

# CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

RESTAURANT WEEK, PAGE 4 ♦ COUNTY BUDGET UNVEILED, PAGE 15 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Walk for Peace monks approach the Fairfax County line along US Rte 1

New Council  
Creates Uncertainty

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Chocolate Joy

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Inspired by  
Message  
Of Peace

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# Fairfax City Council Gets Willard-Sherwood Update

Public hearing and City action are set for April 28.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

For 13 years now, Fairfax City and Fairfax County have worked on redeveloping the county's Joseph Willard Health Center and the City's Sherwood Community Center into one location for healthcare, wellness and fitness, plus programs for children and seniors.

Fairfax City Council was updated on its progress last Tuesday, Feb. 10. But if it fails to give its final approval in April, the whole project could fall through.

Slated for the corner of Layton Hall Drive and Blenheim Boulevard in Fairfax City, the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center entails demolition of the current health center and construction of a new, 102,800-square-foot facility in its place. It's planned for three stories, with two levels of underground parking, and would connect to the existing, but expanded, Sherwood Center via a fully enclosed bridge.

The new health building will offer the same healthcare services it does today, while adding a new childcare center, senior-citizen programs from Fairfax City's Green Acres Center, plus a two-story gym with an upper-level track. Programs and services from the City's Parks & Recreation Dept. would move there too. The Sherwood Community Center will continue housing recreational classes, preschool, afterschool care, meetings, parties, receptions and special events.

During last week's Council work session, Brooke Hardin, the City's director of Community Development and Planning, explained the project's background. He said discussions about replacing the deteriorating Green Acres and building a City community center began in 2013, and the Willard center was one of the possible sites – but the county was already using it.

"In 2016-2017, the City looked at other possible locations, but they all had significant impacts on open space," said Hardin. "About the same time, the county was doing a feasibility study of the Willard center and determined that – because of its age – demolition or replacement was warranted.

"The City reached out to the county about a potential partnership at that location, and the county was receptive. So the City and county entered into agreements to



Artist's rendition of the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center.

explore and design a joint facility there. And in 2021, they also affirmed a commitment to move forward with the project. In December 2022, they approved the Phase II design-development agreement that contemplates the project all the way through construction."

Furthermore, said Hardin, "With each step after that, City Council authorized the project team to move forward." He said the City also began extensive community engagement in January 2022. "We engaged the community even before it was designed to get a sense about their needs and what they were looking for in this project."

The City put \$56 million for it in its adopted Capital Improvement Program. But now, with final project approval approaching and Fairfax's current City Council less willing to spend money on big projects than previous Councils, the whole project is in jeopardy. A public hearing and Council vote to either proceed with or terminate the City's agreement with the county to build this project, is set for April 28.

The City has already invested \$4 million in this venture and will lose it all if it pulls out. It will also cost the county some \$20 million if it has to delay and re-bid this project and restart the design without the City. In addition, the City's action at this late date will inevitably cause a serious rift in City/county relations that could also harm other partnerships they have together.

The project's total cost estimate is \$127.5 million, with the county's 58-percent share being \$73.1 million, and the City's 42 percent, \$54.3 million. It's divided based on each entity's pro-rata use of the space.

James Patteson, with Blue Heron Leadership Group, the City's

consultant on this project, made last week's presentation along with Hardin. Patteson noted that the Willard center was built in 1954, so it's now 72 years old. And Green Acres, built in 1961, needs extensive maintenance and repairs.

Research also revealed that the cost to rebuild Green Acres would be almost \$3.4 million, or nearly 4 cents on the City's tax rate. And the cost to renovate it would be almost \$5.2 million – equating to nearly 6 cents on the tax rate. Fairfax has long wanted to cease using it, and the new facility would fit the bill.

"We're moving everything from Green Acres over to the new, modern, community center and adding areas for art and socializing," said Patteson. "And all the Willard services will remain in a space convenient for City residents.

"This is not primary or urgent care – sick people aren't coming to this center. It's for preventive and educational services; the women's, infants and children's nutritional program [WIC]; vital records; immunizations; maternal health training; services for toddlers with developmental challenges; and early childhood education – childcare serving moderate- and low-income families."

Patteson noted the transportation improvements that will be made, as well. "The new entrance to the site will be directly across from Democracy Lane, removing the [current] dangerous entrance at the corner and building an inter-parcel connection," he said. "The [facility's] design is complete, we're nearly done with permitting and we're ready to go to construction this summer."

But it all depends on what City Council decides to do in April. Meanwhile, see the sidebar for reactions from some City residents.

## City Council Urged to Honor its Commitment

Residents talk about Willard-Sherwood pros and cons.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

The Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center was on Fairfax City Council's Feb. 10 agenda as a worksession item – meaning Council would receive an update on this project and discuss it without acting on it then. But residents took advantage of two public-comment periods during the Council meeting preceding the worksession to tell Council their thoughts about it. Below are some of their comments, edited for length:

Art Hammerschlag (on behalf of Fairfax City Citizens for Smarter Growth): I'm here to voice our strong support for the Willard-Sherwood Center. Green Acres is totally inadequate as a senior center. City residents deserve better. The new facility [will be] a first-class addition to the City ... and make it a desirable place to live.

"The City promised this to its residents; we've been following its progress and are eagerly awaiting its opening. It would be inappropriate at best and mean-spirited at worst to deny [it to] your constituents. The City committed itself to this project. To kill it would be a serious breach; pulling out of this commitment to the county would damage our relationship for years to come."

Jennifer Passey (former Councilmember): This project represents far more than a building; it represents a commitment to the community, reflecting the City's values and the real needs of the people living here. It's an investment in health, inclusion and long-term quality of life.

"That land is owned by Fairfax County, and our partnership with the county can't be taken for granted. The county could build something else there that might not serve the City's needs. The choice is whether we shape this land together or without the City's voice and vision."

Tom Ross (former Councilmember): "The decisions we make are for the future. Yes, [this project] will require a financial commitment, but I be-

lieve in the need to invest in our community, in future generations of all ages and backgrounds, and in our future. Fully fund this center; let's get this done."

Cappy Russell: "A full-sized fitness center is the kind of amenity residents of all ages would be grateful to have. [This project] is also an opportunity to reaffirm our partnership with the county, which we can see in our schools, our first-responder arrangements and in our library. So I hope you support this center. The City's future is brighter when we go into it alongside our county partner."

Doug Cox: "Tax rates and [home] assessments have gone up every year, and the tax base is expanding. Fairfax City has a spending problem. Get a handle on the money and where it's being spent. Find out how many people from the City use Willard; I've been there once, but that's just me. How much will this cost, total, by the time it's financed and the debt's paid off?"

Sabrina DeWald: "The Willard-Sherwood Center would increase our tax bill by 5 cents/\$100 assessed value, minimum. Are you guys going to pay for that. Your house is your biggest lifetime investment. What am I getting back in return for those tax dollars? And Dominion just increased our electric bill. Everyday life is getting more expensive. I urge you to vote no."

Toby Sorensen: "Willard-Sherwood will be a beautiful building and a wonderful addition to Fairfax City. [It's] been a long time coming. When I was on the Green Acres Feasibility Study Committee, many years ago, I would never have imagined the possibility of having a comprehensive community center at the Willard site.

"It's in a practically perfect location and will serve everybody. A lot of people use that health center. Fairfax High students get their shots there for free. People use these facilities." She then read an email from another resident saying the City needs to modernize its amenities "which, in turn, will support local businesses, the real-estate market, etc.

Amini Bonane: "This directly touches families, children and working parents in Fairfax City. Accessible health services matter, ADA-accessible spaces matter.

SEE CITY COUNCIL, PAGE 11

# Fairfax City Acknowledges Black History Month

Live music, reception and a proclamation mark the occasion.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**T**uesday, Feb. 10, Fairfax City officially recognized and honored Black History Month with a community reception, live music, speeches and a proclamation. Participating were Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read, the City Council, Doc Nix, Bobby Lacy II and Stacey Claytor.

Dr. Michael Nickens – affectionately known as Doc Nix – is the legendary leader of the GMU basketball team’s pep band, the Green Machine. Lacy is associate director of the Green Machine ensembles, and Claytor is the founder and director of C4 Performing Arts dance school in Fairfax.

Nix and Lacy performed at the reception before that night’s Council meeting, and they and Claytor later accepted the proclamation. Addressing reception attendees in the City Hall atrium, Read explained the importance of celebrating Black History Month, especially in Virginia.

“When we talk about Black history, we’re talking about American Black History,” she said. “Black history goes back millennia, and ground zero for that in America was Virginia in 1619. This is where it all started. I feel like we, more than any other state in the U.S., have a responsibility to acknowledge Virginia’s role in how Black history has played out over the centuries. There’s much to celebrate, much to acknowledge and

so much to learn.

“No matter how many times we celebrate Black history, year after year, there’ll always be new things that we’ve discovered – new things to know, new names, places, events and historical sites that we didn’t know about. It’s a great country, and we wouldn’t be who we are without the Black Americans who’ve contributed every day, every year, for the entirety of this country’s history – 250 years. So let’s lift up and embrace the Black Americans who’ve made this country what it is today.”

Then during the Council meeting, Read read the City’s Black History Month proclamation:

“In February of each year, we celebrate the diversity of Black people in the City of Fairfax, the Commonwealth of Virginia and in our nation, whether they self-identify as African, African American, Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean or Black. We celebrate this year’s Black History Month theme of ‘A Century of Black History Commemorations.’ [It] marks 100 years since national Negro History Week began in 1926, highlighting the enduring focus on African American history and its contributions in the U.S.

“This theme reflects a century of honoring Black life, struggles and achievements through various events and observances, with a renewed focus on accurate and inclusive history. On February 10, 1976, during the United States Bicentennial, President Gerald Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month.

“In 1986, Congress then passed Public Law 99-244 designating February as Black History Month, enshrining in law this country’s commitment to teach, commemorate, celebrate and educate current and future generations on the contributions of Black Americans to American History.

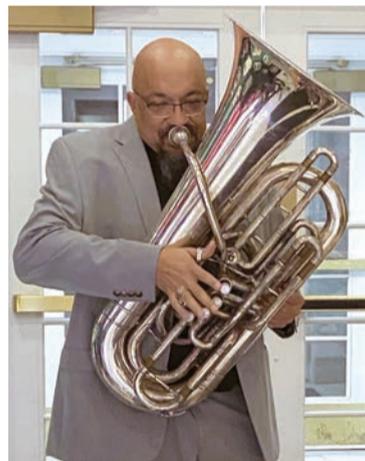


With the proclamation are (from left) Stacey Claytor, Catherine Read, Doc Nix and Bobby Lacy II. In back, from left are Councilmembers Anthony Amos, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Stacy Hall, Tom Peterson, Billy Bates and Rachel McQuillen.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Bobby Lacy II sings Michael Jackson’s “Human Nature” during the reception.



Doc Nix playing his tuba in the City Hall atrium.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX CITY

Posing together are (back row, from left) Anthony Amos, Bobby Lacy II and Doc Nix; and (front row, from left) Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Catherine Read, Stacy Hall, Rachel McQuillen, Billy Bates and Tom Peterson.

“It was the goal of Dr. Carter G. Woodson to establish Negro History Week to promote the history, culture and achievements of African Americans and other people of color worldwide. Woodson, son

of former slaves who became the second African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, recognized the importance of establishing an initiative that could be celebrated annually on a na-

tional scale. In recognition of his contributions to his country, Woodson High School in Fairfax was renamed in his honor in 2024.

“We acknowledge that we have  
SEE FAIRFAX CITY, PAGE 11

## ‘Black Americans Have Contributed in Countless Ways’

Nix, Claytor say proclamation’s words need to become action.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**A**fter Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read presented the City’s Black History Month proclamation last week, two of the

recipients addressed those gathered in City Council chambers. Speaking were GMU’s Michael “Doc Nix” Nickens and Stacey Claytor of C4 Performing Arts.

“We set aside a month, we put words on a proclamation, get together and talk about these things, write articles and make art,” said Nix. “And the repeating [is important]. We work on it, step away from it and come back to it – like when building a spaceship out of LEGOs. When it’s done, you can put it on a shelf and show it off. But you know it’s



Stacey Claytor says much more work is needed.

[eventually] going to fall apart – it’s destined to.



Doc Nix talks about the importance of Black History Month.

And if you glued it together, you’d ruin the essence of what it was.”

“So the only thing to do is start over; and the process continues, again and again,” he continued. “We’re going to get together every year, revisit these things and have these conversations. And every time we come back to them, maybe we can keep going from where we left off, or maybe we’ll have to start anew. We might have to rebuild the spaceship again; but every time we do that, it’s a little bet-

ter plan for the next one.”

So, said Nix, “Let’s keep getting together, start the conversation again and bring what we’ve learned to it. I appreciate the way the City of Fairfax, the Commonwealth of Virginia and George Mason University have put so much faith and trust in me and allow me to express myself. And I’m going to keep bringing my best self to it. You all keep making room for me in a way that makes me feel like I belong and I’m valued, and I appreciate you for it.”

Next, Claytor thanked Read for  
SEE BLACK HISTORY MONTH, PAGE 11

# Fairfax City Offers the Tastes of the Globe



Baked cannelloni from Dolce Vita



A colorful bowl from Okonomi Asian Grill



Fried Chicken Sammie from Big Buns



Fish and Chips from The Auld Shebeen

## Winter Restaurant Week is Feb. 27-March 8.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

People from throughout Northern Virginia can treat their tastebuds to the flavors of the world by eating delicious meals during Fairfax City's winter Restaurant Week. It runs Feb. 27-March 8 and promises a wide array of tantalizing dishes from all over the globe.

Most restaurants will offer set-price menus of \$25 for brunch and lunch, and \$40 for a three-course dinner. Other restaurants will offer Two-for-\$10 or "Let's Work Together" deals, which allow diners to select the option that best works for them.

Celebrating the city's thriving culinary landscape, the 10-day event invites diners to explore and support the diverse restaurants that define the City's vibrant food culture. And Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read is among the many people looking forward to enjoying several of the unique dishes found here.

"Restaurant Week is a time to shake off the stress of freezing temperatures, 'snow-crete' and school closures," said Read. "Grab the family, the neighbors and your work colleagues and settle into a warm space with great food. Our City restaurants have some-

thing to offer everyone. Breakfast, lunch and dinner in cuisines from around the world are close by and waiting for you to discover them."

More than two dozen restaurants will be taking part in this event, and their mouth-watering cuisines will take diners on a trip from Azerbaijan to Ireland, Latin America, India, Japan, Thailand, Italy, Mexico, Korea and China. It's also a great opportunity for people to experience different foods and new restaurants, while also supporting their long-time, neighborhood favorites.

Participating restaurants include Baku Delicious, Bellissimo Restaurant, Big Buns, Boba TomTom, Commonwealth Brewing Co., Curry Mantra, Dolce Vita Italian Kitchen & Wine Bar, Draper's, El Pollo Rico, Hamrock's Restaurant, Kelly's Oyster House and Bar, Meokja Meokja and Milk and Honey.

Also taking part are Ned's New England Deck, Okonomi Asian Grill, Old Dominion Pizza, Ornerly Beer Co., P.J. Skidoos, Patriots Pub & Grill, Sushi Friends Hashi, Tandoori Fairfax, TeaDM, The Auld Shebeen, The Wine House, Vivi Bubble Tea, and Yanzi Noodle House.

Fairfax City Restaurant Week is sponsored by Fairfax City Economic Development and the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Old Town Fairfax Business Assn. For more information, go to <https://www.fairfaxcityrestaurantweek.com/>.

A few examples of the dinner entrees in



Boba tea from Boba TomTom.



Oysters from Kelly's Oyster House

store for diners are:

### Commonwealth Brewing Co.

Traditional Jambalaya, made with Cajun chicken, andouille sausage and rice.

### Big Buns

Regular burgers, birria burgers and Fricken Good Fried Chicken Sammies, all served with fries.

### Dolce Vita

Spinach Fettuccine, Italian Winter Pasta, Baked Cannelloni, and Chicken Saltimbocca.

### The Wine House

Braised Lamb Shank, Chicken Normandy, Faroe Island Salmon Fillet, Pork Tenderloin, Flat Iron Steak, and Wild Mushroom and Butternut Squash Risotto.

### Curry Mantra

Dal Makhani Butter Chicken, Chana Masala, Chicken Tikka Masala, Mixed Vegetable Korma, Traditional Curry, Aloo Matar, Korma Curry, Plain Palak, Vindaloo Curry, Palak Paneer, Traditional Biryani (Raita), Paneer Makhani, and Paneer Tikka Masala.

## Moving Process Underway

### New Franconia District supervisor's office and Kingstowne Regional Library.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The Franconia District supervisor's office and the Kingstowne Library are in the process of moving to their location at the new Franconia Governmental Center at 7130 Silver Lake Blvd. in Alexandria. The approximately 90,000-square-foot facility in Fairfax County will include structured parking and house not only the Franconia District supervisor's office but also the expanded 30,000-square-foot new Kingstowne Regional Library, the Franconia Police

Station, the Franconia Museum, an active adult center, and a child care center serving infants through prekindergarten.

Beginning Tuesday, Feb. 17, through Sunday, March 15, walk-in services for the supervisor's office and community room use will not be available. Supervisor Rodney Lusk and his office staff, however, will continue to serve constituents remotely by phone at 703-971-6262, by email at [franconia@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:franconia@fairfaxcounty.gov), and via virtual teleconferencing throughout the move process.

Alternative community meeting spaces in the area are available by reservation. They

include John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Dr., 703-971-0010; Franconia Volunteer Fire Department, 6300 Beulah St., 703-922-5858; Burgundy Village Community Center, 5516 Norton Road, 571-363-0851; Green Spring Gardens Rental Facilities, 4603 Green Spring Road, 703-642-5173; American Legion Post 176 Springfield, 6520 Amherst Ave., 703-440-0335; and Fairfax County Public Schools facilities, multiple locations, 571-423-2340, [fcpscommunity-use@fcps.edu](mailto:fcpscommunity-use@fcps.edu).

The Kingstowne Community Library closed to the public Feb. 15. The new Kingstowne

Regional Library at the Franconia Governmental Center will open in early spring. Updates on the grand opening of the new location will be shared on the library's newsroom and on our social media platforms.

### Affordable Housing Planned for Former Franconia Governmental Center.

Good Shepherd Housing announced on Feb. 10 that a proposal to build 120 units of affordable housing on the former site occupied by the Franconia Governmental Center won the support of the Fairfax

SEE MOVING PROCESS, PAGE 19  
[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

# Springfield Shootings Injure 2 in Separate Incidents

Resident shot arriving home in Springfield; suspected burglar-shooter arrested on multiple charges. Suspects arrested in both shootings.

BY MIKE SALMON  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

A shooting in Springfield last week led to a temporary shelter-in-place at Lewis High School due to the proximity of the shooting, which occurred on Friday, Feb. 6 at 1:34 p.m., according to FCPD Captain Jessie Katzman. There was no harm to the students.

On Feb. 6 shortly after 1:30 p.m., officers responded to the 7600 block of Cork Glen Way in Springfield for a shooting. Officers arrived and located an adult male suffering from a gunshot wound to the upper body. Officers began performing life-saving measures until relieved by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue personnel. The victim was transported to a local hospital in life-threatening condition.

Detectives from FCPD Major Crimes Bureau arrested a man

in connection with the Feb. 6 shooting in Springfield.

Preliminarily, detectives determined that the victim arrived home while it was being burglarized. When the victim opened the door, he was shot once to the upper body. The suspects then exited the residence through the rear door and fled the scene, according to police reports.

On Feb. 8, with the assistance of the Real Time Crime Center, detectives identified a 2014 white Infiniti Q50 used in the shooting according to police reports. The vehicle was registered to a 20-year-old Alexandria man who was arrested at approximately 8 p.m. on Feb. 6 in the Mount Vernon District on unrelated firearm and drug charges and was being held at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center without bond.

Detectives reviewed recovered surveillance footage and

linked the man to the Springfield shooting earlier that day. He was charged with Malicious Wounding, Armed Burglary, and Use of a Firearm in the Commission of a Felony. He remains held on no bond. Detectives are asking anyone with information regarding this incident to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

The following week, there was another shooting in the Springfield area. On Feb. 13 at approximately 5:34 p.m., officers responded to the 6500 block of Springfield Mall for a reported shooting. Officers located an adult male victim suffering from a gunshot wound to his upper body.

The victim was transported to an area hospital for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries.

Preliminarily, there was a verbal dispute between the suspect and the victim, during which the suspect produced a firearm and shot the victim. The suspect fled the area before officers arrived, the police said.

Responding officers immediately saturated the area, quickly located and arrested the suspect in the parking garage. A second juvenile was also taken into custody in connection with an associated assault. A firearm was recovered on the scene.

The suspect was transported to the Fairfax County Juvenile Detention Center, where he was charged with Aggravated Malicious Wounding, Use of a Firearm in the Commission of a Felony, Discharging a Firearm Within a Building, Removing or Altering a Serial Number, and Possession of a Firearm by Someone Under 18. He is being held pending his detention hearing.



FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
A gun was found near Springfield Town Center.

## Tributes to Two Iconic Figures

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

During the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 17, the chairman, supervisors and those present observed a moment of silence, followed by members of the board sharing tributes to two long-serving public servants. Former supervisor Michael “Mike” Frey, (Sully), died Feb. 16. Former deputy county executive Verdia “Verdi” Lee Haywood died Feb. 6.

### Former Supervisor Michael “Mike” Frey (Sully District)

Former Fairfax County Supervisor Michael “Mike” Frey died Feb. 16. He represented the Sully District from its creation in 1991 until his retirement in 2015, at age 59. His death marks the loss of a legacy figure in western Fairfax County, who was instrumental in bringing the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center to the district. He was a champion for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, which was named in his honor in 2017.

Chairman Jeff McKay, said it was “with deep sadness” that the board learned of the passing of Frey. Before his election to the board, Frey worked for Chairman Jack Herrity and Springfield District Supervisor Elaine McConnell, giving him 37 years of service to Fairfax County and its residents, McKay said.

Supervisor Pat Herrity, R-Springfield, said Frey was “deeply involved in youth sports. Frey was a strong defender of the Fairfax County Police Department “in good times and bad,” Herrity said.

Supervisor Kathy Smith, D-Sully, said Frey was someone about whom “you never heard anybody say anything bad.”

Supervisor Walter Alcorn, D-Hunter Mill, recalled meeting Frey as a 20-year-old intern when Frey was chief of staff to McConnell, saying that even in a “crazy time politically,” Frey “was nice to me.”

After leaving the board, Frey continued to serve behind the scenes, including caring for geriatric dogs and hard-to-place animals and chairing the Dulles Suburban Center task force.

### Former Deputy County Executive for Human Services, Verdia “Verdi” L. Haywood

Verdia “Verdi” Lee Haywood died Feb. 6 at age 77. Chairman Jeff McKay called Haywood “the architect of the county’s human services delivery system,” adding that his work can be seen everywhere in Fairfax County. Haywood served as the deputy county executive for human services for nearly three decades, from 1981 to 2010.

Haywood approached his work with “endless compassion,” was pragmatic and brought people together to solve problems, McKay said. He noted that many people whose lives Haywood changed “never met him or never even heard his name.” That is because “it wasn’t about the attention on him, it was about getting the job done for the residents of Fairfax County,” McKay said.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, D-Franconia, described Haywood as a “very simple, caring, committed person.” Lusk credited Haywood as the driving force behind consolidating about 13 human services agencies into roughly six and said the model “still works today, 30-plus years later. ... He was right.”

Supervisor Dan Storck, D-Mount Vernon, said Haywood’s work along Richmond Highway “brought together an amalgamation of nonprofits and formed a team that greatly expanded the benefits and opportunities.”

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# Motor Squad Protects Walk for Peace

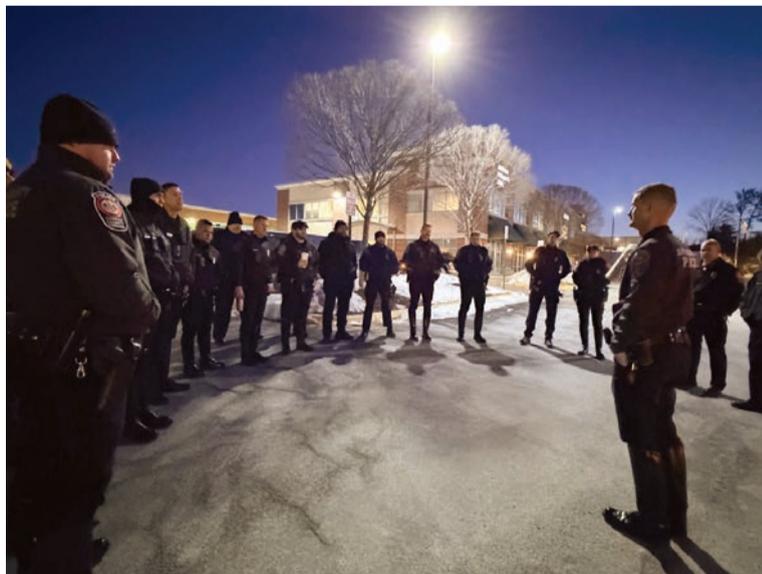
Fairfax County police provide safety for all.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

As the Venerable Monks of the Walk of Peace chari-ka traveled across ten states in sunlight and darkness, in fair and poor weather, on country roads with almost no one to witness their passing, or along major thoroughfares lined with thousands of people, there was one constant presence. Sheriffs or their deputies, patrol officers or chiefs, wearing uniforms of small community rural offices or large city or county departments, escorted the monks. Although they wore many different uniforms they shared the same mission: safety for all.

In the early hours of darkness before sunrise on Feb. 8, ordinary looking vehicles began appearing one by one at a quiet parking area off US Route 1, just over the Fairfax County/Prince William County line. Lights were off, engines running, to combat the 11 degree temperature. After a dozen or more vehicles filled the lot, uniformed officers began to emerge and gather. They assembled to hear their final pre-operation instructions. The unit was the Motor Squad; their Commander, Lt. Tyler Lamper. Their operation: to escort the Walk for Peace through Fairfax County.

Lamper indicated no threats were expected, but the helicop-



Motor Squad officers gather before dawn for pre-operation instruction

ter and drone unit were alert as a precaution if needed. The Department's crowd control unit was expected to assist at stop points. The major responsibility for the assignment fell to the Motor Squad.

The specialized unit consists of 28 full-time officers, and draws on supplemental staff as needed. In their normal duties, they perform a variety of operations: community outreach programs, VIP and funeral escorts, and traffic enforcement. They are experts in controlling traffic flow to maintain thoroughfares and traffic safety. They are a motorcycle unit recognizable by their high uniform boots. In winter snow conditions, they often trade motorcycles for a variety of closed vehicles. The vehicles for the day's conditions were unmarked and equipped with inconspicuous banks of police red and blue flasher lights, and a full regiment of

radios and other police equipment inside.

While the monk's plan to travel through Northern Virginia was known for several weeks, details of their exact travel routes were available with only a few days' notice. That created a challenge in coordinating a large contingent of officers and the liaisons necessary with multiple jurisdictions. Even as the arrival time drew close, the details of the actual timing were in flux. As the weather worsened, it was not clear what impact it would have on the monks' walking pace and schedule. As is typical with escort operations, providing assistance required flexibility to match changing needs, timeframes, and routes, requiring the squad to adapt on short notice, with radioed coordination between unit members and other county departments.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Walk for Peace monks approach Fairfax County line along US Rte 1

After confirming assignments and understanding by each unit member, another waiting period began. At about 6:30 a.m., with unit members on-station nearby, Lt. Lamper waited to hear from the Prince William Police Department when the monks began to move after their overnight rest. The communication came about 7:14 a.m. The monks were leaving their overnight stop to begin their journey north on Route 1. The es-

ort responsibility would transfer to Fairfax County after a few more miles.

When the monks reached that unmarked boundary line, just over the Occoquan River bridge, Lt. Lamper, joined by Captain Harold Morris of the Traffic Division, greeted the monks with a welcoming introduction, a bouquet of flowers, and mementos of their entry into Fairfax County.

SEE MOTOR SQUAD, PAGE 10



Crowds line US Rte 1 in Fairfax County



Capt. Harold Morris and Lt. Tyler Lamper welcome monks to Fairfax County

# Walk for Peace Reaches Fairfax County

Mindfulness and inner peace message resonates with many.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

“**M**ay you and all beings be well, happy and at peace.” That was the recurring blessing shared by a group of Buddhist monks as they endured the vigors of a 110-day, 2,300-mile pilgrimage. They walked with their loyal dog from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C. The journey culminated in their widely attended event of a Global Loving-Kindness Meditation and other gatherings in D.C. at the National Cathedral and Lincoln Memorial. All were welcomed “to make a significant affect on our world.” Their stated mission from the start — to promote peace, compassion, and nonviolence across America and the world.

## The Monks in Fairfax County

The Walk of Peace reached Fairfax County on the morning of Feb. 8; their 106th day of walking. They crossed the Occoquan River Bridge on US Rte 1, stopping for a brief welcoming introduction by their new Fairfax County Police escort

They faced bone chilling temperatures, and hilly miles walking along U.S. Rte 1 that morning to reach their lunch stop and rest at Hoa Nghiem Pagoda on Backlick Road. After lunch they continued on to their overnight stop at Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church on Sherwood Hall Lane. There they entered Alexandria, concluding their trek through Fairfax County.

The group walked through the county in much the same way as they had walked since leaving Huong Dao Temple in Fort Worth Texas, on Oct. 26. They walked quietly in single file along the roadway. Forgoing their bare foot travel, they added closed shoes here; a concession to the bitter cold. They carried no backpacks, instead toting a few essentials on sling shoulder bags. They handed out bead strings to several they encountered on their way and at rest stop visitations, a Buddhist symbol of protection and blessings. Volunteers assisted with arrangements enroute, following with an RV and a couple of support vehicles. Support staff took videos and live-streamed the journey. One monk often took photographs documenting their encounters.

For centuries, monks traditionally have engaged in journeys of pilgrimage to foster person-

SEE WALK FOR PEACE, PAGE 8  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Children bring their message of peace to the monks



Amy Orr, Gaithersburg



Recognizing the steps of the monks toward peace



Vanessa Vizcarra, Burke



Sreeja & Gamesh Rajamani, Ashburn



Reflecting back the monk's message of striving for a peaceful day



Linh Dang, Woodbridge, and Thanh Kha, Springfield

# Walk for Peace Reaches Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 7

al spiritual development. In contrast, this Walk for Peace effort employed modern day communication methods to embrace a huge audience through social media; attracting the attention and admiration of more than 4.5 million Facebook and TikTok followers online. Many hundred thousands more followed their progress in print and network media. Sharing their planned path each day, they attracted thousands to line their way, some traveling hours to see them, lining the roadways, offering quiet support, flowers, or food, and holding signs with words of encouragement. The public was often invited to join them for a visitation as they made daily lunch and overnight rest stops. At a time when many people felt anxiety over national and world events, the monks' message resonated.

## Reaction

Although the crowds were large, they were mostly quiet. Some spoke a "thank you" to the monks, but there was little shouting or loud questions. The monks were permitted to pass quietly. Many who came held signs to convey their messages to the monks. The signs, some drawn by children, contained words: such as, peace, hope, kindness, thank you; the peace symbol; or messages repeated from the monk's talks heard on social media: "May you be well, happy, and peaceful." "Today will be my peaceful day." Many offered flowers. The offering of flowers in Buddhism is a traditional act of respect and devotion.

There were many, many flowers. Some strewn on the pathway, some handed to the monks singly or in bouquets. The monks often accepted flowers, and often gave a gift of flowers back to those along the path.

After the monks passed, there were many signs of emotional impact in the crowds, spontaneous hugging and tears. Many described their admiration for the monks, the need for their message, and a desire to support that message. Along their Lorton travel path, Sreeja Gamesh, of Ashburn, said she was there "To support peace. The world needs this message more than ever before."

Amy Orr of Gaithersburg wanted to witness the march first hand. "The message is needed across the country. It's inspiring."

Vanessa Vizcarra of Burke, whose family is originally from Chile and has lived in the U.S. for thirty years, began to tear as she said, "I really needed this. The state of everything in our country. It's hard to wake up and feel peace."

At the monk's pagoda lunch stop, a crowd gathered outside. Randee Wittkopf and Jody Rumelili of Fairfax, friends and teachers attended together. "It's a beautiful thing they are doing; especially now, to spread peace and kindness and I wanted to be a part," said Wittkopf. "It gives us hope. I have been incredibly sad about the atmosphere, the state of the country. The number of people coming out [for the monks] gives me hope."

T. John and Amy Mutzel of Springfield said "their message — people are hungry for it." T. John grew up in the Congo.



Randee Wittkopf and Jody Romelili, Fairfax



T. John and Amy Mutzel, Springfield



Kenny and Nhi Byrant, northeast Texas

Thai and Phvong Truong of Alexandria are members of a nearby buddhist temple. Thai was born in Vietnam and came to the U.S. 30 years ago. "The monks and walk are a good moment. It's up to all of us to promote peace and kindness, the same as the monk's path."

Kenny and Nhi Byrant journeyed here from northeast Texas. Nhi was born in Vietnam and has been in the U.S. since 2017. She described the Walk for Peace as "a historic moment. ... After watching on Facebook, I wanted to be in on seeing America



Thai and Phvong Truong, Alexandria



Crowd awaits the monks' appearance at their lunch stop at Noa Nghiem Pagoda

turn out. Not many know much about the walks, but how much of an understanding do you need to get their message?"

Mother and daughter Liah Dang of Woodbridge and Thanh Khan of Springfield bundled against the cold. "We are following the peace monks and came out to support and pray for them. It's inspirational, showing you can do anything."

## The Mission

As noted by crowd members, Buddhism may be less well understood by Westerners than mainstream Western religions. Yet the monks' promotion of hope for peace, compassion, kindness and nonviolence is universally understood. The monks made clear that they were not advancing a religion or political position. There was no prominent solicitation for donations. They asked that people "look at the monks, not to see them, but to slow down, take a deep breath and find peace."

Respect for the monks and their journey on foot in adverse conditions with little protection was obvious in the numbers of those who turned out to share their journey in a small way by bearing witness and honoring

their passage with hands in prayer.

Reaching their 100th day milestone in Richmond, the monks were greeted at City Hall by Richmond city officials, legislators in the General Assembly, and Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger. The Governor noted in her remarks that her proclamation in their honor was her first. She officially recognized Feb. 2, 2026 as Walk for Peace Day in Virginia.

The Walk of Peace "officially" ended on its 110th day with large gatherings in Washington DC for multiple events on Feb. 10 - 11. The monks invited Venerable Monks and Nuns, from all Buddhist traditions, to join them on Feb. 10 for a gathering of monastics; to walk with them, and come together in the spirit of unity, compassion and shared purpose.

All people were invited to join them for a gathering at the Lincoln Memorial for an evening meditation.

The meditation was live-streamed for world participation, and drew a huge crowd at the memorial and around the reflecting pool. The monks returned home to Texas by bus on Feb. 12 after a walk stop in Annapolis Md.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

# Monks of the Walk for Peace

## Journey with challenges.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

The monks of the Walk for Peace are back home in Texas now. Bitter cold temperatures, high winds, and winter storms, with ice and snow covered highways, had challenged the Walk for Peace monks during late January and February as the monks reached Virginia. Wearing only their saffron colored robes, supplemented by padded coats beneath, several monks traded their typical sandals and socks for closed shoes and boots. Adding knit caps and scarves were also among the few concessions to the poor conditions of Virginia's icy welcome. They continued walking.

Reaching Virginia from Texas had not been without difficulty, or tragedy, for the group of 19 monks and their loyal dog. On Nov. 19, while still traversing Texas, a truck hit the group's support vehicle. Two monks walking near it were injured and required hospitalization, halting the group's travel for several days. Venerable Monk Bhante Dam Phommasan's injuries required the amputation of his leg, forcing him to leave the pilgrimage. He would later rejoin the group for the final days of the walk in a wheelchair to complete the walk in Washington.

On Jan. 12, Aloka, affectionately nicknamed the Peace Dog the monk's loyal walking companion, required his own leg surgery. His chronic cranial cruciate ligament condition had worsened during the trip. A veterinary practice in Charleston SC, performed a tibial plateau-leveling osteotomy (TPLO).

This is a common procedure for dogs, and Aloka made a good surgical recovery, but was prescribed restricted mobility for the remainder of the journey. He rejoined the group spending much of the walk time in the support vehicle, watching from the window. He was with the monks, center stage, at the Lincoln Memorial and other important venues.

Group leader Pannakara became ill in late January, forcing him to miss walking time. He returned to leading the group on foot when his health improved after a short period. Several of the monks were ill with flu symptoms by the walk's end, but all finished the pilgrimage.

### The Venerable Monks

Who are these stoic walkers? Aligned with the Huong Dao Temple and Vipassana Bhavana Center in Fort Worth Texas for the Walk of Peace, the monks, aged from 32 to 68 years, originate from several temples, countries and U.S. states, including Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, France, and Texas, New York, Illinois, Georgia and Utah. The Venerable Monk, Pra Oneta Mingsisouphann, age 48, is from Wat Lao Buddhavong Temple in Catlett, Virginia.

Over the weeks, the faces of the monks became familiar to those following their journey. Particularly well recognized is their leader, the Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, 44 years old, the head monk and group's spiritual guide. Pannakara was born in Vietnam and raised in the United States. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington, and former Motorola engineer. He left his corporate career for monastic life. He took his monastic training in Myanmar; previously known as Burma.

Pannakara led the group each day as they moved in single file, often stopping briefly to acknowledge those along the way. At rest stops he spoke to assembled crowds suggesting the way to concentrate on breathing in meditation to promote mindfulness and the need to seek peace from within; urging all to commit each morning to the thought, "Today will be my peaceful day."

Usually walking directly behind the lead monk, Venerable Monk Phiyathammo, 40 years old, from Thailand, can be recognized

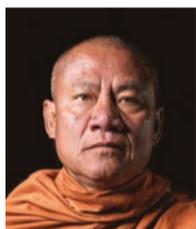
by his multicolored robe. It is over ten years old and has been patched many times. A monk who has completed several pilgrimages, he walked with Pannakara previously on a pilgrimage across India. The multicolors that make his robe distinctive actually are patches that have been added as the robe was

mended many times, first by hand; and as preparation for the Walk of Peace, on a small sewing machine. Recent attempts to dye the robe to one color were not successful. Each patch is made from a different kind of cloth gathered from old robes, joined together and mended over several years. Those who have sat close to him at rest stops recount seeing many worn places. He has explained, "Many people with sincere faith have wished to request this robe from me and were willing to offer a new one in its place. But I do not change it. I have vowed to use this very robe until it can no longer be used."

The oldest monk who completed the walk is 70 year old Venerable Monk Khamvanh Phimmavong, a Laotian from Rochester NY. Revered for his age and winning smile, he usually walked forward in the line.

Equally recognizable is the monks' adopted dog, Aloka. His quiet, gentle disposition, heart-shaped head patch, and demonstrated love of the monks and walking, earned him his own notoriety. His own social media page has over a million followers. Aloka was a stray street dog in India when he began following the monks of his own volition on a peace walk there. Pannakara sought his Temple's permission to formally adopt the dog. The Temple raised about \$14,000 to bring Aloka to the United States.

After undergoing his recent CCL surgery, he was under veterinary orders for reduced mobility. He is often pictured taking a commanding view, seated in the support vehicle. He has been heard whining



KEVIN BLACKWELL  
Pra Oneta  
Mingsisouphann



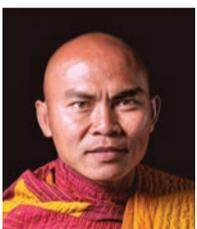
KEVIN BLACKWELL  
Venerable Monk  
Phiyathammo



WALK FOR PEACE  
Pra Phimmavong



WALK OF PEACE  
Aloka



KEVIN BLACKWELL  
Bhante  
Pannakara



WALK OF PEACE

### Monks contend with severe weather in early February as they traverse Virginia

to defy his veterinarian's orders and return to walking by the side of the monks. Although the monks follow a life philosophy of austerity and renunciation of worldly goods, Aloka appears to have a taste for fashion. He is seen in a generous number of coats and bandanas sported over the days of the journey. He does follow the monk's austere practice of sleeping on the floor, not so usual for a beloved pet. An audience favorite, he often interrupted Leader Pannakara's talks on attaining peace and mindfulness, merely by walking by in front of the crowd of listeners to oohs and ahhs.

Inspired by the teachings of Gautama Buddha, the 19 monks who began the journey are affiliated with the Vietnamese sect of Buddhist Theravada, a historically monastic tradition. Theravada emphasizes renunciation of possessions and self-purification. Buddhism has no single sacred text or bible. It applies several canons that vary by tradition, taught by Buddha before his death in 483 BC. Monks are expected to live an austere life with minimal possessions,

focus on the study of Buddhist doctrine, the practice of meditation, and observance of good moral character, setting an example for others. They may not marry or have children. Theravada remains the dominant form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

### Monk Robes

The monks robes, or cāvāra, typically have three layers: a smaller rectangular robe wrapped around the waist (antaravāsaka), a belt (bandhana) used to secure it, and a larger rectangular robe (uttarāsāiga) draped around the whole body, over the left shoulder and under the right arm. Their robes symbolize simplicity and detachment from materialism. The saffron color worn by Theravada Buddhist monks is thought to be similar to that worn by Buddha and his disciples.

The orange dye was readily available at the time of Buddha. One set of robes is typically the only clothing the monk possesses as it is a symbol of their renunciation of worldly life and commitment to the monastic path.

# Motor Squad Protects Walk for Peace

FROM PAGE 6  
Law enforcement jurisdictions along the way have provided badges to add to the lead monk's robe. Commander of the Mount Vernon Police Station, Major Jeff



**Sgt. Steve Cicinato provides left lane sweep control and answers questions about the police operation**

Mauro, would later present a Fairfax County Police badge and shoulder patches at the monks' lunch stop, continuing the remembrance practice. At the county border, in a few minutes, the monks, already looking cold in the 11 degree temperature, walked on. The choreographed operation of traffic control and pedestrian protection began.

Experienced officers, obviously well accustomed to working together, held traffic, blocked intersections and lanes and managed traffic with surgical agility on the busy highway. As they progressed to on-ramps from I-95, State Police shut down exits to Route 1 temporarily. Where possible, and when the monks took a rest break along the way, the squad opened lanes and intersections to aid the flow of traffic.

As the monks walked, the north side of the highway was closed. Managing the overflow of hundreds of observers flowing into the roadway at points along the way was taken in stride, and with understanding of the enthusiasm of the many people who had come to see the monks and share the Walk of Peace experience.

Escort vehicles moved slowly, at a pace in sync with the walking monks. Those in escort vehicles following behind the quiet of the main contingent saw observers, many hugging, smile and wave to the support vehicles. Many shouted out, "Thank you for protecting the monks."

When the procession reached Backlick Road, the unit aided the lane crossing over south bound Rte 1, to the monks' planned lunch rest stop at the Vietnamese Buddhist Hoa Nghiem Pagoda.

There the monks ate and held a private visitation with government officials, addressing the crowd before continuing their walk north. The Motor Squad stood at ease until the monks returned to their journey. Then the synchronized process of lane and intersection closures, and slow progression, re-



WALK FOR PEACE

**Storm and cold brought few observers on Buffalo Rd near Raleigh NC, one of the few spots without crowds along the monks' pilgrimage**

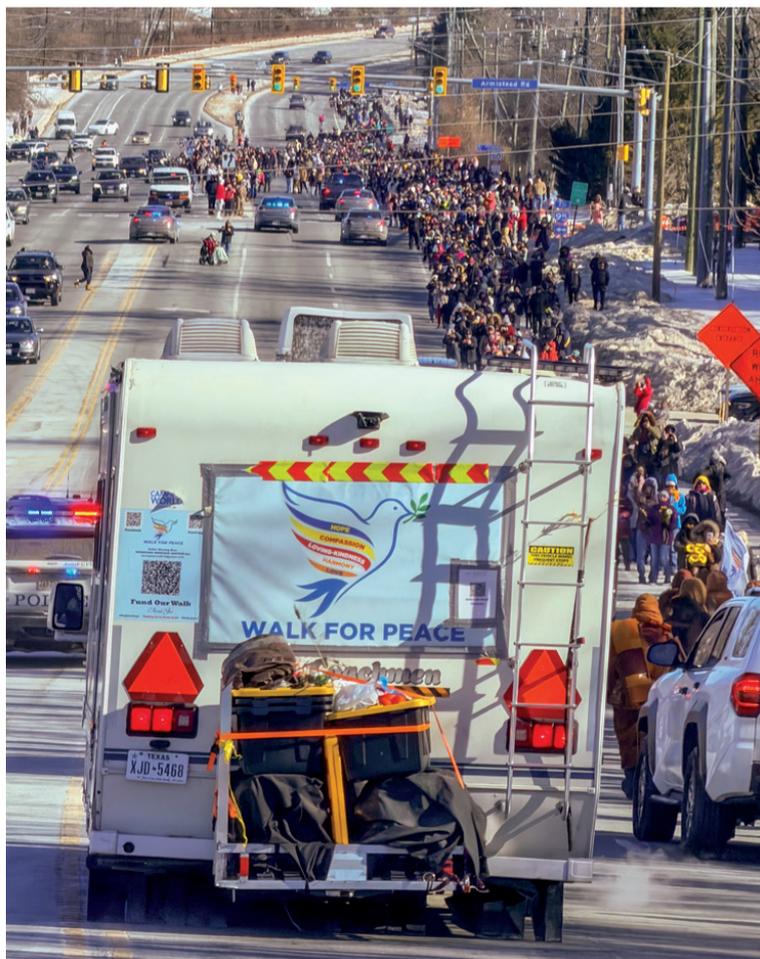
peated itself as the procession continued north to the monk's night stop at Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church on Sherwood Hall Lane. There the jurisdiction changed to Alexandria's police, ending a

twelve-hour shift for the Motor Squad.

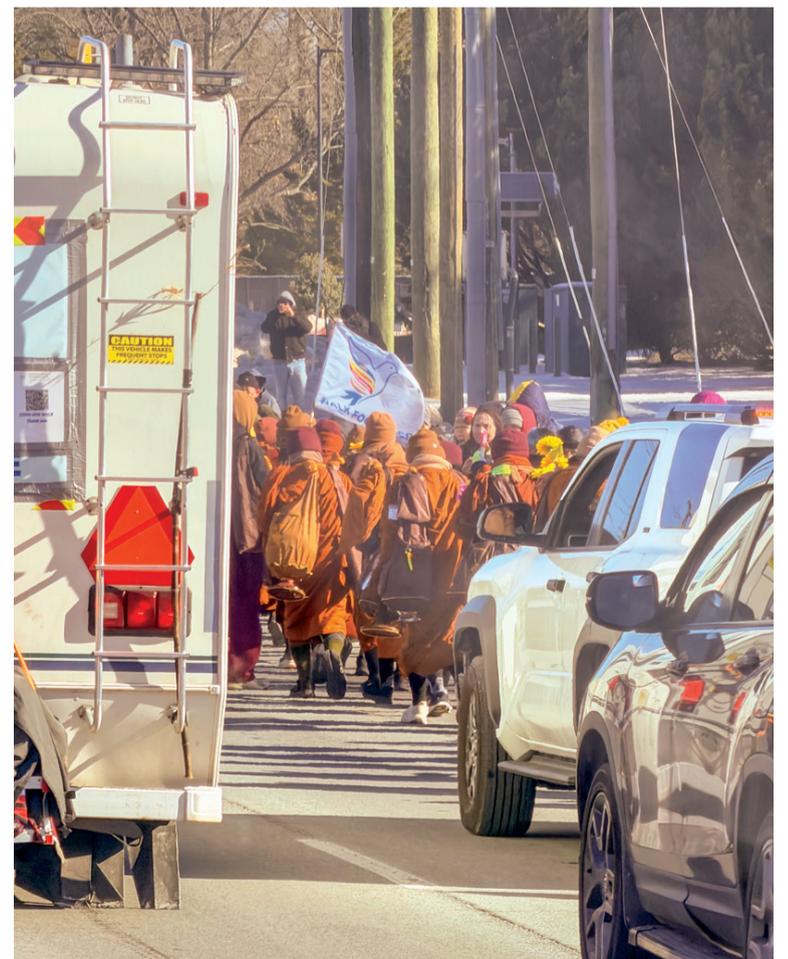
Members of the Motor Squad attain an elite level of driving skill. During their months at the police academy, officers participate in

two weeks of police driving skills training, including skilled backing, braking, handling speed, and controlling skids. Officers in the Motor Squad regularly exhibit cone drills on motorcycles, and are adept at

car handling. Perhaps at the skill level of race car drivers, however, one must note, race car drivers rarely must exhibit backing or parking skills on the track, as these officers do daily.



**People flow into road lanes at major intersections**



**Walk of Peace support vehicles and police escort vehicles protecting monks from the rear**

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

# City Council Urged to Honor its Commitment

FROM PAGE 2

ter, and community recreation and childcare matter. Green Acres has accessibility challenges, outdated restrooms, ventilation issues, and basic functionality [problems] affecting whether seniors can participate with dignity and ease.

“City residents already rely on the Willard center for real, everyday needs from preventive care to travel vaccines. And childcare is essential for families in our local workforce.”

Kelly O’Brien: “Many residents have concerns about this project’s size, cost and [impact on] the City’s

long-term finances. Supporting it means weighing those questions carefully against long-term community needs. Willard-Sherwood has been studied, refined and authorized at multiple stages. It’s a coordinated facility bringing together public health services, childcare, recreation, senior services and community and arts programming in one accessible location.

“It replaces aging facilities and consolidates programs currently spread across multiple sites. Delaying it wouldn’t pause community needs. It would extend reliance on aging buildings, increase barriers

to accessing essential services, and increase overall project costs due to escalation and re-design. This project represents essential community infrastructure [and] a multi-generational investment. It reflects years of careful planning to address a demonstrated need. Continue moving it forward.”

Katie Johnson: “Willard-Sherwood must be viewed alongside [other City financial obligations] – the school bond, property yard, firehouse, the vehicle fleet needing replacement, and all the other CIP projects – plus the debt services we have to pay. Together, their

economic impact must be fully understood and communicated to the people. How high are you willing to raise our taxes? What services will be sacrificed? We must prioritize keeping the City affordable for those living here now.”

Kristina Cecere: “This project isn’t a luxury, but essential community infrastructure serving [people of all ages] in a single location. It’s located on a bus line and is a 10-15-minute walk from many neighborhoods. No jurisdiction – especially one as small as ours – can live in a vacuum. Our ability to offer the level of services our

residents expect depends on our partnership with the county.”

Mike Fabio: “The importance of a community center can’t be overstated. This is about meeting our neighbors and getting to know one another – a place where you want to spend time. Not only will City residents enjoy it, but it’ll be attractive to newcomers. So when you sell your home, you’ll get a better price. Even the Planning Commission advised you of the urgency of this project. Abandoning this project now, with no clear end game, would be a disservice to our community.”

# Fairfax City Acknowledges Black History Month

FROM PAGE 3

never fully lived up to the founding ideals of this country that all people are ‘created equal’ and we have often failed to acknowledge

the contributions of those Black Americans whose courage, sacrifices and relentless efforts helped build this country from the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Vir-

ginia in 1619.

“We acknowledge systemic racism has resulted in Black Americans being more likely to die at an earlier age from all causes, with persons of color more greatly impacted by health inequities, disproportionately overrepresented in our prison system and among our homeless populations, causing trauma over multiple generations within the Black community.

“We recognize that all people have inherent value and worth and deserve respect, dignity and basic

human rights that have often been denied to Black Americans through institutionalized racism that persists to this day.

As a consequence, we have not widely celebrated or raised up the many accomplishments of Black Americans in the arts, education, science, government, technology and business, with many important Black leaders remaining hidden figures absent from our history books.

“Our country is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year, and

it’s incumbent on us to remember Black Americans were here from the very first moments of our nation’s founding and contribute in myriad ways to what makes America great.”

Read then formally proclaimed February 2026 as Black History Month in Fairfax City. She also encouraged everyone to “commit to learning the broader, deeper and important history of our country through the lens of Black Americans’ accomplishments and achievements.”

## Black History Month

FROM PAGE 3

the “meaningful proclamation,” and the City for recognizing Black History Month “with such care, honesty and intention.” As a Black woman born and raised in this City, she called the moment “deeply personal” to her.

“Fairfax is part of who I am,” she said. “It’s where I learned how to dream and how to lead. I learned what it means to belong and, at times, what it means to work for that belonging because belonging has been blocked. This year’s theme reminds us that, for 100 years, Black communities and allies have insisted that our stories aren’t optional, supplemental [or] seasonal. They’re essential.

“Black history is American history, Virginia history and Fairfax history. I appreciate that this proclamation not only celebrates, it also tells the truth. It acknowledges both the brilliance and the burden, the contributions and the cost, the progress we’ve made and the work still in front of us.

“It recognizes that systemic racism has created real, measurable inequities in health, housing, policing, opportunity and safety, and that those inequities create trauma stretching across generations. That matters, because truth isn’t divisive, it’s healing. And healing is exactly what Black History Month can be when it’s honored not as a performance, but as a commitment.”

Like Read, Claytor also acknowledged Carter G. Woodson, “whose vision gave this movement its foundation. He understood that history isn’t just about the past, it’s about power [and] who is remembered and seen.” And she said renaming the school in his honor is “especially meaningful because it’s a reminder

that we’re still, even now, correcting what was overlooked.

“As an educator, Fairfax City business owner and arts advocate, I receive this proclamation not only with gratitude, but with responsibility, because education is how we keep the truth alive. Business is how we build generational stability. And the arts are how we preserve memory, express identity and transform pain into purpose. The arts are also where so many of our ‘hidden figures’ have always lived, even when history books left them out.

“So I accept this proclamation on behalf of:

- ❖ Black students who deserve to see themselves reflected in excellence;
- ❖ Black elders whose stories built this City in ways we’re still uncovering;
- ❖ Black families who’ve endured, contributed and thrived; and
- ❖ Black artists, teachers, entrepreneurs and leaders, past and present, who’ve helped shape Fairfax into what it is.”

Claytor also accepted it with “hope that this City will continue to do more than proclaim. Hope that we’ll continue to invest, include and protect. Hope that we’ll continue to learn the broader, deeper history – not just during February – but every month of the year.

“This proclamation reminds us that Black Americans have contributed in countless ways to what makes America what it is. So let this month be more than remembrance. Let it be renewal and a recommitment to telling the truth, honoring the full story and building a Fairfax where every child and every resident can live with dignity, opportunity and pride.”



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
CRAIG	5556	692	ROUTE0692	CRAIG CREEK	1/21/2026
LEE	10967	743N	ROUTE743	CLEAR SPRING BRANCH	1/21/2026
PATRICK	13342	677	WILLIS GAP ROAD 677	EAST FORK JOHNSON CREEK	1/16/2026
FRANKLIN	8012	876	BYRD'S MILL ROAD 876	BRANCH PIGG RIVER	1/12/2026
ROCKBRIDGE	15619	691	RURAL VALLEY ROAD (ROUTE 691)	CEDAR CREEK	1/7/2026
ALLEGHANY	1041	159	DUNLAP CREEK ROAD (ROUTE 159)	TRIB DUNLAP CREEK	1/1/2026
WASHINGTON	18854	19N	PORTERFIELD HIGHWAY	HAYS BRANCH	1/1/2026
SCOTT	16553	23N	US HIGHWAY 23	BRANCH	1/1/2026

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit [vdot.virginia.gov](http://vdot.virginia.gov) and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov) or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

*The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or [corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov).*

# Sweet and Tasty Paradise For Chocolate Aficionados

Fairfax City's annual Chocolate Lovers Festival was Feb. 6-8.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Manning the Hot Chocolate Bar are members of The Woman's Club of Fairfax, (from left) Kathy Weinberg, Laurie Seaton, Diane Tuininga, Martha Peacock and Wendy Scarborough.



Riley Rhoder with a huge, Nutella-stuffed cookie.



From left, Andrew Lee and Daniel Yang enjoying, respectively, a chocolate-covered strawberry and a Nutella cinnamon roll.



Happy to eat a banana and a strawberry dipped in chocolate are the Jaro brothers, Lucky, 6, and Jumpy, 11.

SEE CHOCOLATE LOVERS, PAGE 13  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left, Evelyn Perkins, Mark Lewis and Megan Wilson, of Wilson Candies, selling chocolates, truffles, pretzels and other treats.

Representing Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates are (from left) Charlene O'Brien and daughter Kerry; and John Shank (in back), son Michael and wife Andrea. Kerry and Michael are Cameron's employees.

# Fairfax City's Annual Chocolate Lovers Festival



Kat Tan of Blended Desserts sells gluten-free, sugar-free and dairy-free cakes and cookies.



Enjoying their hot chocolate are Allan Richards and Luren Villarreal. He topped his with toffee, shortbread cookie bits and chocolate syrup; she topped hers with the cookie bits, marshmallows and graham crackers.



Melissa and Brian Reynolds, with sons (from left) Cooper, 5, and Carter, 3, bought a chocolate-chip-cookie cake.



Eating a chocolate-drenched Rice Krispie bar is Ayden Fournier, 3.



Waylon Handoko, 4, is thrilled with his coconut ice cream.



Micah Hogshead, 2-1/2, with a chocolate-heart lollipop.



Izzy Coyle, 8, with her chocolate-dipped strawberry.

# Fairfax City's Annual Chocolate Lovers Festival



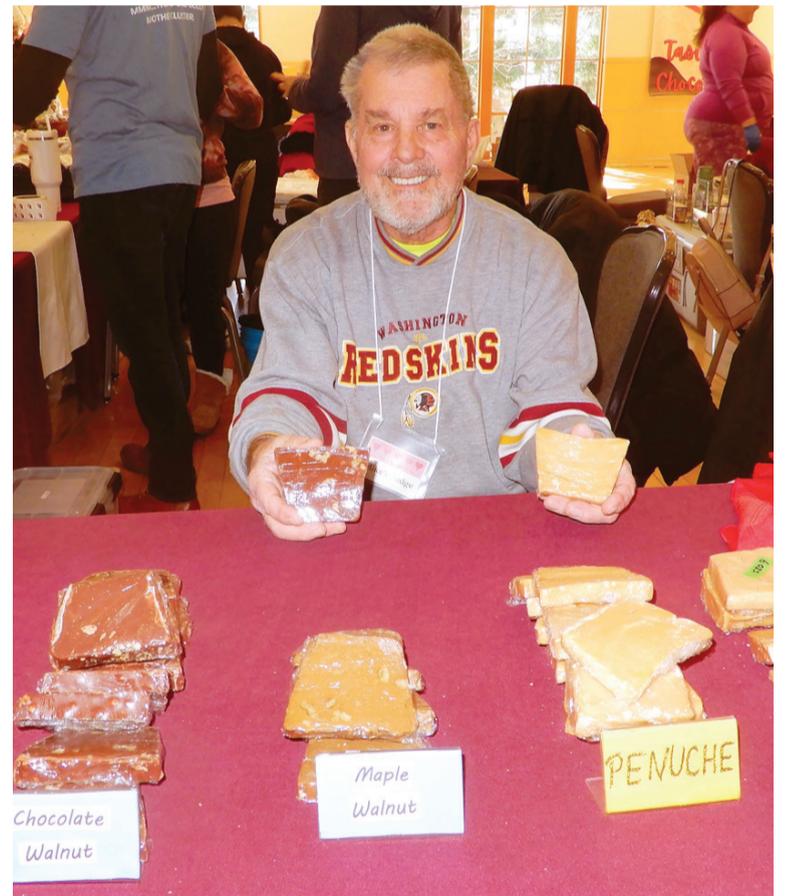
Sharing a cinnamon roll are (from left) Jerry Jones and Kiana Griggs.



Holding a balloon animal, plus hot chocolate adorned with toffee and marshmallows, are (from left) Chrystina Nguyen and Jasmin Benitez with daughter Jade, 14 months.



Vendor Norman Davis of The Sweet Life offers a variety of desserts, including cakes, cookies, chocolates and cheesecakes.



Mike Cherubin of Mike's Fudge offers several flavors of fudge.



Karin Chang of Lovely Macarons serves her cinnamon rolls, including ones made with chocolate and Nutella.



Jeremiah Carter topped his hot chocolate with gingersnaps, M&Ms, candy cane bits and sprinkles.



Brianna Cherry feeds a cinnamon roll to her husband Kyle.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

# Fairfax County Executive's Proposed FY 2027 Budget

No tax increase and school transfer of \$118 million; increase in average tax bill of approximately \$357.43.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill presented his proposed fiscal year 2027 and fiscal year 2028 multiyear budget plan during a regular meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors held Feb. 17. Hill described the plan as one “that reflects stability in uncertain times, disciplined financial management and a clear alignment with our strategic plan.”

## No Change in Real Estate Tax Rate

“This plan invests in our workforce, supports our schools, renews critical infrastructure and protects the county’s long-term fiscal strength, all without increasing the tax rate,” Hill said.

Although the plan keeps the real estate tax rate flat, rising assessments mean the average homeowner’s bill would increase by about \$357, according to Hill. Chairman Jeff McKay (D-At-Large) later reinforced that statement during the meeting. Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield) referenced the same impact but characterized it as a 3.99% increase for the average homeowner and argued the board needs to “work on doing better.”

Hill said real estate makes up nearly 65% of general fund revenues and “residential properties represent nearly 79% of the tax paid.” Hill said overall nonresidential equalization is 0.92% “after two years of declines.” The nonresidential percentage of the total assessment base decreased from 15.58% in fiscal year 2025 to 14.80% in fiscal year 2026, Hill said.

## FCPS Funding

Hill acknowledged the budget does not fully fund Fairfax County Public Schools requested operating transfer. The plan provides about \$94.61 million toward Superintendent Michelle Reid’s \$138.4 million requested increase, leaving an unfunded gap of \$43.79 million. Reid presented a \$4.1 billion “needs-based” budget to the school board on Jan. 22. Hill said responsible budgeting is about balance, noting his plan includes a growth rate of just under 4.5% for both county disbursements and school transfers.

## Reductions and Investments

Hill cited \$32.85 million in targeted reductions, including the elimination of 107 merit positions. However, he noted the budget still “invests in our workforce and schools. It renews our infrastructure and it

ADJUSTMENTS INCLUDED IN FY 2027 GENERAL FUND BUDGET				
(Amounts shown are in millions, net change over FY 2026 Adopted Budget Plan)				
Projected Revenue Increase				
	County	Schools	Unallocated	Total
Projected Revenue Increases	\$132.71	\$118.09	\$25.10	\$275.90
Redirect Tourism Revenue to Contributory Fund	--	--	(\$6.52)	(\$6.52)
Net Impact of Transfers In	\$1.26	--	--	\$1.26
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>\$133.98</b>	<b>\$118.09</b>	<b>\$18.57</b>	<b>\$270.65</b>
FY 2027 Requirements				
	County	Schools	Unallocated	Total
School Operating Support	--	\$94.61	--	\$94.61
County Compensation	\$102.55	--	--	\$102.55
Debt Service	\$7.42	\$11.40	--	\$18.81
Capital Renewal/Maintenance	\$12.51	\$7.50	--	\$20.01
Contracts/Inflationary	\$17.08	--	--	\$17.08
Information Technology	\$11.93	--	--	\$11.93
Parks	\$3.03	--	--	\$3.03
Programs Transferred to FCPS	(\$4.59)	\$4.59	--	\$0.00
Other Adjustments	\$16.89	--	--	\$16.89
Reductions	(\$32.85)	--	--	(\$32.85)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$133.98</b>	<b>\$118.09</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$252.07</b>
Reserve for UASI	--	--	\$1.93	\$1.93
Reserve for Tourism moved to Contributory Fund	--	--	(\$6.52)	(\$6.52)
<b>Total Uses</b>	<b>\$133.98</b>	<b>\$118.09</b>	<b>(\$4.59)</b>	<b>\$247.48</b>
<b>Available Balance for Board Consideration</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>\$23.17</b>	<b>\$23.17</b>

## FY 2027 Budget Summary

- Net County resources are projected to increase by \$270.65 million
- Allocation of resources include:
  - \$133.98 million for County priorities
  - \$118.09 million for Schools
  - \$1.93 million in reserve for UASI
  - (\$6.52) million Reserve for Tourism Promotion transferred to Contributory Fund
  - \$23.17 million balance for Board Consideration
- Schools transfers are 51.2% of General Fund Disbursements in FY 2027
- County’s reserves remain budgeted at target of 10% of General Fund disbursements



SCREENSHOT/ SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 16

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill presents a slide detailing the fiscal year 2027 General Fund budget adjustments during a meeting on Feb. 17. The \$5.93 billion advertised plan proposes \$94.61 million in new operating support for Fairfax County Public Schools and maintains a \$23.17 million balance for board consideration.



Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill

positions Fairfax County for continued stability and long-term success.” After all expenditures, the plan leaves a \$23.17 million balance available for the board’s consideration, according to Hill’s presentation.

The budget focuses on compensation, including a 2% cost-of-living adjustment for all county employees required under collective bargaining agreements. It also funds increases in performance and longevity for nonrepresented employees. Hill proposed raising the county living wage to \$18.50 per hour in fiscal year 2027, the first step toward reaching \$20 by fiscal year 2029. Benefit costs will rise by about \$15.6 million, driven by health insurance premiums.

Hill said that capital renewal and IT modernization were two areas where they have been “playing catch-up” for years. His plan adds \$7.5 million for county facilities and \$7.5 million for schools to address aging buildings. It also allocates \$3 million for public safety radio infrastructure and \$12 million for IT modernization. The funding is intended to shift the county from “reactive fixes to proactive planning,” Hill said.

## Challenges

Hill acknowledged that fiscal year 2028 posed challenges due to uncertainty at the state and federal levels. He said the budget assumes certain funding levels from Richmond and Metro, which the board will revisit in the April add-on package once the General Assembly finishes. The broader context includes federal cuts and shifts in government contracting that make the board

cautious about new programs.

## Supervisor Reactions

McKay called Hill’s proposal “a breath of fresh air in many ways,” praising its focus on “funding and supporting our county employees and their compensation” and delivering “a sizable transfer [to] Fairfax County Public Schools” while keeping the tax rate flat.

Supervisor Andres Jimenez (D-Mason) said the plan makes clear the county is “prioritizing our schools again.”

Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) addressed “the big elephant in the room” in

relation to unfunded priorities like affordable housing. Palchik noted that housing is an unfunded priority and said she wanted a formal budget question about the cost of moving from 1.25 to 1.5 cents on the housing penny. Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) said that as he looks at this budget, he will focus on “our most vulnerable and folks that rely most on these services.”

## Next Steps

Hill said residents can weigh in at district budget town halls and at formal public hearings on the budget set for April 14-16 before the Board of Supervisors, ahead of final adoption of the FY 2027 budget on May 5.

## General Fund Budget Highlights

- Revenue projections based on R Estate Tax rate of \$1.1225 per \$100 assessed value, no change from FY 2026. Results in an increase in the average tax bill of approximately \$357.43 due to rising assessments. (Each penny change in the tax rate equals \$82.99 on a taxpayer’s bill)

- Projected value of \$0.01 on the Real Estate Tax rate is \$35.15 million)

- Includes the full-year impact of the Food and Beverage Tax
- Funds an increase of \$118.09 million, or 4.0%, in transfers to Schools

- Funds compensation increases for all employees, including a 2.00% cost of living adjustment and performance/merit/longevity increases

- Fully funds all three collective bargaining agreements

- Provides for other limited, targeted investments to address various needs across the County, including the impacts of inflation, costs associated with maintenance and new facilities, and support for information technology

infrastructure

- Includes reductions of \$32.85 million and 107 positions

- Leaves balance of \$23.17 million for Board’s consideration

## 2027 Budget Timeline

Feb. 24: Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2027 budget and tax rate

Feb. 26: School Board adopts FY 2027 (proposed) Budget Plan

March 17: Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2027 tax rate

April 14: School Board Presents FCPS Budget to Board of Supervisors

April 14-16: Board of Supervisors holds public hearings on FY 2027 Budget

April 28: Board of Supervisors marks-up FY 2027 Budget

May 5: Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2027 Budget

May 21: School Board adopts FY 2027 Approved Budget

July 1: FY 2027 Budget Year begins

# ENTERTAINMENT

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Honor Black history through meaningful pro-



As part of Black History Month, be sure to catch "The Evolution of Jazz" by award-winning performer Alison Crockett at Sherwood Regional and Centreville Regional Libraries, Saturday, Feb. 21.

grams 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.

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Walk in the Woods on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 at E.C. Lawrence Park in Chantilly.

by checking out a book from these lists, put together by the Library's Collection Marketing team:

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**Accepting Applications  
through April 12, 2026**

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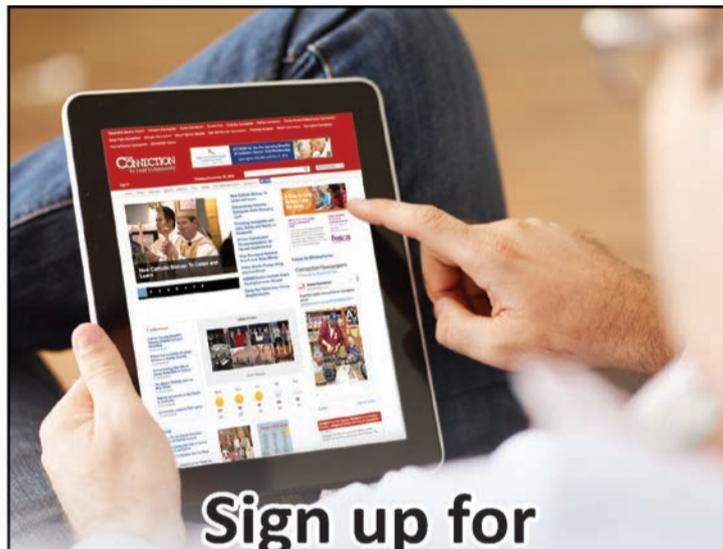
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# ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

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Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble — Saturday, Feb. 28. Internationally renowned, the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble brings more than 50 years of African American tradition and modern dance legacy to the stage. Blending the iconic with the innovative, the company delivers performances marked by power, passion and extraordinary beauty. Through movement that uplifts the spirit and resonates deeply, the ensemble offers an experience that is both artistically stunning and emotionally transformative.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

**Monthly Model Trains Showcase. 1-4 p.m.** At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Rd, Fairfax Station. Visit the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum for its Monthly Model Trains Showcase, a delightful gathering for model train enthusiasts and families alike! 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 model trains. The March model train show is Sunday, March 15, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. 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. Seniors (65+), \$5. [www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org](http://www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org). 703-425-9225. [www.facebook.com/ffxsr](https://www.facebook.com/ffxsr).

## FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

**Hands On Days at Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. 1-4 p.m.** At 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. The next Hands On Day is scheduled for Sunday, March 1, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. The museum is hosting this community event with our Station Master Volunteer, Mario. Join community Model Train Enthusiasts who will set up their trains and share their love of Model Railroading. Come and see local train enthusiasts, many allow you to 'drive' their trains. This is not a 'club' event but rather local families coming together to share their love of Model Trains. 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. Seniors (65+), \$5. [www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org](http://www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org). 703-425-9225. [www.facebook.com/ffxsr](https://www.facebook.com/ffxsr).

## 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 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. 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

## Heads Up Or Else



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As a Bostonian, born, bred and buttered, when snow (or even Washington, DC's version: "wintry mix") is in the forecast or on the ground it doesn't cause my spine to get chilly. But once my car is warmed up and the heated steering wheel is warming up, driving locally becomes as much about awareness, expecting the unexpected, keeping your hands at 10 and 2 and minimizing the use of your cell phone, whether in-hand or hands-free. As for the radio/entertainment center, the radio seems less problematic now as many automobiles feature its controls on the steering wheel. As such, there's not the distraction/loss of focus as when the controls were located solely on the dashboard. Driving in Washington, DC under these wintry conditions then becomes more about survival than it does about getting where you're going. As many Virginia roadside signs used to advise: "Arrive Alive."

And between the municipalities, the car manufacturers, and AAA, among many other car-driving advisory groups, safety of driver, passengers and vehicle has become an ever-evolving business. However, while driving during our most recent storm (snow on the ground for three weeks and counting) I was unexpectedly impacted by a safety feature of my German-engineered car: the "Lane Departure Warning" system. Located/illuminated on the dashboard, under the steering wheel, it's warning words are clear to see. What's not as clear is what to do when the system seizes control of your steering wheel. When it happens, it seems like "The Outer Limits" television show (1963-'65) - and its introductory warning/voice over during the credits, is coming back to scare you. And what the "Lane Departure Warning" system does is take control of the steering wheel to gently-ish get the car you're driving back in its lane without really considering the other variables on the road. I wouldn't characterize it as a design flaw as much as it's a reality check. (By the way, this course correction occurs whether there's snow on the ground or not.) In effect, it's protecting you from yourself. Snow on the ground however complicates the system. The scenario to which I refer is the one which often occurs when snow falls/accumulates faster than the "snowplowers" are able to pile it safely away. As a result, roads sometimes go nowhere, and/or end prematurely - and for this there is no warning. You just have to pay attention.

For perfectly understandable reasons, the late January, "snowcrete," as we've come to title it, caused many familiar problems. Many neighborhoods were left to fend for themselves. However, the snow-related problems also included many "main"/numbered roads as well which resulted in a nightmare scenario: snow accumulation being plowed into driving lanes leading to incomplete lane clearance which caused havoc with the lane-sensitive warning systems.

What I'm referring to/have experienced is when the road you're traveling on becomes no more and you have to swerve into the adjacent lane where the drivers already in that lane are not as aware of your car's predicament as you are. In the midst of this observational dilemma comes the problem I mentioned earlier: you have less control of your own car as the "Lane Departure Warning" system has taken hold of your steering wheel. And it's forcing your car back into your original the lane, the one from which you're trying to escape, like it or not. And even though you may not like it, you can't really stay right as you'll drive directly into a snowbank. If you move left, against the warning system's grain - so to speak, you'll potentially cause an accident which will likely take months/year's maybe to adjudicate. As my late father would say: You "have a confliction." Either you'll slam your car into the snowbank blocking your lane or you'll have to "lane" left without having proper time to look/prepare - each choice made with the warning system working against your predicament. Hardly what the manufacturers intended. Presumably, the system was designed/ to avoid accidents, not create them.

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

# Moving Process Underway

FROM PAGE 4

County Planning Commission. "Commission members voted without opposition on Feb. 4 to approve the plan by Franconia Development Partners, a consortium of several housing groups seeking to redevelop the 3.3 acres of leased county land at 6121 Franconia Road with a four-story apartment building," reports Good Shepherd Housing.

The proposal advances to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, which was scheduled to hold a public hearing on the rezoning proposal and conceptual development plan at 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 17.

The complex is planned to serve individuals and families earning up to 60% of area median income. Qualifying tenants might live in one of the 49 one-bedroom, 45 two-bedroom and 26 three-bedroom units for rents estimated at between \$1,679 and



SCREENSHOT VIA THE LUSK REPORT, FEB. 13

The new Franconia Governmental Center is located at 7130 Silver Lake Blvd. in the Alexandria section of Fairfax County.

\$2,341 per month. The site will include 156 remain open space, including publicly accessible parking spaces. About 40% of the parcel will

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Schoolchildren Say Man Was Following Them

City of Fairfax police are investigating a suspicious incident last week that involved a group of children and an unknown man. According to police, the children reported Thursday, Feb. 5, that they saw a man following them as they walked home from their school, Daniels Run Elementary.

They said they first saw him in Van Dyck Park and later in their neighborhood. The children described the man as wearing black winter gear. Anyone with any information about this incident is asked to call the City of Fairfax Police Department at 703-385-7924.

### Northern Virginia Housing Expo at Fairfax High

The 2026 Northern Virginia Housing Expo will hold a free public event at Fairfax High for home renters and first-time buyers. Set for Saturday, March 7, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., it marks the first time this 16th annual event will be held in Fairfax City. Providing comprehensive housing education, it'll enable attendees to speak directly with housing experts, go to informational workshops and receive one-on-one, personalized financial coaching

from trained, certified volunteer coaches.

This event also offers extensive, year-round, online resources. Go to [NoVaHousingExpo.org](http://NoVaHousingExpo.org) for recorded webinars, and/or sign up for free, virtual, financial coaching by experts from Fairfax-based, nonprofit Britepaths at [britepaths.org](http://britepaths.org). Fairfax High is at 3501 Lion Run in Fairfax.

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2025 COMPANY-WIDE RECOGNITION



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**5918 Oakland Park**  
**Burke, VA**  
**\$1,210,000**



**10809 Belmont Boulevard**  
**Lorton, VA**  
**\$1,000,000**



**10724 Bear Oak Court**  
**Burke, VA**  
**\$879,000**



**10215 Commonwealth Blvd.**  
**Fairfax, VA**  
**\$1,250,000**



**2791 Centerboro Dr. #76**  
**Vienna, VA**  
**\$465,000**



**8378 Old Vicarage Street**  
**Lorton, VA**  
**\$735,000**



**9810 Portside Drive**  
**Burke, VA**  
**\$1,385,000**



**6156 Glen Eagles Court #28**  
**Falls Church, VA**  
**\$575,000**



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