

THE CONNECTION

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Christmas in July at First Baptist Church of Vienna

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Only three voters cast ballots between 6 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Election officers such as Dennis Drum staff Precinct 320 (Herndon No. 2) inside the Herndon Community Center during the primary election in Herndon on Tuesday, Aug. 4. Many incumbents ran unopposed.

Calendar Overhaul, Screen-Time Limits, New Boundaries

FCPS reshapes the upcoming school year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

When students return to Fairfax County Public Schools classrooms on Aug. 24, daily life will look markedly different, from fewer days off and physical math textbooks to strict screen-time limits and new bus-tracking smart cards.

Before heading into its annual late-summer recess, the Fairfax County School Board finalized a series of major decisions. The sweeping policy updates span restructured calendar, technology guardrails, attendance boundary, a brand-new high school, and a push for regional funding — actions that collectively reshape daily routines for more than 180,000 students across the division.

Calendar Reset Restores 28 Full School Weeks

Under the 2026-27 academic schedule approved in an 8-4 vote in April, total days off across the 38-week school year will drop from a record 40 days down to 33.

The reset restores 28 full, five-day school weeks — nearly double the 15 full weeks offered during the 2025-26 school year. Elementary early-release days are capped at eight per year (down from 12), and Veterans Day returns as a standard instructional day.

The decision addresses widespread complaints that a fragmented schedule created severe childcare burdens for working families. Official directives instruct the superintendent to maintain Veterans Day instruction in future years alongside a dedicated “Veterans Day observance curriculum.”

New Tech Directives, Physical Math Books, Bus IDs

Formally adopted July 16 following parent pushback over screen time and generative artificial intelligence, the board passed a package of seven technology directives.

Jennifer Cheng is a leader in



SCREEN CAPTURE FCPS

The Fairfax County School Board approved seven motions related to AI, among them that across all grade levels, laptops and tablets must be stored away when not in active instructional use.

FCPS Parents for Intentional Tech, a parent and community group advocating for more intentional use of educational technology. She told The Connection the group formed “in response to ... ChatGPT being offered to the teachers in the classroom” and “very little community engagement from the district about how they were ... integrating artificial intelligence.”

Starting this fall, FCPS-issued laptops and tablets are prohibited for pre-K and kindergarten students, excluding individuals with IEP or 504 accommodations. For the remaining elementary grades, staff must establish an opt-out process by August so parents can decline take-home devices. Across all grades, devices must be stored

The board also ordered a divisionwide generative AI inventory, launched whitelist firewall pilots, initiated a review of YouTube access, and expanded digital wellness instruction.

“I support this resolution because it sends a clear, powerful message to our community,” said Springfield District Board Member Sandy Anderson. “By passing it, we show a unified, consensus voice that this board is taking the future of technology in our schools with the utmost seriousness.”

To bolster student safety, FCPS is introducing mandatory RFID-enabled student identification cards for all school bus riders beginning Aug. 24. Students will tap their card upon boarding and exiting



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Students across Fairfax County Public Schools’ 223 campuses return Aug. 24 under an updated calendar that reduces total days off from 40 to 33, restoring 28 full school weeks. The first full day of school is Aug. 24, with the last day of regular classes June 16.

imously finalized attendance boundaries, phased enrollment, and a transportation plan for the new Skyview High School in Herndon. The decision adjusts feeder patterns across five western pyramids, impacting 2,544 students (420 middle schoolers and 2,124 high schoolers).

As the division’s first new high school in two decades, Skyview will relieve severe regional overcrowding. Capacity data showed surrounding facilities, including Chantilly High School, operating at 110% to 112% capacity prior to the plan’s approval.

Funding Debates and Infrastructure Backlogs

On July 9, the board unanimously requested that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors evaluate placing a 1% local option sales tax referendum on an upcoming ballot.

School Board Member Mateo Dunne cited an estimated \$400 million deferred maintenance backlog growing by up to 10% annually, warning it could soon reach \$1 billion if unaddressed. Dunne emphasized that delaying infrastructure repairs increases costs long-term as construction prices rise and renovation cycles stretch out.

However, Board of Supervisors members Walter Alcorn and Jimmy Bierman noted in regional discussions that any local tax initiative requires significant coordination across Northern Virginia. Signaling that they will not place the referendum on the November 2026 ballot, supervisor members cited past failed referendums and a lack of regional momentum.

While funding debates carry into future budget cycles, the immediate impacts of the school board’s summer votes will take effect the moment buses roll out and classroom doors open this August.

For additional context on how the new boundary shifts work in western Fairfax County, check out the video guide FCPS Skyview Boundary Map Timeline Explained.



SCREEN CAPTURE FCPS

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, every FCPS student will receive a student identification (ID) card as part of a division-wide effort to modernize school transportation, improve communication with families, and strengthen student safety while traveling to and from school.

away when not in active instructional use.

Alongside screen-time limits, FCPS officially approved the adoption of physical, print mathematics textbooks for grades six through 12. The move marks a deliberate shift away from purely digital instruction, ensuring students have tactile learning materials during core classes.

the bus, giving the FCPS Office of Transportation real-time passenger counts.

Later this fall, the division will launch a mobile app offering parents live GPS location tracking and boarding notifications.

Skyview High School Boundaries Finalized

On July 16, the board unan-

Federal Election Monitors Draw Senate Backlash in Virginia Primary, Aug 4.

A look inside one quiet Fairfax County precinct.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County and Prince William County are the two jurisdictions in Virginia designated for federal election monitors during the Aug. 4 dual Democratic and Republican congressional primary elections.

A sample ballot displayed at Precinct 320 (Herndon No. 2) in Fairfax County shows candidates competing in the Republican primary for the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, Aug. 4. The Senate primary is the only race on the local ballot because both the Democratic and Republican primaries for Virginia's 11th Congressional District were canceled after incumbent Democratic Rep. James Walkinshaw and Republican challenger Arthur Purves ran uncontested for their respective party nominations.

The deployment of federal election monitors is part of an ongoing 15-jurisdiction primary-season initiative that spans multiple election days throughout July, August and September across six states under the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to observe local voting procedures. It is a program critics and some lawmakers point out focuses almost exclusively on Democratic-leaning localities, representing 65% to 75% of all monitored sites.

The monitoring effort arrives amid heightened scrutiny from federal lawmakers. On Aug. 3, 10 Democratic U.S. senators representing six states — including Virginia Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, alongside colleagues Alex Padilla (Calif.), Richard J. Durbin (Ill.), Jeanne Shaheen (N.H.), Margaret Wood Hassan (N.H.), Amy Klobuchar (Minn.), Tina Smith (Minn.), Elissa Slotkin (Mich.), and Gary C. Peters (Mich.) — sent a formal letter to Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon urging the Department to ensure monitors operate within strict legal boundaries.

According to Scott Fujita, the chief election official at Precinct 320 (Herndon No. 2) located at the Herndon Community Center, if federal election monitors arrive,



Only three voters cast ballots between 6 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Election officers such as Dennis Drum staff Precinct 320 (Herndon No. 2) inside the Herndon Community Center during the primary election in Herndon on Tuesday, Aug. 4.

he was told that they must present a “formal letter of introduction,” be strictly nonpolitical, and be treated like standard poll watchers bound by the same precinct rules.

Ninety minutes after the polls opened, Fujita said no federal election monitors had arrived, and a total of three voters had cast their ballots that morning.

“In this case, they’re not representing a party,” Fujita noted, comparing federal observers to traditional poll watchers. Standard poll watchers are almost always affiliated with a specific political party or candidate, sent by local Democratic or Republican committees or by specific primary candidates. They carry a formal letter signed by their party chairman or candidate authorizing them to sit inside the precinct.

“Federal election monitors have been present at election sites on Election Day for decades and play a critical role in assessing if state and local elections are administered in compliance with federal



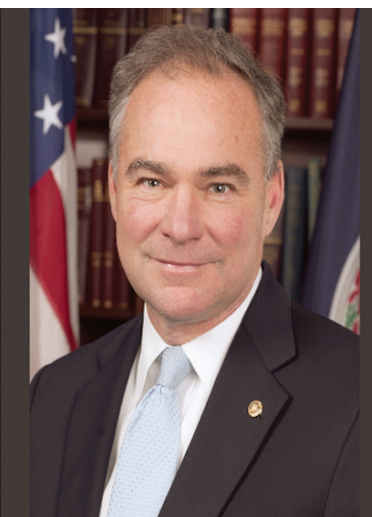
Virginia Senators Mark Warner (left) and Tim Kaine.

civil and voting rights laws, including the laws that guarantee equal access to the polls, language assistance, and disability accommodations,” the senators wrote in their letter to Blanche and Dhillon.

The senators emphasized that American elections have consis-



A directional sign outside Precinct 320 (Herndon No. 2) at the Herndon Community Center points toward the polling entrance in Herndon on Tuesday, Aug. 4. No campaign workers or tents were set up outside the precinct during the primary election.



OFFICIAL SENATE PORTRAITS

tently proven secure under leaders of both major parties. But they cautioned that the observer program “must not be used to undermine that fact,” writing that monitors “must carry out their responsibilities in a manner that respects and upholds voters’ rights,

complies with the applicable legal requirements, and does not interfere with state and local election officials’ administration of the voting process.”

The senators requested a “staff briefing and responses” to 12 questions. Key questions focused on the program’s legal authority and objectives, the criteria used to select jurisdictions for monitoring alongside related internal documentation, and procedures for recruiting, vetting, training, and supervising monitors. Additional inquiries targeted qualifications and eligibility requirements, specifically whether political appointees are permitted to serve, as well as safeguards to prevent voter intimidation, interference, or partisan activity. Finally, the senators sought documentation of any policy or training changes implemented since Jan. 20, 2025, and established procedures for documenting observations and investigating complaints regarding monitor conduct.

From Vacant Office Space to Housing

Local Municipalities and Fairfax County Advance Land Use Adaptation.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Town of Herndon: Located across from Worldgate Centre, this six-story 1980s office structure which previously totaled more than 350,000 square feet was torn down in Nov. 2025. Boston Properties and NVHomes' mixed-use redevelopment project is replacing the vacant commercial site with a 461-unit residential community featuring a five-story apartment building, townhomes, and stacked condo units.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Replacing vacant commercial parcels with housing and mixed-use developments is trending across Fairfax County as a prime redevelopment strategy. As post-pandemic office vacancy rates skyrocketed past 16% to 20% countywide — climbing even higher in non-transit submarkets like Fairfax Center-Oakton (22.2%) and Vienna (23.5%) — a development pattern replacing low-demand commercial space with housing is rapidly emerging, particularly near Silver Line hubs.

Reston Town Center East

In the latest move, Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn invited residents to an open house regarding the 119-acre Reston East Planning Study to consider amending the Comprehensive Plan for residential development north of Sunrise Valley Drive, between Upper Lake Drive and Hunter Mill Road.

This study looks at potential changes and community needs throughout this industrial-zoned

corridor after several landowners nominated their properties to be redeveloped with new housing," said Alcorn, who initiated the effort in April.

The event allowed community members to speak with planning staff and Alcorn about the study's five associated Site-Specific Plan Amendments. On Preston White Drive, a 9.1-acre site would replace 1980s offices with housing at up to 30 units per acre or a 1.2 floor area ratio.

Along Alexander Bell Drive, a 7.5-acre proposal replaces two four-story offices with up to 132 units (86 townhouses and 46 stacked townhouses) at 18 units per acre. Meanwhile, three Parkridge Boulevard sites — 7.6 acres at 10690 Parkridge Boulevard, 8.1 acres at 10800 Parkridge Boulevard, and 7.2 acres at 10701 Parkridge Boulevard (up to 1.35 FAR) — propose adaptive reuse or residential replacement for townhomes, apartments, or senior housing.

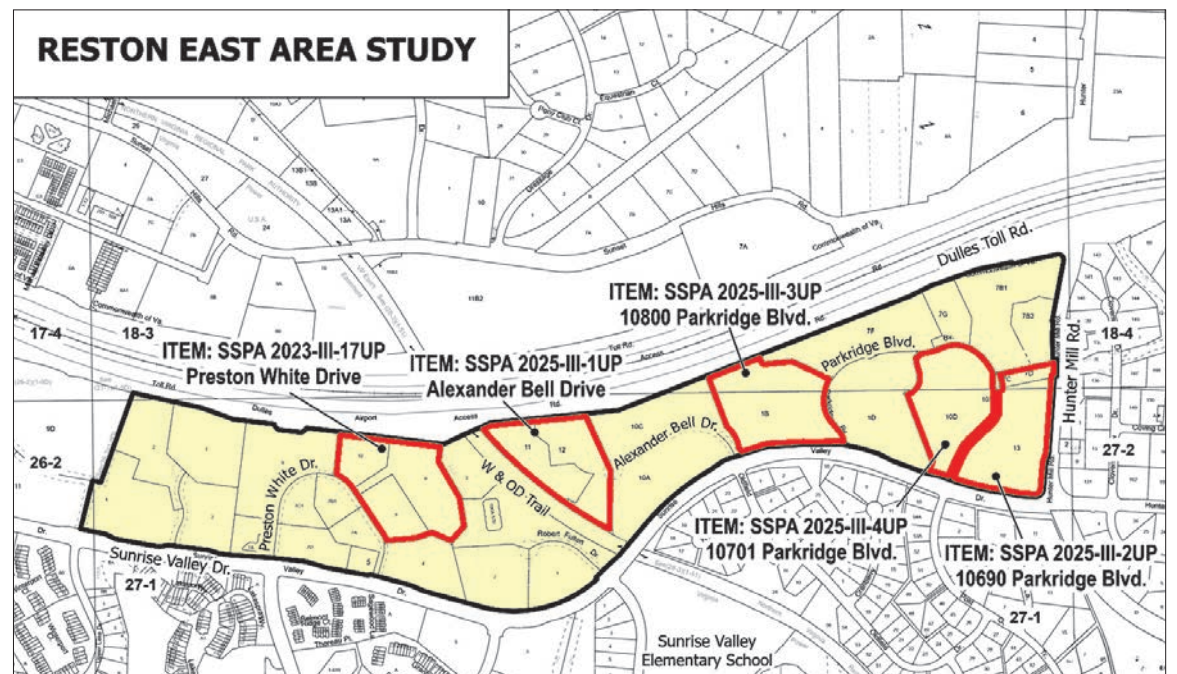
Town of Herndon

Town of Herndon officials are leaning into large-scale redevelop-



IMAGE COURTESY OF VIENNA MARKET / NVHOMES

Vienna Market: Located at 245 Maple Ave. W., the project consists of 44 condominium townhomes and 8,200 square feet of ground-floor retail space.



COURTESY PHOTO / FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Reston East Study: Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn hosted a community open house July 27 at Langston Hughes Middle School to gather public feedback on the Reston East Planning Study, which explores adding residential uses to 119 acres of commercial and industrial land.

ments near Metro. Along Herndon Parkway, developers are replacing aging commercial inventory with high-density housing, led by The Nell at 555 Herndon Parkway — a 400-unit Fairfield Residential community adjacent to the Herndon Metro.

Site preparation is also underway for Bristol Capital and Woodfield Development's seven-story, 525-unit mixed-use project at 575 Herndon Parkway; Boston Properties' development replacing two vacant office buildings at 13100 and 13150 Worldgate Drive; and Rooney Properties' redevelopment of Van Buren Office Park at 250 Exchange Place into 400 apartments and 62 townhomes.

"In Herndon, we've recognized that some aging office properties no longer reflect today's market and we are largely built out as a town," said Mayor Keven LeBlanc. "Thoughtful redevelopment or property conversion in the right locations, particularly around the Metrorail station, allows us to create housing where infrastructure already exists, support local businesses, and preserve the character of established neighborhoods by directing growth where it makes the most sense."

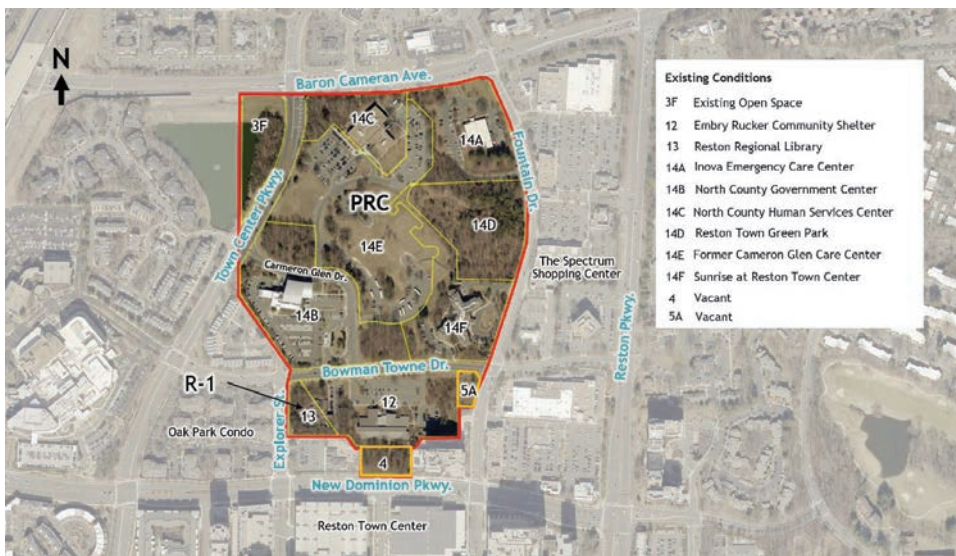
Town of Vienna

The town is selectively approving smaller redevelopments fitting its low-density character, favoring

boutique multifamily and mixed-use structures along Maple Avenue that preserve street-level storefronts. Projects like Vienna Market at 245 Maple Ave. W. (44 condo townhomes over retail), 444 Maple Ave. W. (a four-story, 151-unit building), and 380 Maple Ave. W. (82 apartments replacing an auto shop) illustrate how smaller municipalities balance growth with neighborhood preservation.

Whether through regional plan amendments or municipal rezonings, redeveloping underperforming office properties into residential communities is becoming the primary formula for reimagining commercial corridors across Fairfax County.

NEWS



SCREEN CAPTURE VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

A proposed block layout map shows the 47-acre Reston Town Center North redevelopment plan.

Fairfax Planning Commission Backs Reston Town Center North Approval

Sept. 15 Board of Supervisors vote could pave way for new library and shelter.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

After 15 years of planning, a major effort to rebuild Reston Town Center North is moving to its final approval hurdle following a unanimous 11-0 recommendation by the Fairfax County Planning Commission on July 22. Led jointly by Fairfax County and Inova Health System, the

project covers 47.9 acres across 11 blocks, transforming aging civic buildings and irregular parcels into a transit-oriented core.

The Board of Supervisors will hold its public hearing and final vote on Sept. 15.

"The rezoning coming to the Board includes the future road network and a central green," said Hunter Mill District Supervisor

SEE FAIRFAX PLANNING, PAGE 6



SCREEN CAPTURE VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

The plan for Reston Town Center North as of July 22.

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REMEMBRANCE

Janet Howell (1944–2026)

Former Virginia state senator blazed trails changing the state.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Former Virginia state Sen. Janet Howell, D-Reston, who served from 1992 to 2024, died Aug. 2 at age 82. Tributes poured in Monday morning from leaders across the state.

Gov. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va., called Howell a “fierce advocate for strengthening Virginia’s schools” who “set a powerful example for so many of the women who have followed her in Virginia politics.”

U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., noted that for more than three decades, she championed public education, mental health, women’s rights and so much more.

Senate President Pro Tempore L. Lou-ise Lucas, D-Portsmouth, honored Howell, commending her trailblazing work which “touched the lives of countless Virginia families, and our Commonwealth is stronger because of it.”

As Virginia Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell posted in part Sunday afternoon, Howell “served Northern Virginia with fierce determination, sharp intellect, and unwavering integrity. ... She paved the way for generations of women leaders while leaving an indelible mark on our Commonwealth’s budget, mental health system, and public schools.”

Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-Fairfax, described

Howell as a “model, a mentor, [and] a leader,” adding “I send love, peace and comfort to her husband Hunt and to all who knew & admired her.”

During her 32 years in the Virginia Senate, one of Howell’s most influential legislative legacies was spearheading the overhaul of state mental health laws following the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting. Her landmark reforms overhauled the state’s involuntary commitment process, improved emergency evaluations and expanded funding for local community services boards.

Howell also led a legislative overhaul of Virginia’s family violence statutes, strengthening protective order enforcement and toughening penalties for sexual predators. She carried key safety legislation, such as Senate Bill 479, requiring individuals subject to final protective orders for domestic violence to surrender or transfer their firearms.

As a senior member of the Privileges and Elections Committee, Howell helped spearhead voting expansion bills, including establishing no-excuse absentee voting in 2020. She also made history as the first woman to chair the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. Additionally, Howell authored legislation shielding genetic data privacy, prohibiting insurers and employers from discriminating based on genetic testing.

Howell lived in Reston for decades and was deeply involved in local civic organizations, serving as president of the Reston Community Association and receiving the “Restonian of the Year” award in 1984. She retired at the end of her term in early 2024. Jennifer Boysko won the newly created 38th Senate District — including Herndon, Reston and McLean — succeeding Howell.



PHOTO BY BILL MORRIS

Janet Howell poses for a photo in 2019. Elected to the Senate of Virginia in 1991, she represented the 32nd district in Fairfax County and portions of Arlington County until 2024. She died on August 2, 2026.

Howell also co-authored, with her daughter-in-law, Theresa Howell, a children’s book, “Leading the Way: Women in Power” in 2019.

Howell received a B.A. degree from Oberlin College and an M.A. degree from the University of Pennsylvania; she taught as a public school teacher in the Philadelphia school district in her early career (1968-1969) and served as a legislative assistant in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1989-1991. She also served as chair of the Virginia State



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Janet Howell of Reston, State Senator for District 32, holds the book, ‘Leading the Way: Women in Power,’ which she co-authored with her daughter-in-law in 2019. Howell died Aug. 2, 2026.

Board of Social Services (1986-1991).

Howell is survived by her husband, Alfred Hunt Howell (married in 1966), two adult sons, Eric Howell and Brian Howell, and three grandchildren. Funeral arrangements have not yet been announced.

Fairfax Planning Commission Backs Reston Town Center North Approval

FROM PAGE 5

Walter Alcorn after the vote. He noted it serves as a “necessary precursor” for future site-specific rezonings for a new Reston Regional Library, a replacement Embury Rucker homeless shelter, and other critical county facilities.

If approved, land swaps will allow Phase 1 site preparation to begin in late 2026. Construction will prioritize anchor public facilities — the new library, relocated shelter, and an initial 3.5-acre Central Green park — targeted for completion between 2029 and 2030. Inova will build the Central Green to an interim condition during this first phase.

“The urgency that is on everybody to de-



SCREEN CAPTURE VIA
FAIRFAX COUNTY

Timothy S. Sampson, authorized agent and legal representative for the joint application, speaks during the Fairfax County Planning Commission meeting on July 22.



SCREEN CAPTURE VIA
FAIRFAX COUNTY

Hunter Mill Planning Commissioner John A. Carter reflects on the project’s evolution from a strip shopping center during the Fairfax County Planning Commission meeting on July 22.

liver that library and that shelter is acute,” Timothy Sampson, legal representative for the joint application, told commissioners during the meeting. “With the plan that is proposed now, we have a framework for going into site plan and public improvement plan, which the county intends to do this fall.”

Franconia District Commissioner Mary Cortina praised the extensive public outreach, noting the plan “has been thoroughly vetted with the community” and thanking stakeholders for their effort.

Beyond the initial public facilities, later phases call for Inova to build up to 1,000 residential units across three blocks along

What is Proposed now vs. What will come later

CURRENT APPLICATION

Currently Seeking Approval

- Block Layout
- Uses
- Maximum development program
- Grid of streets
- Central Green concept
- Streetscape Framework
- “Guardrails” for later applications

LATER APPLICATIONS

Will come back seeing Approval for

- Block site layouts
- Individual buildings/garages
- Final architecture
- Entrance / loading locations
- Landscaping within Blocks
- Potential additional publicly accessible open space, parks, and tree preservation within blocks
- SWM details for Block development

Later Review Processes

- PRC Plan for each Block
- RA DRB
- Site Plans / Public Improvement Plans

SCREEN CAPTURE VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

A breakdown outlines what is proposed under the current rezoning application versus future phases.

Fountain Drive, aligned with the updated Comprehensive Plan. These phases also accommodate up to 150,000 square feet of commercial space, a replacement human services building, an expanded Central Green, and sites reserved for an elementary school and recreation center.

Hunter Mill District Commissioner John Carter noted that while the project replaces a former strip shopping center with a modern civic hub, full buildout will span decades.

“At the last CIP they delayed it a year, so now instead of 2049, it’s 2050,” Carter said.

Clemyjontri Park Co-Namesake Returns to Family Legacy



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARTIS SENIOR LIVING

Caroline Simon, co-namesake of Clemyjontri Park and resident at Artis of Potomac, returns on July 29 to the land donated by her family to Fairfax County Park Authority.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A quarter century after her mother donated land for Virginia's first fully accessible playground, park co-namesake Caroline Simon returned for a July 29 picnic.

Simon, 80, visited the 18-acre

park alongside fellow residents from Artis Senior Living of Potomac.

"Dementia may steal memories, but it can never erase a life well lived," said John-Allen Yutzy, director at Artis. "Watching her smile as she remembered the park her family gave to the community reminded me why I do this."

In 2000, Simon's late mother, Adele Lebowitz, donated the estate to the Fairfax County Park Authority to build an inclusive space for children of all physical, sensory and developmental abilities. Appropriately, the park's name blends the names of the four Lebowitz children: Caroline (Cl), Emily (emy), Jonathan (jon), and Petrina



Caroline Simon, right, shares a smile with a friend at Clemyjontri Park in McLean.

(tri).

Located at 6317 Georgetown Pike in McLean, Clemyjontri Park features a 2-acre all-abilities playground, carousel, trackless train and picnic spaces. Voted a 2025 runner-up on USA Today's "10 Best Public Playgrounds" list, the free

park is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

For Simon, the visit fulfilled the legacy commended in 2013 by Virginia House Joint Resolution 766 for "supporting and bringing together all members of the community."

New AI Platform Helps Job Seekers Screen Employers

Thomas Jefferson High senior launches Raaha to help candidates with some disabilities find the right fit.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Inspired by her mother's experience navigating the workforce with hearing loss, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology senior Navya Tuteja launched Raaha in June.

The free, AI-powered platform helps job candidates, particularly those with invisible or sensory disabilities, find supportive workplaces by evaluating job descriptions against individual accessibility needs to generate a fit score, custom reports, and interview questions.

"We've spent years building

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technology that helps employers screen candidates. I wanted to build something that helps candidates screen employers," Tuteja told The Connection.

Employers rarely disclose environmental sensory conditions, like open layouts with high ambient noise, or pace upfront. Raaha bridges this gap by letting users paste a job posting, complete a brief quiz on their ideal work environment, and hit "analyze."

The AI scans for signals, from "open office" versus "quiet workspace," to "fast-paced" versus "structured," and returns a fit score out of 100, along with suggested

interview and accommodation questions. To protect applicant privacy, the tool requires no account registration and retains no data.

The practical value of the platform is already showing up in users' inboxes. One applicant living with ADHD and sensory sensitivities reached out to Tuteja after using Raaha during a search for senior data analyst positions.

"It helped me see which roles matched the way I work and what parts of a job might be challenging for me," the user wrote, highlighting how the tailored questions helped them evaluate prospective employers before applying. "It is a great tool and has made my job search feel much easier and more transparent."

Rooted in South Asian and Middle Eastern origins, the platform's name reflects its core mission.

"Raaha means path in Hindi, and the tagline is 'find your way,'" Tuteja said. "The name reflects the



PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVYA TUTEJA

Navya Tuteja speaks at an AAUW meeting. Tuteja created Raaha, a free, AI-powered platform that helps job candidates — particularly those with invisible or sensory disabilities — find supportive workplaces by evaluating job descriptions against individual accessibility needs.

idea that Raaha isn't making decisions for people. It's just giving them information they need to find the right path for themselves."

Rather than racing to her next project, Tuteja plans to keep sharpening Raaha and "make it into an

app; get it on the App Store" so more job seekers can screen employers as carefully as employers screen them.

To access Raaha and analyze any job or browse more than 1,400 jobs, visit raaha.ai

THE CONNECTION ♦ AUGUST 5-19, 2026 ♦ 7



Worshipping together: For Michael, a community member, his favorite part was worshipping Jesus. “I enjoyed worshipping at First Baptist Church of Vienna so much! The singing, the message, the food — everyone has been so kind. This is a really awesome church.”



Sharing food and fellowship: More than 100 guests joined members and staff at First Baptist Church of Vienna on July 26 for worship and food at its Christmas in July celebration, which featured free clothing, shoes, school supplies, toiletries, diapers and haircuts.



Providing free resources: Xiomara, another community member, said that the event reminded her that there are people who truly care. “Everyone made me and my family feel welcome, and the kindness shown today means more than I can put into words. It gave me hope and made me feel like I wasn’t alone.” Dianne Carpenter, a First Baptist Church of Vienna member, shared that whether people are receiving items from their resource rooms or “simply a smile,” everyone was welcoming and appreciative. “It has truly been an afternoon of neighbors serving neighbors.”



Hands-on service: Cynthia Neal, a First Baptist Church of Vienna member, said that her favorite part about Christmas in July is the opportunity to serve alongside fellow church members, “build relationships, and help uplift our community.”

Neighbors Serving Neighbors

First Baptist Church of Vienna Creates Christmas in July.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

More than 100 guests joined members and staff at First Baptist Church of Vienna on July 26 for worship and food at its Christmas in July celebration, which fea-

tured free clothing, shoes, school supplies, toiletries, diapers and haircuts.

The church’s youth facilitated a community art project — a mural celebrating diversity and acceptance — while a live DJ and games transformed the “church campus into a block party where guests and volunteers danced and celebrated together,” said Stacey

Seay, pastoral assistant and outreach coordinator for First Baptist Church of Vienna.

Rooted in the African American worship tradition, the church has long merged faith with community activism. Under Senior Pastor Vernon C. Walton and past leadership, it stands out for its congregation’s large-scale outreach.



Youth arts and spirit of optimism: The membership’s youth facilitated a community art project — a mural that celebrated diversity and acceptance. “I enjoy the opportunity to witness people from our church giving of themselves. I enjoy watching the community be blessed. I love the sense of optimism that doesn’t have to wait until December,” said Senior Pastor Vernon C. Walton of First Baptist Church of Vienna.



Community block party: Live music, games and shared meals transformed the “church campus into a block party where guests and volunteers danced and celebrated together,” as Stacey Seay, pastoral assistant and outreach coordinator at First Baptist Church of Vienna, shared.



A friendly hand: Rooted in the African American worship tradition, the First Baptist Church of Vienna merges faith with community activism. Under Senior Pastor Vernon C. Walton (far right) and past leadership, the church stands out for its welcoming manner and its congregation’s large-scale outreach.

Pedestrian Fatalities Surge in Fairfax County



As a pedestrian, when crossing, remember to

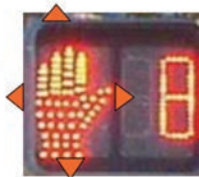
Press the button



Wait for the walk signal to start crossing



Do not enter or start to cross when you see the flashing hand



FAIRFAX COUNTY / HAWK SIGNAL-BACKLICK | TRANSPORTATION

HAWK signals command drivers to stop using a solid red light. They are treated legally as standard traffic signals and are designed for multi-lane arterials, such as Richmond Highway/Route 1.

Safety Crisis Worsens with 12 pedestrians and 2 other vulnerable road users killed bring fatalities to 14.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County has matched its full-year totals for pedestrian and vulnerable road user deaths from both 2024 and 2025 in under seven months.

As the death toll for non-drivers climbed to 14 as of July 29, safety advocates warned that simple, life-saving street fixes remain stalled behind red tape and state approval hurdles. Back-to-back fatal collisions in July along Richmond Highway (Route 1) in Hybla Valley have renewed calls for systemic roadway safety improvements across Northern Virginia.

"My colleagues at Safe Streets are deeply disappointed and saddened by the alarming number of avoidable pedestrian fatalities in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia," Mike Doyle, executive director of NoVA Families for Safe Streets, told The Connection on July 25. "Our unofficial count shows 12 pedestrians killed plus two other vulnerable road users. Including Alexandria, a devastating 16 people were killed in Northern Virginia so far this year when walking or riding."

Serious pedestrian injuries are three to five times higher than fatalities, Doyle noted.

Recent crashes along Route 1 underscore these concerns. On July 2, a driver turning right from Dart Drive onto northbound Richmond Highway struck an adult woman using a mobility device in the crosswalk; she died from her injuries. Police noted speed and alcohol were not factors. On July 3, a vehicle struck 61-year-old Alexandria resi-

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FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Capt. Chris Cosgriff, commander of the Fairfax County Police Department's Public Affairs Bureau, provides updates on a fatal crash involving a 9-year-old boy on an e-scooter near Sully Square in Herndon.

dent Julio Quintanilla in the 7900 block of Richmond Highway near Walmart. Quintanilla died July 18.

The July fatalities followed a deadly 48-hour stretch in mid-June when four pedestrians were killed across Fairfax County: Jerry Harris, 64; Sean King, 38; Jose Sorto Medrano, 68; and Stephen Roberts, 73.

"These crashes are deeply tragic and terrible for the victims and families, as well as for our first responders, drivers, community and me! We all must do more," Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck told The Connection on July 31.

"We continue to work closely with the police and VDOT to prevent tragedies while advancing improvements along the Richmond Highway corridor, but we need a whole-of-community effort for change," Storck said. "We need pedestrians to stay visible and cross at designated locations, drivers to eliminate distractions and travel at safe speeds, more safe places to cross, and stronger enforcement tools for unsafe cross-



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK
Mike Doyle, founder and executive director of NoVA Families for Safe Streets.

ings."

Yet safety advocates argue official calls for vigilance miss the root problem. Safe Streets data shows over 80 percent of Route 1 pedestrian fatalities occurred near crosswalk gaps of up to half a mile long, with

more than half occurring at night. Advocates are urging VDOT and Fairfax County to implement streetlight upgrades, refuge islands, HAWK crossing beacons, and increased speed enforcement.

Doyle questioned whether preventable infrastructure fixes at Dart Drive could have saved a life.

"I wonder whether the killing of the lady in a wheelchair could have been avoided if the driver of the Ford F-250 turning right had a 'No Turn on Red' sign posted at that intersection," Doyle said, noting the junction lacked a complete crosswalk setup. "A 'No Turn on Red' sign might have saved her life. Why aren't there more 'No Turn on Red' signs at these major intersections?"

Advocates emphasize that education and individual vigilance are not enough. The vulnerability of young road users was illustrated by a recent fatal crash in Herndon, where an unhelmeted 9-year-old boy riding an e-scooter collided with a vehicle.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY
Supervisor Dan Storck represents the Mount Vernon District, which includes Richmond Highway (Route 1) in Hybla Valley.

goring personal protective equipment like helmets as the least effective safety intervention. Conversely, engineering controls, physically separated infrastructure, and improved street design rate as the most effective measures to protect vulnerable road users.

Solutions must address dangerous roadway design, high speeds, and a lack of safe crossings rather than placing the burden of survival on the victim, advocates say.

Meanwhile, despite securing \$754 million in regional support, the \$987 million Richmond Highway multimodal project faces a multi-hundred-million-dollar funding gap. This leaves long-awaited safety infrastructure like dedicated bus rapid transit median lanes, separated multi-use paths, upgraded street lighting, and continuous sidewalks dependent on future grants.

"We all need to take a moment," Storck said.

Residents can meet with public safety and transportation partners at an Aug. 19 Traffic Safety Town Hall at the Hybla Valley Community Center.

"The speed limit on Richmond Highway has been reduced, sidewalks and lighting have been added, and we have begun building an even safer, more bike/pedestrian-friendly corridor. We can each make a difference in keeping our roads safer."

Drowning Is Silent. Prevention Is Not.

Drowning prevention starts before a child ever enters the water.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The radio crackles before the ambulance reaches the emergency department.

A child has been pulled from the water.

Within moments, the room begins to transform. Nurses gather equipment. A respiratory therapist prepares oxygen. Blood tubes are laid out.

An emergency physician reviews the information coming from paramedics: a child, water, CPR already in progress.

Everyone knows their role.

What they don't know is whether the next few minutes will end with a child going home or a family leaving the hospital forever changed.

For Dr. Miriam Fischer, an emergency physician with MedStar Health, these are the moments she wishes families never experience.

"I wish I'd put a life jacket on them."

"I wish I hadn't looked away."

"I wish I'd put up barriers."

Those are the words she hears

from parents after a drowning.

"When parents feel like they could have done something differently to prevent this, it's very, very sad," said Fischer who previously worked in the Emergency Department at Inova Fairfax Hospital. "You never want a parent to have that regret."

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 5 to 14 in the United States.

Yet Fischer says one of the greatest dangers is that many parents misunderstand what drowning looks like.

"People envision somebody flopping their arms and screaming for help," she said. "That's not how it usually happens."

Instead, drowning is often silent. "It can take under 30 seconds."

That misconception can be deadly.

Fischer said vacations can also create a false sense of security. At backyard pools, neighborhood gatherings and family vacations, adults often assume someone else

is watching.

"Vacation mode can be wonderful, but also dangerous because everybody's trying to relax," she said. "If parents are sitting on the beach reading a book, having a drink and not watching, that's when we get into trouble."

"You really need to designate a person assigned to watch each child at every moment" Fischer said.

Swimming skills can reduce risk, but they do not eliminate it.

"Kids get tired," she said. "Even strong swimmers can drown."

Fischer said life jackets are one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent tragedies on the water.

"I wear one when we go boating because I don't want to have to swim all the way ashore if we go overboard," she said. "I also want to set an example for my kids. It is easy to get caught up in currents or not realize how far it is to swim back to shore. There's no shame in putting on a life jacket if you're worried. You can wear one and still have fun."

Virginia law requires one properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-ap-

Before Your Family Gets in the Water

- ❖ Designate one adult as the water watcher
- ❖ Put phones away during water supervision
- ❖ Pack properly fitted Coast Guard approved life jackets
- ❖ Know where emergency equipment is located
- ❖ Learn CPR
- ❖ Check pool barriers and gates
- ❖ Identify whether a beach has lifeguards

proved life jacket for every person aboard a boat, kayak, canoe, paddleboard or personal watercraft.

Prevention, Fischer says, is built one small decision at a time. And when a child does struggle in the water, what happens before the ambulance arrives can change everything.

"The one thing I'd want to stress about drowning is that immediate CPR makes a huge impact and really saves lives," Fischer said.

For Arlington CPR instructor Damian Cook, one of the biggest barriers is not ability. It is fear.

"People worry they're going to do something wrong," Cook said. "But the worst thing you can do is nothing."

In CPR classes, parents and care-

givers practice compressions and learn how to respond during the moments when waiting is not an option.

Those skills matter because drowning is not always the end of the story.

"If you see a child struggling in the water, pull them out and start CPR," Fischer said. "You can save their life."

Inside the emergency department, Fischer and her team are prepared for the moments after prevention has failed.

Outside the hospital, Fischer said she hopes her work begins long before an ambulance is ever needed.

"My goal as an ER doctor is to make sure parents never have to experience this."

Non-fatal Officer Shooting Incident

Suspect Charged with Attempted Disarming of a Law Enforcement Officer.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On July 28, a 911 call at approximately 10 a.m. reported a husband threatening his wife and stabbing himself with a knife in Fairfax County. Police responded and encountered the suspect — later identified as Nehemia Fuentes Banegas, 26, of Annandale — running from the residence as his wife pointed him out, Chief Kevin Davis said during a filmed press conference posted on Facebook.com/fairfaxcountypd.

Davis described the encounter in a wooded area involving a K-9 officer, a patrol officer, and a second lieutenant. The suspect emerged from under a bush and grabbed an officer's sidearm. Davis noted that the top of the suspect's hand was around the top barrel of the firearm, and "the bottom of his hand was wrapped around the frame of that firearm."

As an officer fired three rounds, another officer simultaneously

discharged a Taser. One round grazed the suspect's upper right shoulder. Officers immediately rendered medical aid until personnel from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department arrived. Fuentes Banegas was taken into custody and transported to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

According to Davis, police later recovered two discarded knives in the area after reviewing nearby camera footage. "He cut himself several times in his leg thigh area, and we believe he threatened his wife with those knives as well," Davis said.

Davis noted that the officers involved in the incident had a plan for using lethal and less-lethal force, with one officer designat-



COURTESY FCPD

The suspect, who was shot by a Fairfax County police officer, is identified as Nehemia Fuentes Banegas, 26, of Annandale.

ed to carry a deadly-force option and another armed with a less-lethal option. He added that this was not a spontaneous foot pursuit but a "slow, methodical" search through the wooded area.

Davis emphasized the importance of body camera footage in providing transparency: "It informs not only law enforcement leadership about what happened, but it puts me in a position to share

that information and those facts with the community." He added: "There should be no such thing as a police officer in America without body cameras. No such thing."

Davis said during the briefing that the suspect will face charges



SCREEN CAPTURE FACEBOOK FCPD

Chief Kevin Davis gives a media update immediately following the July 28 officer shooting incident.

SEE NON-FATAL OFFICER, PAGE 11

Paul Thomas To Serve as Hunter Mill Planning Commissioner

To fill Commissioner John Carter vacant seat.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Lifelong Restonian and former Fairfax County Public Schools teacher Paul D. Thomas will take over as the Hunter Mill District planning commissioner on Sept. 1.

When Supervisor Alcorn announces he will appoint Paul D. Thomas on Aug. 25, the upcoming vote by the full Board of Su-

pervisors is largely a pro forma approval. Thomas will be replacing John Carter, who announced his early retirement on July 22.

"I'm pleased to appoint Paul Thomas as Hunter Mill Planning Commissioner," Alcorn said in a statement on the Hunter Mill District website on July 31. "[Thomas] brings a community-first perspective to this important role that helps guide future development in the Hunter Mill District."

"My experience serving on the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force — alongside many community leaders in-

PHOTO VIA FXCO

Paul D. Thomas to be appointed by Superver Walter Alcorn as the Hunter Mill Planning Commissioner.



cluding Commissioner John Carter and the late Bob Simon — and deep knowledge of Fairfax County as a teacher, coach, parent, and volunteer, will help me be an effective Planning Commissioner," Thomas said. He added, "I look forward to helping ensure that growth in Fairfax County is responsible, orderly, balanced, and equitable."

Carter, who was originally appointed in December 2017, said he would not complete his term, which officially ran through December 2029. Carter noted he would stay on through September to help ensure a smooth transition for Thomas.

Thomas earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in operations research and management science from George Mason University.

COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

Locals Appointed to Boards

Gov. Abigail Spanberger oversees nearly 300 state boards and commissions and will make roughly 900 appointments every year. Based on her July 2 announcement, here are the individuals specifically identified as being from Fairfax, including Fairfax County, Vienna, Reston, and the City of Fairfax: Sara Holtz of Fairfax — Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism; Mario Flores of Fairfax — Latino Advisory Board; Aaliyah Samuel of Fairfax — Board of Education; Stanley Reid of Fairfax — The Library Board; Robin McDougal of Reston — Air and Space Center Board of Directors; Carrie Ricci of City of Fairfax — Board of Veterans Services; and Steven Arango of Vienna — Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees.

"I have full confidence that they will use their extensive personal and professional experience to serve their neighbors with dedication and integrity as we advance our shared mission to make Virginia safer, stronger, and more affordable for all — now and into the future," Spanberger said

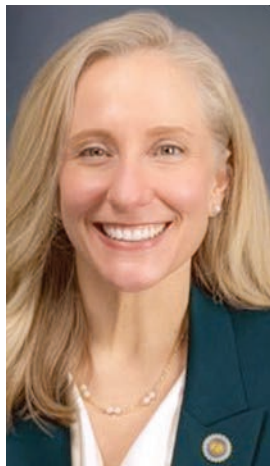


PHOTO VIA
X/@GOVERNORVA

New RA CEO

On July 17, the Reston Association Board of Directors unanimously named Peter Lusk chief executive officer following his service as acting CEO since January. A former Arlington County Parks and Recreation Division chief and RA chief operating officer, Lusk holds a master's degree from Fairleigh Dickinson and multiple management credentials. Reston Association Board President Travis Johnson highlighted Lusk's "steady leadership and sound judgment" in leading the association's next chapter.

— MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF RESTON ASSOCIATION

Non-fatal Officer Shooting Incident

FROM PAGE 10

for felony assault against a police officer and attempting to disarm him, while the department looks into any crimes committed at the home.

Since the incident, FCPD reports that Fuentes Banegas has been formally charged with Attempted Disarming of a Law Enforcement Officer, a Class

6 felony. After being medically cleared, Fuentes Banegas was transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, where he is being held without bond.

As is standard when an officer discharges a firearm, the department is conducting parallel criminal and administrative investigations into the shooting.



COURTESY FCPD

Officer body-worn camera footage shows Nehemia Fuentes Banegas attempting to take an officer's firearm in a still image released by police.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RESTON HOSPITAL CENTER

Reston Hospital Center Award

Reston Hospital Center's Emergency Department earned the national Emergency Nurses Association 2026 Lantern Award — one of only three in Virginia to receive it. "This award reflects the clinical expertise, teamwork, and process improvements that benefit our community every day," said Chief Nursing Officer Laura-Anne Cleveland. Director of Emergency Services Chris Roberts noted that recent operational upgrades—including streamlined triage to shorten wait times and new safety initiatives with Fairfax County partners—were central to the team's success.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Fairfax County Farmers Markets Return

Operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority, these popular markets connect residents with local farmers and food producers at 10 convenient locations. Shop seasonal fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy, baked goods and artisanal products, while enjoying a vibrant, open-air market experience.

WEDNESDAYS

McCutcheon/Mount Vernon: April 22-Nov. 25, 8 a.m. - noon. Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane

Oakmont: May 6-Oct. 28, 8 a.m.-noon. Oakmont Recreation Center, 3200 Jermentown Road

Wakefield: May 6-Oct. 28, 2-6 p.m. Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS

Annandale: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon.

Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike Herndon: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon. Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn Street by the Red Caboose

FRIDAYS

McLean: May 1-Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-noon. Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road

Kingstowne: May 1-Oct. 23, 3-7 p.m. In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center

SATURDAYS

Burke: Apr. 18-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway

Reston: Apr. 25-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza

SUNDAYS

Lorton: May 3-Nov. 22, 8 a.m.-noon. VRE parking lot, 8990 Lorton Station Blvd.



A Summer Concert Series takes place at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle starting June 18 to Aug. 27.

SUMMER CONCERT & ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

Reston Community Center (RCC) transforms Reston's plazas and parks into community gathering places with its acclaimed Summer Concert & Entertainment Series, running from just before Memorial Day through September. All are invited to enjoy free live music and family-friendly entertainment set in some of Reston's most beloved outdoor spaces as we head into the heart of summer.

Wednesdays: Midweek Music on the Lake

Sunset Concerts | Schedule

Lake Anne Plaza

Wednesdays, June 24 – August 26

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Fan favorites return to Lake Anne Plaza for Sunset Concerts on Wednesday evenings, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. so audiences can enjoy slightly cooler temperatures and golden hour views by the lake.

Thursdays: Fresh Finds at Halley Rise

Take a Break Concert Series | Schedule

Halley Rise (2025 Fulton Place, Reston)

Thursdays, June 25 – August 27

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

In its third year, Take a Break Concert Series spotlights fresh talent in one of Reston's newest neighborhoods. This laid-back, open space offers plenty of room to dance or play and a new 7:30 p.m. start time lets the heat ease off a bit.

Summerbration Fab Fridays | Schedule

Reston Station

Fridays, May 29 – September 25

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Then head to Reston Station for the always packed Summerbration Fab Fridays, now starting at 7:30 p.m. so you can stop by Happy Hour with Darden first. These high energy cover bands turn the plaza into a dance party with favorite hits all night long.

Saturdays: Playtime in the Park

Family Fun Entertainment Series | Schedule

Reston Town Square Park

Saturdays, July 4 – August 22

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Saturday mornings bring the Family Fun Entertainment Series to Reston Town Square Park, a summer highlight with puppetry, magic, music, juggling and more! Kids can dance, giggle and get the wiggles out, with plenty of fun for adults too.

Sundays: Classics Under the Sky

Sunday Art in the Park with Shenandoah Conservatory | Schedule

Reston Town Square Park

Sundays, June 21 – August 30

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Spend Sunday evening at Sunday Art in the Park with Shenandoah Conservatory in Reston Town Square Park, where rising classical musicians offer concert quality performances that are friendly, fun and accessible to all ages.

NOW THRU AUGUST 27

Summer Concert Series. 7-8 p.m. At National Museum of the Marine Corps, 1775 Semper



The Burke Historical Society will meet on Sunday, Aug. 30, 2026 at Pohick Regional Library in Burke.

Fidelis Way, Triangle. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation invites the public to enjoy the 2026 Summer Concert Series at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. From June through August, audiences can experience six free, family-friendly evenings featuring premier U.S. military ensembles representing the Marine Corps, Navy, Army, and Air Force. Concerts are held on the Museum's entry plaza. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets. Admission and parking are free and open to the public. The Museum, Tun Tavern, and Museum Store will remain open until 6:45 p.m. on concert evenings. Visit the website: <https://www.marineheritage.org/>

Concert Schedule:

- ❖ August 20, 7 p.m. – U.S. Navy Concert Band
- ❖ August 27, 7 p.m. – "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band

SUMMER ON THE GREEN SERIES

Music lovers of all ages are encouraged to grab a lawn chair or picnic blanket and head to the Vienna Town Green for free summer concerts at 6:30 p.m. beginning in June. The Vienna Town Green is located at 144 Maple Ave., E, Vienna. The Summer on the Green series features a wide range of musical genres, including rock, blues, country, reggae, jazz, and children's music performed by local and regional musical acts.

2026 Schedule

Aug. 7: The Maiden Band - Classic Rock 70s to present

Aug. 14: US Navy Band Commodores - Jazz

For more information, visit www.viennava.gov/summeronthegreen.

FREE CONCERTS IN THE PARK

At Burke Lake Park, Burke. 7 p.m. every Wednesday night from June 24 to Aug. 19 at Burke Lake Park for an incredible line-up of bands, food trucks, 2 Silos beer, and Ice Cream. The atmosphere is informal, so bring a picnic blanket, lawn chairs, and relax with friends and family.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 5. The English Channel. Food Trucks: BA-



The OFC Ignite: Back to School Kickoff & Tailgate Party will be held on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026 at the Old Firehouse Center in McLean.

BU-JI, Cousins Maine Lobster and Ello Gelato Aug. 12 – The Randy Thompson Band. Food Trucks: BABU-JI, Roaming Coyote and Bruster's of Alexandria

Aug. 19 – The Soul Shakers. Food Trucks: Kaziville (hot dogs), Ned's New England Deck and Bruster's of Alexandria

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The juried outdoor fine arts festival will be held Sunday, Oct. 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in McLean Central Park.

Artists working in all fine art and fine craft media are encouraged to apply. Selected artists will have the opportunity to exhibit and sell their work in one of Northern Virginia's premier outdoor arts festivals, connecting with collectors, art enthusiasts and families from throughout the Washington metropolitan area. The application deadline is Friday, July 31. Artists interested in participating can apply at www.mcleancenter.org/mc-lean-artfest and should contact Jen Lillis at jlillis@mpaart.org for additional application information.

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ENTERTAINMENT

AUG. 3-22

Dog Wash for Fairfax Pets on Wheels Fund-raiser. At Weber's Pet Supermarket in Reston. Every dog wash is \$16 with \$10 going to Fairfax Pets on Wheels.

AUG. 5-30

"Sun-Drenched" Exhibition and Show. At McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Opening reception on Friday, Aug. 7 from 5-7 p.m. to meet the artists, enjoy conversation about summer-inspired artwork, and relax with live music, wine, and light refreshments. "Sun-Drenched" captures the warmth, brilliance, and beauty of the season through original artwork inspired by long summer days, flourishing gardens, colorful still lifes, sunlit landscapes, and the simple pleasures of summer.

THURSDAY/AUG. 6

Glow Golf: Drive Change After Dark. 6 to 11 p.m. At Virginia Golf Center, 5801 Clifton Road, Clifton. Join the Junior League of Northern Virginia for its first Glow Golf Tournament at Virginia Golf Center. Proceeds from this fun glow-lit 9-hole golf experience benefit Junior League of Northern Virginia's programs. Individual golfers and teams of 4 welcome—and social tickets are available if you just want to join for the par-tee!

AUG. 7-31

Circus Vazquez. At Tysons II, 8025 Galleria Drive, in Tysons Corner. The production blends time honored circus tradition with contemporary elements to create a vibrant entertainment experience for modern audiences. Show times are 7:00 p.m. Mondays through Fridays; 1 p.m., 4 p.m., 7 p.m. on Saturdays and 11 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m. on Sundays.

DRIVE-IN STYLE MOVIES

Grab your crew and head out to 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly, to sit back, relax and watch movies "drive-in" style — view and listen from your car or bring chairs and blankets to watch from the lawn. Pack a basket for a moonlit picnic or try a new treat from one of our food truck partners and enjoy free entertainment that comes to you as part of the Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series.

Starlight Cinema brings the community together for wholesome family entertainment with a feature film that begins at dark. Gates open at 6:30 p.m., so come early to get a good spot. Mark your calendars for:

Aug. 8: "Zootopia 2"
Aug. 15: "Finding Nemo"
Aug. 22: "Cars"

TUESDAY/AUG. 18

Trivia Nights in Tun Tavern. 6-9 p.m. At National Museum of the Marine Corps, 1775 Semper Fidelis Way, Triangle. Think you have what it takes to claim the top spot? Assemble your strongest team of up to six and join us for Trivia Nights at Tun Tavern at the National Museum of the Marine Corps! Compete in pop culture, geography, and general knowledge trivia, with a fun bonus round to keep things interesting. Event is free and open to the public. Visit the website: <https://www.marineheritage.org/eventscalendar>

AUG. 20-30

The 1st Stage Logan Festival of Solo Performance will run August 20-30, 2026 at 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons, with performances of each show as follows:

LET IT BE ART!: Thursday, August 20 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 22 at 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, August 28 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 5:00 p.m.

It Ends With Guinea Pigs: Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 2:00 p.m.; Wednesday, August 26 at 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, August 27 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 2:00 p.m.

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Circus Vazquez will be at Tysons II on Aug. 7-31, 2026 in Tysons Corner.



The 33rd Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival takes place Sept. 5-6 at Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church in McLean.

2:00 p.m.

Baron Vaughn: Cycle Breaker: Friday, August 21 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 22 at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 5:00 p.m.; Tuesday, August 25 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 7:30 p.m.

Individual tickets can be purchased online at www.1stStage.org or by emailing the 1st Stage box office at boxoffice@1ststage.org.

BACK TO SCHOOL BOOK SALE

At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Fiction and nonfiction for all ages, DVDs, audiobooks and more. Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books and DVDs for \$10. Friday, Aug. 21, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, Aug. 23, 12 to 5 p.m.

SENIOR MOVIE DAY

At Reston Town Center Movie Theater. 10 a.m. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day, sponsored by Friends of Reston. Join us on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie. Free. Ages 55+
Aug. 26: A Little Prayer (rated R)

THURSDAY/AUG. 27

Lunch N' Life. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At American Legion Post 1976, 4206 Daniels Ave., Annandale. Join in a Game Day playing board and card games. To register, call 703-941-1419 or email shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com by

August 25th.

SATURDAY/AUG. 29

OFC Ignite: Back to School Kickoff & Tailgate Party. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Start the school year right with games, food, music and tailgate-style fun with friends at OFC Ignite, the monthly themed family play experience at OFC! Drop in to enjoy ping pong, board games, arcade games, refreshments, the Sensory Room, food and more.

SUNDAY/AUG. 30

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Mary Lipsey, local historian, will discuss Myra Bradwell, Mrs. Lincoln's friend who successfully got Mrs. Lincoln released from an asylum.

SEPT. 5-6

33rd Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival.

Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Sunday from 12:30-5 p.m. At Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean. The Festival will showcase authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, traditional pastries, music and dancing, vendors, church tours, a silent auction, and activities for all ages. Visit the vendors, take a guided tour of the church, or engage in a game of backgammon or chess. Children also can find plenty to do in the dedicated kids' zone, which includes a petting zoo, two moon bounces, 18-foot slide, face painting and a variety of games. A highlight of the event is the Saturday night, 6:30 p.m. "Hafli" ("party" in Arabic) that will feature live music and dancing, including opportunities to join the "Dabke," a traditional folk line dance. Call 703-734-9566 or visit www.middleeasternfoodfestival.com

SUNDAY/SEPT. 6

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Brian Slawski will share research on Joseph William Dooley (1856-1934) and his family of Burke.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 12

Fall Native Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Morven Park, 17195 Southern Planter Lane, Leesburg. Native plants naturally thrive in our local climate. Shop for local flora from five native plant nurseries—Hill House Farm & Nursery, Nature By Design, Seven Bends Nursery, Watermark Woods, and Yellow House Natives. Plus, drop in for free educational talks with plant experts at this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 17

19th Annual Erin Peterson Fund Golf Tournament. Join in a day of golf and fun. At Westfields Golf Club, 13940 Balmoral Greens Avenue, Clifton. Registration is now open. To register, visit www.erinpetersonfund.org.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 19

Sixth Civil War & Miliaria Show & Sale. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arlington Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Don Hakenson and Bud Mayo will be sponsoring a Sixth Civil War & Miliaria Show & Sale. Books, Relics, and Memorabilia will be sold from all wars! Admission is \$5 per person. Tables for vendors are \$75 each. Contact Don Hakenson at dhakenson@verizon.net or call at 703-971-4984 or contact Bud Mayo at mayo5304@cox.net or call at 703-389-1505. All vendors and patrons are welcome!

SEPT. 19-20

Celebration of the Arts. At Capital One Center, 1820 Capital One Drive South, Tysons Corner. The festival invites the public to engage with hands-on workshops, immersive art activations, a local artisan market, live performances, and culinary offerings from the region's most exciting creators.

When:

September 19, 12pm-6pm
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Virginia Treasury Announces a New Record for Unclaimed Property Funds Reunited to Rightful Owners!



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WHAT
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Employment

MEDICAL PRACTICE CLOSING: The practice of Dr. Kate Lemmerman and Dr. Elizabeth Conrad (Well Being-Being Well, LLC) is announcing its closure as of September 30, 2026. Patients needing assistance in locating another physician should contact your health insurer, local medical society or call the physician referral services at a local hospital, such as INOVA Fairfax 703-776-4001. With written patient authorization, a copy of medical records will be available at Well Being-Being Well, LLC PO Box RR McLean, VA 22101 or by calling 703-635-2158 until September 25, 2026.

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Region Has Serious Drought, Rainfall Deficit

Officials urge saving water.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Virginia's Drought Monitoring Task Force updated the state's drought status on July 31: "The recent rain has prevented drought conditions from worsening, although severe drought continues in many parts of Virginia."

A drought warning advisory continues for Northern Virginia which includes Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park.

The Washington, D.C. region is on track to have its driest year in the last 20 years, officials say.

In its assessments, the Virginia task force uses four classifications, with the most severe being "emergency": normal, watch, warning and emergency. Officials factor in current and predicted precipitation, stream-flow, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, soil moisture, reported agriculture and water supply impacts and the current U.S. Drought Monitor map.

Rainfall Shortfall

The state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on July 31 cautioned, "Long-term precipitation continues to show severe and expansive deficits, with the 180-day Standardized Precipitation Index blend observation showing large areas of severe and extreme dryness throughout central and southcentral Virginia. Except for the Richmond area where normal year-to-date precipitation amounts are present, the rest of the Commonwealth is experiencing deficits ranging from 5.3 inches in Norfolk to 9.4 inches in Danville."

Weedon Cloe, DEQ Office of Water Supply manager, said, "The Northern Virginia drought evaluation region has received approximately 81 percent of the precipitation that would be typical for the water year, which began on October 1."

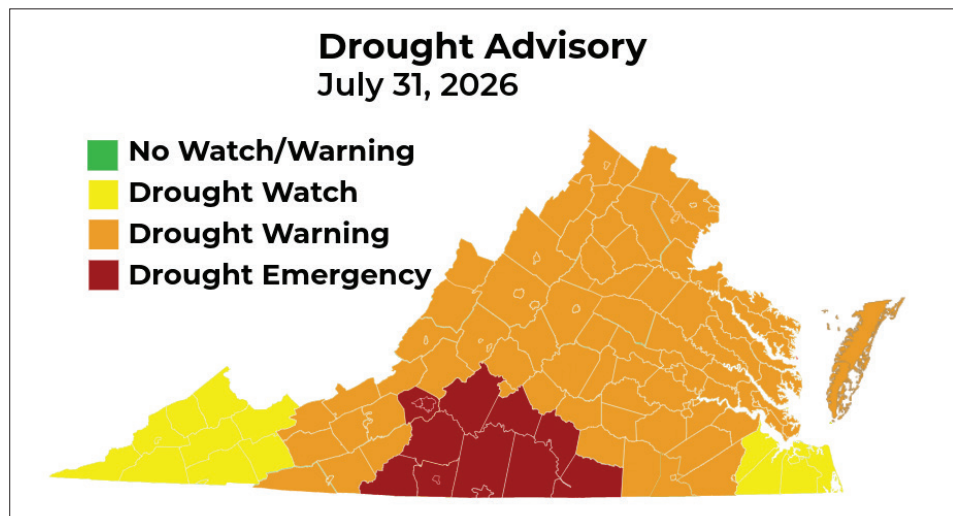
"Despite the recent rain, streamflows in the region are still well below normal. Groundwater has continued to decline. Of the five groundwater monitoring wells in Northern Virginia, four have water levels below the 10th percentile and the well in Prince William is at its lowest level recorded since 2002."

"We will need sustained, above average precipitation over the coming weeks and months for groundwater in the region to recharge."

As for drinking water supplies, "Fairfax Water continues to have adequate supply to meet current customer demand, and our systems are operating normally," emailed Susan Miller, Manager of Public Affairs. "We encourage customers to continue practicing wise water use, but overall water availability remains stable." Around 2.2 million people in Northern Virginia depend on Fairfax Water for their drinking water.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor's July 21 reading, Alexandria is in moderate drought, the second mildest of five categories. Virginia American Water, which sup-

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This map shows the current drought advisories as established by the Drought Monitoring Task Force.



This stream in Great Falls National Park in Fairfax County was dry on Sunday morning, Aug. 1.

plies water to Alexandria, asks residential customers to voluntarily reduce nonessential water use.

More Calls for Conservation

Governor Abigail Spanberger asks Virginians to voluntarily conserve water use. On June 18, she said, "a significant lack of precipitation has resulted in Virginia recording its driest period since 1941. Precipitation totals are approximately eight inches below average across much of the Commonwealth."

If drought conditions continue, the Governor can declare a drought emergency and by executive order implement mandatory water use restrictions for certain users and industries.

Tips for Conserving Water

The following suggestions for saving water are from multiple sources, including Fairfax Water.

- ❖ Reduce or stop lawn and garden watering.
- ❖ Only water between dusk and dawn to reduce evaporation.
- ❖ Plant drought-tolerant plants and reduce grass.
- ❖ Use mulch and leave the leaves.

- ❖ Turn off ornamental fountains.
- ❖ Limit filling of swimming pools.
- ❖ Do not hose sidewalks and driveways.
- ❖ Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- ❖ Reduce shower length.
- ❖ Turn off water while brushing teeth.
- ❖ Wash full loads of dishes and clothes.
- ❖ Keep a container of water in the refrigerator to avoid running water for a drink.
- ❖ Use one glass throughout a day.
- ❖ Do not run water to thaw food.
- ❖ Use a bowl of water to clean and prepare vegetables, instead of letting the faucet run.
- ❖ Compost instead of using a garbage disposal.
- ❖ Fix leaks.

Information

Virginia DEQ, <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quantity/drought>

U.S. Drought Monitor, <https://drought-monitor.unl.edu/>

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, drought information: www.mwcog.org/environment/planning-areas/water-resources/drinking-water-and-drought-monitoring/current-drought-conditions/

"Two Over-70s, Please?"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That's all I had to say - or do, to buy the discounted-for-seniors' tickets at a horse show in Pa. my wife Dina and I recently attended: \$10 per person instead of the \$25-per-person regular price, a 60-percent savings. I was so happy and surprised at such a healthy discount given so readily that it wasn't until the Monday after this Friday event that it hit me. The ticket-sellers never even asked Dina or I for a "valid" driver's license to confirm our eligibility for the discount. It was like an inverted version of having to show one's driver's license to prove you're over 21 - when you're way over aged 21 - and thus be allowed to purchase alcohol. I always joke that if anybody "cards" me thinking I'm not over aged 21, than I sure must look like hell for someone who isn't. Referring back to this "over-70" ticket price; if my age was not questioned then I must be a convincing age 70, appearance wise - which I don't think I am any more than I thought I could possibly look to be under aged 21 at the liquor store. Was my horse-show age taken for granted? How disappointing. And to tell you the truth, a bit of a surprise which is possibly the reason behind my motivation in addressing this subject. Previously, at the liquor store, I wasn't the least bit flattered by the clerk's request. I thought it was ridiculous. In each case though, age/appearance mattered. At the liquor store, apparently; I didn't look old enough while at the horse show, apparently, I did look old enough.

Trying to consider an alternate reason - from the establishment's perspective, given that horse shows might attract an older clientele: good public relations. Would it be well-received if the over-70s are having to show proof of age to buy a ticket rather than it just be presumed? I can just see it now: an elderly (obviously over aged 70) man comes "crutching" up to the ticket booth and after requesting his over-70 ticket/rate, is asked to show his driver's license to prove his age. He then manages to balance himself/ almost falls as he reaches around to a back pocket to grab his wallet and then pick through the wallet with his fingers to find and then extract his driver's license. Or the elderly woman in a wheelchair who rolls up to purchase her over-70 ticket and is likewise asked for her proof of age. She then reaches around uncomfortably to the back of her wheelchair and grabs for her purse. She then brings it upfront, opens it and finds her driver's license and hands it over thinking this request was unnecessary at best and humiliating at worst. (What? The show is expecting a bunch of over 65s-under-70s trying to buy a discounted ticket for which they're not age-eligible? I don't think so. Unlike the under-21s trying to buy alcohol, the non-over-70s who manage to buy the over-70s discounted tickets are unlikely to be stopped on the fairgrounds for being impaired.)

Irrespective of the show's actual policy or my imaginary take, I'm writing about this because this is the first time where my current way-over-aged 21 was an issue of sorts but not one that required proof of age. Usually, I've been asked for proof. Actually, it was the speed of my ticket purchase. Not for a moment was my age-specific request doubted. Either it's the show's policy to treat seniors respectfully or I'm a convincing-looking over 70 (I mean I am nearly aged 72 so I could look the part?)

Having thought about this experience a bit more since then, this 'over-70' ticket purchase has made me think (and as my late brother would say; invoking Moe of The Three Stooges; "Every time you think you weaken the nation." Perhaps I should let it go? I'm more concerned/agitated by all the drivers who insist on backing into parking spaces anyway. There's no discount for doing so. I don't get any it more than I get how anybody - could possibly think I'm not over age 21. As far as being over aged 70; apparently, I'm not getting any younger so I might as well learn to live with it.

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