

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

It's All About Community United Community's Block Party

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Zeke, the "gun-narcotics dog," and his handler, Peter Masood.



Leah Fraley, Chief Executive Officer of United Community.



Cheerleaders from Mount Vernon and West Potomac High Schools greeted arriving "party-goers."

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Everybody do rumble," 40 synchronized, jumping high school cheerleaders called, as families arrived. "Shake those shoulders, don't shrug," urged D.J. Elle, as she swayed her derriere on stage teaching fans the merengue.

It was a day of rumbling, shaking and coming together – no shrugging -- at United Community's (UC) Aug. 22 ALX South Block Party at Bryant High School when 700 people from babies to seniors visited 45 vendors and got advice from skin care to savings accounts.

"Nothing is more important than the community and the community feeling safe," offered Major Jeffrey Mauro, Mount Vernon District Police Commander, as he and several officers mingled among the crowd. "Meeting with the community is directly proportion-

al to the police being successful in keeping people safe. We can't do it without the community."

Mauro was admiring another safety "officer," Zeke, who helps keep local schools safe. Zeke is a "gun-narcotics dog," a German short-haired pointer from the Netherlands, his manager, Pete Masood, explained. With a super sense of smell, Zeke can root out narcotics by smelling six odors. He can search cars, buildings and grounds and "hit on" guns, for example, by smelling a gun's brass and oil odors. "He can find a knife in the bushes," Masood said.

Shauna Cooper welcomed everyone at the UC table, explaining that the non-profit helps families become self-sufficient by linking them with housing and childcare, for example. UC has citizenship and English classes, legal and immigration support, a food pantry and a six-room early learning center at Bryant for children ages six weeks to five.

SEE IT'S ALL ABOUT, PAGE 11



The event attracted 45 local vendors.



Melissa McIntosh and John Harris offered Lions Club vision services.



Mount Vernon School Board member Matteo Dunne and "Iris," Spectra Credit Union's kid scientist. The credit union promoted kids' savings accounts.



Blair Wesley with Sentara's Northern Virginia Medical Center explained that she helps cancer patients navigate the health care system.

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MORTGAGE

Protecting the Right to Vote Still Requires Vigilance



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Women's Equality Day, Aug. 26, attracted 315 people to Lorton's Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Legendary country music singer Dolly Parton may be an atypical woman activist, but on Aug. 26, one day after she died, she was honored at Lorton's Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

NOVA Parks Executive Director Justin Wilson told the 315 celebrants who gathered for Women's Equality Day that Parton wrote a song titled "19th Amendment" about the U.S. Constitutional amendment, certified on Aug. 26, 1920, that gave some women in the United States the right to vote.

Wilson shared some of Parton's lyrics: "There was just so much back then we weren't allowed to do, but the first bite of that apple I guess revealed the truth. That's when Eve got smart and that's why Adam don't like fruit. ... We had to fight for women's rights."

Calling the area a "sacred site," Wilson explained that in 1917 suffragists called the Silent Sentinels peacefully picketing on the White House sidewalk for the right to vote were jailed in the Occoquan Workhouse.

Pat Wirth who led the memorial's fund raising and building reminded all, "It is a national memorial. It took millions of dollars." Its name comes from the 1917 "night of terror" when prison guards brutally treated the jailed women and word leaked out, news that nudged a recalcitrant President Woodrow Wilson to support the amendment.

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Virginia Lt. Governor Ghazala Hashmi gave the keynote address for Women's Equality Day at the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

His change of mind was a turning point in the suffrage movement.

Hashmi, a Historic First

Introducing the keynoter, Virginia's Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi, Camdyn Parker, a 13-year

cookie mom," Hashmi highlighted three key words: persistence, vigilance and engagement. She applauded two South Carolina, enslaved women, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, who in the 19th century agitated for both slavery's abolition and women's rights and challenged the notion that women should stay in the home.

"She made the radical argument that went to the very heart of democracy," Hashmi said. "How can a nation claim that it was ruled by the consent of the governed while systematically excluding half of its citizens from political power?"

Hashmi saluted other heroines, including the late African-American U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. Hashmi said, "It's a democratic philosophy that argues if one is excluded, enter. If the in-

Alexandria Girl Scout, said that Hashmi "made history" in 2026 as the first Muslim woman elected statewide in the United States, remarking, "Her election represents a more inclusive democracy."

Dubbing herself a "Girl Scout

"If one is excluded, enter. If the institution was not designed with you in mind, change it. And once you have a seat, make room for someone else."

— Lt. Gov. Ghazala Hashmi



Justin Wilson, NOVA Parks Executive Director, welcomed attendees.



Laura Greenfield, AAUW Virginia President, described her group's projects.



Patricia Wirth relayed the memorial's history.



Nancy Tate, national League of Women Voters President, said that challenges to voting still persist today.



Tom Cat Reeder with Dolly Parton in Mount Vernon more than 50 years ago.



PHOTOS BY BILL IVEY / CENTRAL PHOTO COMPANY PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROSEMARY IVEY ANTOSHAK
Dolly Parton with a Mount Vernon fan.

Dolly Parton's Legacy Includes 1975 Show at (Old) Mount Vernon High School

She was part of an "all star shindig" that night, Sept. 28, 1975.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

As the nation mourns country music great Dolly Parton, some of the residents in Mount Vernon feel a little closer to this country music legend because some 51 years ago, Parton put on a show at Mount Vernon High School with a few other country musicians to put the school on the map.

On the official scheduling announcement, Dolly Parton was part of the cast of this "all star shindig," it says. The date was Sept. 28, 1975 and the other musicians included Freddy Fender, Lester Flatt, and Moe Bandy. Admission was \$3.50-\$5.50. Lester Flatt was more famous for his part in the "Flatt and Scruggs" duo that became famous for the Beverly Hillbillies theme song among others. That theme song was officially known as "The Ballad of Jed Clampett."

Allen Case-Sipes was at the Mount Vernon High School show. "I saw Dolly a few times around there, she played a few of the high schools," he said. At Mount Vernon, "she played in like a cafeteria," he recalled. Sipes attended Wakefield High School at the time but traveled around to see country music whenever he had the chance. "We knew each other, Dolly and I did," he said.

This wasn't Parton's first gig at schools in this part of Fairfax County. In 1974, she played at Hayfield Secondary School and Edison High School.

Nashville resident Rosemary Ivey was 14 at the time of the concert and lived in Arlington but she did not like country music, so she declined an invitation to go. But her father Bill Ivey went up there with his camera. He owned a local photography business called Central Photo and took a few pictures of Dolly

Parton at Mount Vernon High School that night. Those photos are part of Central's collection and his niece Madeleine Ivey still runs the operation.

On the Central website, they noted past achievements. "Hailed as 'an American icon' by The Washington Post and recognized by the Library of Congress, Central Photo has photographed Presidents Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy, Dolly Parton, generations of students and travelers from around the world," the website reads.

The Commons Mount Vernon

The old Mount Vernon High School is now under redevelopment into an arts and entertainment venue renamed "The Commons." When it opens in the spring of 2027, "entertainment and arts is going to be a big part of that venue," said Dot Johnson, a Mount Vernon resident and a staff member in the Mount Vernon District supervisor's office.

The Commons Mount Vernon is the new name for this "Human Development Center," according to its website.

The 149,000 square foot facility will include:

- ❖ Welcome Center & Event Spaces
- ❖ Performing Arts Venue
- ❖ Classroom & Computer Labs
- ❖ Public Wi-Fi
- ❖ Workforce Development Program
- ❖ Business Incubation
- ❖ Early Childhood Program
- ❖ Recreation Center for Teens & Seniors
- ❖ Historic Library
- ❖ Re-Engagement Center and more.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/the-commons-mount-vernon>



Dolly Parton.

News

The Pink Gala, Friday, Sept. 25

The Pink Gala is more than one evening. Last year, the support raised through this event helped make more than 1,000 mammograms and diagnostic tests possible. This year, Alexandria is coming together again to expand access to care and help more people get the answers and support they need.

All ticket sales go towards providing mammograms and follow-up diagnostics essential to early breast cancer detection.

A limited number of VIP Tickets are available and include a special rooftop reception, 6-7 p.m.

All tickets gain entry to the Gala, food,

drinks, and fun.

Food by Purple Onion Catering Co. Expect a wide variety of delicious hors d'oeuvres to circulate all evening. Open bar stocked with soda, beer, wine and a signature pink drink.

ALX Pink Gala. 7-10 p.m. At Above ALX Community, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Breast Cancer Collective for the ALX Pink Gala on Friday, Sept. 25 in Alexandria, supporting greater access to breast cancer screening and diagnostic care.

Join ALXPinkGala.org.
<https://www.alxpinkgala.org/>
 @thebreastcancercollective

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event. Or email to calendar@connectionnewspapers.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern

Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or donaldrea@aol.com. Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 6

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News

Thrillers, Poetry, History, Memoirs, Literary Fiction

Fall for the Book's 28th Annual Festival includes 'New American Voices Award.'

Fall for the Book's 28th Annual Festival is packed with more than fifty writers, including poets, historians, novelists, memoirists, children's authors, graphic novelists, and more.

Chantel Acevedo's *Cages*, Bindu Bansinath's *Men Like Ours*, and Ada Ferrer's *Keeper of My Kin*, have been named finalists for the New American Voices Award, presented in partnership with Fall for the Book and the Institute for Immigration Research. Celebrating its ninth anniversary, this post-publication award recognizes recently published works that illuminate

the complexity of human experience as told by immigrants, whose work is historically underrepresented in writing and publishing.

In-person and virtual events run from Oct. 6-10, at George Mason University, downtown City of Fairfax, and in Fairfax County Public Library branches.

In addition to headliners Celeste Ng, and Stephen Graham Jones, the festival welcomes featured writers Elizabeth Rusch, presenting the Beck Environmental Lecture with her book "The Twenty-One: The True Story of the Youth Who Sued the U.S. Government Over Climate

Change," and award-winning journalist and PBS NewsHour co-anchor Geoff Bennett with *Black Out Loud: The Revolutionary History of Black Comedy from Vaudeville to '90s Sitcoms*.

The full schedule is now live and can be found on www.fallforthebook.org/schedule.

The 2026 Festival will also host many local authors including, novelists Caroline Bock, Lina Patton and Diana Rojas; poets Michele Evans and Danika P. Myers; mystery writers Melanie McCabe and Aggie Blum Thompson; historians George Oberle and Nina Willner;

Maryland state delegate Lily Qi; and folklorist Brittany Warman.

The Fall for the Book Festival partners with the City of Fairfax's 50th Annual Fall Festival on Saturday, Oct. 10 and offers a day of hands-on literary events to readers aged 2 to 13. For the younger kids, Chuchu Wang will launch the morning with an interactive storytime featuring her picture book and lead a drawing demonstration. Next, Marcie Flinchum Atkins will help kids make their own animal handbook followed by Korena Di Roma Howley who will guide them as they make a paper drum.

The middle-grade set will get zany with Adi Rule and make their own cut-out ghost chicken in time for Halloween. Finally, Amanda Foody will reveal the inspirations behind her bestselling series and offer advice on creating magical worlds.

Fall for the Book will host the Ninth Annual award ceremony for immigrant writers: The Institute for Immigration Research New American Voices Award, judged by Angie Cruz, Donna Hemans, and WeiKe Wang. The three finalists, Chantel Acevedo, Bindu Bansinath and Ada Ferrer, will appear at the festival on Oct. 8.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit

www.rsvpnova.org.
Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed.
To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression

and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673. The Caregiver Support Group is facil-

itated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member

or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

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NEWS

The Gift in the Blood

A Northern Virginia blood shortage is putting renewed pressure on donors to help patients with sickle cell disease, cancer and traumatic injuries.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The child had received blood from strangers.

After a transfusion for sickle cell disease at Inova, the child invited some of those donors to a blood drive. When they met, the distance between the donor chair and the hospital bed briefly disappeared. The child stood face to face with people whose donations had helped sustain them, people who had given blood without knowing who would receive it.

It was a moment most donors never experience: seeing, in one young patient, where their generosity had gone.

The encounter revealed what usually remains invisible after a donor leaves the chair: the person on the other side of the transfusion.

Right now, Inova is asking more Northern Virginians to take that seat.

The American Red Cross has declared only the second national blood supply crisis in its history, and the shortage is being felt locally. Inova needs 200 donations each day and approximately 1,400 each week to maintain the supply its patients need.

"Anything that is being donated today will be distributed tomorrow," said Nicholas Lilly, senior director of Inova Blood Donor Services.

The need is particularly pressing during the summer, when donations often decline even as trauma cases increase.

"If we don't donate today, we won't have enough for tomorrow," Lilly said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INOVA
Nicholas Lilly, senior director of Inova Blood Donor Services.

Blood is needed for patients with sickle cell disease, cancer and traumatic injuries, as well as those undergoing surgery and other medical treatment.

Every six to eight weeks, some Inova patients with sickle cell disease receive red blood cell exchange transfusions. Inova cares for about 400 patients with sickle cell disease, some of whom require regular transfusions. Finding appropriately matched blood can be difficult, making a reliable donor pool especially important.

Unlike many medical supplies, blood cannot be manufactured when supplies run low. It must come from another person.

Fewer than 7 percent of people donate blood, although approximately 60 percent are eligible. Many people who could donate never try because they assume they do not qualify.

"People assume that they don't qualify," Lilly said. "Think about who is on the other side, the person who will benefit. People think that they don't need to donate be-

cause someone else is going to do it."

Eligibility can depend on factors including medical history, travel and where a tattoo was performed. Donors should allow staff to make that determination rather than ruling themselves out.

The process begins with a health questionnaire. Staff members check blood pressure, temperature and iron levels before drawing the blood. The entire visit takes about one to one and a quarter hours, including time to rest and have a snack afterward.

Inova operates permanent donor centers in Centreville, Sterling and Annandale, and holds mobile blood drives throughout Northern Virginia and the surrounding region.

"We have locations that are open seven days a week that you can go in to donate," Lilly said. "We take walk-ins or you can sign up."

For Lilly, the appeal comes down to the connection between the person who gives and the person who receives.

"At some point everyone will know someone who needs blood," he said. "It's our duty to be a part of that."

For most donors, the person receiving their blood will remain a stranger.

But at that blood drive, one child with sickle cell disease stood among the people whose donations had helped sustain them. The donors had expected to give blood and leave without knowing where it would go. Instead, they found themselves face to face with the child who had received it.

<https://www.inovablood.org/donate-blood/where-can-i-donate/>

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there will be a 5-minute firework display taking place as part of a private evening event at George Washington's Mount Vernon on

**Thursday, September 17,
between 9:15-9:45pm.**

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association thanks you for your tolerance and apologizes for any disruption.

To receive Mount Vernon fireworks notifications via email, please write to events@mountvernon.org

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‘Deer Management’ Starting Soon in Fairfax County

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

White-tailed deer are quite at home in suburbia and perhaps too much so.

From Sept. 12 to Feb. 13, Fairfax County will conduct annual “deer management” using archery, sharpshooting, “human exclusion, repellency and habitat modification.” The last three, non-lethal methods, are county recommendations to property owners, such as fencing, tree guards, repellents and plants unpalatable to deer.

Deer management is needed, officials say, because of collisions with vehicles, disease transmission and harm to forest regeneration, forest composition, ecosystem services and biodiversity. Too many deer can degrade habitat by eating seedlings, saplings and valuable native plants.

Wildlife biologist Jordan Green elaborates, “In Northern Virginia, the need stems from an ecological imbalance where too many deer on the landscape degrade native habitats to the point of making it difficult to impossible for some other native wildlife species to survive. In addition, a higher concentration of deer has implications for the greater spread of disease, such as chronic wasting disease and the higher risk of deer-vehicle collisions.” Green is with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

How Many Deer Are Too Many?

“Suburbia’s rise supercharged the whitetail’s recovery,” wrote Ben Goldfarb in his book “Crossings.” “Deer thrive in edge habitats, transitional zones where delectable meadows bump against the shelter of forests.”

Fairfax County officials have conducted deer density surveys in certain parks using cameras and drone surveys. Their goal is to “manage local deer populations to balance the varied needs and reasonable expectations of a diverse human community (cultural carrying capacity), the requirements of a biologically diverse ecosystem and the anticipated future social/ecosystem demands. Hunting is the preferred population management method, where appropriate and feasible.”

Historically, in the eastern U.S., animals like cougars, bobcats and red wolves were their primary predators. Today, few natural predators remain in Northern Virginia.

Deer Hunts

In fiscal year 2026, hunters “har-



A small buck takes a rest after foraging for acorns.



Young deer, called fawns, have white spots.



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

White-tailed deer have adapted to suburban yards.

vested” 752 deer in Fairfax County using archery and sharpshooting.

This year, hunters using bows and arrows will operate in over 100 parks from tree stands. The county will post orange “deer management” signs at park entrances and trail heads and send letters to around 27,000 property owners adjacent to the park sites. Archers and hunters must complete hunter safety education courses and have certain qualifications.

The Fairfax County police will conduct sharpshooting at night in secured parks when parks are closed and shoot at static locations over bait from elevated positions. They will donate the venison to local food banks and Hunters for the Hungry. In 2026, they donated an estimated 5,610 pounds of venison.

Vehicle Collisions

“Deer-vehicle collisions are the primary cause of deer deaths in suburban areas without other lethal control,” says the county police department’s website.

In 2025, there were approximately 120 deer-vehicle collisions in Fairfax County with the highest numbers of collisions occurring in October and November and the peak time for collisions being 6 a.m.

Native plants that are less attractive to deer, from Katherine Edwards, Fairfax County’s Wildlife Biologist:

Common wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
Blue wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*)
Threadleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*)
Virginia or southern blueflag iris (*Iris virginica*)
Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*)
Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
Green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)
Orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*)
Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)
Pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)
False indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*)
Common pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) (a tree)

Virginia ranks ninth in the country for collisions. A Virginia transportation official has estimated that only ten percent of deer-vehicle collisions are captured in police records.

Feeding Deer

Some people intentionally or unintentionally feed deer, says Dr. Gino J. D’Angelo, Associate Professor of Deer Ecology and Management at the University of Georgia. Some well-meaning people put

out corn. WalMart sells millions of bags of “deer corn,” he says, and some packaged deer corn carries the aflatoxin fungus.

Deer also will knock bird seed out of feeders and eat what falls out. Grain-based food can be high in carbohydrates. “A deer’s gastro-intestinal system cannot manage a high influx of carbs and they can increase acid buildup,” D’Angelo said. Also, congregating deer can transmit disease through their saliva, feces and urine, he said.

White-tailed Deer

As they bound away, white-tailed deer flash their erect tails’ white underside.

The males, called bucks, have antlers and are larger than females, called does.

Bark scraped off a tree may have been done by deer because their antlers are initially covered with hair called “velvet” and they rub off the velvet before rutting or mating season. In Virginia, rutting season is usually from late October through November when bucks may have heightened activity as they compete for does’ attention.

Fairfax County’s program is a model, Dr. D’Angelo offered. “Many wildlife professionals view programs in Fairfax County and the D.C. area as leaders in urban deer management programs. We are learning from the way they do this work.”

Information

Fairfax County, www.fairfax-county.gov/wildlife/deer-management-program

Locations of archery and sharpshooting, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/wildlife/archery-program and www.fairfaxcounty.gov/wildlife/sharpshooting.

Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline, 855-571-9003



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LUSK REPORT

Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk, center, walks across the Veterans Memorial Bridge alongside Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander Col. Samuel Allen, right, and Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Creel, left, during the Army Community Covenant walk on Saturday, Aug. 22.

Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk Highlights Community Walk

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk, D-Franconia, highlighted a community walk across the Veterans Memorial Bridge on Aug. 22 to reaffirm the Army Community Covenant. The event served as the first official community gath-

ering for new Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel Allen, who assumed command on Aug. 13. The ceremony brought together local leaders, military members and residents. It featured special recognitions for WWII veterans Edwin “Ed” Lyman Kesler, 100, and Daniel “Dan” Emmanuel Palenski, 99, alongside assistance from Life Scouts Oliver Adams and Peyton Fu.



WWII Army veteran Daniel “Dan” Emmanuel Palenski, 99, center left, poses with his family and Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk, center right, on Saturday, Aug. 22.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there will be a 10-minute firework display taking place as part of a private evening event at George Washington’s Mount Vernon on

**Saturday, September 19,
between 9:15-9:45pm.**

The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association thanks you for your tolerance and apologizes for any disruption.

To receive Mount Vernon fireworks notifications via email, please write to events@mountvernon.org

**GEORGE WASHINGTON’S
MOUNT ★ VERNON**

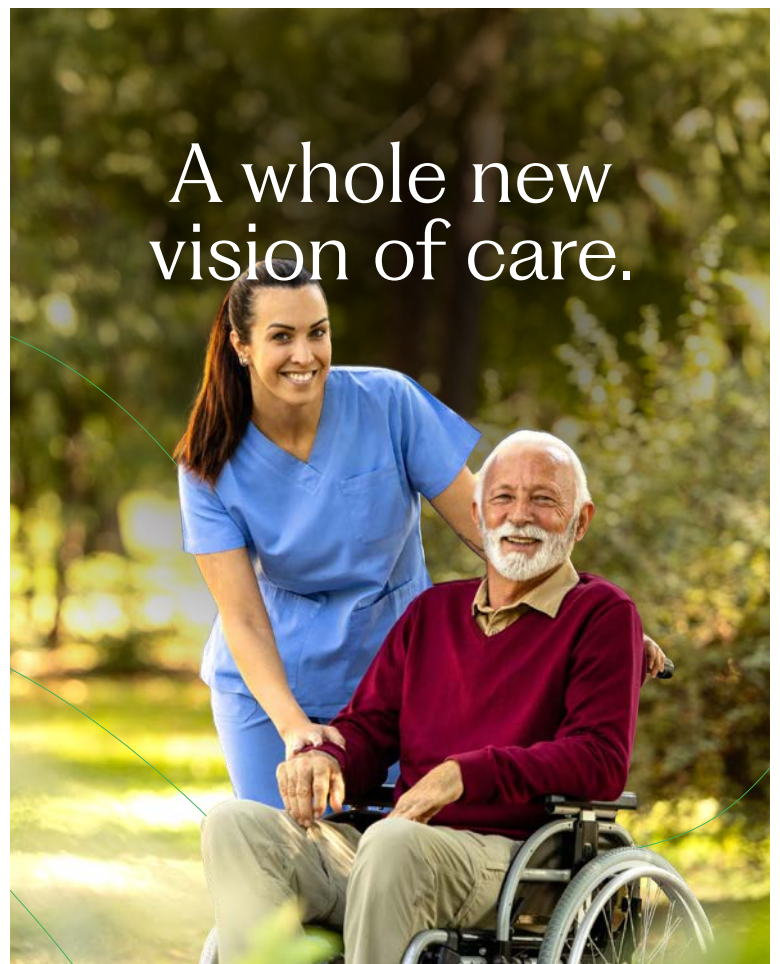
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Outdated State Standards Collide with SCC Review of NextEra-Dominion ‘Merger’

Herndon-Reston Indivisible holds legislative town hall.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

A town hall with State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, at Reston’s North County Governmental Center focused on mobilizing public action over NextEra Energy’s potential \$67 billion acquisition of Dominion Energy.

Speaking to the assembled community members on Aug. 30, organizers and lawmakers urged those present to scan the on-site QR code to submit formal comments directly to the three members of the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

“This is the QR code. It’ll take you directly to the [SCC] website to submit public comment,” Shin told attendees. “Make sure that you’re doing that one way or the other, whether you’re in favor of this acquisition or not,” Shin said. “Make sure you are letting the [SCC] know how you feel as Dominion Energy customers or folks who might be impacted by this decision.”

The event opened with live virtual analysis from Josh Macey, a professor at Yale Law School and expert in energy law and utility regulation. Macey stressed the importance of regulatory oversight, followed by the lawmakers’ comments highlighting community concerns, an audience Q&A, and a closing call to action.

The Aug. 30 event was hosted by Herndon-Reston Indivisible

Expert Context on Utility Risk

Macey cautioned that utility mergers carry risks that standard corporate transactions do not. Macey explained that a combined NextEra-Dominion could shift financial risks and higher costs directly onto Virginia consumers. He noted the merged entity could enter “into above-market contracts with its own affiliates” and use the regulated utility to “guarantee the debt of a riskier venture,” leaving ratepayers exposed if those bets go bad.

Infrastructure decisions after such a merger could disproportionately favor large commercial entities over everyday residents, Macey said.

New transmission could be built so that “cheaper supply goes to data centers” while “funneling more expensive power to the customers who don’t have any choice in who their provider is,” potentially prioritizing tech hubs over residential households.

Virginia could meet its clean-energy goals more cheaply through “a competitive process” rather than relying on voluntary promises from a merged megacity, Macey said.

Macey called for “ring-fencing provisions” prohibiting cross-affiliate financial transactions and requiring independent competitive solicitations subject to comprehensive audits.



From left, State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, deliver remarks to community members as Josh Macey, an associate professor at Yale Law School and expert in energy law and utility regulation, listens online.



State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, (left) and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, listen to community members’ comments following a town hall meeting in Reston, Virginia, Aug. 30.



Community members take their seats before a town hall meeting hosted by Herndon-Reston Indivisible, State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, at the North County Governmental Center in Reston Aug. 30. The meeting focused on mobilizing public action regarding NextEra Energy’s proposed \$67 billion acquisition of Dominion Energy.

Shin Discusses Legal Framework, Commission Structure

Turning to the regulatory landscape, Shin outlined the legal framework governing the transaction. The Virginia SCC will judge the merger under the Utility Transfer Act, a narrow, 1970s-era statute that asks essentially three core questions: does the deal interrupt or disrupt service; are rates still “just and reasonable”; and can ratepayers be held “mostly harmless”?

Unlike Texas and Hawaii, which rejected NextEra acquisitions because their state laws require a broad “public’s best interest” standard, Virginia’s current statute lacks a similar public-interest requirement.

Shin explained that Texas rejected a NextEra acquisition because regulators could not show it was in the best interest of ratepayers and would not shift risk onto them. Hawaii similarly rejected NextEra under its clear public-interest mandate. Shin contrasted those outcomes with Virginia’s Utility Transfer Act, which sets a narrower bar for

utility transfers.

Shin also laid out the State Corporation Commission’s 180-day review structure, which includes an initial 60-day period plus a possible 120-day extension. She noted that because the formal application was filed in mid-July, the statutory clock will run through the November and December holidays.

Addressing ethics concerns surrounding the three-member commission, Shin spoke about SCC Chair Kelsey A. Bagot who is a former senior attorney at NextEra. Shin voiced support for keeping Bagot on the case rather than seeking recusal, explaining that if Bagot stepped aside, the SCC would be left with only two members. Those remaining two commissioners could select a temporary third member without General Assembly oversight — an outcome Shin opposes.

Litigation Outlook and Public Action

Looking ahead, Boysko reinforced that

the 180-day window will not be the end of the NextEra-Dominion Energy story, stating that there will “likely be litigation, no matter what the answer is” and that the matter will “not be solved in 180 days.”

Shin added that if the SCC’s ultimate decision is appealed, the case would bypass lower appellate courts and proceed directly to the Virginia Supreme Court.

When an audience member asked whether the General Assembly could intervene to extend the SCC’s statutory timeline, Boysko acknowledged that while some lawmakers have requested an extension, she does not believe enough legislative support currently exists to pass such a measure.

Asked if the legislature has the technical authority to change the timeline, Shin replied it would be “very unusual and extraordinary” while the case is underway.

Both legislators concluded the meeting by emphasizing that public participation remains the most effective tool for residents, as lawmakers do not vote on utility merger approvals. They reiterated the importance of filing public comments in the official SCC docket.

They advocated for local in-person public hearings so residents do not have to navigate restrictive phone-in testimony systems. Shin reminded attendees that the merger impacts 2.7 million Virginia customer accounts and predicted that the upcoming legislative session will see multiple bills introduced to revise statutory standards for future utility acquisitions.

The Virginia State Corporation Commission announced on Facebook on August 17, “If you’ve been following the news about the proposed Dominion Energy/NextEra merger, you may be curious about how the public can participate.

We’ve created the following web page to help! Keep up with important dates and other information relating to the upcoming hearing.

We’ll be updating the page as more information becomes available.”

<https://www.scc.virginia.gov/about-the-scc/dominion-nextera-merger-updates/>

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Will Rowe explained how medics use electrodes and leads to measure a patient's electrical signals. Brothers Omkar Bodke (left) and Shree Bodke learned about emergency medicine administered in an ambulance.



Fairfax County Fire and Rescue brought an ambulance for "touch a truck" in the parking lot.

It's All About Community

FROM PAGE 1

Staying Healthy

Health care was front and center. Mariama Kalokoh from the Fairfax County Health Department encouraged people to get flu shots and handed out free home covid tests. Blaire Wesley, a Sentara oncology nurse navigator, helps people get care and comfort and discussed the risks of using marijuana, e-cigarettes and vape pens.

Caitlin Liberatore with U.S. Dermatology Partners on Sherwood Hall Lane offered free sunscreen.

The "sand tray" at River Grove Therapy's table was an attention-getter. Lucas Watling said that clients create scenes in the sand to express their emotions. "There's no right or wrong way," he said.

"We go where the child is," said Shannen Garland with ABA Centers, as youngsters snatched lollipops off her table. Her organization offers autism care to youngsters aged 18 months to 17 years.

John Harris and Melissa McIn-

tosh with the Mount Vernon Lions Club explained that they host vision and hearing screenings, recycle eyeglasses and hearing aids and offer scholarships to visually-impaired students.

Some youngsters climbed up into an ambulance where Will Howe, a county volunteer, explained that the crew uses a mounted Zoll monitor to check a patient's heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen and alert hospital emergency room personnel about a patient's condition.

Burke and Herbert Bank and Spectra Credit Union employees touted their financial services. AT&T representatives offered a \$200 discount for customers "to switch" to AT&T cellphone and internet services.

Enticing Cuisine

The school's basement level was abuzz with food vendors, like Dishes of India doling out palak paneer and murg makhani. Haymibbq and

International Grocery owners from North Kings Highway teased appetites with beef and tibs, seasoned with special homemade seasonings. Cooper Road's Chalkboard Wings had steady patrons for barbecue and wings. Few could skip Paris X and Puff's stuffed cookies and brownie S'mores.

As she savored Dishes of India's offerings, Deborah Ahenkan said she was impressed with all the vendors and food. Her cousin, Pam McKinley, came from Rose Hill to "learn what's going on in my community."

The Theme: Community

United Community billed the event as a "celebration of community, culture and connection."

"It's all about community," noted Leah Fraley, UC's head. "United Community has always been about community. It's an action word, bringing people together."

Echoing that view, Mount Vernon School Board member Matteo

Dunne said, "It a wonderful community event, coming together to celebrate inclusivity and build a sense of community."



United Community's logo



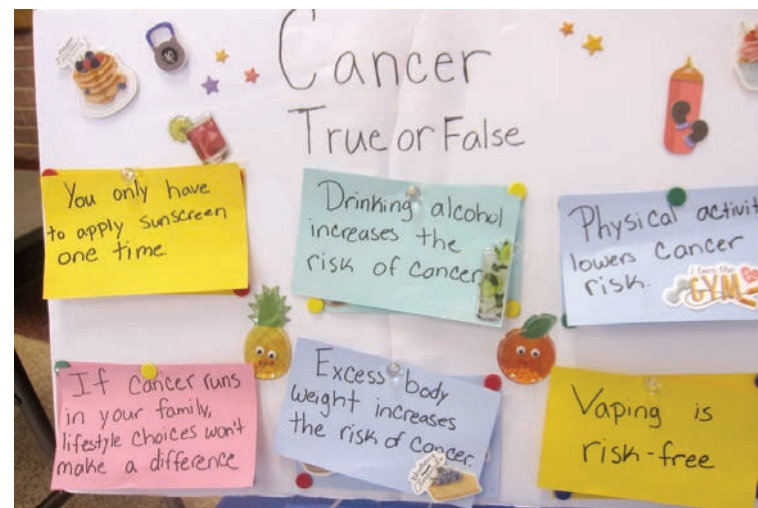
Naresh Bhatt and Prakash Bhatt offered delicious food from Belle View Shopping Center's Dishes of India.



People could express or cope with their feelings about divorce with these figures of a bride and groom seeming to walk away from each other.



River Grove Therapy had a sand tray with small figures for people to use to create scenes, a form of therapy.



Blaire Wesley with Sentara's Northern Virginia displays a cancer quiz on her table.

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

Bird Walks. 8 a.m. At 6401 George Washington Memorial Parkway, Alexandria. Friends of Dyke Marsh organizers lead bird walks every Sunday morning. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Walks are led by experienced birders and everyone is welcome to join.

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

Monday Morning Bird Walk. 7 a.m. Meets at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard Alexandria. The Monday Morning Bird Walk is sponsored by the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and takes place every Monday at 7 a.m. April-September and 8 a.m. October-March. Following the walk, members of the group gather at the nearby Denny's for breakfast and to compile the morning's bird list. Call (703) 768-2525.

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Wednesday Night Bingo. 7 p.m. At Atlas Brew Works, 2429 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. The Capital City Showcase, the company that brings you some of the DC area's best events, is hosting an amazing night of everyone's favorite game at Atlas Brew Works Alexandria. Win prizes on every round, and the winner of the final round gets a \$50 Atlas Brew Works gift card for your next visit! There's also \$6 select Atlas drafts! Plus pizza served from the world famous Andy's Pizza! Email at capitalcityshowcase@gmail.com

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every Sunday 9-1 p.m.

NOW THRU SEPT. 13

Rebecca J. White Birth of a Torii. At the Athenaenaeum, Alexandria. The "Birth of a Torii" series re-imagines the origin of a torii, a traditional Japanese gate to a sacred space or shrine. In Rebecca's work, torii's are placed as a mark of reverence or divine protection.

NOW THRU SEPT. 17

Summer Concerts at Carlyle Crossing. 6-8 p.m. At Carlyle Crossing, 2455 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. Beginning June 11 and continuing through Sept. 17, the free outdoor series will bring an eclectic lineup of local and regional musicians to the plaza on select Thursday evenings, creating a lively gathering place for residents, visitors, and the surrounding community.

Concert dates:
September 3 – Femi and the Foundation (Funk, Rock, Hip-Hop, R&B)
September 17 – Sol Roots (Funk, Blues, Soul & Rock)

NOW THRU SEPT. 30

Spiritual Expressions: Differences and Similarities Exhibit. At Mount Vernon Unitarian Church Art Alcove, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Digital photographic images by Jeanne Tifft. Contact: Nina Tisara, ninat@ninatisara.com, 703-625-8313.

NEPENTHE GALLERY IN SEPTEMBER
Location: Nepenthe Gallery, 7928 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria.



"Blithe Spirit" can be seen now through Sept. 19, 2026 at The Little Theatre of Alexandria.



The Chalk-A-Block celebration takes place on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 at the TideLock development in Old Town North.

September 10th: Gallery Discussion About Banksy and His Works;
September 17th: New Collection from Tamara Minarchi;
September 24th: Opening of Special Exhibit, Alexandria Experience, by World Renowned Artist, Alexei Butirskiy;
September 25th: Live Painting Demonstration by Alexei Butirskiy;
September 29th: Fundraiser for EdenSpring.

NOW THRU SEPT. 19

"Blithe Spirit." 8 p.m. Thursday to Saturday; 2 p.m. Sundays. At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. A sparkling supernatural comedy that follows novelist Charles Condomine as he invites an eccentric medium to his home for research—only to accidentally summon the ghost of his mischievous first wife, Elvira. As the spirited (and increasingly chaotic) haunting disrupts his marriage to his second wife, Ruth, Charles finds himself caught between the living and the dead in a battle of wit, jealousy and otherworldly antics. Clever, fast-paced and delightfully irreverent, Blithe Spirit remains one of Coward's most beloved comedies.

SEPT. 4-26

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage: Voices Through Visuals Art Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave, Alexandria. This exhibit honors Hispanic culture, and its rich traditions, resilience, and artistic contributions through a range of media and perspectives, and explores themes like heritage, migration, family, cultural pride, and transformation. Opening Reception:

Friday, September 4 from 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](https://www.delrayartisans.org/exhibits)

SATURDAY/SEPT. 5

First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Open every day, various hours. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 6

The Hot Lanes Concert. 7 p.m. At Fort Hunt Park, Pavilion A, Alexandria. The band is honored to be back for the Fort Hunt Park series and its continued relationship with the National Park Service. Bring a chair or grab a picnic table early.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 10

The Chamber ALX's 2026 Legislative Reception. 5:30-7 p.m. At the Alexandrian Hotel, Alexandria. Don't miss one of the Chamber's premier events of the year—the 2026 Legislative Reception. This annual gathering brings together elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders for an evening of meaningful conversations, valuable networking, and connections that help shape the

future of Alexandria and the region.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 17

September After Hours. 5:30-7 p.m. At Royal Restaurant, 730 N. St. Asaph Street, Alexandria. Shake off the workday and join the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce for its September After Hours at Royal Restaurant. It's taking over this Alexandria favorite for an evening of drinks, delicious bites, and plenty of good company. Come catch up with familiar faces, make a few new connections, and enjoy a night out.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 19

Chalk-A-Block. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At TideLock development, 1111 N. Fairfax Street, Old Town North in Alexandria. Chalk artists will transform TideLock's interior drive into a spectacular temporary canvas, creating large-scale works of art throughout the day. Artist/architect Anila Angjeli, who captivated the crowd last year with her colorful "Wings in Bloom" creation and accompanying interactive art activity, and master muralist Patrick Kirwin will be among the artists returning to Chalk-A-Block this fall. Visitors can watch the artwork come to life while enjoying live music from local favorite The Okays, browse handmade goods from local artisans and makers curated by Made in ALX, and sample food and beverages.

WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 23

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce's 29th Annual Chamber Golf Classic. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Laurel Hill Golf Club, 8701 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton. For almost thirty years, this popular event has provided more than \$365,000 in scholarships for local high school students to study business, preparing the next generation of business and community leaders.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 24

September Coffee & Connections. 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal Street, Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network presents September Coffee & Connections. Kick off your morning with the Professional Women's Network at the September event—featuring coffee, conversation, and valuable connections with women (and men) from across the region. This quarter, they'll hear a guided look at Women in Business: We Were Always Here, a special exhibit at Gadsby's Tavern Museum that explores the remarkable stories of women entrepreneurs who helped shape Alexandria's past and present.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 25

ALX Pink Gala. 7-10 p.m. At Above ALX Community, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Breast Cancer Collective for the ALX Pink Gala on Friday, Sept. 25 in Alexandria, supporting greater access to breast cancer screening and diagnostic care. Join [ALXPinkGala.org](https://www.alxpinkgala.org).

SEPT. 26-27

Carmen & The Firebird. Featuring Louis Lohraseb, conductor; also featuring Chee-Yun Kim, violin.
Saturday, Sept. 26 at 7:30 p.m.
At Rachel M. Schlesinger Center,
Sunday, Sept. 27 at 3 p.m.
At George Washington Masonic Memorial

SATURDAY/OCT. 3

First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Open every day, various hours. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

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PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Oriella Mejia, a Prince William Parks Commissioner, donned one of the sashes like those the suffragists wore.

Protecting the Right to Vote Still Requires Vigilance

FROM PAGE 3

stitution was not designed with you in mind, change it. And once you have a seat, make room for someone else.” She exhorted the audience to use “the power that that generations before us fought to secure.”

“Threats to voting rights are greater now than in 60 years,” Nancy Tate told attendees. “The suffragists knew that the fight for equality was never over,” she said, so some went on the found the League of Women Voters in 1920. Tate, an Arlington resident, is the League’s executive director.

Historian Shirley Marshall, author of “An Inside Story of the National Woman’s Party,” said, “The suffragists did more than hold banners and stand around.” Combining through the 1918 letters Elizabeth Kalb wrote from Washington to her mother, Marshall described

incidents, like the police arresting women “for carrying the American flag” and Kalb getting a lump from being “cracked on her head.”

“Police violence was common,” Marshall said, “But mostly out of sight.” Because Wilson initially did not support suffrage, women burned his speeches in Lafayette Square. “Kerosene was the secret, keeping the fires lit. They soaked logs in kerosene,” she snickered.

Many historical accounts portray the suffragists as white women, but suffrage was diverse, Marshall asserted. And she emphasized that even upon the 1920 passage of the amendment, women who were not white, like African Americans, Indigenous women and Chinese women, still could not vote.

Joy Galberth, president of the Fairfax County chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, recalled that the organizers of the suffragists’



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton.

1913 Washington parade insisted that African American women march at the end. “Our sorority marched with dignity even when forced to the back,” she said, adding, “Equality is not a destination but a responsibility.”

Gloria Blackwell, reinforced Hashmi’s themes. “It was a long, courageous effort,” she said. “They persisted. Democracy is not self-sustaining.” Blackwell is head of the American Association of University Women.

Kobby Hoffman, president of the Virginia chapter of the National Organization for Women, read the “Women’s Declaration of Independence” and sought petition signers urging Congress to recognize the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th amendment to the Constitution.

Marshall quoted Mary Church Terrell, a 1905 African-American civil rights leader: “There is an imperative need of meddlers today, active, insistent and fearless meddlers.” The meddlers are still at it.

“I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand.”

Susan B Anthony

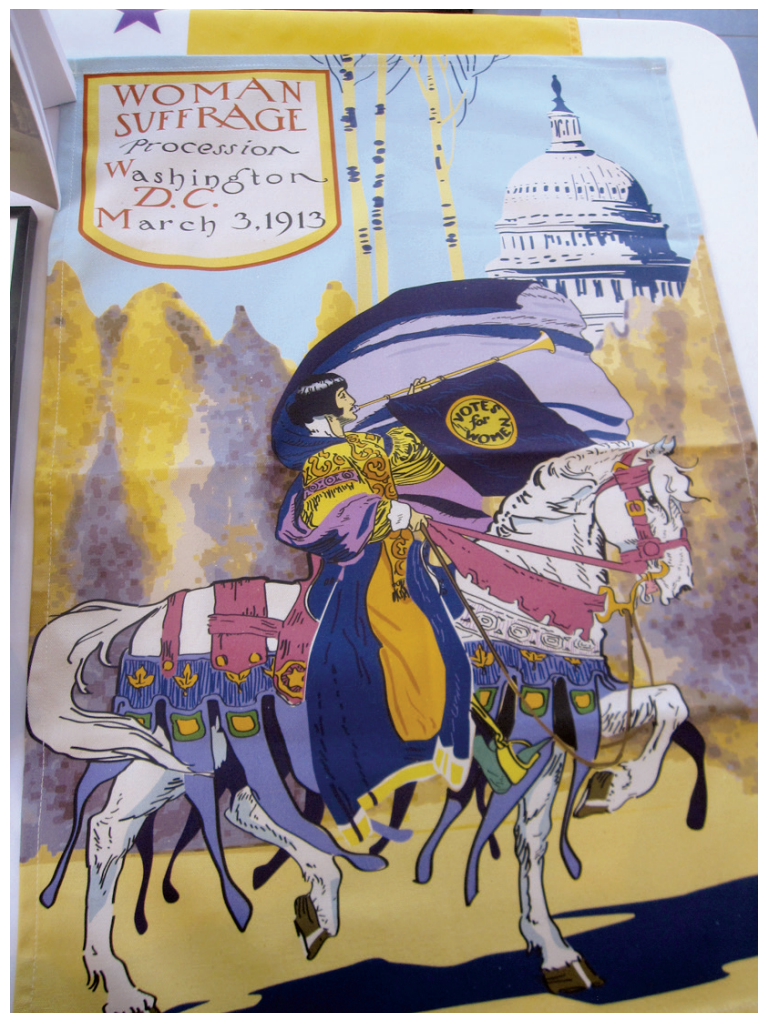
Susan B. Anthony was just one of many suffragists.



Thirteen stations tell the suffrage story.



Lynne Garvey-Hodge portrayed Mrs. Robert Walker, a suffragist.



The suffragists staged a parade in Washington, D. C., in 1913.

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:

gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm

Editor and Publisher

mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Jeanne Theismann

jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com

@TheismannMedia

Mercia Hobson

Staff Reporter

mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon

Contributing Writer

miksalmon6922@gmail.com

Glenda Booth

Contributing Writers

ADVERTISING:

For advertising information

sales@connectionnewspapers.com

703-778-9431

Debbie Funk

Display Advertising/National Sales

703-778-9444

debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin

Marketing Assistant

703-778-9431

dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment

Advertising

703-778-9431

Publisher

Jerry Vernon

703-549-0004

jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher

Mary Kimm

mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

@MaryKimm

Production Manager:

Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager:

Ann Oliver

circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

A Connection Newspaper



Mount Vernon Bike Path Detours Away from Long Bridge

Bridge project has many facets including bicyclist implications.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

This summer, cyclists along the Mount Vernon Trail encountered a detour on the northern end of the trail at Gravelly Point due to the Long Bridge Project where impacts include a temporary bypass and detour.

Beginning July 1, the bypass opened, shifting riders closer to the GW Parkway, with a well-marked maze of fences and cement barriers. It will be in place for the next few years.

Cyclist Trent Bailey captured it all in a video he posted on social media to lessen the confusion, calling it a "massive detour on the Mount Vernon trail."

"They're making a separate bridge for bikers and walkers," Bailey explained.

The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling posted a blog about the detour too, noting that it didn't open on the exact date that was initially targeted but soon after. "The good news is the Mount Vernon Trail will remain open throughout construction," the blog stated.

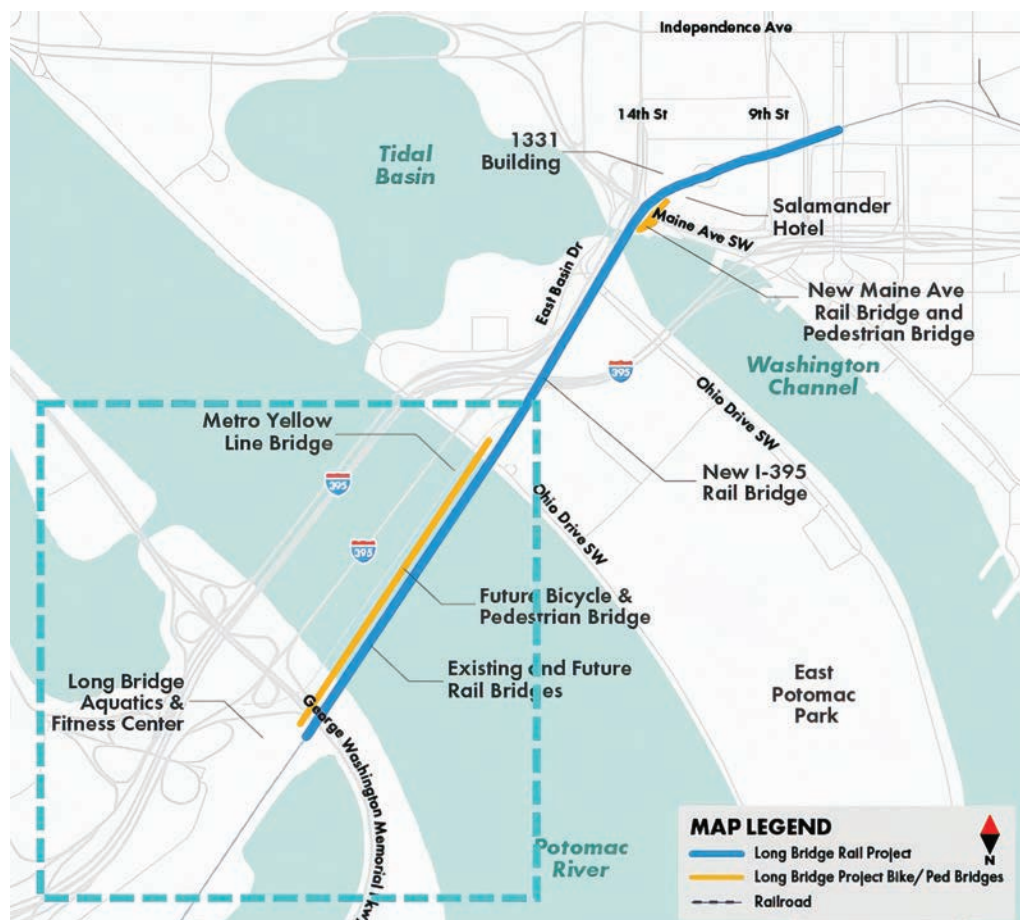
The trail detour, separate bike and pedestrian bridge, and rail work are all part of the \$2.3 billion project that includes more rail tracks to accommodate a projected increase in railroad traffic along this corridor. This includes Amtrak, VRE and CSX Transportation railroad services.

Cyclists on the trail will encounter the detour just past Reagan-National Airport where the trail goes through Gravelly Point. The temporary trail takes them back up to the Parkway, past the Metro bridge, and back down to the riverside path.

On July 30, the project officials met with the Arlington and Alexandria Advisory Group to update them on the project. The bike trail detour at Gravelly Point was a topic they covered. "Very exciting for us to get this open, we've had a lot of compliments," said project control manager Brian Grayburn.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association mapped out a route that skips the area entirely. On the WABA map, a bicyclist bypasses the Gravelly Point lot and follows Long Branch Drive, but this requires crossing some busy streets.

At Gravelly Point, cyclists coming from the Mount Vernon area are detouring away from the river.



MAPS BY VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

Once across the Potomac River, the Long Bridge pedestrian-bicyclist bridge links up with the Mount Vernon Trail.



News With Which I Can Live



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

After yet another monthly lab test, my oncologist responded with a brief electronic reply: "Cancer well controlled. Stable creatinine and liver function tests." Why this statement matters, other than the obvious is, that my health situation exists on two simultaneous tracks which unfortunately compound the treatment of either: stage IV papillary thyroid cancer and as a direct result of its previous treatment, stage IV chronic kidney disease. Two for the price of one, you might say, as I did say to the X-Ray tech when I had both a CT scan and MRI consecutively one visit, (I use that term 'visit' loosely). My lab tests measured the usual choices, but as soon as damage was done/creatinine level was too high, my oncologist stopped that original papillary thyroid cancer medicine and went on to plan (B), which I still remain on. (During the time I was being treatment for papillary thyroid cancer, I went to Georgetown University's Lombardi Cancer Center for an evaluation/second opinion. Their thyroid cancer specialist doctor confirmed my papillary thyroid cancer diagnosis and agreed that I was on the best drug available for its treatment.)

However, like many medicines, they sort of have a shelf/effective life and are prescribed until they are no longer effective and another medicine/chemotherapy is recommended. This situation (changing medicines) is not so much a matter of if as it is when. In conjunction with recurring CT scans and MRIs, the indications from your regular lab work might indicate that something might be happening in your body and so changes are made to your treatment protocol, and this routine goes on and on and on (so long as you live on and on).

And since I wasn't promised a rose garden (much of a life/future in Feb. '09 when I was given a "13 month to two years" prognosis), I pretty much consider it a miracle that I'm still alive and take nothing for granted. Moreover, blips on scans and/or abnormal levels on my lab work are all just the cost of doing business, so to speak (remaining alive). As such, none of it really bothers me; it's more that it gets my attention and focus until the situation is addressed/hopefully resolved. The problem that persists is that none of this is guaranteed and most people's least favorite word is cancer is my most necessary word. And as you most of you should equate, cancer is the original "Big Dog," who rarely wants to get off the porch. As much as you (the patient) want to be in control of your life, a cancer diagnosis is the ultimate topsy turvy. Upside down is only the beginning. Whatever was before will never be again. You are a victim of your circumstance. And though there are many cancer patients in the world (heck, there are probably some on your street) from whom you might gain some strength and understanding, there are still times when you're on your own: as in receiving emails from your doctor with results of your recent lab work or scan. This moment is not for the faint of heart. And more often than not, you're by yourself when this kind of news appears on your computer/device.

Sometimes, very often in fact, I have been rewarded with the appearance and/or sound of my most favorite word: stable. I can live with stable. Moreover, I can live with uncertainty of not knowing what happens next. In addition, I can live with the monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly and hopefully even longer intervals between medical assessments I'll call them, to determine where me and my cancer stand in Kenny's world.

It's hardly an ideal existence but it's one I never expected, and one for which I'm eternally grateful.

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



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