

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton ♦ Reston ♦ Vienna

Romeo and Juliet

PAGE 11

Justin Wolfe Released after 25 Years

PAGE 3

Drawing the Line on Surveillance

PAGE 4

Connection Election Guide 2026

PAGES 6-13

Riley Burden
(Romeo) presents
a rose to Langlen
Heisnam (Juliet)
on her balcony, in
Westfield High's
production.

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

OCTOBER 7-20, 2026

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Two Women Killed in Chantilly Pedestrian Crashes

One victim was struck while in a wheelchair.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Two female pedestrians were struck and killed by vehicles in separate incidents in Chantilly, just 11 days apart. The first tragedy, Sept. 18, involved a woman who used a wheelchair on Route 50 near the Greenbriar Town Center. The second happened last Tuesday, Sept. 29, on Route 28 north.

Theresa Flynn

Fairfax County police identified the first victim as Chantilly resident Theresa Flynn, 53. While in her wheelchair, she tried to cross Route 50 at Plaza Lane in Chantilly's

Greenbriar community.

Officers responded Sept. 18, at 7:27 p.m., to the Route 50/Plaza Lane intersection after receiving reports about a pedestrian there who was struck by a car. The vehicle, a Kia Rio, was traveling westbound on Route 50. The driver was uninjured and remained on the scene.

Crash Reconstruction Unit detectives preliminarily determined that Flynn wasn't in a crosswalk while using her mobility wheelchair to cross Route 50 from south to north. However, Route 50 is six lanes there, with a 45-mph speed limit, and Plaza Lane has no crosswalk across that busy highway.

Flynn sustained life-threatening injuries and was transported to a local hospital

where she was later pronounced dead. Preliminarily, police said speed and alcohol did not appear to be factors for the driver.

Fiona Hagengimana

The second victim was Fiona Hagengimana, 32, of Fairfax. Police responded Sept. 29, at 11 p.m., to Route 28 near Route 50 following reports of a pedestrian who was hit by a vehicle.

According to police, Crash Reconstruction Unit detectives have initially determined that Hagengimana was walking in the northbound lanes of Route 28, just north of Route 50, when a vehicle struck her.

"Several additional vehicles subsequently struck Hagengimana," said police. "She was pronounced deceased at the scene. At least two drivers remained at the scene. Detec-

tives are working to determine the circumstances surrounding the crash and identify the initial striking vehicle and driver. It is unknown at this time if alcohol was a factor in the crash."

Detectives are now investigating the chain of events that led up to the crashes resulting in the deaths of both Flynn and Hagengimana. Anyone who may have information about either incident should call the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

Or submit a tip anonymously via Crime Solvers at www.crimesolversfairfax.org, download the P3Tips app or call the tip line at 866-411-8477.

If tipsters wish to be contacted by a detective, they should leave their contact information.

McLean Man Sentenced for Shooting Man in Town of Herndon

Victim had been kicking vehicles.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A 20-year-old McLean man was sentenced Sept. 25 in Fairfax County Circuit Court to five years and eight months in prison for fatally shooting an un-

armed pedestrian who kicked his car.

Kianmehr Shirinipaziziba received a 10-year sentence with four years and four months suspended after pleading guilty in May to voluntary manslaughter, reduced from an original charge of second-degree murder. In Virginia, voluntary manslaughter

is classified as a Class 5 felony, which carries a maximum statutory sentence of 10 years in prison.

Authorities said the shooting occurred at Elden Street and Jonquil Lane in the Town of Herndon when Shirinipaziziba, then 18, encountered 39-year-old Jason Hann acting erratically and jumping in front of traffic. After Hann kicked the Tesla Shirinipaziziba was driving, Shirinipaziziba shot him once in the chest from inside the vehicle with a Glock handgun.

Herndon Police officers initially responded to 911 calls regarding a disorderly pedestrian jumping in front of traffic. They arrived at the scene immediately following the shooting and arrested him on site.

Shirinipaziziba had remained at the

scene, called for help, and told responding officers he fired because he thought Hann was reaching for his waist.

"When the defendant was placed in this situation he responded with violence instead of other reactions that could have avoided this tragic outcome," Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said. "That is textbook voluntary manslaughter and a clear danger to public safety."

According to Va. Code § 53.1-20 (Commitment of persons convicted of felony), following sentencing for a felony conviction, defendants in Virginia receiving active prison sentences are transferred from local county detention facilities to a state prison facility operated by the Virginia Department of Corrections to serve out their active term.

NEWS BRIEFS

Fifth Annual Parktober Fest Is Oct. 10

The fifth annual ParktoberFest will be held Saturday, Oct. 10, from noon-5 p.m., at E.C. Lawrence Park on the lawn of the historic Middlegate House. It's beside Cabell's Mill at 5235 Walney Road in Chantilly. This free, family-friendly event celebrates this park and all it has to offer.

There'll be live, music performances by The Walkaways, Lucas Mason and Georgia Rae Braun; craft brews from Ono Brewing Co.; food trucks Burgorilla and TacoOne; crafts artisans, makers, bakers and specialty vendors; tours of the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center, and fun on the child-friendly park-loop trail.

Learn about Police Marine Patrol, Motor Squad

The Sully District Community Advisory Committee will meet Wednesday, Oct. 14, at 7 p.m., in the Sully District Governmental Center. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly, and the public is welcome to attend. Guest speakers will be representatives of the Fairfax County Police Department's Marine Patrol and Motor Squad units.

Fatal Crash on Beltway

Virginia State Police is investigating a fatal single vehicle crash that occurred Saturday (Oct. 3, 2026) at 4:40 a.m. on Interstate 495 westbound at the 170-mile-marker in Fairfax County.

A 2025 Toyota Rav4 was travelling southbound (the correct direction of travel) on Interstate 495 when the vehicle hydroplaned and struck a traffic attenuator.

The driver, Abraham Wrobeh, 24, of Alexandria, Va., suffered serious injuries and was transported to an area hospital. Wrobeh succumbed to those injuries a few hours later. Wrobeh was wearing a seatbelt.

The crash remains under investigation.

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Hard-Won Freedom Comes at Last for Justin Wolfe

After a quarter-century in prison, he's finally released.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Terri Steinberg doesn't need any presents for the upcoming holidays. She got everything she wanted last week, when – after more than a quarter century in prison – her son, Justin Wolfe, was finally released.

Convicted of murder-for-hire in 2002, he continually maintained his innocence. But police and prosecutors in Prince William County were doggedly focused on incarcerating him and making sure he received a death sentence. They led the shooter – the only person who could save him – to say Wolfe hired him for the job. (See companion story)

But the truth finally came to light and, after 25 years of fighting to free him – including a slew of legal filings, court motions and hearings, trials, and the help of countless attorneys and even the Innocence Project – Wolfe came home last Monday night, Sept. 28. He'd been transferred from prison to the Manassas jail, where his mom and uncle eagerly waited to greet him and whisk him away.

Earlier that afternoon, Steinberg shared her feelings about Justin's impending re-

lease. "In 2002, this court sentenced my son to die for murder-for-hire, a crime he did not commit," she said. "Today, after a 25-year battle for his life, my son finally gets to come home. What happened to Danny was tragic; the Petrole family lost a son. There was never any doubt that Owen Barber killed Danny."

But, said Steinberg, when former Prince William County Commonwealth's Attorney Paul Ebert, now deceased, "manipulated evidence and witnesses in order to secure a death sentence for Justin, he only compounded the pain and suffering of all involved. It was an unnecessary, cruel and unusual punishment and, according to Judge [Raymond] Jackson from the Federal District Court, it was 'abhorrent to the judicial process.'"

Regarding her son's plea to two lesser charges, which enabled him to be sentenced to time served and leave prison at last, Steinberg said it came after he served 25 years, 4 months and 28 days, including over 5,000 days of solitary confinement." And



Justin Wolfe today
at age 45.

while it wasn't exactly what his family had hoped for, she said it "does allow for Justin to maintain his innocence, finally be free and our family to begin to heal."

She then thanked everyone who "stood by us all these years, especially our amazing legal team – Marvin Miller who has been with us since 2002, Meghan Shapiro, Scott Abeles, Gene Rossi, the law firm of Carlton Fields, the law firm of King

and Spaulding, the UVA Innocence Project, Katie Swanson, Bob Lessemun, and so many others without whom my son would not be alive today."

Steinberg also expressed appreciation for her "Journey of Hope family and friends who carried me when I could not stand." This organization works to end the death penalty and calls for more constructive and effective responses to violent crime.

Meanwhile, friends and family shared their joy about Wolfe's release on social media. Abraham Bonowitz, founder of Death Penalty Action – another group working toward abolishing the death penalty – was one of many

who wrote on Steinberg's Facebook page.

"I am deliriously happy for my friend Terri Steinberg, who has been fighting for freedom for her son Justin since he was railroaded to Virginia's death row 25 years ago," he wrote. "Terri sets the example for a mother's love for her child. [She's been] unyielding in her advocacy [for him]."

"These past several months have been a brutal roller coaster of final negotiations and undue delays. And Sept. 28, Justin walked into his mother's arms and into freedom. It should not be this hard to get justice."

Chenoa Young, who met Wolfe through her work in prison ministry, summed up her feelings that evening by writing, "Tonight, Justin came home. Home to his loved ones. Home to his friends. Home to the people who never stopped believing in him."

Since then, Wolfe has been enjoying his mom's home-cooked meals and all the hugs she'd stored up for him while they were separated for so very long. He's also reconnected with many other family members and has even obtained a brand-new driver's license.

As for Steinberg, she said she and Justin's stepdad, siblings, nieces, nephews and other relatives will do their best to "try to recover from the past 25 difficult years. It is now time for our family to heal."

A Tale of Drugs, Money and Prosecutorial Misdeeds

The saga of Justin Wolfe, Owen Barber and Danny Petrole.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When 21-year-old, Centreville High grad Danny Petrole was slain in his car in front of his Bristow townhouse, March 15, 2001, the tragedy unearthed a major drug ring operating in the Centreville/Chantilly area.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars changed hands regularly, and a dozen young drug dealers in Fairfax and Prince William counties became rich. Among them, said authorities, were Centreville's Justin Wolfe, almost 20, Petrole and the man later convicted of killing him, Owen Barber IV, 21, of Centreville.

After Petrole arrived home that night, Barber fired 10 shots from a 9 mm Smith & Wesson through Petrole's passenger-side window, with all but one bullet striking him. Driving away, Barber tossed the gun into a nearby intersection and fled, but police investigation soon led to both his and Wolfe's arrests.

Petrole attended NOVA and delivered flowers part-time. But when police searched his belongings, they discovered \$965 in his wallet and \$17,460 in his car's trunk. In his townhouse were guns, \$120,366 in cash and nearly half a million dollars worth of ecstasy and marijuana.

Barber and Wolfe were 1998 Chantilly High grads; Petrole graduated in '98 from Centreville. During Barber's and Wolfe's trials in Prince William County Circuit Court, much of the testimony came from young, self-admitted drug dealers and users in the local area.

Both Barber and Petrole sold marijuana, including to Wolfe, to sell to others. Initially facing the death penalty for killing Petrole, Barber said he didn't know Petrole but killed him because Wolfe hired him to do so. In return for his testimony, Barber's charge was reduced from capital to first-degree murder.

In January 2002, Wolfe, then 21, was convicted of capital murder and later sentenced to death, plus 33 years in prison – 30 for drug distribution and three for a firearm being used in Petrole's killing. In August 2002, Barber received 38 years in prison.

Wolfe always maintained his innocence, and Barber was the only one directly linking Wolfe to the murder. But during a November 2010 evidentiary hearing in Federal Court in Norfolk, Barber recanted his earlier testimony against Wolfe. Furthermore, U.S. District



Justin Wolfe, then 21,
in court.



Danny Petrole,
the victim.



Owen Barber,
the shooter.

Court Judge Raymond Jackson heard evidence not presented in 2002.

In his July 2011 decision to overturn Wolfe's convictions and sentences, Jackson wrote that the commonwealth "failed to disclose evidence indicating Barber had a relationship with Petrole" prior to his death. This disclosure, he wrote – plus statements from a confidential informant that "Barber owed Petrole money [and] Petrole had a hit out on Barber" – could have impeached Barber's testimony.

In August 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit, in Richmond upheld that court's ruling that Wolfe's due-process rights had been violated and his convictions and sentences should be vacated.

On Aug. 16, 2012, Judge Robert B. King wrote his opinion was based on "a written police report reflecting that – before Barber ever asserted that Wolfe hired him to murder Petrole – Prince William County Det. [Samson] Newsome advised Barber he could avoid the death penalty by implicating

Wolfe."

King therefore concluded "Barber had a motive to misrepresent the facts regarding Petrole's death" and that any evidence of Wolfe's alleged drug-dealing was "inevitably tainted by the prosecutorial misconduct in this case."

Yet the pattern continued. Again coerced before Wolfe's 2016 retrial, Barber pleaded the Fifth. Frustrated, on March 19, 2016, Wolfe took a deal and wrote a letter pleading guilty to first-degree murder, use of a firearm in [that] felony and conspiracy to distribute marijuana. That July, he was sentenced to 41 years in prison. But his friends and relatives said he only wrote that letter so he'd someday be released from prison.

Then in 2023, Barber wrote a statement saying Wolfe had nothing to do with Petrole's murder. Barber said he testified against Wolfe because police told him "it was either do this or die." So he concocted the murder-for-hire story because "it was what prosecutors [Paul Ebert and Richard

Conway] wanted to hear." In his affidavit, Barber said Wolfe "did not deserve to die for something he did not do." The Fourth Circuit ruled it "new evidence because it rendered Barber available" to testify to Wolfe's innocence.

Still, Wolfe remained behind bars, ultimately spending more than 25 years in prison – 13 of them on death row. On July 7, 2025, Judge King and fellow Fourth Circuit Judges, Stephanie Thacker and Nicole Berner, ordered Wolfe to receive a new hearing based on his claims of innocence.

Writing their opinion, Thacker said this case involved conduct by Virginia that "we and lower courts have recognized as 'abhorrent to the judicial process.' Twenty-four years ago, the Commonwealth decided [Wolfe] was a guilty man. From that moment, [it's] done everything in its power to ensure [he] dies in prison."

But he remained incarcerated until last Monday, Sept. 28, when he was allowed to plead guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana and no contest to solicitation of robbery. In return, all his past charges were dropped, his resulting convictions were vacated and he was sentenced to time served (28 years, with three suspended).

Afterward, Petrole's family members issued a statement hoping this court decision gives them closure and that people will remember Danny's life instead of the circumstances of his death.

Drawing the Line on Police Surveillance

Commercial loophole creates de facto surveillance web.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

In a move against expanding surveillance, the Fairfax County School Board voted unanimously Sept. 24 to ban automated license plate readers on school grounds ahead of an Oct. 20 Board of Supervisors meeting on police technology.

Meanwhile, unregulated commercial networks — which make up a far larger portion of the broader tracking ecosystem — operate across private properties nationwide. Because Virginia Code § 2.2-5517 governs only state and local law enforcement, commercial properties, shopping malls, parking garages, HOAs, and repossession companies deploy license plate readers with virtually no statutory boundaries.

Introduced by Fairfax County Public Schools Vice Chairman Kyle McDaniel (At-Large), the approved

Police Implementation and Evolving State Standards

The school division's action comes four years after FCPD authorized Automated License Plate Reader technology under General Order 424 and Virginia Code § 2.2-5517. Led by Chief Kevin Davis, the department adopted the technology without a formal vote or supervisor budget approval.

Police briefed the board's Safety and Security Committee in summer 2022 before launching a multi-vendor pilot, including Flock Safety, Axon, and Motorola, in November 2022.

Statewide standards for law enforcement license plate reader use took effect July 1, 2025. According to a January 2026 report by the Virginia State Crime Commission, "Based on the responses to the Crime Commission's 2025 Law Enforcement ALPR Use Survey, some Virginia law enforcement agencies are not using ALPR in accordance with the new statute."

FCPD data shows that between Nov. 1, 2022, and Sept. 4, 2026, ALPR technology supported 1,594 cases, resulting in 912 arrests and 2,633 charges (1,741 felonies and 892 misdemeanors). It also aided in recovering 555 stolen vehicles



SCREEN GRAB VIA FCPS VIDEO
Kyle McDaniel, Fairfax County Public Schools Board member.

Flock cameras operated by HOAs, apartments, and businesses outnumber official FCPD units (84) by four to five times — roughly 335 to 420 cameras. Nationwide, Flock's network exceeds 120,000 cameras sharing data across state lines without warrants. Advocates say local networks could feed location data to federal agencies like ICE, deterring immigrant families from schools, healthcare or public services.

The ACLU of Virginia leads legal advocacy statewide. "Continuous surveillance of all Virginians threatens our most fundamental freedoms," Chris Kaiser, ACLU-VA policy director, told The Connection. "Predatory tech companies are harvesting our data to train their AI models and networking it globally in the cloud — making our data vulnerable

not just to leaks, but to the Trump Administration and its allies in the states who are using these networks to target immigrants, journalists, people seeking lawful reproductive healthcare, and political opponents. This technology has no place in Virginia and should be banned statewide."

"The expanded use of ALPR technology in our communities represents a dangerous escalation of mass surveillance," said Niki Zimmerman, president of the Fairfax County NAACP, in a statement. "Once these camera networks are established and integrated with third-party software, the harm to our civil liberties will be nearly impossible to roll back."

DeFlock Fairfax, a grassroots privacy coalition mapping ALPR locations, endorsed the Fairfax County School Board's ban.

Regional Reckoning Over Mass Surveillance

While county supervisors paused new police Flock installations Sept. 15 pending review with police presenting evaluations



SCREEN GRAB VIA LINKEDIN
Chris Kaiser, ACLU of Virginia.



SCREEN GRAB VIA FCPD
Chief Kevin Davis, FCPD.



SCREEN GRAB FCPD FACEBOOK VIDEO

Flock Safety Automated License Plate Reader camera mounted on a pole, paired with its solar panel.

Oct. 20, statutory oversight ends at government borders. Statewide, Virginia Code § 2.2-5517 governs only law enforcement agencies, leaving private entities entirely outside its reach.

The state's primary consumer privacy law, the Virginia Consumer Data Protection Act, contains key exemptions that leave commercial license plate reader networks unmonitored. Because the statute exempts publicly observable information and grants broad latitude for property security, commercial operators, parking garages, homeowners associations, and repossession companies can use license plate readers to collect, retain and share license plate data without state oversight.

Regionally and nationally, local elected bodies are taking firmer action, sometimes overriding the objections of law enforcement. Neighboring Arlington County, Va., voted to eliminate its leased Flock program despite Police Chief Andy Penn framing the board's removal order as a major setback

for local investigative work. The town board of Nantucket, Massachusetts, voted to dismantle its camera network following public outcry, even though Chief of Police Jody Kasper defended their investigative value up to the final vote.

Commercial ALPRs: The Regulatory Gap

Federal measures like the Fourth Amendment Is Not For Sale Act target only government data purchases, leaving private surveillance unregulated nationwide. In Virginia, state law (§ 2.2-5517) regulates only police ALPRs, while the Virginia Consumer Data Protection Act exempts public plate scans under security exceptions. Commercial operators, HOAs, repossession firms and others face no data deletion deadlines, allowing them to retain location histories indefinitely and sell aggregated tracking databases to insurers, lenders, data brokers and others. No bills are pending in the General Assembly's 2027 session to regulate private ALPR networks.

"Continuous surveillance of all Virginians threatens our most fundamental freedoms."

— **Chris Kaiser, ACLU-VA policy director**

motion prohibits the procurement, installation, or operation of surveillance plate readers, including Flock Safety cameras, on school division property. Board members framed the measure as necessary to safeguard civil liberties and address constituent privacy concerns.

"We are not the police department; we are an educational institution," McDaniel said, emphasizing that FCPS resources must focus on its students. "Our job, our mission, our focus, our budget dollars are about making sure 177,000 kids get the best education possible."

Brian Lambert, FCPS Chief Safety and Security Officer, noted that while traditional security cameras monitor facilities in real time, ALPR technology uses software algorithms to capture, search, and retain vehicle metadata — including plate numbers, make, model, color and distinguishing features.

Standard school security cameras remain active for routine facility monitoring. The ban also exempts speed enforcement and school bus stop-arm cameras.

valued at over \$9.2 million, 66 firearms, 158 narcotics seizures, and locating 57 missing persons. FCPD reports operating 84 stationary Flock readers.

Davis and peer executives in the Major Cities Chiefs Association embrace ALPR systems to solve auto thefts and violent crimes. On Sept. 11, 2026, the MCCA wrote congressional judiciary leaders advocating for continued, responsible ALPR use.

On Sept. 14, a coalition of 13 national law enforcement groups, including MCCA, published "Joint Law Enforcement Principles for Responsible Use of Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) Technology" to "prevent misuse without preventing legitimate use." The release shifts the debate toward standardized internal regulations rather than hardware bans.

Private Networks and Community Pushback

Community pushback has grown as cameras expand onto private property. In Fairfax County, private

NEWS

Local Officials Rally Turnout for Fairfax County Public Hearing on \$67 Billion Dominion-NextEra Merger

Discovery Dispute Carries Over to SCC Proceedings.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

As regulators at the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) weigh a proposed \$67 billion merger between Dominion Energy Virginia and Florida-based NextEra Energy, Inc., Northern Virginia local officials and state lawmakers are rallying turnout for an upcoming public hearing in Fairfax County.

At the same time, a discovery dispute carried over to SCC proceedings.

The regional Virginia State Corporation Commission in-person public witness hearing is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 9, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Fairfax County Government Center Board Auditorium. State Del. Rozia A. Henson Jr. (D-19th) posted on Bluesky that Friday's Fairfax session is "the only in-person opportunity in Northern Virginia." for community members to testify directly to regulators.

Sully District Supervisor Kathy Smith posted on Facebook Oct. 3 urging ratepayer participation: "The Virginia State Corporation Commission will hold a local public hearing in Fairfax to receive comments on the proposed merger between Dominion Energy Inc. and NextEra Energy Inc. Members of the public are invited to attend and offer comments on the proposed transaction and its potential effect on Dominion's Virginia customers."

In a Sept. 28 joint release announcing local government intervention in the proceeding, Arlington County Board Chair Matt de Ferranti and Alexandria Mayor Aliya Gaskins emphasized that formal local participation is critical to ensure state regulators address Northern Virginia's ratepayer and affordability concerns.

If approved, the transaction would combine NextEra — already the world's largest utility company — with Dominion Energy, Virginia's dominant electric provider serving 2.7 million customers. To complete the deal, NextEra must obtain approval from the SCC, as required under the state's Utility Transfers Act, to ensure new management will not harm Virginia consumers or jeopardize reliable service at fair rates.

Discovery Dispute Carries Over to SCC Proceedings



SCREEN GRAB VIA MAPQUEST
The Virginia State Corporation Commission building is located at 1300 E. Main St. in Richmond, Va.

As regional in-person public feedback on the proposed merger begins, a legal dispute over alleged internal corporate secrecy has carried over into the Commonwealth's regulatory proceedings (Case No. PUR-2026-00112).

Clean Virginia, an energy watchdog group acting as an intervenor, requested that regulators force NextEra Energy to release a corporate record known as the "Robo Memorandum." While attorneys representing NextEra and Dominion argued the out-of-state document did not concern Virginia utility service, Shelby Green, research and communications manager at the Energy and Policy Institute, noted in an Oct. 2 communication to The Connection that the SCC Hearing Examiner ruled (Page 25) earlier that day in favor of Clean Virginia, ordering NextEra and Dominion to turn over the document:

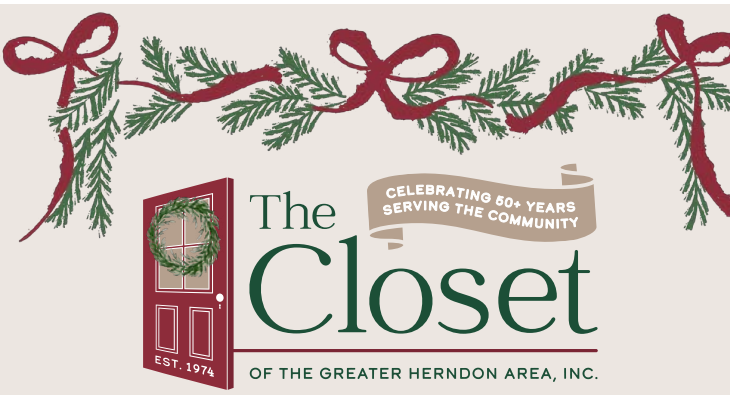
"Accordingly, I find the requested information is discoverable in the instant case, although the Commission will ultimately decide the admissibility of any information offered into the record as evidence," the Hearing Examiner wrote.

In his reasoning, the examiner shared that he found Clean Virginia's request for the Robo Memo to

be "reasonably calculated to lead to evidence that could verify or impeach the Petition's representations." He added that the memo and other requested materials reveal "governance issues of how the NextEra Board addresses allegations of potential criminality that it has determined warrant investigation."

According to Green, the Robo Memorandum allegedly demonstrates how NextEra's primary utility subsidiary, Florida Power & Light Co. (FPL), channeled corporate resources to a network of nonprofits that funded "ghost candidates" to undermine state legislative campaigns of candidates deemed unfavorable by FPL. Green added that one nonprofit, Grow United, allegedly extended a "phony job offer" to a city council member to facilitate NextEra's potential acquisition of the Jacksonville Electric Authority.

Named after former CEO James Robo, the "Robo Memorandum" details NextEra Energy and FPL's alleged 2018–2020 misconduct in Florida, including election interference, bribery, and pay-to-play media. Filings reveal millions in "dark money" used for ghost-candidate schemes, fake job offers, and targeted media influence. NextEra and FPL have denied wrongdoing.



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ELECTION GUIDE 2026



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Government Center serves as headquarters for the local government of Fairfax County, Va. According to reports from the county's electoral board, Fairfax County has approximately 813,000 total registered voters, including about 730,000 to 750,000 active voters.

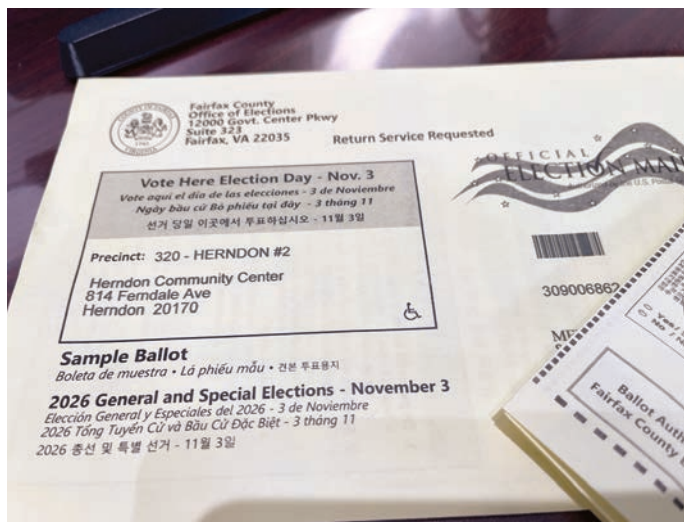


PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Office of Elections mails sample ballots to voters for the Nov. 3 General and Special Elections.



PHOTO VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY FACEBOOK

Voters line up on the first day of early voting on Friday, Sept. 18, at the Fairfax County Government Center.

Connection Newspapers 2026 Voter Guide

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Welcome to the Connection Newspapers 2026 Voter Guide, a nonpartisan election resource designed to help prepare readers for the Nov. 3 general election, and early voting.

We composed questions focused on key local concerns, in search of candidate responses that address the specific priorities of the community members they seek to serve.

All participating candidates responded to identical questionnaires with set word limits — 500 words total for congressional candidates and 300 words total for municipal candidates. Entries appear unedited in the official sequence set by state election officials; we note candidates who did not respond before publication in their respective sections.

What's in Our Guide

Depending on your local edition's distribution area, your guide includes:

- ❖ Federal Congressional Races: Profiles

and questionnaire responses for the statewide U.S. Senate contest and House District 8, 10 or 11, matched to our readers' congressional boundaries.

- ❖ Local Municipal Election: Profiles and candidate responses exclusively for voters in the Town of Herndon for their municipal jurisdiction.

- ❖ Statewide and Local Ballot Measures: Breakdowns of the three proposed statewide constitutional amendments and details on the two Fairfax County bond referendums.

- ❖ Voting Logistics: Guidance on voting

options and general voter resources.

❖ Voting Information & Resources

For specific voting details, deadlines, and requirements determined by local election boards, voters should consult official election portals directly. Statewide Voter Information: To check your registration status, request absentee ballots, or view sample ballots, visit the Virginia Department of Elections. Fairfax County Logistics: To find local polling locations, early voting options, and drop-box locations, consult the Fairfax County Office of Elections.

Candidates for United States Senate, Statewide

COMPILED BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Member, United States Senate — Statewide

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's statewide U.S. Senate race — Democratic incumbent Mark Warner and Republican challenger Bert Mizusawa — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. (Mizusawa did not reply.) We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections and regional utility regulation.. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Under Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines, housing is considered affordable when costs do not exceed 30 percent of income for families earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income—including extremely low-income households earning at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. Given that Virginia's Dillon Rule restricts Fairfax County's authority over local

revenue and zoning mandates, how will you leverage federal housing grants, housing choice vouchers, federal tax credits, or federal land transfers to expand affordable housing in our district?

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Fairfax County relies heavily on federal partnerships to fund critical transportation networks. What specific federal infrastructure funding bills, transit grants for Metro, or United States Department of Transportation initiatives like Safe Streets and Roads for All will you champion to relieve traffic congestion and protect vulnerable road users?

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Fairfax County's economy relies heavily on tens of thousands of federal civil servants and contractors, whose spending sustains local small businesses and the regional job market.

How will you protect federal workforce jobs and government contracting, and what strategies will you pursue to support Northern Virginia workers and industries impacted by economic shifts?

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Following Governor Spanberger's intervention before the State Corporation Commission regarding the proposed Dominion Energy-NextEra merger, and federal concerns over data center energy load and rising utility bills: What federal legislation or regulatory oversight will you pursue to protect Northern Virginia households from rising energy costs while supporting grid reliability?

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Mark R. Warner (Democrat)

Q1 Housing & Zoning:

There is a housing crisis in this country and we're millions of homes short. I am proud to have co-authored the bipartisan ROAD to Housing Act, a landmark package of legislation. It has key provisions to boost the housing supply while lowering costs, protect veterans and renters, and prevent housing in rural areas from being bought up by corporate investors. Additionally, I have introduced and supported a range of bipartisan bills to spur new housing construction and redevelopment, including the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, New Markets Tax Credit Extension Act, and the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act. I was also the lead author of the Low-Income First Time Homebuyers (LIFT) Act, which would help qualified first-generation homebuyers build equity in their homes by offering a 20-year mortgage with monthly payments comparable to a traditional 30-year loan, and the Yes in God's



COURTESY PHOTO

Sen. Mark R. Warner (D)

Backyard (YIGBY) Act, which would help faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education unlock the promise of their existing land holdings by transforming underused property into much-needed affordable housing.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: I was proud to be a key negotiator of the landmark Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which delivered transformative investments to communities across Virginia. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars for public transit across Virginia, including passenger rail, ferry service, and buses. I have also been a consistent and strong advocate for robust Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority funding. As we work on a full-year of government funding and renewal of BIL, I will continue to fight for Virginia to get our fair share of funding that supports our vital public transit systems.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Federal workers in Virginia and across the country are the backbone of services Americans depend on. As the Trump administration continues to target federal workers and use them as political bargaining chips, it is critical to defend the job security, pay, and benefits of our dedicated civil service. I have fought against the administration's attacks on federal workers, from trying to access

SEE SENATE CANDIDATES, PAGE 7

ELECTION GUIDE 2026

Candidates for United States Senate, Statewide

FROM PAGE 6

their sensitive data to attempting to weaken longstanding civil service protections. My Federal Worker Credit Protection Act is legislation to protect federal workers' credit histories during a government shutdown. I

have also introduced legislation to keep federal wages competitive, prohibit RIFs during a shutdown, and preserve collective bargaining for federal workers.

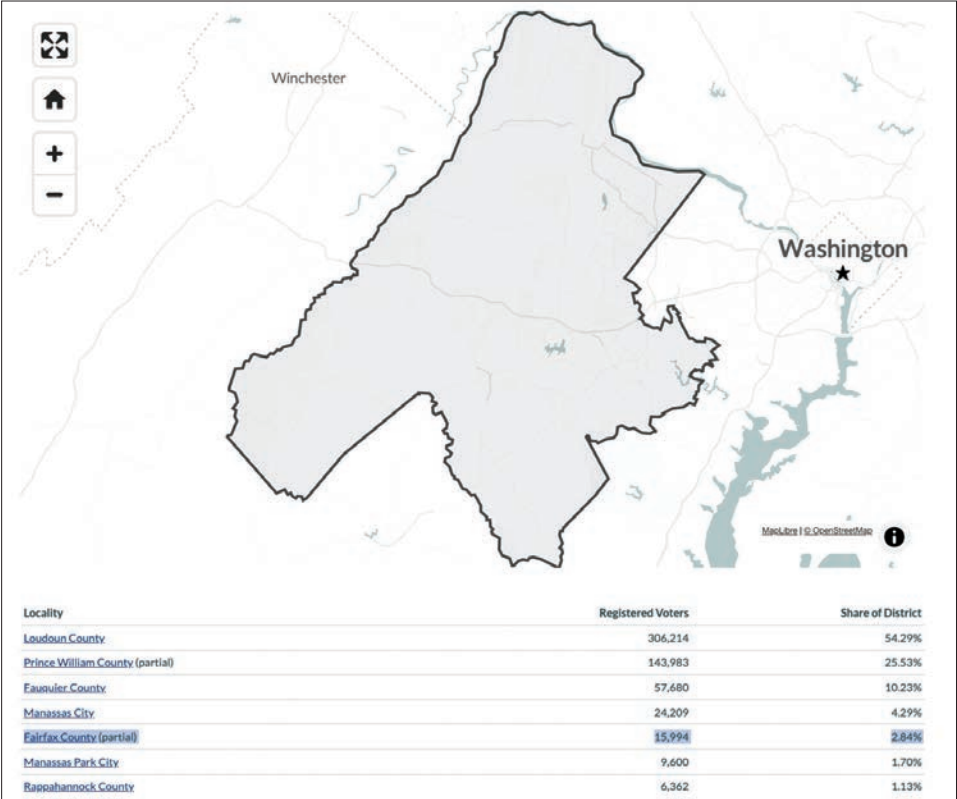
Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: As I travel around the Commonwealth, I listen to Virginians and I take what they say seriously. Virginians are already being crushed by rising energy costs and they shouldn't have to foot the bill for the data centers in their neighborhood. These companies should have to pay their own electric bills.

I've introduced legislation to require greater transparency about energy and water use and other impacts, make data centers pay for the grid upgrades they require instead of passing those costs on to residents, and condition valuable tax benefits on meeting strong efficiency standards.

Bert K. Mizusawa (Republican)
Did not reply.



COURTESY PHOTO
Bert K. Mizusawa (R)
Did not reply.



MAP DATA VIA U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The 10th Congressional District includes parts of Fairfax and Prince William counties, all of Loudoun, Fauquier, and Rappahannock counties, and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park.

Candidates for US House of Representatives District 10

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's 10th Congressional District race — Democratic incumbent Suhas Subramanyam, Republican challenger Dave T. Beckwith who did not respond, and Independent challenger Ahsen Mujeeb Malik — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including local housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections, and regional utility regulation. We capped responses at 500 words. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

OUR QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Under Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

guidelines, housing is considered affordable when costs do not exceed 30 percent of income for families earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income—including extremely low-income households earning at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. Given that Virginia's Dillon Rule restricts Fairfax County's authority over local revenue and zoning mandates, how will you leverage federal housing grants, housing choice vouchers, federal tax credits, or federal land transfers to expand affordable housing in our district?

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Fairfax County relies heavily on federal partnerships to fund critical transportation networks. What specific federal infrastructure funding bills, transit grants for Metro, or United States Department of Transportation initiatives like Safe Streets and Roads for All will you champion to relieve traffic congestion and protect vulnerable road users?

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Fairfax County's economy relies heavily on tens of thousands of federal civil servants and contractors, whose spending sustains local small businesses and the regional job market.

How will you protect federal workforce



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The Herndon Metro Station on WMATA's Silver Line connects Loudoun and Fairfax counties directly to Washington, D.C., serving as a major regional transit and infrastructure investment.

jobs and government contracting, and what strategies will you pursue to support Northern Virginia workers and industries impacted by economic shifts?

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Following Governor Spanberger's intervention before the State Corporation Commission regarding the proposed Dominion Energy-NextEra merger, and federal concerns over data center energy load and rising utility bills: What federal legislation or regulatory oversight will you pursue to protect Northern Virginia households from rising energy costs while supporting grid reliability?

RESPONSES

Candidates U.S. House of Representatives, 10th District

U.S. Rep. Suhas Subramanyam (D-10)



US Rep. Suhas Subramanyam (D)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: The median age of a first time home-buyer in the U.S. is 40 years old. We need an all hands on deck approach to increase access to affordable housing in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia. In Congress, I introduced the bipartisan First Time Homebuyer Savings Opportunity Act to establish tax-free down payment savings accounts for

SEE US HOUSE OF, PAGE 8

ELECTION GUIDE 2026

Candidates for US House of Representatives District 10

FROM PAGE 7

eligible first time homebuyers.

I have championed legislation and pushed for federal funding to expand access to low-income housing tax credits, establish training programs for schools to develop residential construction industry training, support affordable housing production, veterans housing, and homelessness assistance grants. I have worked to secure federal funding for affordable housing projects in our district.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Transportation and infrastructure are critical to Fairfax County and Northern Virginia. I have worked to secure \$150 million for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in federal spending legislation, and introduced legislation to address high private toll road pricing. I have secured funding for local transportation and infrastructure projects – ensuring that our roads are safe and free from congestion.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: On the Oversight Committee, I am committed to standing up for our community's federal workers and contractors. Since the start of President Trump's second term and the launch of DOGE, I have pushed for legislation to raise wages for federal workers, reinstate fired probationary employees with backpay, prevent the political firings of federal workers, and support federal workers

and contractors during government shutdowns.

Additionally, I have introduced legislation to hold DOGE accountable and prevent reckless agency relocations out of the DMV. I have offered amendments to legislation to strip anti-federal employee federal provisions from legislation, including H.R. 1, which were eventually removed.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: We need to continue to speak out against the Dominion Energy-NextEra merger. I am extremely concerned about the impacts on ratepayers. Since getting elected to the Virginia General Assembly in 2019, I have taken on monopoly utility companies, securing over \$300 million in refunds to ratepayers, and introduced legislation to ensure that ratepayers didn't foot the bill for data center's power needs. Now in Congress, I am calling for a local moratorium for data centers in our community and the establishment of a national data center siting plan to ensure that we don't continue to put all of the country's data centers in one place.

Dave T. Beckwith (Republican)

Did not reply.



Dave T. Beckwith @
Did Not Reply

Ahsen Mujeeb Malik (Independent)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Housing affordability is indeed a great crisis for our coun-

try. However, I would approach the problem differently by building on the recently enacted 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act,

which took an important step by encouraging local zoning reform. I would push for a bill with a "Zero-Zero" incentive: developers in localities that bring their zoning in line with federal standards would become eligible for 0% construction loans, and buyers of the resulting homes would be eligible for 0% mortgages.

The funding would come from a public-private equity partnership. Developers would share excess profits and buyers would sign over a share of the home's future appreciation, rather than the federal government writing a check. A program like this would create real pressure on Richmond to loosen the Dillon Rule's grip on local zoning authority, because Virginia localities that don't reform would simply watch this opportunity go to counties in other states that do.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: I will fight to pass the BUILD America 250 Act, the bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization that would provide five years of stable funding for roads, bridges, transit, and rail, while extending the federal government's \$150 million annual capital contribution to WMATA through FY2031. I also support reauthorizing and fully funding the FTA's Capital Investment Grant program, which is critical to major transit expansion projects across Northern Virginia. Given that the federal government is one of the largest employers in this region, our communities

ed by economic shifts?

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Following Governor Spanberger's intervention before the State Corporation Commission regarding the proposed Dominion Energy-NextEra merger, and federal concerns over data center energy load and rising utility bills: What federal legislation or regulatory oversight will you pursue to protect Northern Virginia households from rising energy costs while supporting grid reliability?

RESPONSES

Candidates for U.S. House of Representatives, 11th District

U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D) Incumbent

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Every American who works hard and plays by the rules should be able to live the American dream, which includes having an affordable home and the



Ahsen Mujeeb Malik (I)

deserve their fair share of federal transportation investment.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: The federal workforce is integral not just to Fairfax County's economy, but to the functioning of our entire country. Our nation cannot operate without the hard work of our dedicated civil servants.

But this is a mutually beneficial arrangement, not an entitlement. Government contracting can't be "protected" in the abstract unless there's a legitimate public need behind it. Continuing contracts that no longer serve the public interest is a form of corruption.

I will fight hard for equitable treatment for workers affected by upcoming shifts and utilize any appropriate federal tools that could assist in the future diversification of Northern Virginia's economy. I also encourage local business leaders to collaborate with state and local legislators on strategies to diversify the region's economy, ensuring that a downturn in any single industry does not have an outsized effect on Northern Virginia's economic stability.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Gov. Spanberger was right to intervene in the Dominion-NextEra merger and push the principle that data centers, not ratepayers, should pay for their own grid infrastructure. The GRID Act (Hawley, Blumenthal) would require large data centers to source their power off the public grid or face steep penalties, while the GRID Savings Act (Heinrich) would require large electricity users like data centers to pay for the new transmission and generation capacity built to serve them. I support incorporating initiatives like these into a bipartisan bill that equitably manages the negative externalities of data center construction.

opportunity to own a home. On the Board of Supervisors, I worked to put together the complicated financing and approval necessary to build new, affordable housing. In Congress, I've supported bipartisan legislation like the ROAD to Housing Act and worked closely with local officials to help meet our local affordable housing goals.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: In my first year in Congress, I secured \$13.4 million for Northern Virginia transportation projects, including \$3.15 million for safer roads and \$2 million for the W&OD Trail. After leading the regional Transportation Planning Board and VRE Operations Board while on the Board of Supervisors, I am now fighting in Congress for increased federal funding for Metro, stronger rail and bus investments, and Safe Streets and Roads for All grants to reduce congestion and protect pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Our district is home to more than 60,000 federal workers, along with even more federal contractors. They are essential to our economy and to delivering the services Americans rely on. I founded and co-chair the Federal Workforce Caucus, a bipartisan group work-

Candidates for U.S. House of Representatives — 11th District

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Member, US House of Representatives — 11th District

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's 11th Congressional District race — Democratic incumbent James R. Walkinshaw, Republican challenger Arthur G. Purves and Green Party challenger Dianne L. Blais — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including local housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections and regional utility regulation. We capped responses at 500 words. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

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guidelines, housing is considered affordable when costs do not exceed 30 percent of income for families earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income—including extremely low-income households earning at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. Given that Virginia's Dillon Rule restricts Fairfax County's authority over local revenue and zoning mandates, how will you leverage federal housing grants, housing choice vouchers, federal tax credits, or federal land transfers to expand affordable housing in our district?

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U.S. Rep. James R. Walkinshaw (D)

ELECTION GUIDE 2026

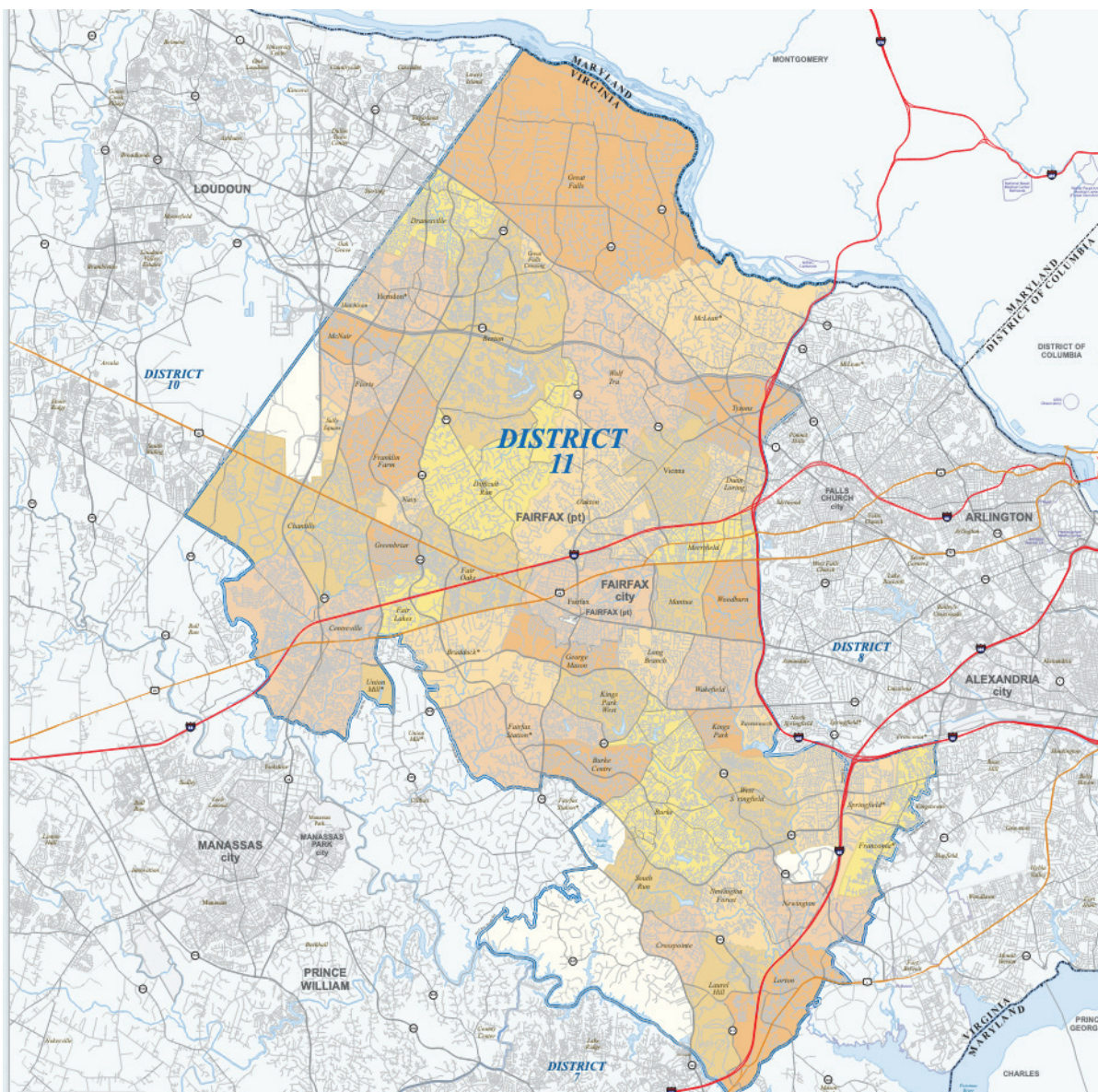


PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Substation infrastructure serves high-density data centers in northern Fairfax County, part of Virginia's 11th Congressional District.

SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA
A map shows Virginia's 11th Congressional District, which covers most of Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax. The Supreme Court of Virginia established the boundaries during the 2021 redistricting process.

Candidates for U.S. House of Representatives — 11th District

FROM PAGE 8

ing to protect federal workers, contractors, and our merit-based civil service. Right now, we're fighting mass layoffs, agency dismantling, and efforts to politicize civil service positions. During last year's shutdown, I helped block the Trump Administration from illegally firing 4,000 federal workers. I introduced legislation requiring congressional approval before a President could carry out reorganizations that slash jobs or budgets or outsource core government functions.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: I support coordinating local governments, state regulators, and utilities on infrastructure and environmental standards. Electricity prices are up 13% since Trump returned to office, and families face additional utility rate increases. I'll push for oversight to ensure new grid costs are not shifted onto residential ratepayers and fight to restore clean energy investments cut by the "Big Beautiful Bill." I also support Governor Spanberger's intervention in the proposed Dominion-Nex-tEra merger. If the proposed merger does not protect ratepayers and lower costs, it should be rejected.

Arthur G. Purves (Republican)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: The federal government is broke. The Social Security trust fund goes broke in six years. With \$2 trillion annual deficits and \$1 trillion for interest on the debt, any increases in federal spending, even for housing, mean high interest rates and inflation. Despite decades of affordable housing subsidies, housing affordability is worse than ever. The solution is local. If you want affordable housing, let the private sector build more housing. Government regulations account for an average of 32% of total multifamily development costs.



Arthur G. Purves (R)

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: The federal government is also running out of money for transportation. However, there is a solution. The government spends trillions on the chronic disease epidemic caused by ultra-processed food. Eating real food would reverse chronic disease and save trillions in federal spending. Government – and households – are being bankrupted by Big Food that makes us sick and Big Med that profits from chronic disease and has no financial incentive to cure us.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: The region is facing a "crisis without precedent,"

according to the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce. That the Fairfax economy relies on one sector – federal government – is the result of decades of bad governance. To attract businesses, lower taxes. But local Democrats have been raising taxes for decades. As a county supervisor, Walkinshaw voted to raise real estate taxes \$2,000 in 4 years, and he voted for the meals tax.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: It is hypocritical of Democrats to criticize high gas prices due to the Iran war. Democrats deliberately raise gas and oil prices to promote green energy. Governor Spanberger rejoined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a carbon tax, which adds \$10 to the monthly electric bill. Virginia Democrats indexed the gas tax to inflation, so gas taxes increase every July 1. Democrat carbon caps have shuttered numerous refineries in California, which has the highest gas prices in the nation (\$5.65/gallon). What Democrats have done to Virginia and California energy prices, they will do to the nation if they win control.

Dianne L. Blais (Green Party)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Because my GreenUS efforts aim to allow money to stay in



Dianne L. Blais (G)

the US, increasing tech research, hopefully creating a new money system to stop inflation and implementing land value tax to stop the increasing disparity between the rich and poor, the number of low-income people would be greatly decreased. The need for vouchers, grants, and tax credits would be greatly decreased.

All residents would be housed based upon family size.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: My GreenUS program would emphasize free and low-priced public transit to encourage decreasing those needing cars. A world-class train system throughout the US would be a major goal. Transit would utilize modern technology so that accidents would be greatly decreased.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: A Green DOGE would review all positions eliminated by DOGE. Hopefully much of the expertise and scientific know-how lost by DOGE can be again put in place.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: AI has many wonderful and horrible repercussions. An intensive review is needed while there is a moratorium on data centers. GreenUS is anti data centers for the many anti-green environmental effects. A GreenElectric commission would consider

improving the electric grid in the US, hopefully establishing the best technology to collect electrical power – probably solar or fusion.

ELECTION GUIDE 2026

Fairfax County Bond Referendums

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County voters will decide on two local general obligation bond referendums.

❖ The ballot includes a \$180 million Parks and Park Facilities Bond to fund countywide park maintenance, land acquisition, and recreation center upgrades. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2020-bond>

❖ A \$75 million Community Health and Human Services Facilities Bond would finance the expansion of health care facilities and human service centers.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bond/bonds>



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

A health department technician conducts analysis inside a county laboratory. The proposed \$75 million health bond would fund the expansion of the JoAnne Jorgenson Public Health Laboratory in Fairfax and support renovations at the Tim Harmon Campus in Chantilly.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Visitors at Frying Pan Farm Park take a tractor-pulled wagon ride along a forested path in Herndon. The proposed \$180 million park bond would fund countywide park maintenance, facility upgrades, and recreation expansions.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments on the Ballot.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3, Virginia voters statewide will be asked to vote “yes” or “no” on three constitutional amendments referred to the ballot by the Virginia General Assembly.

Question 1 addresses the right to reproductive freedom, Question 2 addresses marriage equality and Question 3 addresses voting rights.

Question 1: Reproductive Freedom

What it does: Establishes a state constitutional right to personal reproductive freedom, defined as the right to make personal decisions about reproductive care; protecting medical providers along with patients.

Present Law: Virginia statutes currently permit abortion access, but the state constitution contains no explicit protection for reproductive rights, leaving current policies vulnerable to future statutory changes.

Proposed Law: Adds a section to the Virginia Constitution establishing reproductive freedom. It protects patients and health-care providers while allowing third-trimester restrictions, except when necessary to preserve a patient’s life or health

Ballot Text: “Should the

Constitution of Virginia be amended to (i) protect the freedom to make personal decisions about prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, birth control, abortion, miscarriage management, and fertility care; (ii) protect doctors, nurses, and patients from being punished for these decisions; and (iii) allow for restrictions on access to abortion during the third trimester of pregnancy except when the patient’s health is at risk or the pregnancy can-

not survive?”

A “YES” vote establishes a state constitutional right to make personal choices on reproductive health care — including prenatal care, birth control, abortion, and fertility treatments — and protects patients and providers from criminal penalties.

A “NO” vote leaves the Virginia Constitution unchanged, keeps existing state statutes in place, and allows future state legislatures to modify reproductive health care laws through the legislative process.

Question 2: Marriage Equality

What it does: Repeals Virginia’s inactive constitutional ban defining marriage as between one man and one woman, replacing it with an affirmative right to marry regardless of sex, gender, or race.

Present Law: Article I, Section 15-A of the Virginia Constitution prohibits same-sex marriage and civil unions. Although unenforceable because of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision, the dormant language remains in the state constitution.

Proposed Law: Removes the inactive ban from the state constitution and establishes a fundamental right to marry, requiring the Commonwealth to grant licenses and treat all lawful marriages between two adults equally under the law.

Ballot Text: “Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to (i) remove the ban on same-sex marriage; (ii) affirm that two adults may marry regardless of sex, gender, or race; and (iii) require all legally valid marriages to be treated equally under the law?”

A “YES” vote repeals the same-sex marriage ban, affirming a state constitutional right to marry for two adult persons regardless

of sex, gender, or race, and ensuring equal legal protection for all valid marriages.

A “NO” vote keeps the existing unenforceable language banning same-sex marriage in the Virginia Constitution.

Question 3: Voting Rights

What it does: Establishes a fundamental right to vote, automatically restores voting rights to individuals with felony convictions



upon release from incarceration, and updates the standard for voter disqualification based on mental capacity.

Present Law: Under Article II, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution, individuals convicted of a felony permanently lose voting rights unless individually restored by the Governor. Additionally, court determinations of mental incapacity automatically revoke voting rights.

Proposed Law: Establishes a right to vote for all qualified citizens. Political rights (voting, juror eligibility, running for office, becoming a notary) are automatically restored upon release from prison. It also requires a specific court finding that a person lacks the capacity to understand the act of voting to disqualify them.

Ballot Text: “Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended (i) to provide for the

fundamental right to vote in the Commonwealth, (ii) to revise the qualifications of voters so that a person convicted of a felony is not entitled to vote during his period of incarceration but is automatically invested with the right to vote upon release from incarceration, and (iii) to update the existing prohibition on voting by persons found to be mentally incompetent to instead apply to persons who have been found to lack the capacity to understand the act of voting?”

A “YES” vote creates an explicit constitutional right to vote, automatically restores political rights to individuals upon release from prison, and updates mental capacity standards for voter eligibility.

A “NO” vote retains the requirement for individual gubernatorial approval to restore felony voting rights and keeps the current general mental incapacity standard.

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Local Races in the Town of Herndon

Mayor runs unopposed; 12 candidates vie for 6 Town Council seats

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for the Town of Herndon election to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. A total of 13 candidates are on the ballot as independents. Under Virginia state law (§ 24.2-613), election officials are prohibited from placing political party designations on the ballot for local offices. One candidate is running unopposed for the two-year mayoral term, while 12 candidates are vying for six two-year Town Council seats.

We asked the candidates about key issues facing the Town of Herndon, including housing affordability, local economic development, downtown revitalization, public safety and infrastructure priorities. We capped responses at 300 words. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials. Members elected during the Nov. 3, 2026 midterms will officially take office Jan. 1, 2027, for the two-year, 2027-2028 term.

The Town of Herndon stands apart in Virginia as its third-largest incorporated town. It balances a historic downtown centered around its original rail depot, with a high-density tech district powering global cloud and data infrastructure. The town serves as a major technology and defense hub hosting key industry leaders like Serco Inc., HawkEye 360 and Cornerstone Defense. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Silver Line Metrorail station directly connects the community's commercial core to Washington, D.C., and Dulles International Airport.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q 1 Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth

Herndon's downtown redevelopment has faced years of delays, even as the Silver Line Metro station attracts interest in higher-density development. (a) What specific zoning and land-use policies will you support to ensure growth near the Metro station drives economic vitality without harming downtown's historic character or worsening traffic congestion? (b) How can Herndon most quickly and affordably reclaim ownership of the 4.675-acre downtown site after Comstock backed out of the redevelopment plan in December 2024?

Q2 Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability

Following Herndon's recent housing study and interim policy work, how do you plan to expand housing affordability across all HUD income tiers (0% to 80% AMI) while protecting neighborhoods from displacement and enforcing local property codes?

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Q3 Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation

Fairfax County administers social services, but Herndon directly controls municipal property, code enforcement, parking, and town police. How will you address continuous public space usage and vehicle habitation on town properties while balancing social service referrals with public safety and facility maintenance?

Candidates for Mayor, Town Council, Town of Herndon

Mayor Keven J. LeBlanc Jr. (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) I support concentrating greater density where it belongs: near Metro, with mixed-use zoning, public space, safer pedestrian and bicycle connections, parking management, and traffic analysis tied to development approvals. Downtown needs small-area guidance that protects scale, historic character, local storefronts, civic space, and walkability, while the Metro area carries higher-density growth. Herndon 2050, the Downtown Early Action Plan, and Metro-area planning I advanced should work together so growth strengthens our tax base and businesses without overwhelming neighborhoods or historic downtown. (b) On Lot H, the fastest, most affordable path is protecting taxpayers: enforce the Town's contractual rights, maintain legal pressure for specific performance (ruling expected September 25), preserve leverage, and continue next-step planning.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Housing affordability requires data, partnerships, neighborhood stability, and a diversity of housing options. I support using the housing study and policy guidance we adopted this term to identify needs across income tiers, then matching tools to the problem: affordable set-asides where legally available, preservation of existing attainable housing, partnerships with Fairfax County and nonprofit providers, senior and workforce housing strategies, and careful review of zoning barriers. Affordability cannot mean tolerating unsafe or overcrowded conditions. We need consistent property maintenance enforcement, tenant education, landlord accountability, and anti-displacement strategies that help residents remain safely housed.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: We should respond with compassion and consistency. Fairfax County leads social services, but the Town manages public property, parking, code, sanitation, and safety. My approach is coordinated outreach first: HPD, Town staff, county homeless services, nonprofits, and faith partners

connecting people to shelter, health care, food, and case management. But public spaces must remain safe, clean, and usable for everyone. That means clear rules, documented outreach, reasonable timelines, enforcement when necessary, vehicle and animal welfare checks, maintenance response, and communication with nearby residents.

Candidates for Member, Town Council, Town of Herndon

Sabrina A. Bruce (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) I support concentrating mixed-use density around Metro, where residents can walk, bike, or take transit, while preserving downtown's smaller-scale historic character. If we add 1,000 homes, I do not want that to mean 1,000 more cars on our roads. New development should include strong pedestrian connections, public spaces, transit access, and traffic improvements. (b) After the legal issues with the Comstock property are resolved, we need a holistic review of what will work there. We have vacant properties in some of our most valuable areas, such as downtown and near the Metro, while other commercial areas are much healthier. Understanding why, and fixing it, will be a priority of mine.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Herndon needs housing at multiple price points, not just market-rate apartments. I support working with Fairfax County and using redevelopment and rezoning opportunities to add affordable units while preserving existing lower-cost housing. We also have an opportunity near Metro, where aging and underused office properties can be redeveloped into mixed-use neighborhoods. If we are going to grow, this is exactly where much of that growth should go. For existing neighborhoods, we can make accessory dwelling units easier to build. One idea is creating pre-approved, "off-the-shelf" ADU plans residents can use instead of starting from scratch. The affordability crisis is nationwide, but that does not remove our responsibility to help our neighbors here in Herndon.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: Public spaces should remain safe, clean, and usable by everyone. We should connect people experiencing homelessness with Fairfax County services and housing resources while consistently enforcing rules for overnight use, parking, sanitation, and unsafe behavior on Town property. Police should focus on genuine public-safety issues. Homelessness itself should not be treated as a crime, but the Town cannot ignore conditions that prevent everyone from using public spaces.

Josif N. Ezekilov (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) Given Herndon's projected population growth, we need to prioritize high-density residential zoning along the Metro corridor. Business development can be incentivized through more pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, insulating our small businesses from inequitable corporate competition, and imposing vacancy taxes to stimulate more business occupancy. Such development will not impact downtown's charm, and traffic congestion will be eased through improved transportation links. (b) The only way to reclaim ownership of the downtown site is through the current legal process. As councilmember, I will ensure corporations like Comstock do not bully our town into doing their bidding.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: I plan to focus on maximizing housing for those earning 40% of AMI (\$60,000 per year) or less. This will ensure that Herndon's teachers, firefighters, and police officers, and the rest of our working class—the lifeblood of our town's economy—can afford to live and thrive here. The metro corridor and underoccupied office parks in town provide enough opportunity to increase housing without displacing current residents. Coordinating with county and state officials will ensure we lower housing costs in a sustainable way.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: Current statistics indicate that this isn't a major public safety or maintenance issue. Our town staff does an amazing job serving our community, and my priority will be to assist them in continuing to do their job by prioritizing empathy and equity. Criminalizing unhoused people is both contrary to the neighborly values we uphold in Herndon, as well as an ineffective way to address the issue. Instead, Herndon should improve coordination with our county officials to better serve our most vulnerable populations. Fairfax's Family Services department provides a variety of resources to those in need of assistance, but not enough people in need in Herndon are accessing them. Fixing service bottlenecks should be the priority of the next council.

Cesar A. del Aguila (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) Treat Metro and downtown as separate but complementary economic districts. Concentrate highest density—mixed-use and transit-oriented—at the Metro station as planned. This brings new housing, business, and tax revenue. My land-use priorities: Ensuring smooth transitions to neighborhoods and downtown.

SEE TOWN OF HERNDON, PAGE 12

ELECTION GUIDE 2026

Mayor runs unopposed; 12 candidates vie for 6 Town Council seats

FROM PAGE 11

Improve connections between Metro and downtown to reduce car dependence. Prioritize mixed-use development that boosts Herndon's tax base. (b) First, distinguish between buying the property and enforcing the Town's contract rights. The Town's goal is to enforce the contract for the property's return, not simply repurchase it. The quickest, cheapest solution is a negotiated reconveyance; otherwise, litigation will decide. Future agreements should set milestones, deadlines, protections, and clear remedies, informed by recent lessons.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: First, since zoning alone can't solve affordability, we leverage incentives and redevelopment to create and preserve affordable units without overburdening Herndon taxpayers. Second, we need targeted solutions for each income tier. For 0-30% AMI, deeper subsidies and partnerships are essential. For 30-80% AMI, combine affordable units, workforce housing, and incentives tied to redevelopment. Third, preserving existing affordable housing is as important as building new. Finally, affordability must not compromise safe neighborhoods. I support proactive enforcement of building and rental standards to ensure safety and code compliance. My goal has been a balanced housing strategy: create and preserve affordable homes, protect residents, enforce codes, and maintain quality neighborhoods.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: We can help the homeless and keep public spaces safe. Fairfax County provides prevention, shelter, and outreach services. Herndon manages facilities, enforces rules, and ensures safety. My approach: Staff or police should first connect people to County services. Fairfax offers outreach for homelessness. The Town must maintain property and enforce rules. Facilities should not become indefinite residences. We must balance dignity with community standards.

Douglas Isaac "Doug" Mejia (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a)

As a councilmember, I will support higher density



Cesar A. Del Aguila (I), Incumbent Candidate for Herndon Town Council

housing plans near the Metro. This way the Metro station and bus routes can be viewed as viable transport options for people to travel to work or to the downtown area without worsening traffic congestion. (b) Our first option should not be buying back the property from Comstock. We should look at enforcing the contract so the property is returned. If that does not give results we must look towards the route of litigation. As a councilmember I will call for future agreements to reflect the lessons learned from the contract with Comstock.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Herndon needs a realistic housing strategy that expands affordability without burdening taxpayers. Through partners and subsidies we can support 0-30% AMI, while helping 30-80% AMI through mixed-income projects that include workforce housing and affordable units. Preserving our existing housing is just as vital as building new units, and affordability must never compromise safety. We should be proactive in our code enforcement as we seek to expand affordable options. We cannot compromise protecting resident safety and preserving the character of our neighborhoods, both must go hand in hand.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: As a nurse, I know firsthand how critical it is to connect people with the right care, and addressing homelessness requires that same compassionate, resource first mindset. Staff and police should always begin by connecting individuals in need to Fairfax County's services. Herndon must uphold local standards and care for its infrastructure so public facilities remain safe, clean, and accessible to all, rather than becoming long term living spaces. By combining clinical empathy with municipal management, we can support vulnerable residents while keeping our shared spaces safe and welcoming.

Kelvin Garcia

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a)

I support concentrating the greatest density near the Herndon Metro Station, where transit and infrastructure can better accommodate growth, while preserving downtown's historic character. Rezoning decisions should require traffic-impact analysis, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, parking strategies, and transportation-demand measures. Downtown development should follow appropriate design, scale, setback, and architectural standards. Near Metro, mixed-use projects should expand housing, support businesses, and strengthen the tax base without imposing unreasonable congestion, infrastructure costs, or neighborhood impacts over time. (b) Herndon should enforce its contractual rights to recover the downtown property while simultaneously pursuing a negotiated resolution that minimizes taxpayer expense and delay. The



Kelvin Garcia (I), Incumbent Candidate for Herndon Town Council

Town should prioritize obtaining clear title without repurchasing property previously conveyed for redevelopment. If negotiations or litigation do not produce a timely resolution, the Town should evaluate whether eminent domain is legally available and financially prudent. Any approach should protect taxpayers, accelerate redevelopment, and preserve Herndon's long-term control of the site.

Q2 Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Herndon should expand housing affordability across the full 0% to 80% AMI range through zoning flexibility, mixed-income development, workforce housing, accessory dwelling units where appropriate, and partnerships with Fairfax County, nonprofits, and private developers. At the same time, the Town should preserve naturally affordable housing, reduce displacement, and provide relocation or rehabilitation support where feasible. Strong, fair enforcement of property, fire, building, and occupancy codes must ensure safe housing without unnecessarily displacing vulnerable residents equitably.

Q3 Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: Herndon should maintain town property, so it remains safe, sanitary, accessible, and available for public use while treating people experiencing housing instability with dignity. I support clear, consistently enforced rules governing parking, overnight use, sanitation, obstruction, and unsafe conduct, coupled with coordinated referrals to Fairfax County services. Police, Public Works, Community Development, and County agencies should follow written protocols. The goal should be lawful, humane, predictable enforcement that protects public safety without criminalizing poverty unnecessarily.

Yasmin "Soniya" Shafiq (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) Northern Virginia faces a housing shortage, Herndon included. Dense housing development (townhouses and apartments) near the Metro stop is necessary to accommodate a growing population and to drive economic development in Town with a larger tax base. Town must work with and negotiate with developers to incorporate parks and community spaces into new housing developments; our incoming Town residents should have the same high quality of life as the rest of Town. Along with a growing population, we need to add more safe sidewalks and bike lanes, and we need to work with local legislators to add bus lines to ease single-occupancy vehicle load on our roadways. (b) The judge will provide action on ownership of the site on September 25, 2026; when Town gets the deed back, we will have access to the land, which after necessary remediation, will be available to us for use.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: We should simply mirror the greater Fairfax County affordable housing program and its parameters. This is a proven



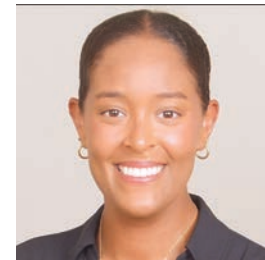
Yasmin "Soniya" Shafiq (I) Candidate for Herndon Town Council

model that has been used for over 20 years. Incorporating affordable housing means that we get to hold on to our younger and less affluent Town residents – people who contribute to our economy and more importantly to our community.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: Herndon is a safe Town with a very appreciated police force. I plan to work with local community organizations to help our underserved and unhoused Town residents.

Meron T. Yohannes (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) I want us to stay true to the Transit-Related Growth (TRG) zoning district, which sits in the Planned Development-Transit-Oriented



Meron T. Yohannes (I) Candidate for Herndon Town Council

Core I helped shape as a Planning Commissioner. TRG is meant to increase walkability, housing, density, and mixed-use development while preserving downtown's character. This should be the densest part of town and our economic engine benefitting from more foot traffic and less car traffic. It'll be vital to have a Town Council that turns a plan into reality. (b) For now, we must continue the legal route to reclaiming the lot. As councilwoman, I'll keep exploring ideas to utilize that space in the present and preparing a new vision for the land, work I've already started as the Planning Commission's representative on the Downtown Advisory Board.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Where redevelopment has the most appetite, I want to adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance so affordable and diverse housing is the baseline expectation, not an afterthought. That gives us leverage to negotiate proffers for set-aside housing for folks making under \$100K, and fund infrastructure that makes walkability and biking a focal point rather than car dependency. Affordability also means protecting the housing people already have. I want to strengthen code enforcement so existing rental units stay safe without pricing out tenants, make it easier for historic district homeowners to get repairs done, and find ways to lessen the utility burden driven up by data centers.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: We have seen an increase in unhoused folks since COVID-19, especially in privately owned businesses and vacant buildings. It's critical that social services reach these folks, so I want town staff and police to lead with referrals and County connections first, not citations or removal alone.

Clark Hedrick (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) The small area plans surrounding the Metro station were designed to maximize green space, acces-

SEE TOWN OF HERNDON, PAGE 13
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ELECTION GUIDE 2026

Mayor runs unopposed; 12 candidates vie for 6 Town Council seats

FROM PAGE 12

sibility, and infrastructure improvements through redevelopment; as individual site plans move through the approval process the Council must ensure those priorities are reflected in what is approved and built. (b) The Town is currently awaiting an opinion in the litigation of this matter. The best thing the Council can do right now is to develop an actionable plan for the property, which can be executed as soon as the litigation has been finally resolved.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: As the Council continues its work on housing affordability in the comprehensive plan, it needs to also be sensitive to Town policies and processes which drive housing and development costs: 1) We need to broaden our tax base and reduce real property tax rates. 2) We need to reduce the administrative time it takes from the submission of a site plan to permitting. 3) While it would take a law change in Richmond, I would like the Town to be able to shift to a land value-only tax so we are not penalizing property owners for making improvements to their land. Each of these would significantly impact the quality of housing, the cost of rent, and the barriers to home ownership in Town.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: The Herndon Police Department has undertaken exceptional efforts at building trust throughout our communities and neighborhoods. Addressing continuous public space usage and vehicle habitation on Town properties while balancing social service referrals with public safety and facility maintenance will require leveraging those relationships and collaborating with other Town departments to identify areas of

acute concern.

Michael T. Lloyd (I)

Downtown Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: Multiple development projects in the Metro Transit Area have been approved with one project to be completed and open in 2027. Successful development in this area is vital to the Town of Herndon remaining an economically viable and affordable place to live. While mixed use commercial and residential development was envisioned, market demands do not support such. Leaning into the demand for residential properties will ensure Herndon grows (up to a 30% increase in population), increases the tax base and provides new business opportunities in the town. Property and business taxes generated from Metro Area development could increase income to the town by \$6M annually, shielding current Herndon residents from future tax increases and keep Herndon an affordable place to live. Growing the number of residents while continuing to focus on the cost-efficiency of town operations and services can stabilize per-capita costs (e.g., property taxes) in the years ahead.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Recent developments regarding the development of Lot H (Comstock), specifically the courts' decision in favor of the developer, is another blow, another delay, in the effort to build upon the Heart of Herndon. This decision effects every resident and every business in the town. There is no quick or affordable path to reclaiming this site from the developer. Herndon will appeal the recent decision, and I believe will ultimately prevail in our quest to recover this property, but the time line is not under the control of the town. I encourage all residents to contact their elected representatives at the state level in protest of this outcome and seek statewide support to return Lot H to the town.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: From roadway safety action planning to partnerships with social service agencies, Herndon's focus on public safety and resident support is part of every decision the town makes on its journey into the future.

Justin K. Britt (I)

Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) Density should be concentrated closest to Metro and major corridors, with mixed-use development that puts housing, restaurants, retail, offices and public

spaces within walking distance of transit. As development moves toward established neighborhoods, building height, scale and density should transition appropriately. Developers hate uncertainty, and we have lost opportunities in the past because of a lack of clarity. We need clear, predictable zoning guidelines and then adhere to them through our TRG and Comprehensive Plans. (b) My priority is getting downtown moving again. I will continue protecting the Town's legal position while pursuing a negotiated settlement. Then I will pursue a vibrant mixed-use downtown with retail, outdoor dining, arts and residential space. In the interim, use low-cost temporary parks and pop-up vendor hubs to activate vacant spaces. Don't wait for the perfect long-term plan to bring downtown to life.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: I support expanding housing choices across income levels while protecting the stability and character of existing neighborhoods. The majority of new housing should be concentrated in the Metro-area development, where there is room to accommodate growth. We should look to use tools like density bonuses and expedited permitting to encourage public benefits, such as affordable/workforce housing, affordable ownership opportunities and public green space. Because homeownership is an important way to build wealth and provide a long-term stake in a community, I support zoning policies that prioritize for-sale condos and townhomes over rental-only developments.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: Compassion and accountability can go together. We can treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity while keeping public spaces safe, clean, and accessible for families and residents. The goal is not to simply move people from place to place, but to connect them with help while preserving public spaces for the entire community.

Alexis "Alex" Reyes (I)

Did not respond



Alexis "Alex" Reyes (I)
Candidate for Herndon Town Council
Incumbent.

Stevan Michael Porter (I)

Redevelopment & Transit-Oriented Growth: (a) Many delays are due to economic factors (supply chain, inflation, etc.) that are outside the control of either the developers or the town.

We must ensure that our policies are consistent with surrounding jurisdictions and that we have made our processes as user friendly as possible to minimize procedural delays. For zoning, a good mix of residential, office space, and assorted businesses will be critical to make the Metro area an attractive area to live, work, and play. We should also zone this area with a reduced focus on car based requirements as many who elect to live in this area are focused on alternative transportation options. (b) For the downtown situation, we have to let this play out in the courts (including likely appeals) while planning for the next steps for when we get OUR property back.

Housing Affordability & Neighborhood Stability: Housing affordability is a critical problem for everyone. Our best option is to spend responsibly to keep overall property tax rates down. This benefits both owners and renters. Where appropriate (particularly in the Metro area) we can also work on some higher density housing, different sized units, and the inclusion of rent controlled offerings.

We must be sure that our policies are inline with others in the area though so we do not scare developers away which would result in fewer housing options for everyone.

Homelessness, Public Space Use & Vehicular Habitation: In this economy, these problems are likely to get worse before they get better.

The key here is to actively partner with county resources (we pay for these!) and local community organizations like Cornerstones to figure out options which we can then communicate to those in need.



Stevan Michael Porter (I)
Candidate for Herndon Town Council

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event. Or via email calendar@connectionnewspapers.com.

WEDNESDAY/OCT. 14

Transportation Meeting. 7 p.m.
At Timber Lane Elementary School, 2737 West Street, Falls Church. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation

(FCDOT) will present recommended improvements to sidewalks, bike paths, transit stops and crossings located on Route 29 between I-495 and Tripps Run at the Falls Church City border, just east of South Maple Ave, at an in-person public meeting. Following the presentation at approximately 7:30 p.m., residents and commuters will have the opportunity to review exhibit boards, ask questions and provide comments. An online survey will be available close to the meeting in October.

OCT. 3 TO NOV. 1 (WEEKENDS)

Fairfax Tree Rescue Extravaganza II. Help save a tree! Join Fairfax and Falls Church residents in a community-wide effort to rescue trees threatened by invasive vines. Learn how to identify and clip harmful vines while protecting native ones. It's fun, gratifying, makes an immediate difference and no experience is needed. With an estimated one million trees at risk, we need hundreds of neighbors to lend a hand. Pick an event. Bring a friend. Save a tree. For event locations,

dates, details, and registration, visit [FairfaxPRISM.org](https://www.fairfaxprism.org) and click on the October 3–November 1 Tree Rescue Extravaganza II box.

FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFERS FREE TREES

Community-based organizations in Fairfax County can apply to receive free trees for planting on private properties, through a program by Fairfax County's Urban and Community Forestry Division (UCFD) of the Department of Public Works

and Environmental Services. The program, offered in partnership with Casey Trees, is designed to help community organizations in Fairfax County – such as volunteer groups, civic associations and faith-based organizations – obtain high-quality, professionally grown trees suitable for planting. Purchasing top-quality trees can be a challenge for these organizations.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 18

Celebrate 34th Annual Centreville Day on Oct. 17

A parade, live music, food, games and new attractions.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Come one, come all to the 34th annual Centreville Day celebration. It's set for Saturday, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., in Historic Centreville Park, 5714 Mount Gilead Road (off Braddock Road, across Route 29 from the IHOP) in Centreville.

This free, family-friendly event includes a parade, children's rides and games, a pet village and pageant, live music, marketplace and food trucks.

There'll also be safety and eco expos, plus open houses and tours of local historic landmarks. And children are encouraged to bring a bag for the annual Trick or Treat Trail. Vendors displaying orange, pumpkin signs will be handing out treats.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, there'll be five Celebration Stations, plus a Salute to Taverns on the lawn of the Mount Gilead house. And the whole shebang will feature even more vendors, fun and activities than ever before.

"This year's 250th celebration inspired us to shake things up," said Centreville Day Planning Committee Chair Cheryl Repetti. "Our creative and enthusiastic planners really outdid themselves. There's a new layout – the food court has moved near Mount Gilead, and the children's rides returned to the rear of the main marketplace."

"To help people find their way around the large venue, the trails now have proper street names, like Royal Oaks Lane. And there are exciting new activity areas such as the Kidz Zone, Zen Zone, and Celebration Stations."

Shortly before 10 a.m., the Magic Hands Orchestra will perform on the

Fairfax250 Stage, and the Rev. Kevin Laskowski will give an abridged reading of the Declaration of Independence. Then Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) will present the Citizen of the Year awards, followed by songs from the Mount Olive Baptist Church Choir.

Fairfax250 Stage Entertainment

11:40-noon – Pizza Eating Contest
14 ♦ THE CONNECTION ♦ OCTOBER 7-20, 2026



This map shows the new layout for this year's Centreville Day.



Girl Scouts marching in a past Centreville Day parade.



The rock-climbing wall at Centreville Day is always a hit.

test

12:05-12:35 p.m. – Centreville Dance Academy

12:40-1 p.m. – Korean Autoharp Players

1-1:40 p.m. – Pet Parade on Stage

1:40-2 p.m. – Wushu Academy Demonstration

2-4 p.m. – A Walk in the Park

Following the opening ceremony will be a colorful parade at 11 a.m., led by the National Reconnaissance Office Joint Honor Guard. Participants include Boy and Girl Scouts, floats from the School of Rock Chantilly and the Sons of the American Revolution, fire engines, Corvette cars, trucks, and Western Fairfax Christian Ministries' Walk to End Hunger.

Participants will travel from

Wharton Lane, passing the stage shortly before noon and continue along Mount Gilead Road to Braddock Road. Individuals and families are welcome to decorate a bike or scooter and join the fun – and Halloween costumes are encouraged.

The food court will be in the new Walnut Way Marketplace, adjoining the Mount Gilead lawn. Come enjoy tasty dishes from Southern Fish Fry, Taste of Asia, Two Smooth Dudes, Danny's Mexican and nearby Mellow Mushroom. Food will also be sold at The Old Stone Church (Church of the Ascension) at 13941 Braddock Road, plus hot coffee and other beverages at St. John's Episcopal Church near the stage.

The Centreville Day History

Trail has now dramatically expanded, thanks to grants from the Fairfax 250th Commission, Arts Fairfax and the Lane's Mill Chapter. Daughters of the American Revolution. Each Celebration Station along the trail is at a historic site open for tours. Boy Scouts from Troop 17 will stamp people's history-trail map with a star once they complete that site's history challenge.

Each celebration station will offer a pop-up artist at work, plus a fun make-and-take activity to do. After finishing as many challenges as possible, participants will bring their maps to the Completion Station at St. John's church to select a prize. The first 20 people to complete all five stations may choose a 250th commemorative silver dol-

lar.

Celebration Station Activities, Time Periods

♦ Mount Gilead, 1785: Tours, painter Rebekah Keener, plus early American toys and games.

♦ Spindle Sears House, 1934: Tours, painter Meredith Moss, plus recycling bottles and rocks into art.

♦ Enos Utterback House, 1918: Tours, tissue-paper artist Harper Yi, plus balloon figures.

♦ The Old Stone Church (Church of the Ascension), 1854: quilter Sheryl Simms, plus patriotic-themed facepainting.

♦ St. John's Episcopal Church, 1950: a water colorist, plus feather quill pen-and-ink writing.

While traveling the History Trail, look for George Washington – who visited Centreville many times – along the way. Portraying him will be history teacher Brian Hilton, who brings Washington "to life" and out of the textbooks. Historian, ethnographer and author Marion Ransell Dobbins will also provide living history at Mount Gilead. Born and raised in Merri-field, she has a unique perspective on history and shares her family story.

Taverns were once essential public places. They served as hotels, restaurants, entertainment centers, courthouses, polling sites, neighborhood bars and gathering spots where people discussed the merits of independence from the British.

Centreville was built around the success of the Newgate Tavern on Braddock Road, and Mount Gilead was originally the Tavern at the Sign of the Black Horse.

Mount Gilead resident curators Kristyn and Spencer Marrott will host first-floor tours of their home, and the History Train will run from Mount Gilead to Braddock Road. In addition, entertainers will perform on the Tavern Stage.

Tavern Stage Schedule

Noon-1 p.m. –

Cardinal Cloggers

1-2 p.m. –

School of Rock Chantilly

2-3 p.m. –

Woodbridge Flute Choir

3-4 p.m. – Pam & Mike

Children's activities will include a rock-climbing wall, inflatable slide, parachutes, bubbles and games. And young "Future-Preneurs" will sell a variety of goods from books to organic skin care. Operated by entrepreneurs in grades 4-12, their businesses in the Kidz Zone include Green Greetings, Be Kind and Rise, Golden

SEE CELEBRATE 34TH, PAGE 18
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Shakespeare Classic Set at a Renaissance Faire



Rehearsing a scene are (from left) Grace Costanzo (Lady Capulet), Langlen Heisnam (Juliet), Riley Burden (Romeo) and Iris Cooper (the nurse).

Westfield High presents modern-day 'Romeo and Juliet.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Montague and Capulet families have had a bitter, ongoing feud for ages. But it doesn't stop their respective son and daughter from falling in love – and therein lies the tragedy of William Shakespeare's classic play, "Romeo and Juliet."

Yet, while being true to the original story, Westfield High's upcoming production offers a fresh, contemporary take. It's set at a modern-day festival echoing the Maryland Renaissance Faire, complete with a castle entrance and stylings of the Globe Theater. And the idea to perform this show was suggested by the actors themselves.

"They had an overwhelming desire to do 'Romeo and Juliet,'" said Director Christine Maxted. "They all study it in their English classes and also really love Shakespeare."

Featuring a cast and crew of more than 70, show times are Thursday-Friday, Oct. 15-16, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, Oct. 17, at 2 and 7 p.m. (The Oct. 16 performance will be ASL-interpreted). Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, students, via www.westfieldtheatre.com.

In addition, a carnival will take place in the school lobby, an hour before each show, with games,

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

a photo booth and facepainting. Each play ticket comes with tickets for five games, and more may be purchased for a nominal fee.

The roles of Romeo and Juliet were double cast, with seniors Riley Burden and Phineas Younce portraying Romeo, and junior Langlen Heisnam and sophomore Madison Hummer playing Juliet. "We weren't planning it, but the talent of all four performers was incredible," said Maxted. "So to be fair, we double-cast."

"I'm also impressed with all the actors' commitment, dedication and hard work to bring this show to the stage in such a short time-frame [since school began]," she continued. "Audiences will be surprised by the comedy that can still be found in a tragedy. Until an important character dies, everything in the show is really funny."

Burden describes his Romeo character, 17, as "difficult to get along with if he doesn't get his way, because of his ego. But he's also fun and likes to have a good time joking around with his friends, Mercutio and Benvolio. Romeo's obsessed with finding love and is girl-crazy, but there's something different about Juliet. From the moment he sees her, he's in love and knows it's real – there's no doubt."

Enjoying his role, Burden said, "Romeo goes from initially being immature and dramatic to being more grounded and really knowing what and who he wants in his world – Juliet. In the beginning he's mopey and sad; and later, he's grieving and upset. So I especially like portraying the different elements and tiny details of his changing emotions throughout the show, as well as his sadness because Juliet's parents forbid him to marry her."

Burden said audiences will appreciate how all the actors have found "different ways of delivering their lines to make the same old story new, in a way. And they'll enjoy our show's modern aspects, plus the contrasts between the Renaissance Faire clothing and today's outfits. And our set is really cool because it's divided between the Montague and Capulet sides [with a middle neutral zone for other actors] to visually remind audiences of the clear rivalry between the two families."

As Juliet, Heisnam says her character starts out as a "sweet, sheltered, young girl, excited about the rest of her life. She trusts her nurse and her parents to guide her in the strict society she lives in. She's intuitive and, over the course of the show, she grows in courage so she can eventually stand up to her parents for the boy she loves."

"Juliet's strong-willed but has always followed what her parents told her, so she gets to show a different side of herself. She's not dumb or irrational; she's smart but impulsive. She may not always make the right decision but does what she believes is best for her, and I enjoy playing her."

Saying she loves Shakespeare and especially this play, Heisnam explained that "It gives me the opportunity to delve into the text. Once you understand what the character is really saying, you can effectively grasp her feeling and convey that to the audience in the way Shakespeare intended. It's lots of work but it's also fulfilling to see yourself as a figure that's been painted as a romantic archetype for years and bring part of myself to it, too."

Since it's such a dramatic role, added Heisnam, "It's fun to say all of Juliet's monologues and portray



Riley Burden (Romeo) presents a rose to Langlen Heisnam (Juliet) on her balcony, in Westfield High's production.

someone going through something where the stakes are life-and-death. And I like showing her character arc and growth from someone light and innocent to a person involved in a dark situation."

She said Westfield's interpretation of this story makes it "more approachable" for audiences. "We also tried highlighting the comedy in many places," said Heisnam. "That way, even when it gets dark, we still keep a little bit of fun in the show. It's going to be amazing, and I'm looking forward to seeing the finished set because our set team always does an incredible job that'll immerse audiences into the characters' world."

Senior Grace Costanzo portrays Juliet's mother, Lady Capulet. "She's self-absorbed, self-centered and always thinking about herself," said Costanzo. "She loves her daughter but doesn't always know how to show her affection, so it often comes out in the wrong ways. She's also materialistic and has fancy and luxurious wigs and fine clothes."

"It's fun to play someone with all this wealth and these characteristics," continued Costanzo. "And she has some funny scenes, too, because she always tries to make everything about herself."

She said Westfield's production is unique because of its Renaissance Faire setting. "So it combines the classic elements of Shakespeare's world with a fresh retelling of the story," said Costanzo. "And that allows audiences to better under-

stand it because it's more relevant to them. And the costumes will still be impressive; people will see Renaissance Faire dresses, as well as modern, vibrant, colorful outfits at a costume party."

Playing Juliet's nurse is senior Iris Cooper. "She's been her nursemaid since Juliet was a baby," said Cooper. "She lost her own daughter as an infant, so she sees a lot of her own child in Juliet. She's only 36, but she's lived a long time and has seen lots of things. Her husband died, too. But despite all this sadness, she's loud, uplifting to others and loves a good dirty joke."

"She's a comic-relief character who's surprisingly touched and saddened by tragic events that happen in the show. I auditioned for this role and love playing her. I enjoy comedy and wanted to play a character I saw myself in – and someone loud that I could play big."

Overall, said Cooper, "Because the Romeo and Juliet roles are double-cast, audiences will see variations between shows, so that sets it apart from other productions. But all the roles are just so well-cast."

For instance, Lord and Lady Capulet – Brenna Pond and Grace Costanzo – are best friends in real life. So are Romeo's friend, Mercutio, and Juliet's cousin, Tybalt – Charlie Gurson and Karli Powell, [respectively], who are enemies onstage. And because of that, they all have great chemistry in the show."

ENTERTAINMENT

COX FARMS FALL FESTIVAL IS IN FULL SWING!

Cox Farms is celebrating the 20th anniversary of Dino Slide and the debut of the Monster Slide, which replaced the Barn Slide that burned down in 2025. The Fall Festival is open Thursdays through Mondays (closed Tuesday and Wednesday), and the market is open daily. Admission includes all the slides, unlimited hayrides, and other attractions like the Cornundrum cornfield walk and the Imaginature Trail through the forest, apples and cider to enjoy while you're there, and a small patch pumpkin to take home! Fields of Fear is the scary nighttime event on Friday and Saturday nights (plus Sunday, October 11), recommended for ages 12+. In addition to fan favorites like kettle corn and apple cider donuts, they introduced a "dirty slushie" option along with the very popular apple cider slushies. Located at 15621 Braddock Road, at the corner of Braddock Road and Pleasant Valley Road, Centreville.

WEDNESDAYS NIGHTS

Open Game Nights. 6:30-9 p.m. At Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Come enjoy table tennis, bridge, mah-jongg, arcade games, a sensory lab and more at the Old Firehouse. Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

DANCING ON THE SQUARE

Thursday evenings in Fairfax City, Old Town Square – 10415 North Street, Fairfax. 6:30 p.m. Dance Workshop; 7:30 p.m. Free Dance Join in every Thursday in September at Old Town Square for free Dance Workshops led by local artists and studios. Each evening begins with a guided workshop at 6:30 p.m., followed by an hour of open dancing at 7:30 p.m.—perfect for all ages and skill levels. No registration required. Make a night of it: stop by Commonwealth Brewing before or after the event to enjoy their special themed drink, the Whiskey Tango!

NOW THRU OCT. 25

Bat Boy: The Musical. At Workhouse Arts Center, Building W3, Lorton. If you remember the Weekly World News tabloid sensation about a half-bat, half-boy creature found in a West Virginia cave, they already know the vibe. This rock musical is campy, hilarious, surprisingly heartfelt, and features a killer score that will have audiences tapping their feet between laughs. Performances run Fridays/Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. in September; Saturdays at 5 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. in October at the Workhouse Arts Center's Theater in Building W3.

SEPT. 12 TO NOV. 7

Transformations: Documenting the Pilot Substance Abuse Program at Lorton Reformatory, 1989-1991. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. More than 35 years after photographer Lloyd Wolf was given rare behind-the-scenes access inside Lorton Reformatory, his powerful photographs documenting incarcerated men participating in a groundbreaking substance abuse treatment program are returning to the very grounds where they were taken.

SEPT. 26 TO OCT. 31

Fall Fest Returns to Reston Farm Garden Market. At 10800 Baron Cameron Avenue, Reston. The farm marks its 50th fall in Reston with five and a half weekends of moon bounces, train rides, and hand-feeding friendly farm animals — built for kids ages 2 to 12. Weekends 10 a.m.-5 p.m., plus Monday, October 12 (Columbus Day). Fall Fest pairs a full afternoon of kid-sized activities with the pumpkins, mums and fresh-pressed cider that make the season. Parents get a safe, contained, easy-to-navigate site; kids get the run of it.

Includes three main attractions: Moon Bounces — jump, bounce, and burn off the afternoon

Feed the Farm Animals — hands-on time at the feeding fence with our friendly goats, pigs,



Cox Farms is now open in Centreville for Fall Festival.



Fall Fest returns to Reston Farm Garden Market from Sept. 26 to Oct. 31, 2026.



A Touch a Truck event will be held on Monday, Oct. 12, 2026 at the McLean Community Center Parking Lot in McLean.

and chickens. The Reston Farm Express Train — the ride kids line up for twice DJ Chi Dr. Productions keeps the music going all day, and face painter Carolina Tabares Sierra is on site each festival day, along with balloon art — face painting and balloon art for an additional fee.

OCT. 1-31

"Fall Into Color!" At McLean Art Gallery.

"Fall Into Color!" features original artwork inspired by the rich colors, changing light, and distinctive atmosphere of the season. The exhibition reflects the many ways artists find inspiration in the world around us.

"Watercolor for All Levels" with Raj KC Five

2-hour classes - \$225 Tuesdays: October 6, 13, 20, 27 and November 3 at 1:15-3:15pm Register now! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/watercolor-for-all-levels-by-raj-kc-5-sessions-october-november-tickets-2002394300255?aff=erelpanelorg>

"Plein Air Painting" Free Demo Friday, Oct. 23, 11am Raj KC will present a demo on raising your game in watercolor painting. Get free tickets at: plein-air.eventbrite.com/ [http://how-to Artist demos held at McLean Community Center at 1234 Ingleside Ave in McLean.](http://how-to-Artist-demos-held-at-McLean-Community-Center-at-1234-Ingleside-Ave-in-McLean)

OCT. 3-30

The Haunt. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton.

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. This year, they've raised the stakes (and the scares) to bring you an immersive, art-infused haunted experience like nothing else in the area. Think chilling installations, unexpected twists, and a walk-through history that takes a decidedly spooky turn. It's eerie, it's creative, and yes—it's a whole lot of fun. This year's experience promises to be the most immersive yet. Tickets run \$25-\$35 depending on the night.

OCT. 6-10

Fall for the Book's 28th Festival. At George Mason University, downtown City of Fairfax, and in Fairfax County Public Library branches. Featuring over 50 writers, including esteemed poets, historians, novelists, memoirists, children's authors, graphic novelists and more. 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 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. Visit www.FallfortheBook.org/schedule.

THURSDAY/OCT. 8

Breast Cancer Fundraiser. 5 p.m. At South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. The community is invited to attend South County's Dig Pink volleyball matches against Robinson High School at South County High School. Freshman and JV play at 5:00 p.m., followed by varsity at 6:30 p.m. Fundraising and awareness activities will take place throughout the evening. Donation link: <https://giving.side-out.org/campaigns/23768>

OCT. 8-12

Washington West Film Festival. At LOOK Cinemas in Reston Town Center, Reston. Will host the East Coast premiere of *JIMMY*, Starring KJ Apa as Jimmy Stewart. *JIMMY* stars KJ Apa (Riverdale) as James Stewart and traces the most transformative chapter of the actor's life, from his Academy Award-winning performance in *The Philadelphia Story* to his enlistment as a combat pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps at the outset of World War II. Stewart flew 20 combat missions over Europe and rose to the rank of colonel before returning home changed, just as the role of George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* came calling.

OCT. 8-25

"Betrayal." At 1st Stage, Tysons. Show times as follows: **Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.**, Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856. Emma, Robert and Jerry have history. As her marriage to Robert comes to an end, Emma reconnects with Jerry, her former lover—and her husband's best friend—as

ENTERTAINMENT

the action unspools backward in time in an inventive retelling by the Nobel Prize-winning playwright.

FRIDAY/OCT. 9

Pathway Homes Honors. 8:30-10:30 a.m. At Fairview Park Marriott, 3111 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church. In Honor of Sen. Warner, Kerrie Wilson and HomeAid for Support of Those in Need of Mental Health and Affordable Housing Services. The awards take place during Pathway Homes' Steps to Pathways Breakfast for their efforts to ensure vulnerable members of the community have needed services and a place to call home. The annual event raises funds and awareness about Pathways' work to prevent and end homelessness. It features speakers including Pathway clients, civic leaders, and its awardees, and brings together nearly 200 people in support of Pathways — a nonprofit providing mental health services starting with safe, stable housing to individuals marginalized by poverty and inequity. To purchase tickets, visit: <https://www.pathwayhomes.org/breakfast/>.

FRIDAY/OCT. 9

Coffee & Conversation: Navigating Medicare. 9 a.m. Grab a coffee, pull up a chair and connect with AARP Virginia and Chapter, a national Medicare advisory service that provides free, unbiased Medicare plan guidance. Join us at Panera, 8365 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, for Medicare information and helpful resources. Medicare Open Enrollment runs from Oct. 15 through Dec 7. All are welcome! AARP members, non-members and anyone curious about Medicare are invited. Sign up to get a reminder email. <https://events.aarp.org/FCF100926>

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, OCT. 9-11 & OCT. 16-18

McLean Community Players' The Addams Family. At The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. They're creepy, they're kooky- and they're perfect for the whole family. The Addams Family, presented by McLean Community Players, is a laugh-out-loud musical comedy that celebrates love, loyalty, and embracing what makes each of us unique. When Wednesday Addams falls for a perfectly "normal" young man, chaos- and heart- ensue. With catchy songs, colorful characters, and plenty of humor for ages 8+, this delightfully offbeat show is a fun, family-friendly night at the Alden Theatre!

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

ParktoberFest. 12-5 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5235 Walney Road, Chantilly.

- ❖ 20+ local makers: More than 20 local makers, bakers and artisans will be on hand, along with fall plants and florals.
- ❖ Live local music: The Walkaways return, joined this year by singer/songwriter Jay Byrd.
- ❖ Fall food & brews: Ono Brewery will serve seasonal favorites including Pumpkin Ale and OktoberFest, while Burgorilla and Spinners Deli provide food.
- ❖ Family-friendly and FREE: ECLP staff and a local Girl Scout troop will lead crafts and activities for young visitors.

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

Transportation Fair. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Minnie H, Peyton Community Center at Bailey's, 5920 Summers Lane, Falls Church. Learn about local transportation projects and different public transportation resources, programs, and services available to Mason District residents.

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

McLean VFD Open House and Blood Drive. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. At 1455 Laughlin Avenue, McLean. Once a year, the fire department opens its firehouse to the public to showcase its apparatus, conduct live rescue demonstrations, provide fire safety education, and offer fun activities for the whole family. The Inova Blood Donor Services Bloodmobile will be parked in the fire station's lower parking lot. Donors will receive a specialty vampire shirt.



The McLean 5K Race will be held on Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026 at the McLean Square Shopping Center in McLean.



Treasure Island Reimagined: Jane Hawkins and the Pirate's Gold can be seen Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2026 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

Vienna Volunteer Fire Dept. Open House. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At 400 Center Street, S, Vienna. The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department (VVFD) invites the community to its Annual Open House for a fun-filled day of fire safety lessons, family activities, food, tours of the firehouse and vehicles, and kid-friendly activities. This year's Open House coincides with Fire Prevention Week and highlights the theme, "Charge Into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower!" Families will have the opportunity to meet Vienna Volunteer Fire Department firefighters and EMTs, learn valuable fire safety information, enjoy demonstrations and activities, and experience an exciting day at the firehouse. Visit www.vvfd.org.

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

McLean 5K. 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. At McLean Square Shopping Center, 6631 Old Dominion Dr., McLean. The race, a perennial family favorite, is hosted by the McLean Community Center and the McLean Community Foundation (MCF), and proceeds support MCF, which in turn gives generous grants to numerous McLean-area organizations. The certified course through McLean is designed to appeal to runners of all ability and experience levels. Sign up October 1 through Race Day: \$50

SATURDAY/OCT. 10

The McLean 5K & OFC's IGNITE. Race at 8 a.m. and IGNITE at 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. In downtown McLean & The Old Firehouse Center. Start your Saturday with the McLean 5K, then keep the good energy going at OFC IGNITE: Relax & Recover. After crossing the finish line, head to the Old Firehouse Center

for a chance to unwind, recharge and enjoy a relaxing afternoon. It's the perfect pairing for an active day in the community!

SUNDAY/OCT. 11

October Craft Day: Paper Pumpkins. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Embrace the Fall Season with a creative twist at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum Sunday, October 11, 2026, for the festive Craft Day where guests of all ages can make adorable paper pumpkin decorations to take home and brighten their autumn decor. Craft supplies included with admission fees. Free parking and handicap accessible. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6; Teachers, First Responders and Military, \$5; Seniors 65+, \$5. Visit www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org. www.facebook.com. 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/OCT. 11

Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel: Glorious Musical Jewels –Beethoven and Schubert. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The program includes Beethoven's joyous Polonaise, the beloved Für Elise, and humorous Bagatelles, alongside Schubert's tender Waltzes, fiery F minor Impromptu, and the heavenly Ave Maria. Praised for his "pianistic eloquence with a special gift for commentary" (The Washington Post), Siegel offers an evening not to be missed for new and returning classical music lovers, concluding with a short audience Q&A.

MONDAY/OCT. 12

Touch a Truck. 9 a.m. - Noon. At the McLean

FAIRFAX COUNTY

FARMERS MARKETS

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.

Community Center Parking Lot, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Kids can climb aboard, explore and get up close with trucks and specialty vehicles at this hands-on community event. Meet the people who operate these vehicles, discover how they work and enjoy a fun, interactive experience for the whole family!

TUESDAY/OCT. 13

Treasure Island Reimagined: Jane Hawkins and the Pirate's Gold. 7 p.m. At the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. In this adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic, the ultimate pirate story comes to life as a live-action graphic novel! Jane Hawkins, 12, lives a quiet life at a seaside inn on England's western coast in 1754. When a sinister stranger arrives with a mysterious trunk, her world is transformed into a thrilling adventure. Three performers create character voices and sound effects live as 1,200 projected illustrations bring this edge-of-your-seat tale to life. Filled with suspense, skeletons and pirate action, this production is recommended for ages 8+.

OCT. 13 TO NOV. 18

Virtual Author Series. 6:30 to 7:45 p.m.

Upstart Crow, Inc. and Fairfax County Public Library will present four free virtual author conversations from October 13 through November 18. The programs are online, open to the public, and sponsored by the library. Registration is on the Fairfax County Public Library calendar. A link to join is sent to registrants.

Tuesday, Oct. 13, at 6:30 p.m. with Lois Romano, a longtime Washington Post editor and POLITICO reporter, on her New York Times bestseller, An Inconvenient Widow: The Torment, Trial, and Triumph of Mary Todd Lincoln (Simon & Schuster, 2026). William Miller hosts.

Tuesday, Oct. 27, at 6:30 p.m.: Shubha Sunder on her novel Optional Practical Training (Graywolf Press), with William Miller. Sunder

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 19

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NEWS

Herndon Town Council Votes to End Town Manager Employment

Action is effective immediately; no reasons provided.

The Herndon Town Council voted at its Sept. 29 meeting to end the employment of Town Manager Dan Hoffman, effective immediately, according to an Oct. 1 Facebook post by the Town of Herndon Government.

"This is a personnel matter. To respect the privacy of everyone involved, the Town will not com-

ment further on the reasons for the Council's decision," Mayor Keven LeBlanc said in the post. "The Council will share information about next steps for the Town Manager position at the appropriate time."

"We wish Mr. Hoffman the best in his future endeavors," LeBlanc added.

Deputy Town Manager Kirstyn Jovanovich will serve as interim town manager.

"I appreciate the trust the Council has placed in me and in our leadership team during this transition," Jovanovich said.

— MERCIA HOBSON

Celebrate 34th Annual Centreville Day on Oct. 17

FROM PAGE 14

Leaf Skin Care, Maileybeau Mini, Bees and Butterflies, and Emma's Studio Art Shop.

The Pet Village has moved to Royal Oaks Lane in the main marketplace. Pet blessings by the Reverends Kevin Laskowski and Michael Weaver will begin at 12:30 p.m., followed by the pet parade at 1 p.m., with swag bags and individualized certificates for pet participants. Owners get to brag about their pets, and costumes are fun and welcomed, but not required.

Authors Gal Chivvis and Roxie's Mom will share stories of winsome canines. And HART, A For-

ever Home, Fairfax County Animal Shelter, Woofies, Saint Rocco's Dog Treats, and Metropolitan Guinea Pig will bring some animal friends and provide information about pet adoptions.

First responders, CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), domestic-violence prevention services and other safety agencies will be in the Safety Expo. The Eco Expo will include the Public Works Department, Wonder Wagon (the Park Authority's mobile nature center), and Watch the Green Grow activities. New this year is the Fairfax Water bar.

And for anyone just needing a

break, there's a Zen Zone on Newgate Lane. It's anchored by the Meditation Museum at one end and the Stretch Zone at the other, with health and wellness providers in between, as well as readings offered by the Fells Point Psychic.

Free, remote parking will be at the Trinity Centre (5820 Trinity Parkway) and Centreville United Methodist Church (6400 Old Centreville Road), with free shuttle buses taking people to and from the event. For more overall information, go to <https://www.historiccentrevilleva.org/>.

— CHERYL REPETTI

CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 13

This opportunity focuses on increasing tree cover in economically disadvantaged communities, which typically do not benefit from moderate to high tree cover.

How to Apply: Fairfax County Tree Distribution to Community Organizations | Public Works and Environmental Services

UCFD will prioritize applications for tree-planting sites within or adjacent to Fairfax County-designated highly vulnerable communities, as defined by the county's One Fairfax policy and its associated Vulnerability Index. While planting in highly vulnerable communities will be prioritized, all community organizations are encouraged to apply for tree delivery, regardless of where tree planting is proposed.

The costs of the trees and delivery are covered by the county's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and will be offered at no cost to participating organizations.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appoint-

ment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There is no minimum driving requirement. Not only do you help older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. The Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer, non-sectarian, non-profit organization. Its mission is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. Visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.org.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria regions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov

or call 703-324-5406.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.



The OFC's Festival of Frights & Trunk or Treat will be held Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026 at the Old Firehouse in McLean.

FROM PAGE 17

won the 2025 Whiting Award and the 2025 New American Voices Award. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 6.

Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 6:30 p.m.: Valerie Tripp, author of the American Girl stories of Felicity, Josefina, Kit, Molly, and Maryellen, with Jennifer Disano. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 20.

Wednesday, Nov. 18, at 6:30 p.m.: Jane Kamensky, president and CEO of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, on Declare: A Civic Gospel, with Ken Budd. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 28.

HALLO-WEEKEND THRILLS AWAIT IN FAIRFAX PARKS!

Step into a Halloween season packed with thrills, treats and traditions across Fairfax County parks. Ghostly golf, costumed parades, harvest festivals and family-friendly haunts fill the calendar with festive fun. Create memories with loved ones, explore new adventures and celebrate the magic of fall at Fairfax County Park Authority events designed for every ghost, ghou and goblin.

Farm Harvest Festival – Big Trucks, Carnival Rides and Fall Fun!

Frying Pan Farm Park, Oct. 16-18

Celebrate fall with carnival rides and games, farm animals, hands-on activities, food vendors and more. Big Truck Night is Friday from 5-7 p.m., Farm Harvest Days run Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the carnival continues throughout the weekend. Purchase unlimited ride wristbands in advance and save by Oct. 16. Individual ride credits are also available on site. Parking is \$10 per vehicle.

Sensory-Friendly Family Trick-or-Treat

Clemjyjontri Park, Oct. 18, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Celebrate Halloween in a calm, inclusive, sensory-friendly way at Clemjyjontri Park. Enjoy a variety of fun and accessible activities, including the carousel, train, arts and crafts, and themed treat stations throughout the playground, all with reduced noise and sensory support. Costumes are welcome but not required. Tickets cost \$20 per person.

❖ **Halloween on the Farm**

Frying Pan Farm Park, Oct. 23-24

Celebrate Halloween with farm animals, trick-or-treating, crafts, games and a tour of the decorated farmhouse. Choose a one-hour time slot Friday between 5 and 7 p.m. or Saturday between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. Advance registration is \$12 per person through Oct. 22. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult.

Haunted Mini Golf

Oakmont Rec Center, Oct. 23-24, 4-9 p.m.

All werewolves, vampires and goblins (and their fam-

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com



The Burke Historical Society meets on Sunday, Oct. 25, 2026 in Burke.

ilies) are invited for a fun night of mini golf. Trick-or-treat and win various goodies at Oakmont Mini Golf. Trick-or-treat and get various goodies at every mini golf hole. Come dressed in your best costume and enjoy family fun! Cost is \$15 in advance and \$18 at the door. Please note that the mini golf course closes at 9:30 p.m.

Ghost Town

Burke Lake Park; Oct. 24-25, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Put on your costume and enjoy a not-so-spooky Halloween celebration with train and carousel rides, mini golf, crafts, trick-or-treat houses and family activities throughout the park. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Free for children younger than 2 with a paying adult.

Spooktacular Halloween Runs

South Run Rec Center, Oct. 24, beginning at 3 p.m.

Hustle down to the South Run Rec Center to join in some Halloween fitness fun featuring the Monster Mash 5K Dash, Halloween Fun Run 1-Mile and Spooktacular Tiny Tot Trot. Come in your best costume to enjoy the spooktacular atmosphere with your community. Cost is \$25 for the 5K and \$15 for other runs.

Halloween Costume Party: Family Skate and Dance Night

Franconia Rec Center, Oct. 24, 5-9 p.m.

Calling all gliding ghouls and goblins — our spooky Family Skate and Dance Night will be skele-fun for the entire family. Gather your favorite spooky crew and head out for this thrilling family-friendly event, with tunes sure to bring you back from the dead. Cost is \$10 per person.

House of Reptiles

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park Visitor Center and Amphitheater - Oct. 24, 6-8 p.m.

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Don't "Boss" Me



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

We do a lot of fast/medium-food take out, and not just Chinese either. In fact, since Covid, the food business has become very accommodating to take out/pick up requests. Moreover, as many of you regular eaters know, there are also services that will deliver to you all sorts of food. And in so receiving, recipients can minimize their interactions with food serving/delivering public. No parking and walking to the establishment, no standing and waiting in line once you're inside, and no mixing with the hoi polloi; just sitting and waiting from the comfort and convenience of your home. But for those of us who are resistant to the advantages of food delivery, interactions with the general public and the fast/medium-food staff await - or shall I say: persists.

I've written recently of my feelings about being called "sir" by the same general public I'm referring to here: the restaurant/fast/medium-food establishments. And as you regular readers know, yours truly (as opposed to my wife) will almost exclusively being the one going to pick up and pay for the food, thereby interacting with a store employee. hardly an awkward/unfamiliar exchange, especially given the post-Covid world where food delivery/pick up is almost di regur and people's eating routine has changed where now fewer meals are prepared at home and more are brought in ready to eat. It's become more acceptable, preferred almost, as a work-around to the miscellaneous toxins in the air that we all breathe. In fact, all these years later, I still see people wearing masks, sometimes even in their cars.

Now that I've established the context, let me finally address the particular situation that has led to this column being written: the employees greeting and thanking me after I order, receive and then pay. "Sir" in this interaction, I can tolerate. However, when an employee calls me "Boss;" that I don't tolerate nearly as well. "Sir" connotes respect, sort of. I don't like it, but it doesn't feel as if the employee is subliminally seething with contempt of our generational divide. It's not merely disrespectful, it's downright rude and snarky almost. I'm not the employees' boss so don't pretend to treat me as one. I'm your customer, not your supervisor. I place the order. You deliver the order. Though I'm not on the same side of the register as you, we are, in effect, two sides of the same request. We're practically equal. I'm not your boss. I'm happy being your customer. Let's not conflate your providing me a service with your working for me. If anything, we're working together. Calling me "Boss" raises my stature and presumes a relationship we've never actually consummated.

I don't want - or quite frankly deserve, any special dispensation, either in how my meal is prepared and/or how said meal is handed to me and what is said to me during that handoff. All I require is courtesy and gratitude. Anything more is unnecessary and likely not in your job description.

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

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