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Dan Greaney, with Sydenstricker Schoolhouse board members Judy Riekse, Ellen Plissner, Shirley Edwards, Kathleen Pablo and Ron Edwards. Greaney, a Simpson's TV writer, says he is running for U.S. President as a Republican, the first officially announced candidate.

Photo by Susan Laume/The Connection

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Podcaster Elevates Good

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Early Campaigning for U.S. President, in Springfield

Page 14

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VIRGINIA CONNECTS

American Legion, VFW Honor America's Veterans

Residents, dignitaries attend Fairfax City's annual event.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

Veterans Day ceremonies in Fairfax City always make an impact, as did the one last Wednesday, Nov. 11, at American Legion Post 177. That post, plus VFW Post 8469, hosted the event before a large crowd of local veterans and residents alike.

Attendees also included U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11th), Del. Gretchen Bulova (D-11th), Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37th), Del. Dan Helmer (D-10th), former delegate Mark Keam, and Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid and husband Greg Kincaid, Virginia State Police captain. Also present were Fairfax City Fire Chief Shawn Dunstan, City Police Chief Raúl Pedroso, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read and City Councilmembers Anthony Amos, Billy Bates and Tom Peterson.

"Veterans Day celebrates and honors all who've served, and that's our purpose here today," said Post 177 Past Commander Jeff White. Then, after the presentation of the colors, the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of the National Anthem by The Unmuted, VFW post 8469 Chaplain Dan Allmacher gave the invocation.



Jeff White



Mike Fant



James Walkinshaw



Photos by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

Listening to James Walkingshaw speaking are (from left) Jeff White, Mike Sprano, Mike Fant and Dan Allmacher.

He asked God to be with everyone there as they paid tribute to America's veterans, plus those currently serving in the Armed Forces. "We're grateful for their dedication, commitment, the countless selfless acts they've performed and the sacrifices of their spouses and families so that we might continue to enjoy freedom," he said. "We thank You for their service to the nation and to their families and communities in the years since they've served.

"We're mindful that many of their comrades sacrificed their lives on the fields, seas, along the shores and in the air, where the battles of war were fought. We remember those today with great reverence and thanksgiving. We thank You for our great land, life, liberty and the freedom to pursue happiness that constitutes the legacy of our forbearers and the ongoing ideals of our republic."

Next, noting the role veterans

See American Legion, Page 18



Part of the American Legion and VFW Color Guard, which opened the program.



The Unmuted singing the National Anthem. From left are Beth Kimlick, Martie Gilliam, Kate Rau and Ginger Albertson.

'Veterans' Sacrifices Should be Remembered, Valued, Honored'

Judge Michael Sprano shares his military story.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

Most people in Fairfax County know Michael Sprano as either a public defender, an attorney in private practice or in his current role as a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judge. Along the way, however, he also served in the Marine Corps Reserve and saw active duty during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Judge Michael Sprano



Photos by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

Michael Sprano and his platoon in Iraq on Christmas Day 2004.

And last Wednesday, Nov. 11, he shared his military experiences during the annual Veterans Day ceremony at American Legion Post 177 in Fairfax City. As he spoke, photos of him and his unit were shown on the wall behind him.

"I joined the Marine Corps in 1994; I signed a contract my senior year of college [at Miami University]," said Sprano. "And I was in boot camp, the summer of 1995, in between college and law school. I was a history and political science major in college, with a heavy emphasis on 20th-century European diplomacy and history – WWII – and spent my junior year studying in Europe, including visiting two of the death camps of the Holocaust.

"At Dachau, there's a sign at the gate that, in German, means 'Never forget, never again.' And at the time, about 600 miles

See 'Veterans' Sacrifices, Page 6

Kirsten Lockhart Elected Fairfax City's Mayor

Amos receives the most votes for City Council.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

Fairfax City Planning Commissioner Kirsten Lockhart was elected mayor Nov. 3, beating current City Councilmember Tom Peterson. Lockhart garnered 6,080 votes and 55 percent of the total to Peterson's 4,866 votes and 44 percent.

In the race for City Council – where 11 candidates vied for six seats – Anthony Amos received the most votes, 6,508, followed by Kelly O'Brien, 6,062; Sandi Slappey Brown, 5,664; Maria Jose Padmore, 5,506; Stacy Hall, 5,343; and Rachel McQuillen, 4,841. Amos, Hall and McQuillen are all incumbents.

In addition, re-elected to the Fairfax City School Board were its longtime chairman Carolyn Pitches, plus Kristina Cecere, Sarah Kelsey, Amit Hickman and Lauren Bartelme.

And although Fairfax is a small city, its residents take elections seriously. According to the Fairfax City Registrar's Office, 60 percent of those qualified to vote did so. Of the 19,240 registered voters, 11,505 cast their ballots.

Residents also voted resoundingly in favor of a ballot question asking whether Fairfax City should be authorized to levy a general, retail sales tax not to exceed 1 percent. The revenue it raises would be used solely for school capital projects – renovations and new construction – and public transportation projects serving the City. Voters passed it, nearly 56 percent to 44 percent.

❖ Below are comments from some of the election winners, beginning with the mayor-elect. Council members were asked how they felt about their victories and why they believe voters chose them.



Celebrating their victories on election night are (from left) Anthony Amos, Maria Jose Padmore, Kirsten Lockhart, Sandi Slappey Brown and Kelly O'Brien.



From left, Rachel McQuillen and Stacy Hall take a selfie on the campaign trail.



From left, Stacy Hall and Rachel McQuillen pose in front of City Hall.



A trio of Fairfax City mayors: From left are Catherine Read, current mayor; Kirsten Lockhart, mayor-elect; and David Meyer, past mayor.

Kirsten Lockhart

"I am so honored that the City of Fairfax has decisively put its trust in me to help steer our community forward. While the campaign season was long and hard, I learned so much from hundreds of conversations with residents from every corner of the City, and I'm excited to get to work in service of all those priorities and needs.

"Looking at the slate of elected officials, I believe City voters opted for candidates who offered plans, rather than critiques. As residents of the same neighborhoods and commuters on the same roads, we all know where the pain points are; candidates who were willing to speak to their proposed solutions saw more success on Election Day.

"Personally, I think opting to spend significant time meeting directly with voters made the difference. My gut instinct was that more spending (more mail, mass texts) wasn't going to meaningfully impact voter turnout at the same scale as personal engagement.

"I do hope that people felt heard during my campaign, and that that sentiment continues once I'm in office. I also thank the other candidates and volunteers who were willing to carry my information with them on their own door-knocking adventures, because personal recommendations are always the best advertising."

Lockhart said her "day-one tactical priority is to establish ground rules and expectations that this will be an elected government that operates transparently and efficiently to get things done.

"I intend to work closely with the City Manager and City Attorney to look at the Boards and Commissions application and appointment process to ensure that we address any vacancy backlog ASAP," she said. "We need to establish a clear plan for advertising, receiving and vetting applications, as well as revisiting the delivery expectations for the boards and commissions themselves. Step one of my core campaign priority is to provide meaningful opportunities for resident engagement in the City.

"Lastly, as my term as a Planning Commissioner winds down and I step into the mayoral role, I'm very interested in the future of the Small Area Plans and how we can best utilize them to inform a more consistent, predictable, development-review process.

"I think my message to City residents is just one of gratitude – for taking the time to have a conversion, do their own research and of course show up to vote in record numbers. I'm truly honored to serve as the next Mayor of the City of Fairfax, and I look forward to ushering our community into its next great era."

Anthony Amos

"I'm honored, excited and really grateful that the Fairfax City community wanted me back and that I earned their trust. I'm excited to work with the Council to get things done and also to keep working with City staff.

"The main thing I heard from the residents while campaigning was that people appreciate that I show up to everything and have an open door and an open mind. I think the City is a place of opportunity, and I hope that we can live up to our potential."

Sandi Slappey Brown

"I'm super-excited, all in, and honored that the voters selected me to serve them. I'm excited to jump in. I've been at the Council's public hearings, meetings and budget retreats and plan to absorb as much as I can. I love this stuff and am looking forward to meeting people at project open houses and various meetings and having conversations with City staff and the people attending these events.

"I was out there all the time – going to board, authority and commission meetings on a regular basis – and people saw me doing the work and told me they respected that. I knocked on thousands of doors and met people at their homes and got to talk with them about what they care about. And even with people who might have different perspectives on things, they appreciated that someone listened to them.

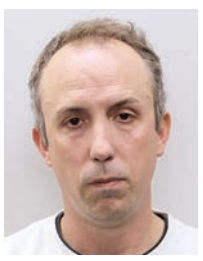
"I also think that being recommended by the local Democratic Committee had an impact and resonated with a lot of people and that our values aligned. I also give credit to Rep. James Walkinshaw

See Kirsten Lockhart, Page 9

Police Arrest Woodson High Band Director

Charges include solicitation of a minor student.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection


Morgan

Fairfax County police have arrested Woodson High's band director on several criminal charges, including solicitation of a minor and possession of child sexual-abuse material. He is Aaron Morgan, 38, and he's currently being held without bond in the county's Adult Detention Center.

According to police, on Nov. 10, Fairfax County Public Schools "notified detectives of concerns regarding a band director's alleged inappropriate conduct toward a student." Detectives from the Major Crimes Bureau's Child Exploitation Unit immediately began investigating, and their efforts led to Morgan being identified as the adult in question.

They also executed multiple search warrants and, say police, reportedly uncovered "electronic evidence of child sexual-abuse material" associated with him. Then, last Thursday, Nov. 12, police arrested Morgan at his Fairfax home. Besides solicitation of a minor, they charged him with five counts of possession of child sexual-abuse material.

He's been employed by the school system for 10 years and has been Woodson's band director since 2016. Following his arrest, he's been suspended without pay. Victim specialists from the Police Department's Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure the victims are receiving appropriate resources and assistance.

Morgan has a Feb. 1, 2027, preliminary-hearing date in General District Court on the solicitation charge. Regarding the sexual-materials offenses, he's scheduled to appear Feb. 25, 2027, in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.

In the meantime, detectives would like to speak with anyone who may have information about this case or any others possibly related to it. Those with information are asked to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 4. Submit a tip anonymously through Crime Solvers of Fairfax County (www.crimesolversfairfax.org) by calling the Crime Solvers tip line at 866-411-8477.



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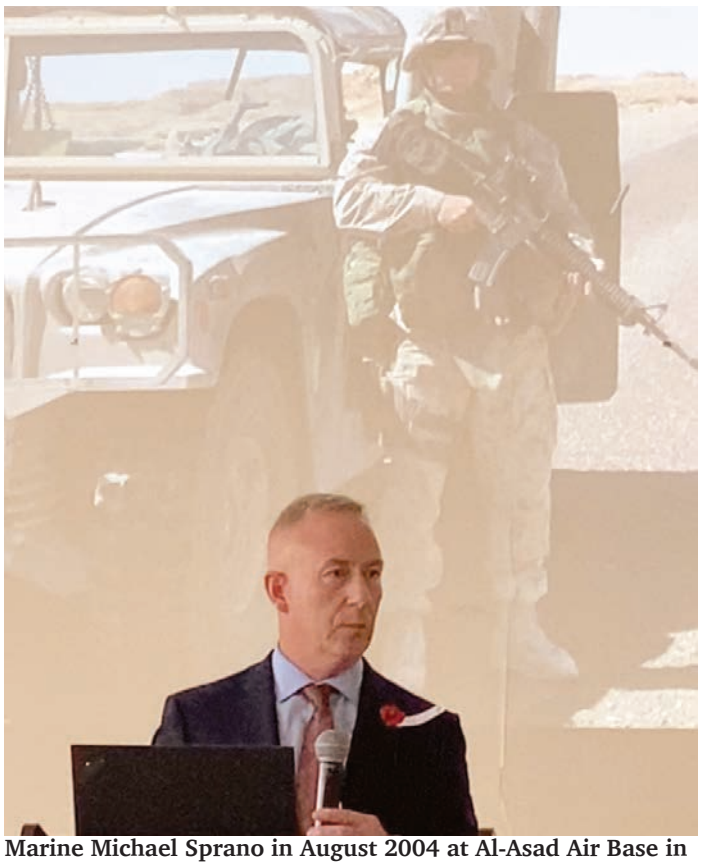
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‘Veterans’ Sacrifices Should be Remembered, Valued, Honored’

From Page 3

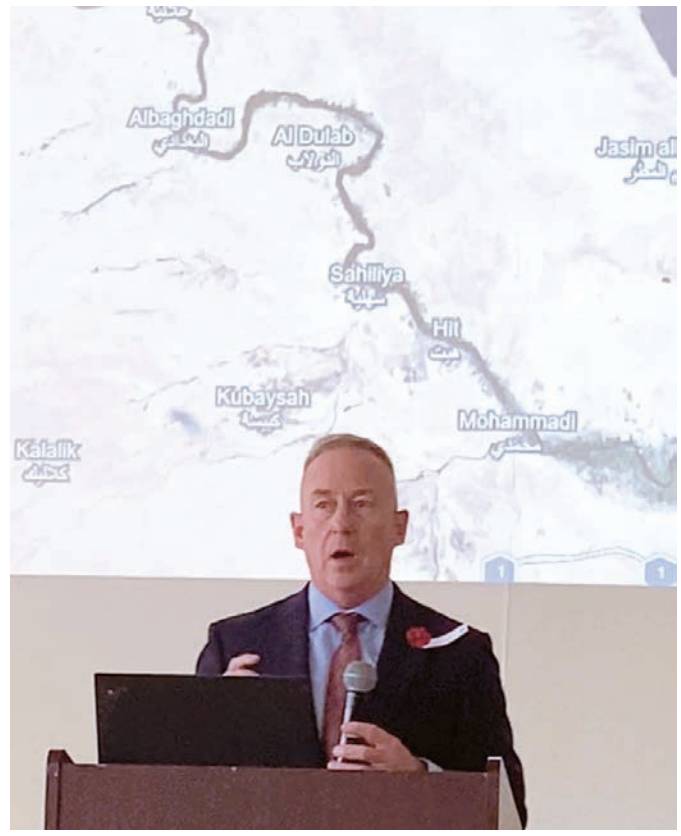
to the southeast of that, it was happening again – this time, to Bosnian Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. And I, as a young idealistic college student thought that was wrong and the world should do something to stop it – and the ‘world’ meant the United States.

“So I decided that, at some point in my life, I needed to put myself in a position where I was going to actually be one of the people to pay the price for that. So I decided to serve in the military. But it was never going to be a career; I knew where my career path was destined, and I didn’t want to wait to get started.



Photos by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

Marine Michael Sprano in August 2004 at Al-Asad Air Base in Iraq.



Michael Sprano with a map of his platoon’s area of operations in Iraq.

“I didn’t want to sidetrack my career plans but wanted to go where there was the best chance of getting called up, if the country needed to go to war. So I signed up with the Marines and said, ‘I want to be a grunt.’ And they said, ‘Absolutely, we’ve got plenty of space.’ I ended up going to law school at Washington & Lee University, where there are no infantry units around, so the Marines told me I was going to be a combat engineer.”

Calling it “the coolest [job specialty] in the Marine Corps,” Sprano said, “We did everything an infantry unit would get to do. Our mission, on defense, is to engineer the battlefield, design and build the defensive plan, obstacles and fortifications; and on offense, to breach those obstacles and fortifications – usually by blowing them up.

“So I graduated boot camp, entered life as a reservist, pursued my career as a public defender, opened up a law practice with a couple of my colleagues, got married in 2002, became a stepfather, bought a house and started working on having [more] children. So as life was getting more complicated, in May 2004, the phone rings: ‘You’ve got to go to war.’ So I spent the night informing the rest of my platoon.”

Then, after several weeks’ preparation and training – including a week’s personal leave during which his son was conceived – said Sprano, “We arrived at Al- Asad [Air Base] Aug. 17. It was 120 degrees on the tarmac. We were told our mission was to support the Iraqi security forces – two police stations and their national guard – in maintaining order and taking over their own country.” But before the Marines could do that, he said, those police stations were decimated.

“So our next mission was to support the Iraq national guard,” said Sprano. “Checkpoints were set up throughout the area of operations, but they were woefully under-defended, so we built them up [to make them larger and stronger].” However, after all that work, he said, the Iraqis who were supposed to defend them caved to threats by the insurgents, who then destroyed the checkpoints and took their weapons. So by early November, said Sprano, “There were no more police or national guard; it was just the Wild, Wild West.

Another job his unit did was to gather and then blow up the insurgents’ stockpiles of artillery shells. “Blowing stuff up is fun,” said Sprano. “I’m not going to lie. Unexploded ordnance disposal was something we always did over there.” That fall of 2004 was also the Battle of Fallujah. “I wasn’t part of it, but the buildup to it impacted us,” said Sprano. “They basically took half of our strength and doubled our area of operations.

“So in November-December, we did lots of security patrols in 14-hour shifts. We also had to worry about landmines. And when we found one, we’d blow it up in place. With IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], though, if they were armed, we’d call EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] to deal with them with their robots and other equipment.”

Sprano’s unit had a good Christmas. But then, he said, “They hit us with a rocket attack on New Year’s Day [2005]. My platoon commander was on a recon mission and got hit with an olive-oil can IED and ended up losing his arm, and the Marine next to him lost his life.”

He said it was all leading up to the first free elections in Iraq, that Jan. 30. So to try to neutralize the insurgents planning to prevent the elections, said Sprano, “On Jan. 26, we sent a squad of combat engineers and a weapons company to execute a hard hit on a meeting of high-level insurgents in a certain house. Our guys were supposed to blow up the door but, when they got there, the house was empty.”

So they turned around and left, he said, but were then ambushed. Seven Marines were killed and another three were wounded as they drove away. “The driver ended up with seven holes in his body, but survived,” said Sprano. “We had a memorial for those we lost, the next day, and then got back to work.”

He said they built fortifications for the two Iraqi election sites. “Then we manned [protective] positions there, along with the infantry, during the elections,” said Sprano. “We were hit several times. The mission was a success in that we had no casualties. Voter turnout in our area – which was between 100,000 and 200,000 people – was 10. But they had an election.”

Then, at the end of February, his unit participated in an operation to occupy various cities, for a few days at a time, doing patrols and searching for weapons caches. He said they had lots of ammunition and heavy-duty vehicles with them. But then the powers that be decided the insurgents were less likely to attack a simple infantry unit than one displaying so much firepower.

“So we were going to go first – which meant me, as the lead vehicle – and it was terrifying,” said Sprano. “So at [3 a.m.], we went racing down a hill, and I hear a big IED explosion behind me, but our training kicks in and we knew we had to keep going. I wasn’t able to contact [Communications], so we were just five guys in a truck driving into no-man’s land.

“We slowed down and took a hard left at a T intersection, and I looked up – and right across the street are two guys with RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] taking a prone position. They fire one over my head, one over the driver’s head. We make the turn and continue the mission. But I will say, as many who come back and question, ‘Why did my friend get killed by an RPG fired at the absolute maximum range of that weapon – 400 yards – when two of them fired at me, 35 feet away, and missed?’ Ours is not to reason why.”

After one more mission, they returned to Virginia on April 1, 2005. “My son was born three weeks after I got back, and I decided I’d done what I’d signed up to do, and I didn’t need to do it again,” said Sprano. “So I moved back into civilian life and here I am now.

“That’s my story and my combat experience – but that’s not what it means to be a veteran. It’s not whether you served in combat; a lot of that’s just down to timing and luck. When I think about what it means to be a veteran, I think about a question one of my friend’s uncles asked me at his funeral.

“One of the Marines who died was Jesse Strong of Attleboro, Vt., and a bunch of us went there to help bury him. After his funeral, this uncle pulled me aside and asked me if it was worth it, and my answer was yes. It was and is worth it – not for the specific mission, but for the idea that good people are still willing to die for this country and what it stands for.

“To me, that’s what it means to be a veteran. It’s about the willingness to make that sacrifice. And that’s what binds all veterans together – the fact that we took that oath to fight for and, if need be, die for our country – and we live up to it. And that’s why honoring and supporting veterans is so important on this day and every day. It also means support for their programs, such as healthcare, plus transitional support from military to civilian life.

“It also includes the Veterans Treatment Docket we have in Fairfax County for veterans who’ve run afoul of the law. It gives them all the help and services they need and holds them accountable [for their future behavior]. That program has now graduated 85 veterans, all of whom are now closer to rediscovering the people they once were. And they also need housing; one homeless veteran is one too many.

“I think it’s also important to send a message to future generations of leaders that veterans’ service and sacrifices are important to this country, will be remembered, valued and honored – and that it matters. We want people joining the military to be motivated by love of country and the Constitution and the desire to serve something greater than themselves.”

Shawn Dunstan: Fairfax City's New Fire Chief

Shawn Dunstan is Fairfax City's new fire chief, effective Nov. 23. He replaces former Fire Chief John O'Neal, who retired July 1, after serving more than 10 years in this role with the City of Fairfax Fire Department. Since then, Dunstan has been the City's Acting Fire Chief.

City Manager Dan Alexander made the announcement at the outset of the Nov. 10 Fairfax City Council meeting. "Chief Dunstan brings 33 years of fire service experience, including more than 24 years with the City," said Alexander. "Since joining Fairfax as a Fire Medic in 2002, he has advanced through a series of operational and management roles, most recently serving as Assistant Fire Chief.

His appointment also marks an important milestone, as he becomes the City's first homegrown Fire Chief."

Alexander then asked the meeting attendees to join him, the mayor and council in "congratulating Chief Dunstan on this well-deserved appointment. We look forward to what lies ahead under his leadership."



Fire Chief Shawn Dunstan

— Bonnie Hobbs

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Photo Courtesy of Daniel Rosenbaum

Nathalie Louis receives the Community Impact Award. From left are Supervisor Rachna Sizemore Heizer (D-Braddock); Caitlin Connolly, daughter of the late U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly; Cathy "Smitty" Smith, Connolly's wife; Nathalie Louis; and U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11)

Lamb Center's Banquet Draws Record Crowd

More than 500 people gathered Oct. 22 at The Lamb Center's 2026 "Hope & A Future" banquet – a record crowd for the Fairfax day center serving neighbors experiencing homelessness and poverty. As a result, organizers expected the event to raise about $270,000, which will support Lamb Center guests and residents of Beacon Landing. Once it opens in Fairfax City in December, it'll be the largest permanent supportive housing community in Fairfax County.

During the banquet, nurse practitioner Nathalie Louis received the second annual Honorable Gerry Connolly Community Impact Award for her exceptional care of vulnerable people in the community and for helping Lamb Center guests feel comfortable seeking the medical care they need.

Also that evening, guests shared their stories of perseverance – both live and within a video presentation titled, "Looking Back, Moving Forward."

— Sierra Scott, The Lamb Center

Donate to FACETS's Food and Gift Drive

Via its Holiday Hope initiative, nonprofit FACETS is hoping to fill 1,200 grocery bags so local families in need can celebrate the holiday season their way. The goal is to collect groceries, plus gifts for children, ages 0-17. And there are several ways members of the community may help – individually or in groups, in person or online.

The deadline for FACETS to receive these donations is Monday, Dec. 7.

To see the list of needed food and suggested gift items, go to https://facetscares.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Holiday-Hope-Flyer.pdf.

* Individual collections: People are asked to download the list of needed food and suggested gifts and purchase or collect as much as they can. $25 grocery store or Visa gift cards (Aldi, Lidl, Walmart, etc.) are especially helpful. Please give non-perishable, unexpired and unopened food, plus new, unwrapped gifts. Then drop them off at FACETS, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at 10700 Page Ave., Suite 160, in Fairfax.

* For congregations, companies, schools or neighborhoods wishing to collect as a group, choose one item from the list, gift cards or kids' gifts, and FACETS will give them a goal and a drop-off date. Email development@facetscares.org to sign up.

* People may also shop online from FACETS's Amazon wish lists and have items sent directly to FACETS. Financial donations are also welcome. For more information on either of these giving options, go to https://facetscares.org/ways-to-give/holidayhope/.



Courtesy of Fairfax City

Housing and Healthy Communities Advisory Board members and partners. At far left is Mark Light, and Catherine Read holds the proclamation. Behind her is Tara Ruszkowski, and next to Read (from left to far right) are Abra Kurt of Britepaths and Deb Haynes.

Need for Food and Housing Hits Home Everywhere

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in Fairfax City.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

At the beginning of the Nov. 10 Fairfax City Council meeting, Mayor Catherine Read presented a proclamation acknowledging Nov. 15-21 as Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in the City. Receiving it were members of Fairfax's Housing and Healthy Communities Advisory Board (HCAB) and its partners.

It's celebrated nationally to increase understanding, compassion and action around the issues of hunger and homelessness. The proclamation stated that they're influenced by "a range of interconnected factors, including the availability and affordability of housing, access to living-wage employment, reliable transportation, affordable childcare, health and behavioral health care, substance-use treatment, and other resources that help individuals and families meet their basic needs and achieve and maintain stability."

It further states that addressing these challenges requires both immediate assistance and long-term solutions, including "creating and preserving housing that residents can afford, strengthening prevention and early intervention, expanding access to supportive services, and addressing the systemic and structural factors that contribute to hunger and housing instability."

Fairfax City has established groups dedicated to tackling these issues and helping the City develop positive and effective ways of dealing with them.

And, states the proclamation, it also "recognizes and values the dedication and essential contributions of a network of nonprofits, government partners, faith communities, businesses, volunteers and community members whose collective efforts provide access to food, shelter, affordable housing, supportive services, and other essential resources for individuals and families experiencing hunger, homelessness and housing instability."

Therefore, realizing that these efforts require the participation of the entire community, and that every resident may contribute in some way, Read encouraged them to do whatever they can to ensure City residents have access to the food, housing and support they need. Speaking next was Executive Director of Food for Others, Deb Haynes.

"As Food for Others marks 30 years of distributing food to our neighbors across Northern Virginia, we find ourselves facing a greater demand than ever before," she said. "This past fiscal year, we served more than 57,000 individuals, many of whom turned to us for support more than once. Those numbers remind us that, for far too many of our neighbors, putting food on the table has become increasingly difficult – and that's exactly why we continue our mission.

"We continue with the same passion and commitment that have guided us for the past 30 years to ensure that our neighbors have access to the food they need. But we don't do this work alone. We move forward because of the dedication and generosity of our Fairfax Community, including the volunteers, partners, donors and supporters who stand alongside our neighbors every step of the way.

"Together, we've distributed nearly 4 million pounds of food and provided more than 3 million meals to families. Every can of food donated, every dollar given and every hour volunteered is a reminder of what can happen when a community comes together to care for one another. As we reflect on what our mission has meant to this community, we're reminded of what this community has meant to us.

"Today's proclamation is a powerful message that hunger is a challenge we face to-

See Need for Food, Page 9

Design Engineers Etch Out a Dreamy Plan for Springfield Plaza

Drawings are more urban than previous plans.

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

Tentative plans and a drawing are being thrown around the Springfield Plaza redevelopment community and from the artist rendering, the future of this plaza in central Springfield looks similar to the Farragut West plaza in Washington, D.C.

The surrounding 8-to12-story buildings have retail-looking spaces on the ground floor, elevator shafts near the corner, trees and coffee shop spaces populated by couples and families enjoying the urban living space.

Of course, this is an artist rendering and to put anything like this into play for Springfield Plaza needs commercial enthusiasm and maybe about a billion dollars. For those that have lived through a few phases of redesign and construction in Springfield, this futuristic vision is a big change.

It's "how it might look," said Trent Bailey, a commercial real estate agent who has a podcast called "NOVA with Trent."

"That's a planning concept, not a demolition announcement," he said on the podcast.

Hanover Springfield, apartments were built a few years ago close to the town center, and a "Hanover R2" might be coming someday. Hanover Springfield is an apartment complex with studio, one, two and three bedroom apartments ranging from $2005 a month for a studio, to $3,746 a month for a three-bedroom, two bath apartment. There are 439 apartments in the existing structure, and another 399 proposed in Hanover R2.

It even mentions the town center "going away" in the future but the podcast didn't elaborate on that.

This information was presented at a public meeting on Oct. 20, 2026 in a community webinar called Franconia-Springfield Study Preliminary Plan where they show eight blocks at Springfield Plaza as spaces planned for buildings that will be 8-to-12 stories, and several blocks that are described as buildings with "taller heights in the center and along major roadways." Those major roadways are Backlick Road, Amherst Avenue, Bland Street and Brandon Avenue.

This redevelopment plan is currently in the "Staff Analysis and Plan Drafting," stage, but will move into the "Draft Plan Text," in early 2027 and possibly into the public hearings phase next summer.

There is an opportunity to weigh in on the plan at https://engage.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield-planning-study.



Photos contributed

The existing Hanover Springfield apartments are close to the Springfield Town Center and Metro.



An artist rendering of the future Springfield Plaza vision.

Need for Food and Housing Hits Home Everywhere

From Page 8

gether, and that everyone has a role to play in building a community where no neighbor has to wonder where their next meal will come from. Food for Others is honored to be part of this special moment, and I'm deeply grateful to everyone who continues to stand with us and with our neighbors."

Next speaker was HCAB Chairman Mark Light. "It's easy to think that things like that don't happen here in Fairfax City," he said. "But hunger and housing insecurity are always visible. And many time, they affect more of our neighbors than we realize.

"According to the City of Fairfax Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, 2,896 households – or 32 percent of all households in the City – are either living in poverty or are considered what's called 'ALICE,' asset limited, income constrained and employed. For many individuals and families, the rising costs of housing, food, utilities and other basic necessities leave little room for unexpected expenses.

"Even a small, financial setback can create a housing crisis or put someone at the risk of losing their home – and, in some cases, actually losing it and becoming homeless. Expanding affordable and attainable housing opportunities, while preserving existing affordable homes, is an important part of ensuring that our neighbors can find housing and remain stably housed.

"There's a wide number of organizations that come together in the City of Fairfax and collaborate to make things happen. There's no single solution to these challenges. Meaningful progress requires collaboration, a range of strategies and the sustained commitment of all of us.

"Each of us has a role to play – whether that means supporting local organizations, volunteering, learning more about these issues or helping connect someone in need with available resources."

Then Tara Ruszkowski, CEO of The Lamb Center, thanked the mayor and Council for the proclamation. "Because of this community – and the way it walks the walk and what it talks about in terms of housing for all – we will be opening a 54-unit apartment community next month," she said. "We'll be bringing in people currently experiencing chronic homelessness, just before the holidays.

"And that happened because of bold action on the part of this City and its leadership, and we're so grateful – and also for the community that created this bold Council. Thank you all."

Kirsten Lockhart Elected Fairfax City's Mayor

From Page 4

[D-11th] for his endorsement, as a key contributing factor in my campaign. I believe that also resonated with many voters, as he's so well-respected."

Stacy Hall

"I'm grateful that Fairfax City residents have trusted me to serve another term. I've appreciated the opportunity to bring more residents into the budget process and help them see how Council decisions truly affect their everyday lives. I look forward to continuing that work, and I'm here to listen to and serve everyone in our City, regardless of who they voted for.

"I think residents know that, even when we disagree, I'll listen, do my homework, ask the tough questions and show up prepared and ready to do the work. I think it came down to listening to residents and talking openly about the issues they care about – from responsible budgeting and strong schools to safe neighborhoods and thoughtful growth.

"At the doors, people asked good questions about what the City could afford and how decisions were made, and I tried to give them straight answers. I'm also grateful to my family and the volunteers who knocked on doors and helped me reach more neighbors than I could have on my own."

Kelly O'Brien

"I appreciate the vote of confidence. I feel grateful and look forward to working with the Council. I love my community, and it's just another way to give back.

"I'm not new to the community; I've been volunteering for years, so people knew me by word of mouth.

I appreciated the City residents who vouched for me, and I want to thank all the candidates who ran, because we all love the City of Fairfax."

Opinion

Fairfax County Must Protect the Accotink Watershed While Building New Sewer Pipeline

By Martin E. Shepherd
Former Member, Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink

Major sewer construction upstream of Lake Accotink demands stronger environmental safeguards, coordinated sediment monitoring, and public accountability.

Column

Fairfax County faces an important test of its commitment to environmental stewardship as it undertakes a major sanitary sewer expansion through the environmentally sensitive Hunters Branch corridor, a tributary of Accotink Creek. The Accotink Gravity Sewer Improvements Project will provide additional wastewater capacity to accommodate continued development, particularly in Tysons. While the need for this infrastructure is legitimate, the environmental consequences of its construction deserve greater public attention and oversight. The project involves approximately three miles of new sanitary sewer pipeline, with construction extending through established stream corridors, forested areas, and sensitive habitats.

Friends of Accotink Creek has raised concerns about the potential removal of more than 630 mature trees, disturbance of wetlands and vernal pools, and sections of the proposed pipeline alignment that depart from existing utility corridors. These concerns extend well beyond the immediate construction area because Hunters Branch flows into Accotink Creek, which carries water and sediment downstream toward Lake Accotink.

A Watershed Already Under Stress

Lake Accotink has suffered decades of sediment accumulation that have substantially reduced its surface area and threatened its future as a recreational and environmental resource. Fairfax County is now investing considerable public resources in the Smaller Lake Accotink Preservation Feasibility Study and associated Sedimentation Rate Study to better understand sediment transport, accumulation, and the alternatives available for preserving the lake. These investigations involve scientists from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and engineering consultants, including Arcadis and WSP/LimnoTech, who are examining the complex relationships between watershed conditions, sediment movement, and lake preservation. At the same time, another County project will introduce extensive excavation, soil disturbance, and vegetation removal within the same watershed. Construction activities can increase erosion and sediment transport when inadequate controls allow exposed soil to enter nearby waterways, particularly during significant rainfall. This creates an important question for County officials: How will Fairfax County ensure that construction of its new sewer infrastructure does not worsen the very sedimentation problem it is simultaneously spending public funds to investigate?

Regulatory Compliance Is Only the Starting Point

The Accotink Creek watershed has a history of controversies involving stormwater management and environmental protection. In 2012, Fairfax County and the Virginia Department of Transportation successfully challenged an Environmental Protection Agency stormwater-flow regulation intended to address sediment-related impairment of Accotink Creek. Although the court resolved that dispute on statutory grounds, its decision did not eliminate the underlying environmental problem. Major transportation construction projects, including the I-495 Express Lanes, have also generated concerns about erosion, stormwater runoff, and sediment entering local waterways.

These experiences illustrate why residents should expect more than assurances that construction contractors will comply with existing environmental regulations. Regulatory compliance establishes minimum requirements, but effective watershed protection also demands measurable performance, timely inspections, prompt corrective action, and transparent reporting. Fairfax County should demonstrate that its environmental safeguards actually prevent avoidable damage rather than relying exclusively on documentation showing that contractors followed prescribed procedures.

Put Existing Scientific Resources to Work

Fairfax County already has an opportunity to strengthen environmental oversight by coordinating the Accotink Gravity Sewer Improvements Project with its ongoing Lake Accotink studies. The County has assembled scientific and engineering resources to investigate sediment transport and accumulation throughout the watershed. Rather than allowing separate project teams to work independently, DPWES should formally engage USGS scientists, engineering consultants, and responsible County officials in developing a coordinated approach to evaluating potential construction-related sediment impacts.

Before major land disturbance begins, the County should establish baseline stream conditions and collect appropriate turbidity, suspended sediment, and other environmental measurements. During construction, monitoring should evaluate changes that may result from excavation, vegetation removal, and stormwater runoff. The study team should also determine whether existing monitoring stations, field investigations, and sediment transport models can identify or quantify additional sediment attributable to sewer construction. Where current monitoring methods cannot adequately distinguish construction-related impacts from other sediment sources, the County should consider supplemental measurements and monitoring locations.

This coordination should produce more than an exchange of information between project managers. The County should document participating organizations and their responsibilities, establish procedures for responding to adverse monitoring results, and make relevant inspection findings and corrective actions accessible to the public. Incorporating these findings into both project records would strengthen accountability and provide valuable information for the County's ongoing evaluation of sedimentation in Lake Accotink.

Protect the Corridor and the Communities Downstream

Environmental oversight must also extend to the physical construction corridor. Fairfax County should minimize unnecessary removal of mature trees, understory vegetation, and established stream buffers while protecting wetlands, vernal pools, and designated Resource Protection Areas. Where the selected pipeline alignment departs from existing utility corridors, DPWES should explain how it evaluated the environmental consequences of alternative routes and why the selected alignment balances engineering requirements with natural resource protection. Independent technical verification, regular inspections following significant rainfall, and clear authority to suspend work when serious environmental deficiencies occur would provide additional assurance that environmental protection remains a priority throughout construction. These measures

See Accotink, Page 11

Be a Green Guide

The Fairfax County Green Guides is a new volunteer program from the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination. Green Guides are neighbors who learn how the county's sustainability and climate programs work, then share what they know at community events and in their own neighborhoods.

We're looking for people from across the county. You might run a civic association, lead a community group, organize a school group, or simply be the person on your block everyone asks. If that sounds like you, we hope you'll apply. You don't need to be an expert. You just need to care about where you live.

What you'll get:

❖ free training from county experts, about 2 hours a week for 6 weeks, January 21 – February 25;

❖ a clear picture of how county programs work and who to call;

❖ a network of Green Guides from across the county;

❖ and practical tools and resources to share with your community.

What we ask:

❖ a one-year pledge, 20 hours of volunteer service, and 5 hours of continuing education after training;

❖ age 16 or older and a completed background check;

❖ and a willingness to show up for your neighbors and at community events.

Applications close December 21. Questions? Contact greenguides@fairfaxcounty.gov.

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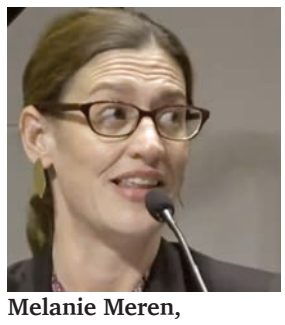
School Board Votes 8-2 in Support of Superintendent

Fairfax County School Board approves legislative agenda, Willow Springs renovation and disputed student-environment report.

Photos Screenshots via FCSB



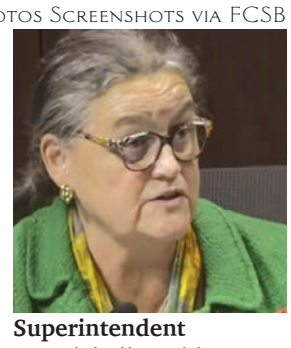
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Melanie Meren, Hunter Mill



Seema Dixit, Sully District



Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The Fairfax County School Board at its Nov. 12 regular meeting, voted 8–2 after debate to find Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid in compliance with Executive Limitation 10 — the standard set by the School Board that guides how the superintendent manages the school division's learning environment and relationships with students.

The debate followed questions about whether current metrics adequately capture school safety, discipline and student support across the division.

Some board members expressed concern about the adequacy of current data, such as self-reporting surveys, and the impact of teacher working conditions and student discipline approaches.

One concern focused on the quality of data. School Board member Seema Dixit, Sully District, questioned whether the student-safety survey fully captures students' experiences, noting, for example, that it appeared to ask only whether students felt safe at school, without follow-up questions. Dixit said, "There are no subsets of questions on it."

Dr. Reid answered, "Yes, ma'am. We'll take a look at the survey, and also we do an SEL screener, which is a different survey. But I take your point that it's important to make sure we're accurate and know how our students are feeling."

Melanie Meren, (Hunter Mill), voted no, with concerns regarding the monitoring report for Executive Limitation 10. "We are hearing how low membership into high school is creating a very poor learning environment for those students." Meren described confusion about what the rolling grade book implementation does and does not mean. She raised questions about keeping the same counselor or mentor year to year, teacher turnover and the frequency of substitute teachers. She asked whether these issues should be examined more deeply.

As for teacher concerns, Meren said employees had shared "sobering comments" on a range of issues.

Meren ended her comments saying she could not support the executive limitation that evening.

Mason District member Dr. Ricardy Anderson also voted no, citing concern that the report focused heavily on administrative activities rather than tangible results for students. She said she was "not seeing the through line" regarding the manner in which efforts directly impact the learning environment and student relationships. While she recognized the value of the programs presented such as annual summits and inclusion initiatives, she struggled to connect these "great activities" to the actual, day-to-day educational outcomes and student experiences.

Voting in favor of finding Dr. Reid in compliance were Chair Robyn Lady (Dranesville), Vice Chair Karl Frisch (Providence), Sandy Anderson (Springfield), Tom Dannon (At-Large), Seema Dixit (Sully), Mateo Dunne (Mount Vernon), Ilryong Moon (At-Large) and Marcia St. John-Cunning (Franconia). Voting against were Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason) and Melanie Meren (Hunter Mill). At-large member Ryan McElveen and Braddock District member Rachna Sizemore Heizer were absent.

The board also unanimously approved its 2027 legislative agenda ahead of the upcoming Virginia General Assembly and congressional sessions. Key last-minute amendments included requests for state funding for two proposed $1.5 million high school programming initiatives aimed at boosting enrollment at John R. Lewis and Mount Vernon high schools. Also added were positions addressing utility/energy costs, school safety and early-childhood education funding.

In a third action, the board unanimously awarded a $59.5 million renovation contract for Willow Springs Elementary School to add roughly 32,000 square feet to the building and allow the division to remove eight temporary classroom trailers.

Fairfax County Must Protect the Accotink Watershed While Building New Sewer Pipeline

From Page 10

should complement, rather than replace, the County's existing regulatory and permitting obligations.

Supervisors Walter Alcorn and Dalia Palchik, whose Hunter Mill and Providence Districts encompass the construction corridor, have an important opportunity to lead this effort. Their colleagues representing downstream communities, particularly Braddock District Supervisor Rachna Sizemore Heizer, also have a direct interest in the outcome. I have formally requested that County officials establish specific environmental safeguards, coordinate the sewer project with the Lake Accotink studies, and provide a substantive written response identifying the responsibilities, monitoring arrangements, and accountability measures they will implement.

One Watershed, One Responsibility

Fairfax County should not manage sanitary sewer construction and Lake Accotink preservation as unrelated undertakings simply because different project teams administer them. The watershed does not recognize political boundaries, departmental responsibilities, or separate project budgets. Sediment entering Hunters Branch can move into Accotink Creek and ultimately affect Lake Accotink, making coordinated planning and environmental oversight essential to protecting the entire watershed.

Residents who have questions or concerns about protecting the Accotink Creek watershed should contact their Fairfax County District Supervisor, the Accotink Gravity Sewer Improvements Project Manager, and the Smaller Lake Accotink Preservation Feasibility Study Project Manager. Share your concerns, ask what environmental safeguards and sediment monitoring measures the County will implement, and encourage coordination between the two projects. Public involvement and informed oversight can help ensure that necessary infrastructure improvements do not come at the expense of the watershed and Lake Accotink's future.

Residents should not have to choose between reliable sanitary sewer service and preserving their natural resources. Fairfax County can provide both, but doing so requires measurable environmental safeguards, effective coordination, and accountability before construction causes damage that may prove difficult and costly to reverse. The County already possesses substantial scientific resources, engineering expertise, and institutional knowledge to address these challenges. It now has an opportunity to demonstrate that responsible infrastructure development and meaningful environmental stewardship can advance together.

Martin E. Shepherd is a former member of the Fairfax County Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink and a longtime advocate for preserving and restoring Lake Accotink.

For More Information or to Express Your Concerns

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Contact your district supervisor:
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/

Accotink Gravity Sewer Improvements Project
Thomas Grala, Project Manager
Thomas.Grala@fairfaxcounty.gov
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/accotink-gravity-sewer improvements-project

Smaller Lake Accotink Preservation Feasibility Study
Turgay Dabak, Project Manager
Turgay.Dabak@fairfaxcounty.gov
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/node/854

Bulletin Board

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

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? 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/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

Loving How Words Can Change Things

Springfield broadcaster elevated her kindness aura into the Top Host competition.

By Mike Salmon
The Connections

On several fronts, Springfield resident Morenike Ogebe uses all kinds of methods to "elevate good." She produces the Elevating Good Podcast, develops web videos and recently entered the national "Top Host" competition vying to have her podcast produced by iHeartRadio, $25,000, and a guest spot on On Air with Ryan Seacrest. She came in third place but was happy to be considered.

"I not only had fun, I learned so much about myself and others, and about what it takes to be a successful podcaster and do this with the best of the best. In a word, I'd say I'm grateful," she said.

It's all about reaching out to others and her podcast makes this possible. "There are lots of differences out there building bridges between groups," and she's trying to build connections. It's her broadcasting outreach attitude that makes this happen.



Photo contributed

Morenike Ogebe

Ogebe is an attorney working for the Federal government in the Homeland Security area. She's lived with her family in West Springfield since 2012, where her children went to Cardinal Forest and Rolling Valley Elementary Schools, and then Lake Braddock Secondary. Her son graduated from

See Loving How Words, Page 15

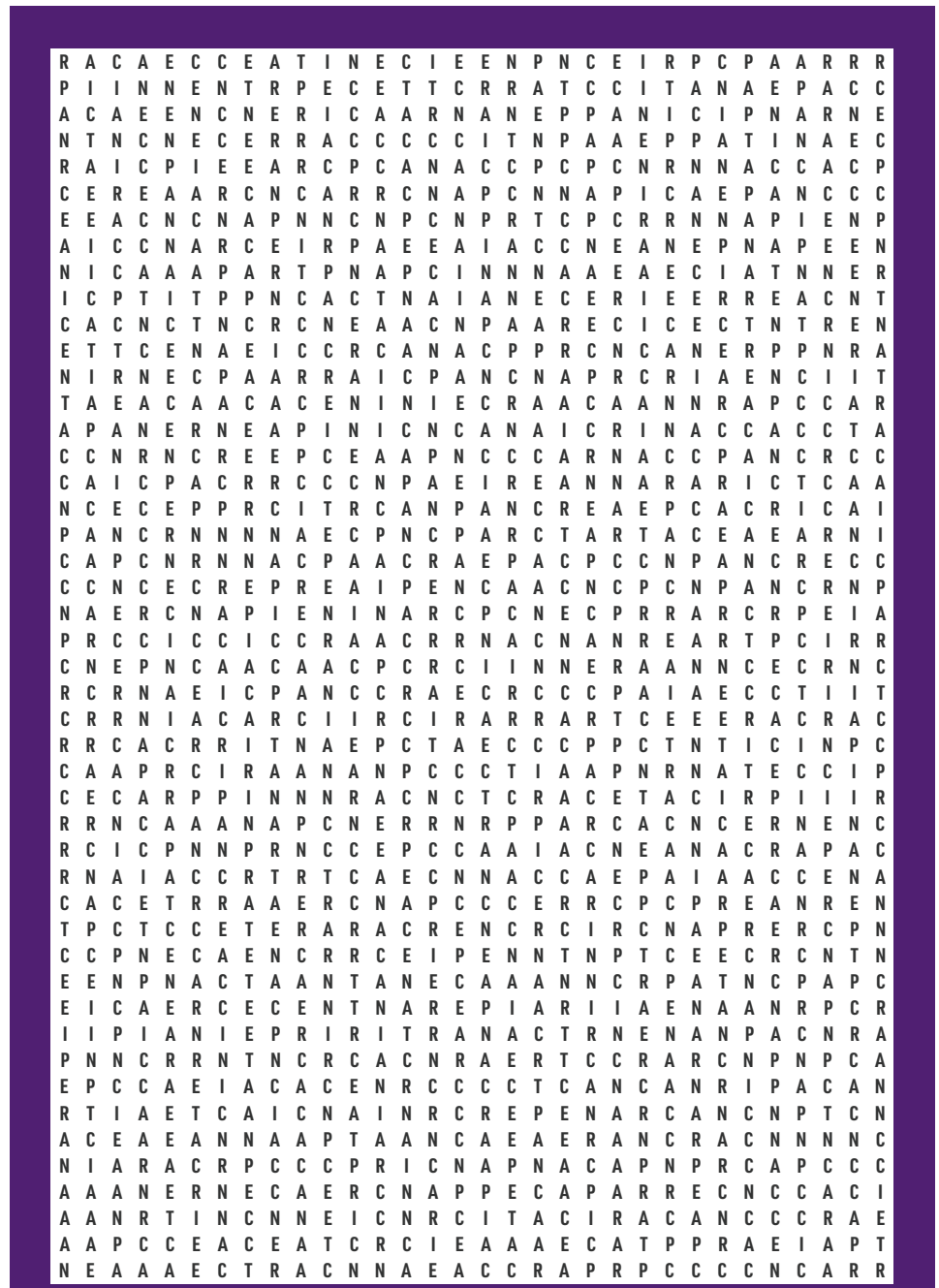


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Screenshot courtesy of Save Bren Mar / Nature Forward

An artistic rendering created by project opponents shows how the proposed 5-acre Edsall Substation would sit next to neighboring townhome communities.

'The Chokepoint': Plaza 500 Electric Substation Faces Mandated Fairfax Public Hearing

Section 2232 Review, Planning Commission Meeting Planned for Dec. 2

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Two sides are at odds over the Plaza 500 Electric Substation — officially Dominion Energy's Edsall Substation, Fairfax County application 2232-2025-MA-00007 — ahead of a scheduled Dec. 2 Fairfax County Planning Commission vote. The Section 2232 application covers the 5-acre Dominion Energy high-voltage electrical substation required to power Starwood Capital Group's proposed Plaza 500 data center campus. The two-building, 461,444-square-foot project spans 34 acres at 6295 and 6299 Edsall Road in Lincolnia in the Mason District, along the City of Alexandria border.

With pre-construction work looming and other regulatory doors closed, opponents in Bren Mar Park and Lincolnia Park are drawing what could be their final card at the Dec. 2 hearing, hoping to persuade the Planning Commission to halt the project by denying

See Section 2232 Review, Page 19

Get Involved

Public Hearing: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2, in the Board Auditorium at the Fairfax County Government Center (12000 Government Center Parkway). Sign up to testify in person, by phone or by video on the Planning Commission's website.

Project Details: Maps and visual simulations are posted at dominionenergy.com (search "Edsall Substation").

Community Prep: Civic and environmental groups are hosting a Nov. 19 Lunch and Learn on testifying at actionnetwork.org/events/lunch-learn-edsall-substation.

https://natureforward.org/edsall-substation-plaza-500/



Screenshot courtesy of Dominion Energy

A banner on Dominion Energy's website introduces the Edsall Substation and Transmission Line Project. The Fairfax County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing and vote Dec. 2 on the proposed 5-acre substation at 6299 Edsall Road.

Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 10, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2026, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2027, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from $5,090 to $5,370*.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from $1,960 to $2,050*.
- An increase in the Account Charge from $50 to $51.
- An increase in the Quarterly Service Charge from $17.55 to $26.00*.
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from $4.35 to $4.61 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from $4.20 to $4.45.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from $61 to $62.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Overhead Charges for Labor from 104% to 106% and a decrease for Materials from 14% to 13%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge Inspection Fee from $48 to $49.
- An increase in the After Hours Service Restoration Charge from $58 to $60.
- New proposed rate: Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention Non-Compliance Charge ranging from $150 to $2,400.

**Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.*

Fairfax Water is also proposing a $281 million budget for calendar year 2027.[1] Water sales are expected to provide $249 million and the remaining $32 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- $1,000s -- 2026	2027
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	$ 78,983	$ 86,354
Power and Utilities	14,759	17,200
Chemicals	14,476	15,410
Purchased Water	10,622	9,625
Supplies and Materials	8,315	9,038
Insurance	1,402	1,285
Fuel	849	915
Postage	650	700
Contractual Services	16,877	18,630
Professional Services	2,421	2,221
Other	3,220	3,293
Sub-Total	152,574	164,671
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(12,104)	(12,632)
Total	**$ 140,470**	**$ 152,039**

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	$52,802,485
Improvement Fund	$11,000,000
General Fund	$63,691,000

[1] *Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.*

Visit **fairfaxwater.org/rates** to view a copy of the proposed changes.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Jessica Love at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to **PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org** or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on **Wednesday, December 9, 2026** to be included in the record of the public hearing.

Simpsons Cartoon Writer Visits Springfield

Presidential hopeful on his Springfield, USA Tour; only 16 Springfields left to visit.

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

It's hard to imagine, but the Sydenstricker Schoolhouse and the Simpsons actually have something in common. Is it Bart? Homer? Springfield? Or even Ned Flanders? It was a little of all the characters on Nov. 10 when Dan Greaney, a longtime writer and producer for The Simpsons, swung through town on his cross-country "Springfield, USA" tour.

The Simpsons lived in a fictional town of Springfield on the show so that was the catalyst for the trip.

"I was excited initially because of his link to the Simpsons," said Ellen Plissner, a board member of the Friends of the Sydenstricker School House committee. "He's a really nice guy, he seemed genuinely interested," she added.

Greaney has his eye on the 2028 Republican presidential nomination as a candidate hoping to appeal to voters who are fed up with both mainstream parties. He's kicking off his campaign by stopping in the 17 Springfields across the country. Part of his emerging platform is his advocacy for rebuilding the local, grassroots social fabric that connects us all, his literature stated.

Greaney started his tour in Springfield, New Hampshire, down to Virginia, and from his map that he posted on social media, he's heading to Springfield, West Virginia, Springfield, Ohio, a couple of other Springfields in the Midwest before hitting Springfield, Oregon and then to Springfield, California.

Greaney's dip into politics started back in 2000, when George W. Bush was mired in election controversy. Greaney was looking in his crystal ball and predicted a Donald Trump presidency, a prediction that was on an episode of the Simpsons.

Coincidence? Maybe. In 2046, guess who he's predicting to be president? Either Billy Eilesh, the striking singer that has the Barbie song "What Was I Made For?" or Justin Timberlake, "since they are young enough," Greaney said. Stranger things have happened.

More

Coming up: 4th Annual Santa's Merry Makers Market, Saturday, Dec. 12, from Noon to 5 p.m. at the Historic Sydenstricker Schoolhouse https://sydenstrickerschoolhouse.org/



Dan Greaney, with schoolhouse board members Judy Riekse, Ellen Plissner, Shirley Edwards, Kathleen Pablo and Ron Edwards.



Inside the schoolhouse, Kathleen Pablo and Shirley Edwards talk with Dan Greaney, and "Will," a member of Dan Greaney's campaign.

Photos Contributed



Dan Greaney has a colorful, cartoonish car for the trip.

Loving How Words Can Change Things

From Page 12

George Mason University and her daughter is in her final year at American University.

The podcast is gaining speed with Ogebe's enthusiasm. "I have always loved words, I love how they can change things," and it's always been on the positive side. "I have people come on that are actually doing good things," she said, and as an example, a guest of hers was Adassa who played Delores on Disney's "Encanto."

Other guests have been involved in uplifting things like building "NOVA Raft," to help people from Afghanistan. Another guest was a teacher from Tennessee who highlighted men and grieving. Ogebe's podcast featured a single mom who formed an organization that goes into danger zones to give aid.

"Those are the kind of stories that I feature," Ogebe said, "people like that, doing good and filling needs." Her podcast can be seen on YouTube, Spotify and Apple. "Each episode, I sit down with ordinary people doing extraordinary things — building bridges, meeting needs, choosing love when the world says don't bother," she wrote.



Photo contributed

A sign in her Springfield front yard to gather some support.

"Elevating Good Podcast," is aimed at women aged 30-60 because she finds they are the type that "want to build better community," she said. https://www.facebook.com/elevatinggoodpod/videos/

VDOT
Virginia Department of Transportation

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
HALIFAX	9250	639	ROCK BARN ROAD	BUFFALO CREEK	10/30/2026
APPOMATTOX	1665	700E	TRENT HATCHERY ROAD	BRANCH CUB CREEK	10/30/2026
NELSON	12612	776	GRAPELAWN DRIVE	DAVIS CREEK	10/29/2026
WISE	19495	1135N	LITTLE LEAGUE ROAD	TOM'S CREEK	10/26/2026
HALIFAX	9295	685	LEWIS FERRELL ROAD	BIRCH CREEK	10/22/2026
SCOTT	16704	625N	ANGLERS WAY ROAD	BRANCH	10/20/2026
LEE	10829	624N	ROUTE 625	CREEK	10/15/2026
PITTSYLVANIA	13652	713	BIRCH CREEK ROAD	BIRCH CREEK	10/15/2026
LEE	10745	912E	ROUTE 912 (OLD 58)	BRANCH	10/13/2026
KING & QUEEN	26123	33E	ROUTE 0034	MATTAPONI RIVER	10/6/2026
BATH	2492	618	DUNNS GAP (ROUTE 618)	COWARDIN RUN	10/2/2026
TAZEWELL	29681	0	SAGE HILL ROAD	INDIAN CREEK	10/1/2026
TAZEWELL	18616	643	BRUSHFORK ROAD	NS RAILWAY	10/1/2026
PATRICK	13211	40	CHARITY HWY/ROUTE 40	POPLAR CAMP CREEK	9/30/2026
GRAYSON	8756	58E	HIGHLANDS PKY	HELTON CREEK	9/30/2026
SCOTT	16690	621N	ENGLAND VALLEY ROAD	BRANCH	9/30/2026
TAZEWELL	18614	643E	ROUTE 643	MUD FORK	9/30/2026
NELSON	12521	640	WHEELERS COVE ROAD	DUTCH CREEK	10/31/2026
ALLEGHANY	1031	159N	DUNLAP CREEK ROAD (ROUTE 159)	DUNLAP CREEK	10/20/2026
DINWIDDIE	6050	624	HILLS DRIVE	WHITE OAK CREEK	10/24/2026

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

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

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

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



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Entertainment

WEDNESDAYS NIGHTS

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

CONCERTS AT OLD BROGUE IRISH PUB

Each concert has two performances: 4:30–6:00 p.m.; 6:30–8:00 p.m. Meets at The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760 Walker Road, Great Falls, VA

Sunday, Nov. 22 – Piper Jones Band

Sunday, Nov. 29 – Kinnfolk

Sunday, Dec. 13 – Jody Marshall & Friends Annual Holiday Concert

NOW THRU NOV. 24

Lions Citrus Sale. At American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak Street, Fairfax. Fresh from Florida's Indian River Groves: Navel Oranges; Mandarins; Pink

Grapefruit; Whitley's VA Peanuts. Pick up orders Dec 10-12, 2026 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (or fruit shipped to you). Visit the website https://www.fairfaxlions.org/

NOVA PARKS HOLIDAY LIGHT SHOWS OPEN

Drive, Walk and Smile into the holidays with three unique holiday light show experiences. Tickets for the 2026 holiday season are now on sale, and all 3 NOVA Parks light shows will be open as of Saturday, November 14.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights

Walk a sparkling half-mile garden trail while sipping on a hot beverage for an enchanting evening at Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights in Vienna.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights is an elegant garden trail aglow with countless sparkling lights, perfect for a date night or family holiday outing. The half-mile walk through the enchanting Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Vienna, VA) features lighted nature themes and animated displays along a paved wheelchair and stroller-accessible trail. Stay warm by sipping on a hot beverage (with or without spirits) as you walk and s'mores to finish out the evening. Treat your pup to their favorite walk of the year on specific dates. The Winter Walk of Lights is illuminating the gardens for its 15th season, bringing joy to more than 110,000 visitors each year.

Open nightly November 11 through January 3. Capacity is limited; reservations are required to ensure access on a specific date. Tickets start at $19 per person; promotions are available for specific dates. Visit novaparks.com/WinterWalk for details.

Bull Run Festival of Lights

Drive through 2.5 miles of dazzling lights at Northern Virginia's largest drive-through light show at the Bull Run Festival of Lights in Centreville.

Experience the magic of the holidays at the Bull Run Festival of Lights, Northern Virginia's largest drive-through holiday light show! A family favorite for three decades, the Bull Run Festival of Lights dazzles with a 2.5-mile display of holiday and fairytale vignettes. Enjoy time with family while staying warm and cozy as you slowly drive through the animated displays in Bull Run Regional Park. New displays are added every year–drive through the Winter Wonderland where it's always snowing and see the tallest light display yet. Don't miss the Holiday Village and Carnival at the end of the drive to visit animals at the stable, roast marshmallows, and new this year, enjoy an extra special treat at the new hot chocolate and dirty soda bar!

Open November 14 through January 3. Price per vehicle varies by date. Book now for visits before December 11 for the lowest rates of the season. Visit novaparks.com/FestivalofLights for details.

Bright Nights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run

Explore a winter village wonderland for a playful outdoor experience at Bright Nights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run in Alexandria.

Just minutes from Old Town Alexandria, explore new, dazzling light displays at Cameron Run Regional Park (Alexandria, VA). Bright Nights offers a fun, unstructured outdoor family experience to explore unique light displays, snap family pictures or selfies with a variety of festive scenes and enjoy a hot beverage and snack. New this year, enjoy lighted mini golf, a scavenger hunt, a giant maze, and bring your own camera and capture a special holiday memory with Santa Claus through December 23. Visits and photos with Santa are free with admission to Bright Nights.

Open weekends November 14 through 22, then nightly November 27 through January 3. Admission is $9 online; promotions available for specific dates. Visit novaparks.com/BrightNights for details, hours and Santa's schedule.

Visit novaparks.com/Lights for more information and to purchase tickets.



Enjoy Holiday Gingerbread House Decorating on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2026 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.



The Duo Mosaic Piano Duo will perform Sunday, Nov. 22, 2026 at the Alden Theatre at McLean Community Center in McLean.

NOW THRU DEC. 24

Santa Photos at Tysons Corner Center. At the Lower Level 1 near Wasabi.

The heart of the season returns as Santa arrives for his 39th year at Tysons Corner Center, inviting families to share their Christmas wishes and capture festive photos together located on the Lower Level near Wasabi. Sponsored by CAMP, the experience allows guests to reserve a time in advance and receive a complimentary personalized digital message from Santa, powered by Portable North Pole. Photo package purchases also include additional perks, such as discounted Shutterfly prints and access to a digital greeting card platform.

NOV. 4-29

McLean Art Society's "City Life" Exhibition and Members Show. 12 to 6 p.m. At McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. "City Life" explores the energy, character, and beauty of urban living through original artwork inspired by city streets, architectural forms, vibrant neighborhoods, bustling cityscapes, and the quiet moments tucked within the rhythm of daily life. The exhibition celebrates the many ways artists interpret the movement, contrasts, and unexpected beauty of the city. Opening reception will be held Friday, Nov. 6 from 5-7 p.m. to meet the artists, enjoy conversation about summer-inspired artwork, and relax with live music, wine, and light refreshments.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 18

"Arias and Duets" Virginia Opera. 7 p.m. At the Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Enjoy a live performance of operatic arias, duets, and musical favorites while the artists share insights into the music and stories. This engaging community concert for people of all ages provides an accessible and welcoming introduction to opera!

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

SATURDAYS

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

Reston: Through 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.

Prepare to be amazed! Featuring professional singers from the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program. Supported in part by a grant from the City of Fairfax.

NOV. 18-22

Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Preview sale, Wed., Nov. 18, 2 - 5 p.m. Entry fee $10. General sale, Thu. – Sat., Nov. 19 - 21, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Free. Bag sale, Sun., Nov. 22, 12 - 2 p.m. $5/bag. Get a head start on your winter/holiday reading at bargain prices. Thousands of like new books to choose from. Funds raised support library programming, children's and adult. Contact the Friends at rbfriends@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 18

Virginia Opera "Arias & Duets". 7 – 8 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Virginia Opera's Arias and Duets concert features selections from beloved operas and musical theater, highlighting a diverse range of composers, styles, and languages. Virginia Opera brings the beauty and accessibility of opera to all ages through intimate, high-quality performances sung by our Herndon Emerging Artists. Supported, in part, by a grant from the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts.

THURSDAY/NOV. 19

UMW Onsite Regional Reception. 7-9 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Join us at a fall Mary Washington regional reception to connect with admissions staff, current students, and alumni while enjoying light refreshments. You'll learn more about UMW and what makes our community unique. Visit the website: https://www.umw.edu/admissions/meet-us/

NOV. 20-22

Sterling Playmakers Present Camelot. At Theatre at Seneca Ridge Middle School, Sterling. Journey back in time to the majestic kingdom of CAMELOT, to King Arthur's court, and the knights of the round table. Packed with thrilling sword fights, pageantry, suspense and romance, this legendary Golden Age musical has enchanted generations of theatregoers.

Show times:

Friday, Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 21 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 22 at 2 p.m.

General Admission available at the door or online at https://www.sterlingplaymakers.org/tickets



The Old Town Hall Performance Series – The Capital Hearings will take place on Friday, Dec. 11, 2026 at Old Town Hall in Fairfax.

FRIDAY/NOV. 20

Old Town Hall Performance Series - Bokor, Snedecor, Hill - Chamber Trio. 8 p.m. Location: Visit website: www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts. Join us for this evening for a trio of trios! Brahms's trio is celebrated for its lush, flowing melodies woven seamlessly among the clarinet, cello, and piano. Muczynski's Fantasy Trio offers a striking contrast, driven by bold, energetic, and punchy rhythms. Nino Rota—best known for his score to The Godfather—composed his trio in 1973, infusing it with a charming, cinematic character that reflects his signature style. This concert is sponsored by the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Finnish Christmas Bazaar. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Prince of Peace Church & School, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. What's Christmas like in the world's happiest country? Here's a chance to find out without leaving Northern Virginia! For over 50 years, the Finnish Christmas Bazaar has brought a little piece of Finland to the Washington, DC area. Visitors can experience authentic Finnish Christmas traditions, enjoy traditional Finnish pastries and baked goods, and shop for unique Nordic gifts and handmade crafts.

FRIDAY/NOV. 20

The Bokor, Snedecor, Hill Trio. 8 p.m. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. This talented clarinet, cello & piano trio will perform a trio of musical selections! https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Fun-Facilities/Cultural-Arts-and-History/Cultural-Arts

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Holiday Gingerbread House Decorating. 10 a.m. – Noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Celebrate the holidays with us! Families decorate a gingerbread house to make their own one-of-kind designs. The Old Firehouse will supply a prebuilt house, frosting, and toppings along with light refreshments. Price is per gingerbread house. Registration is required!

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

WWII Book Launch. 2-4 p.m. At Truro Anglican Church Community Room, 10520 Main Street, Fairfax. Her family remembered Rita as cold-hearted and self-centered. But what if they were wrong? Come hear about the true story of a half-Jewish mother facing impossible choices in Nazi-occupied Holland. Visit https://ramblingruminations.com/the-truth-was-different

NOV. 22 TO JAN. 20

Transformations & Permutations: New Work from Old Things. At McLean Project for the Arts – Emerson Gallery, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A four-person sculpture show featuring works by Tory Cowles, Mary Decan Opasik, Jordan Tierney, and Sherry Trachman. Opening Reception: Thursday, Dec 3, from 7- 9 p.m. Artist talk: Thursday, Jan. 7, 7 p.m.

SUNDAY/NOV. 22

Duo Mosaic Piano Duo. 2 p.m. At the McLean Community Center's Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Wildly popular pianist Ching-Yi Lin returns to The Alden with his wife and musical partner Grace Liu. The two will dazzle on The Alden's two Steinway pianos, the first time in decades that both instruments have shared the spotlight.

FRIDAY/NOV. 27

Reston Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting: Enjoy a nationally recognized holiday parade featuring festive floats, marching bands, giant balloons, live entertainment, and community

See Calendar, Page 19



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Legals | Legals

American Towers LLC is proposing to modify the lighting of an existing 185.2' overall height self-support communication tower at 7711 Loisdale Road, Springfield, Fairfax County, VA 22150-2104, Tax Parcel ID: 0992 01 0002A. The proposed modification will involve a change in lighting from none to E1 (avian, markers flashing, IR). American Towers LLC seeks comments from all interested persons on any potential significant impact the proposed action could have on the quality of the human environment pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Section 1.1307, including potential impacts to historic or cultural resources that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Interested persons may review the project application pending with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at www.fcc.gov/asr/applications by entering Form 854 File No. A1397298. Interested persons may comment or raise environmental impact concerns about the proposed action by filing a Request for Environmental Review with the FCC. The FCC strongly encourages all interested parties to make such filings online, following the instructions found at www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest. Paper filings can be sent to: FCC Requests for Environmental Review, Attn: Ramon Williams, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554. The Request must also be sent to American Towers LLC, by e-mailing a copy to enviro.services@americantower.com or mailing a copy to: American Tower, 10 Presidential Way, Woburn, MA 01801 ATTN: Environmental Compliance. Requests or comments should be limited to environmental and historic/cultural resource impact concerns and must be received on or before 12/18/2026. This invitation to comment is separate from any local planning/zoning process that may apply to this project.







Photos by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection



Residents and veterans during the National Anthem.

American Legion, VFW Honor America's Veterans

From Page 3

play "in the life of our community," White said they may be found throughout Fairfax County – teaching, running small businesses, working in healthcare, in the courts and in law enforcement, fire departments, emergency services, churches and in homes, raising families.

Walkinshaw addressed the crowd, beginning by acknowledging "all our service members who, as we speak, are still in harm's way across the world, the 21 who've lost their lives in the war in Iran and the nearly 1,000 who've been wounded. We honor their bravery and service to the nation.

"Although now in our country, we almost uniformly honor our veterans, that hasn't always been the case. Salem Poor was enslaved in Massachusetts when the American Revolution broke out – and was so inspired by our founding documents and the spirit of the Revolution – that he worked and purchased his own freedom and then volunteered to serve in his local militia. He was wounded at Bunker Hill and saw action in a number of battles.

"And when the war ended and most veterans were able, after much advocacy, to get the pensions the Continental Congress had promised them, Salem Poor was denied his because he was Black. He died penniless and unknown. So that story and the story of so many other veterans – including those who returned from Vietnam and didn't receive the recognition they deserved – are reminders to us as a nation how important this day is to make sure all our veterans are honored."

Then came the guest speaker, Judge Michael Sprano (see sidebar), followed by some words from VFW Post 8469 Commander Mike Fant. Fant thanked everyone for being there and acknowledged The Unmuted for their "special and inspiring" songs. He also said America is honored by its veterans' dedication to the nation.

"To our veterans, you answered the call and took on responsibilities that deserve our lasting gratitude," said Fant. "To your families and friends, thank you for your steadfast support of our veterans. I urge all of you to show your gratitude by checking in with veterans, offering a ride or sharing a meal with them and their families. I call on you to honor veterans not just today."

Afterward, The Unmuted sang an Armed Forces medley, with veterans standing when the anthem of their own branch of the service was sung. Then, following the playing of "Taps," Allmacher gave the closing prayer, saying, "May we continue to highly esteem those worthy men and women who gave their best when they were called upon to serve and protect our country."



Veterans saluting during the Armed Forces medley.

From Page 17

performers, followed by holiday activities and the lighting of Reston Town Center's iconic holiday tree.
Parade: 11 a.m.
Sip & Stroll: 4:30-8 p.m.
Tree Lighting: 6 p.m.
Interested in becoming a sponsor? Email inquiries to info@restontowncenter.com
https://www.restontowncenter.com/calendar-events/reston-holiday-parade-tree-lighting

SATURDAY/NOV. 28

Beaver Boogie 5K Race. 10 a.m. At Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. The Beaver Boogie 5K returns to Lake Accotink Park for its fourth annual fun run and walk on Saturday, Nov. 28. Join the Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP) for a scenic adventure welcoming runners, walkers, families and nature lovers. Packet pickup begins at 9 a.m., and the race starts at 10 a.m. Participants will follow a picturesque route through the park while supporting FLAP, an all-volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting, restoring and preserving the park's natural, historical and cultural resources. All proceeds support projects and programs at Lake Accotink Park. Early packet pickup will be available Friday, Nov. 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Kilroy's, located at 5250 Port Royal Road in Springfield. Participants can also look forward to awards in multiple categories and a raffle featuring a new kayak and other prizes. Each race bib includes a raffle ticket.

SATURDAY/NOV. 28

Skye Ballet Center Nutcracker. 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. At South Lakes High School, 11400 S. Lakes Drive, Reston. Tickets: https://events.ticketleap.com/events/skyeballet. Tickets also available at the door.

SUNDAY/NOV. 29

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke Centre. At the meeting, Jeff Joyce will share a presentation, "Cockpit Tales: Stories from the National Air and Space Museum.

DEC. 3-5

Winterfest 2026. At Brown's Chapel Park, Reston. Enjoy sparkling light displays, craft vendors, family-friendly activities, seasonal treats and more as we come together for three days filled with fun and holiday cheer.
This Year's Attractions:
Light Up the Park: Take a magical half-mile walk through Brown's Chapel Park illuminated by thousands of sparkling holiday lights.
Enchanted Forest: Explore a collection of beautifully decorated holiday trees sponsored by local businesses, community organizations, and families. Following the event, these trees are donated to local families in need through Friends of Reston.
Vendor Village: Shop unique gifts and holiday treasures from local vendors while supporting small businesses in the community.
Santa Experience: Capture holiday memories with complimentary photo opportunities featuring Santa Claus.
Grinch's Village: Visit the Grinch's Village for family-friendly fun, festive activities, and memorable photo opportunities.
Fire Pits & Seasonal Treats: Warm up by the fire with marshmallows and enjoy a variety of seasonal refreshments, treats, and food truck offerings.
New! Polar Play Park: Making its debut in 2026, Polar Play Park features stunning ice carvings, interactive ice games, and frosty fun for guests of all ages (weather permitting).

DEC. 3-6

Tysons Library Book & Media Sale. At Tysons Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests.
Thursday, Dec 3, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Friday, Dec 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday, Dec 5, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday, Dec 6, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. $10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less
Visit https://www.tysonslibraryfriends.org/

DEC. 3-20

The Tall Girls. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. The Tall Girls, by Meg Miroshnik, directed by Madeleine Regina. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: Tickets: 30-55 general admission, $15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

Section 2232 Review, Planning Commission Meeting Planned for Dec. 2

From Page 13

its power infrastructure.

Starwood Capital Group — operating through Starwood Digital Ventures as Plaza 500 LLC — is developing the two-building complex. Because the facility is a "by-right" industrial project, county planners have accepted site plan submittals, the Virginia State Corporation Commission cleared transmission line routing on Aug. 8, 2025, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has no direct land-use veto over the buildings themselves.

The Connection sent five requests for comment before publication and received responses from Starwood Digital Ventures, Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez, and Save Bren Mar. Dominion Energy and Fairfax County planning staff did not respond before the deadline late last week.

Developer and Official Responses

On Friday, Nov. 13, a Starwood Digital Ventures spokesperson wrote in an email: "SDV has been investing in Fairfax County since 2019. We remain committed to this project and to our neighbors here in the community. The planned redevelopment of the Plaza 500 site is an essential opportunity for Fairfax County to deliver a less obtrusive investment that enables its growth, providing high-quality jobs and needed tax revenue and supporting funding for education, first responders and other essential community services. SDV is continuing to work closely with Dominion Energy and Fairfax County to ensure plans for the Edsall Road substation, a public good subsidized by SDV, are community-conscious and low-impact."

While Dominion Energy did not respond before publication, the utility states on its Edsall Substation webpage that the facility is needed "to meet the area's growing electrical needs" and "will support new data center development while helping provide reliable electric service for local homes, businesses and communities."

County planning staff is expected to release its formal Section 2232 report and recommendation ahead of the Dec. 2 hearing.

Meanwhile, Jimenez restated his opposition in a Friday statement. While acknowledging the need for reliable power, he said protecting neighborhoods is his priority. "I do not believe Dominion Energy's Edsall Road Substation proposal, as currently presented, fully explores alternative site locations or design options." He noted concerns over visual impacts, proximity to homes and neighborhood compatibility, adding he would vote against the application if appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Jimenez's office added that it worked with the Lincolnia Park Recreational Club and Lincolnia Park Civic Association following Dominion's July notice regarding possible investigations on club property, noting the issue is resolved.

Opposition Concerns

Opponents say the proposal conflicts with neighborhood protections in the county comprehensive plan.

"We strongly believe that the County Comprehensive Plan, the basis of the 2232 review, does not support approval of the massive 5-acre data center substation at this location," Tyler Ray of Save Bren Mar wrote in an email. "It is inconsistent with both the Lincolnia Planning District site-specific plan that calls for 'preserving stable residential areas' and that 'infill development must match the character, intensity, and density of existing residential uses,' and the broader County Comprehensive Plan goals relating to land use, economic development, and public facilities."

Ray said approving the facility near homes would set a countywide precedent, comparing what opponents say is a 67-foot setback to prior county approvals.

"If the county staff, Planning Commission, or the Board of Supervisors finds that a substation of this size and scope (can power 40,000-120,000 homes) is appropriate a mere 67 feet from a residential district, they will have to approve all other future data center[s] and other substations that are also in such close proximity," Ray wrote, noting the last four similar county-approved substations sit 900 feet to 5,500 feet from residential districts.

Ray also addressed Dominion's outreach, citing "vaguely worded letters" to the Lincolnia pool and edits to its project webpage, saying residents and officials "simply cannot trust what Dominion is saying." Save Bren Mar also opposes downsizing the substation.

"The proposed Plaza 500 data center is wrong for our community," said Paul Gilbert, a conservationist and former executive director of NOVA Parks who lives in Springfield, in a statement to The Connection. "The way this can be rejected is for the Planning Commission to turn down the power substation. Without lots of power, there is no data center."

Gilbert said that if the Fairfax County Planning Commission "does the right thing and rejects the power substation," the data center company can still "appeal the decision to the Board of Supervisors." He added that the board "usually" does not reverse the Planning Commission.

"We should not approve any new data centers until the carbon pollution, water usage and noise issues have been resolved," Gilbert added. "Let's think globally and act locally."

"Cartality"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Every month when I receive my paper bill from Audi (the car, not the belly button) to make my monthly payment, I also take notice of how many payments I have remaining (I purchased this SUV and financed it for 60 months after having completed a 42-month lease on the same car). Given my diagnosis, I am also mindful of what my car future may or may not be. It's in this context I remember a conversation I had with Dina's late Italian grandfather: Cesear aka "Chez." It was about cars, specifically the Oldsmobile Omega sedan parked in front of his house. Chez took the opportunity to begin listing all the cars he remembered buying over his lifetime before summarizing that the Omega would be the last car he'd ever buy; acknowledging his own mortality. Being 85-ish, give or take, at the time, "Chez" wasn't driving very much anyway so his comment was hardly a revelation. Still it was funny how he recounted all the other cars that he had owned/had previously driven and laughed at their memory while understanding his car future was over.

I feel similarly about my 2022 Audi Q3. One of two cars we own/lease in our retirement. Additionally, our driving demands are somewhat less than while we were working. As such, our cars are odometer friendly: the miles just aren't adding up. Therefore, there's less wear and tear on both the car and the driver and since I'm not a car guy (sports and chocolate are my areas of expertise), but rather more of a budget guy, I would much rather have two paid-off cars than new/leased cars with payments. As the years have passed, I have gained much less pleasure in making my car payment. Those payments never seemed to be a means to an end as they feel now (not an end to my life but instead an end to car payments). I anticipate the joy I'll feel when I no longer have to pay $631. 30 every month. I think then, this Audi might be my last car. And every month receiving its bill reminds me of my goal and how much closer I am to reaching it. It also reminds me of the time when the late comedienne Joan Rivers burned her home's mortgage on live television after she had paid the balance due. She was free, unencumbered. Likewise, I'll be car rich rather than car poor. Granted there might have been a time in my life when my car mattered more. Not anymore. Now that car payment represents my future. I just hope I get to enjoy it sort of the way "Chez" enjoyed knowing his Omega was going to be his last car. Meaning to me that he was content with his life/what his life had been and the car was incidental.

Unlike "Chez" I won't be aged 85 when my car is paid off; I'll be 75-ish with a few good years likely to have left. Still, I have to temper my anticipation/enthusiasm because I am an active cancer patient still undergoing treatment. And considering one's cancer diagnosis is generally not an ideal way to plan your retirement, it is hopefully not the impediment it used to be. Some cancer survivors are now treated as if they have a chronic disease, sort of like diabetes, with many normal-type years left to live. My "13 month to two years" prognosis back in 2009 is a thing of the past. Nevertheless, for the moment, life goes on and though I'm not throwing caution to the wind (hardly), I am certainly throwing myself into my car as per usual knowing that each trip is getting me closer to heaven on earth: car-payment freedom. And though I'm not exactly planning on how I am going to spend this $600+ monthly windfall, I am looking forward to not having to send it to Audi. I can only imagine the effect it will have on our budget. Can you say "Come to papa?"

The older I get, it's discretionary income that tickles my fancy, and being able to say "yes" to a random demand for my cash. Saying "no" all those previous years was prudent certainly, but in the midst of a cancer-centric life, it was a bit of a, to quote my late father, "confliction." If I didn't have as long to live as I had anticipated/planned/hoped et cetera, budgeting money became a sort of which way the wind/diagnosis was blowing. What seemed to end up most was me spending in the present in a way that might not bankrupt my future. It was a fine line to be sure and one not always appreciated. When diagnosed with a "terminal" diagnosis, it's nearly impossible to not live exclusively in the present. And a big expense like a car is front and center in that spending dilemma. And though I may have driven myself anxious over this issue over the preceding years, I've survived, no thanks to my cancer diagnosis.

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

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