Mount Vernon Gazette

Mount Vernon's Hometown Newspaper • A Connection Newspaper

November 19, 2026

A Time to Give

'Scouting for Food'

By Glenda C. Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

During this, the "giving season," people are opening up their hearts and their pocketbooks, many helping families experiencing food insecurity. "Across the country, high costs of everyday essentials are making it harder for families to make ends meet," says Feeding America.

As part of the nationwide Scouting for Food campaign, local scouts fanned out in recent weeks and collected food donations. In eastern Fairfax County, in zip codes 22303, 22306, 22307, 22308, 22309 and 22310, scouts from eight troops collected food for United Community's food pantry. This nonprofit helps their neighbors in need, offering services like a food pantry, English fluency and citizenship classes and immigration and legal assistance.

Scouts collect food for this food pantry because, says Tom Scala, "a small amount of effort, six hours across two weekends, provides an astounding amount of help to people in need who live in our community, and it feels better knowing people all over the country are doing the same thing at the same time." Scala is Cubmaster for Pack 888, based at Aldersgate United Methodist, and Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 654, based at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

The Cub Scouts, kindergarten through fifth grade, and Scouts BSA, sixth grade to

See A Time to Give, Page 5



Photo by Scott Fix

Scouts from across the region dropping off food donations from the surrounding community.



Photo by Scott Fix

Corporate volunteers from M&T Bank and Keller Williams sorting through food donations.



Photo by Scott Fix

Over 100 volunteers came out to support the Scouting for Food event.



United Community volunteer Larry Berquist helping to stock food.



Photos by Mayleen Watson

Volunteers from Crowe LLP helping to organize the refrigerator.



Even the kids came out to help.

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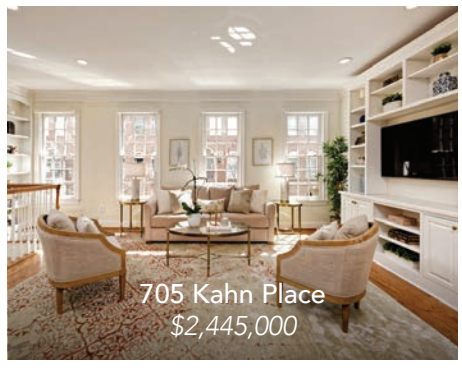

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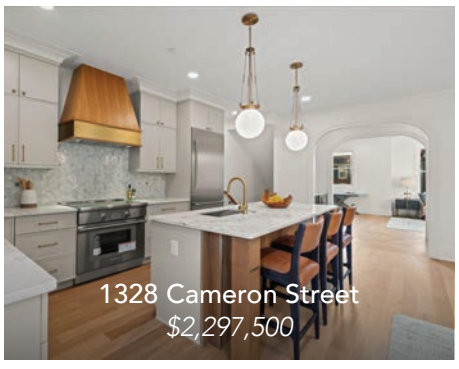

116 Prince Street
$2,500,000

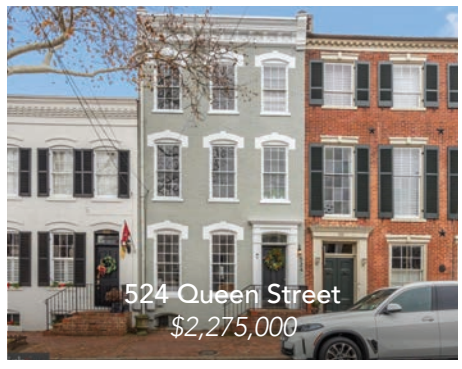

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$2,500,000

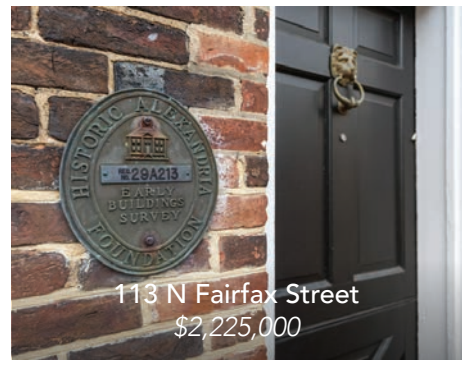

705 Kahn Place
$2,445,000


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$2,420,000


605 Hilltop Terrace
$2,325,000


1328 Cameron Street
$2,297,500


524 Queen Street
$2,275,000



113 N Fairfax Street
$2,225,000


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*Data derived from Bright MLS for properties that sold in the City of Alexandria for more than $1.5M+ from Jan 1-Oct 31, 2026.

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Finding a Path to a Career

Career forum attracts 50 high schoolers and parents.

By Glenda Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

Photos by Glenda Booth/The Gazette



Sergeant First Class Agnes Rice described many jobs available in the Army.



Jennifer Merrill discussed how community college programs can lead to jobs.



Jackie Townsend said that NASA offers over 100 different jobs.



Virginia Williams's daughters, Judy Rasayon and Laura Rinehardt, who grew up in the Mount Vernon area, organized the forum.



Fifty people explored career paths at the forum.

For young people today choosing a career can take a confusing, circuitous path, trial and error and failure, several workplace advisors said at the Nov. 7 Virginia Williams High School Forum at the Hyland South County Government Center.

"Try things that to you are the most important things to do. Try what seems impossible and see if you like it," advised Jackie Townsend, a project manager for NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center.

> "First you have to help kids recognize their own value, once they have a feeling of self worth, they can deal with the larger world."
> — Virginia Williams

To break in, she continued, "Look for opportunities to serve your community in your church or a theater, for example, even if all you can do is push a broom. You'll start learning."

Jennifer Merrill chimed in, "Don't be afraid." Merrill is with Northern Virginia's community colleges.

The event, sponsored by the Virginia Williams High School Career Association, hosted 50 high schoolers and parents. Delores Harkless, a West Potomac High School senior, said she went to "become more open minded about opportunities."

Kevin Elvia, a WPHS freshman, said he went "to figure it out."

Laura Rinehardt, who grew up in the Tauxemont community, founded the organization in honor of her mother, the late Virginia Williams, to introduce high school students to a range of careers. After serving in the Army, Williams became a guidance counselor at Fort Hunt High School and in 1980, Director of Guidance at Mount Vernon High School, the first African American woman to hold the position in the Fairfax County Public Schools.

The forum featured eight panelists from varied fields including the military, public health, art, the federal government and firefighting.

Their Stories

U.S. Army SFC Agnes Rice said after being laid off from a BMW car manufacturing plant, she chose the Army and now does recruiting. The Army offers over 150 non-combat jobs in fields like health care, firefighting, law, computers and finance.

For Danielle Waite, a hospital internship led to her job with Fairfax County's Health Department. "My passion is people. I'm a problem solver," she said. "It's not a straight line. Be patient with yourself."

Townsend studied psychology but was not inspired. She worked as a farm hand and secretary and in retail. She "wanted to do something to make the world better," she said, so she interned with NASA and regrouped. "If something matters to you, there's nothing that can stand in the way. It's more normal than usual that you don't know what you want to do, much less what you are going to do."

What, Where Are the Jobs

Merrill said she "fell into higher education," became resident aide on campus and now helps people become employable at NOVA community college. Information technology and transportation are among the "services in demand," she said.

Townsend stressed that NASA Goddard has no astronauts, but there is "every trade you can imagine," for example, artists, website managers and engineers. The pressing needs now are the trades like machine operators.

Bobby Yi, a George Mason University art professor, was the first in his family to go to college. "Artists create something out of nothing," he said. "You think differently from others and the only true magic in the world is art. Industry needs artists and you can teach art."

Christopher Murray, a 20-year Fairfax County firefighter, invited students to visit his station to learn about the Firefighters Explorers program and the training academy.

Artificial intelligence was a hot topic. It's here, all acknowledged. "It's frightening and exciting at the same time," said videographer Dean Tinnan.

"Machines do data sets, but humans analyze," Townsend said. "It helps solve problems. Don't use it as crutch. Use it as a tool."

When one parent asked how parents can help their teenagers, Tinnan advised, "Let them fail. It's a way to learn. They'll get up and try again."

Information -- https://www.vwhsca.org/





Photo by Deborah Gray

Officials gather for the Veterans Day observance ceremony Nov. 10 at Fort Belvoir. L-R: Dr. Christopher Pulley (Fairfax County Veterans Coordinator); COL Samuel Allen, Garrison Commander, Fort Belvoir; COL (ret.) Gerald P. Krueger, Commander, VFW Post 609-Alexandria; Rodney Lusk, Fairfax County Franconia Supervisor; and CSM Brandon Greer, Command Sergeant Major, Ft. Belvoir Garrison.

Veterans Day

Fort Belvoir ceremony honors lifelong service.

By Jeanne Theismann
The Gazette

Soldiers, veterans, military families and community leaders gathered Nov. 10 at Fort Belvoir for the installation’s annual Veterans Day observance, honoring the service and sacrifices of America’s veterans.

Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander Colonel Samuel Allen reflected on the history of Veterans Day, noting that President Woodrow Wilson established Armistice Day in 1919 and President Dwight Eisenhower later redesignated it as Veterans Day in 1954 to honor all U.S. veterans.

Keynote speaker COL (ret) G.P. “Jerry” Krueger, commander of Alexandria’s VFW Post 609, focused on the meaning of military service and the continued contributions veterans make after leaving the armed forces.

“All of course are veterans,” Krueger said, emphasizing that the term includes active-duty personnel, reservists, National Guard members, retirees and former service members.

Krueger described veterans as individuals who once “wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount up to and including his or her life.”

While honoring the nation’s recognized combat heroes, Krueger highlighted the everyday service of veterans who continue serving their communities through volunteer work, mentoring, youth programs, veteran support services and civic organizations.

“It is now commonplace for Americans to greet veterans by saying, ‘Thank you for your service,’” Krueger said. “Might I suggest that it might also be appropriate to add, ‘and thank you for still serving.’”

Calling these veterans his “everyday heroes,” Krueger praised those who continue giving back long after taking off the uniform.

“They continually demonstrate a lifelong legacy of continued service to our communities,” he said.

Krueger concluded by encouraging Americans to remember not only veterans’ military service, but also their ongoing contributions to society.

“Let us all hold a moment of silence for all our military veterans,” he said, “and then give a shout-out of recognition to all those veterans who continually serve long after taking off that uniform, because they are heroes of the first rate.”

A Time to Give

From Page 1

age 18, left door hanger requests at homes over the Nov. 7 weekend and collected donations on Nov. 14. This food drive accepts non-perishable items like canned vegetables and fruit, peanut butter, pasta and rice.

"Last year we had 26,611 pounds of food donated to our United Community food pantry and over 100 volunteers showed up to receive, sort, and stock the food," reports Cecelia Fix, UC's Director of Development and Communications.

People don't have to wait for Thanksgiving. UC's Brenda Renninger urged people to donate any time to the food pantry at 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, host a food drive and help sort, distribute and deliver groceries.

Why do scouts collect food donations? "It is important for scouting youth to educate and raise awareness about income disparity, need and charity. It is important to demonstrate a positive example to our neighbors and live up to the scout oath and scout law," said Scala.

The annual, 35-year-old Scouting for Food effort is the nation's largest youth-led food drive.

Supervisor Storck's Food Drive

Until Dec. 4, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck is accepting food donations to support Artemis House, a local domestic violence shelter. People can take donations to the Mount Vernon Governmental Center, 2511 Parkers Lane. He will also host a donation weekend Nov. 20-22 at Fresh World American and International Supermarket, 7451 Mount Vernon Square Center on U.S. 1, where items can be dropped off inside the store. For suggested donations, visit https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/mvd-annual-holiday-donation-drive.

Farmers' Markets

For families cooking at home, don't forget our farmers' markets for cider, baked goods, honey, pickles, fresh vegetables, fall fruits and more.

- ❖ Mount Vernon Farmers Market, Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Last day for this year: Nov. 25, 8 a.m. to 12 noon,
- ❖ Lorton Farmers Market, 8994 Potomac Bend -- Nov. 22, 8 a.m., to 12 noon, last day for this year.
- ❖ Oliver Keckler's Farm Stand – Oliver reminds all that he will be at the St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road, on Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., all winter, starting Dec. 5.

HOLIDAY SHOP
Saturday Nov. 21st 9.30am - 4pm
Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane, 22307
Over 50 artisan vendors,
baked and canned goods,
Household collectibles and jewelry.
Our lunch menu has been updated this year.
Come along - spend the day!
Our 64th Year!
WWW.MVUC.ORG
Quilt Raffle
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6th Annual
TURKEY TROT
5K
CAN the Bird
Thanksgiving Day
November 26, 2026
Race Starts 8:00 a.m.
Walmart, 5885 Kingstowne Boulevard
Donations of nonperishable food items will be accepted by Koinonia.
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www.CanTheBird.com

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Northern Virginia's Hot Spots

As it gets hotter; tree canopy matters.

By Glenda C. Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

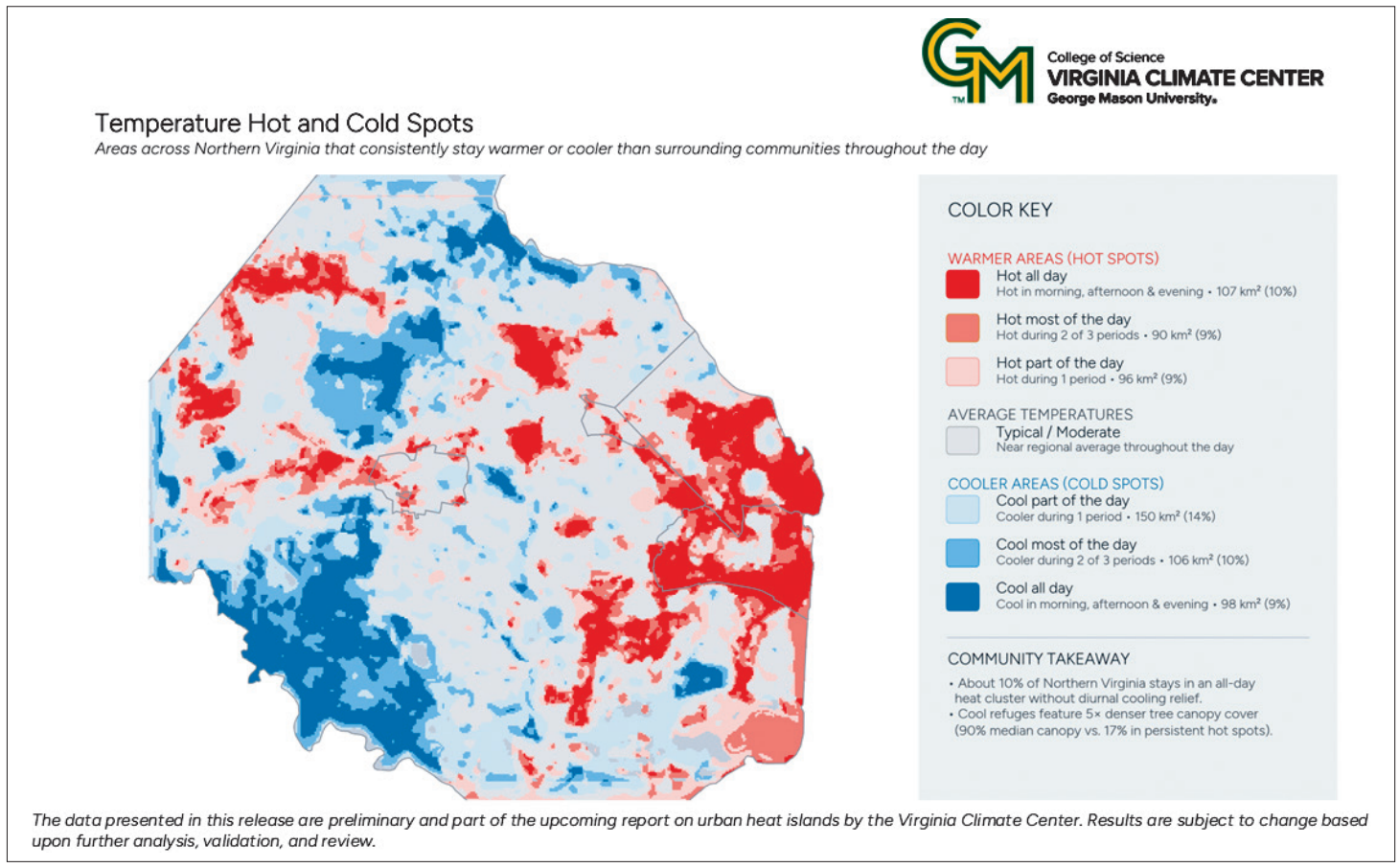
Outside temperatures are dropping, but summer will return and Northern Virginia has some very hot spots called "heat islands," according to a recent study.

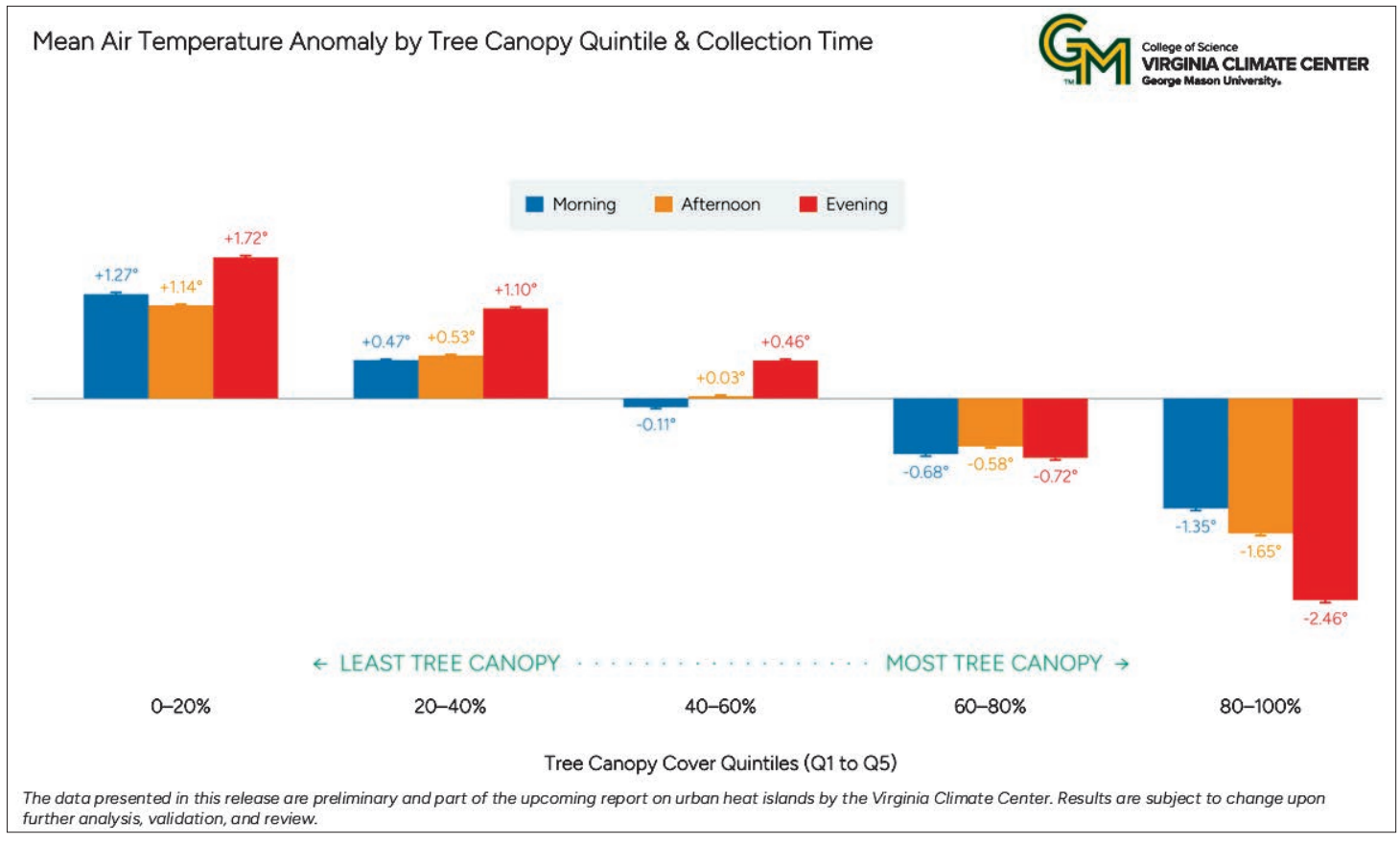
On July 26, 80 volunteers fanned out and found that the hottest places were inside the Beltway, especially around Bailey's Crossroads, Seven Corners, Falls Church, Alexandria, southern Arlington, Tysons and along the Dulles corridor.

Franconia was the hottest spot where the temperature hit 103 degrees Fahrenheit that day. The high temperatures at Reagan National and Dulles International Airports were 98 and 96 degrees.

The project was sponsored by the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, George Mason University's (GMU) new Virginia Climate Center and the American Red Cross's National Capital Chapter.

Northern Virginia's summers are getting hotter and extreme heat is becoming more common in the region, studies have found.





How They Did It

To identify the "heat islands," the 80 citizen scientists collected over 100,000 data points across Northern Virginia and drove 30 assigned routes, 22 in Fairfax County and eight in Arlington and Alexandria three times that day at 6 to 8 a.m., 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. checking temperatures with rooftop sensors atop their vehicles. Their map shows bright red "hot spots" throughout the region.

The GMU Center will publish the complete report with neighborhood and street level data in early 2027.

Trees Help

Areas that are hot throughout the day have four times less tree canopy than cooler spots. Areas with limited tree canopy can be 2.5 to 4.2 degrees hotter than areas with more tree cover, the study found. Temperature differences between areas with trees and those with fewer were greatest in the evening.

High temperatures can lead to heat stress and heat stroke in people and put infrastructure such as the energy grid and transportation systems at risk. They can also increase energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

What's Next?

The study's sponsors hope the conclusions will help government officials and others determine how and where to combat heat with steps like tree planting, shade structures, parks, green spaces, cooling centers and building designs.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay commented, "I appreciate the work of the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, George Mason University and the community volunteers who contributed to this study. Their findings reinforce what we already know about the impacts of extreme heat and the importance of the work Fairfax County is doing to address it.

"Through our Resilient Fairfax plan, we are already taking action with targeted tree planting, cooling assistance programs and land use policies designed to reduce heat islands. This study is another valuable example of how community partnerships can help us build a safer, healthier and more resilient Fairfax County."

What Are Heat Islands?

Heat islands, says the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website, are "urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. Structures such as buildings, roads and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat more than natural landscapes such as forests and water bodies.

"Urban areas, where these structures are highly concentrated and greenery is limited, become 'islands' of higher temperatures relative to outlying areas. Daytime temperatures in urban areas are about 1–7 degrees F higher than temperatures in outlying areas and nighttime temperatures are about 2–5 degrees F higher."

More Trees

Studies show that on average urban forests are three degrees cooler than urban non-green areas, reports EPA. Trees and other vegetation can provide shade and cooling through evapotranspiration.

American Forests has published tree equity scores for 150,000 U.S. urban neighborhoods and 486 municipalities across the U.S. Their analyses have found that trees are often "sparse in neighborhoods with more low-income families and people of color."

"Much like buildings, streets and sewer lines, trees are critical infrastructure that improve our quality of life," the organization contends.

Information

https://www.vaclimate.gmu.edu/heat-data-collection-northern-virginia-summer-2026

https://faithforclimate.org

FCPD Warns of Scam Website

The Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) is warning the community about a scam website impersonating the department's official news website, fcpdnews.org.

The scam website mimics the appearance and branding of FCPD's official news site and contains links that falsely claim to allow users to file police reports online. The website also solicits payment from users.

This website is a scam and is not affiliated with the Fairfax County Police Department. FCPD does not charge residents to file police reports.

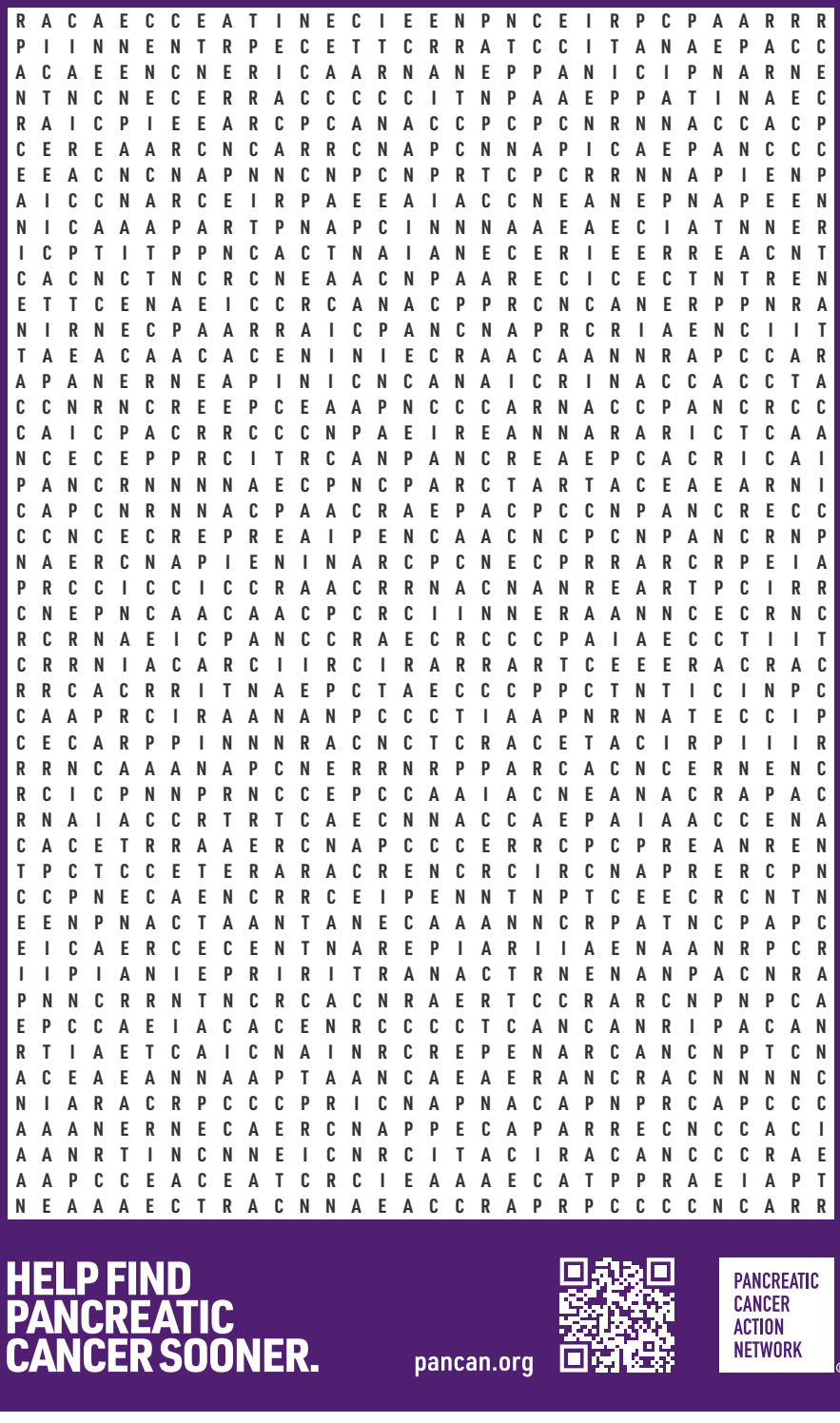
Anyone who has submitted payment information through the scam website is encouraged to contact their financial institution immediately and file a police report through FCPD's Financial Crimes Online Reporting (FiCOR) system. To submit a FiCOR report, go to https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/report-financial-crime.

We urge community members not to interact with the scam website, download any files, or provide any personal or financial information.

Community members seeking official police news or online reporting services should use the following verified websites:

❖ FCPD Official Website: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police
❖ FCPD Official News Website: www.fcpdnews.org

FCPD's official social media accounts and additional department resources can also be accessed through our Fairfax County government website at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police. Government websites ending in .gov are restricted to verified U.S. government organizations, providing an additional way to identify trusted sources of information.



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.

Can an Ever-Urbanizing County Be Green?

Question posed at the Green Fairfax Environmental Summit.

By Glenda C. Booth
The Gazette



Providence Supervisor Dalia Palchik organized the summit.



Congressman James Walkinshaw is working to address climate change impacts.



The sustainable transportation panel: Maria Lashinger, Gorove Slade; Michael Pinkoske, VIKA; Dr. Alireza Ermagun, George Mason University; Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth.



Photo by Hunter Wagenaar

Sharon Bradley spoke about new frameworks for crafting impactful and inclusive landscape design.



Photo by Hunter Wagenaar

Dr. Celso Ferreira presenting on flood risk and mitigation in the County.

Opening the Oct. 19 Green Fairfax Environmental Summit, Dalia Palchik, Providence District member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, teed up some of the challenges of an urbanizing county, asking, "Can the county grow and be more sustainable at the same time?"

Noting that 30 years ago people could get to Tyson's Corner only by car, today there are four Metro subway stations. "We must transform an environment built for the car," she emphasized, adding, "I'm working to transform Tysons."

Since there is little land left to develop, "It's all about redevelopment," she said. "When we build up instead of out, we protect the green space we'd otherwise pave over.

A new building can use a fraction of the energy of the office park it replaces. A redevelopment can add the stormwater management and tree canopy that an old parking lot never had. Every new project is a chance to fix something that we weren't thinking about 30 to 40 years ago."

Around 100 people from the private sector, local governments and non-governmental organizations met at McLean's Mitre Corporation to explore the county's infrastructure, environmental conditions and challenges. Palchik hopes this will be the first of future annual summits.

Reusing, Redoing Buildings

Keynoter Tony Malkin stressed that "adaptive reuse" is more environmentally sound than building a new building. "The greenest building is the one already built," he said, describing how his company revamped New York City's 95-year-old, 2.8 million-square-foot Empire State Building and cut energy use by 38 percent. He cited the Retrofit Playbook which suggests best practices to address climate change, practices that the playbook says, "create asset value, reduce emissions and enhance the resilience of assets." Malkin is the chief executive officer of Empire State Realty Trust.

Global Warming Is Here

Climate change is bringing more flooding and more severe and more frequent storms, experts contended. "Fairfax County is experiencing warmer, wetter and weirder climatic conditions," says Fairfax County's resilience plan.

The climate resilience panel explored global warming's local impacts. George Mason University professor Dr. Celso Ferreira said that with decades of development we've seen a "drastic transformation in the landscape," that development often overwhelms stormwater infrastructure. Most of the flooding that occurs is outside the floodplain, he stated, and most stormwater controls were designed based on past assumptions, not for today's or future rainfall events. "We must make room for the water," he said, "and live with water instead of fighting it. Water will flow, like it or not."

Eleventh District Congressman James Walkinshaw also pointed out that "weather events are worsening," and asserted that the federal government is "moving in the wrong direction," with the Trump administration taking steps like "disinvesting in clean energy" and abandoning the Paris Accords, an international treaty to combat climate change.

Walkinshaw has introduced a bill that addresses federal facilities and "heat island" effects and another requiring the Defense Department to collect extreme weather data. Climate change is a serious threat to the military, he said.

Falls Church Mayor Letty Hardi noted that buildings and transportation account for 90 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and that Falls Church is planting more trees and "growing up" instead of sprawling out.

State Senator Saddam Salim credited Virginia's 2020 Clean Economy Act with requiring the state's electricity providers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by moving to less-polluting energy and setting energy-efficiency standards.

Transportation accounts for 43 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in car-centric Fairfax County. To garner more support for public transit, people must "get comfortable with vehicle congestion," Maria Lashinger with Gorove Slade remarked, to uncomfortable snickers.

Bill Pugh with the Coalition for Smarter Growth advocated fixing existing roads before building more. Fairfax County's 2023 "Parking Reimagined" was a "game changer," he said. This zoning change was intended in part to address excess parking and improve walkability and biking infrastructure.

One panel offered ways to design landscapes and "give nature a voice," as Dr. Sharon Bradley put it. Bradley is with Bradley Site Design.

Torsha Bhattacharya with the Fairfax County Park Authority called parks "multi-vitamins" that can address climate change and boost peoples' physical and mental well-being.

Growing and being sustainable can go hand in hand, most speakers maintained.



Photos courtesy of the Lost Report Nov. 10, 2025

Participants received health and wellness resources.

Fairfax County Area Agency on Aging Celebrates 50 Years

The Fairfax County Area Agency on Aging celebrated 50 years of service to Fairfax County older adults on Nov. 13. Operating within the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, the agency serves adults age 60 and older, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers across Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. The event included a screening of the film "Facing the Falls," workshops and resources for aging well.

— Mercia Hobson/The Gazette



Introducing our onsite Hemodialysis Unit, in partnership with Nova Dialysis, providing advanced care and personalized services to meet all of your dialysis needs.

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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.



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.



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.

'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 Gazette

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 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.

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/

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."

Melanie Meren Announces Bid for Board of Supervisors Chairman

Campaign launch comes seven months ahead of June primary.

By Mercia Hobson
Mount Vernon Gazette



Screenshot via melaniemeren.com

Fairfax County School Board member Melanie Meren. Meren announced her campaign Nov. 17 for chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in the June 15, 2027, Democratic primary.

Fairfax County School Board member Melanie Meren, who represents the Hunter Mill District, on Nov. 17 announced her campaign for chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in the June 15, 2027, Democratic primary.

While incumbent Jeff McKay has not formally launched a reelection campaign, the Virginia Public Access Project lists incumbent McKay as an active candidate for the race, showing $142,865 raised toward the election. McKay has served as board chairman since 2020 and won reelection in 2023. Supervisor terms are set for four years.

Meren's campaign announcement says she told a crowd of supporters, community leaders and residents at Shipgarten in Tysons Tuesday evening that the county needs leaders who "show up, speak up and answer to the people they serve."

"Fairfax has led this region for generations, and it's time to renew that leadership," Meren said. "Residents deserve a county government that listens, explains its decisions and welcomes hard questions. That's how I've worked on the school board, and that's how I'll lead as chairman."

Meren cited in the release that the "months-long" fight to reverse county budget cuts that eliminated 13 high school crossing guards this year as the impetus for her decision to run.

She "challenged the cut, stood with students and residents," and helped organize a September rally.

"The crossing guard fight was a crescendo for me," Meren said. "Students and residents had to advocate for months just to get back something as basic as public safety on the way to school.

That's when I knew Fairfax County needed new leadership, and I was ready to step up."

Meren's campaign website highlights three "issues that matter": growing Fairfax County's economy, restoring excellence in public schools and county services, and leading with accountable governance while treating everyone with respect.

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.

FAIRFAX CIRCUIT COURT RELEASES FREE PROPERTY ALERT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

The Fairfax Circuit Court Clerk's Office, in collaboration with the Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration (DTA) and the Department of Information Technology (DIT), announced the launch of the new Fairfax Circuit Court Property Alert Notification System, a free e-alert service available through MyFairfax for Fairfax County and City of Fairfax property owners.

The Fairfax Property Alert System is designed to help property owners stay informed and receive an email alert if any documents are filed on their real estate record with the court. By providing a timely alert, the system provides early detection of potential fraud, including unauthorized deed filings, or other suspicious activity involving real property records.

Key features of the Fairfax Property Alert System include:

Email alert when a document is filed with Fairfax Circuit Court's Land Records office matching the property owner's name

Monitoring for unauthorized transfers or potentially fraudulent activity

Online access and management through the MyFairfax portal (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/myfairfax)

Quick, easy, and no-cost enrollment

For more information and to set up Property Alerts, please visit:

Fairfax Circuit Court: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit

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.



Entertainment

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

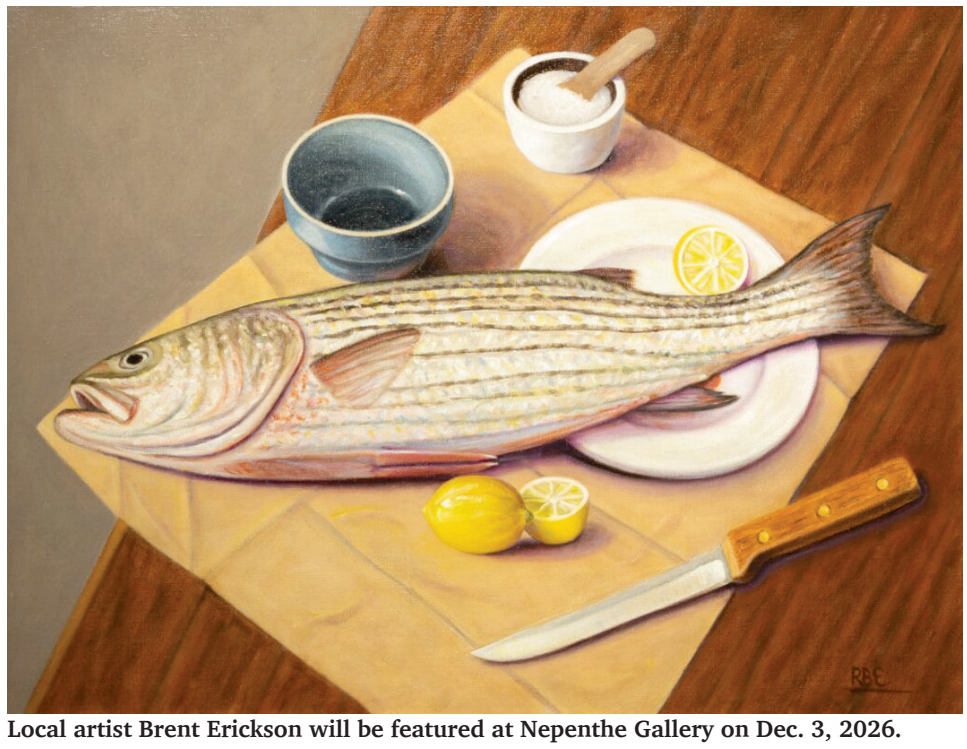
The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 -11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

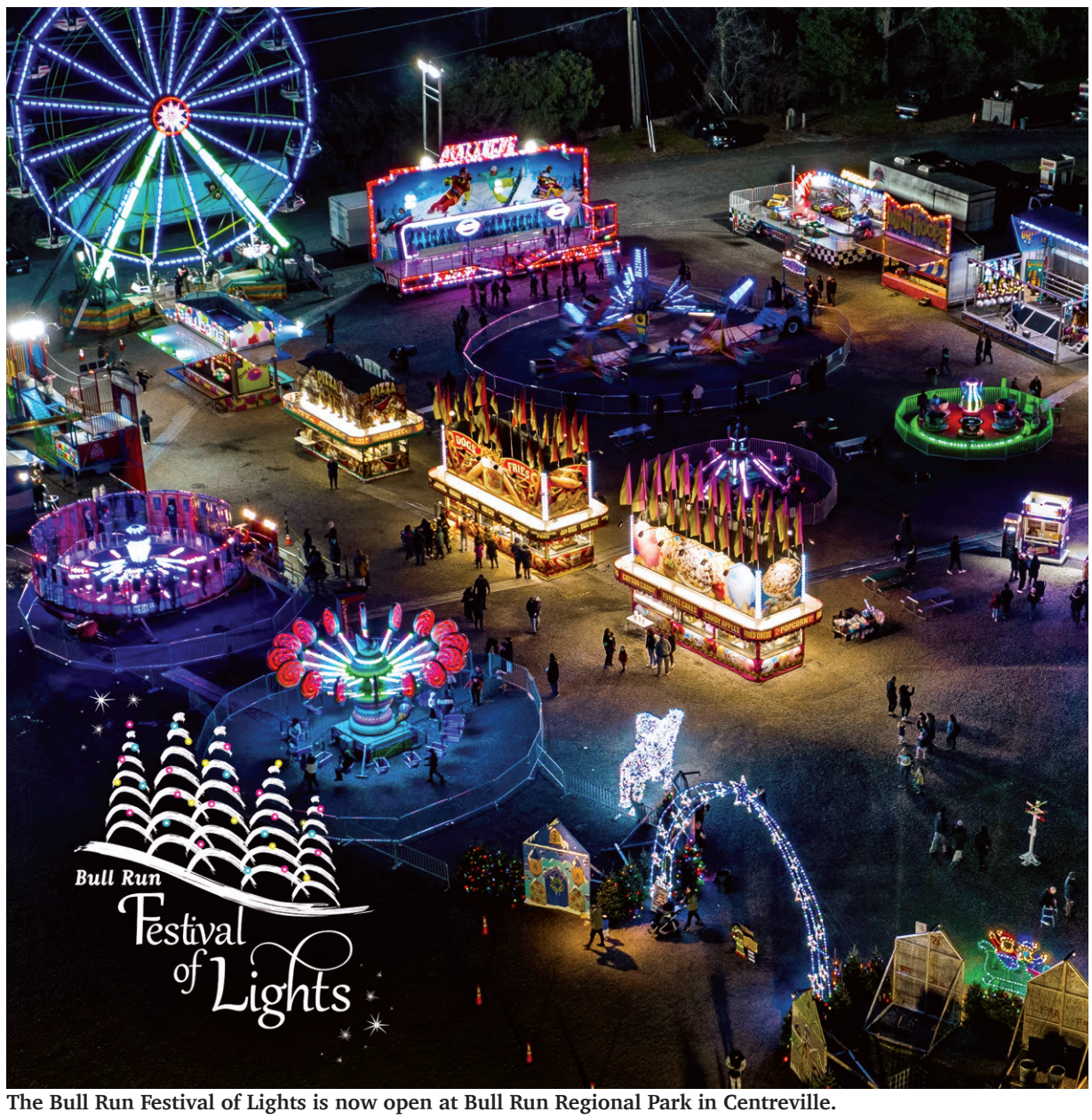
Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every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

NOW THRU DEC. 13

Markmaking Exhibit. At the Athenaeum Gallery, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Featuring Kim Abraham, Kung Chee Keong, Bart Dluhy, and Lori Katz. This exhibition explores four artists' shared fascination with the accumulation of marks on a surface, revealing how their interplay produces an aesthetic effect that transcends the sum of its parts. While recurring elements and motifs establish a visual dialogue among the artists' works, each pursues a distinct approach to the possibilities of their chosen materials and surfaces—paper, natural wood, metal, and stoneware—celebrating the unique character and expressive potential of each.



Local artist Brent Erickson will be featured at Nepenthe Gallery on Dec. 3, 2026.



The Bull Run Festival of Lights is now open at Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville.

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.

NOV. 6-29

Del Ray Artisans "$125 & Under" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. The exhibit showcases members' artwork all priced at $125 or less. The art is sold on an art-to-go basis. The gallery walls are packed with great art at prices all art-lovers can afford. Opening Reception: Friday, Nov. 6, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving Day. Visit DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits.

FRIDAY/NOV. 27

Old Town Alexandria – Plaid Friday. 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Throughout Old Town Alexandria. Skip the big-box crowds and celebrate the Old

Town Boutique Community's independent businesses during Alexandria's beloved Plaid Friday tradition, featuring special promotions, unique finds and one-of-a-kind holiday gifts. https://oldtownboutiquecommunity.com/plaid-friday

NOV. 28 TO DEC. 19

Old Town Alexandria Debuts Small Business Saturday Puzzle Crawl. Kickoff: November 28, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. | Old Town Alexandria. Old Town Boutique District is putting a creative twist on shopping local with the debut of It's a Beautiful Day in Old Town, a new three-week puzzle crawl kicking off on Small Business Saturday, November 28. Inspired by the welcoming spirit of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, the interactive experience invites residents and visitors to explore more than 35 participating shops, meet local merchants and collect pieces of a limited-edition, 54-piece puzzle featuring original watercolor artwork by Alexandria artist Alexandra Schmeling. The whimsical, storybook-style illustration celebrates Old Town's historic charm and neighborhood character. Throughout the crawl, participants can discover independent boutiques, enjoy special in-store activities and exclusive offers, and support the small businesses that make Old Town a beloved shopping destination. Approximately 200 puzzles will be available, with registration priced at $30 through November 16 and $40 beginning November 17. Each registration includes a puzzle box, neighborhood map and passport to guide the experience. Puzzle boxes must be picked up on November 28, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., at Mint Condition (122 S. Royal St.), Bloomers (706 King St.) or Fibre Space (1319 Prince St.). Participants then have through December 19 to explore the shops and collect the pieces needed to complete their one-of-a-kind Old Town keepsake.

EVENTS AT NEPENTHE GALLERY

The Nepenthe Gallery, located at 7928 Fort Hunt Road in Alexandria, had a grand re-opening last week with almost 200 people in attendance. The December Art, Wine and Cheese events are scheduled:

December 3 : Local Artist Brent Erickson

December 10 : Opening of Holiday Art Market. Open until December 22nd.

December 17: Holiday Bluegrass with Dogwood Hollow

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. Parade starts at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. At Old Town Alexandria Waterfront. Illuminated boats will cruise along the Potomac River waterfront as part of Alexandria's annual holiday celebration. Public viewing information, participating-boat details, and the final event schedule will be posted shortly.

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

2026 Alexandria Scottish Walk Holiday Parade. 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. In Old Town Alexandria. The Alexandria Scottish Walk Holiday Parade started as a community event more than 50 years ago to highlight the city's Scottish heritage and support the mission of the Campagna Center, then known as the Community Y. The Campagna Center partnered with St. Andrew's Society Washington, DC, Old Presbyterian Meeting House and the City of Alexandria to produce the parade and associated events led by Junior and Supporting Friends of the Campagna Center. In 2026, to elevate this signature event as an ongoing source of civic pride and celebration of Alexandria and its communities, the City of Alexandria took on the role of lead parade producer, with additional support by the Campagna Center and Visit Alexandria.

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

NOVEMBER

Wed. 18: Judy Collins: Sweet Judy Blue Eyes – Farewell Tour, with Oakland Rain $79.50

Thu. 19: Jesse Cook $49.50

Fri. 20: Trae Crowder $49.50

Sat. 21: Trae Crowder $49.50

Sun. 22: Marshall Crenshaw w/ Sarah Borges & Eric Ambel $49.50

Fri. 27: An Evening with The Seldom Scene $45.00

Sat. 28: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston $69.50

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.

The Night Alexandria Lost Seven

The dead were not professional firefighters. Alexandria would not have a paid fire department employee until 1866.

By David Heiby

Fire was the great fear of 19th-century Alexandria. Wooden row houses stood shoulder to shoulder with warehouses full of flammable goods, and one spark could take a block. But the fire that broke out on the night of Nov. 16, 1855, was different. Someone set it deliberately, and before dawn it had cost seven lives.

The blaze began in the Dowell China shop in the 200 block of King Street. Volunteers from the city's fire companies fought it through the night. Some worked the upper floors of the adjoining warehouse, and others worked its cellar.

At about four in the morning, the warehouse's west gable wall gave way. Six men died beneath it. A seventh, John Roach, was pulled from the wreckage alive but died of his injuries at home. Six more were hurt. One of them was John Dogan, an African American laborer from Royal Street, who was lamed for life. It remains the deadliest night in the history of Alexandria's fire service.

The dead were not professional firefighters. Alexandria would not have a paid fire department employee until 1866. They were neighbors and tradesmen who answered the bell. G. David Appich, a confectioner, was 21 and the youngest of the seven. William Evans was an English-born plumber. George O. Plain was a painter of 46. Robert I. Taylor was a pavior who helped lay the city's streets. James W. Keene, a woodseller, belonged to the Friendship Fire Company. J. Carson Greene was the grandson of Dr. James Carson. Roach was the only Catholic among them.

Their graves are scattered across the city. Appich was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery on Wilkes Street. Evans, Plain, Taylor and Keene went to the Methodist Protestant Cemetery nearby, though Keene's exact grave has been lost. Roach rests in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. For generations no one knew where Greene lay. In 2025, ground-penetrating radar confirmed his burial beside his family in Christ Church Episcopal Cemetery.

The fire companies did not let the loss fade. Friendship draped its engine house in mourning for six months, and the Star company kept its black bunting up for a full year. In 1856, the cornerstone was laid for a memorial obelisk at Ivy Hill Cemetery, carved with the names of the seven. In that year's memorial procession, John Dogan carried the fire's damaged hose nozzle, engraved with the names of the men who had died around him.

The obelisk still stands. The Friendship Fountain beside it was dedicated in 1970 and rededicated after September 11, 2001.

Every Fire Prevention Week, Alexandria's firefighters still gather there to remember.



Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria (1907), page 65.

H. Baader & Sons, a dealer in stoves, tinware and metals, later did business on the King Street block where seven volunteer firemen died on Nov. 17, 1855. Restaurants and shops now fill the site, including 219 Restaurant and Bollywood Masala.

No one was ever named as the arsonist. What remains is the memory of seven volunteers who went into a burning building on King Street because their town needed them. Readers can find every grave, along with the fire sites, at gravestonestories.com/fallen-firefighters-alexandria.

This story draws on the research of Catherine Weinraub, historian for the Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society and the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, and author of Friendship Fire Company 250th Anniversary, 1774–2024.

David Heiby is an independent historian, founder of Gravestone Stories (gravestonestories.com), and Superintendent of the Presbyterian Cemetery & Columbarium. He is Treasurer of the Alexandria Historical Society and of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns the Lee-Fendall House Museum, and a member of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir Seeking Public Interest in Establishment of a Restoration Advisory Board

The U.S. Army Environmental Command, in coordination with U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir (USAG-FB), invites interested community members to participate in the environmental cleanup process at USAG-FB in Fairfax County, Virginia. The Army is seeking community volunteer participation in the establishment of a local Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) at the Installation. RAB members will participate in a variety of ways by contributing local perspective, reviewing information, and sharing community interests or recommendations. Persons interested in volunteering to establish the Fort Belvoir RAB are asked to contact Mr. Paul Lara by December 4, 2026.

Mr. Paul Lara Acting Deputy Director, Fort Belvoir Public Affairs Office (PAO) U. S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir Building 269, 9820 Flagler Road, Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060-5116
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The RAB is intended to provide a forum for residents, government representatives, regulators, and environmental experts to discuss ongoing cleanup activities on the Installation.

The RAB will support Fort Belvoir's ongoing environmental cleanup efforts by creating a means for community members to provide input and receive updates. Depending on the level of interest, the frequency of RAB meetings could range monthly, quarterly or twice per year to provide project updates, receive community input, and discuss ongoing environmental cleanup activities. Participation in the RAB is voluntary but does require a time commitment from participants to ensure a sustained, constructive dialogue. Additional information regarding the establishment criteria for a RAB, purpose, membership, and responsibilities is available at https://www.epa.gov/fedfac/1994-restoration-advisory-board-implementation-guidelines and https://aec.army.mil/Cleanup/Restoration-Advisory-Boards/.

The requirements for establishing a RAB are formalized in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 2705, 32 CFR 202.10, and applicable Department of War (DOW) and Army policies. Environmental cleanup activities at Fort Belvoir are conducted under federal and Commonwealth of Virginia environmental cleanup requirements in accordance with environmental laws as implemented through the DOW's Environmental Restoration Program (DERP). The program addresses environmental concerns resulting from past activities at Fort Belvoir and supports efforts to protect people, property, and the environment. The program includes cleanup of contaminated sites through the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) and assessment of former military training areas through the Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP). Addressing these environmental concerns supports continued military operations and long-term sustainability at Fort Belvoir.







Photo courtesy office of Supervisor Lusk

Dignitaries in attendance at Groveton Elementary's 150 anniversary celebration included Superintendent Michelle Reid, Chairman Jeff McKay, Marcia St. John-Cunning, Rodney Lusk, Mateo Dunn, Ilryong Moon, Scott Surovell, and others.

Groveton Elementary Celebrates 150 Years

The school opened in 1876 as the one-room Kirby School on U.S. 1, later becoming Groveton Elementary.

By Glenda C. Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

Long before laptops, elementary students did their lessons on their actual laps. They had no desks but sat on benches and wrote with chalk on small portable slate boards. That is a snapshot of public education in the late 1800s in Virginia.

On Oct. 24, Groveton Elementary School at 6900 Harrison Lane celebrated its 150th anniversary with speeches, resolutions, tours and fun. Groveton opened in 1876 as the one-room Kirby School on U.S. 1, later becoming Groveton Elementary.

At the event, Fairfax County schools' Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid and Virginia Senator Scott Surovell delivered remarks. Several school board members attended.

"Groveton Elementary School is a very special place with a very special community and deserves to be recognized for its deep history," said the principal, Dr. James Swoger.

The History

When the Kirby School opened in 1876, Fairfax County's population was around 14,000 people. In 1888, the school burned down from high winds igniting a fire in the stove and a new one-room schoolhouse replaced it named Groveton School.

Teachers taught all the children grades one through seven in this one room, plus maintained a fire in the pot-belly stove and washed and oiled the wooden floors. As one grade of students did their recitations, the other students worked quietly at their desks.

According to a school system history, "There were no restrooms or running water in one-room schools. Older boys were tasked with carrying drinking water in a large bucket from a nearby well and with carrying firewood into the building. Bathroom facilities typically consisted of a single outhouse, but in some more fortunate communities, there were separate outhouses for boys and girls."

By the early 1920s the school was overcrowded and in 1924 local residents lobbied the school board for a new, two-room school. By 1925, the school board completed the new school at a cost of $4,714; and then in 1933, built another new school on Memorial Street with six classrooms and an auditorium and named it Groveton Elementary School. The current school was built in 1972 and had 640 students. Today, Groveton enrolls 764 students and has 108 staffers.

Electeds Commended

Senator Surovell presented a resolution approved by the Virginia General Assembly earlier this year, which in part said, "Groveton Elementary School, an outstanding public primary school in Fairfax County, has provided generations of young people with a strong foundation for lifelong learning by cultivating a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes physical, behavioral, and academic growth."

The resolution notes that the school was one of the first public schools in the eastern United States to offer special education programs for children with autism, it established the first co-op preschool program and the first before-and-after-school child care program in Fairfax County and today specializes in English as a second language.

Franconia Supervisor Rodney Lusk presented a Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' resolution commending the school for "expanding opportunities for children and working families," strengthening "community connections through a senior citizens nutrition program" and "welcoming students from diverse backgrounds, including Vietnamese refugees."

In a Sept. 15 statement to the Board of Supervisors, Lusk said, "The strength of Groveton Elementary School rests on its dedication to inclusion, innovation and community partnership. For 150 years, teachers, staff, families, volunteers and community leaders have created a welcoming environment where students of every background can learn and thrive."

Remembering Police Officers at Thanksgiving

Police are among those who work on holidays.

By Glenda Booth
Mount Vernon Gazette

While you are slurping up turkey gravy and savoring sweet potatoes, remember that some people are on the job, like people who work for the Fairfax County Police Department.

Policing is 24/7. That includes holidays. Thanks to generous donors like Wegman's and Mission Barbecue, many Fairfax County police officers who have to work on Thanksgiving Day will have a meal around a table in the police station.

Susan Stiegler, Acting Chair and Vice Chair of the police force's Mount Vernon Community Advisory Committee (CAC), reports that Wegmans is donating a gift card and the CAC will order Wegman's food for the 30 on-duty officers at the Mount Vernon station. In some years, CAC members make food for the officers.

Wegman's spokesperson Marcie Rivera, emailed, "Our stores often provide some sort of support to their local police and fire stations for Thanksgiving, based on the stations' needs and other donations they may have planned. Donations often include sub trays, cookies and chips, which is what is planned in Fairfax County for this Thanksgiving."

On Nov. 24, Mission BBQ at 6482 Landsdowne Center will take pulled pork, macaroni and cheese, baked beans and drinks to the Mount Vernon Station, said operating partner Chrissy Thacker. "Our mission is to serve the military and first responders," she said. "The police do so much for us, we'd like to support them. After all, it's the season of giving."



Photos by Glenda Booth

The Mount Vernon Police Station is in the Mount Vernon Government Center.



Fairfax County Police Department's insignia.

Meals for Officers

Many community groups across Fairfax County provide Thanksgiving meals to police staff working that day, according to Major Jeffrey Mauro, the Mount Vernon District Commander. Over the years, the Mount Vernon CAC "has given incredible support to the men and women of the police department," he said.

In the Mount Vernon station, typically 15 officers work in each of two shifts and officers not assigned to a specific station, like the canine unit, may drop by too.

In some years, donors deliver the food. In other years, officers pick it up. Those on duty like to sit around big tables in the roll call room, Mauro said, but he stressed that they are on duty and may have to go out on a call at any time.

Mauro says his team is very appreciative that people remember them. "The police are always there to protect people, to run to danger when others are running away from danger. These officers are serving on holidays in their public service role and away from the people they love.

"The hardest part is for those who have small kids. I give a shout-out to the officers and the families of officers and first responders. It's a big sacrifice not to have loved ones present and to share them with us on those holidays when they are not able to be home."

Asked about the pace of work on Thanksgiving, Mauro said, "Routine calls slow down." Stores are closed so there's less shoplifting, for example.

He noted that since many people travel that week, the police department may get more service calls for vehicle accidents. Also, during the late winter season, there's often an increase in domestic disputes when people are home from work and kids are out of school, he noted.

"Black Friday is a chaotic day," he said. "A lot of people are out. Things happen."

The 26-square-mile Mount Vernon Police District generally includes most of the Mount Vernon magisterial district and the part of Franconia magisterial district east of Telegraph Road. The station has 117 people, including 96 sworn officers, six auxiliary officers and 15 civilians.

Information

Fairfax County Police Department, https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police

Citizen Advisory Committee, MtVernonCAC@gmail.com

Don't Forget Farmers' Markets

For families cooking at home this Thanksgiving, don't forget our farmers' markets for cider, baked goods, honey, pickles, fresh vegetables, fall fruits and more.

❖ Mount Vernon Farmers Market, Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Last day for this year: Nov. 25, 8 a.m. to 12 noon,

❖ Lorton Farmers Market, 8994 Potomac Bend. Nov. 22, 8 a.m., to 12 noon, last day for this year.

❖ Oliver Keckler's Farm Stand – Oliver reminds all that he will be at the St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road, on Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., all winter, starting Dec. 5.

— Glenda Booth

"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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7609 Midday Ln | $1,049,000



2008 Mason Hill Dr | $1,050,000



9344 Mount Vernon Cir | $975,000



4200 Pickering Pl | $890,000



9020 Beatty Dr | $1,825,000



9305 Reef Ct | $1,199,000



4008 Robertson Blvd | $920,000



9400 Ludgate Dr | $1,375,000



8704 Greystone Pl | $759,000



8010 Candlewood Dr | $749,000



4429 Neptune Dr | $999,500



9502 Ferry Hall Ct | $1,575,000



6404 Potomac Ave | $887,000

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