

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 23, 2025



CREDIT: FAIRFAX COUNTY

Board of Supervisors group portrait, May 18, 2009- Board Supervisor Gerry Hyland is fourth from the left. Ten years later, on September 20, 2019, at the dedication of the Gerry W. Hyland Center, formerly the South County Government Center, Hyland said, "I miss being your supervisor; it was the best job I have ever had."

Retired Supervisor Gerry Hyland Remembered

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Gerald W. "Gerry" Hyland, 88, retired Mount Vernon District Supervisor of seven terms (1988-2015), died over the weekend.

The week after Hyland announced on Jan. 31, 2015, that he was retiring, his daughter, Christiane Gigi Hyland, wrote "A Daughter's Perspective." In it, she says, "If you believe in things as fate-filled as 'callings,' my Dad's calling has always been to be a public servant. ... My Dad is really about one thing, above all else -- helping people." She goes on to say that it sounds "deceptively simple," helping people, but "at its toughest, 'helping people' is messy, frustrating, complex, and often exhausting. ... Not for Dad. He always has and always will take that 6'3" frame and those size 14 feet and wade barefoot into the swirling waters of an issue because someone (or many someones) needs help. And he does it with the utmost patience and grace."

In 2019, at the Sept. 20 dedication of the Gerry W. Hyland Building, formerly named the South County Government Center, Hyland said, "I miss being your supervisor, the best job I ever had."

Elected in November 1987, a Washington



CREDIT: FAIRFAX COUNTY

Retired Fairfax County Board Supervisor Gerry Hyland comments at the dedication and renaming of the South County Government Building to the Gerry W. Hyland Building on September 20, 2019. The name change honored Hyland, the Mount Vernon District representative on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from 1988-2015.

Post story described Hyland as someone who "knows how to get things done." Hyland "had himself thrown in jail and wouldn't come out until he had raised \$10,000 for charity."

As a new supervisor, Hyland said the top priority on his agenda was to encourage

SEE GERRY HYLAND, PAGE 6

Gerald "Gerry" W. Hyland, 88

Gerald "Gerry" W. Hyland (Colonel, USAF, Ret.), 88, passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 19, 2025. Born on August 17, 1936 in Holden, Massachusetts, Gerry was the first of his family to attend college at Holy Cross and receive his Juris Doctor from Georgetown University School of Law, where he met and later married his law school sweetheart, Carmen Josefina Colón. He was a reservist in the Air Force with the Judge Advocate General's Office and served four years of active duty in Normandy (France). Upon returning to the U.S., Gerry remained active in the Air Force Reserve for 30 years, and worked for the Credit Union National Association, as legislative counsel. Together with Carmen, they founded the law firm Hyland & Hyland in 1976 and he practiced law as a member of the Virginia State Bar for 50 years.

Public service was Gerry's calling and passion. In Fairfax County, he served on the Board of Zoning Appeals and was elected in 1987 as the Mount Vernon District Supervisor, a position he held for 28 years before retiring in 2015.

He gave his all to ensure that the citizens of Mount Vernon were deeply involved in the decisions affecting their lives and the community. He was known as a "leader who listens" and who always considered how the County could support the most vulnerable of its residents.

Gerry was instrumental in the efforts to close the county I-95 landfill, he led the effort to keep the Inova Mount Vernon Hospital open and led the transformation of Lorton. His annual Town Hall Meetings and Lobsterfests, attended by hundreds of residents, politicians and County leaders, were testament to his deep commitment and connection to the community. In 2019, Fairfax County rededicated the Gerry Hyland Government Center, home to family services, community health, career programs, a senior and teen center and more, including many public rooms essential for community meetings and workshops.

In addition to his supervisor role, Gerry also served as chairman of the Virginia Railway Express, is a past president of the Virginia Association of Counties and served on the National Association of Counties Board of Directors.

SEE GERALD "GERRY", PAGE 6

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MORTGAGE



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NO FAIRFAX CASINO COALITION

Members of the No Fairfax Casino Coalition exit their chartered bus in Richmond on Wednesday, Jan. 15, to lobby against SB982 and attend a press conference hosted by Sen. Jennifer Boysko, who is opposed to SB982.

Bill Paves Way for Fairfax Casino Referendum

Coalition seeks to ‘kill the bill;’ sponsors say Fairfax County needs the money for schools and property tax relief.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

David Marsden (D-35) “put a bulls-eye for a casino directly over Tysons.”

Last year, the Virginia Senate subcommittee voted on Feb. 2 to “continue” Senate Bill 675 until 2025, essentially killing the bill. The reasoning was to allow for more in-depth projections regarding a potential casino in Northern Virginia.

SB982| 2025 does not explicitly name Fairfax County as “the eligible host locality.” Still, the land use description in subdivision A 6 can only refer to Fairfax County, specifically Tysons.

SEE CASINO, PAGE 12

A 50,000-member Facebook group called the No Fairfax Casino Coalition is out to “kill the bill,” SB982 — Casino gaming; eligible host localities in the Virginia Senate.

Prefiled Jan. 7 and offered Jan. 8, SB982 as of Saturday, Jan. 18 is referred to the Committee on General Laws and Technology, subcommittee gaming.

The bill would authorize a process by which voters in Fairfax County could eventually vote on a local ballot referendum on a casino development. The bill does not authorize a casino development.

The chairperson of the “No Fairfax Casino Coalition, Lynne Mulston said on Saturday, Jan. 18, that a previous Senate Bill, 675 in 2024 Casino gaming; eligible host localities by Da-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NO FAIRFAX CASINO COALITION

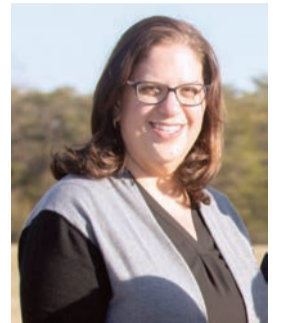
Which way do we go in the Virginia General Assembly Building? Lynne Mulston, chair of the No Fairfax Casino Coalition, with (left) Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna, Supervisor Walter Alcorn, (D-Hunter Mill) and Supervisor Jimmy Bierman, (D-Dranesville)

Comments by the Chief Co-Patrons of the “Entertainment District Bill”

Comments from the Jan. 14, 2025 Release: Senate of Virginia, Scott A. Surovell. Comments may be edited for space.

Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-Fairfax):

“My constituents are tired of rising property taxes hitting their pocketbooks, while our schools remain chronically underfunded and our teachers are underpaid. An entertainment district will generate hundreds of millions of tax revenue, dollars that can be used to relieve the pressure being felt by homeowners in Fairfax County, while also generating thousands of jobs.”



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-39)

Sen. Lamont Bagby

(D-Richmond): “I’m proud to join this effort to amend the historic

legislation patron by Senator Lucas in 2020 to include a casino in Northern Virginia. These projects have delivered huge revenues across the Commonwealth to repair aging school facilities.” Bagby serves as the Chairman of the Black Caucus

Sen. Todd Pillion (R-Abington): “Virginia cannot continue to lose hundreds of millions in tax revenue to Maryland. The positive impacts of this bill will reach far and wide across the Commonwealth helping to fund our important priorities in keeping our taxes low.”

Majority Leader Sen. Scott Surovell (D):

“We are excited to get this bill passed and for the board of supervisors to begin a transparent process that will select the operator and site for this historic opportunity.”



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34)

What Happened to Two Other Casino Bills?

SB675 in 2024 and SB1543 in 2023

On Feb. 1, 2024, Supervisor Walter Alcorn and others testified opposing SB675, Casino gaming; eligible host localities, introduced by Sen. David Marsden (D-35). Marsden’s bill provided a path forward for a casino in Fairfax County through a referendum.

On Feb. 6, 2024, the Senate subcommittee continued SB675 to 2025 in Finance and Appropriations voting (13-Y 2-N), essentially killing the bill for the year. Developer Comstock targeted Fairfax County as a site for its vision of a casino establishment with a hotel, conference center, and arts venue.

A year earlier, in 2023, Marsden introduced similar legislation, SB1543, allowing casino gaming along the Metro Silver Line. Assigned to the Senate’s Committee on General Laws and Technology (GL&T) subcommittee: Gaming on Jan. 24, 2023, and on Jan. 25, 2023, at the request of the bill’s patron, SB1543 was “Stricken in General Laws and Technology in a vote o (15-Y 0-N),” according to LIS, Virginia’s Legislative Information System.

Supervisors: Casino Bill Muddies Waters

Real issue is state underfunding of schools, they say.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

A senator's comments Monday to the Virginia Senate Subcommittee on Gaming regarding SB982 (Casino Gaming; eligible host localities) led the chair of the No Fairfax Casino coalition, Lynn Mulston, to email the senators a letter titled "URGENT: SB982 Reaction to Chief Patron's Comments." In a 5-2 vote, the gaming subcommittee reported SB982 to the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee, moving it forward. They are scheduled to meet Wednesday afternoon.

Sen. Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) is the chief patron of SB982. "Fairfax County Board is continuing to talk to us, and they're waiting for a bill, and we're discussing changes to it, but they have not taken a position," he said.

"Senator Surovell's remarks to the Gaming Subcommittee are confusing and disturbing as they tend to distort the circumstances surrounding the stance of Fairfax County's Board of Supervisors," Mulston wrote. She



Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

explained that SB98 proponents have been confusing the issue of Fairfax County's real estate tax increases in recent years.

"The record should clearly reflect that the Board of Supervisors' stance on real estate tax increases has been driven by the necessity to compensate for the state's inadequate funding of public education," Mulston wrote. Mulston noted in her letter that the Legislative Committee of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors addressed SB982 at its Jan.17 meeting.

According to the publically available video of the Jan. 17, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Legislative Committee Meeting, Chairman Jeff McKay said, "I've seen several statements from in this case, at least two senators in Richmond who suggest that this

is a way to prevent future real estate tax increases that have burdened our residents. And I think we need to make it clear in here that real estate tax increases, at least in the last couple of years, have been to overcome the state's negligence in funding public education."

McKay said the "problems are with public education funding." He clarified why Fairfax County real estate taxpayers bear the burden. McKay referenced Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study (2023) but did not go into detail.

McKay held up his 2024 letter. "I particularly love this letter since I signed it," McKay said. "Nothing really has changed, and I think it would make sense for us to recirculate the letter."

Moments before, Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (D-Dranesville), a former litigation attorney, confirmed, questioning county staff, the following:

- ❖ Fairfax County did not seek authority for a casino.
- ❖ Fairfax County had not been substantively involved in developing a casino.
- ❖ There has been no percentage change in the casino gaming tax revenue split be-

tween the state-70 percent and local jurisdiction-30 percent. Bierman said that is relevant because Fairfax "can generate significant local tax revenue without a casino."

❖ The 2025 bill is "less expansive," meaning it is more restrictive to the casino's location and concept than the 2024 bill.

"This has been our position now for a year," McKay said. "This has been our position that has not changed. And I think we need to clarify that with at least certain members of our delegation that seem to have not either don't remember getting this letter or have chosen to ignore it."

Based on the Jan. 17 board discussion that followed, its planned next steps are to modify the letter, get board approval to re-submit, and ensure the board's position is communicated to relevant state senators.

The JLARC study outlined Virginia's education costs, detailed the inadequacy of state funding formula flaws, and offered near- and long-term recommendations. The state's funding formula is outdated and shortchanges Fairfax County Public Schools. According to Fairfax County Public Schools, "the vast majority of JLARC-related legislation introduced during the 2024 Regular Session was "tabled" for the 2024 session, with the content of the legislation being referred to the Joint Subcommittee for longer-term consideration."



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Mount Vernon's Dixie Pig Restaurant Still Has Hooves

Remnants of the long-gone institution live on around the area.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Just about everyone in Mount Vernon that's been around for a few years has some memory of the Dixie Pig restaurant that used to sit on Beacon Hill across from the Beacon Mall shopping center. Whether it was a baseball team banquet, a night out for the bowling team or an outing of teachers from the local school, the Dixie Pig was the hot spot for many.

Years ago, the doors closed at Dixie Pig and the lighted neon sign was taken down, but the place still lives on for some, including the firefighters at station 11 in Penn Daw, where a part of the old Dixie Pig was made into a cupola over the station sign, shielding it from the elements. Firefighter Domenick Iannelli was behind the effort to make this

happen.

Other Dixie Pig furnishings made it as far as Winchester, where local resident Chris Trice has one of the old Dixie Pig booths in his kitchen where he has his morning coffee and reads the paper on his computer. Trice lived in Alexandria and his father, Brother Trice, was a lifelong firefighter and has an alley named after him in Old Town. When they found out the Dixie Pig restaurant was being torn down, they managed to save the booth, and now it has a second life in the Trice house.

When Mount Vernon Boy Scout Ricky Castles launched his Eagle Scout project, he used authentic Dixie Pig bricks to build a brick patio and a new picnic table at Riverside Elementary School on Old Mount Vernon Road. Most of the bricks used were preserved from the Dixie Pig.

"My dad helped to clean the mortar off so they could be used again as a patio for the school," he posted on social media.

Another Dixie Pig was on the north end of Old Town for years but it was bought by another restaurateur and turned into Vasso's Kitchen specializing in Greek food. They kept the neon pig on the roof though.



A booth from the former Dixie Pig is now at a home in Winchester.

PHOTOS BY
MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE



The roof over Station 11's sign was part of the Dixie Pig restaurant years ago.



An old Dixie Pig menu.



WINTER 2025

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JANUARY 1 - FEBRUARY 23
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Alexandria Restaurant Week
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FEBRUARY 1 - 2

NSO at Mount Vernon
FEBRUARY 11 & MARCH 4

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FEBRUARY 15

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FEBRUARY 16

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MARCH 1



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alexandria

Retired Supervisor Gerry Hyland Remembered

FROM PAGE 1

continued redevelopment of the Rt. 1 corridor.

Hyland announced his retirement early in 2015. Sue Langley, chair of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee, said in a statement that “his tireless devotion to the citizens of the Mount Vernon District will be difficult to replace.”

As a supervisor, Hyland had many achievements. Among them are that he insisted upon the expansion of the Mount Vernon Hospital rather than closing it, started a new farmers market in Lorton, increased police patrols in the Richmond Highway corridor reducing the crime rate in the Mount Vernon area, and is credited on creating one of Fairfax County’s first dog parks.

Hyland supported expanding the trails in Mount Vernon and the County and created a park and golf course in the Lorton community. Before he retired, Hyland won his fight and supported the community in closing the Lorton Landfill.

Hyland also started the tradition of the Mount Vernon Annual Town Meeting, which will celebrate its 38th event this year, according to Supervisor Dan Storck, who won his empty seat.

During his tenure as supervisor, Hyland earned the nickname, “Mr. Pothole;” because he aggressively pursued road improvements and street repairs in his district.

Just because Hyland retired does not mean he stopped advocating for his Mount Vernon community.

In December 2021, Hyland wrote a letter to the “Special Masters” at the Supreme Court of Virginia regarding their proposed redistricting map in the area of Fairfax County that he had represented for 28 years. He signed it, “Very Truly Yours, Gerald W. Hyland. Retired Mount Vernon District Supervisor.”

Hyland urged the court to “create one delegate seat for the Mount Vernon Community and a separate delegate seat for the Lee Community (you call it ‘Franconia’ in your memorandum),” writing that it “better aligns the delegate seats with the communities that actually exist.” A master of facts and the use of visuals, he included five maps in his letter.

According to Fairfax County public affairs, “Hyland also served as chairman of the Virginia Railway Express and is a past president of the Virginia Association of Counties. He has served as a board member of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, the Environmental Policy Committee, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Improvement Study Coordinating Committee, the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Board of Zoning Appeals.”

Hyland was born and raised in

Holden, Massachusetts. He graduated from the College of Holy Cross and received a law degree from Georgetown University in 1962. He earned a master’s degree in taxation from George Washington University. Hyland served as a colonel in the Air Force Reserves and was past president of United Community Ministries.

The final paragraph of Christiane Gigi Hyland’s “A Daughter’s Perspective” reads: “My Dad is the living embodiment of the quote from Quaker missionary Stephen Grellet: ‘I shall pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.’ That’s my Dad. And I am so proud of him.”

Many local people are posting memories and tributes:

“I’m deeply saddened to share the loss of a community pillar, a true patriot, Mount Vernon leader for 30+ years, my friend and mentor, Gerry Hyland. He was committed to doing things right for the right reasons and challenged us all to be our best selves. We honored Gerry for his deep commitment and many successes in our community by renaming the South County Government Center after him in 2019. Gerry was notorious for his puns, sharp legal mind, and for being a leader who listens. As

we celebrate his life, each one of us should find a

way to be of service to others, as he was to all of us. I hope you will join me to celebrate him at the 38th Annual Town Meeting on Feb. 8, where we can further honor his life and the town meeting tradition that he started.”

— **Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck**

“Deeply saddened to learn of the passing of longtime Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland. He was a good friend and stalwart advocate for his constituents. He was a consequential public servant who will be missed by all of Fairfax County.”

— **Rep. Gerry Connolly @GerryConnolly**

“He was the quintessential public servant who loved helping people every chance he could get. I’m so glad he was my political mentor and personal friend. He taught me a lot and was always there for me too like when he eulogized my parents at their funeral. God bless you Gerry.”

— **Paul Krizek @KrizekForVA**

“Gerry Hyland, former Fairfax County Supervisor (Mount Vernon District), was like family for me having lost my own. He was like a great uncle or second father. He cared so much for people and was always there to lend a helping hand. Thank you for being my

champion and a champion for all.”

— **Lisa “ERA” Sales @CABlueBlaze**

“Gerry was passionate about his constituents and served on countless regional, statewide, and national organizations. He loved his community and spent decades working to improve the lives of everyone whom he served. Gerry was a leader in every sense, but particularly when it came to providing services to our most vulnerable residents and promoting the revitalization of the Richmond Highway Corridor. He was especially proud of his work protecting the many historical properties in his district. “He always advocated for those who had no voice and those who needed county services and support. Gerry led with his heart.

“Gerry’s quick wit and good humor made him a joy to serve with and made him very effective. He never took himself too seriously and always had a pun ready about any situation he found himself in.

“Most importantly Gerry was a friend and mentor who will be deeply missed. His successes can be seen everywhere in Mount Vernon District and I am so proud the South County Center was renamed the “Gerry Hyland Government Center” in 2019 to honor the decades of service Gerry provided to our residents.”

— **Jeff McKay, Chairman, Board of Supervisors**

Gerald “Gerry”

FROM PAGE 1

Outside of public service and family, Gerry’s other love was “the farm” – his 35-acre “sanctuary” in Parksley, Va. where he grew vegetables, raised everything from a bull, to chickens, sheep and peacocks, and caught crab on his dock that he would bring back to share with cherished friends.

Gerry Hyland was predeceased by his wife Carmen, parents Maurice and Eve (Shimkus) Hyland, sister Cecile Gelardi, and companion Shirley Robson. He is survived by his daughter, Christiane Gigi Hyland, and son-in-law Christopher Revere of Mount Vernon. He is also survived by three siblings: twin sister Carole Santos of Marstons Mills, MA; brother, Ted Hyland and wife Tina of Southborough, MA; younger sister, Christine Sweeney and

husband Jack of West Hyannisport, MA; best friend William Bock of Mount Vernon; and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews who adored “Uncle Gerry” and the delight he brought to family gatherings at the farm and on Cape Cod.

The Hyland family expresses eternal appreciation to Dr. Soren Caffee and the doctors, nurses and caregivers at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital and Paul Spring Retirement Community for their love and devotion. A community celebration of Gerry’s life will be held in the Spring. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the PKD Foundation (<https://pkdcure.org/>) or to the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (<https://veslt.org/>).

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNews-papers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League’s programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school

year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551- 2488, or donaledge@aol.com.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

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

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

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria’s preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for “Space of Her Own,” and “Space of His Own,” serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah

SEE BULLETIN BOARD, PAGE 16

OBITUARY

Nancy Van Gulick Cooper Dies at 78

Celebration of life set for Jan. 25.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

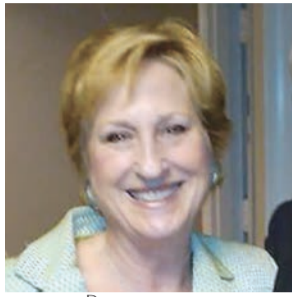


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Longtime Alexandria resident Nancy Van Gulick Cooper died Dec. 14, 2024, at the age of 78.

Nancy Van Gulick Cooper, a longtime Alexandria resident and community humanitarian, died Dec. 14, 2024, at her home in Oxford, Md., following a year-long battle with cancer. She was 78.

Van Gulick Cooper was born March 15, 1946, to Millie and Hugo Phillips and raised in Baltimore. She graduated from George Washington University and lived abroad in France prior to settling in Alexandria. She worked for and with the Peace Corps and the American Red Cross before founding Seniors Living Well.

A devout Christian, Van Gulick Cooper became a member of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in 1985. She served there in many capacities, including as elder, teacher, mentor and choir member.

"Nancy was just a wonderful friend and devoted to doing good work in the community, said Senior Services of Alexandria executive director Mary Lee Anderson, who first met Van Gulick Cooper through the Meeting

House. "It still doesn't seem real – she was so active and vibrant."

In 2012, Van Gulick Cooper married Gerry Cooper, a fellow Meeting House congregant and longtime SSA board member.

Together they dedicated many hours to serving the community through programs such as Meals on Wheels and supporting Friends of Guest House.

Van Gulick Cooper was a leader in the Rotary Club of Alexandria, committed to advancing Rotary's international peace-building efforts. She established the Nancy and Gerry Cooper Water Projects Endowment to ensure funding for future water projects around the world.

"Nancy was as inspirational a character as I have ever met," said Alexandria Rotary Club president Jim Carmalt. "Her legacy of service and unwavering dedication to our club and the Alexandria community have touched countless lives. Her contributions were too

"Nancy was just a wonderful friend and devoted to doing good work in the community."

— SSA executive director Mary Lee Anderson

numerous to count, and her spirit of service above self will continue to inspire us all."

Van Gulick Cooper was instrumental in starting Rotary's regional Walk for Water, raising more than \$30,000 last year even as she battled cancer. Carmalt noted that the walk has now been renamed the Nancy Van Gulick Walk for Water in her honor.

Van Gulick Cooper began working with the Fund for Alexandria's Child in the 1970s and was an emergency placement foster mother and promoter of character education.

Music and singing were early passions for Van Gulick Cooper and she was a proud member of the Phoenix Choir of Baltimore during her high school years. She enjoyed traveling, entertaining, and spending time with family, particularly relishing her role as host for her family's traditional Christmas cookie bake.

"She had one hell of a year fighting cancer, a fight which I'm glad is finished for her sake," said her nephew Robert Phillips. "The pain of her loss was never going to be easy and though that Saturday I held her hand for the last time, she was at peace, surround-

ed by her family on the weekend she loved most – the Phillips Cookie Bake. She lived her life beautifully, and leaves behind a legacy of inspiring others to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God."

Van Gulick Cooper is survived by her husband Gerry Cooper; her brother Russ Phillips (Charlotte); her sister-in-law Carol Phillips; three nieces, Suzannah Baum, Katy Phillips, and Holly George; three nephews Hank Phillips, Robert Phillips, and Bay Phillips; five grandnieces and two grandnephews; and countless cousins including Debbie O'Neill, Carol Wallyn, and Suzie Mason. She was preceded in death by her brother Roger Phillips. She is also survived by the Cooper family: Steve Cooper (Donna) and Dan Cooper (Iris), and many Cooper grandchildren, especially Kaiya Cooper.

An interment service took place Jan. 4 at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Oxford. A Celebration of Life will be held Jan. 25 at 11 a.m. at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, 321 South Fairfax Street, with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, please consider supporting the Nancy and Gerry Cooper Water Projects Endowment [ID E21485]: The Rotary Foundation, 14280 Collections Center Drive, Chicago, IL 60693 USA.

"Nancy was a very special woman," Anderson said. "She was such a force of nature and her loss is just immeasurable."



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Virginia Legislature Begins Work

One of the more bizarre starts ever

BY SENATOR SCOTT A. SUROVELL

The first week of the 2025 regular session of the General Assembly which began on Jan. 7 was one of the more bizarre starts I have ever experienced.

While Fairfax County got around eight inches of snow, Richmond had three inches, but the snow managed to take down the entire public water system for six days. Two backup systems failed along with a switch and several pumps. This forced General Assembly leaders to gavel in on the first day of the session and then recess until Jan. 13.

While the lack of water meant a slow start, we have plenty to do. I am carrying approximately 25 bills and about 30 budget amendments, and have responsibilities as Senate Majority Leader, Chairman of the Courts of Justice Committee, the General Government Subcommittee of the Finance and Appropriations Committee and the Cannabis Subcommittee of the Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee.

For now, I'll single out several of my bills that have directly impact our area. First, we continue to see many collisions on the south George Washington Memorial Parkway ("the Parkway") at Belle Haven Road and Belview Boulevard. I have received numerous complaints about excessive speeds and a lack of enforcement by the United States Park Police, especially in the wake

of the Bijan Ghaisar shooting. I have introduced a bill to authorize the Virginia State Police and Fairfax County Police Department to conduct traffic enforcement on the Parkway and to allow those agencies to install photo speed monitoring devices.



A second bill I have proposed addresses access to health care facilities. People entering and leaving a women's health clinic in our community have experienced significant harassment. My bill requires anyone picketing a health-care facility to stay at least 40 feet away from the main entrance and to refrain from obstructing access or leafleting patients in that zone.

This is similar to the state's rules for polling places.

Holding the Line on Property Taxes

In 2016, MGM opened a new casino at National Harbor and announced that one-third of their revenue would come from Virginia customers. I wrote a column in the Richmond Times Dispatch arguing that Virginia needs to embrace casino gaming or else we would be exporting hundreds of millions of Virginia tax dollars to Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, states that have casinos. Last year, the National Harbor casino grossed \$850 million in tax revenue for Maryland and Prince George's County. One-third of those dollars came from Virginia.

I have introduced legislation to authorize the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to put a referendum on the ballot to allow Fairfax County voters to vote on a casino in Tysons Corner.

Experts estimate that it could generate at least \$100 million for Fairfax County which equals about three percent of Fairfax County's current real estate taxes or about \$300 per year Fairfax County household.

For too long, Fairfax County has relied on real estate taxes for revenue and since at least 1970, the county has attempted to diversify its tax base by attracting more commercial office space, but commercial space valuations are cratering due to remote work. This is in part why Fairfax County now has the highest real estate tax rate in all of Virginia (except for Falls Church). This project would take pressure off your real estate taxes.

A casino would be only five percent of the entire floor space because the bill also requires the project to include a 1.5-million-square-foot entertainment complex and convention center. Fairfax County is larger than eight states and does not have a place to host 1,000+ person conventions, events that can also generate significant revenue.

The project will create 2,000 union construction jobs and 5,000 permanent union casino jobs, opening doors for non-college-educated and other workers to both live and work in Fairfax County.

Every year since I was elected in 2009, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has asked for authority to diversify their revenue sources. Two years ago, the General Assembly gave the county the same taxing authority as cities. This bill is one more step to help keep your taxes down.

Please email me at scott@scottsurovell.org if you have any feedback. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

Modernizing the Virginia Litter Tax

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

As anyone who has walked through Virginia's beautiful rivers, streams, and hiking trails can attest, there is plastic litter everywhere. It damages our waterways, harms our wildlife, and decreases our quality of life. Worst of all, almost all of this would be preventable if Virginia modernized its woefully out-of-date Litter Control and Recycling Fund.

According to recent research by Clean Virginia Waterways, a state-wide non-profit based at Longwood University, the production of plastics has grown 744% since Virginia's litter tax went into effect in 1976. Plastic production alone is projected to double by 2040.

Most troubling, single-use plastic containers such as water bottles, soft drinks, and sports drinks like Gatorade comprise approximately 23% of all litter found in Virginia according to 2022 data from



the International Coastal Cleanup. However, only soft drinks are included in Virginia's Soft Drinks Excise Tax as single-use plastic water bottles and similar containers were not in common use in

1976.

Virginia's Litter Control and Recycling Fund was created to provide localities with money to fund their environmental cleanup programs and to pay for recycling efforts. These programs involve thousands of volunteers who annually support community clean ups, youth education, and solid waste infrastructure. Most importantly, localities have used the money efficiently and effectively, keeping costs down.

The program is funded by a flat fee of \$20 that retailers, distributors and producers pay yearly. Manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors or retailers of the follow-

ing products: groceries, beer, soft drinks, and carbonated beverages, which are proven to produce additional litter into our environment, are taxed at a higher rate of \$30 annually. This fee was increased for the first time in four decades from \$10 and \$15 annually, respectively.

The current system generates \$3.2 million in litter tax revenue for environmental cleanup and recycling efforts, yet Virginia's Litter Control and Recycling Fund generates the lowest amount of revenue per capita of any state using a similar system, according to a Clean Virginia Waterways' study.

There is strong bipartisan support for efforts to reduce plastics in our streams, waterways, and trails; it's clear that more must be done.

Virginia has a chance to implement the best practices for litter control and recycling while modernizing our Litter Control and Recycling Fund to meet our 21st century needs.

To stay up-to-date, I have authored a comprehensive study

for this year's General Assembly designed to modernize the Litter Tax to better promote recycling, reduce landfill waste and advance environmental stewardship. In fact, I have been working on this issue with other pieces of legislation since 2019.

Stakeholders from environmental groups, industry, and government will be unified to comprehensively review the Commonwealth's solid waste and recycling programs. The study will assess what materials are entering our waterways and landfills, and what can be, and frankly, should be better recycled. It will also conduct a study focused on the economic impact that these materials have on all of us when they are not recycled, and what revenue is lost by not properly managing our Litter Control and Recycling Fund.

The world has changed since 1976, and our litter control efforts need to adapt to reflect that. Back then, the most common material

SEE KRIZEK, PAGE 13

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OPINION

My 2025 Legislative Updates

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN

Our first full week in session started off with a flurry of snowflakes and bills. The Virginia Senate Privileges and Elections Committee reported out my Marriage Equality Constitutional Amendment with bipartisan support (SJ 249).

I continue in my role as chair of the first Virginia Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology, with over a hundred bills to consider during this 2025 session. My bills include SB 1042, which would make it easier to become a Certified Public Accountant and SB 1043 which would ensure sixty days notice when a landlord does not renew a tenant's lease. Both reported out of the committee. On Friday, the Senate Courts of Justice Committee recommended passage of SB 880- a ban on the public carrying of assault weapons and SB 881, regarding restrictions on 'ghost guns.'

On Monday, Jan. 20, we had a productive day of bills. The Virginia Committee on Justice considered SB 1053, addressing deepfake fraud and SB 1060 which would allow for the confiscation of tobacco and vapes possessed by minors. Also on Monday, the Virginia Committee of Commerce and Labor considered SB 1056, which would increase weekly unemployment maximum benefits and SB 1057, which would raise the limits for unemployment compensation when working a part time job. We also considered SB 1280 in the Gaming Subcommittee of the General Laws Committee. This bill would ensure the posting of the problem gambling help line in places where gambling occurs.

Full Legislative Agenda

With the support of my two staffers and three interns from Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond, we are running full speed ahead with a full legislative agenda.

First is SB 249, a Constitutional Amendment protecting marriage equality. We are also seeking to amend the Virginia Human Rights Act, SB 1052, to ensure that companies regardless of size, do not discriminate in employment. Next is SB 881, which would ban ghost guns. SB 880 would ban carrying assault weapons in public.

SB 1060 would allow for the confiscation of tobacco and vapes possessed by minors. We are also working on SB 1053 addressing deepfake fraud. SB 1042 would make it easier to become a Certified Public Accountant. SB 879 would help tradespeople get a Career and Technical Education

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teaching license.

In SB 1043, we are working on more notice to tenants when their lease is not renewed by the landlord. SB 1054 requires the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority to draft regulations for retail cannabis sales. SB 1283 would ban privately run state prisons. We are also working on requiring data center operators to provide more information when applying for siting.

SB 1056 and SB 1057 would increase unemployment benefits. SB 1058 would make it easier for schools to provide solar power to the grid. Providing post-release job placement services to returning citizens is the goal of SB 877. SB 1280 would promote the state's gambling help line.

SB 1051 would allow for the annual inspections of animal boarding facilities. We are working on transparency regarding the use of deepfakes and technology. I am also working on increasing the penalty for hitting a vulnerable road user in a crosswalk.

Constituent Visits

We had many productive discussions with constituents last week.

I had a good meeting with Virginia community health leaders, including Dr. Basim Khan, who leads Neighborhood Health Services, to discuss continued healthcare access in medically underserved communities. Serving over 400,000 patients in 2023, Virginia's health centers provide high-quality, comprehensive primary care for 1 in every 21 Virginians.

I was glad to have met with local constituent activists from Students Demand Action and Moms Demand Action for their lobby day. We are working this session to do more to address gun violence.

I also met with the American Association of University Women of Virginia. I appreciate their advocacy and for coming to visit me in Richmond, advancing gender equity in the Commonwealth.

I met with the Virginia Society of Public Accountants for their CPA Assembly Day. I am thankful for all the work CPAs perform and will continue to work with them in the future.

Upcoming Town Hall Meeting

I'll be hosting a town hall meeting on Saturday, Jan. 25 at 10 am. Please join us at the Minnie Howard Campus of Alexandria City High School, 3775 W Braddock Rd, Alexandria, VA, 22303. Also attending will be Delegates Bennett-Parker, Herring and Lopez. Sign up here to attend.

Thanks for the continued opportunity to serve.



38th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting

Saturday, February 8, 2025

NEW TIME

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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
DINWIDDIE	6050	624	HILLS DRIVE	WHITE OAK CREEK	1/3/2025
DINWIDDIE	6025	613	SQUIRREL LEVEL ROAD	HATCHERS RUN	1/2/2025
POWHATAN	13837	603	ROCKY FORD ROAD	BRANCH ROCKY FORD CREEK	12/17/2024
WYTHE	19757	681	BRUSHY MOUNTAIN ROAD	BR REED CREEK	12/10/2024

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 Traffic and Travel/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.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE GAZETTE

Martha Wescoat-Andes and dad Jim Wescoat with his Quilt of Valor.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE GAZETTE

From left, Martha Wescoat-Andes photographs her dad receiving his quilt from Madonna Rabatin.

Local Marine Veteran Receives Quilt of Valor

Jim Wescoat, 103, is honored before friends and family.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE GAZETTE

Jim Wescoat was born on Dec. 7, 1921, in Atlantic City, N.J. Exactly 20 years later, after Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, he joined the Marine Corps.

Now 103, he's the only Marine WWII veteran living at The Woodlands, a retirement community in Fairfax. And on Jan. 10, he received a patriotic quilt there from the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOV), which makes quilts for military veterans.

"He's given a lot to his country, and we believe he's most deserving of this award," said Madonna Rabatin, the foundation's Virginia coordinator. "It's an expression of gratitude from a grateful nation."

She was among the women who together made his quilt. And her sister, Toni Rabatin, also with the foundation, explained its origin and purpose. A national organization, it was founded in 2003 by a Blue Star mom, Catherine Roberts.

"With a son deployed in Iraq as a gunner atop a Humvee, she had a vision of a post-deployed warrior in the middle of the night, struggling with his war demons, while sitting on his bed, wrapped in a quilt," said Toni Rabatin. "The quilt not only comforted the soldier but warded off the demons. [Thus], Quilts of Valor was founded with the message, 'Quilts Equal Healing.'"

"The foundation's mission is to cover ac-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA WESCOAT-ANDES
Jim Wescoat in his 20s, as a WWII Marine.

tive-duty service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor," she continued. "While many bear the physical scars of battle, many others have been [affected] in less-visible ways by conflicts past and present." Then, addressing Wescoat directly, she said they'd come to honor "your service, sacrifice and commitment to our Constitution. We're indebted and thankful to you for taking the oath to defend our freedom."

Since its inception, Quilts of Valor has gar-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA WESCOAT-ANDES

The Wescoats on their wedding day, June 30, 1951.

nered more than 11,000 volunteer quiltmakers and awarded more than 400,000 quilts worldwide. Rabatin said each quilt is created with love, care and gratitude. And she told Wescoat, "Your Quilt of Valor comes from the hearts of many thankful women and men. Through this quilt, you'll forever be in our hearts."

Noting that a quilt has three layers, she said the top features many colors, shapes and fabrics representing the many communities and individuals in the organization. The batting – the filling in the center – pro-

vides warmth. "It represents our hope that this quilt will bring warmth, comfort, peace and healing to you who receive it," said Rabatin. "The backing is the strength supporting the other layers and represents the recipient's strength and the support of your family, our community and our nation. And each stitch holding the layers together represents love, gratitude and, sometimes, the tears of the maker."

SEE QUILT OF VALOR, PAGE 11
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SENIOR LIVING

Quilt of Valor

FROM PAGE 10

Then, as her sister Madonna wrapped Wescoat's quilt around him, Rabatin said, "With our deepest appreciation, we say, 'Thank you for your service and welcome home.'"

Next, fellow Woodlands resident Ron Gallier read a poem he'd written about Wescoat, calling him "Woodlands' pride and joy and every resident's friend. It's not to his age that I raise my glass, but to his incomparable touch of class."

All the residents were gathered for the ceremony, and the guests included one of Wescoat's daughters, Martha Wescoat-Andes of Fairfax. With her beaming proudly beside him, he told everyone, "This is incredible. I am so very, very thankful. The thoughtfulness and effort you put into this is outstanding and very much appreciated."

"I must tell you, though – in the service, I got more than I gave. I was a high-school dropout when I enlisted in the Marine Corps. In the military, I acquired a little bit of self-confidence. And when I got out [in 1945], I went back to high school and they said, 'Yeah, we remember you, but we'll try it again.' They said if I did all my courses, they'd give me a diploma – the lack of which cost me dearly during my service."

Besides being grateful to finally obtain his diploma, Wescoat said he was also thankful for that experience because, while on campus, he met "the gal who became my wife, the mother of my four children and my wonderful inspiration every day, still today. I appreciate all that's been done for me and helped me, but I can't find the words, except to say, thank you and God bless."

A pianist then played the Marine Corps Hymn, and Army Col. (ret.) Jim Miller, also a resident, spoke about Wescoat. He said Wescoat served aboard the USS Denver during WWII.

"As the Marines landed and took the Japanese islands, one by one, and Guadalcanal, the Navy provided an armada of ships – including the Denver – that shelled these islands before the Marines landed," explained Miller. "I was a little boy then. But Jim [Wescoat] was a fighter, and I'm awful proud of him. Jim, thank you so much for your service, and I'm so happy you're here with us and we can be friends."

After the ceremony, Wescoat and his daughter told the Connection further details about his life. On the Denver, he said, he was a buck sergeant directing the ship's 40-millimeter, anti-aircraft guns. He operated the equipment that lined them up to shoot at the enemy.

But his ship was eventually torpedoed. "I was in the boiler room, and we were in Japanese waters and vulnerable," said Wescoat. "They could have sunk us but didn't. We were towed back to Guadalcanal and then to the States for repairs and then returned to the war."

He left the Marines in November 1945, two months after the war ended. And while getting his high-school diploma, he met his future wife, Bonna – then a college student – when she returned to the school to visit a former mentor, who introduced them. He later attended UVA on the GI Bill, graduating around 1950 with a degree in engineering.

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BONNIE HOBBS/THE GAZETTE

WWII Marine veteran Jim Wescoat wearing his Quilt of Valor.

Wescoat then worked for Esso, Hess and Mobil in their oil refineries. "I was a safety and security inspector and went to all the refineries around the world that Mobil had," he said. Afterward, he was with Mobil for decades as an engineer.

Along the way, he and Bonna married and had four children – Jim, Bonna, Martha and Andy – raising them in both Texas and New Jersey. After the children were grown, Mobil moved its headquarters to Fairfax in the late 1980s, so the Wescoats spent the next 30 years in Oakton. They eventually had eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild and were married for more than 70 years until Bonna died, two years ago, at age 93.

After retiring from Mobil, Wescoat served his community as a volunteer. In Fairfax City, he helped the homeless by working for several years in The Lamb Center's kitchen. And at Waple's Mill Elementary in Oakton, he taught children how to build bridges out of cardboard during recess.

He's also remained close with his family members. "He's important to everyone in our family and is very much in touch with his grandchildren," said Wescoat-Andes. "He and my mother were a team, and he's a central figure in our family." Re what she believes contributed to his longevity, she replied, "He's a good and thoughtful person, led a good life and did good things for people."

As for her dad's Quilt of Valor, she said, "It's such an honor. I quilt, so I know the amount of work and effort that goes into it." Pleased with the ceremony at The Woodlands – which included a luncheon and cake – Wescoat-Andes said, "The Marines and other military veterans here have a strong community, which he really enjoys. They get together and support each other. And The Woodlands put on a beautiful event today – they really celebrate their residents."

"I've lived here about six years," said Wescoat. "It's a nice place with friendly staff and residents. I also like the concerts and other entertainment we have here." Regarding the quilt, he said, "So many people are much more deserving than I am, in terms of their contribution to the war effort."

Still, he was happy to be recognized with such a special ceremony. "I'm overwhelmed," said Wescoat. "It was a wonderful effort by some very thoughtful people, and I'll treasure the memories and the quilt."

◆◆◆

Jim Sullivan nominated Wescoat to receive his Quilt of Valor. To make a nomination, go to <https://www.qovf.org/nominations-awards/>.



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Bill Paves Way for Fairfax Casino Referendum

FROM PAGE 3

In the last five days, beginning on Wednesday, Jan. 14, with a press conference in Richmond concerning SB 982 hosted by Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D), the bill elicited bombshell statements by state and county elected officials opposed to it. It strengthened calls for action by the No Fairfax Casino Coalition.

“The developer (Comstock) has made some eye-popping political contributions, over a million dollars,” Sen. Jennifer Boysko said at the press conference. “Arm twisting has begun in full force to build political support.”

Boysko said she is an avid union supporter but warned that there are “no guarantees” to developer claims that its casino will bring 5,000 union jobs.

“The developer doesn’t have the authority to make this guarantee to the potential worker,” she said.

Boysko pointed out that the developer proposing the casino project (Comstock) breaks promises. “The developer pulled out of a commitment in the Town of Herndon despite signing an MOU in 2017. As recently as this past August, they met with the town and reported that everything was on track and good to start the redevelopment. But then, after the election, they pulled the plug and said, ‘Nope, we’re backing out of the deal.’”

Boysko clarified that SB982 is written for Tysons and one specific area in Tysons. The legislation “ties the hands of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and infringes on their land use authority.”

“Every local official in the Commonwealth of Virginia needs to worry about this bill, because this is a new and frightening development in terms of state involvement in land use,” Supervisor Walter Alcorn said at the press conference.

“Anybody that tries to tell you that Tysons is failing, they don’t know what they’re talking about. This is not a failing community. This is a community, as Sen. Boysko mentioned, is part of the economic engine driving Fairfax County and driving the Commonwealth,” Alcorn said.

Supervisor James Bierman (D-Dranesville) said, “I know a bad deal when I see it.” Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna, said, “Not a casino. ... It will hurt families. It will hurt individuals. It’s addictive.”

On Jan. 7, 2025, the Senate referred SB 982 to the Committee on General Laws and Technology (GL&T). On Jan. 20, 2025, the Senate assigned it to a subcommittee: Gaming.

The Chief Patron of SB 982 is Scott Surovell (D-34), who represents portions of Fairfax County roughly following U.S. Route 1, Mount Vernon, Kingstowne and Lorton. The Chief Co-Patrons are Sen. Lamont Bagby (D-14), who represents parts of Henrico County and Richmond City; Todd Pillion (R-6), whose district is in southwest Virginia and parts of Henrico County; and Sen.

Tuesday, February 4

Crossover (last day for each house to act on its own legislation, except Budget Bills) Amendments to Budget Bills available

Thursday, February 6

Houses of origin to complete action on Budget Bills

Wednesday, February 12

Last day to act on Budget Bills and revenue bills of other house and appoint conferees

Monday, February 17

Last day for committee action on remaining bills

Thursday, February 20

Last day to act on remaining bills and appoint conferees

Saturday, February 22

Session adjourns sine die

SCREENSHOT: UVA STATE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Key Dates Remaining for the 2025 General Assembly



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK
Sen. Jennifer B. Boysko (D-38)

Stella Pekarsky (D-39), who represents western Fairfax County. Pekarsky served as Chair of the Fairfax County School Board before being elected to the Senate in 2023.

None of the patrons of SB982 represent Tysons, a census-designated place in Fairfax County located in Northern Virginia. It is minutes from Washington, D.C., and has direct access to Metro’s Silver Line. The county sees it as its future downtown.

According to Virginia.gov, “SB982 adds Fairfax County to the list of localities eligible to host a casino in the Commonwealth and provides that any proposed site for a casino gaming establishment considered by Fairfax County shall be (i) located within one-quarter of a mile of an existing station on the Metro Silver Line, (ii) part of a coordinated mixed-use project development consisting of no less than 1.5 million square feet, (iii) within two miles of a regional enclosed mall containing not less than 1.5 million square feet of gross building area, and (iv) outside of the Interstate 495 Beltway.”

The No Fairfax Casino Coalition is an advocacy group fueled by the determination of its volunteer members and supporters.

The group’s online petition reads, “Rather than help us, a casino would hurt the county’s economic bottom line, harm local businesses, increase gridlock and public safety problems, lower property values, and encourage risky behaviors, while forever changing the character of our community.”

The coalition succeeded through lobbying and action to stop two recent casino gaming eligible host legislation. They are SB675 2024 — continued to 2025 in Finance and Appropriations (13-Y 2-N); and SB1543 2023, — stricken at request of Patron in General Laws and Technology (15-Y 0-N).

Monday, Jan. 20, at 4 p.m. is the sole opportunity for people to testify advocating for or against SB982. No Fairfax Casino Coalition is marshaling allies for its planned 2025 assault operation against Surovell’s



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NO FAIRFAX CASINO COALITION

Lobbying at the 2025 Regular Session Senate General Laws and Technology meeting, Wednesday, Jan. 15, in the General Assembly Building



SCREENSHOT

Sen. Jennifer B. Boysko speaks to the audience assembled for the press conference she is hosting on Wednesday, Jan. 15, in Richmond.

bill, SB982 casino gaming, eligible host localities.

Time matters because Crossover 2025 is on Tuesday, Feb. 4. Crossover is the last day for each house to act on legislation, including SB982; however, each house can act on

budget bills after that date.

Jan. 18, one of the allies of the No Fairfax Casino Coalition, Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill), posted on X @WalterAlcornFFX, “My cards are all on the table: NO CASINO.”

OPINION

Krizek

FROM PAGE 8

used to make drink containers was aluminum, but today it's plastic. One of the most important goals of this study is about broadening the types of materials that can be included in the Litter and Soft Drinks Excise Tax to include those that just weren't conceived of decades ago. Plastic water bottles, energy drinks, and ready-to-drink wine cocktails didn't exist in 1976, but make up a huge portion of our litter problem today.

By eliminating barriers to recycling, implementing the best nationwide recycling practices, and broadening the types of materials included, we can modernize and vastly improve our current Litter Control and Recycling Fund without having to raise rates. At the same time, we can increase revenue to the fund that can go to localities which are already spending it wisely, prudently and efficiently.

We all want a walk in the park or a stroll by the stream to be cleaner for our children than it is for us. To make that happen, we need a Litter Control and Recycling Fund that meets 21st-century needs. By modernizing our recycling system, broadening the base of materials included, and implementing best practices from across the country, we will leave our Commonwealth a cleaner and better place for all our children.

We have already seen some progress

toward modernization. Since the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors enacted its 5-cent grocery bag fee in 2022, meant to encourage behaviors that protect our environment and reduce litter, a 2.5% reduction was seen in plastic bags compared to 2022 to 2023 usages, and an even larger 5% decrease from 2023 to 2024. That's a reduction of almost one million fewer plastic bags used in the first half of 2023, and almost two million fewer plastic bags used in 2024. The real-world impacts of this can be seen by litter clean-up groups throughout Fairfax County who beautify our roadways, parks, and communities.

The ultimate goal is to collect no revenue as we want shoppers to embrace reusable bags and reduce plastic waste. However, any revenue collected from the fee will continue to support vital environmental programs here in Fairfax County. Such programs include: environmental clean-up efforts, pollution and litter mitigation, educational campaigns on waste reduction, and providing reusable bags to those in need.

This success is a testament to the growing commitment of our community to make sustainable choices, even when they may not be convenient. Together, we're making a difference. Protecting the planet and our local communities is critical to future generations. The commonsense decisions we make now will create a cleaner environment today and into the future.

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PHOTO BY MADELINE LIBRE

Even vultures need our help.



Migratory Bird Day-Arlington: Wildlife Rescue League provides information to the public about wildlife.

Living Harmoniously with Our Wild Neighbors

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Squirrels, foxes, raccoons, turtles, snakes, deer, bats, birds, they are all around us all the time and we must learn to live with them, Carolyn Wilder with the Wildlife Rescue League told “Zoomers” at the Jan. 11 green breakfast talk sponsored by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District. Bats in your chimney? Foxes denning under your deck? “Many wild animals have learned to live with us better than we’ve learned to live with them,” she offered.

Wilder discussed how and when to help wild animals and urged much caution and restraint when dealing with sick, injured or “nuisance” wildlife. She discouraged people from habituating an animal, especially. Animals should not lose their fear of people so she urged, don’t feed them, secure garbage cans and don’t leave pet food out at night.

If you find injured or orphaned wildlife, the first thing to do is call the Wildlife Rescue League’s wildlife helpline, 703-440-0800, or Virginia’s, 855-571-9003.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources website says that usually, handling wildlife “can do more harm than good” and offers detailed advice here: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/>.

If you handle an injured or orphaned animal, wear gloves or use a towel, Wilder stressed. The animal may have fleas or mites and can bite. Put it in a box so it cannot get out and put a heat source under the box, like a sock filled with rice and heated in a microwave oven. Put the box in a quiet dark place and leave it alone. Contact a wildlife rehabilitator and follow their instructions.

Obey Laws

State and federal laws generally require permits to handle wildlife and clearly pre-

More Information

- ❖ Wildlife Rescue League, <https://www.wildliferescueleague.org/>, 703-440-0800
- ❖ Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, including licensed rehabilitators, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife>, 855-571-9003
- ❖ Fairfax County Animal Protection Police, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/specializedunits/animal-protectionpolice>; 703-691-2131

scribe what people can and cannot legally do. For example, it is unlawful to have, sell or trap wildlife or keep wildlife as pets without a permit. It is unlawful to destroy a nest or den that has eggs or babies.

If you find injured wildlife, you can capture the animal temporarily and keep it as long as it takes to get the animal to a veterinarian or rehabilitator, Wilder said. She recommended trying to keep the animal warm, dry and quiet. “Do not feed it or give it water,” she advised, “unless a rehabilitator tells you that you should.”

On orphaned wildlife, she said that mammals have a good sense of smell and mothers almost always come back to their young. For baby squirrels, she recommended that if you find a baby on the ground, do not feed it; put it in a box under the tree where you found it. If the mother hears her offspring, she’ll retrieve it.

Some people consider the ubiquitous gray squirrel in Northern Virginia a problem, but Wilder said, “We do not know any way to get rid of squirrels. They are way too smart for us. They adapt to anything and everything.”

On rabbits she said, “They are predator to nothing and prey to many.” Their nest is shallow on the ground and covered with

SEE LIVING HARMONIOUSLY, PAGE 15



Jane Copeland teaches students about turtles at Flint Hill School.



PHOTO BY FELICIA SCHWENK

Ducklings, learning to swim before they can fly.

Living Harmoniously with Our Wild Neighbors



PHOTO BY KAREN LAMB

Hiccup the Raccoon. Orphaned baby raccoons grow up to be rambunctious teenagers before release.



Owls have sharp beaks and talons-hence the gloves.

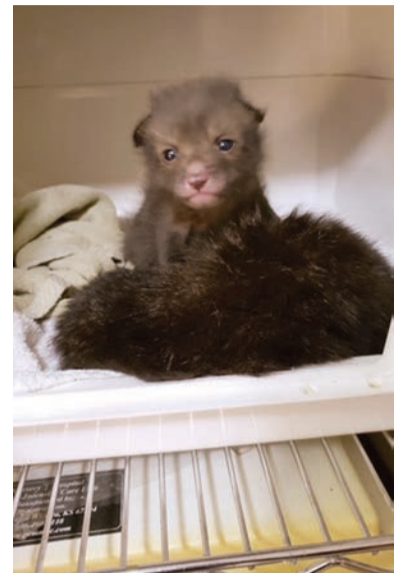


PHOTO BY DR. BELINDA BURWELL

This baby fox was surprised to find out his fur hat wasn't his mother!

FROM PAGE 14

grass. Mother cottontails only feed their young at dawn and at dusk. Then she covers them up in the nest and “does not hang around.” She urged people who find a nest to put twigs over it and return later. If the twigs were moved, the mother probably came back. If a dog is carrying a bunny, try to put the bunny back in the nest, but the baby rabbit likely has puncture wounds and

will need a rehabilitator. Check for rabbit nests before mowing your lawn, she urged.

Some mammals (not opossums) are rabies vector species. Raccoons, foxes, groundhogs, skunks, bats and beavers transmit rabies through their saliva. Symptoms of rabies include lethargy, stupor, walking in tight circles, aimless wandering, unexplained aggression, eye or nose discharge, biting and convulsions. If you suspect a ra-

bid animal, she recommended calling your local government’s animal control officers who can conduct a test.

Wildlife Rehabilitators

Wildlife rehabilitators are trained and licensed to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured, orphaned and sick wild animals back to their natural habitats and help people learn to coexist with wildlife.

The Wildlife Rescue League, incorporated in 1984, is an all-volunteer group with 140 volunteers and 30 rehabilitators who work out of their homes. They have no building.

Many species of wildlife in our area adapt quickly to living around people. They are resourceful and self-sufficient. It is important to understand when they need human help and when people should leave them alone, Wilder summarized.

Commanders Watch Parties Planned For the NFC Championship on Sunday

Football fans can still cheer in unison at spots around the area.

By MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

When the Washington Commanders meet the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFC championship game on Sunday, there’s nothing like being at a crowded bar, cheering your team on

with a cold one in hand. Sure, it could be loud but fun to many and in southern Fairfax County there’s plenty of spots to watch this landmark game.

Things start off at 1 p.m. on Sunday at the Verizon store in Springfield Plaza where they are having the “Commanders Official Verizon Pep Rally with mascot Major Teddy, the Commanders dance team

and other legends.

There are a nearly infinite number of options for seeing the game, the first time the Washington football team has been in the NFC Championship game in more than 30 years.

Crystal City Sports Pub, 529 23rd Street, Arlington

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❖ **NFC CHAMPIONSHIP:**
Washington Commanders vs Philadelphia Eagles
Sunday, Jan. 26 at 3 pm

❖ **AFC CHAMPIONSHIP:**
Kansas City Chiefs vs Buffalo Bills
Sunday, Jan. 26 at 6:30 pm

a big screen, fans will catch every minute of the action at this Arlington location. Appetizers are \$7.99 and beer specials throughout the afternoon.

Kalypso’s Sports Tavern, 1617 Washington Plaza North, Reston

Fans will enjoy free barbecue wings
SEE COMMANDERS, PAGE 16

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ENTERTAINMENT

Something Rotten! JR ACCT musical runs through Jan. 26.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

For anyone who has ever wondered about the beginnings of musical theater, look no further for the answer than *Something Rotten! JR*, a musical comedy playing now through Jan. 26 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater.

Set in the 1590s, *Something Rotten! JR* is adapted from the Broadway hit that Time Out New York hailed as the funniest musical comedy in at least 400 years. The play follows brothers Nick and Nigel Bottom, who are desperate to write a hit play but are stuck in the shadow of that Renaissance rock star known as The Bard. When a fortune teller predicts that the future of theatre involves singing, dancing and acting at the same time, Nick and Nigel set out to write the world's very first musical.

"I have always loved *Something Rotten* and was so excited when I found out that they were making a junior version so we could do it as a youth production," said director Julia St. Pierre. "The music is amazing, and the comedic elements ring true for all ages. It is truly a throwback to the classic musicals with big musical numbers and hilarious characters."

The outrageous, crowd-pleasing musical farce *Something Rotten* was created by Grammy Award-winning songwriter Wayne Kirkpatrick, and successful screenwriters Karey Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell. Audiences and critics praised the show, which received several Best Musical nominations.

"*Something Rotten Jr.* is a comedic, family-friendly musical that mixes historical references with modern humor, making it enjoyable for both younger audiences and adults," said producer Carolina Chirhart. "Its playful tone and parody of Shakespeare and Broadway culture can attract theatergoers who enjoy clever storytelling and witty dialogue."

The ACCT production features a talented cast of area youth in a hilarious mash-up of 16th-century Shakespeare and 21st-century



PHOTO BY HOWARD SOROOS

The ACCT production of *Something Rotten! JR* runs through Jan. 26 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308. For tickets or more information visit www.acctonline.org.

"The show introduces participants and audiences to Shakespearean themes and characters in a humorous, approachable way."

— ACCT producer Carolina Chirhart

"I have been given the opportunity to play a real person that has been reimagined for *Something Rotten Jr.*," Weinstein said. "I play the renaissance soothsayer, Nostradamus."

Although, in this version he is changed to be his niece Nancy, yet the powers remain. Her powers, questionable at best, help the protagonist to create the very first musical."

Eliza Froemke, in her first post-COVID role, plays Bea.

"My character, Bea, is definitely a very fun one to play," Froemke said. "She's sassy and super motivated, which lands her in some situations that I've had such a good time getting to bring alive onstage."

Bea has been a dream role of mine for a long time and I hope I do her justice."

The show is under the musical direction of Cathey Manley and features an upbeat,

traditional Broadway style score. Choreography by Michelle Koros is showcased in energizing dance numbers like "A Musical" and "We See the Light."

"The show introduces participants and audiences to Shakespearean themes and characters in a humorous, approachable way," Chirhart said. "The Jr.' version is adapted to suit younger performers and audiences, with simplified language, shorter runtime, and adjustments for appropriateness while retaining the essence of the original production. Everyone in the family will enjoy this show."

Something Rotten! JR is playing Jan. 17-26 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308. For tickets or more information visit www.acctonline.org.

Commanders

FROM PAGE 15

with entrees.

Glory Days, 9459 Lorton Market Street, Lorton

The televisions will be tuned in and the fans cheering to their regularly priced beers and food. The real fun begins on Super Bowl Sunday where there is a \$35 entry fee to a party that includes drinks, food and more. "We have one every year," said the host.

Burtons, Kingstowne, 6452A

Old Beulah St, Alexandria

Six televisions will be on behind the bar tuned to sports, and the Super Bowl, if requested.

Chili's Grill & Bar, 6601 Richmond Highway, Alexandria

Football fans are expected as usual for the Sunday afternoon festivities.

Theismann's Restaurant, 1800A Diagonal Rd, Alexandria, VA 22314

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

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

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alex-

andria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673.

The Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. at the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center,

1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 18

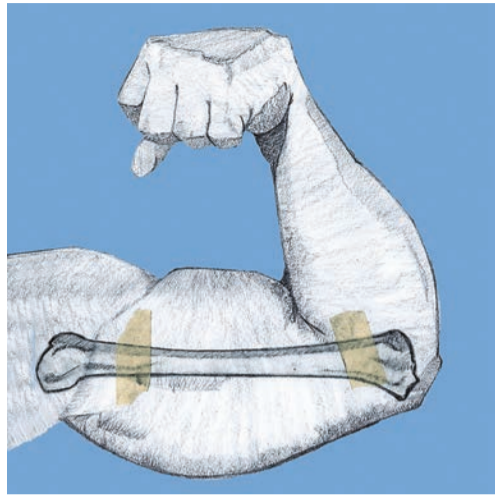
ENTERTAINMENT

JAN. 1 - FEB. 23, 2025

Ice & Lights at Cameron Run offers daytime ice skating on weekends/holidays throughout January and February.

JAN. 3 TO FEB. 1

“Visual Humor.” At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. A lighthearted art exhibit that explores how humor sparks the imagination. Opening Reception on Friday, January 3, 7-9 p.m. to meet curator Dr Erica Hughes and the artists. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits



Del Ray Artisans Gallery in Alexandria presents “Visual Humor” from Jan. 3 to Feb. 1, 2025.

JAN. 16 TO FEB. 23

Eclipse: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Artist Talk: Sunday, February 23, 2 p.m. Curated by Alison Sigethy, Eclipse is an all sculpture show examining light and shadow, liminal space, and the passage of time. Every artist brings a unique perspective to their work. Pairing sculptures by different artists amplifies that perspective. Sometimes those perspectives sing in harmony, sometimes they debate. In either case, the experience of each individual work is heightened by the art it is paired with.



Eclipse: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational can be seen now through Feb. 23, 2025 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 22

Special Virtual Event: How the Northeast Became an Acela Corridor. 7 p.m. via Zoom. Sponsored by the Alexandria Historical Society. Join David Alff, author of *The Northeast Corridor: The Trains, the People, the History, the Region, for an engaging discussion about the transformative history of one of the most iconic rail systems in the United States.* Alff will explore how the Northeast’s geography, culture, and politics shaped the creation of the train tracks and how this infrastructure came to define the region from Washington, D.C., to Boston. To attend, email AlexandriaHistoricalSociety@gmail.com with the subject line “Register for Jan 22nd.” Visit AlexandriaHistoricalSociety.org.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23

Art, Wine & Cheese. 6-7:30 p.m. At the Nepenthes Gallery, 7918 Ft. Hunt Rd., Alexandria. Featuring Winter Solstice Exhibit: Six Local Artists. The opening event will be Thursday January 23 and will feature original works by six local artists: Celia Chadwick, Lesley Clarke, Todd Key, Camille Kouyoumdjian, Nancy Ramsey, and Lori Welch.

THURSDAY/JAN. 23

The Chamber ALX’s January After Hours. 5:30-7:00 p.m. At BeeLiner Diner, Alexandria. Don’t miss the first After Hours of the year at BeeLiner Diner! Join them at the reigning Rising Star Business of the Year for drinks, bites, and networking, then stay for Bingo.

JAN. 25-26

Auditions for “Much Ado About Nothing.” Jan. 25 from 1-5 p.m. and Jan. 26 from 5-9 p.m. At The Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe St, Alexandria, VA 22314

THURSDAY/JAN. 30

Coffee & Connections. 8:30-9:30 a.m. At Wegmans Carlyle, Alexandria.

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The 21st Annual Alexandria Boutique Warehouse Sale takes place on Feb. 1-2, 2025 throughout Old Town Alexandria.

men) from around the region at the first Professional Women’s Network Coffee & Connections of 2025! This quarter we will hear from Wegmans Bakery Manager Frances Carlson who will share her journey.

ALEXANDRIA RESTAURANT WEEK Alexandria Restaurant Week returns January 31 to February 9, 2025. For 10 days and two weekends, nearly 100 restaurants will offer a \$30, \$40 or \$50 prix fixe dinner for one. Plus, find special fast casual offers.

https://visitalexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/?mc_cid=6333e6a5dc&mc_eid=c8aed55232

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Indoor Rowing Championships. 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Alexandria City High School will host “Erg Sprints,” the largest and longest running indoor rowing championship in America. It is rooted in the storied history of Alexandria City’s crew program, a training ground for top athletes and Olympians. First held in 1986, the day-long event features approximately 1,500 athletes competing on 140 ergs that are set up on the race floor inside the ACHS gym. The athletes have ranged in ages from under 10 to over 80, and have included some of the top high school, club, and collegiate rowers in the country and the world.

FEB. 1-2

21st Annual Alexandria Boutique Warehouse Sale. Throughout Old Town Alexandria. With over 40 independent businesses participating from Alexandria and the surrounding region, shoppers can explore a variety of shopping experiences in stores, pop-up tents, open retail spaces, and select side streets along King Street. Shoppers can also discover incredible deals on indie brands, clothing, shoes, jewelry, home furnishings, and

more. Participating shoppers can download a sale map ahead of time to plan their shopping routes and highlight must-visit spots. QR code stations will also be available at participating businesses and pop-up tents to help locate shopping destinations easily. The sale map will be released the week of the event. For more information, visit AlexandriaWarehouseSale.com.

Feb. 7 to March 1

The “MeWOW: Fabulous Felines” exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Celebrate the mysterious and fascinating world of cats with “feline forward” artwork. Opening Reception on Friday, February 7, 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

FEB. 8-MARCH 1

Roald Dahl’s Matilda The Musical. At the Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria. Thursdays to Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Matilda Wormwood is an exceptionally gifted child with an extraordinary love of books, an incredibly vivid imagination, and just plain rotten luck in the parental department. Along with her friends and her teacher, Miss Honey, Matilda stands up for justice against the headmistress (appropriately dubbed “The Trunchbull”) and other adults who “can’t be bothered with the affairs of “wretched, filthy children.”

SATURDAY/FEB. 15

George Washington Birthday Parade. 2-4 p.m. At 300 King Street, Alexandria. Thousands of spectators will line the streets of Old Town Alexandria to cheer on the oldest and largest George Washington Birthday Parade in the country! This year’s parade theme is George Washington: America’s Commander-in-Chief, marking the 250th anniversary of the start of the Revolutionary War and founding of the United States

Army. The Parade Grand Marshal will be Lieutenant General Heidi J. Hoyle, Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States Army. The parade features drum corps, color guards, bands, community and fraternal organizations, youth groups, local merchants, city dignitaries, and, of course, General Washington and Martha Washington.

SATURDAY/FEB. 15

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall, Alexandria. Featuring James Ross who plays and conducts Mozart & Schubert. Alexandria Symphony, James Ross, Conductor and Horn Soloist; Lee Hinkle, Marimba; Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2; Kevin Puts Marimba Concerto; Schubert Symphony No. 9, “The Great C Major.”

SUNDAY/FEB. 16

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Featuring James Ross who plays and conducts Mozart & Schubert. Alexandria Symphony, James Ross, Conductor and Horn Soloist; Lee Hinkle, Marimba; Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2; Kevin Puts Marimba Concerto; Schubert Symphony No. 9, “The Great C Major.”

FRIDAY/FEB. 21

The Thirteen: To The Field of Stars. At 7:30 p.m. At Virginia Theological Seminary, Immanuel Chapel, 3651 Deanery Dr. Alexandria. The Thirteen returns to the mystical Camino de Santiago de Compostela – Camino of St. James of the Field of Stars – with two works that explore transfiguration: David Lang’s Pulitzer Prize-winning the little match girl passion and Gabriel Jackson’s 2011 To the Field of Stars.

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.

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NEWS

Man Arrested After Reports Of Gunshots

Fairfax County police officers arrested a man after he recklessly discharged his gun in a Lincolnia neighborhood, according to police reports.

On Jan. 17, at 1 p.m., officers responded to the 6400 block Montrose Street near Lincolnia for the report of gunshots. Officers located evidence of a gun being discharged and determined the suspect lived nearby. No one was injured during the shooting.

Officers responded to the suspect's residence and attempted to have him exit, but he refused. After brief negotiations, Erick Agustin, 30, of Lincolnia, was taken into custody. Agustin sustained injuries from a K9 bite and was transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Agustin was taken to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center and charged with Reckless Handling of a Firearm, Reckless Discharge of a Firearm within 1,000 Feet of a School, Obstruction of Justice, and Reckless Driving.

He has since been released. There is no mugshot available at this time.

Detectives are asking anyone with information to come forward and call FCPD Criminal Investigations Division at 703-256-8035 and ask to speak with a detective. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477).

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 15

- to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.
 - ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
 - ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.
- Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more.
- Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit www.nova-secondaturday.com for more.

Property Near Kingstowne Slated for 10-Acre Park

Banks family land has local roots but some aren't happy with plan.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

On the eastern edge of Kingstowne, a piece of property once owned by the Banks family is the center of local attention recently. A Fairfax County Park Authority plan is emerging to demolish the home and push forward, turning the site into a county park.

Some people are concerned that the park authority might plan to include a dog park on the property. The large Banks home has been vacant for many years and some think that a dog park might go where the house is located once it's demolished, but the dog park has been removed from the plan.

The Franconia Museum posted information about the property, urging supporters to contact local elected officials to save the property but it's unclear what the immediate plans entail. "The FCPA is planning to turn the house lot into an off leash dog park," said the Museum. Many on social media aren't happy with that concept but the park authority says the off-leash dog park has been taken off the plan.

"So they want to tear down a historic house to build a pooping lot?" asked one.

"So why is the house important?" asked another.

Former Hayfield Farm resident Jean Mulroy Martelli chimed in and said she's read up about the property and it doesn't meet the guidelines or requirements for the historic structure designation to possibly save the house.

According to a FCPA slideshow, dating back to May 2011, the 10-acre site was purchased by the Park Authority in 2001 from Mr. Banks who survived his wife. In 2005 the park was dedicated and a monument sign was installed by the family. There is a map with the park divided into an open zone, a managed natural area with a stream restoration zone, a leisure zone and an activity zone which is where the current house is now. The park plan includes a playground, picnic facilities, a meadow with the stream running through it and courts, parking and the off-leash dog area.

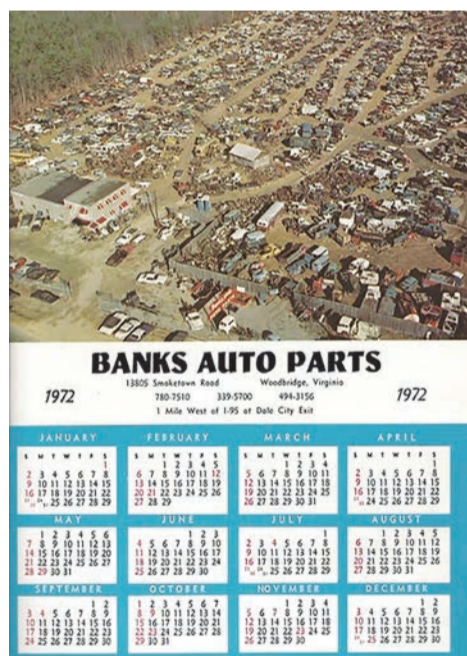
According to FCPA spokesperson Ben Boxer, the Park Authority has been working to develop the project plan to proceed with implementation of the Master Plan.

"We have also been communicating with members of the family along the way on



The old Banks house dates back to the 1950s.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



how to share the Banks' family story on the homestead and will keep the lines of communication open," Boxer added. Those details are not yet finalized, but the FCPA will be sharing that information with the community as it becomes available, Boxer said.

Banks Auto Parts

It all started in about 1940 when Olander Banks Sr. started emerging as a business entrepreneur in Alexandria, selling ice at 4 a.m., dabbling in real estate, and opening the Zero Cab taxi service in Alexandria.



Olander Banks Sr. working in the office.

A calendar for Banks Auto Parts which started in Alexandria but expanded into Prince William County.

Then he opened Banks Auto Parts at 718 North Henry Street in Old Town, and a bigger auto parts place out in Woodbridge.

In 1957, Olander Banks and his wife Margaret bought the property off Old Telegraph Road and built the home shortly after where they raised nine children.

"In August 2001, the Fairfax County Park Authority was given the land for recreation," their website read. The only access to the land is off Old Telegraph Road and it's bordered by a line of trees so it's easily overlooked by passing traffic.

End of an Era



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Sitting at my desk at home with my golden retriever Burton lying at my feet, unwrapping Christmas-colors-wrapped milk Chocolate Hershey's Kisses, I feel compelled to make an admission (not that any of you should care): I don't like Mars M&Ms anymore. And considering I've been eating them my entire life, Mars is losing one of their best customers.

To put this loss in some context, though it's impossible to quantify; let's just say for the sake of this column, I've consumed over a million M&Ms. Almost exclusively the plain M&Ms until the "peanut butter (orange bag) came along. Peanut M&Ms despite their lofty position atop various "most eaten candies" lists never appealed to me. Neither did any of the newer varieties which have appeared on the shelves over the last decade or two except the mint M&Ms. Whenever I see that green bag, I'm buyin'. Delicious but hard to find for some reason. To summarize then the percentages eaten over the years: 97% plain, 2.5% peanut butter, .5% mint. (As the peanut butter and mint flavors are somewhat new creations, comparatively speaking, their newness is reflected in these percentages.)

As to the reason for this rather drastic change in my candy consumption, I can't really remember the "Oh no"-moment when I took a handful, which had not melted in my hand, and tossed them into my mouth where they indeed melted (after I had crunched them all down to more eatable size). Nevertheless, me and my tastebuds have come to the same conclusion: our love affair with M&Ms was over. Though I finished whatever bag I had started, we parted as friends. Never again will I eat M&Ms unless there are extenuating circumstances ("extenuations" you might call them) as in the M&Ms are in plain sight, within arm's length and relatively unguarded. But my days as an intentional buyer are over.

I've had a similar falling out, though not nearly as definitive/life changing, with 3 Musketeers and Milky Way bars. For years, make that decades/half centuries even, these two bars were my go-to preferences (along with the M&Ms); now they're merely memories of a recent past. Unlike my M&M stoppage for which I had no specific event, I do indeed have one sort of, for the end of my similar love affair for 3 Musketeers/Milky Way bars. It was Halloween a few years back. Naturally, I had prepared a bowl of snack-size candies for the year's lucky participants: 3 Musketeers, Milky Way and Snickers. But few trick-or-treaters showed that year, so I was left with an ample-sized bowl brimming with chocolate goodies. And needless to say, or I wouldn't be writing this column, I overwhelmed their defenses and over the next few days (not weeks), rapidly (not slowly) and surely, I emptied that bowl. By week's end, the bowl was a shell of its former holiday self. I wouldn't say I was proud of myself, but other than my brother who could have accomplished what I did? (This was a rhetorical question. Those that know me, know the answer: no one.) To invoke Curly Howard of The Three Stooges: "I seen my duty and I done it." However, my overeating had a consequence that overindulging often has: swearing off of the presumptive cause. For me, it was most definitely the 3 Musketeers and Milky Way snack/fun size bars originally meant for the neighborhood kids. In lieu thereof, I picked up the slack and haven't had a 3 Musketeers or Milky Way bar since. Added to the M&M loss, Mars must be feeling the pinch. One that a smaller company might not have survived.

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

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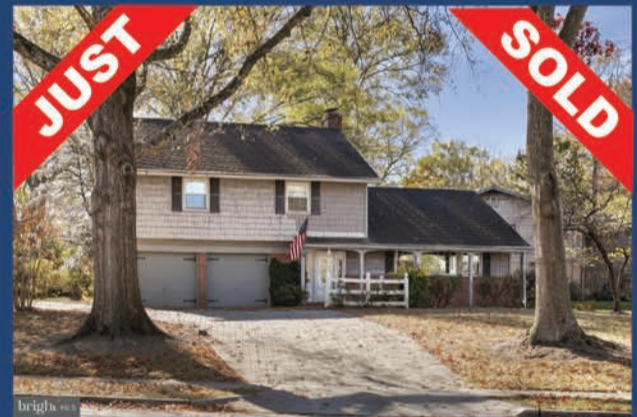
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