

Alexandria Gazette Packet

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FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Special Elections Set for Feb. 10

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Early voting runs now through Feb. 7.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria voters will head to the polls on Feb. 10 for a rare pair of overlapping special elections that will determine representation in both Virginia Senate District 39 and the Virginia House of Delegates District 5.

The elections come amid a rapid reshuffling sparked by recent appointments by Governor Abigail Spanberger (D) within the state government.

Spanberger triggered a sequence of vacancies with the appointment of State Senator Adam Ebbin, who represented Alexandria and portions of Arlington and Fairfax counties, to lead the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority. His departure prompted Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D) to resign her House District 5 seat in pursuit of the open Senate position, creating an additional vacancy.

Who's on the Ballot? Senate District 39

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D) — Current Delegate and candidate emphasizing economic opportunity, reproductive rights, and public education.



Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D)



Julie Lineberry (R)



Mason Butler (R)



Kirk McPike (D)

Julie Robben Lineberry (R) — Longtime real estate professional and former member of the Alexandria Electoral Board, campaigning on affordability and balanced governance.

House District 5

Mason Butler (R) — Technology and management professional, positioning as a moderate voice prioritizing affordability and education.

Kirk McPike (D) — Alexandria City Council member focused on housing, climate ac-

SEE SPECIAL ELECTIONS, PAGE 14

Early voting runs through Feb. 7 at 132 N. Royal St., Suite 100.



'Tis the Election Season

Candidates join race for City Council seat.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria is entering another election season, with voters preparing to decide the future makeup of City Council.

The Alexandria Democratic Committee has called a firehouse primary for Feb. 21 to select a nominee to fill an open seat on City Council.

This follows the departure of Councilman Kirk McPike, now running in the House of Delegates special election.

At present, four candidates have confirmed their intention to compete in this nominating process: Sandy Marks, former ADC chair; Tim Laderach, U.S. Navy reservist and president of the Del Ray Citizens Association; Roberto Gomez, local nonprofit leader of Cornerstone Craftsmen; and Cesar Madison Tapia, a public schools social stud-



Roberto Gomez



Tim Laderach



Sandy Marks



Cesar Madison Tapia

ies teacher and political TikTok.

Polls for the firehouse primary will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. at two locations: Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library (5005 Duke Street); and Leonard "Chick"

Armstrong Recreation Center (25 W. Reed Ave.).

Additional candidates have until Feb. 6 to file to run in the firehouse primary. The citywide special election date for the council

seat has not yet been set.

In the last election cycle, Democrats swept every council seat and Mayor Alyia Gaskins, who ran unopposed, became the first Black woman elected to the role.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Winter Storm Fern

Cleanup efforts continue, deputies deliver Meals on Wheels.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria residents continue to dig out from Winter Storm Fern, a powerful storm that left the region with 7-10" of snow followed by sleet and freezing rain.

The storm began late on the evening of January 24 and intensified overnight. By the following day the precipitation had turned to freezing rain, covering roads and vehicles with thick layers of ice.

In anticipation of the storm, City Manager Jim Parajon declared a state of emergency with city offices, courts and schools shutting down for several days.

While many were unprepared for the significant impact of the storm, Senior Services of Alexandria planned ahead to be sure residents receiving Meals on Wheels would not go hungry.

"We definitely planned ahead," said SSA executive director Mary Lee Anderson. "Marshall Hespe, our director of nutrition programs, worked with the catering company so that on Friday before the storm we delivered double meals. Presbyterian Meeting House volunteers delivered that day and made sure everyone had meals for Sunday and Monday in advance."

Anderson and Hespe then coordinated with

"Clients saw sheriff's deputies showing up with food and were so grateful."

— SSA executive director,
Mary Lee Anderson

Sheriff Sean Casey to have ASO volunteers deliver meals despite the limited snow removal and dangerous ice conditions at the time.

"We coordinated with the ASO in advance," Anderson said. "Sheriff Casey agreed to cover all 10 of our routes on Tuesday. Due to the dangerous road conditions, we weren't sure if the caterer could make it to Alexandria so Marshall picked up all the meals himself in Hyattsville and delivered them to the sheriff's department."

Anderson noted that Casey and the ASO volunteers covered an additional four routes on Wednesday.

"Clients saw sheriff's deputies showing up with food and were so grateful," Anderson said. "By Thursday we were back to normal."

During the storm, plow crews worked in continuous shifts to clear primary routes, including Duke Street, Richmond Highway, and King Street before moving into residential areas. Despite these efforts, many side streets remain snow-covered more than a week following the storm.

"We haven't had a storm like this in 10 years," Anderson said. "But with advance planning and Sheriff Casey and the ASO volunteers ready to help when we needed them, it was pretty amazing. Nobody went without food."



Sheriff Sean Casey, right, and members of the Alexandria Sheriff's Department, receive instructions from Meals on Wheels coordinator Marshall Hespe, left, prior to delivering food Jan. 27 following Winter Storm Fern.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Sheriff Sean Casey, right, delivers meals to an Alexandria resident Jan. 27 following Winter Storm Fern.



A plow working through the night on Old Dominion Blvd.



A snowman in a residential neighborhood.



A herd of deer seen during Winter Storm Fern.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED/APD

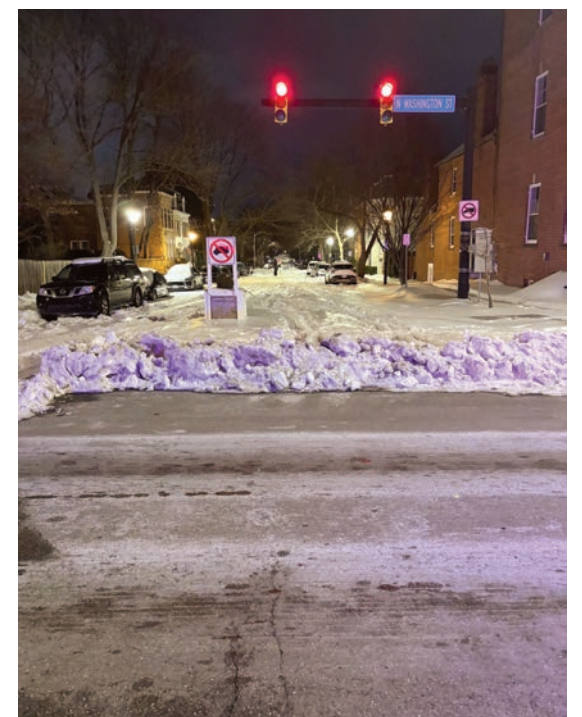


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED/APD
The intersection of Washington and Princess streets in Old Town.

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‘Officer Bennie’

Evans retires after 28 years of service.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

After nearly three decades of distinguished service, Alexandria Police Officer Bennie Evans has retired, leaving behind a legacy defined by compassion, community connection, and a commitment to some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. His retirement was celebrated Jan. 5 at APD headquarters, with Chief Tarrick McGuire praising Evans’ unwavering dedication to serving others.

“As I have been throughout the community, your name rings like billboards,” McGuire said. “Everyone knows who you are. Everyone knows you have a heart of service. Your strong bonds with the homeless, your constant care and selfless acts of kindness are appreciated by those that have been impacted.”

Evans, widely known in the community simply as “Officer Bennie,” built his career on human connection. For more than 20 years, he patrolled Alexandria both as a sheriff’s deputy and later as a police officer. His work supporting homeless residents earned him national recognition, including the U.S. Attorney General’s Award for Distinguished Services in Community Policing, the first ever given for such work.

Throughout his career, Evans championed crisis intervention approaches, becoming trained in defusing situations involving mental illness and later training hundreds of other officers in those techniques.

“I spent more time here than any other job,” Evans said. “What saved my career was the opportunity to serve. The only thing that was important to me was ‘did I help somebody?’”

Evans also became known for his hands-on volunteerism including cooking meals for homeless residents, stopping by local shelters simply to talk, and investing personal time and resources into strengthening community bonds.

McGuire noted the countless hours of personal time Evans dedicated to the community.

“Your service goes beyond your actions as a police officer,” McGuire said. “We are all better for the work you have done.”

Added Evans, “I had a great career but I didn’t do it by myself. I was part of a team and I thank everyone here. You allowed me to be who I am.”

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Chief Tarrick McGuire, left, makes a presentation to Officer Bennie Evans Jan. 5 at APD headquarters. Evans retired following nearly three decades in law enforcement.



Officer Bennie Evans celebrates his retirement with his family Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.



A resident congratulates Officer Bennie Evans on his retirement Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.



Officer Bennie Evans, left, with Alexandria Commonwealth’s Attorney Bryan Porter and Michael Kochis, Chief of Police in Charlottesville, Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.



The Hon. Lisa Kimler, right, with Officer Bennie Evans Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.

“Your service goes beyond your actions as a police officer. We are all better for the work you have done.”

— Chief Tarrick McGuire on Officer Bennie Evans

Sgt. Constance Carelli, left, speaks with Officer Bennie Evans Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.



Mayor Alyia Gaskins congratulates Officer Bennie Evans on his retirement Jan. 5 at APD headquarters.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Vaughn Ambrose, front center, sits with newly installed officers of the Departmental Progressive Club Jan. 9 at the DPC headquarters in Old Town.

Ambrose to Lead DPC

New officers installed at historic Departmental Progressive Club.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Departmental Progressive Club, one of Alexandria's oldest and most storied African American civic institutions, recently celebrated the installation of its newest officers. Founded in 1927 as a service and social organization for African Americans during segregation, the DPC continues to honor its legacy of community uplift, fellowship, and leadership.

At a ceremony held on Jan. 9, the club formally installed its new slate of officers before members, city officials, and community leaders. Vaughn Ambrose was sworn in as President, with Sheriff Sean Casey performing the installation of officers.

"I am excited to be a part of this historical organization in a place of leadership," said Ambrose, who has been a member of the DPC for several years. "It's been a wonderful experience for me because everyone has opened their arms, guided me and mentored me. Now I will be in a position to guide and mentor the next generation of Departmental Progressive Club members."

Joining Ambrose in leading the organization are Anthony Dale as vice president, William Campbell as financial secretary, Robert Goss as assistant financial secretary, Scott Price as treasurer, and Christopher Harris as house committee chairman.

Board Members sworn in include William Chesley, Robert Worthy, John Chapman, Donal Goff and Lester Simpson.

"We have a strategic plan to recruit young members," Ambrose said. "We want to reach out to the younger members of the community but also part of the plan is leaning on the community to spread the word of the good that the Departmental Progressive Club has done throughout the history of the city. We need drum majors to go forth and tell the story of how many members have been immortalized in the city of Alexandria."

Dale served as master of ceremonies with DPC chaplain Quardrisco B. Driskell providing the invocation and benediction. Mayor Alyia Gaskins was in attendance and delivered remarks before Ambrose took to the stage.

A renowned jazz saxophonist and local music teacher, Ambrose performed a musical selection before the official swearing-in took place.

Following the program, Ambrose outlined his vision for the future, affirming a commitment to both preserving the DPC's traditions and enhancing its operational strength.

"We are looking to start our capital campaign, to lean on the community to help us return the Departmental Progressive Club building itself back to greatness," Ambrose said. "While we are still trying to grow our membership, we think about all the things the Departmental Progressive Club has done for the community and now we're going to ask the community to support us. We want the building itself to stand for another 100 years for those young people who have not yet become members and for their grandkids. We are going to ask the community to invest in that vision with us."

www.DPC1927.org

ASC to Host Track and Field Coaches Night Feb. 18

The Alexandria Sportsman's Club will host Track and Field Coaches Night Feb. 18 during the organization's monthly membership meeting at the Old Dominion Boat Club.

A roundtable of varsity track and field coaches will include Adam Alderton of Alexandria City High School, Bob Artman of Bishop Ireton High School, Damian Walsh of Episcopal High School, and Rob Watson of Saint Stephen's & Saint Agnes High School.

Presentations will be given to high school Athletes of the Month.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and a complimentary dinner will be served. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the Old Dominion Boat Club Ballroom, 0 Prince Street in Old Town. Due to limited space and increased demand, RSVP is required at alexandriasportsmansclub@gmail.com.

Visit www.alexandriavasports.org for more information.

- JEANNE THEISMANN

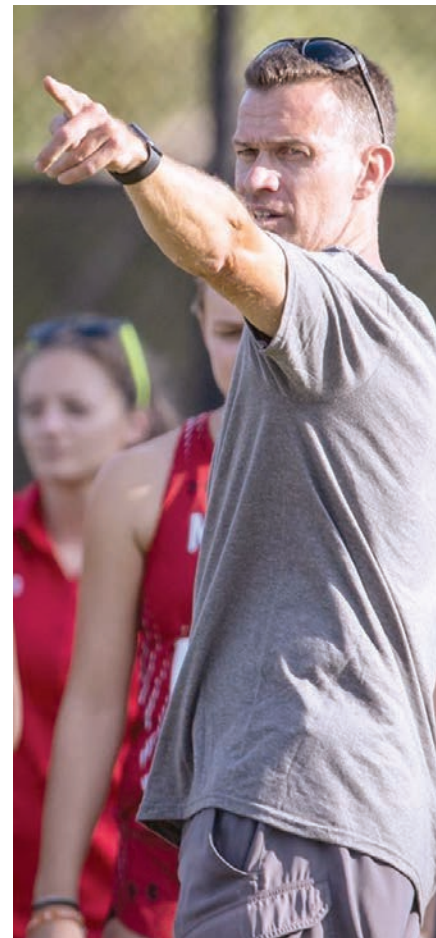


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Damian Walsh, Track and Field coach at Episcopal High School, is one of four head coaches that will participate in a roundtable discussion at the Alexandria Sportsman's Club Feb. 18 meeting at the Old Dominion Boat Club.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP - The 22nd Alexandria Warehouse Sale returns Feb. 7-8 as shoppers return to the streets of Old Town. More than 40 independent boutiques from Alexandria and the surrounding region will offer 60-80 percent off retail prices on clothing, shoes, jewelry, home décor, kids, and more. Sales will take place in storefronts, pop-up tents, and open retail spaces along King Street and select side streets. Shoppers can follow a downloadable sale map and on-site QR codes to navigate the sale. Follow @alxwarehousesale on Instagram or visit www.oldtownboutiquecommunity.com for more information.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of

tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteerallexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.alivehouse.org>

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 5

SENIOR LIVING

Exploring Horizons: Senior Education and Travel

*Presented by Senior Services of Alexandria
and At Home in Alexandria*

BY MARYANNE BEATTY
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

Senior Services of Alexandria and At Home in Alexandria Present "Exploring Horizons: Senior Education and Travel," on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 10 a.m. at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street.

Register now for the upcoming speaker series, which will inspire you to expand your knowledge and learn about travel opportunities both locally and abroad.

Speakers include representatives from the Alexan-

dria Library and Encore Learning discussing educational opportunities on topics ranging from international affairs and book authors to art and architecture.

Attendees will also hear from Road Scholar, a non-profit travel company that caters to older adults with experiences within the United States and internationally.

Finally, a special guest speaker will share their personal experience about traveling to state and national parks.

This event is free and open to the public. Please RSVP by emailing events@seniorservicesalex.org or calling 703-836-4414, ext. 110. It promises to be a fun and insightful event.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 4

volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE

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.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental

health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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An Icy Week in Richmond

BY ADAM P. EBBIN
MEMBER, SENATE
OF VIRGINIA

The last week in January was an icy time in Richmond, punctuated by bills passing and special events.

As the snow started falling, I was honored to receive a lifetime achievement award from the Virginia Chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). It's been my pleasure to work with NORML for many years. I passed a bill to stop the suspension of driver's licenses for all marijuana offenders in 2017. After a multi-year effort, in 2020, I decriminalized possession of less than one ounce of cannabis with Delegate Charniele Herring (D-Alexandria) – meaning we removed criminal penalties. Then in 2021, I legalized the possession of up to an ounce of marijuana, and allowed Virginians to grow up to four plants at home with Delegate Herring and Senator Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth). However, some key Senate colleagues were not yet ready to adopt our plan to provide licenses to sell cannabis in a controlled 21+ adult-only marketplace. In 2024 and 2025, Governor Glenn Youngkin vetoed follow up bills (from me and others) to issue tightly limited licenses to curtail the illicit market. When we finally move marijuana sales off the street corner to behind an age-verified counter, I look forward to Virginia becoming a national model for a safe and prosperous cannabis market.

Wednesday night, I enjoyed attending the Outdoor Caucus reception with Adam Spanberger, the first "First Gentleman" of the Commonwealth, in his first initial appearance since Governor Span-

berger's inauguration.

Last Thursday night, I was flattered and grateful to receive a handmade quilt made by Mothers of Light, an Alexandria nonprofit, presented by Mayor Alyia Gaskins in recognition of my 22 years of representing the city. It was a special opportunity to welcome the members of City Council to Richmond.

Legislative Updates

We have been hard at work reviewing and voting on a wide range of legislation in this 60-day "long session," and I want to share a few highlights with you.

One important bill that I advanced from committee was SB 130, which ensures greater transparency and community input when data centers and new high-energy facilities are proposed. It will require developers to study and share how these facilities could impact nearby homes, schools, and the surrounding environment before local approval is granted, while still protecting existing local zoning authority.

Protecting renters is another top priority. I introduced SB 313, which prevents landlords from charging tenants for routine maintenance or repairs unless the damage was caused by the tenant. The bill also bans extra fees just for paying rent except for actual costs incurred to process a credit card or other electronic payment. SB 313 received a unanimous vote in the General Laws and Technology Committee and is expected to pass the Senate today.

Accountability and transparency in government are essential



Adam Ebbin

to a healthy democracy. In that same spirit, I introduced SB 699, which requires public bodies to post meeting agendas online ahead of meetings and limits last-minute additions from being voted on unless they are truly time-sensitive. The bill also received a unanimous committee vote and should also pass the full Senate later today.

Protecting our Communities

This year I've introduced two gun safety bills, SB 312 and SB 323, to curb unnecessary tragedies.

The rate of gun related deaths has increased by 19% from 2015 to 2024, with one Virginian now killed by a gun every eight hours. We can change these statistics with meaningful legislation to protect public safety and save lives.

My SB 312 would prohibit the public carrying of semi-automatic long guns, whether loaded or not. In 2019 gun-rights advocates carried military rifles through the Old Town Farmers' Market, causing fear and alarm.

My bill to ban "Ghost Guns," SB 323, passed out of the Courts of Justice Committee on a party-line vote. Ghost guns are untraceable weapons without serial numbers, and are typically bought in kits or in multiple pieces.

These weapons are found at many crime scenes and are an increasing problem for law enforcement. Firearms are now the leading cause of death of children. Sadly, ghost guns are specifically marketed to people who could not legally pass a background check, including children, domestic abusers, and previously convicted crim-

inals.

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, Feb. 10
6am-7pm, at your regular polling place

❖ Special Election for the 39th Senate District. Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker is the Democratic nominee.

❖ Special Election for the 5th House of Delegates District. Councilman Kirk McPike is the Democratic nominee.

Early Voting Times and Locations:

❖ Alexandria <https://www.alexandriava.gov/elections/key-early-voting-dates-deadlines>

❖ Arlington <https://vote.arlingtonva.gov/Elections>

❖ Fairfax <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/elections/early-voting>

New General Assembly Website

The Virginia General Assembly has a new website designed with constituents in mind. The updated platform makes it easier than ever to stay informed, allowing you to quickly find information about your legislators, watch live committee and floor sessions, and track legislation as it moves through the Assembly.

In Conclusion

Like everyone else, we have been dealing with the aftermath of the winter storm. The General Assembly rarely stops, so we've been in the office and continued to work. While crews work to clear our roads and sidewalks from snow and ice please remain cautious and stay warm.

If you have an issue that our office can help with please email us at senatorebbin@senate.virginia.gov or call us at (804) 698-7539.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Pump the Brakes on New Taxes with Votes for Lineberry and Butler

Readers following social media are aware that posts on Virginia's new Democratic party Governor and General Assembly members are going viral for the numerous proposed new taxes after their election wins campaigning on affordability. This classic case of bait and switch will cost Virginia taxpayers thousands of dollars per year. Not only is it noteworthy, but also unnecessary given the budget surplus and strong economy handed to them by Gov.

Youngkin.

New taxes are proposed on (to name a few): dog walking; dog grooming; gym memberships; digital personal property; vehicle repair; home repair; storage facility rentals; highway use fees; etc. Oh, and they want to pay for bureaucrats to buy houses while eliminating Right to Work laws that provide a competitive advantage for Virginia businesses.

While their moral authority was already shrinking and on very thin

ice (Jay Jones texts, anyone?), their misrepresentation of their tax-everything agenda as an affordability platform should serve as a wake-up call for all those who voted for them. You have been betrayed.

Former Gov. Doug Wilder (D) even issued an admonishment to Spanberger, after having endorsed her.

What is to be done? Fortunately, we have a Special Election opportunity underway to elect some

balance to Virginia's legislative branch.

Julie Lineberry (running for Senate Dist. 39; julieforva.com) has been serving the Alexandria community for decades as a professional Realtor, Girl Scout leader, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church volunteer, Inova Hospital's TWIG Auxiliary President, and local Electoral Board member.

Mason Butler (running for

SEE PUMP THE BRAKES, PAGE 13

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'Poop Geyser' on the Potomac After Sewage Spill Not a Joke

Arlington has not issued guidance on threat to residents, fish, the environment.

BY EDEN BROWN
GAZETTE PACKET

The massive Potomac River sewage spill was a funny joke on the Colbert Show last week but so far, guidance from Arlington County has been scarce. We've been told there is no impact on the drinking water quality here, because the spill occurred after the intake above Great Falls, although one individual made reference to an intake at Little Falls that is located below the spill and had to be shut down.

But as far as the impact on people, fish and dogs or the need to be on the lookout for impacts to other animal life along the river ... or further down into the Bay (think oysters and crabs) we have heard nothing.

Arlington's DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) had no ready guidance as we went to press, Arlington's Department of Environmental Services spokesperson Katie O'Brien said they were monitoring the situation but said DEQ would have to issue such guidance. One theory was that since the spill was on the Maryland side the Maryland DEQ would have to handle any alerts.

Renee Thompson from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin located in Rockville, MD said she had not received any advisory information from any of the regulatory agencies about impact to downstream residents to date.

What we do know is from the Potomac Riverkeepers, who released the following information on January 29, see box:

"Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) today released the results of its testing of contaminated water from the Lockhouse 10 sewage spill along the Potomac, and the data show a far worse impact than originally contemplated, PRKN President Betsy Nicholas announced today.

Nicholas said, "These measurements of E.coli bacteria show contamination which is nearly 12,000
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PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN

Two dogs who live in Arlington go down to the water in the Glen Echo area. Frolicking in the Potomac River is not limited to warm weather for dogs like poodles and Labrador Retrievers.

times what authorities limit for human contact. And so far, almost 300 million gallons have entered the Potomac River. The long term impact cannot be overstated. We measured against the standards established by Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality and Maryland's Department of the Environment. We were able to get this information thanks to the real-time testing done on Friday, Jan. 23 by Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper, and Evan Quinter, PRKN Volunteer Coordinator on Friday."

Naujoks elaborated: "We sampled the sewage discharging from the broken interceptor pipe to the Potomac River near Cabin John at Lock 10 and the result was 4,884,000 MPN – Most Probable Number for E.coli – which is 11,900 times higher than the 410 MPN limit for safe human contact. Very nearby, samples collected from the river at the Lock House 10 public river access where people

recreate showed values were 7,000 times above the 410 limit. We also sampled roughly four miles downstream in DC waters at Fletchers Cove, [across from Arlington] where testing data revealed E.coli levels were 60 times higher than the 410 standard. As a baseline, we sampled upstream from the sewage spill at Old Angler's Inn, where we measured 4.1 MPN for E.coli – ensuring river water upstream from the spill is safe and clean for human contact."

Naujoks continued, "Infrastructure failure is at the root of this disaster – the six-foot diameter sewage interceptor pipe located this close to the river should have been better maintained in order to avoid this catastrophe. DC Water needs to come up with a better plan than using a one hundred year old dry canal ditch to capture and contain future sewage releases instead of discharging hundreds of millions of gallons of sewage to the river!

Feb 11, 2026 12 p.m.

Join Potomac Riverkeeper Network for a deep-dive discussion into one of the worst sewage spills in modern history. On Jan. 19, a 6-foot diameter sewage pipe failed and leaked more than 300 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River. This issue isn't 100% resolved just yet, but progress is underway.

During this discussion, we'll talk about: what happened, what has been done to fix the issue, what still needs to be done, what our next steps are, and much more. There will be time for a Q&A session at the end of this presentation.

Register for this free webinar here: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/.../WN_y5Lw8hu2QLmaQoLn8cwXzA...

One of the largest sewage spills in US history could have been avoided."

E.coli is a bacterium found in mammalian intestines, including humans and is used as an indicator of water quality and pollution levels, as it comes from sewage discharges, stormwater runoff, and agricultural pollution sources. It also indicates a host of nasty contaminants: fecal matter, sewage, water-borne illnesses, pathogens, harmful bacteria and parasites. Some E.coli strains cause gastrointestinal complications, disease, kidney and nervous system issues, and in the most severe cases, permanent damage. MPN (Most Probable Number) for E. coli refers to a statistical method used in water and food testing to estimate the quantity of E.coli (a fecal indicator bacteria) in a sample, utilizing UV light often used for E. coli confirmation, indicating fecal contamination. It's a key indicator of sanitation, with results expressed as MPN per volume (e.g., 100 mL) to assess drinking water safety or shellfish quality.

Naujoks concluded, "Our sample data collected right at the sewage outflow revealed shockingly high numbers that could have long term impacts to water quality. The vile and putrid smell from the torrent of sewage discharging to the Potomac River for eight straight days is one of the most disturbing things I have ever seen in 25 years as a Riverkeeper. We are glad the flow of sewage has been reduced but the potential health risks at this level and the long-term impacts to the river are hard to imagine. We have seen no response from public health agencies to determine whether this type of raw sewage will impact public health and the environment. Raw sewage is not

only harmful to humans, but it can also harm the environment through excessive nutrients, toxic contaminants, and disease exposure. This can lead to dead zones in the river, harmful algal blooms, and fish kills."

For more information about the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches, see: <https://potomacriverkeepernetwork.org>

Several Virginia residents commented on facebook that the Riverkeepers post was the first information they were getting about the impact of the spill. One referred to the closure of an area in Charles County near Port Tobacco, prohibiting shellfishing, which indicated the spill was affecting a large area south of D.C. Several Arlington residents said they wondered why there had been no further information after the notification of the spill.

Maryland's Department of the Environment put out several warnings about fishing, boating and coming into contact with water in the Potomac, including as far south as Charles County which is considerably further downstream than Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax counties. These warnings, dated Jan. 24, were on Everybody's Maryland Politics Facebook page:

"There is a major raw sewage discharge into the Potomac River upstream of Maryland's tidal stretch. Until further notice, assume the Potomac is contaminated downstream of the DC area.

WHO SHOULD PAY ATTENTION

❖ Montgomery County – especially anywhere along the C&O Canal
SEE 'POOP GEYSER', PAGE 13
ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET ❖ FEBRUARY 5-18, 2026 ❖ 7



Bald Eagle in flight with nest material — branches — taking them to the nest.



A pair of Bald Eagles on their nest.

Bald Eagle Activity Hints that Spring Is Coming

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

Last week, cooped-up, iced-in, Washington-area residents coped with the snow, ice and a glaze on top of that, and a significant cold snap including the longest stretch of sub-freezing temperatures in over 35 years. Temperatures on many days were well below freezing and nights dipped into the single digits.

While these frigid conditions did not stir thoughts of spring, a spring ritual is underway along the area's rivers.

Since mid-November, keen ob-

servers have seen bald eagles carrying sticks and refurbishing last year's nests. These birds begin their courtship rituals in early December and in January and February are laying and incubating eggs for five to six weeks. The eggs hatch in early March and parenting begins in earnest, with adults bringing fish to their hungry young. In late May, the young eaglets will fledge.

Bald eagles build nests in trees near water, in places like Dyke Marsh, Little Hunting Creek, River Farm, Fort Belvoir and Mason Neck. It is too early this year to conduct a definitive survey of ac-

tive bald eagle nests. By "active," bird experts mean that pairs are seen tending to a nest and/or their eaglets. On the Mason Neck peninsula, there are at least 23 bald eagle nests, up from five in 1980, according to Randy Streufert, citing a map of nests in Virginia.

In 2023, a nest in Dyke Marsh collapsed after two young fledged. Friends of Dyke Marsh bird surveyors believe the pair relocated to a residential backyard just west of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, built a nest and raised young there the next two years.

THE COMEBACK

Since 1782, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has been America's national bird. In 2024, then-President Joseph Biden signed a bill into law making it official.

Bald eagles are one of America's great conservation success stories. The United States had around 100,000 nesting bald eagles in the lower 48 states in the 1700s. By 1963, the number plummeted to 417 known nesting pairs. In 1967, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) listed the bald eagle as endangered.

In the early 1970s, scientists determined that the eggshells of ea-

gles and other birds broke during incubation and young birds failed to hatch. Experts linked the eggshell thinning to DDT and other compounds used as pesticides that moved up the food chain. In 1972, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT. As eagle numbers climbed, in 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the bald eagle from the endangered species list. It is still protected under other laws.

Big, Imposing Birds

Adult bald eagles have a white head and tail, a chocolate brown

SEE BALD EAGLE, PAGE 9



A Bald Eagle on its nest with a chick, facing away.



A Bald Eagle on its nest, feeding an unseen chick with a second chick waiting to be fed.

Bald Eagle Activity Hints that Spring Is Coming



Mature Bald Eagle.

PHOTO BY RANDY STREUFERT



A Bald Eagle carrying its catch - a large Catfish.

FROM PAGE 8

body, a yellow hooked bill and yellow talons. Eagles under five years old are mottled brown. Adults weigh between 10 and 14 pounds and have an eight-foot wingspan.

Bald eagles perch, swoop down and grasp prey in their talons, mostly fish, but they also eat small animals, like rodents, snakes and waterfowl. They also snatch fish from other birds like ospreys, a behavior that led Benjamin Franklin to disparage them as “a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly ...”

Bald eagles mate for life and have what biologists call “nest site fidelity,” meaning that they typically return to the same site each year.

Their nests of sticks, moss and other materials are typically five to six feet in diameter, some of the largest nests in the world. Females lay two to three eggs.

Still Some Threats

Threats to bald eagles include



Two Bald Eagles about to mate.

lead poisoning from ammunition and fishing tackle, unattended fishing line, mercury, fire retardants, collisions and habitat loss

from shoreline development.

Learn More

Bald Eagle Basics, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>



A pair of Bald Eagles looking over their snow-covered nest.

Community Open House on Housing 2040 Draft Plan Recommendations

The City of Alexandria’s Office of Housing invites the community to an Open House on Saturday, Feb. 28 to learn about and provide feedback on the Housing 2040 draft recommendations and implementation strategies.

Topics include Affordable Housing Preservation; Home-

owner Resources and Common Interest Communities; Landlord-Tenants Rights and Resources; Financial Tools for Affordable Housing; Housing Options for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities; Housing Diversity and Supply; Housing and Health; and Housing and Sustainability.

The draft recommendations will

be released via the Housing 2040 Plan website in advance of the open house.

When: Feb. 28, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Where: Nannie J Lee Memorial Recreation Center, 1108 Jefferson St, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Format: Open house, including breakout sessions with presentations. Registration: Registration is

strongly encouraged to help us plan for the event. Please register using the following registration form <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/019be110f4d67453b89c-fa14a2574b42>

Background: The 2013 Housing Master Plan (HMP) established principles, goals, and strategies to address Alexandria’s housing needs through 2025. In collaboration with the community and local partners,

the City is undertaking an update to the HMP through 2040. Presentations and recordings of the Housing 2040 meetings, including the March Community Meeting, April Preservation Panel Discussion, September Community Meeting, November Community Meeting, and Housing 2040 Projects, are available at alexandria.gov/HousingPlan.

The Landfill's Becoming 'Birdy'

50-acre no-mow grassland provides sanctuary for some bird species of concern.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

Few people find visiting a landfill enticing, but some of our avian friends do.

Grassland and other birds are using a closed portion of the I-95 landfill, according to a recently released Fairfax County report.

In 2024, at the urging of the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance and with the Board of Supervisors' support, landfill managers designated 50 closed acres of the 500-acre landfill as a "no-mow" zone. The managers agreed to avoid mowing during grassland birds' nesting season and to raise mower blades to an eight-inch height when they did mow.

County officials concluded, based on 2024 and 2025 surveys, "overall observations confirm that the no-mow zone continues to provide critical habitat during the peak breeding and nesting season." County staffer Kimberly Lewis wrote, "The Eastern meadowlark and grasshopper sparrow, among other species, are thriving on a 50-acre meadowland atop the landfill."

By modifying and reducing mowing, the area is in effect a grassland, albeit not a natural one. The project sought to determine which grassland birds are using the area and how.

In 2025, Blair Evancho, a county intern, staffers and volunteers conducted weekly bird surveys from May 1 to July 12, 2025 and recorded all bird species observed. They confirmed 40 bird species in this area in 2025, including four species of regional or continental concern: chimney swift, grasshopper sparrow, Eastern meadowlark and bobolink. "Notably, the grasshopper sparrow, a grassland nester experiencing regional population declines, was the most detected species," notes the county's report. In 2024, surveyors confirmed 29 bird species.

"The County's monitoring efforts show that the I-95 Landfill Complex continues to provide meaningful habitat for grassland birds, including several species of conservation interest," commented Duane Wright, Director, Solid Waste Management Program. "These findings reflect our commitment to thoughtful land management that supports both environmental stewardship and long-term site care."

"On survey days, at least one



COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The no-mow zone continues to provide critical habitat during the peak breeding and nesting season, attracting birds like the Eastern Meadowlark above, and grasshopper sparrow.



Plants other than grass take hold and attract insects, like butterflies.

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (NVBA) volunteer helped," NVBA President Libby Lyons said. "We commend the County for this approach and hope this project can serve as a role model for other landfills in taking such important conservation steps," she said.

According to the 2025 report, one glitch was "unanticipated mowing on three days in June during work on a new solar field next to the no-mow zone, which created "a noticeable decline in bird activity on those dates." The report indicates that this mowing "conflicted with the established protocol, which prohibits mowing in the no-mow zone during the April – September breeding season, except when required for access to monitoring wells."

Grassland Birds

Grassland birds rely on grass-

land habitats for nesting and many species have seen marked drops in numbers. Since 1970, grassland birds have declined by 43 percent, concluded the 2025 State of the Birds report by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The main driver is habitat loss.

Most of the eastern United States' natural grasslands are gone. These birds typically do not use other habitats. In Virginia, since the European colonists' arrival in the 1600s, only a fraction of the state's grasslands remain. "It may be less than .0001 percent," according to biologist Justin Folks quoted on the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's website.

"The landfill has the largest patch of grassland in eastern Fairfax County," ornithologist Greg Butcher said in our 2024 Connection article. Landfill managers usually put a cover on closed landfills



A Blue Grosbeak thriving in the environment enhanced by grasslands.



I-95 landfill managers have installed signs to guide the mowers.



Landfill managers typically plant grasses to stabilize a landfill's surface. The Lorton landfill has monitoring wells.

and plant grasses to stabilize the surface.

Wright concluded, "By maintaining a clearly defined seasonal no-mow period, the County is able to support important nesting and foraging activity while also ensur-

ing the landfill remains well maintained and protective of the environment. This balanced approach allows us to responsibly manage closed landfill areas while recognizing their value as part of the region's broader ecosystem."

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Springfield resident Sofia Bezkorovainaya has a lot to skate for.



At 15, Sofia practices daily while attending school virtually.



Somewhere over the rainbow.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Local Ice Skating Marvel Honors Friend

The ice skating community and one teenage girl lost a lot from last year's helicopter-airliner collision.

By Mike Salmon
Gazette Packet

The best part of performing is definitely the adrenaline," says Sofia Bezkorovainaya, 15 year old figure skater. "I love the excitement and the feeling of being on the ice in front of an audience."

When skating phenomenon Sofia Bezkorovainaya looks down at the ice, she remembers skating around the rink with her friend Everly Livingston, one of the 67 lives lost on Flight 5342 over the Potomac River last year when the airliner collided with a U.S. Army helicopter.

Sofia's friend Everly was aboard the commercial jet with her whole family, and Sofia is dedicating her routines to Everly. "In the opening and closing moments of the program, when I look up and hug myself, it feels like she's hugging me," said Sofia.

It's a lot for a 15-year-old, but



The ribbons and trophies may be on the Olympic level one day.

her flawless routine shows her level of professionalism and dedication. Her short program music is "Over the Rainbow." The emotion came through to the many who watched it on the Instagram post of Sofia skating. "I got chills, what an amazing tribute," said one. "I cry every time, it's a beautiful program for her dear friend," said another. "In some respects, this is hard to watch, but to see it, and to this song, you HAVE to, so we can remember all of the great skaters and their families whose lives were so senselessly cut short that eve-

ning. R.I.P. Everly. Your friend did a beautiful job in tribute to you," said another.

Sofia is a 15-year-old student at Virginia Virtual Academy from Springfield, born in Alexandria, Va., who recently earned a top-six finish at the U.S. Junior Figure Skating Championships, placing her among the best junior skaters in the country. She trains in Reston, and is widely considered a strong future Olympic contender, with her sights set on the 2030 Winter Games when she becomes age-eligible.



She manages traveling, home life and school.

"Absolutely, the 2030 Olympics are my long-term goal," Sofia said. Meanwhile she is excited to watch the Winter Olympics beginning Feb. 6. "These Olympics are so exciting to watch. ... I'm cheering for all of the Team USA skaters."

Training Home

"I started skating at the Mount Vernon Rec Center. After that, I trained at MedStar and Ashburn," Sofia said. "My current home rink is Reston SkateQuest."

Her virtual school schedule at the Academy allows her the flex-

ibility needed to travel, train and compete nationally while still getting an education. It's a model that has supported her growth for years, dating back to her 2022 Juvenile National Championship.

The XXV Winter Olympic Games, Milano Cortina 2026, is scheduled to take place this month, Feb. 6 - 22. Sofia won't be competing there yet, but she is hopeful for the future.

<https://www.instagram.com/sofiabezkorovainaya/>

<https://usfigureskating.org/sports/figure-skating/roster/sofia-bezkorovainaya/1244>

ENTERTAINMENT

YEAR ROUND ON SATURDAYS

The City of Alexandria's historic Old Town Farmers' Market will temporarily move to the 100 block of North Royal Street and the courtyard at Tavern Square starting on Jan. 10, 2026. The new location is just across the street from Market Square. This move allows the market to keep operating during the upcoming renovations to City Hall and Market Square. The Farmers' Market has operated uninterrupted at Market Square since 1753. Because City Hall and Market Square will undergo major renovations starting in early 2026, the Farmers' Market must move to keep operating during the renovation. The Market Square Garage will also be closed during construction, and the new location provides easier access to nearby parking options. The Market Square Garage will be closed by Jan. 17. After this time, Farmers Market visitors are encouraged to use the Tavern Square garage (418 Cameron St.), which will offer FREE parking on Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. There is also parking at nearby Courthouse Square (111 S. Pitt St.). For a full list of parking locations, visit the Parking in Alexandria page. Shoppers can expect the same variety of local produce, baked goods, flowers, meats, dairy, and specialty items from over 70 vendors, now in a more spacious setting. The Market continues to run every Saturday morning from 7 a.m. to noon, year-round, rain or shine.

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

ONGOING

Revolutionary War Exhibit. At the National



The Last Days of RFK Stadium will be on display at Multiple Exposures Gallery at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria.



Celebrate America's 250th Birthday starting now through the summer 2026 in Alexandria.

Museum of the U.S. Army, Alexandria. The National Museum of the United States Army has opened a special exhibition, Call To Arms: The Soldier and the Revolutionary War. The two-year exhibition commemorates this year's 250th Birthday of the U.S. Army and next year's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This 5,000 square-foot exhibition features a rare collection, specially curated by the Museum, that includes Revolutionary War artifacts from the original colonies, England, France and Canada. Among the exhibit's highlights are a pair of General George Washington's pistols, the original flag

of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment carried by the Army's first African American Soldiers, and a complete Loyalist uniform—one of the rarest items in the collection. The sword of British General Charles Lord Cornwallis, presented to Washington at the surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, will also be displayed for a limited time.

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Starting now through summer 2026, Alexandria will host major events and experiences commemorating America's 250th birthday. Located on the Potomac River just

minutes from Washington, D.C. and George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Virginia invites families, friends and history-lovers to stay in, explore and commemorate America's 250th birthday in a city older than the United States itself with a dynamic lineup of events and immersive experiences. Learn more and find additional details on these and other events at VisitAlexandria.com/250.

250th Events Itinerary:

❖ February 14: The oldest and largest George Washington Birthday Parade in the country
SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

'Poop Geyser' on the Potomac After Sewage Spill Not a Joke

FROM PAGE 7

nal and Potomac shoreline.

❖ Prince George's County – all Potomac-facing parks, marinas, and shoreline.

❖ Charles County – marinas, fishing spots, private docks, beaches on the Potomac.

❖ St. Mary's County – areas near the mouth of the Potomac and adjacent tidal waters.

❖ Anyone in Southern Maryland who boats, fishes, or lets kids/pets near Potomac-connected water.

WHAT NOT TO DO

❖ Do NOT enter the Potomac River or connected creeks downstream of DC until officials say it's safe.

❖ Do NOT let kids or pets play in, wade in, or drink from the river or shoreline puddles.

❖ Do NOT eat fish or shellfish taken from the Potomac or its immediate tidal creeks right now.

❖ Do NOT hose off boats, gear, or dogs with river water — if it touched the river, wash with clean tap water and soap.

❖ Do NOT assume "it looks clean so it's fine." Sewage contamination is invisible but very real.

WHAT TO DO

❖ Stay away from the river and banks unless you absolutely have to be there.

❖ If you come into contact with river water, wash exposed skin immediately with soap and clean water and change clothes.

❖ Follow county health department alerts for closures, shellfish advisories, and recreation warnings.

❖ If you feel sick after contact with river water (GI issues, fever, skin infection), call your doctor or urgent care and tell them you were exposed to potentially contaminated river water.

DRINKING WATER

❖ At this time, public drinking water systems are separate from the river and are generally drawn from protected/intake-controlled sources.

❖ Do follow any specific guidance from your local water authority if they issue updates, but this is primarily a recreation and contact emergency, not a tap-water panic.

We've got a snowstorm coming, which should keep most people off the river. Please share this so the one guy who "just wants a quick cast" or "a walk with the dog by the water" thinks twice.

If you see updated advisories from your county or town, drop them in the comments so folks in your area can see them fast."

Arlingtonian Kurt Moser, co-founder and president of the Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation, an organization focused on nature, culture, and community at lower Four Mile Run in Alexandria and Arlington said he was alarmed by the spill, but hopeful that the size of the river and time of year would mitigate some of the disaster. Moser is also an independent researcher/ecologist, and he knows his way around pollution and fish kills. Did he think it was just a Maryland problem?

"It's on the DC side. So the plume will probably stay over

there, but you just don't know. I suspect that probably when the tide comes in it is washing some of it a little way up the (Four Mile) Run, maybe by the time it gets down there it will be a bit diluted." Moser noted that fish in the river would recognize the contaminated water and swim away, and freshwater mussels might hang in there, but oysters would be more vulnerable. "Environmentally it's disastrous, but a minor blessing is that it's a big river, so dilution will be happening. The fact that it was diverted into the C&O canal is also really gross." He reiterated that the only good news was the time of year — there aren't that many people out and about on the river; sun exposure will kill off a lot of the bacteria before the weather warms up. Moser said it was the sad reality of living in an urban environment. "This stuff just happens in an aging infrastructure situation."

Potomac Conservancy newsletter reportedly showed aerial photography of the spill indicated Moser was right, the plume appears to have hugged the D.C. Maryland shore, but as Moser noted, things change and further downstream is definitely affected.

For more see: <https://potomac.org/blog/2026/1/30/potomac-interceptor-sewage-spill-updates>

And https://www.bayjournal.com/news/pollution/nearly-contained-sewage-spill-leaves-serious-concerns-for-the-potomac-river/article_ee4cbf3b-d91f-4686-93cd-d04d4e7bf95a.html

tive private sector industries and have life experiences providing a grasp on commercial business realities that is unmatched by their opponents. Electing Lineberry and Butler would help pump the brakes on the downhill trajectory of Virginia that is widely predicted.

Linda App
Alexandria

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NOTICE OF WILLINGNESS TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING

Duke Street and West Taylor Run Parkway
Intersection Improvement Project
City of Alexandria
VDOT #0236-100-888, C501, P101, R201
(UPC #115531) / City of Alexandria #20633

Proposed Project: In cooperation with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the City of Alexandria is proposing roadway improvements along Duke Street (Route 236) between West Taylor Run Parkway and Dove Street. The purpose of this project is to improve safety, enhance traffic operations, reduce congestion, and increase access for all users traveling through this critical corridor.

The proposed project includes:

- Pedestrian safety improvements, including new crosswalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curb ramps, pedestrian signals, pedestrian refuge areas, and a wider sidewalk along West Taylor Run Parkway;
- A new left-turn lane and ramp connecting eastbound Duke Street to the existing southbound Telegraph Road on-ramp (east of the Telegraph Road bridge); and,
- A widened and extended concrete median between eastbound Duke Street and the existing southbound Telegraph Road on-ramp (south of the West Taylor Run Parkway intersection) to accommodate a future bus rapid transit station.

This project is funded by Virginia's Smart Scale Program administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Environmental Review: In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR Part 771, an environmental document in the form of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) is currently under preparation. A separate public notice will be published when FHWA approves of the CE's public availability for review and comment.

Plan Review: The plans are available for review on the project webpage at alexandriava.gov/go/2399. Plans may also be reviewed in-person at the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services – Project Implementation office located at 2331 Mill Road, Suite 302, Alexandria, VA. All visitors must have an appointment scheduled with a City staff member to access the Mill Road office. To review the project plans or submit questions and comments, contact the Project Manager, Anup Gautam, at Anup.Gautam@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.4155.

Requesting a Public Hearing: By this notice, the City is indicating its willingness to hold a public hearing for this project if individual concerns cannot be addressed through discussions with staff. You may request that a public hearing be held by mailing a written request to: Anup Gautam, Project Manager, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services – Project Implementation, City of Alexandria, 2331 Mill Road, Suite 302, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Deadline: All questions, comments, and public hearing requests must be postmarked by Sunday, February 15, 2026.

Further Notice: If a request for a public hearing is received, and the concerns addressed in the request cannot be adequately resolved, a public hearing will be scheduled at a time and place to be advertised in a future notice.

Questions or Special Assistance: Questions regarding this project should be directed to Anup Gautam at anup.gautam@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.4155. For the hearing impaired (VA residents only), dial 711 for Virginia Relay.

The City of Alexandria ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. For reasonable disability accommodation, contact Lydia Durand at Lydia.Durand@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.4622, Virginia Relay 711. If you have limited English proficiency or prefer communication in another language, free interpretation and translation services are available to you. Please email LanguageAccess@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.3960.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Pump the Brakes on New Taxes with Votes for Lineberry and Butler

FROM PAGE 6

House of Delegates Dist. 5; masonbutler4alx.com), an IT executive with decades of experience, also has a long list of community service, including the Campaigna Center Board and the Alexandria Scooter Commission.

Neither of them will fall for the nonsense in Richmond. They have both earned their living in competi-

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FEBRUARY 6, 7 & 8

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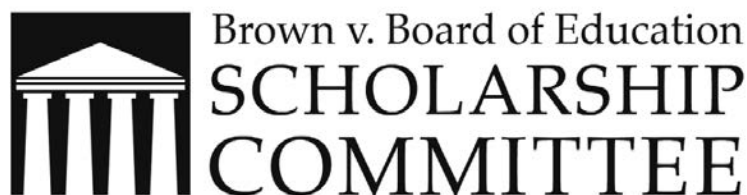
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Accepting Applications through April 12, 2026

The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program was established by the General Assembly to provide educational opportunities for persons who were denied an education in Virginia between 1954 and 1964 due to the closing of the public schools during Massive Resistance. The scholarship is now available to those individuals and to their descendants. The program is open to eligible applicants for the 2026–2027 school year. For applications and information on eligibility, visit: **BROWNSCHOLARSHIP.VIRGINIA.GOV**

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Employment

Employment

Center Director, Sylvan Learning Center, needed to manage day to day operations to maintain clients & customer relationships, increase sales & promote local marketing to drive enrollments. The Center Director acts as the point of contact during phone, email & walk-in inquiries, meets sales & financial targets, monitors performance, profit & loss controls, revenues, expenses, & fee collection. Selects, develops & monitors staff to deliver high quality educational curriculum. Establishes relationships with teachers, educational specialists, PTAs & school administrators. Job located in Alexandria, Va. BA in business, administration or related degree + min of 3 yrs of work exp or Masters in Business Administration + 1 yr of exp. To apply: Send resume & cover ltr to: I. Batsaikhan, Franchise Director, Sylvan Learning Center, 2305 Mount Vernon Avenue Alexandria Virginia 22301 or email: Alexandria.va@sylvanlearning.com. No phone calls. EOE

Legals

Legals

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF VOLUNTARY REMEDIATION

Pursuant to the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Regulations, Virginia Administrative Code section 9VAC20-160-120, Van Metre Homes at Crownstone, L.L.C. hereby provides notice of voluntary remediation at the following site:

Crownstone
802-808 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
VRP Project Number VRP01133

The Site occupies 0.45-acre, is addressed 802-808 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia, and is bounded by North Washington Street and Madison Street. The Site is being redeveloped with a 5-story, 48-unit condominium building with one level of underground parking. A previous environmental investigation of the Site identified petroleum compounds in soil, soil gas, and groundwater. The suspected source of the contamination is an off-site gasoline station located approximately 90 feet north of the Site. In order to address potential environmental risks, Van Metre Homes at Crownstone, L.L.C. applied to and was deemed eligible to participate in the Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP). A Remedial Action Plan (RAP) has been reviewed and accepted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ). The RAP includes implementation of both an Environmental Health and Safety Plan and an Impacted Material Management Plan, disposal and removal of contaminated soil, installation of vapor intrusion mitigation controls, and a deed restriction limiting use of groundwater to environmental monitoring and testing or de-watering in compliance with law. A Certification of Satisfactory Completion of Remediation will be requested from the VDEQ VRP for the site. Questions or comments regarding this notice will be accepted for 30 days from the date of publication (March 5, 2026) and should be addressed to the contact below:

Brady Riles
Environmental Consultants and Contractors, Inc.
43045 Little River Turnpike
Chantilly, VA 20152
publicnotice@eccfirst.com
(703) 327-2900

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News

Black History Poetry Slam And Open Mic

The Black History Poetry Slam & Open Mic, a celebration of Black history, culture, and creativity will be Saturday, Feb. 21. Celebrate 100 years of Black History Month through live poetry performances by talented local artists.

"This milestone year invites us to celebrate Black history while uplifting the creativity and stories within our own community," said Hashim T. Taylor, Director of RPCA. "RPCA is proud to be part of that ongoing celebration."

Event Details:

- ❖ Date: Saturday, February 21
- ❖ Time: 6-9 p.m.
- ❖ Location: Charles Houston Recreation Center (901 Wythe St.)
- ❖ Hosted by former City of Alexandria Poet Laureate KaNikki Jakarta

Enjoy light refreshments while experiencing a showcase of inspiring poetic expression. Reserve your spot online today.

If you prefer communication in another language, free interpretation and translation services are available to you. Please email LanguageAccess@alexandriava.gov or call 703-746-5434.

Special Elections

FROM PAGE I

tion, and supporting federal workers.

The two districts overlap within Alexandria, meaning some residents will vote in both elections depending on their address.

Election Day is Feb. 10 with polls open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Early in-person voting takes place now through Feb. 7 at 132 N. Royal St., Suite 100, with hours varying by day. The deadline to request a mail-in ballot was Jan. 30. Those ballots must be postmarked by Feb. 10 and received by Feb. 13 at noon.

Note that the City Hall voting location has been relocated to Lyles Crouch School (530 S. Saint Asaph Street) and the George Mason School voting location has been relocated to Trinity Church (2911 Cameron Mills Road).

For more information, visit alexandriava.gov/elections

FROM PAGE 12

- will run through George Washington's adopted hometown on the streets of Old Town Alexandria. The theme for the 2026 parade is "Virginia's Son ~ America's Founding Father."
- ❖ March: A new, major exhibit will open at Mount Vernon. Called George Washington: A Revolutionary Life, the exhibit will immerse visitors in Washington's world through recreated spaces, interactive role-playing, lifelike figures and artifacts.
- ❖ March: A new exhibit will open at Gadsby's Tavern Museum highlighting Hannah Griffith, who ran a coffeehouse there from 1794-1800. The exhibit will explore her resilience during the Revolutionary War, its impact on families and her ties to Alexandria's modern entrepreneurs.
- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, Sails on the Potomac, will host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.

JAN. 27 TO MARCH 8

The Last Days of RFK Stadium. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Studio 312, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria. In this exhibition, Eric Johnson documents the ongoing demolition of RFK Stadium, a Washington, D.C. landmark for more than 60 years. His black-and-white photography captures the transformation of the stadium site as it progresses through its stages of demolition. It is both a record of the demolition and a farewell to a neighborhood fixture, marking a moment of transition as the city and team owners prepare for a new stadium and development on the site.

JAN. 29 TO MARCH 8

Continuum: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria.

Artists' Talk: Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m. Continuum is a full gallery sculpture show, featuring floor and wall-mounted art as well as site-specific installations that take advantage of the gallery's high ceiling and unique light-filled space. Seven artists were invited to explore the concept of Continuum. Their works explore the connections that persist through continuity and gradual transformation, and the stories that evolve.

FEB. 6-28

"Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" Art Exhibit. Del Ray Artisans presents "Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" art exhibit celebrating traditions, mythology, and the dynamic symbolism of the horse in the zodiac through diverse interpretations inspired by movements, heritage, and storytelling with an emphasis on cultural respect and authenticity. View at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Gallery hours: Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

FRIDAY/FEB. 6

The Thirteen Concert. 7:30 p.m. At Virginia Theological Seminary/Immanuel Chapel, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria. The Thirteen explores the vocal music of Sergei Rachmaninoff. "Beautiful and grandly mystical... exud[ing] a spiritual force that is deeply moving and restorative" (New York Times), Rachmaninoff's Liturgy exalts the power, beauty, and emotive range of the human voice. This concerto for choir in a symphonic palette has moved audiences for over 100 years with soaring melodies, rich harmonies, and vocal pyrotechnics.

SATURDAY/FEB. 7

39th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting. 8:30 a.m. At Mount Vernon High School, Alexandria. Enjoy an informative exhibit hall featuring many County agencies and local service providers, as well as a special 250th Experience, created by the 250th Commission, highlighting our country's rich history. The official program will begin at 10 a.m., which will have a new version of our annual virtual tour, updates from local leaders and an opportunity to have your questions answered.

FEB. 7-8

Alexandria Warehouse Sale. Throughout Old Town Alexandria. Get ready for Alexandria's Warehouse Sale, the longest-running winter shopping tradition, returning February 7 & 8, 2026. Sponsored by Kristen Jones Real Estate, this highly anticipated event features 60-80% off at more than 40 independent

businesses from Alexandria and the surrounding region in a walkable format. Shoppers can find a downloadable sale map and on-site QR codes to help explore storefronts, pop-up tents, open retail spaces, along King Street and more to score the best deals. For more information, visit <https://oldtownboutiquecommunity.com>.

SUNDAY/FEB. 8

Winter Lecture - Imperiled and Emboldened Insects. 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road - Alexandria. (16-Adult) Our landscapes and gardens house a rich diversity of insects, some native, some non-native, some nice and some nasty. Explore with Mike Raupp, Professor Emeritus of Entomology at the University of Maryland, how many of our charismatic insects like butterflies, bees and fireflies are faring in our rapidly changing world and learn why the ongoing stream of dastardly pests like emerald ash borers and spotted lanternflies is unlikely to be stemmed. Not to be without hope, actions to help our imperiled friends and actions to mitigate the noxious pests will be discussed. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code N59.TII5

SATURDAY/FEB. 14

Art of the Heart. 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road - Alexandria. (Adults) Love has been a subject for artists throughout history. In honor of St. Valentine's Day, enjoy representations of the emotion on canvas. Discover art that shows love of many kinds - romantic, maternal, brotherly and patriotic. Be inspired, amused, moved, and elevated as we delve into the heart of art. \$18 (lecture only). Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173

SUNDAY/FEB. 15

Winter Lecture - Colonial Seed Exchange. 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road - Alexandria. (16-Adult) Discover how 18th-century neighbors built community through the exchange of seeds, cuttings and garden knowledge. Join Holly Gruntner, Mount Vernon's landscape historian for a look at how early Americans shared plants, ideas and innovations—shaping both their gardens and relationships. Explore the social and botanical networks that helped gardens thrive in George Washington's time. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code KBC.XVYN

"Every Knock's a Boost"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

If I heard those words of fatherly encouragement once, I heard them a hundred times; words of wisdom from my late (very late now; he died in Dec. 2006) father, Barry. Not only would he be positive about the positive (that was easy), but he would also try to find a way to be positive about any kind of negative as well. Ergo the title of this column. My father had the kind of personality and attitude that invokes a very desirable description of not-every professional athlete: "Good in the locker room." Meaning, great/positive/helpful; he was good in the house, too, where my brother Richard and I not only grew up but were raised.

Born in 1918, my father was a child of The Depression. As a boy of no more than 10 years old, he was already working, selling miscellaneous stuff at Braves Field in Boston, home of the then National League Boston Braves (who eventually moved to Milwaukee and then on to Atlanta where they still play today). You might have heard of their crosstown rival: the Boston Red Sox? After the game ended and my father returned home, whatever coin (literally) he had earned, he would give over to his mother, Besse. She would greet him by spreading open her apron wide for him to donate (I use that term loosely) his days wages for the Lourie family budget. Living in the Jewish ghetto in Dorchester, Ma. with six brothers and sisters and my grandfather who rarely worked (I never received much of an explanation as to why, but my grandmother, Besse, was the breadwinner), all monies earned went to support the family.

My grandmother had a job outside the house, too. She worked for a caterer. In those days, chicken wings were not as popular as they are today, so the caterer had no interest in them. They were refuse, more trash than treat. Unclaimed and unwanted, my grandmother collected this 'refuse' and brought them home to feed her family. Otherwise, on the nights when my grandmother didn't work, the family would have gone hungry. The effect this cycle had on my father? This Depression-era staple - for him, became a lifelong must-have. For the next 70 years or so, my father loved chicken wings. And it formed him as a man and a father. Forever grateful (there's another story he would tell about wanting clean bedsheets since he always slept in the same bed as his siblings), my father never took anything for granted and as his life improved, so did his attitude. Never complaining about what he didn't have, my father was always happy to get a hot meal and sleep in a bed with clean sheets.

My father, in his work ethic, his deeds and actions, showed Richard and I the way forward. And though it may not have been a way paved with gold, it was one brimming with good intentions and confidence-boosting words of encouragement. I learned at a pretty young age, that even though we might not have had a lot, (there's a story I like to tell about the occasional breakfast my mother served/provided, and she did serve us, always: on a dinner-sized plate, she would fill it with the week's leftover breads. There would be a bagel piece, half a bulky roll, a heel of rye bread, another end of pumpernickel, some challah, et cetera, with butter and cream cheese, and American cheese), but we didn't go to school hungry or sleep in the same bed as one another. We might have been depressed but it was no Great Depression. Nor was it a big deal. It was just another day in our life.

A little perspective - and context, goes a long way. At least it did for us.

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

Market Square Updates

Market Square Garage Closure

Effective Monday, Feb. 9, the Market Square Garage will close to the public to allow for the start of the City Hall and Market Square Renovation.

If you currently hold a monthly pass for the Market Square Garage, you should have already been contacted about your new parking location options. For questions, contact benhar@uspparking.com.

Farmers Market Visitors: Good news. While the Market Square Garage is closed, free parking is available during market hours at the Courthouse Square Garage, located at 111 South Pitt Street and Tavern Square Garage, located at 418 Cameron Street. Farmers' Market

parking at these garages is available on Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

General Parking: For a full list of alternative parking locations in Old Town, please visit alexandriava.gov/go/2930.

Construction Staging & City Services

Starting this month, you will notice fencing being installed around City Hall and Market Square. This is a necessary step to secure the site for renovation work.

With the addition of fencing, the sidewalks and street parking on the block surrounding City Hall and Market Square will be closed to the public along North Royal, North Fairfax, and Cameron Streets. Part of the sidewalk will still be available for pub-

lic use along King Street in front of City Hall.

Ride the bus or trolley to the City Hall/Market Square stop? This stop at N Fairfax Street and King Street will be moved several times during renovation work for your safety. The first move will take place this Spring. This bus stop will move around the corner to 302 King St. (right across from Coldwell Banker Realty).

More information on the future moves of this the bus and trolley stop will be shared through DASH.

To find where offices and services that used to be in City Hall are now, please visit alexandria.gov/CityHallRelocation.

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Del Ray
14 W Bellefonte Avenue

\$2,985,000 | This stunning new construction by Windmill Hill Design Build features 5 bedroom, 5 full and one half baths, and over 5800 SF of living space.

Jen Walker Team : 703.622.1080
JenWalker.com



Arcturus on the Potomac
815 Arcturus on the Potomac

\$2,599,999 | Two blocks from the Potomac River, this timeless masterpiece with east-facing water views is a testament to the enduring power of quality, function and elegance.

Susan Anthony & Rochelle Gray : 703.795.9536
SusanBruceAnthony.com



Tuckahoe
1123 Bayliss Drive

\$1,395,000 | Stunningly renovated 6-bedroom, 3.5-bath home. Beyond the beautiful aesthetics lies a powerhouse of recent structural and mechanical upgrades.

Jen Walker Team : 703.622.1080
JenWalker.com



North Old Town
625 Slaters Lane #407

\$850,000 | Top-level, corner, 2-bedroom, 2-bath unit in luxury Towngate North community. Steps from GW Parkway, Mt. Vernon Trail, Slaters Lane shops, and all Old Town has to offer.

Jillian Hogan Homes : 703.951.7655
JillianHoganHomes.com



Holly Acres
3335 Beechcliff Drive

\$800,000 | 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath townhome featuring over 3,200 square feet, 2-car garage, sun-filled living areas, gourmet kitchen, and flexible lower level.

Miriam Miller : 703.598.6619
MM-RealEstate.com



The Royalton
309 Holland Lane #311

\$660,000 | Experience the perfect blend of historic charm and modern luxury in this stunning, renovated 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom residence. Includes 2 (tandem) parking spaces.

Jen Walker Team : 703.622.1080
JenWalker.com



Carlyle Towers
2121 Jamieson Avenue #511

\$640,000 | NEW PRICE! Fabulous, freshly painted, 2- bedroom, 2-bath condo with all the amenities! Hardwood floors, updated baths and kitchen, and a bonus sunroom with views.

Lisa Groover : 703.919.4426
LisaGroover.com



Fort Washington, MD
8414 Clay Drive

\$525,000 | This charming 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath single-family residence lives larger than it looks. Fully-finished lower level offers potential for 5th bedroom, home office, or den.

Jillian Hogan Homes : 703.951.7655
JillianHoganHomes.com



Park View, DC
3577 Warder Street NW #102

\$525,000 | Stunning 2-bedroom, 2-bath condo, on the 2nd floor of the boutique Lincoln Condominiums, with a wonderful open floor plan, 10-foot ceilings, one assigned parking space.

The Makris Group : 703.402.0629
TheMakrisGroup.com

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