

Alexandria Gazette Packet

SERVING ALEXANDRIA FOR OVER 200 YEARS • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

OCTOBER 22, 2026

Honoring the Fallen

Firefighters remembered at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Firefighters, emergency medical personnel, city officials, retirees and community members gathered Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery to hon-

“When the alarm sounds, no matter the time of day or time of night, whether in the height of summer or the depths of winter, there are those in our community who risk all for all of us.”

— Jimmie McClellan, Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association president

or Alexandria’s fallen firefighters during the annual Fallen Firefighters Memorial Ceremony. The solemn event, held during National Fire Prevention Week, paid tribute



Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department president Jay Johnson, left, and Fire chief Felipe Hernandez salute after placing a wreath during the annual Fallen Firefighters Memorial Ceremony Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community.

The ceremony took place at the historic Fallen Firefighters Memorial, where participants reflect-

ed on generations of service and sacrifice. The memorial, a granite obelisk erected in 1856, commemorates seven firefighters who lost their lives in the tragic Dowell China Shop Fire of 1855, one of the



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

AFD Chief Felipe Hernandez makes remarks at the Oct. 9 firefighters memorial ceremony at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

deadliest incidents in Alexandria’s firefighting history.

“When the alarm sounds, no matter the time of day or time of night, whether in the height of summer or the depths of winter,

there are those in our community who risk all for all of us,” said speaker Jimmie McClellan, president of the Friendship Veterans

SEE FIREFIGHTERS, PAGE 12



AFD Chief Felipe Hernandez leads the wreath laying ceremony at the gravesite of Firefighter Charles Glasscock Oct. 4 at Methodist Protestant Cemetery.

First of the Fallen

Firefighter Glasscock remembered.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

In June of 1852, Charles Glasscock was among the Alexandria firefighters answering the call of a reported fire. The men carried the firefighting apparatus through

the streets of the city only to have Glasscock fall and be struck by the heavy wheels. He died from his injuries two days later, on June 30, making him the first Alexandria firefighter to die in the line of duty.

For generations, the location of Glasscock’s grave was uncertain. But recent efforts by David Heiby of Gravestone Stories along with Friendship historian Catherine Weinraub and archaeologist Mark Ludlow led to the discovery of Glasscock’s grave in Methodist Protestant Cemetery on Wilkes

Street.

The location had no marker but on Oct. 4, the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association held a wreath-laying ceremony to honor Glasscock and to reveal the first public look at a bronze plaque commemorating the firefighter. The plaque will be on permanent display at the Friendship Firehouse Museum.

Since his death in 1852, Alexandria’s fire department recites Glasscock’s name first on its Roll Call of the Fallen.



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News

Wine on the Water

ASF raises \$120k for apprentice programs.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

A sold out crowd of more than 300 gathered along the waterfront as the Alexandria Seaport Foundation held its annual Wine on the Water fundraiser Oct. 10 at the United Way Worldwide Headquarters.

The event raised more than

“Being an apprentice is being part of a family,”
— ASF apprentice Ben Hale

\$120,000 in support of the ASF mission of using boatbuilding and woodworking to build life skills in young adults.

“We are thrilled to have so many friends and so many new supporters join us for our most successful Wine on the Water event ever,” said ASF executive director Deb Roepke. “Many thanks to the board, the

event committee, our sponsors, the apprentices and everyone who made it such a fun evening.”

The Seaport Foundation’s focus is on providing life and career skills to young people in need of confidence and a focus for their lives. Apprentices learn the maritime heritage of Alexandria and develop the hand-crafting skills required to build traditional wooden boats.

“Being an apprentice is being part of a family,” said Ben Hale, an ASF apprentice. “It’s not just the hard skills that we learn but also the soft skills like confidence, determination and being reliable. Those are the skills I value the most.”

Said ASF board chair Helen Morris, “In addition to raising money we are celebrating the work that our apprentices do every day and we appreciate the community in supporting our work.”

www.alexandriaseaport.org

Former vice mayor Del Pepper stands with Alexandria Seaport Foundation apprentices at the annual Wine on the Water fundraiser Oct. 10 at the United Way Worldwide headquarters on the Alexandria waterfront.



Helen Morris, chair of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation board, with ASF apprentices at the Wine on the Water fundraiser Oct. 10 at the United Way Worldwide Headquarters along the Alexandria waterfront.



Restoring Voting Rights

3rd amendment provides automatic restoration of voting rights, and protection for people with disabilities.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Part 3 of a three part series.

Three amendments to the Virginia Constitution will be on the ballot Nov. 3: protection of women’s reproductive rights; removing the ban on same sex marriage; and automatic restoration of voting rights for convicted felons as well as strengthening the protection of voting rights for people with disabilities. This is the third of a series of three articles focusing on each of the proposed amendments.

A Constitutional amendment follows a rigorous process in



Sen. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Virginia before it can be put before the voters. The proposed language must be passed in the General Assembly. Then after an intervening election, the exact language must be passed by the General Assembly again. Finally the language goes before the voters.

The language of the third proposed Constitutional amendment reads:

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended (i) to provide for the fundamental right to vote in the Commonwealth, (ii) to revise the qualifications of voters so

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

State Senator Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, D-Alexandria, the patron of the third proposed Constitutional amendment in the House of Delegates in 2025 and the start of the 2026 session explains, “I think Virginia is one of the most punitive states with their current practice on restoration of voting



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Three proposed Virginia constitutional amendments are on the Nov. 3 ballot, with this sign in support of all three.

rights for those convicted of a felony. We are lagging behind.”

She explains currently in Virginia a formerly incarcerated person has to apply individually to the governor to have voting rights restored. “This means a person could wait decades to get restoration of the right to vote. One of the problems of the current system is there is no transparency. It is left to a sin-

gle politician.”

The first felony disenfranchisement laws were introduced in the United States in 1792 in Kentucky, and by the Civil War about 24 states had some form of felony disenfranchisement. The growth of these laws led many to conclude that

SEE RESTORING, PAGE 5

News

Prost!

SSA raises \$45k
at Oktoberfest.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The lederhosen and traditional dirndls were on display as Senior Services of Alexandria celebrated with its 15th annual Oktoberfest fundraiser Oct. 8 at Port City Brewing Company.

"We had about 160 guests," said SSA executive director Mary Lee Anderson. "This was the 15th annual SSA Oktoberfest and we raised just over \$45,000 to support nu-

**"We raised
just over \$45,000
to support nutrition,
companionship
and informational
programs."**

— Mary Lee Anderson,
SSA executive director

trition, companionship and informational programs."

Presenting sponsor for the evening was Focus Data Solutions.

SSA programs for Alexandria's older adults include Meals on Wheels, Groceries to Go, Friendly Visitors and Callers and Senior Ambassadors.

Attendees sampled traditional fare along with the best of local brewery Port City Brewing Company. Tours of the brewery



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Harlene Clayton, RJ Alban, Noris Sanchez, David Cavanaugh and Deborah Johnson enjoy Oktoberfest Oct. 8 at Port City Brewing Company.

were available throughout the evening with attendees entertained with traditional Bavarian folk music.

"Port City has hosted this event since it began," Anderson said. "SSA had an amazing time celebrating with everyone who joined us and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who came out and supported our mission."

For more information, visit www.seniorservicesalex.org

Alexis Colton, Art Sauer, Bettie Samuel and Ellen Kozicki, in back, toast to the music of M&J Volksmusik Oct. 8 Port City Brewing Company.



Cathy Puskar, left, accepts gifts from former SSA board member Mitch Opalski and SSA Executive Director Mary Lee Anderson Oct. 8 at Port City Brewing Company. Puskar created the Oktoberfest fundraiser in 2011.



Lynnwood Campbell, Mitch Opalski and Leona Campbell at the SSA Oktoberfest Oct. 8 at Port City Brewing Company.



George Hughes, Jane Hughes, Cathy Puskar, Faiqa Clark and Brittany Humphrey toast at the SSA Oktoberfest Oct. 8 at Port City Brewing Company.

Restoring Voting Rights

FROM PAGE 3
the laws were implemented to target African Americans.

By 2018 most states had implemented policies to restore voting rights upon completion of a sentence but only Virginia and Iowa permanently disenfranchised a former felon unless and until the governor had restored each individual's voting rights.

During his term as Virginia governor, Terry McAuliffe restored the voting rights of more than 173,000 individuals who had been convicted of felonies, one at a time. The Supreme Court of Virginia blocked him from issuing a blanket restoration of voting rights.

Bennett-Parker says during Governor Glenn Youngkin's four years in office, only 10,000 formerly incarcerated people had their voting rights restored but Governor Abigail Spanberger has already restored the rights of 100,000.

"I believe when the Constitutional amendment passes, 230,000 will have their voting rights automatically restored," Bennett-Parker says.

During consideration of the proposed amendment in the General Assembly an amendment was proposed, but defeated, that would have limited restoration of rights to those who had been convicted on non-violent offenses, had paid their restitution and who had completed probation or parole. House Minority Leader Terry Kilgore, R-Scott County supported these changes. He said he supported reform but not the constitutional amendment as written. He says they left Republican votes on the table by



This sign in opposition to the first two proposed amendments ("Catholics Vote No").

not including these changes and putting victims first.

Bennett-Parker explains she disagrees with the changes proposed in that amendment because denying formerly incarcerated people the right to vote until they have paid restitution is a "modern day poll tax."

"Not requiring restitution be paid before restoring the rights to vote doesn't eliminate the obligation to pay restitution.

"Having the right to vote helps a formerly incarcerated person enter society and helps them be able to pay their restitution. The current process lacks transparency. No one knows what to do."

The amendment also strengthens voting rights protections for people with disabilities. "Currently a person under a guardianship loses their right to vote no matter the circumstances. The amendment would ensure that their voting rights are lost only if a court has determined that a person is incapable of understanding the act of casting a ballot."

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The Boy Who Spiked the Guns

By David Heiby

In the same week of September 1814 that the British bombarded Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor, American troops hundreds of miles away burst out of Fort Erie on the Niagara frontier and stormed the British siege batteries that had been pounding them for weeks. Among the attackers was Thomas Childs, a newly commissioned West Point graduate. He helped spike the enemy's cannon, hammering iron into the touchholes so the guns could not fire. The sortie of Sept. 17 broke the siege.

By order of President Madison, Childs received a captured quadrant, the instrument gunners used to aim a cannon. It was engraved for "gallant conduct in the Sortie from Ft. Erie and for spiking the guns of the enemy's batteries." The inscription gives his age as seventeen. Childs was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on March 16, 1796, so he had actually just turned eighteen. It was a small slip on a large honor.

Alexandria claimed him through marriage. In 1819 Childs married Ann Eliza Coryton, daughter of Josiah Coryton, whose house stood at 522 King Street. Her uncle Adam Lynn, a silversmith and clockmaker and a lieutenant colonel of the Alexandria militia in the War of 1812, is buried in St. Paul's Cemetery.

The couple had at least seven children and buried most of them. Two of them were infant sons, each named Henry Lynn Childs in the uncle's honor.

Childs made the army his life. He served in the Seminole War in Florida from 1836, then went to Mexico in 1846 and fought at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. At Monterey that September, his ar-



PHOTO BY DAVID HEIBY

The inscription on General Thomas Childs's obelisk in St. Paul's Cemetery, part of the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex, recording his birth in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and his death at Tampa Bay, Florida, in 1853.

tillery battalion fought as infantry beside regulars and Texas Rangers. They climbed the fortified heights near the Bishop's Palace, and before sunrise on Sept. 22 the battalion's flag flew over the position. He fought again at Cerro Gordo in April 1847.

His hardest test came at Puebla. When General Scott marched on Mexico City, Childs stayed behind as military governor of a city of 60,000. His job was to guard the army's hospitals, and he had about 400 able men to do it. For

28 days a Mexican force of more than 8,000 besieged them, firing from streets, balconies, rooftops and churches. The garrison held. Scott praised the defense in his official report, and Childs was made a brevet brigadier general.

After the war he commanded Fort McHenry for three years, the same fort whose bombardment had coincided with his own first fight. He was then sent to command in Florida. Yellow fever killed him at Fort Brooke, on Tampa Bay, on Oct. 8, 1853. He was 57.



COURTESY OF THE DAGUERREAN SOCIETY

Thomas Childs, photographed about 1846 by the Boston studio of Southworth & Hawes, around the time of his Mexican War service.

His obelisk stands in lot 32 of St. Paul's Cemetery, one of the 13 burial grounds of the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex. It is carved with crossed sabres and a roll call of his battles.

The epitaph says that although he was honored as a soldier of his country, "he felt it a greater honor to be a soldier of the cross." It closes with St. Paul's words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Ann Eliza, who died in South Carolina in 1875, is named on the same stone.

October marks 173 years since yellow fever took him far from home. His stone in St. Paul's Cemetery still tells his story to anyone who stops to read it.

David Heiby is Superintendent of the Presbyterian Cemetery and founder of Gravestone Stories (gravestonestories.com). He serves as Treasurer of the Alexandria Historical Society and of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation, and teaches at the Lifetime Learning Institute of Northern Virginia.

Alexandria City's New Legislative Director

Fatimah Dandashi is the new Legislative Director for the City of Alexandria. City Manager James Parajon selected Dandashi for the role following a national search. Dandashi brings experience in local and state government, including previous work with Fairfax County and the Virginia Senate. As Legislative Director, she will oversee the City's intergovernmental affairs, advocate for state and federal



Fatimah Dandashi

funding, and work closely with City Council and City departments to advance Alexandria's legislative priorities. She will begin her new role on Oct. 26.

"Throughout her career, she has helped advance the legislative and policy priorities of localities while ensuring the voices of the residents are heard," said Parajon "I know she will do the same here in Alexandria and successfully advocate for the City's legislative goals in Richmond."

Dandashi is a public servant

with experience working for elected officials at the local and state levels in Northern Virginia. Most recently, she served as District Director for Virginia Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell and worked to connect constituents with state agencies and partner organizations in Richmond and across the Commonwealth.

Her past experience includes serving as Casework and Policy Aide for Fairfax County Franconia District Supervisor Rodney Lusk.

She is committed to making government work for the people of Northern Virginia and to ensuring resident voices shape the decisions that affect their communities.

Dandashi was born and raised in Northern Virginia and holds a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Government and International Politics from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.

NEWS

Agenda: Alexandria October Program: Is ACPS Meeting the Mark?

The City of Alexandria allocates one-third of its budget to education. Alexandria students need and deserve an excellent education. Are we meeting the mark in Alexandria? Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are designed to assess whether students are meeting state grade-level standards in reading, math, science, and history. The tests provide a statewide snapshot that informs school accountability and high school graduation requirements.

What is the trajectory of our test

scores and how can we improve? How do we compare to our neighboring jurisdictions? If our numbers are in need of improvement, what specific efforts should we demand? And, how can parents help their students succeed?

The program will address these questions through a moderated discussion featuring four expert panelists.

What do we need to do as a city to help all our students realize their potential?

On Monday, Oct. 26, Agenda:AL-

exandria's event will begin at 6:30 in the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. (101 Callahan Drive) Parking is free at the Memorial.

From 6:30-7 pm, we will have time for socializing and refreshments and light fare. The panel discussion will begin at 7, and we will end the panel discussion by 8:30.

Admission to the event is free for current Agenda:Alexandria members, and \$10 at the door for everyone else.

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

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.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.



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VDOT
Virginia Department of Transportation

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
NELSON	12503	628	RHUE HOLLOW ROAD	BRANCH REEDS CREEK	9/24/2026
BUCKINGHAM	4032	601	MANTEO ROAD	SYCAMORE CREEK	9/22/2026
SCOTT	16849	689E	LUNDSFORD MILL ROAD	BRANCH	9/16/2026
BUCHANAN	3825	600E	HURRICANE CK ROAD	HURRICANE CREEK	9/14/2026
SCOTT	16850	689E	LUNSFORD MILL ROAD	STREAM	9/14/2026
FLOYD	7501	221N	FLOYD HWY S 221	BR OF DOBBINS CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2832	699E	BORE AUGER ROAD/699	BR OF BORE AUGER CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2816	691E	SHEPERDS ST ROAD 691	WOLF CREEK	9/10/2026
CARROLL	4779	881N	CROSS CREEK ROAD 881	L REED ISLAND CREEK #1	9/9/2026
CAMPBELL	4203	604E	RED OAK SCHOOL ROAD	SOUTH FORK FALLING RIVER	9/8/2026
BUCHANAN	29782	3304	MALLARD ROAD	BIG LICK BRANCH	9/3/2026
BUCHANAN	29789	4080	LOCKHART BRIDGE ROAD	WAR FORK	9/3/2026
FLOYD	7631	785N	BURKS FORK ROAD/785	BURKS FORK	9/17/2026
SUFFOLK	22113	616	ROUNDTREE CRESCENT	CYPRESS SWAMP	9/3/2026

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

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

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

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

Frightfully Fun

Spooky Mad Scientist Expo highlights STEM learning.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Costly experiments, bubbling potions and hands-on scientific discoveries filled the Patrick Henry Recreation Center Oct. 17 as families gathered for Alexandria's 11th annual Spooky Mad Scientist Expo, a Halloween-themed celebration designed to make learning both exciting and a little eerie.

Children and parents explored interactive exhibits where science came alive through spooky demonstrations and creative activities. Young scientists tested mysterious chemical reactions that produced colorful "monster slime," examined creepy crawly insects under microscopes, and learned about the physics behind glowing jack-o'-lanterns and fog effects commonly seen during Halloween.

"This year's Expo brought together 90 national and local organizations, including six universities, 100 student volunteers, and more than 130 tables featuring hands-on activities and interactive experiences," said event founder Zohreh Khoshnamak. "Hundreds of people attended throughout the event, which featured a wide range of STEM experiences, from robotics, AI, space exploration and engineering to health sciences, chemistry and creative technology."

The event transformed traditional science education into an engaging adventure. Participants were encouraged to ask questions, conduct experiments and discover the scientific principles behind many of the sights and sounds associated with the Halloween season.

Local educators, student volunteers and science enthusiasts staffed dozens of activity stations throughout the fair. Popular exhibits included a "Mad Scientist Laboratory," where students safely mixed solutions to create dramatic reactions, and a "Creature Features" station that explored the biology of bats, spiders and other animals often associated with spooky stories.

"It's a wonderful way to show children that science is everywhere," said one volunteer educator. "When learning is hands-on

and fun, students become excited to explore the world around them."

The event included a proclamation recognizing Oct. 17 as Spooky Mad Science Expo Day, with Mayor Alyia Gaskins, Del. Kirk McPike, and City Council members participating in the presentation. Other distinguished attendees included School Board President John Chapman, Sheriff Sean Casey, and Colonel James Page.

The event also highlighted science, technology, engineering and mathematics education through challenges and demonstrations that encouraged critical thinking and problem-solving. Young attendees built structures, tested engineering designs and participated in interactive games that combined scientific concepts with Halloween-themed fun.

Many children arrived in costume, adding to the festive atmosphere as they moved from exhibit to exhibit collecting science-themed treats and prizes.

The Spooky Mad Science Expo is presented by Chrysalis Development Group, a 501(c)(3) organization, in partnership with the City of Alexandria.

"What makes Spooky Science especially meaningful is the community that has grown around it over the years," Khoshnamak said. "Scientists, educators, families, students, community organizations, universities, and industry partners come together to share their expertise and resources and help make STEM opportunities more accessible to young people."

PHOTOS BY
JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET



Costume clad attendees attend the STEM focused Spooky Mad Scientist Expo Oct. 17 at the Patrick Henry Recreation Center.



A young attendee experiments at the Spooky Mad Scientist Expo Oct. 17.



Volunteers work with attendees at the Spooky Mad Scientist Expo Oct. 17 at Patrick Henry Recreation Center.



Under the guidance of Stephen Botts from Del Ray Artisans (not pictured) attendees create animation flip books.



Elle and Sarah Younker of Astrolith with Spooky Mad Scientist Expo attendees Oct. 17 at the Patrick Hendry Recreation Center.

'We the People'

Students celebrate Constitution Week.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Songs of patriotism filled the air as students from across the city gathered to celebrate the signing of the Constitution Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.

Mayor Alyia Gaskins signed the official Proclamation commemorating Constitution Week, Sept. 17 – 23, marking the 239th anniversary of the signing of the historic document.

Linda Ferrara welcomed the students and provided a background of the drafting and signing of the Constitution.

Ferrara is the Constitution Week chair of the District 5 Daughters of the Revolution. In 1955, DAR petitioned Congress to set aside Sept. 17-23 annually to be dedicated for the observance of Constitution Week. The resolution was later adopted by the Congress and signed into law on Aug. 2, 1956, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The aims of Constitution Week are to emphasize citizens' responsibilities to protect the Constitution, to educate people about the role of the U.S. Constitution and encourage the study of historical events leading to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in September 1787.

"In order for this government to work we're going to need your ideas," said Gaskins in addressing the students. "We need your thoughts, your hopes, your dreams and your vision for how we keep making a better city and a better country."

Participating in the ceremony were students from Mount Vernon Community School, Samuel Tucker Elementary School, and Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy.

Dressed in period attire, David Embrey played patriotic music while Vicki Embrey, also in period attire, spoke about the role of working women in 1787.

The U.S. Constitution was signed on Sept. 17, 1787. In addition to establishing Constitution Week, the DAR erected a structure built in tribute to the Constitution of the United States. DAR Constitution Hall, which is a performing arts center, opened in 1929, in Washington, D.C.

"Our Constitution is one that has stood the test of time -- longer than any other in world history," Ferrara said. "It reflects the thinking of many learned Founding Fathers more than 200 years ago and yet it still applies today."



Mount Vernon Community School choir members perform "America America" at the Constitution Day ceremony Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.



Mayor Alyia Gaskins signs the Constitution Day proclamation Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.

"We need your thoughts, your hopes, your dreams and your vision for how we keep making a better city and a better country."

— Mayor Alyia Gaskins on Constitution Day



Fifer David Embrey stands with students from Samuel Tucker Elementary School Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.

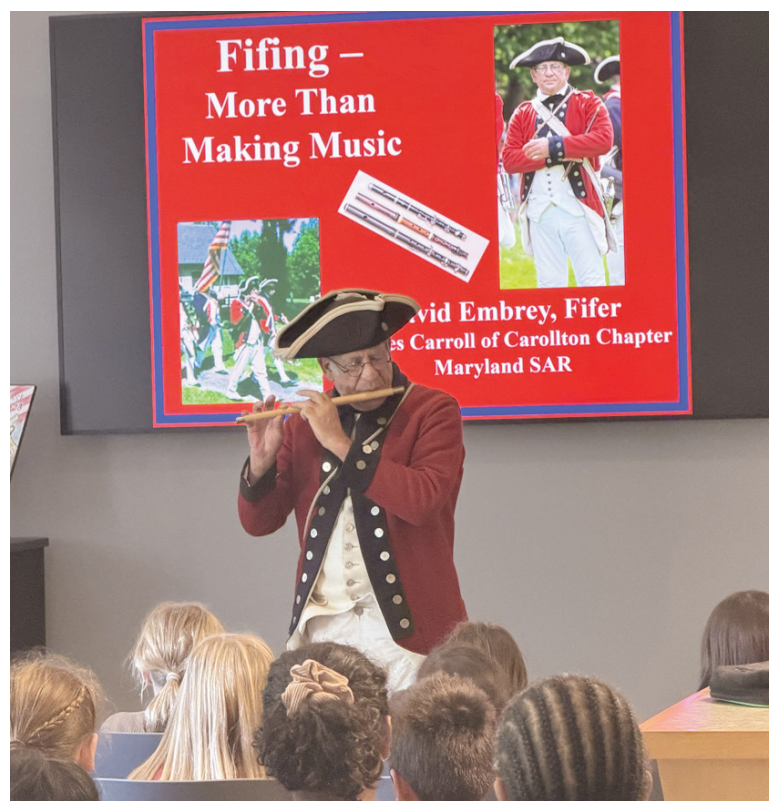
PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Vicki Embrey, dressed as Mrs. Jolly, explains the role of working women in 1787 during the Constitution Day event Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.



Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy students perform "America of Thee I Sing" Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.



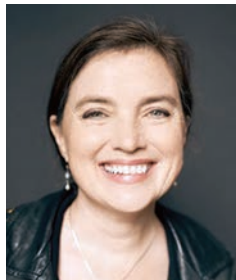
David Embrey demonstrates fife playing at the Constitution Day event Sept. 16 at the Del Pepper Community Center.

‘Magic Hour’ —Comedy or Drama? —Decide for Yourself

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

“**M**agic Hour” is a comedy according to Jacqueline Christy, the filmmaker but ... “Magic Hour” is also a drama. “The greatest challenge, you know all the way through, was getting everybody—the actors, the designer, the colorist, the composer — to understand that specific combination. It’s comedy but grounded in reality. A lot of it is funny but it breaks your heart.”

“Magic Hour” is Christy’s first full length feature film and will premiere at the Alexandria Film Festival on Nov. 14.



Jacqueline Christy, filmmaker,

She says that Miriam Shor, the lead actor, got it from the beginning. “It’s funny. She asked had I written the film for her. She connected with the character on a lot of issues. I wanted to be able to break your heart and make you laugh at the same time. Miriam understood the power of kindness in a world where some think kindness is a weakness.”

“Magic Hour” is written partly out of experience. Christy says it is about a woman in her 40s who decides as her life falls apart to pursue her dream of going to film school. “She keeps going back to the idea of being a filmmaker and she decides to go for it.”

As you might expect, she finds herself a fish out of water with most other students being half her age. “But she finds a place friendly and close with her new artistic family. She is in a bubble of love.”

However, as the plot unfolds she gets a huge professional opportunity to work on a real set in a big studio. It turns out not to be what she had hoped for with the professional

“It’s comedy but grounded in reality. A lot of it is funny but it breaks your heart.”

— Jacqueline Christy, filmmaker

al environment snarky and with people out for blood. “Her dream falls apart, bursting her bubble of love.”

Christy says this, her first full length film, has been a long time in the making. “I started it at the end of my time in the NYU film program in 2018, and post production took all of this time.”

“Honestly I had such a great time after putting off my long dream, going for it even if it is not the right time. You only live once. I felt motivated. Funny things happen. People relate to that.”

Christy says there are a lot of challenges to making a film. “Stuff is real. I’m currently fundraising to get the film out into the the-



Harriett played by Miriam Shor finds a new love interest with Hank played by Sendhil Ramamurthy in Magic Hour at the Alexandria Film Fest as she pursues her long held dream of filmmaking.



Harriett watches her film with her new artistic friends as she sees her dream become reality.

atres. This next stage is very exciting. A lot of people want to know why I am fundraising since the film is finished but you have to pay for travel, the trailer, the booker, advertising for the next step.”

She says, “The cast was so great with many accomplishments already behind them. Christy explains the process of attracting them was lucky. “Patrick Green was a friend of a friend and when he read the script and agreed to be in the film, it gave the film enough street cred to interest others. One anchor of someone so well regarded gave the project some legitimacy so others agreed to read the script.”

Christy says her love of the arts came from her parents. Her father was a director and

her mother was a music teacher. “They used to take me to rehearsals instead of getting a babysitter, and I’d watch the same show over and over. Sometimes I’d have a small part. It was magical. I could watch it again and again.”

She says she started her own career by setting up a space for other artists to perform but realized she was an administrator and wanted to go out on her own. So in 2012 she decided to step out of the shadows and went back to school. “The story that I wrote in “Magic Hour” reflected the emotional part of my dreams, my own struggle.”

The next step is well under way. She has written her second film and early next year will put together the cast and the crew. She

says she got the idea from a real life FBI plan to capture a huge smuggling ring with the challenge of how to get them all in the same room. The plan involved two undercover agents posing as the bride and groom and inviting all of their criminal friends to the wedding. “It’s a true story. I took the premise and made up the details. It’s a cops and robbers wedding comedy.”

“Magic Hour” is scheduled at the Alexandria Film Festival on Saturday, Nov. 14 at 9 p.m. at the VTech Auditorium. The film will be followed by Q&A with Christy.

The Alexandria Film Fest, celebrating its 20th year, will be held Nov. 13-15 at five venues throughout Alexandria. For more information: alexfilmfest.com

ACHS Football Remains Undefeated

West Potomac vs.
Alexandria City
varsity football.

West Potomac came up short in its Homecoming game against Alexandria City, losing 24-14 on Oct. 9. West Potomac falls to 3-3 on the season. Alexandria City remains undefeated at 6-0. West Potomac heads to Lake Braddock (3-3) on Oct. 16 to take on the Bruins while Alexandria City will host Fairfax (0-6) at home.

PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/GAZETTE PACKET



The West Potomac student section celebrates after their school's first touchdown.



Samuel Salazar #5 looks for an open receiver.



Jack Coulter #5 catches a screen pass and looks downfield.



Will Coulter #41 kicks the ball off late in the third quarter after having made an extra point to give West Potomac 14 and close in on Alexandria City's 21.



Kevin Coates #3 takes a handoff down the field while trying to elude the West Potomac defenders.



Callahan Kenney #13 advances the ball along the Alexandria City sideline as Idrisa Kargbo #20 pulls him down.



A rose for each fallen firefighter is placed in a vase as part of the memorial ceremony Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery.



AVFD president Jay Johnson and AFD Chief Felipe Hernandez place a wreath in memory of fallen fighters Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

Firefighters Remembered at Ivy Hill Cemetery

FROM PAGE 1

Fire Engine Association.

During the service, Alexandria Fire Department Chief Felipe Hernandez and Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department president Jay Johnson conducted a wreath-laying ceremony at the base of the monument. Uniformed firefighters

stood in formation as the names of fallen firefighters and emergency medical personnel were read aloud during a Roll Call of the Fallen. Family members, retirees and colleagues joined in the remembrance in a display of respect and gratitude.

The annual ceremony serves not

only as a memorial to those who died in the line of duty but also as a reminder of the risks faced daily by first responders. In addition to McClellan, speakers included AFD Chief Hernandez, who highlighted the importance of preserving the legacy of those who served before them and learning from past trag-

edies to enhance firefighter safety for future generations.

A highlight of the event was the sounding of a ceremonial bell and a moment of silence, traditional symbols within the fire service that mark a firefighter's final call.

The Ivy Hill memorial ceremony remains one of Alexandria's

oldest civic traditions, tracing its roots back more than 170 years. Each year, it reinforces the city's commitment to remembering those who dedicated their lives to protecting others and ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

www.ivyhillcemetery.net



The annual Roll Call of the Fallen is marked by the ringing of a bell for each lost firefighter.



AVFD president Jay Johnson, retired paramedic Jeremy Lenzer and AFD chief Felipe Hernandez stand by the wreath placed in memory of lost firefighters Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery.



A wreath in memory of fallen firefighters was placed Oct. 9 at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT

CLINICS ARE OPEN

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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

NOW THRU NOV. 1

Plein Air Sketches. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artist's reception Sunday, Sept. 27 from 4 to 6 p.m. Featuring works by Anne Alden, Ann Meagher Cook, Carol Cowie, Katie Flack, Abigail Muncy, Christine Raymond, Margaret Stewart, Ann Tannous.

NEPENTHE GALLERY EVENTS

Location: Nepenthe Gallery, 7928 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria.

- ❖ October 22nd: Tours with Bill: Art and History Featuring BILL SHUTE;
- ❖ October 29th: Grand Re-Opening.

OCT. 17 TO NOV. 7

"She Loves Me." At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. In 1934 Budapest, co-workers Georg and Amalia seemingly despise one another at

Maraczek's Parfumerie. After both respond to a "lonely hearts ad" in the newspaper, they now live for the letters that they exchange, not knowing that the stranger they're falling in love with is their own worst enemy. Based on the play, Parfumerie, which inspired the films The Shop Around the Corner, In the Good Old Summertime, and You've Got Mail and from the creative team behind Fiddler on the Roof, many theatre-goers feel this effervescent, witty, romantic show is the perfect little musical. Show times Thursdays to Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinee at 2 p.m.

THURSDAY/OCT. 22

The Chamber ALX Young Leaders Network After Hours. 5:30 to 7 p.m. At The Commodore Old Town, Alexandria. Join them for drinks, bites, and a room full of Alexandria's young business leaders ready to mix, mingle, and make some new connections. Don't miss our final Young Leaders After Hours of the year.

FRIDAY/OCT. 23

Bone/Joint Health. 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. At Kingstowne Regional Library, 7130 Silver Lake Blvd., Alexandria. NOVA ScriptsCentral presents an interactive workshop on Bone & Joint Health! Learn about common conditions that affect bones and joints, practical ways to keep bones strong, medications and supplements for bone health, and exercises that support healthy movement. They'll end with a fun, hands-on activity where participants will use modeling clay to create their own bone shapes while putting what they learned into practice!

SATURDAY/OCT. 24

Both Sides Tour. 8:15 a.m. Meets at Franconia Museum, located in the new Governmental Center, 7130 Silver Lake Boulevard, Suite 103, Alexandria. Park in the garage and go to the first floor. The museum will be touring the sites and locations of the famous Black Horse Troop (Company H, Fourth Virginia Cavalry), that was formed in Warrenton, Virginia (where the town changed hands 67 times). During First Manassas the Black Horse troopers rode black horses and wore black boots, and hats. The tour will be visiting New Baltimore, Cub Run Bridge, the Warren Green Hotel, in Warrenton, General William H.F. Payne's house, Warrenton Cemetery, Waterloo Bridge and Corporal Robert E. McCormick's grave (Don Hakenson's great-great grandfather). If you are interested in attending, send a check for \$130 made out to Don Hakenson, 4708 Lillian Drive, Alexandria, VA 22310. Don Hakenson's cell phone is 703-785-5294.

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Medicare 101. 1:30-3 p.m. At Kingstowne Regional Library, 7130 Silver Lake Blvd., Alexandria. Got Medicare questions? This session, presented by the Fairfax County Virginia Insurance Counseling and assistance team (VICAP), will cover Medicare parts A - D, as well as supplemental plans. The event will be held in Room G105 of the Franconia Governmental Center, one floor below Kingstowne Regional Library.



"She Loves Me" is showing Oct. 17 to Nov. 7, 2026 at the Little Theatre of Alexandria. (Pictured): Maura Lacy and Brandon Schenk (Ilona and Kodayl).

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Is ACPS Meeting the Mark? 7 p.m. At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. Panel discussion presented by Agenda: Alexandria. The City of Alexandria allocates one-third of its budget to education. Students need and deserve an excellent education. Are we meeting the mark in Alexandria? That is the overarching question that this Agenda:Alexandria event will focus on. Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are a key tool used to measure our students' education and therefore the impact of the city's investment. An SOL is designed to assess whether students are meeting state grade-level standards in reading, math, science, and history. The tests provide a statewide snapshot that informs school accountability and high school graduation requirements. What is the trajectory of the test scores and how can we improve? How do we compare to our neighboring jurisdictions? If our numbers are in need of improvement, what specific efforts should we demand? And, how can parents help their students succeed? The program will address these questions through a moderated discussion featuring four expert panelists representing a wide range of expertise and perspectives.

WEDNESDAY/OCT. 28

The Chamber ALX 2026 Best in Business Awards. 6-9 p.m. At Westin Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria. Celebrate excellence in business with the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce at the signature awards event! They will honor Jen Walker as the 2026 Business Leader of the Year and recognize standout companies across a range of competitive categories. It's their very own version of the Oscars—complete with a red carpet and inspiring stories that showcase the innovation, resilience, and success of Alexandria's business community.

SATURDAY/NOV. 7

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

NOV. 7-8

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra: Pictures at an Exhibition. Conductor Chia-Hsuan Lin and pianist Dinara Klinton join the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra for a program filled with color, energy, and imagination. Lin leads ASO through music by Polina Nazaykinskaya, Sergei Prokofiev, and Modest Mussorgsky, while Klinton takes center stage for Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3. ❖ Saturday, Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall; ❖ Sunday, Nov. 8 at 3 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial.

THURSDAY/NOV. 12

The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network. 5:30 to 7 p.m. Evening of Perfect Pairings: Wine + Chocolate, Women + Business. At Goodwin House Alexandria. Get ready for an evening of wine, chocolate, delicious bites, and great connections at this Perfect Pairings event. Featuring wines and perfectly paired bites inspired by destinations across the globe—all while celebrating the connections, accomplishments, and possibilities that make our business community so special. Raise your glass. Expand your network. Indulge a little. Celebrate a lot.

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.

OCTOBER

Thu. 22: Phil Vassar (Acoustic) w/ Talbot Mayo \$59.50
Fri. 23: David Cross \$49.50
Sat. 24: Josh Ritter: A Book Of Gold Thrown Open \$49.50 **SOLD OUT!**
Sun. 25: Josh Ritter: A Book Of Gold Thrown Open \$49.50
Tue. 27: Emma Nissen \$35.00
Thu. 29: Boney James \$95.00
Fri. 30: Walter Beasley \$59.50

NOVEMBER

Sun. 1: Dweezil Zappa DZ20: Like Father, Like Son \$99.50
Mon. 2
Tue. 3: Choir! Choir! Choir! Presents: Landslide: An Epic Fleetwood Mac Singalong! \$35.00
Wed. 4: Ashley Monroe & Charlie Worsham \$35.00
Thu. 5: Euge Groove \$45.00
Fri. 6: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sat. 7: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sun. 8: Jake Shimabukuro \$49.50
Wed. 11: Jamal Roberts \$59.50
Thu. 12: Marty Stuart and His Fabulous Superlatives \$80.50
Fri. 13: Chante' Moore \$89.50
Sat. 14: Chante' Moore \$89.50
Sun. 15: Hiroshima \$59.50
Mon. 16: Rachael Yamagata w/ Will Dailey \$39.50
Tue. 17: Judy Collins: Sweet Judy Blue Eyes – Farewell Tour, with Oakland Rain \$79.50
Wed. 18: Judy Collins: Sweet Judy Blue Eyes – Farewell Tour, with Oakland Rain \$79.50
Thu. 19: Jesse Cook \$49.50
Fri. 20: Trae Crowder \$49.50
Sat. 21: Trae Crowder \$49.50
Sun. 22: Marshall Crenshaw w/ Sarah Borges & Eric Ambel \$49.50
Fri. 27: An Evening with The Seldom Scene \$45.00
Sat. 28: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston \$69.50

Obituary

Obituary



Jeannine Anderson

Jeannine Fitts Anderson, age 93, of Alexandria, Virginia, passed away peacefully on August 30, 2026. Born in Amesbury, Massachusetts, she was a longtime resident of Alexandria and a beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by all who knew her.

Jeannine was a devoted mother to Jeannine Michelle Anderson, Catherine Doris Anderson, Daniel Anderson and his wife, Leslie, and the late Joseph Franklin Anderson Jr. Her family was at the heart of her life, and she took great pride in the lives, accomplishments, and happiness of her children and grandchildren.

She was a cherished grandmother to Knowlton Anderson and Camden Anderson and his wife, Katie, and a proud great-grandmother to Elliott Anderson. Her love, strength, and devotion to her family created a lasting legacy that will live on through the generations.

Jeannine will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, where she will be reunited with her beloved husband, Joseph Franklin Anderson. The love they shared and the life they built together will remain a treasured part of their family's history and memories.

Graveside services will be scheduled and announced at a later date.

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THE GAZETTE 2026 VOTER GUIDE

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

The 2026 Voter Guide is designed to help prepare readers for the Nov. 3 general election and early voting.

Our questions for federal candidates focused on key local concerns, to address priorities of the community members they seek to serve.

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

Connection QUESTIONS asked of all Congressional Candidates:

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Under Department of Housing and Urban

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

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

road users?

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia's economy relies heavily on tens of thousands of federal civil servants and contractors, whose spending sustains local small businesses and the regional job market. How will you protect federal workforce jobs and government contracting, and what strategies will you pursue to support Northern Virginia workers and industries impacted by economic shifts?

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

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Candidates for United States Senate, Statewide

Member, United States Senate — Statewide

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

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Mark R. Warner (Democrat)

Q1 Housing & Zoning:

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



COURTESY PHOTO

**Sen. Mark R.
Warner (D)**

property into much-needed affordable housing.

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

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Federal workers in Virginia and across the country are the backbone of services Americans depend on. As the Trump administration continues to target federal workers and use them as political bargaining chips, it is critical to defend the job security, pay, and benefits of our dedicated civil service. I have fought against the administration's attacks on federal workers, from trying to access their sensitive data to attempting to weaken longstanding civil service protections. My Federal Worker Credit Protection Act is legislation to protect federal workers' credit histories during a government shutdown. I have also introduced legislation to keep federal wages competitive, prohibit RIFs during a shutdown, and preserve collective bargaining for federal workers.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: As I travel around the Commonwealth, I listen to Virginians and I take what they say seriously. Virginians are already being crushed by rising energy costs and they shouldn't have to foot the bill for the data centers in their neighborhood. These companies should have to pay their own electric bills. I've introduced legislation to require greater transparency about energy and water use and other impacts, make data centers pay for the grid upgrades they require instead of passing those costs on to residents, and condition valuable tax benefits on meeting strong efficiency standards.

**Bert K.
Mizusawa (R)**

Did not reply.



COURTESY PHOTO

Bert K. Mizusawa (R)
Did not reply.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Candidates for United States House of Representatives, District 8

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Member, U.S. House — District 8

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's 8th Congressional District race — Democratic incumbent Donald S. Beyer Jr., Republican challenger Tony A. Sabio, Libertarian challenger Shelly M. Arnoldi, and Independent challenger Tim S. Sharman — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. We created a questionnaire and asked candidates about issues facing our region, including housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections, and regional utility regulation. We capped responses at 500 words total and truncated anything beyond that limit. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Donald S. Beyer, Jr. (Democrat — Incumbent)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: I am a vocal fighter in the House for policies to make housing more affordable. On the House Ways and Means Committee I lead on housing with the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, portions of which were enacted last year. I secured federal funding for local affordable housing projects in Northern Virginia. This year, I helped enact the 21st Century ROAD To Housing Act to improve federal housing programs and expand financing options to spur home construction and make housing more affordable.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: My strong track record strengthening our transportation infrastructure and ensuring transit in the DMV is safe and reliable includes helping pass legislation to fund WMATA and create new safety oversight for the Metro system, and passing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to fund transit and other surface transportation. I helped secure funds to renovate Arlington Memorial Bridge, passed legislation to enable the Long Bridge Project to expand rail traffic over the Potomac River, and brought federal dollars home for investments in our bus systems. I've also worked hard to secure safety improvements on local roadways like GW Parkway.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: The Trump Administration's assault on the federal workforce has been devastating. Thousands of civil servants who deserved thanks for their tireless work for the American people were fired illegally, and the essential services they provide were gutted on the whim of corrupt figures like Elon Musk. I've done all I can to stand up for our feds, through direct challenges to the Administration, through legislation, and by holding jobs fairs and resource fairs for federal workers. It's hard to describe all I have done in response to this local crisis in the space allotted; I wrote about those efforts at greater length here.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: I support policies and have introduced legislation to protect ratepayers from higher electricity costs. I have also long worked to address challenges that hamper the delivery of affordable, reliable energy to the grid. I share Virginians' concerns about the proposed Dominion-NextEra merger, and have long shared the view that consolidation can be harmful to consumers. The merger should only go forward if it is in the best interests of ratepayers and workers, and I am deeply skeptical that this will ultimately be the case.

Tony A. Sabio (Republican — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: My goal is to make homeownership attainable while respecting local zoning authority. I would establish a Builder Tax Credit to encourage starter-home and a Workforce Homeownership Tax Credit for police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, EMTs, and medical personnel. I would cut unnecessary federal red tape that delays construction and raises costs while supporting responsible use of Housing Choice Vouchers, HOME funding, and housing tax credits. I would also examine appropriate underused federal land for housing. We need more supply, lower costs, and pathways to homeownership.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia needs both reliable transit and roads that move. I would support long-term federal infrastructure funding for Metro reliability and safety, roads, bridges, congestion relief, and faster project delivery. I support programs such as Safe Streets and Roads for All when they help Fairfax address dangerous intersections and protect vulnerable road users. Transportation policy must also recognize that many Northern Virginia families depend on automobiles. We should improve Metro and bus connectivity while investing in roadway capacity and infrastructure that reduces congestion rather than forcing residents into one transportation option.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia's federal employees and contractors are important to our economy. Government should be efficient and accountable, but indiscriminate cuts are not reform. I would protect mission-critical positions and strengthen opportunities for small and veteran-owned federal contractors. But Northern Virginia must also become less economically dependent on the federal government. I want to build a new jobs ecosystem by attracting and growing industries in advanced nuclear energy, technology, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades, supported by apprenticeships and workforce development. We can protect essential jobs today while creating high-paying private-sector careers for tomorrow and building a stronger, more diversified Northern Virginia economy.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Congress does not set Virginia's retail electricity rates, but federal policy significantly affects energy supply, transmission, reliability, and ultimately costs. My Promise for America prioritizes reliable American energy and grid modernization. I would advance the Nuclear Ready Grid Zone Act, support advanced nuclear and small modular reactors, strengthen domestic transformer production, and accelerate responsible permitting. With data centers creating enormous new electricity demand, I would pursue greater transparency over infrastructure cost allocation so residential customers are not disproportionately burdened. Our objective should be more power, greater reliability, and lower long-term costs.

Shelly M. Arnoldi (Libertarian — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Federal housing programs like vouchers, tax credits, and land deals grow the bureaucracy without doing much to make housing cheaper. They add rules and then subsidize the cost of the rules. I'd cut the federal mandates and paperwork that make it slow and expensive to build here, and let localities make their own zoning decisions instead of tying them to federal strings. When the federal government is involved, it should put citizens and legal residents first. We get more housing by clearing government out of the way, not by adding another program on top of the last one.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia needs roads and transit that actually work, but I won't vote for another giant spending bill full of earmarks and wishful thinking. I've spent 27 years managing federal construction projects, so I know the difference between money that fixes a bottleneck and money that vanishes into overhead. I'd put existing infrastructure dollars toward maintenance and congestion re-

lief, with real accountability for what gets delivered, and I'd oppose the bloated programs that leave taxpayers paying more for less.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: This region runs on federal workers and contractors, and I'll protect those jobs. I spent years working inside the federal system as an engineer, so I've seen the waste and the bureaucracy firsthand. I have zero tolerance for financial misconduct with taxpayers' money. I'd push for transparent budgets, cut the unnecessary administrative layers, and hold the government accountable for every dollar it spends. I'd also lower taxes and red tape so small businesses can grow here, so the 8th District isn't one budget fight away from crisis.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Two things are driving up what families pay: taxpayer subsidies for unreliable wind and solar projects, and data centers pulling huge new loads onto the grid. I'd end those subsidies. Energy that can't stand on its own shouldn't be propped up on the backs of ratepayers. And I'd hold data centers responsible for their own energy and water, not at the expense of working families. Big power users should fund and secure their own supply, not push the cost or the reliability risk onto households. As an environmental engineer, my priority is simple: power that's reliable and affordable.

Tim S. Sharman (Independent — Challenger)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: would encourage the General Assembly to give Northern Virginia localities substantially greater autonomy over housing and land-use. At the federal level, I would complement that with infrastructure grants that help communities build more housing where transportation and other infrastructure can support it.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: We need federal grants that increase transportation capacity and get more cars off our congested roads. I live close to the Wilson Bridge, and it's a factory of misery most afternoons. We should invest more in mass transit, including exploring commuter ferries on the Potomac. We also need to make our roads safer. In urban areas that means addressing dangerous parking, double parking, scooters and other conflicts between road users. On our highways, reckless driving remains a serious problem. Federal transportation and safety grants should help local communities tackle these problems.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia cannot afford another federal government shutdown. The 2025 shutdown caused immense harm to federal workers, their families, contractors and local businesses. Imagine having your paycheck simply not show up twice. I believe there's a real risk of further shutdowns in 2027–28. We should pass legislation as soon as possible guaranteeing federal workers are paid on time during any future shutdown. I would also protect Northern Virginia's federal workforce and contracting base from arbitrary cuts while supporting reforms that make government work more effectively for Americans. Federal workers and this region should never become pawns of political dysfunction.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Local communities should decide whether and where data centers are built. Families and small businesses should not pay higher electricity and water costs because enormous new data centers arrive in their communities — the SCC's GS-5 rate class addresses that. And we also need to rapidly build the energy America will need. We need more generation, more transmission and a more resilient grid. I support building all forms of power generation where they make economic and environmental sense. The answer to rapidly growing electricity demand cannot simply be higher bills for existing customers. At the Federal level we must abolish the Justice Department's AI Litigation Task Force, which was created to challenge state AI laws. The data center issue is so politically hot right now because people are rightly scared for their jobs. We need to prepare for the transformation of work. That's why America needs an AI & Robotics Transition Program.

Are You Listening to Me?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I think I crossed the relationship Rubicon in the early days of our marriage, sometime in the early 80s. Dina and I had gotten married in the fall of 1978 and it took a few years to build up the trust and familiarity with one another so that in the following examples, I wasn't being sent totally on a fool's errand.

The first example of my wife having to ask/send me on an errand that was normal for her (but due to miscellaneous physical problems became difficult)/awkward for me was to buy feminine hygiene products for her. (And yes, I would look for a male cashier to lessen my anxiety.) Under the circumstances, I was happy to help; a bit uncomfortable with the process, nevertheless, I did what any good husband would do. However, not having been raised with sisters or having had too many serious girlfriends previously, I was quite inexperienced for the task at hand. That being understood between both parties, and my having failed at previous similar "shopping," I began to ask Dina for explicit, mind-numbing details - and back-up options as well, to buy exactly what she needed me to buy. And since there were no cellphones back then, I was given those details because if left to my own devices, Dina no doubt would have ended up with a variety not of her preference. After fits and starts and poor choices by yours truly on previous occasions, eventually I learned what options - so to speak, to select and what never to get. Over time and with proper follow-up training, I became a reliable purchaser.

The second similar situation involved the purchase of stockings. Sometimes, Dina would get behind in her preparation - or suffer a stocking malfunction, and once again, yours truly would be thrown into the breach. And quite a breach it was. There seemed to be endless varieties: size, color, "sheer," "opaque," "reinforced toe," "ventilated panel," "reinforced waistband," et cetera. It was all very intimidating, almost equal to the feminine hygiene aisle. "I was," to quote my late brother, Richard, "flying blind." Moreover, I had become aware of the importance of the correct stocking. Likewise, this was no place for an executive decision to be made by you know who. As repeated purchasing opportunities arose, it gave me a chance to right some previous wrongs. I was now writing down Dina's explicit instructions on a piece of paper. Forearmed is forewarned. A necessary step as it had become clear I had bad stocking-purchase instincts.

The final example which re-arose recently are food selections made at the supermarket. Typically, I am the food shopper (Dina is the social director). And since we have different tastes/requirements, again I am thrust into situations where if my instincts take over, I will likely make the wrong selection. Cottage cheese and yogurt are those recent requests where I am at a loss. At least now, after multiple errors or incorrect presumptions, I know to ask specific questions depending on whether the product is available or not. (Obviously cellphones make this current issue less impactful as the two previous examples but hopefully you'll appreciate the problem nonetheless.)

If I were left to fend for myself in the dairy aisle, I would likely come home with less-than-desirable choices. For cottage cheese, I need to know the brand (no substitutions I now know), the size of the container, the fat content, the curd size and the sell-by date. Are there flavors? I don't know. I'm getting plain. As for yogurt: what brand? what size? what fat content? what flavor (very important?) what style (flip top, with or without fruit, Greek or not? Not that I'm a dunce but if I don't my notes in hand, once I'm in store and see all the choices and variables, my mind goes blank. Every product looks and sounds similar enough to what Dina requested - but?

Years ago when I was a rookie husband, these choices were all new to me. Very often I did not fare very well. I was willing but for awhile, it appeared as if I was unable. But I was willing to learn and I was somewhat coachable. Oh sure, I made plenty of mistakes. Generally speaking, I knew what trouble was in the offing by the request and tried to anticipate my inevitable failings. But thanks to my evolution as a husband, I write everything down now and then review it all with Dina before I leave the house. Sure the cellphone eliminates the real disasters but sometimes my instincts kick in and it's 1978 all over again. I never said I was perfect.

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

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