

CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

# 2011 AWARDS

FROM

VIRGINIA PRESS ASSOCIATION

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PART 6

# Mount Vernon Gazette



LOUISE KRAFFT

**Second Place in Picture Story or Essay:**

Graduation Day in the Mount Vernon District

*Judges comments:* Good variety of a regular event  
in the community.

# Mount Vernon Gazette



MICHAEL LEE POPE  
**Second Place in Business and Financial Writing**



# The Price Of Influence

People who have business before the Board of Supervisors contribute to incumbents.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

**W**hy do people give money to candidates for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors?

"People give money in politics to get what they want," said Stephen Farnsworth, communications professor at George Mason University. "If they weren't getting what they want they wouldn't keep giving money."

From developers to commercial real estate owners and property management companies, the roster of people who have given money to incumbent members of the Board of Supervisors reads like a Planning Commission docket. It's all legal in Virginia, which has no restrictions on who can give or how much money they can contribute — as long as it's disclosed. But following the money isn't always easy.

"I think what voters are really interested in is transparency," said Lincolnia Park Civic Association President Loretta Prencipe. "We really want to understand who is donating. And when campaign contributions are made under entities that aren't transparent. It raises questions for us."

Take an entity known as Tysons West Assemblage LLC. The limited liability company is a group of commercial real-estate developers who own land near the new Tysons West Metro station. Providence District Supervisor Linda Smyth said that she did not accept campaign contributions when the plan for Tysons Corner was being crafted. But now that the only pending business before the Board of Supervisors is a series of rezoning decisions, all bets are off.

"What is going on at Tysons," explained Smyth, "is that there are small land owners who consolidate and set up a partnership."

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE RECORDS** show the limited liability company has given \$5,000 to Supervisor Smyth and \$30,000 to Chairwoman Sharon Bulova. Smyth accepted the money, but says her vote is not for sale.

"They do not get any special favors from me," said Smyth. "Let me put it that way."

Some argue that money does buy influence, or at least access. Sue Tolchin is author of *Pinstripe Patronage: Political Favoritism from the Clubhouse to the White House and Beyond*. She says it's unethical for members of the Board of Supervisors to take

## Sharon Bulova

Chairman of the Board of Supervisors

● total money raised: \$1,016,755  
● construction and real estate: \$220,426



## Pat Herrity

Springfield District

● total money raised: \$198,887  
● construction and real estate: \$54,900



## Jeff McKay

Lee District

● total money raised: \$122,018  
● construction and real estate: \$49,517



## John Cook

Braddock District

● total money raised: \$216,681  
● construction and real estate: \$46,300



## Penny Gross

Mason District

● total money raised: \$152,558  
● construction and real estate: \$42,885



## Gerry Hyland

Mount Vernon District

● total money raised: \$219,561  
● construction and real estate: \$40,743



## Michael Frey

Sully District

● total money raised: \$147,237  
● construction and real estate: \$35,473



## John Foust

Dranesville District

● total money raised: \$222,106  
● construction and real estate: \$34,784



## Linda Smyth

Providence District

● total money raised: \$139,765  
● construction and real estate: \$14,250



## Catherine Hudgins

Hunter Mill

● total money raised: \$59,341  
● construction and real estate: \$3,625



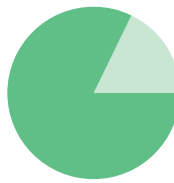
2008 to 2011 campaign finance information from the Virginia Public Access Project

money from people who have pending or future business in the county.

"On the face of it, it's unethical," said Tolchin. "They are paying in effect to get a certain decision."

Supervisors disagree, saying that people contribute to campaigns because they agree with their values. Take developer Theodore Georgelas, who frequently has business before the county. In the last

SEE CAMPAIGN FINANCING, PAGE 21



## Fall Harvest Family Days

The line was long at the fire and down the lane on the colonial farm as visitors roasted apples over open flames for a taste of the sweet harvest at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate last weekend.

PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFFT/  
THE GAZETTE



Mount Vernon volunteer Gretchen Bondurant spears an apple quarter to the end of a stick for roasting.



The Cooper Marshall Scheetz sets the base of a barrel with the help of Justin Filipowski.



Lydia Martin plays a few French and Irish tunes on her recorder.



Young visitors race through the haystacked maze beneath the barn in the Colonial Farm.



# Campaign Financing Under Scrutiny

FROM PAGE 3

decade, he's contributed more than \$95,000 to a variety of political action committees and candidates. One of those is Braddock District Supervisor John Cook, who received \$1,000 from Georgelas.

"Look, Ted Georgelas as well as other people in the business community want a strong business environment," said Cook. "That's something I ran on."

**ACROSS FAIRFAX COUNTY**, supervisors have taken more than \$2 million this election cycle. Much of that money has come from the real-estate and construction industry, a group of people and businesses that often has business before the county. Some of them, such as Tysons West Assemblage, will have rezoning applications in the future. Others, such as developer Daniel Clemente have had business in the past. Campaign-finance records show that an entity called 8500 CDC LP, which has ties to Clemente, has given \$12,000 to incumbent Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross.

"I worked with Mr. Clemente and his organization on some developments of new housing in the Skyline area of Bailey's Crossroads," said Gross. "It's a wonderful new revitalization."

Her Republican challenger, David Feld has raised questions about Gross' fundraising. When asked about fundraising numbers during a debate this month hosted by the League of Women Voters, Feld

criticized Gross for taking money from people who have had businesses before the Board of Supervisors or will potentially have business in the future.

"I believe it's unethical to take contributions from anybody that you're doing business with," said Feld, who loaned his campaign \$27,000 to fund his race for the Mason District race.

**SOME HAVE CALLED** for reform, although nobody is expecting to see change anytime soon. Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay said he supports imposing limits on how much people could donate, although he's not sure what the limits should be.

He also supports some form of public financing for campaigns, although he acknowledged he's not sure how it should work or how much public money should be involved.

Until then, he said, he's going to keep working the system.

"Until there's some reform in how you raise money, you would be a fool not to raise significant amounts of money," said McKay.

Not all the money comes from people who have direct businesses before the Board of Supervisors. Sometimes the relationships are indirect.

"The biggest contributor to my campaign was my husband," said Supervisor Smyth.

Was he trying to influence a decision?

"Well," said Smyth. "I'm hoping he'll take me to dinner."

## More

Readers can find more on contributions to candidates at VPAP.org.


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UCM is thankful for the generous support of the Mount Vernon Gazette.

**Mount Vernon Gazette**

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# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

AUGUST 11, 2011

## Running At-Large

Issues, candidates, create closely watched race.

BY VICTORIA ROSS  
THE GAZETTE

**D**ebates over discipline, boundaries, budgets, standardized tests and sleep have generated Fairfax County's most closely watched and contested School Board race in the board's 19-year history.

"Is this an outrageously large slate of candidates? Yes," said Susan Jennings, Fairfax County's coordinator for candidate services since 1994. "I haven't seen this much interest since 1995, when we had our first School Board elections. That was very chaotic."

Of the 12 School Board seats, six are up for grabs, including three at-large seats. The only at-large incumbent running for reelection is Ilryong Moon, who served three terms on the board, including a stint as the board's chair in 2006. Incumbents who will not seek reelection include Stu Gibson (Hunter Mill), Tessie Wilson (Braddock), Brad Center (Lee), Tina Hone (At-large), Jim Raney (At-large) and Liz Bradsher (Springfield).

"When you have that many vacancies, you get more people interested in throwing their hat in the ring," Jennings said.

Currently, 11 candidates are running for the at-large seats, and the top three vote getters on Nov. 8 will serve a four-year term, with an annual salary of \$20,000.

As of Monday, Aug. 8, 10 candidates are running for the at-large seats, and the top three vote-getters on Nov. 8 will serve a 4-year term, with an annual salary of \$20,000. They are Jeannie H. Armstrong, Sheree Brown-Kaplan, Catherine Clark, Christina M. Guthrie, Lin-Dai Y. Kendall, Lolitta Mancheno-Smoak, Ryan L. McElveen, Irylong Moon, Steven Stuban and Ted Velkoff.

Trying to pin down exactly who

SEE AT-LARGE, PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

### In the Garden

The newly planted north upper garden has been replanted on the border with hundreds of small boxwoods. Beginning recently in 2005, the Mount Vernon Estate archeologists dug into different areas of the upper garden south of the green house to try and determine how the garden might have been as George Washington planted and saw it in the 18th century. This season the garden has been replanted with vegetables and flowers that draw pollinators to their blossoms. The work is still in progress.



A Buckeye butterfly finds a tempting flower to eat from.



A spider lily bursts forth with color.



Favorites of bees and birds, varieties of sunflowers have been planted on the edges of the flower garden to encourage pollinating of the vegetables and fruit enclosed.

## Exemptions Questioned

Properties at Inova Mount Vernon under investigation.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

**D**eath may be part of life at Mount Vernon Inova Hospital, but taxes aren't. And now that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has given a green light to an expansion at the hospital, new questions are emerging about tax-free status of the hospital and surrounding buildings.

The Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration does not assess property taxes for the hospital, which is built on land owned by the county. A spokeswoman for the county said state law forbids jurisdictions from assessing taxes on hospitals. Now that the hospital is moving forward with a \$43.5 million expansion project, the amount of tax-free property on the site is set to dramatically improve.

"It has nothing to do with the fact that the county owns the land," said Merni Fitzgerald, director of public affairs for Fairfax County. "Even if it weren't on county-owned land, the hospital would be exempt from property taxes because of the state code."

SEE EXEMPTIONS, PAGE 4

## Kammerer, Cooper Face Off in Sheriff's Primary

Aug. 23 primary will determine Republican nominee for sheriff.

BY ALEX McVEIGH  
THE GAZETTE

**W**es Kammerer and Bill Cooper will face off for the Republican nomination for Fairfax County Sheriff in the Aug. 23 primary. Both men are running for the chance to run against three-term incumbent Sheriff Stan Barry (D).

The Fairfax County Sheriff's Of-

fice is responsible for managing the Adult Detention Center, providing courthouse security and serving civil law process. Founded in 1742, it is one of the oldest law enforcement agencies in the country, and with more than 600 employees, it is the largest sheriff's office in Virginia.

Kammerer was born in New York City, and joined the Army at age 17. He served in the Army for sev-

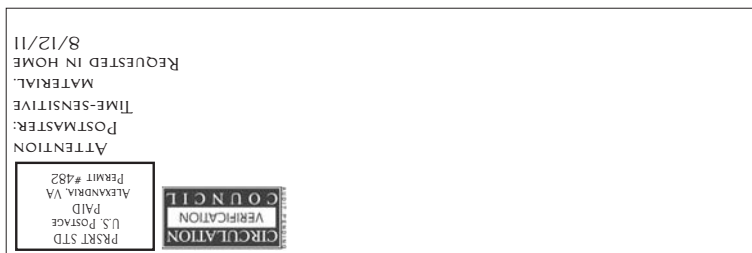
eral years before joining the New York City Police Department in 1962.

During his 26 years with the NYPD, he served in numerous positions, including on the firearms discharge review, as an investiga-

tor in the Office of Internal Affairs and a detective with the Office of the Chief of NYPD.

He left the NYPD in 1989 and joined the Secret Service in 1990, where he worked for 12 years in a

SEE KAMMERER, PAGE 4





# At-large School Board Race: One To Watch

FROM PAGE 1

is running — or not running — is not that easy, Jennings said. Potential candidates have until Aug. 23 to declare his or her candidacy.

“It’s tricky this time of year. Anything can happen in the next few weeks, and it probably will,” Jennings said. “The first thing I want to do is help keep them out of trouble (in the filing process),” Jennings said.

But the filing process has not been a major issue this election cycle. In addition to the heated rhetoric over the issues, drama over the candidates themselves has sharpened the focus on this race.

Although the School Board is officially a nonpartisan office, candidates actively seek endorsement by the county’s Republican or Democratic committees. No one has been elected without backing from one of the major political parties, but many say that could change this year.

On July 1, at-large candidate Charisse Espy Glassman, who was endorsed by the Fairfax County Democratic Committee on May 24, withdrew from race, citing personal reasons. It later came to light

that Glassman, the niece of former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, was charged with assault and possession of a prohibited weapon after the Jan. 24 incident in the District of Columbia, according to D.C. Superior Court records.

Currently Moon, Velkoff and McElveen have the Democratic Party’s endorsement.

When Glassman withdrew, Armstrong, a newcomer for an at-large seat, announced that she would seek the Democratic endorsement. After McElveen was chosen, Armstrong sent out a news release on Aug. 1 saying that she had filed an appeal to the endorsement vote, citing “multiple problems and irregularities with the endorsement election process.”

According to the release, her appeal was filed with the three Democratic Congressional District chairs for the congressional districts in Fairfax County and the Virginia Democratic Party. The Congressional District chairs or their appointees will hear the appeal pursuant to the Virginia Democratic Party Plan, the rules of the Democratic Party in Virginia.

On July 20, the Fairfax County Republican Committee handed down three at-large endorse-

ments. The endorsed candidates are Mancheno-Smoak, Kendall and Brown-Kaplan.

“It is critical that those serious contenders for the School Board have the drive to assure that the impressive gains that Fairfax has achieved not be devalued or diminished,” said Janet Olescek, who served one term on the School Board from 2004-08 as an at-large member. “Strong schools are necessary to continue to attract jobs, and maintain our excellent property values.”

**FAIRFAX COUNTY** Public Schools, the 11th largest school district in the nation with an estimated 177,629 students, operates on a \$2.2 billion budget, which is larger than the education budget of nearly 15 states. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors sets the tax rate for the school system; the School Board allocated funding. The total county transfer to support school operating and debt service is \$1.77 billion or 52.5 percent of total county disbursements.

Pat Herrity (R-Springfield), a member of the Board of Supervisors, said that he’s hearing a lot of anger from his constituents about the school system and the School

Board. “On the School Board race, I think there is enough anger on these issues that the bottom of the ticket races will drive some of the voter turnout,” Herrity said.

Herrity added that voters have voiced concerns to him about a variety of issues, including parental notification, the southwestern boundary study, the closing of Clifton Elementary, all-day kindergarten and what some call an inflexible disciplinary process.

Many parents and school advocates blamed FCPS’ rigid discipline policies when two students committed suicide. Josh Anderson, of South Lakes High School, took his life in March 2009; and Nick Stuban, called a “model student” at W.T. Woodson High School, committed suicide on Jan. 20.

Since his son’s death, Steve Stuban and his wife Sandy, who is battling Lou Gehrig’s disease, have become advocates for reforming the school system’s disciplinary process. With the support of many parents and friends, Stuban said he was also motivated to seek an at-large seat on the School Board.

“There are a lot of issues out there. It’s going to be an interesting race, to say the least,” Herrity said.

## Exemptions Questioned

FROM PAGE 1

But the list of properties that enjoy exemptions from property taxes isn’t confined to the new patient tower or the two new operating rooms. A new restaurant that’s part of the expansion will also enjoy immunity from property taxes. And the new offices that will be constructed at the hospital will also be tax free. The Sunrise assisted living facility at Inova Mount Vernon also benefits from the property-tax exemption.

“We’ve got a discontinuity here,” said attorney Patrick Rea. “If you are a doctor who has an office at the hospital, you’re not paying taxes as part of your rent but the doctors who have offices on the other side of Sherwood Hall Lane are paying taxes as part of their rent.”

**SHORTLY BEFORE** the Board of Supervisors considered Inova’s application for expansion last month, Rea sent a letter to elected officials asking them to consider addressing the issue during their deliberations on the application. The July 25 letter requests that the county find a way to start collecting money from the hospital’s improvements to the county-owned land.

“Inova has offered to contribute its ‘fair share’ towards the cost of traffic mitigation,” Rea wrote. “I believe that Inova’s fair share rises substantially when we factor in that the county does not receive regular annual real property tax payments from Inova.”

Supervisors did not address the issue when the hospital’s application was approved. But Rea’s letter opened the door to an investigation of the tax issues at Mount Vernon Inova Hospital. Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland said the investigation will determine what kind of lease arrangement Sunrise has with Inova Mount Vernon. If county officials determine that the property should have been taxed, Hyland said, the county has authority to collect for three years of back taxes.

“It’s a legitimate issue,” said Hyland. “And if we determine that the property should have been taxed, the director of assessments will have some questions to answer.”

# Kammerer, Cooper Face Off in Sheriff’s Primary

FROM PAGE 1

security capacity, including security support for Presidents George H.W. Bush (R) and Bill Clinton (D). He retired from the Secret Service in 2002.

Kammerer said he hopes to use his connections with federal agencies to create partnerships.

“I want to unify federal, state and municipal organizations in case of a catastrophe,” he said. “I’ve observed that these agencies can tend to get argumentative about who should be doing what.”

He also says one of his goals is to increase crime awareness among the county’s senior population.

“I aim to keep senior citizens informed so they don’t become victims,” he said. “I’d go out myself and speak to our seniors, to make sure they’re informed and make sure they have the proper literature to keep themselves educated.”

Kammerer said another one of his goals is to educate the community on the function of the Sheriff’s Office.

“I’d like to set up programs in our schools to teach kids about the Sheriff’s Office and who to go to for help,” he said. “Visibility is a

key factor, and I don’t see it, which is why I’m running. I want to unify with the Fairfax County Police Department to help with this.”

He said he also aims to streamline the Sheriff’s Office to make sure funds and manpower are allocated in the most efficient way.

“I’ll look and see where we can save money, where we can eliminate wasteful programs and duplication,” Kammerer said. “And my top priority will be to make sure we’re always turning out professionally trained sheriff’s deputies.”

More information on Kammerer can be found at [www.weskammererforsheriff.org](http://www.weskammererforsheriff.org), or on Facebook under “Wes Kammerer for Sheriff of Fairfax County.”

**COPPER IS** a native of Pittsburgh, Pa., and he moved to Fairfax County in 1976.

He served in the Army for three years, before joining the Arlington County Sheriff’s Office and then the Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office in 1988. During his tenure at the Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office, he worked in every division, including court security, the Adult Detention Center and the Criminal



Kammerer

Cooper

Justice Academy. He was also a certified law enforcement instructor.

He served on the office’s Fugitive Task Force, along with FBI agents and U.S. Marshals. He retired as a lieutenant in March.

“As a law enforcement officer, I feel my primary responsibility is to keep Fairfax families safe,” Cooper said. “I’ve always felt a strong commitment to protecting my country, and after I got out of the military, I still felt that commitment to protect citizens.”

He also said, if elected, he plans to enforce the more than 4,000 outstanding fugitive warrants in Fairfax County.

“I’d put together a task force with agencies I’ve worked with before to put these people behind bars, where they belong,” he said.

“If the Sheriff’s Office and the Fairfax County Police Department combine resources, we should be able to make it a budget neutral initiative.”

Cooper said he hopes to combat the growing gang problem in the county, as well as start a program to get deadbeat parents to pay up.

“I’m running on a ‘tough on crime’ agenda, and I plan to run a tough, strict jail,” he said. “I don’t believe convicted felons should be sitting around watching TV and eating bonbons.”

Cooper said he is also committed to expanding the reach of the Sheriff’s Office to keep families safe, saying that with approximately 500 sworn sheriff’s deputies, there is a lot they can do.

“Because of budget constraints and manpower issues, local and state law enforcement has to work closer together and share resources,” he said. “By doing so, we can keep costs down while rendering better services to this community.”

More information on Cooper can be found at [www.cooperforsheriff.net](http://www.cooperforsheriff.net), or on Facebook under “Cooper for Sheriff.”





PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

The future is uncertain at Penn-Daw Plaza.

## A Second Chance

### Supervisor McKay wants to avoid Kings Crossing debacle at Penn-Daw.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

Ever since the Shopper's Food Warehouse at the Penn-Daw Plaza closed in April, neighbors have been warily eyeing the future. Many say they want to avoid what happened across the street at Kings Crossing, where advocates for mixed-use development pushed for years as an ongoing study lingered indefinitely. The owner of the property felt the process was taking too long, so the parcel was developed "by right" — a process that side-stepped the county's ability to force the developer to pay for transportation improvements to handle the influx of new visitors.

Now, Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay has convened a task force to help forge a way forward.

"Instead of letting the developer tell us what to do or having county officials come up with a plan in a vacuum, we want to get a sense of what the economy will support," said McKay. "This is unprecedented, at least in my experience."

Walking through the Penn-Daw Plaza, and it's clear that change is in the air. The vacant grocery store was once a major anchor at the strip mall, bringing customers to the other businesses. Now that it's gone, the remaining businesses say they have already seen a dra

SEE AVOIDING, PAGE 5

## On Vacation and Saving Lives

### Couple praises 14-year-old's quick response.

BY KATHERINE PERKINS  
THE GAZETTE

Benjamin Haseltine of Fort Hunt may be 14 years old, but Bob and Sue Sherburne of Arlington, Mass., believe he is a hero. If it had not been for Ben's actions on a Maine seashore early last month, the Sherburnes might not be alive today.

On Aug. 9, Ben was on vacation with his family at Moody Beach near Wells, Maine. While enjoying the surf with his mother and sister, he noticed an older couple swimming several yards away. It took him a moment to realize the Sherburnes were in distress.

"I saw a rip tide carrying Mrs. Sherburne out like a slingshot," Ben later said. "She was in way over head." Sue's husband, Bill, was being dragged out as well.

According to the National Weather Service, rip currents — narrow belts of fast-moving water flowing away from shore — are the cause of more than 100 drowning accidents each year. Swimmers caught in rip currents are advised not to fight the current but to float or swim parallel to the shore until the current slackens. But such guidelines can be quickly forgotten in a few moments' panic.

Those moments were frightening ones for the Sherburnes. Sue Sherburne remembered to float on her back and called out for her husband to do the same. But Bob Sherburne soon began to tire: "I started to choke on seawater and realized I was about to drown. I was speaking to my Maker, ready to die," he recalled. At that moment he suddenly felt himself being guided toward shore.

It was Ben. After he had helped Bob Sherburne out of the path of the current and into shallower waters, Ben went back for Sue Sherburne. "He stretched his arm out to me and told me to grab his hand," Sue Sherburne said. "Once he'd pulled me to where I could stand, he gave me a hug and asked, 'are you OK?'"

Ben credits his strong swimming skills to many summers spent at Moody Beach, where his father, a



Ben Haseltine of Fort Hunt rescued a couple swimming near Wells, Maine.

"If it wasn't for Ben coming up to two strangers ... he put himself right into that rip tide. The best way I know how to thank him is to make sure everyone knows."

— Bob Sherburne

former lifeguard, taught him to swim and surf. A freshman at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School, Ben plays many other sports as well, including

SEE HERO, PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

### First Day Back to School

Mount Vernon High School seniors Michael Alney, Ethan Lane, LaTarryl Hall, Colbert Osgi-owusu and Yaphet Elias enjoy their first lunch in the newly opened "Senior Café."



Mount Vernon High School seniors enjoy lunch in the new "Senior's Café" in the school cafeteria. Pictured are Michael Parker, Karla Castellanos, Jacobo Hernandez and Robert Gill with Mount Vernon High School principal Nardos King.



# Avoiding Another Kings Crossing

FROM PAGE 3

matic decline. Many say they are worried about a future that includes high-end mixed-use development, a change that some say would price them out of the market.

"That would destroy my business," said Mike Best, manager at Colortyme. "It's just not my customer base."

**THE PENN-DAW PLAZA** takes its name from an old cottage-style inn named the Penn-Daw Hotel then at Kings Crossing. It was named for an Alexandria contractor named Samuel Cooper Dawson and Detroit hotel operator Edward Pennell, who worked together to create the cottages. For decades, it's been a central part of the community — a place where customers could buy a book at Books-A-Million, go grocery shopping at Shopper's or bowl in an alley located in the basement. Now that redevelopment is imminent, many say a mixed-use development should be at the top of the agenda.

"Just think about where we are," said Spring Bank resident Martin Tillett. "We're less than a mile from a Metro stop. You go anywhere else in the Washington metropolitan region and you're this close to a Metro stop, you see a lot of development going on. For some reason, we're missing the ball down here."

The future of Penn-Daw is a frequent topic of conversation at Books-A-Million, one of the few bookstores left in the region. Since the grocery store anchor closed in the spring, speculation has run rampant about the future of the strip mall. The conver-

sation grew more intense when one developer submitted plans to the county for the property, although McKay dismissed the plan as more of an effort to prevent the process from becoming mired in an endless study as was the case across the street at Kings Crossing.

"People are scared, and they don't know what's going to happen," said Jamillah Scott, a manager at the bookstore. "Many of our customers grew up with this shopping center and want to see it stay here."

**THE STAKES ARE** high at Penn-Daw, a major redevelopment opportunity along the Route 1 corridor. Advocates for redevelopment have been trying to bring upscale mixed-use development for years, although efforts have been stymied for a number of reasons. Some redevelopment advocates say McKay's task force could become a model for bringing the community together with developers to find a middle ground that will be more beneficial to all parties involved.

"Usually the developer takes a position on this hill over here and the community takes a position on this hill over here and we fight," said Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation president Kyle Telente. "What's unprecedented here is that the community has agreed to bring in a third party objective person whose specialty is market analysis and economic development to find out what can happen."

Telente says his organization is hopeful that the process will lead to transportation improvements at the convoluted intersection, which was dramatically affected by the opening of Wal-Mart.

## Novartis MS Education Link

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# Mount Vernon Gazette



JEANNE THEISMANN

**Second Place in Feature Story Writing:**

10th Anniversary of 9-11

*Judges comments:* Good job of writing about the 10-year anniversary of 9/11 - many stories were written, this was one of the better ones. Nice work.



## Heroics and Heartbreak

'We remember every day.'

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
THE GAZETTE

The photograph remains instantly recognizable: A single fragment of time captured on Sept. 12, 2001 when firefighters and military personnel unfurled a flag atop the Pentagon as a symbol of resilience and hope for a nation still paralyzed with disbelief at the events of the day before.

"You'd think after 10 years, it would get easier but it doesn't," said Lieutenant Jim Morris, one of four local firefighters pictured in what has become a defining image of the terrorist attack on the Pentagon. "The emotions of that day are still very difficult to talk about."

As Morris joined other Alexandria and Penn Daw Fire Station 11 personnel in the heroic rescue and recovery efforts at the Pentagon, his mind was 225 miles north in New York City, where his brother Seth was still unaccounted for in the rubble of the World Trade Center.

"The last we heard from him he was on the phone with his wife," Morris said of his brother, a broker with Cantor Fitzgerald work-

ing on the 105th floor of World Trade Center 1. "He hung up abruptly and said he had to go."

Morris and family members held out hope that Seth, who had survived the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, had somehow made it out of the building before it collapsed.

"We spent hours looking at thousands of pictures on the web of people who had evacuated, looking for his face in the crowds and hoping that he had survived," said Morris, who has been a firefighter and paramedic for 35 years. "We found out on Sept. 13 that nearly all the Cantor Fitzgerald employees had been trapped on the 105th floor and pretty much knew then he didn't make it."

As the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches, calls to Morris and the other local firefighters captured in the photograph — Capt. David G. Lange, Haz Mat Technician Robert Clarke and Apparatus Technician Randy Schwartz — have intensified and national media is devoting unprecedented coverage to the events of that day.

"This year is especially rough," said Morris, who tries to balance interview requests regarding the iconic photograph with his own



**Jim Morris's brother Seth perished in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.**

personal tragedy. "I thought that after 10 years I might be ready to watch one of the shows on the attacks so I tried watching a National Geographic documentary. After about five minutes I had to turn it off. It's still too hard."

As he has in years past, Morris, a married father of three children, will take leave and mark the anniversary privately with his family.

"The first couple of years I felt I should be with my co-workers," Morris said. "But it's really better if I am alone during this time. And this year especially, I don't want to be watching it on TV over and over again."

Morris's parents will also take off for a few days to mark the anniversary privately. Only his brother's widow, Lynn, who has remarried, will attend the memorial dedication ceremony in New York on Sept. 11.

"I tried attending a ceremony a couple of years ago in Milford, Conn., where my brother and I grew up," Morris said. "But it was just too difficult for me to be there."

As the nation prepares to commemorate 9/11, Morris will quietly mourn the loss of Seth — a brother, son, husband, father and



PHOTO BY PAUL MORSE/THE WHITE HOUSE

**Lt. Jim Morris and fellow firefighters from Alexandria and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Station 11 join soldiers atop the Pentagon to hang an American flag during rescue and recovery efforts Sept. 12, 2001.**

friend.

"I do understand the historical significance of the anniversary," Morris said. "But for those of us

who lost someone on 9/11, we don't just remember on one day. We remember every day."

### 9/11 Tributes

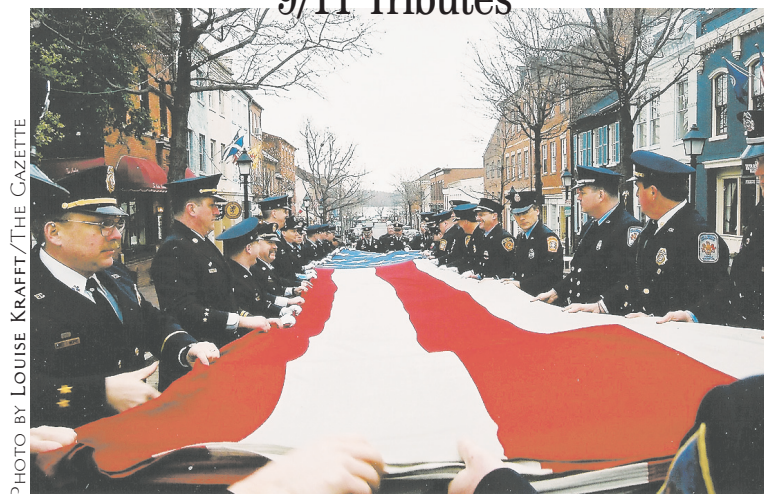


PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

After standing watch over the rebuilding of the south wall of the Pentagon following the terrorist attack, Old Glory was walked through Alexandria at the 2002 St. Patrick's Day Parade by members of the Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax County, Prince William County, Washington Airport and New York City fire departments.

#### FRIDAY/SEPT. 9

**9-11 Remembrance Ceremony.** 12 p.m. Market Square, 301 King St., Alexandria. The City of Alexandria will hold a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of Sept. 11, 2011. The ceremony will feature remarks from Alexandria Mayor William D. Euille, Alexandria Sheriff Dana Lawhorne, Police Chief Earl L. Cook, and Fire Chief Adam K. Thiel. The purpose is to give thanks and pay tribute to those who responded on 9-11.

#### SATURDAY/SEPT. 10

**National Day of Service and Remembrance.** 9:30 a.m. Mason Neck State Park, 7301 High Point Road, Lorton. Join the 9/11 Tribute Movement with Mason Neck State park as they host charitable activities to honor the 9/11 victims, survivors and those that rose in service in response to the attacks. Volunteer to clean the park shoreline, by collecting trash and debris that washes up along the Potomac River watershed. The river clean-up begins at 9:30 a.m. Afterwards, a dogwood tree will be planted in a dedication

ceremony in honor of the fallen heroes and their families affected by the 9/11 tragedy, as well as a moment of silence for all our heroes at war. In conjunction with the ceremony, the Gunston Fire Department, Station #20, will give safety lessons, a tour of the fire engine and fire safety demonstrations. Meet the Combat Veterans of America Motorcycle Club when they bring their Harleys for show and demonstrations. Free, parking fees apply to general public. VirginiaStateParks.gov or 703-339-2384.

**10th Anniversary Rededication Ceremony.** 4 p.m. The Memorial Garden at Wilton Woods was created after 9/11 as a place where the

public can come and find peace and beauty. Police Chief David Rohrer and Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay will be speaking. Co-sponsored by Wilton Woods Civic Association and the Wilton Woods Garden Club which maintains the garden. 3800 block of Ivanhoe Lane, Wilton Woods, Alexandria. Visit [www.gwwca.org/v1/memorial\\_garden.shtml](http://www.gwwca.org/v1/memorial_garden.shtml)

**9/11 Tribute.** 7:30 p.m. Arlington County will honor the 184 lives lost during the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon. At the Air Force Memorial — overlooking the Pentagon Memorial — the event that will include the U.S. Air Force Band Brass Quintet Ensemble and Joint Armed Forces Color Guard.

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## NEWS

# Blocked from View

**Police Department wants \$3.7 million for digital cameras, but video will not be public.**

By MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

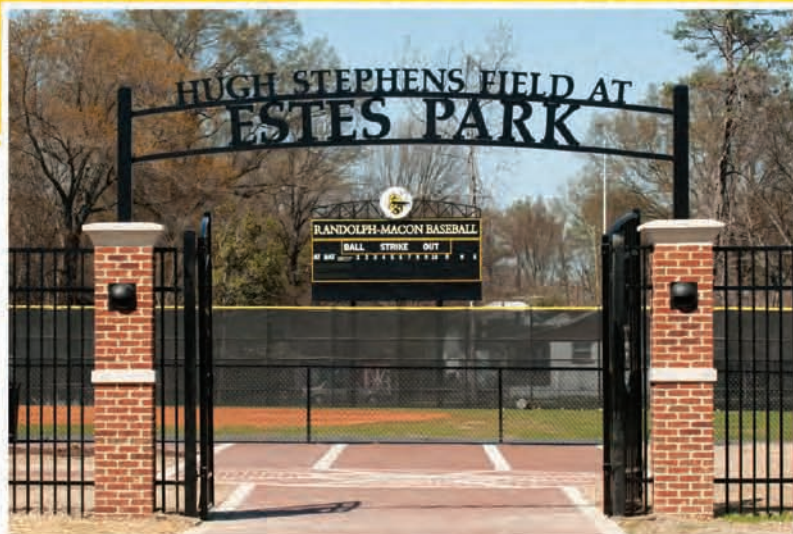
When Fairfax Police officer David Ziants shot and killed an unarmed driver on Richmond Highway in 2009, cruisers at the scene recorded the event on VHS videotape — a system that has since been removed from service. Public release of that video footage might answer many questions that have been raised about the shooting, including why force was necessary and whether or not the unarmed driver was shot from behind. But Fairfax police have consistently denied access to the footage, even when it was requested in a Virginia Freedom of Information Act request.

Now the Fairfax County Police Department is seeking \$3.7 million

to add digital cameras in all the county's cruisers. But police officials say they have no plans on making any of that footage public. Instead, according to spokeswoman Mary Ann Jennings, the plan is to add the cameras and then determine if any of the footage will ever be made public. In a memorandum outlining Police Chief David Rohrer's opposition to a citizen review board of his officers, the chief said existence of the cameras is one of the reasons public oversight should be considered unnecessary.

"The very fact that the citizens know that the encounters are being videotaped is a way to reassure the public that they have some measure of protection of what happened," said Jennings.

But don't expect that reassurance to ever be public. When  
SEE RESTRICTING, PAGE 11



## EXTRAORDINARY THINGS ARE HAPPENING AT RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE!

### RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE OPENS HUGH STEPHENS FIELD AT ESTES PARK

On April 9, 2011, Randolph-Macon College dedicated a new baseball stadium which features permanent grandstand seating, a new scoreboard and a 16-foot wall in left field—accompanied by architectural elements which were designed to complement the college's historic campus. The development of this stadium is another example of R-MC's commitment to its students and belief that their dedication to excellence deserves the same in return.



### ANDREWS HALL

Opening in Fall, 2011

Andrews Hall, a 104-bed, suite-style freshmen facility, will feature a 1,500 square-foot common room for academic and student organization use, study areas, a TV/gaming room and an on-site laundry facility.



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**Randolph-Macon College**

Ashland, Virginia



# One Barber Dead and Another Injured in Shooting

FROM PAGE 5

who owns the barber shop, said that Hoang had worked there for the past four years.

"He was very well liked by customers," she said. "Everybody had great conversations with him. He was very intelligent and kind. He was a great friend to everybody and brought something different to the shop."

Nguyen had worked for the barber shop on and off for four to five years, but hadn't worked there since December of last year.

Ahmadzai said that Hoang was single, and they met a girlfriend of his at the funeral. He also had a lot of extended family that they had never met; he was very professional and didn't talk about his personal life at work.

Anna Le decided to open after being

closed for one day.

"Everyone is trying to stay strong," said Ahmadzai. "They [workers] are still mourning the loss of Le [Hoang], as well as dealing with the traumatic events of the day. Everybody is extremely shocked and we just want to move on. The workers who weren't here that day are able to provide strength and everybody is trying to support each other."

Anna Le is very thankful for how much support has been provided by both the community and the other shop owners.

"The other store owners told us to keep on going; that they're glad we're here," said Anna Le. "So many customers have stopped by to offer their condolences."

Le and her daughter, who was not there when the shooting happened, were not able to discuss the events of the day, but just said, "It happened so fast that nobody knew exactly what happened."



PHOTO BY GALE CURCIO/THE GAZETTE

**Police cordon off the area at Belle View Shopping Center last week as they investigate the shooting at Belle View Barber Shop**

## Restricting New Digital Cameras for Cruisers from Public

FROM PAGE 4

video footage from a separate incident was requested under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, police officials responded that they had no legal obligation to confirm or deny the existence of video footage in that case. The Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau responded that video footage of the 2008 shooting in which Fairfax officers shot and killed 19-year-old Hailu Brook was "not releasable."

"I don't know if there's video footage of that or not," said Second Lieutenant Timothy Field. "And I wouldn't be able to justify the staff time of researching it see if the tape exists or not."

**FAIRFAX COUNTY** police are one of the least transparent departments in Virginia, going so far as refusing to release the names of officers who shoot to kill. Ziants' name only became part of the record when the Washington Post reported it, and the department continues to shield the names of the officers who killed Brook. Now that the department is seeking \$3.7 million from the Board of Supervisors for digital cameras in

all the county's cruisers, civil rights advocates say the money should come with strings attached.

"Cameras in police cruisers are good ideas

**"Cameras in police cruisers are good ideas if there's a protocol that requires that they be on all time and they are available to the public."**

**— Kent Willis, executive director, American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia**

if there's a protocol that requires that they be on all time and they are available to the public," said Kent Willis, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia. "But even then, it is not a substitute for a citizen review board."

The movement to create a citizen review board to examine police misconduct was sparked by Ziants killing the unarmed

driver. Former District of Columbia detective Nicholas Beltrante formed the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability specifically to press the Board of Supervisors to create a panel of citizens that would have some kind of oversight over the police. In the case of Ziants, Beltrante believes the official story of events — that shots was fired because the suspect was moving toward an officer — is deceptive.

"I dispute the police version of events," said Beltrante. "I find it strange that they would never make the video available, especially when their actions have been called into question."

**UNLIKE EVER OTHER** state in America, Virginia police agencies enjoy broad exemptions that allow them to shield basic information. Local jurisdictions use their exemption in all cases, regardless of what the case is about or whether the case is open or closed. During the recent General Assembly session, one senator from Roanoke tried to introduce legislation that would have increased availability of documents in cases that are closed. But the ef-

fort died when police chiefs and prosecutors from across the commonwealth showed up in force to lobby against the measure.

"It's a mindset that I just don't understand," said Lucy Dalglish, executive director of the Arlington-based Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "If an investigation is closed, there's just no reason to protect those people."

Virginia's Freedom of Information Act dates to the late 1960s, a time when most states were crafting some kind of public records law. Unlike other states, Virginia chose to craft a provision that shielded criminal records from public view. But the lack of transparency in Virginia isn't necessarily a good thing for cops and prosecutors. According to law enforcement officials in states that share garden-variety police documents, the release of information is beneficial to public safety.

"I think it's made us better agencies," said Gerald Bailey, commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. "We proceed knowing that our work product is going to be reviewed by the press or the public or the people who are actually involved in the cases."

## Forum To Focus on Mental Health

The Advisory Board for The Gartlan Center for Community Mental Health is sponsoring a forum on "Best Practices in Prevention-Intervention for Children & Youth" on April 29, 8:45 a.m. – 3:45 p.m., at the Virginia Hills Administrative Center, Multipurpose Room #1, 6520 Diana Lane, Alexandria.

The forum will share information through team building among families, professionals, and community leaders to assist in reducing mental health problems for children and youth.

Register by contacting Nexus Coordinator Lainge Bailey at lainge@earthlink.net. Lunch is available.

Morning panelists will include:

- ♦ George Braunstein, executive director, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB)

- ♦ Del. Scott Surovell

- ♦ Benedetto Vitiello, M.D., chief, Child & Adolescent Treatment & Preventive Intervention Research Branch, National Institute of Mental Health

- ♦ Elizabeth Hinkle, M.S., Inova Health Systems

- ♦ Abigail Levrini, Ph.D., Psych Ed Coaches

Afternoon panelists will include:

- ♦ Gary Lupton, M.A., CSB

- ♦ Scott Brabrand, Ed.D. Fairfax

- County Public Schools (FCPS)

- ♦ Kim Dockery, M.S., FCPS

- ♦ Mary Ann Panarelli, Ed.D., FCPS

- ♦ Allan Bloom, Ph.D., Fort Belvoir Community Hospital

- ♦ Cyndy Dailey, M.P.A., Northern Virginia Family Service.

— GERALD A. FILL

## Gorham Appointed to Park Board

Linwood Gorham of Lorton replaces longtime Park Board member Gil McCutcheon on the Fairfax County Park Authority Board. The appointment is for a four-year term.

Gorham has served on Supervisor Gerry Hyland's Mount Vernon Visioning Task Force Land Use Committee, and formerly served on several Area Plan Review Task Forces. He has also served on the South County Federation since 1992, and is past chairman of the Mason Neck Citizen Association. In 2010-2011 he was named a Lord Fairfax honoree in the Mount Vernon District and was the recipient of the Northern Regional Park Authority's Walter Mess Volunteer Service Award in 2009.

— GERALD A. FILL



# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 10, 2011



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

## It's Spring

West Potomac varsity soccer player Michelle Rigel Cruz advances the ball towards the goal in a Monday night scrimmage against Washington Lee High School.

SEE SPORTS, PAGE 21

## Awaiting Advice

Long-awaited recommendation on citizen review board for police expected this month.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
GAZETTE

Advocates for a citizen review board to the Fairfax County Police Department have been waiting more than a year for some kind of action on their request. Now, finally, their day has arrived. But that doesn't necessarily mean they'll get the answer they asked for or what they want.

Later this month, County Executive Anthony Griffin will present his recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. His presentation will include a series of options Police Chief

David Rohr forwarded to the county executive last week, although county and police officials have declined to share any details from the secret memorandum.

"The conversations I've had with the county executive seem to indicate that he is going to recommend some kind of review process," said Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland. "I think in all likelihood we will come out of this

with some kind of process to handle the issues that have been raised."

The push for a citizen review board to the police department began in February 2010, shortly

**"Maybe they are getting solid advice from people outside the citizen oversight world."**

**— National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement**

SEE POLICE, CHIEF PAGE 4



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE GAZETTE

Nicholas Beltrante reviews documents collected in his quest to create a citizen review board for the Fairfax County Police Department.

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# Police Chief Compiles Options

FROM PAGE 1

after Fairfax County Police Officer David Ziants shot and killed an unarmed driver on Richmond Highway. Police officials failed to release the incident report or the dashboard video footage of the incident, even when the information was requested in a Virginia Freedom of Information Act request. That led retired D.C. detective Nicholas Beltrante to begin advocating for a citizen-led review board that would be able to investigate complaints against the police.

"Citizens should have the opportunity to investigate these matters," Beltrante said in a March 2010 interview. "But the way things work now, the process is biased in favor of the police and citizens don't have any input."

**THE MOVEMENT** was slow to catch on, and it received some early resistance. When Beltrante approached the Public Safety Committee of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations, the panel declined to even consider the issues. And Hyland interpreted the lack of interest among members of the council as an indication that the effort had scant community support.

"We've already got a lot of commissions, and most of them just end up making paper," said Dallas Shawkey, chairman of the Public Safety Committee of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations. "If someone feels they've been wronged, they can file a civil complaint."

But Beltrante was not alone. In May, he and others who were concerned about a lack of oversight at the Fairfax County Police Department formed the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability. Central to the mission of the coalition was the effort to advocate for a citizen review board, a concept which has been endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement.

"The problem is that there's a lot of police misconduct in Fairfax County," said Shirley Stewart, a member of the Fairfax NAACP. "And it's getting swept under the rug."

**IN A CLOSED EXECUTIVE** session last year on May 25, members of the Board of Supervisors discussed the issue with Chief Rohrer. According to Chairwoman Sharon Bulova, the meeting concluded with the chief agreeing to consider a process for community discussion on how such a review mechanism might be structured. The chief promised to return with some models and strategies as well as a timeline for engaging the community.

"I think it would be helpful to assure ourselves and either confirm that the right decision was made or to be able to go back and correct something that may not have gone as well as it should have," Bulova said in October.

Since that time, it's been a waiting game. Supporters of the citizen review board have been eagerly anticipating the police chief's recommendation. In December, police officials decided they would not be making a public recommendation. Instead, the chief of police would make a secret report to the county executive, who would then make a final recommendation to members of the Board of Supervisors.

"The Police Department is just one of many stakeholders in this issue and the recommendation will come from the county, not the police chief," said police spokeswoman Mary Ann Jennings in a December e-mail. "That will happen after all the discussions and considerations are complete."

**NOW, AFTER MORE** than a year of waiting, the county is finally ready to move forward with a recommendation. But it's unclear what kind of research has been conducted by county officials in advance of the March 29 meeting. For example, leaders of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement say they have never been contacted by anyone from the police department or county government.

"Maybe they are getting solid advice from people outside the citizen oversight world," said Phillip Eure, immediate past president of the association. "It's not at all clear to me that Fairfax County officials have consulted with the people who are most knowledgeable about police review boards, although we remain ready, willing and able to help them at any time."

## CRIME REPORT

Activities reported by the Mt. Vernon police department through March 4.

### ROBBERY

**Two men robbed an 18-year-old man** in the 3100 block of Monticello Drive around 8:25 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 26. The suspects apparently cut

the victim with a sharp instrument. The victim was treated at the scene for non life-threatening injuries.

**A 29-year-old Alexandria-area woman reported she was robbed** by three men around 12:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 15 in the 8300 block of Brockham Drive. The victim alleged that she was struck in the

head from behind by the suspects. They knocked her to the ground and took cash before fleeing. The victim later responded to the hospital around 2:30 a.m. and reported the incident.

**A 20-year-old man was robbed at knifepoint** in a parking lot in the 7500 block of Richmond Highway around 10:25 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 16. The suspect was described as black, between 5 feet 8 inches and 6 feet 1 inch tall, 180 to 220 pounds, in his mid-30s and wearing a black hoodie, a mask and black pants. The victim was not injured and detectives believe the victim was targeted.

### DRIVING ON A SUSPENDED

#### DRIVER'S LICENSE/

#### RESISTING ARREST/ ARREST

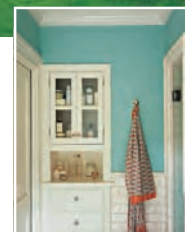
**Police conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle** around 5:40 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 26 in the 8500 block of Laguna Court for traffic charges. The driver was arrested after an investigation determined he had multiple outstanding warrants. A 26-year-old male of Triangle was taken to jail and the warrants were served. He was additionally charged with driving on a suspended driver's license and resisting arrest.

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# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 31, 2011



## An Orphan's Tale

Hondo Lilly (the dog), Maya Brettell and Fiona Penn perform in the Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre's production of "Annie!" at the Carl Sandburg Middle School. Two performances remain: April 2 and 3.

PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE

MORE PHOTOS, PAGE 3

## Former Coach Pleads Guilty

John Hamilton molested young athletes, exchange student.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
CENTRE VIEW

They didn't get to testify in court Tuesday morning, but the mothers — and even a grandmother — of John Hamilton's victims all sat together in the front row of courtroom 4F to hear him enter his pleas.

And before they all left, Hamilton, 39, of Gabrielle Way in Centreville, pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated sexual battery, two counts of taking indecent liberties with a minor and one count of crimes against nature.

"Are you entering these pleas of guilty freely and voluntarily and because you are, in fact, guilty of the crimes charged?" asked Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Brett Kassabian. "Yes, sir," replied Hamilton.

Before moving to Centre Ridge, Hamilton was a popular, well-respected and long-time Little League baseball coach for the Fort Hunt Youth Athletic Association. But unbeknownst to the parents



HAMILTON

SEE HAMILTON, PAGE 7

## No Citizen Oversight

Police chief, county executive oppose citizen oversight of Fairfax County Police Department.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

Citizens will have no role in a model for investigating allegations of police misconduct under a recommendation presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors this week by Police Chief David Rohrer and County Executive Anthony Griffin. For advocates of a citizen review board, the move was a disappointing rejection of an effort more than a year in the making. Almost immediately after a memorandum outlining the plan was re-

leased last week, experts began questioning the extent of research that was invested in the proposal.

"I find it perplexing that they made no effort to contact the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement," said Phillip Eure, former president of that organization, adding that he's still waiting to receive a phone call from Fairfax County. "It really makes you wonder about the extent of the best-practices research they conducted."

The March 29 memorandum

SEE ROHRER, PAGE 6

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# Rohrer and Griffin Oppose Citizen Review Board

FROM PAGE 1

outlining the plan does include a 1997 report indicating that only 98 out of 651 eligible agencies had public review. But critics of the proposal say much has changed in the last 14 years, and that if the county officials had examined the current state of the

**“Having an auditor review the police investigation is like having the fox guarding the henhouse.”**

— Kent Willis,  
executive director, American Civil  
Liberties Union of Virginia

field they would have discovered that Fairfax County is the largest jurisdiction in the country without any independent review of its police department.

“It’s unfortunate that the board is seeking guidance from Chief Rohrer because I feel he’s a big part of the problem,” said Ronald Koch, president of the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability. “He would much prefer to continue to have police police themselves.”

**INSTEAD OF HAVING** an independent investigation of allegations of police misconduct, Rohrer and Griffin

suggest having the county auditor review the police investigation. The brief memorandum outlining how this would work explains that the auditor, who reports to the county executive, would not have the power to subpoena witnesses. Instead, the auditor’s review would be limited to examining the police investigation.

“It is not proposed that the Internal Auditor will do an independent investigation separate from the police,” Rohrer and Griffin write in the March 29 memorandum. “There may be instances, however, when the Internal Auditor will need to contract for consultants to aid in a view to compensate for a lack of particularized expertise in a specific area.”

Critics say this model presents a conflict of interest. Because the auditor and the chief of police report to the same individual, how would the public ever know if the two disagreed on an investigation? Also, would an employee of the county executive be willing to issue a report detailing police misconduct?

Advocates for a citizen oversight panel say the only way to ensure an independent investigation is to create a system outside of the existing power structure.

“It’s clear that they are doing everything in their power to avoid citizen oversight,” said Nicholas Beltrante, executive director of the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability. “I would encourage the Board of Supervisors to adopt our proposal rather than the one presented by the chief of police and county executive.”

**ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSAL** from Rohrer and Griffin was on the docket for the Board of Supervisors meeting this week, Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland offered

a motion to postpone the matter and send it to the Public Safety Committee and the Citizen Advisory Committee. The move was cheered by many who were concerned that the public had no opportunity to respond to the proposal. Now that the police chief and county executive are on record opposing citizen oversight, those who would like to see a more public process say they will be fighting for a more public process than the one currently under consideration.

“Having an auditor review the police investigation is like having the fox guarding the henhouse,” said Kent Willis, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia. “Citizens should have the opportunity to evaluate, investigate and review police activity.”

Rohrer and Griffin, on the other hand, believe that a citizen review board would not provide “additional value” to a review process. In the memorandum outlining their proposal, they say the citizen’s role would stop at asking for an investigation. Because the auditor already investigates allegations of inappropriate behavior and business practices, they say, he or she would be familiar with police procedure and investigator practices.

“There is no strong evidence that a citizen review board provides additional value to a review process,” they wrote. “Public review boards have the same issues as any publicly appointed body.”

**THE MOVEMENT** to create a citizen review board in Fairfax County began in February 2010, shortly after police officer David Ziants shot and killed an unarmed driver on Richmond Highway. Police officials failed to release the incident report or the dash-

board video footage of the incident, even when the information was requested in a Virginia Freedom of Information Act request. Yet Rohrer and Griffin now say the existence of the dashboard video footage is a reason citizen input is not needed.

“In summary, an independent auditor is a recognized model and option to provide an independent look at significant responses by police and alleged police misconduct,” the memorandum concludes. “It allows the public to initiate reviews of the Police Department actions, and coupled with the Board’s anticipated acquisition and installation of digital cameras in police patrol vehicles, which the Police Department has long sought, the public’s trust of police should be enhanced.”

The Fairfax County Police Department has long maintained the position that its incident reports should be kept secret, even though these documents are routinely available in the vast majority of jurisdictions across the country. Even when one of their officers shot and killed the unarmed man in 2009, the department refused to identify the officer who fired the fatal shot.

“What does the name of an officer give the public in terms of information and disclosure?” asked police spokeswoman Mary Ann Jennings at the time. “I’d be curious to know why they want the name of an officer.”

Because the auditor would merely review information submitted by police, critics say, the department’s reputation of secrecy would be counterproductive for investigating allegations of misconduct.

“We’re happy they’ve acknowledged there’s a problem,” said Koch. “But the proposal currently under consideration is not what we were looking for.”

## Lorton Incinerator Purchase Goes Up in Flames

**Supervisors choose to continue lease agreement.**

BY JULIA O’DONOGHUE  
THE GAZETTE

**T**he Fairfax County Board of Supervisors ruled out a government purchase of the \$432 million Energy Resource Recovery Center in Lorton, a privately owned facility better known as the county’s trash incinerator, on March 29.

The supervisors voted 9-1 to extend Fairfax’s public-private partnership with Covanta Energy, which currently owns the plant, under a new agreement. Fairfax County staff is expected to finalize the new contract with Covanta and bring it back before the board for approval over the next 60 days.

“Renewing the contract on the terms county staff has negotiated provides an economical, safe and secure way to ensure Fairfax County residents have reliable, af-

fordable and environmentally preferable trash disposal for the next 30 years,” said Fairfax County Chairwoman Sharon Bulova (D-At-large).

Under the new agreement, Covanta will own and operate the incinerator until 2041, but Fairfax will continue to own the land on which the incinerator sits, said Bulova. This arrangement requires Covanta to lease the incinerator property from the county, even though the private company owns the facility outright.

**IN FEBRUARY**, Fairfax County Executive Anthony Griffin had recommended that the supervisors purchase the incinerator rather than sign a new lease agreement with Covanta. The company had been asking too much of the Fairfax and buying the plant appeared to be cheaper for the county in the long run, he said.

“Staff believes it is still negotiating with Covanta but [the agreement] is not to a level that we should continue a long-term relationship with them,” said Griffin on Feb. 22.

At that time, the supervisors also indi-

cated they weren’t satisfied with the deal Covanta presented. The county board unanimously voted to give Covanta a list of “must haves” for Fairfax in the new contract.

If Covanta declined to accept these terms, the supervisors said they would be likely to move forward with the purchase of the waste management plant.

Bulova said the threat to purchase the incinerator did ultimately produce a better financial deal for the county this month. The new agreement saves Fairfax \$300 million over the life of the 30-year contract when compared with previous agreements that had been presented, she said.

“When we looked into purchasing the incinerator, it gave us some leverage with Covanta and put us in a much better bargaining position,” said Bulova.

Other supervisors characterized the new agreement and success of this month’s negotiations differently, saying the contract closely resembled the one that had been on the table in early February.

“There has not been any substantial change to the contract,” said Supervisor

Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield).

“The terms we laid out were not accepted by Covanta. That is why I think the purchase [of the incinerator] remains the better option. Nothing has moved substantially since Feb. 8,” said Supervisor Gerry Hyland (D-Mount Vernon).

Hyland, who represents the communities that surround the incinerator, was only county board member to vote against extending the county’s agreement with Covanta.

“That agreement, in my opinion, does not go far enough,” said Hyland, who wanted the county to move forward with purchasing the facility.

In an interview, Bulova acknowledged that the county didn’t get everything it wanted from Covanta.

“Time was out and I think we negotiated as good a deal as we possibly could have,” she said.

**FAIRFAX’S NEW ARRANGEMENT** with Covanta doesn’t give the county enough

SEE COUNTY, PAGE 7

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# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JUNE 30, 2011

SUMMER  FUN



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE GAZETTE (2010)  
Among summer's possible pursuits: Sailing classes at the Belle Haven Marina.

SEE SUMMER FUN SPECIAL SECTION, PAGES 14-16.

## 55 Years For Hamilton

Former coach sexually molested boys, ages 9-16.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE GAZETTE

Justice took a long time coming — but when it finally came to John Hamilton, it came down hard. Last Friday, June 24, the man convicted of sexually molesting five boys, ages 9-16, was sentenced in court to 55 years in prison.

Tears flowed on the witness stand as four out of the five victims testified about what their former, Little League baseball coach had done to them as children — and the devastating effects it's had on their lives. Also testifying was the mother of one of the victims.

"John robbed [my son] of his innocence and his childhood," she said. "[My son's 11-year-old dream

to be the best at baseball was exploited by Hamilton for his own, selfish enjoyment, with no regard for the wreckage he left behind."

On March 29, Hamilton, 39, of Gabrielle Way in Centreville, pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated sexual battery, two counts of taking indecent liberties with a minor and one count of crimes against nature. But he'd committed these offenses years before — and he was only in a court of law, at all, because he'd been arrested in Europe after fleeing the country to escape prosecution.

Before moving to Centre Ridge, Hamilton was a long-time baseball coach for the Fort Hunt Youth Ath

SEE FORMER COACH, PAGE 3

## Behind Closed Doors

Police chief, county executive propose excluding public from misconduct investigations.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

Advocates for a public role in oversight of allegations of police misconduct faced a major setback this week, jeopardizing their yearlong effort to increase transparency in one of the most opaque departments in the county.

During a meeting of the Board of Supervisor's Public Safety Committee, County Executive Anthony Griffin and Police Chief David Rohrer threw their support behind a plan that would exclude public participation, although they opened the door to a way for the outcome of investigations to be appealed.

SEE BEHIND, PAGE 4

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate will celebrate Independence Day with An American Celebration, July 4, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., featuring military reenactments, patriotic music, and more. Please be advised that a brief daytime fireworks display will take place as part of the day's festivities at 12:45 p.m. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association thanks you for your tolerance and apologizes for any disruption.

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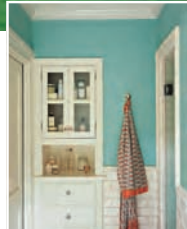
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## NEWS

# Behind Closed Doors

FROM PAGE 1

"Officers have to know we will hold them accountable, and I think they know that," Rohrer told committee members. "But they also have to know that we have their backs."

Sitting side-by-side in a committee room at the Fairfax Government Center, the county manager and police chief outlined a potential role for the county auditor in overseeing investigations of police misconduct. After a study of how the department conducts investigations, the pair is expected to come before the Board of Supervisors with a formal recommendation that the county auditor review some allegations of misconduct.

"A substantial part of the problem has been the amount of time that's necessary to appropriately investigate cases," Griffin told committee members. "People read the accounts in the newspaper and they reach their own conclusion based on those accounts."

"The best example of that is Route 1," responded Mount Vernon District Supervisor Gerry Hyland (D). "And I know you've taken action concerning that officer without waiting for the investigation from the FBI to be completed."

**THE SHOOTING** of an unarmed man in 2009 by Officer David Ziants shocked many

in the Mount Vernon Community and remains controversial now that he's been fired. The case came on the heels of a number of other high-profile cases in which Fairfax officers killed unarmed civilians. Starting in May 2010, a coalition of organizations and individuals began meeting at the Sherwood Regional Library and formed the Virginia Coalition for Police Accountability.

"The police need us, and we need the police," said executive director Nicholas Beltrante at the inaugural meeting. "However, no one is above the law."

For more than a year, the group has been pushing the county government to create a citizen review board that would have the power to investigate allegations of police misconduct. Yet those efforts seem to have fallen on deaf ears. After the county manager and the police chief outlined their plan to have the county auditor review investigations this week, several members of the Board of Supervisors wanted to make sure that the process would not be open to members of the general public to lodge complaints. None of the members expressed any support for creating a panel of citizens to review cases.

"The citizen review, from my standpoint, happens at a minimum every four years when they can review the Board of Super

SEE AUDITOR, PAGE 19

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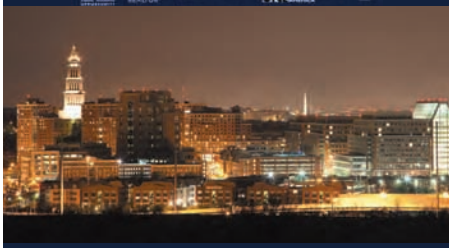
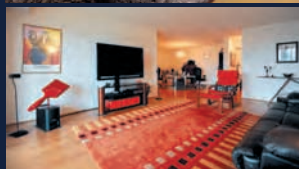
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# LETTERS



**An unleashed dog in the Stratford Landing neighborhood.**

FROM PAGE 8

dogs through our neighborhood off-leash. They've been asked numerous times by numerous people including the police to leash their dogs to no avail. It has been explained to them numerous times, including in this month's Stratford Landing newsletter ([http://www.stratfordlanding.org/images/SLCA\\_June\\_2011\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.stratfordlanding.org/images/SLCA_June_2011_Newsletter.pdf)) that their actions endanger others and their dogs, but they refuse to take heed.

As I view my street from the windows of my home office, there are four main perpetrators, three of whom I can identify by name. One is the former chief of staff of a U.S. senator. His wife walks the same dog by my house on-leash at about 6 a.m. every weekday, but he insists on running the same dog using his bicycle, sometimes on-leash but usually off-leash. Two years ago, while he was running the dog on his bicycle, the dog was hit by a car and badly injured. After his wife walked the badly limping dog past my house for several months, it thankfully recovered. Then, he resumed his running of the dog on his bicycle. He recently wrote me an e-mail informing me that he "... will continue, despite the dangers ..." Do we get a vote?

Another is a former member of Stratford Landing's executive committee. Last week she trotted past my house with the dog 50 yards ahead. I happened to be outside and asked her where the dog's leash was. She showed me the leash in her hand as the dog continued to run half a football field ahead of her. When I asked her to place the leash on her dog, she replied, "Is he bothering you?" How does one respond to such ignorance?

A third is the chief executive officer of a lobbying organization concerning global issues, and his wife. He used to walk with his wife by my house several times a week with their large yellow dog run-

ning 30-40 yards ahead. After the umpteenth time asking them to use a leash, instead, they changed their route and now do the same thing elsewhere in our community. Occasionally, they do walk by my house with their dog off-leash as they did once last week. Apparently global issues are more important than safeguarding neighbors.

A fourth is a couple who I don't know. The wife walks their Doberman Pinscher on-leash but the husband often does so off-leash. I've asked him to leash the dog, to no avail.

Perhaps it is going to become necessary to ask the Animal Control Police to stake out our community and start writing tickets. Wouldn't it be a shame to have to waste our limited county resources to enforce leash laws in Stratford Landing concerning people who know better but openly defy a law that was put in place to protect others from such inappropriate behavior? I mentioned the professions or civic involvement of these law-breakers because, clearly, as people in responsible positions, they know better. What a shame.

**H. Jay Spiegel**  
Mount Vernon

## Write

The Gazette welcomes views on any public issue.

The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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## News

# Auditor To Do Police Review?

FROM PAGE 4

visors and make their own determinations," said Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay (D).

Advocates for a citizen-review board say they are not giving up their fight. Now that the county auditor has initiated a study for reviewing how investigations are conducted, members of the coalition say that gives them more time to make their case before an official recommendation is presented to the Board of Supervisors. And they're not about to give up.

"Even though today was a disappointment, we're not going to give up," said Annie Whitehead, secretary of the coalition. "We're going to continue to fight to get a citizen review board."

Others say they have yet to receive a complete hearing, criticizing how the committee hearing was conducted.

"We were promised 10 minutes," said Ronald Koch, president of the coalition. "They waited until after they already made their decision to hear our speaker, and they didn't give us the 10 minutes. So I think it's despicable the county would lie to the citizens committee."

Other members of the coalition said the current recommendation is inadequate.

"Clearly I'm disappointed," said Sal Culosi, who reached a \$2 million settlement with the police after his son was killed by a Fairfax SWAT team in 2006. "That auditor has absolutely no teeth."

## CRIME REPORT

FROM PAGE 7

### LARCENIES

**4000 block of Adrienne Drive.** Two bicycles stolen from residence.  
**2700 block of Arlington Drive.** CD player, tire and ignition stolen from vehicle.

**1600 block of Belle View Blvd.**

Soaps and lotions stolen from business.

**7800 block of Bluebird Lane.**

Wallet stolen from vehicle.

**Boswell Ave./ Fordson Road.** Purse stolen from business.

**7400 block of Convair Drive.** Spray machine stolen from vehicle.

**Cyrene Blvd./ Grey Goose Way.**

Safe and welder stolen from vehicle.

**900 block of Darton Drive.** Two iPods stolen from residence.

**2800 block of Fort Drive.** Purse and iPod stolen from vehicle.

**8400 block of Fort Hunt Road.** Keys stolen from school.

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# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 24, 2011

## Auditing the Police

**Six-month audit of Fairfax Police expected soon, opening way for potential review board.**

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE GAZETTE

**E**arly next year, the Fairfax County auditor will release an investigation of the Fairfax County Police Department that could be the first step in an effort to create a citizen review board. Or it could lead members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to abandon the idea altogether.

County Executive Anthony Griffin and Police Chief David Rohrer have already recommended a plan that would have no public role in oversight. Now the results of the county auditor's report will serve as a backdrop for how that recommendation is received by the supervisors.

"We'll be looking at whether incidents are fairly and thoroughly

investigated, whether they are timely and officers have the necessary training," said Chris Pietsch, director of the Internal Audit Office. "At this point, we're still at the beginning stages of this."

Back in June, the Public Safety Committee of the Board of Supervisors met with Griffin and Rohrer to hear their recommendation, which would essentially freeze the public out of any form of oversight. The move was a major setback for a group known as Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability, which has been pushing for almost two years to create a citizen review board. Now the effort has been put on hold while the auditor conducts a review of the department, which is expected to conclude in March.

SEE SIX-MONTH, PAGE 18

**"The county is really dragging its feet on this."**

— **Nicholas Beltrante,**  
executive director,  
Citizens for Police  
Accountability



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFT/THE GAZETTE

## At Rehearsal

Dressed for her Arabian dance, Kaila Anderson talks to a group of angels off stage as the dress rehearsal begins Sunday afternoon, Nov. 20, at West Potomac High School for the 3rd Annual Community Nutcracker. More photos, page 3.



COURTESY OF RESTON IMPACT

**Sal and Anita Culosi appear on the cable access show "Reston Impact," confronting Fairfax County Police Chief David Rohrer on the death of their son.**

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**Claire Stern displays her glazed dishes at the bazaar.**



**Debra Greenwalt shows some of her new arrival holiday snowmen and snowwomen at the fair.**



**Stained glass artist Pat Rowell laughs while reminiscing in front of some of her light catching creations.**



**Lisa Adams knits up another scarf while visitors wander around the booths.**



**Potter Bruce Ciske displays one of his recent creations.**



**Barbara Craley and Adina Russell relax for a moment in their chairs. Both are glass craftsmen and represent the Alexandria Glass Artists.**

## Holiday Bazaar

Aldersgate Church held its annual Holiday Bazaar Saturday, Nov. 12, in the church complex. Vendors sold a multitude of wares and goods including pecans and nuts, alpaca hiking and walking socks, crocheted throws and wraps, children's gifts, pottery and handmade dolls. A lunch of vegetable soup, barbeque, pie and sandwiches and more was available in the fellowship hall of the church.



**Rag dolls by Mary Ciske.**

PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFT/THE GAZETTE

# Six-Month Audit of Police Department Expected Soon

FROM PAGE 1

"The county is really dragging its feet on this," said Nicholas Beltrante, executive director of Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability. "Most importantly, their audit is lacking the most important element — a role for public involvement."

**THE AUDITOR'S REVIEW** of the Fairfax County Police Department was ordered in June, although the initial meeting didn't happen until the fall. Even then, staff members were not assigned to the project until two weeks ago. Pietsch said his office is now conducting a survey of how the department conducts investigations and how other jurisdictions operate as well as best practices nationwide. Once that's concluded in December, the auditor's office will start conducting fieldwork to get a sense of how the department's policies are implemented in specific scenarios.

"We'll look at the risk that investigations aren't complete or aren't fair," said Pietsch. "Are the officers properly trained? Are there trends in misconduct?"

Pietsch said that the final review will be released to the public, which he expects to happen in March. Members of the Fairfax

County Board of Supervisors will be briefed on the findings of the report, although it's not yet clear if that briefing will take place in public or in a closed-door executive session. The release of the report is expected to reopen the discussion of whether or not a citizen review board is needed to investigate allegations of police misconduct. Several supervisors have already indicated an inclination to make sure the public plays no role in investigating allegations of police misconduct.

"The citizen review, from my standpoint, happens at a minimum every four years when they can review the Board of Supervisors and make their own determinations," said Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay (D).

**ONE INCIDENT** that continues to haunt the Fairfax County Police Department was the January 2006 killing of Salvatore Culosi Jr., a 37-year-old optometrist who was under investigation for running a gambling operation. A Fairfax County SWAT team was sent to arrest Culosi, a botched operation that led to Culosi being shot and killed. The police later concluded his death was an accident, and the family later settled a wrongful death lawsuit. Last week, Culosi's par-

ents confronted Rohrer during the videotaping of the public-access show "Reston Impact."

"This thing screams for a civilian review board," said Salvatore Culosi Sr. "There's a lot going on here for an independent review committee to look at."

An internal police investigation determined that the shooting was caused when a car door bumped the officer as he exited a vehicle. The Culosi family said that there was no reason to send a SWAT team to arrest a man who police should have known had no weapons. They also raised concerns about not being able to receive documents relating to the investigation of the shooting, eventually filing a lawsuit to gain access to the kinds of documents that are widely available in other states but shielded from public view in Virginia. Ultimately, Rohrer said, what happened in the Culosi case should not have taken place.

"I'm so sorry for what happened," Rohrer told the Culosis in the televised panel discussion. "I wish I could go back and undo that."

**THE MOVEMENT** to create a civilian review was prompted by a series of police-

involved shootings, culminating in the 2009 incident in which a Fairfax County officer named David Ziants shot and killed an unarmed driver named David Masters. Starting in May 2010, a coalition of organizations and individuals began meeting at the Sherwood Regional Library and formed the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability.

"The police need us, and we need the police," said Beltrante during its inaugural meeting. "However, no one is above the law."

Since May 2010, the group has been pushing the county government to create a citizen review board that would have the power to investigate allegations of police misconduct. After the county manager and the police chief outlined their plan to have the county auditor review investigations this week, several members of the Board of Supervisors wanted to make sure that the process would not be open to members of the general public to lodge complaints. None of the members expressed any support for creating a panel of citizens to review cases.

"We're not going to give up," said Annie Whitehead, secretary of the coalition. "We're going to continue to fight to get a citizen review board."



# CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS 2011 AWARDS

[CLICK HERE FOR "AN END TO HOMELESSNESS?" WHICH WON THE VPA AWARD FOR JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE, AMONG OTHERS. \(PART 1\)](#)

[CLICK HERE FIRST-PLACE VPA AWARDS THE ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET WON. \(PART 2\)](#)

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[CLICK HERE FOR THE POTOMAC ALMANAC'S AWARD WINNING CONTINUING COVERAGE OF SOCCER FIELD PROPOSALS ON BRICKYARD. \(PART 8\)](#)