

Fairfax CONNECTION

Amid Controversy, Council Approves WAWA in Fairfax

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Opponents of the proposed WAWA gas station turned out en masse, Tuesday night, at Fairfax City's Council meeting.

Other Gas-Station Owners Fuel Fight

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WEEK IN FAIRFAX

Make Valentines for Foster Children

Approximately 500 volunteers will gather this Saturday, Jan.18, for the Volunteer Fairfax Annual Valentine's Challenge. This year's challenge is to make 6,000 valentines for children in foster care and child protective services in Fairfax County, and for college students who recently aged out of foster care through Foster Care to Success.

The Valentines will go to at-risk youth desperately in need of support and encouragement. Spots are still available for volunteers to sign up to participate

from 9 a.m.-noon and 1:30-4:30 p.m. The event will be held upstairs at Fire Station 3 at 4081 University Drive in Fairfax.

Bulova, Petersen Town Hall Meeting

Del. David Bulova (D-37) and Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) will hold a joint, town hall meeting Saturday, Jan. 25, from 9-11 a.m. It's at the Fairfax City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St. in Fairfax. They'll provide an overview of the current, Virginia General Assembly session and answer constituents' questions.

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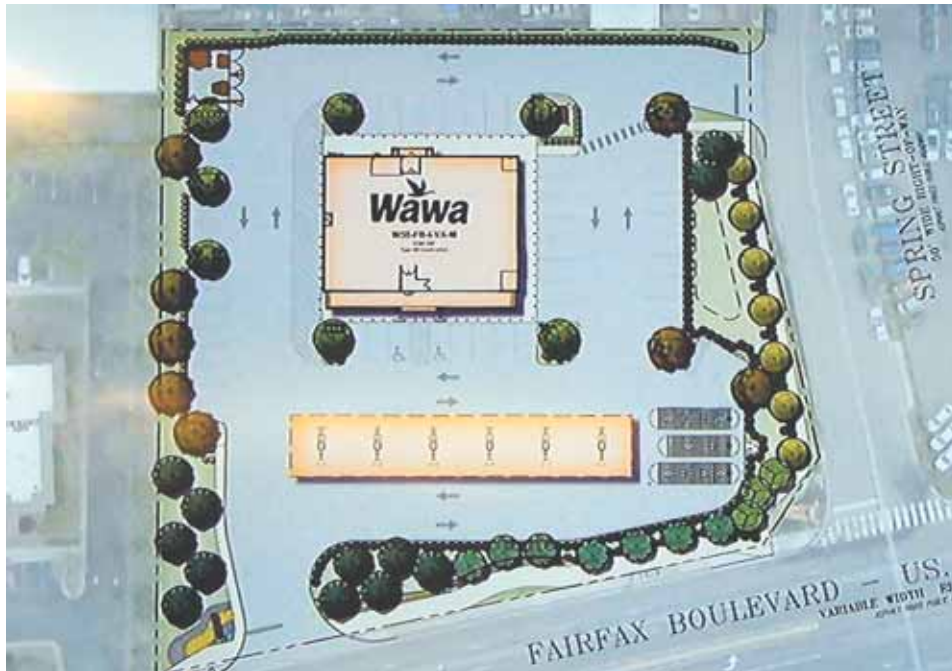
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The site plan for the proposed Wawa on Fairfax Boulevard.



Amid Controversy, Council Approves WAWA in Fairfax

Increased competition is not a basis for denial.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Gas station owners and employees, small businessmen and others opposed to a large, WAWA gas station and grocery store coming to the City filled nearly every seat at Tuesday night's Council meeting. They also displayed signs in protest.

And although two Council members voted against the project, at the end of the evening it was approved. That paves the way for WAWA to replace the old Rodeway Inn at 9700 Fairfax Blvd. with a 6,049-square-foot grocery store and six fuel stations – 12 pumps total – under a covered canopy.

"I know there'll be impacts on other businesses," said Councilman Michael DeMarco. "But we can't deny an application because of increased competition."

The 1.8-acre site is on the west side of Spring Street and surrounded by commercial uses. And although WAWA calls its building a convenience store, the City zoning ordinance states anything over 5,000 square feet is considered a grocery store. It will offer soups, sandwiches and other food items, and it and the gas pumps will be oriented toward Fairfax Boulevard.

A special-use permit is required for fuel stations in the (CR) Commercial Retail District. Rezoning a portion of the property from (IH) Industrial Heavy to Commercial Retail is also needed because IH doesn't permit grocery stores. And City staff recommended ending the site's current split zoning and rezoning the entire site to CR.

The gas station won't do vehicle maintenance or inspections. Fuel trucks will enter from Fairfax Boulevard, and food trucks, from Spring Street. One of the current curb cuts on Fairfax Boulevard will be closed, with right turns in and out of the site to Fairfax Boulevard and full access to and from Spring Street.

About 1,280 new trips/day are expected from WAWA, and its transportation engineer, Andy Smith, said one vehicle entering and entering counts as two

trips. He expects some 70 vehicles during a.m. peak hours and some 49 vehicles during p.m. peak hours. But he said less than 2 percent of the vehicles on the road won't be there because of WAWA.

TUESDAY NIGHT, attorney Bob Brant, representing WAWA, said it will provide \$200,000 toward a future traffic signal at Fairfax Boulevard and Spring Street. City traffic engineer Kirk McCullough estimated its actual cost at \$800,000.

"This is an exciting revitalization and economic-development opportunity for the City on Fairfax Boulevard," said Brant. "Since our initial concept plan, we've added more trees on the site and decreased the amount of impervious surface. And fuel delivery will generally not occur during peak-traffic hours."

There'll also be a 5-foot-wide, green strip adjacent to the curb and a 10-foot-wide sidewalk connecting the west side of the property to the site. "On the east side, Spring Street today has no sidewalk," said Brant. "We're proposing a 6-foot-wide sidewalk there to increase pedestrian connectivity."

Brant also stressed the business's many benefits to the City, including: Contributing to its tax base, providing 40-50 full and part-time jobs and extending the Draper Drive left/U-turn lane at Fairfax Boulevard to double its capacity from two to four vehicles. Furthermore, said Brant, "WAWA will conduct a traffic-signal analysis within its first year of opening, at its own expense."

"It'll be a modern, state-of-the-art building, and we're proposing eight, electric-vehicle, charging stations there," he continued. "And this business is estimated to bring as much as \$347,000 additional, net revenue to the City annually."

Still, at the outset of the Jan. 14 meeting, some of the opponents expressed their concerns. Resident Alan Casey said the station would be too close to Fairfax Circle and would cause morning and evening traffic backups. Also speaking was Chase Beaulieu, whose father owns the Jermantown Shell station.

"We're hardworking people that have always supported the City's youth clubs," said Beaulieu. "Our livelihood depends on selling gas and snacks, and

SEE COUNCIL, PAGE 5



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The same people opposing the WAWA station in December returned to City Council for the Jan. 14 decision – this time, with signs.

Other Gas-Station Owners Fuel Fight

Contend the new WAWA will decimate smaller businesses.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During WAWA's Dec. 10 public hearing before the Fairfax City Council, Councilman Sang Yi asked about WAWA's impact on other gas stations in a community. But when Bob Brant, representing WAWA, said it doesn't put other gas stations out of business, many people in the audience laughed.

Then they had their say, starting with Charles Beaulieu, who's owned the Jermantown Shell for 28 years. "It's a shame to see a big company coming in that'll affect my business," he said. "In Loudoun County, when the WAWA went in, my business, customer base and revenue dropped."

A WAWA in Fairfax, said Beaulieu, will also impact the Sunoco, CITCO and other Shell station nearby. "Traffic at Fairfax Circle is already horrendous and will get even worse when the new Giant comes in," he said. "Reconsider this application and consider the small businessman." The audience then applauded, as it did after most of the speakers.

Another man, who's owned a fuel station on Route 1 for more than 10 years, said, "WAWA can easily destroy this growing economy. There are more than 120 small businesses in the vicinity of this new WAWA, and it will destroy them. WAWA puts its prices low, at first; and then, after the small businesses are forced out, they raise them."

Scott Brown said gas-truck drivers will arrive, all hours of the day and night, and "there'll be two a day. And their food-delivery trucks are 18-wheelers. Therefore, traffic will back up on Fairfax Boulevard. The average WAWA sells between 400,000-500,000 gallons/month, has just under 1,700 gas visitors/day, plus 2,000 store customers/day. And WAWA is a destination, so it'll attract more people than drive there now."

Mahmoud Cheladi said he's seen WAWA's effect on small businesses in Loudoun. "They cannot compete with WAWA," he said.

Agreeing, Mohamed Oud, a Fairfax City resident for 18 years, said, "Small businesses are the heart and soul of this country. We'll be out of business, and 90 percent of fuel-delivery trucks can't make that turn out of there, so traffic will back up."

THIRTY-YEAR City resident Chase Boyer said, "The fuel industry is a dying business. I've worked at a gas station my entire life, and fuel trucks will take two lanes to get back out on Route 50 [Fairfax Boulevard]. Is there even a need for a gas station here? You can find one every two blocks. With cheap gas, there'll be lines that'll back up on Route 50. And what will WAWA give back to the community? Will they support a FPYC [Fairfax Police Youth Club] team?"

SEE OBJECTIONS, PAGE 5

OPINION

VIEWPOINTS

Legislators Reflect on the First Days of the 2020 Session

—MERCIA HOBSON

PHOTOS VIA VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Del. David Bulova (D-37) introduced HB

1012 Early childhood care and education; establishment of system, licensure. “A child’s earliest experiences - and particularly those in the critical years between birth and age five - have lifelong impacts on their likelihood of success. However, according to statistics from the Virginia Department of Education, 40 percent of students entering kindergarten lack the key literacy, math and social emotional skills that predict success. Further, only 25 percent of Virginia’s early childhood programs that receive public funding participate in the state’s voluntary quality measurement system. I am pleased to be carrying House Bill 1012 on behalf of the Governor, which directs the Board of Education to consolidate and simplify Virginia’s early childhood education programs and create a uniform quality rating system for programs that accept public funding. This will improve quality, foster continuous improvement, and help parents better understand their options. As the parent of three children, this is very important to me. I have personally witnessed the difference that a quality pre-school program has made on my children.”



Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33): My top priority is recovering the local funding for our regional transportation.

Today (*Monday - Jan. 13), I cast my first votes on the Senate Judiciary Committee and was able to vote for four life-saving bills to prevent gun violence: universal background checks, giving municipalities local control about allowing firearms in government buildings, a red flag law and restricting gun purchases to one gun a month. Last week I cast my first vote on the Senate Privilege and Elections Committee to make Virginia the 38th state to Ratify the ERA.



Del. Ibraheem Samirah (D-86)- introduced

HB 152 Middle housing allowed on lots zoned for single-family use. “Middle housing is defined as two-family residential units, including duplexes, townhouses, cottages, and any similar structure. Such structures shall not require a special use permit or be subjected to any other local requirements beyond those imposed upon other authorized residential uses.” Samirah said, “Across the country, there is a shortage of affordable units that is putting a squeeze on working families and contributing to rises in rents for existing units...I will certainly get pushback for this”



Del. Mark Keam (D-35) **HB 572 Distributed**

renewable energy; promotes the establishment thereof. Del. Keam said, “This bill would free up the solar market, not only for local governments... but also for residents, businesses, schools, institutions and non-profits that want to install solar for their own use... (It would) remove the rule that limits customers to installing only as big an array as would have served their needs in the past year ... Today, residential customers are penalized with so-called “standby charges” if they install more than 10 kilowatts of solar (enough for a larger home, or a modest home with electric vehicles) ... Many Virginians do not have access to solar at all, especially if they live in rental apartments or condominiums, because the building owners are not allowed to install solar panels and sell the output to tenants. My bill would make this legal.”



ASSEMBLY - WEEK ONE

Highlights of Some of the Bills Proposed

—MERCIA HOBSON

PHOTOS VIA VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sen. J. Chapman Peterson (D-34) introduced **SB 26 Plastic bags; tax in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed** which imposes a five-cent per bag tax on plastic bags provided to customers by certain retailers in localities located wholly within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and directs revenues to be used to support the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan.



Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36) introduced **SB 436 Establishment of the Virginia Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearms List; penalty.** The bill creates the Virginia Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearms List (the List) that prohibits the possession, transportation and sale of firearms to any person who voluntarily registers himself to be enrolled into the List.



Del. Karrie Delaney (D-67) introduced **HB 547 Virginia Energy and Economy Transition Council; established, report.** The bill establishes the Virginia Energy and Economy Transition Council, consisting of 28 members, to develop plans to assist the Commonwealth in transitioning from the use of fossil fuel energy to renewable energy by 2050



Del. Paul Krizek (D-44) introduced **HB 15 Public school buses seat belts.** The bill requires the Board of Education to make regulations to require each new public school bus purchased for the transportation of students to be equipped with a seat belt consisting of a lap belt and shoulder strap or harness in every seat. He also introduced **HB 16 Safety belt system; all occupants of motor vehicles to utilize.**



Write

The Connection 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 length, libel, grammar, civility, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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Council Approves WAWA Project

FROM PAGE 3

WAWA will affect thousands of people who'll lose their jobs because of it. There'll be five gas stations within 500 yards of Casey's house. Is there really a need for it?"

Daniel Chahell said the traffic study should be done by an independent group. And, he told the Council, "This [project] clearly affects citizens, employees and everyone who's here, and their friends and neighbors. Think of that when making your decision."

Bobby Singh said, "Small gas stations have a connection to the people in their community that big corporations like WAWA don't." And residents Rodrigo Cruz and Vicki Fairfax both said the City already has enough gas stations.

"WAWA is bad news for the City and small businesses," said Fairfax Exxon owner Harry Singh. "This will be a bottleneck of traffic and WAWA will wipe out the competition."

However, said resident Rob Wright, "Change is good, and I like having a choice." Besides, he told the opponents, "If you're doing a good job, people will still come to you." Agreeing, Kelly O'Brien said, "Competition is healthy, and I'd love to see WAWA come in."

But Councilman Sang Yi wondered if it would really be profitable for the City, which would have to pay the other \$600,000 for the traffic signal. "To fund it, the City would have to raise the tax rate by a penny," he said. "And but for WAWA, we wouldn't need



Drawings of the front and back of the building.

this traffic signal."

COUNCILWOMAN So Lim noted that an application has also been submitted for a WAWA at Routes 50 and 123, to replace the former Rite Aid there. Brooke Hardin, director of Community Development and Planning, said it wouldn't have gas pumps and can go there by right, without needing a special-use permit.

Brant then made his final pitch, address-

ing several concerns that had been raised, including site design, safety and fuel trucks having difficulty entering the site. "WAWA operates over 600 fuel locations and has extensive experience making sure fuel and food-delivery trucks, and residents, can get in and out safely," he said.

Brant also noted that "It's important for the safety, security and visibility of fuel customers to locate the fuel canopy up front. Every inch of this property will be covered

with lights to provide a sense of security and enhance people's visibility. We'll have video cameras everywhere, and WAWA provides complimentary coffee to law-enforcement officers to provide a police presence throughout the day and night."

He said WAWA is "significantly improving and widening the existing access point and apron by more than 50 feet. The turning radius for trucks will be 30 feet, compared to 2 feet today, and fuel trucks will only go there once or twice a day."

DeMarco then made a motion to approve the rezoning and the project, and Councilwoman Janice Miller seconded. "I go to Royal – the gas station closest to my home – even though I can get gas cheaper elsewhere," she said. "And I believe WAWA will be a good addition to this community."

"I have to think about the small businesses, so I'll be voting no," said Lim. "Do we need another gas station when we already have 14 in the City? And especially when another WAWA will be 1.6 miles away."

"I know how hard the people in small businesses work," said Yi. "I don't see this as being about competition, [but] about traffic, safety and economics. At that location, I'm worried about the public welfare and safety, so I can't support this project."

But, said Councilwoman Jennifer Passey, "It's not a vote against small business, it's a vote for opportunity, so I'll be voting for this project." Councilman Jon Stehle voted yes, too, and WAWA was approved, 4-2.

Objections to WAWA Approval

FROM PAGE 3

Also speaking was Daniel Noura, who owns a gas station in Woodbridge. "As soon as WAWA opened, my volume dropped 50 percent and traffic was a nightmare," he said. "There are four gas stations at Fairfax Circle. One is closed down, and the other three will go out of business and will become eyesores – no one will touch those sites."

The owner of the Hampton Inn in Fairfax said WAWA will bring more traffic on Route 50. And, he added, "My guests already complain about the traffic here. If this is approved, they'll take their business somewhere else. It's getting harder for the small businessman."

Also concerned about safety and traffic issues was resident Steve Harrell. "Fuel delivery will come down Pickett Road and Fairfax Boulevard and go through the Circle," he said. "And drivers cannot navigate around that site."

David Raidman owns a Mobil station in the City and came to the meeting to support his fellow business owners. Echoing Noura's concerns, he said, "When this WAWA opens up, there'll be closed gas stations on the corner – and they'll be there for a long time."



Artist's rendition of the WAWA gas pumps and canopy.

Meanwhile, Charles Chevelle said more traffic and safety studies need to be done. "It won't be economically beneficial to the City if the small businesses close," he said. "The Council people were elected to look after the City residents, so you should think about how this would affect the small busi-

nessmen."

Joe Lothrop, who manages the 7-Eleven at Fairfax Circle, contended that the WAWA would "increase crime because it'll be another location selling single, alcoholic beverages to go. And all these folks in this room – their livelihood depends on it. You might

gain 50 new jobs but lose 100."

THE LONE SPEAKER in support of the proposal was Rob Wright, who lives on Fairfax Boulevard. He said there aren't many good food choices in that area and he always buys gas wherever it's cheapest. And, he added, a WAWA "might inspire these other gas stations to adapt and diversify."

The last speaker from the audience was land-use attorney David Gill, who was asked by the small, gas-station owners to address the Council on their behalf. He requested the Council defer its decision on this matter until it had time to address all the issues.

"It's a tight site, and you're asking fuel drivers to do a hairpin turn out of that site and block traffic for 5 minutes, twice a day," said Gill. "Why do the pumps have to be up front? Why not bring them to the rear, and bring the store to the front, for a more attractive site?"

Brant said, "A lot of valid points have been raised, but the site design is fairly firm. And pushing beyond an early January Council date could put this project in jeopardy."

The Council then approved deferring its decision to Jan. 14.

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Announcements



The show "All You Need is Love will be held at Mosaic in Fairfax.

All You Need is Love

Now thru Feb. , At Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Ave., #105, Fairfax. In celebration of Valentine's Day, Torpedo Factory artists are tackling one of society's most complex human emotions — Love. In its newest exhibit titled All You Need is &e, the gallery is presenting a selection of original paintings, photographs, jewelry, scarves, ceramics and more, that reflect its artists' interpretations of love. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

ONGOING

Oculus: A Place of Unseen. Now thru Feb. 2. At The Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Road, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center presents the interactive exhibit Oculus: Of A Place Unseen featuring works of artists Elaine Buss, Edgar Endress, Michelle Repiso and Steve Wanna. The use of the word 'oculus,' most known as an eye-like form in architecture, gestures towards the enlightening narratives discovered throughout the show. Each referencing feelings of solitude and contemplation, the storylines range

from institutional boundaries to societal oversights and mantra meditations. Some works are as light as silk, some as heavy as stone, but the overall space is quiet — both literally and figuratively.

All You Need is Love. Now thru Feb. 16. At Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Ave., #105, Fairfax. In celebration of Valentine's Day, Torpedo Factory artists are tackling one of society's most complex human emotions — Love. In its newest exhibit titled All You Need is &e, the gallery is presenting a selection of original paintings, photographs, jewelry, scarves, ceramics and more, that reflect its artists' interpretations of love. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

St. James Intramural High School Basketball League. Now thru March 10. At the St. James Sports, Wellness and Entertainment Complex, 6805 Industrial Road, Springfield. The St. James invites you to participate in its Middle School Basketball League for Boys & Girls (8th to 12th grade), Jan. 10- March 10, in the new 33,000 square foot Basketball Courthouse on four high school regulation sized courts. The TSJ Intramural High School Basketball League registration fee is \$250 per player and \$600 per team. All games are officiated and statistics provided. The TSJ Intramural High School Basketball league also includes a Playoff round where top teams in the league will meet. Visit

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 7

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-Werner Heisenberg

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 6

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JAN. 16-19

Shen Yun. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Show times are Thursday, Jan. 16 at 2 p.m.; Friday, Jan. 17 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Jan. 18 at 2 p.m.; Saturday, Jan. 18 at 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan. 19 at 2 p.m. Prices starting at \$80. Shen Yun's artistic vision expands theatrical experience into a multi-dimensional, inspiring journey through one of humanity's greatest treasures—the five millennia of traditional Chinese culture. This epic production immerses you in stories reaching back to the most distant past. You'll explore realms even beyond our visible world. Featuring one of the world's oldest art forms— classical Chinese dance—along with patented scenographic effects and all-original orchestral works, Shen Yun opens a portal to a civilization of enchanting beauty and enlightening wisdom.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

Valentine's Challenge. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.; and 1:30-4:30 p.m. At City of Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Approximately 500 volunteers will gather for the Volunteer Fairfax Annual Valentine's Challenge. The Challenge this year is to make 6,000 valentines for children in foster care and child protective services in Fairfax County and for youth in college who have recently aged out of foster care through Foster Care to Success. Offering two shifts, Volunteer Fairfax will be accommodating 250 volunteers each, to allow many in the community to join in to support at-risk youth desperately in need of support and encouragement. Visit www.volunteerfairfax.org and click on these opportunities in the community calendar.

SUNDAY/JAN. 19

G-Scale Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax. The Washington, Virginia & Maryland Garden Railway Society "WVMGRS" members will have a display running at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Museum members, free; adults 13 and over, \$5; children 5-12, \$3; under 4, free. Seniors (65+ and military (active & retired), \$4. Information on the museum and shows is at www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

MONDAY/JAN. 20

Give Together. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Pozez Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Give Together, a signature program of Volunteer Fairfax, helps to foster a legacy of volunteerism in the generations to come. The program recognizes MLK Day as a day of service bringing families together to work on projects that benefit the community. The event is free and encourages families of elementary school-age children to participate. Volunteer with your children to work on service projects benefitting the community. Together, you'll create Valentine's cards for youth in foster care, prepare cat adoption kits, assemble snack packs for food insecure children, create fleece lap blankets for veterans and more. Registration is required. Visit www.volunteerfairfax.org, click events, then click Give Together.

MLK Day of Service. In recognition of Dr. King's message of peace and empowerment, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day has been designated as a national day of service – "a day on, not a day off." Volunteer Fairfax honors the MLK Day of Service and Dr. King's legacy locally through Give Together: A Family Volunteer Day. Volunteer Fairfax strives to foster a legacy of volunteerism in the generations to come with our Give Together event. Join your elementary school-aged children to work on service projects benefitting our community. Together, you'll create Valentine's cards for youth in foster care, prepare cat adoption kits, assemble snack packs for food-insecure children, create fleece lap blankets for veterans and more. This event is open to families with children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old. Older teens can be involved by registering as a Teen Event Volunteer. Sign up here:

<https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/events/give-together-martin-luther-king-jr-day-of-service> If you have any questions, contact Hollie Gordon; hgordon@volunteerfairfax.org, 703-246-3703.

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Still Waiting for "Canswers"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I half expected, with my oncologist out on vacation this week, he and the endocrinologist didn't speak. As a result, after sitting in the examining chair, the first question the doctor asks is "So you have thyroid cancer?" I snickered and said something like "Hopefully," before I began to elaborate. Though she had access to my medical records, I can't say she was prepped and ready for our appointment. As she listened to my story, I could she see was simultaneously trying to review my medical history on her computer. In fact, as I hemmed and hawed in response to some of her medical questions, I kept saying/pointing to her computer for her to get the proper answer.

Nevertheless, eventually we were able to move forward in the determination of exactly what kind of cancer I have: thyroid cancer or lung cancer - or both (it's possible, she said). To that end-result, the doctor performed a biopsy on my "Adam's Apple" tumor, as I call it. The biopsy I had two weeks prior was from a lymph node. The results from which caused my oncologist to call me with his "exciting news." Apparently, those results were not enough for the endocrinologist (who had never seen me before) to make a definitive judgment, so in her office, that day, this second biopsy was performed. Fine with me since a second biopsy from a different tumor is absolutely moving the ball forward, as if is so often said these days; I just hope it leads to a touchdown instead of another possible fumble.

For the last nearly 11 years, I've been diagnosed with non small cell lung cancer, stage IV. Now after two biopsies, not so much. Right now, the assessment of my cancer status is somewhere between a definite maybe and a confirmed I don't know.

Will I now know - in another week's time (when the results of this most recent biopsy are confirmed) whether my non small cell lung cancer is actually thyroid cancer or will there be additional biopsies, additional diagnostic scans, injections of isotopes, etc., to make a once-and-for-all confirmation of what the heck is going on (or has been going on) in my body? If so, it's been a long time coming. I first went to the Emergency Room Jan. 1, 2009 so it's sort of an anniversary of sorts as I write this column. I'd just as soon we get it right this time, if in fact it was ever wrong.

I have a few questions, some of which were answered by the endocrinologist. Yes, I can have two types of cancer. Could my lung cancer have changed to become thyroid cancer? No. And the underlying curiosity/question: During this cancer life that I have lived, I have been told - and seen multiple times on discharge-type paperwork I've received that I have "metastatic cancer" meaning that the cancer has moved. Moreover, when one considers the staging aspect, my cancer was stage IV. Stage IV means, among "relevancies" (like inoperable) that the cancer has moved from its "primary" location. I remember asking my oncologist where did my lung cancer come from (I'm a lifelong non-smoker with no cancer history in my immediate family). His answer, if I recall correctly, and I may not due to "chemo brain," a confirmed side effect of chemotherapy) was that he didn't know, and if I further recall correctly, he wasn't particularly interested in finding out and accordingly no additional tests were ordered. Perhaps we misunderstand the need to know now or misunderstood the answers we were given then (Feb., 2009). But as of this past Friday, Team Lourie is sort of wondering as was the endocrinologist.

As of this moment, our focus is on hearing back from the endocrinologist. Until then, we'll try to move forward. What's done is done and we'll hear back when we hear back. I have what I have (and have had what I've had) and right now, all we can do is wait.

That being said, we are having a little difficulty restraining ourselves. We can't get past the fact that my oncologist called us in the first place, and in the last place, if he wasn't so sure, why call us and get our collective hope sky high? Why go out on such a presumptive limb? In spite of that call, somehow, we have to internalize and compartmentalize and try to synthesize fact from fiction. So far, it's proving extremely difficult.

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

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