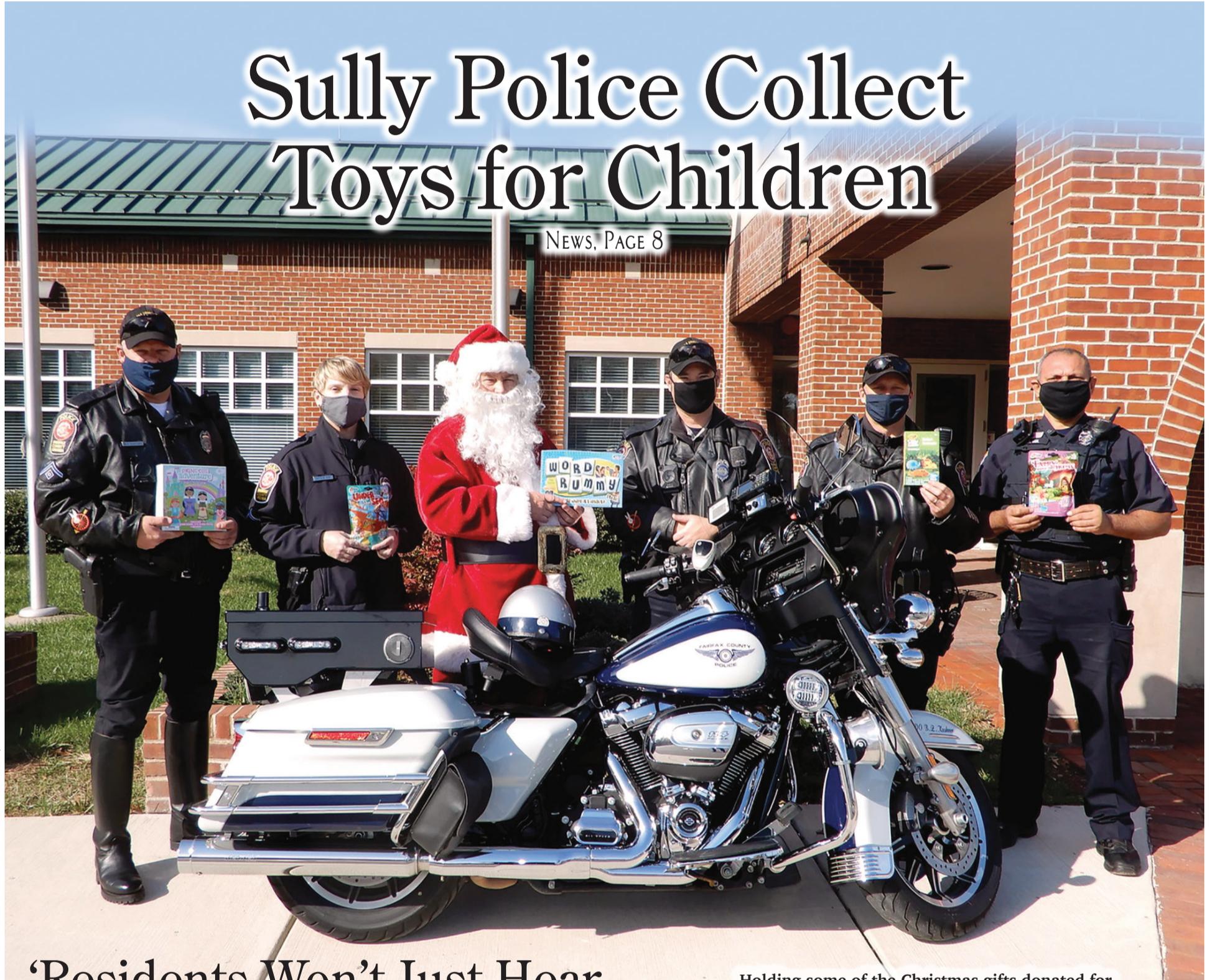


CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Sully Police Collect Toys for Children

NEWS, PAGE 8



OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

‘Residents Won’t Just Hear The Noise – They’ll Feel It’

NEWS, PAGE 3

What Are You Grateful for in 2020?

VIEWPOINTS, PAGE 4

Holding some of the Christmas gifts donated for Santa’s Ride are (from left) MPO Ben Kushner, MPO Meg Hawkins, Santa Claus, PFC R.B. Kitchens, MPO Dave Pierce and APO Tony Gul.

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Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF WATER RATES AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

At 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2020, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA. The meeting will also be available online for remote attendance. For more information, visit fairfaxwater.org/meeting-schedule.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2021, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,320 to \$4,400[†].
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$18,030 to \$19,610.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,370 to \$1,430[†].
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.40 to \$14.85[†].
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.20 to \$3.33 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.85 to \$3.90.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$49 to \$50.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and the Peak Use Charge.
- A decrease in the Overhead Charge for Labor from 104% to 102%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge from \$39 to \$40.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$196 million budget for calendar year 2021*. Water sales are expected to provide \$168.9 million and the remaining \$27.1 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	2020	2021
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$59,083	\$61,352
Power and Utilities	10,730	10,815
Chemicals	7,869	7,928
Purchased Water	5,014	8,364
Supplies and Materials	5,507	5,784
Insurance	1,230	1,100
Fuel	535	700
Postage	586	620
Contractual Services	13,779	14,102
Professional Services	1,336	1,298
Other	2,296	2,452
Sub-Total	107,965	114,515
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,313)	(10,763)
Total	\$97,652	\$103,752

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,358,365
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$38,409,000

* Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

A copy of the proposed changes can be viewed on our website at fairfaxwater.org/rates.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing (in person or remotely) or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Karen Barnette at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, to be included in the record of the public hearing.



Meadowlark Gardens displays a sea of lights and colors to highlight elements of the natural world and brighten the holiday season.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



NOVA Parks helps visitors leap into the holiday season with colorful light displays.

Area Light Shows Brighten the Holidays

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

This season NOVA Parks offers an opportunity to literally “brighten” spirits with three holiday shows. As a more somber country examines holiday traditions this year with an eye toward finding safe accommodations, spectacular shows with hundreds of lights and light sculptures await viewing now at: Festival of Lights, Bull Run Park; Ice & Lights, Cameron Run Park; and Winter Walk of Lights, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens.

The scale of the light shows has not diminished, but goes on with added safety protocols, in what has become a delightful area entertainment custom. The number of available tickets at Cameron Run and Meadowlark were scaled back to meet the latest State restrictions on entertainment gatherings; to reduce crowd size to one third capacity. Added protocols include: timed ticket entry, six foot social distancing, required masks, increased facility sanitation, and staff symptom and temperature checks. The drive-thru show at Bull Run is largely unaffected by the facility safety restrictions since participants remain in their vehicle.

Bull Run Festival of Lights first opened over twenty years ago. Its 2.5 miles include approximately a million lights and a large number of holiday displays. Remaining popular over the years, the show attracted 48,000 cars for the drive through event last year. A newer tradition, begun in 2012, the Meadowlark Botanical Gardens' Winter Walk of Lights show features unique nature themed displays over .6 miles of walking trails, created with over half a million lights. Its first year visitation of 36,000

jumped to about 75,000 walkers in 2019, who watched, among other displays, illuminated bees fly from their lighted hive, frogs leap, and bunnies hop. The newest show, Cameron Run's Ice & Lights, which opened in 2019, “transforms the Great Waves Waterpark into a holiday wonderland”, says NOVA Parks, Operations Superintendent, Blythe Russian, who worked with other staff members to create the Meadowlark and newer ice shows.

Holiday light shows are almost as old as light bulbs themselves. Three years following Thomas Edison's first public demonstration of the incandescent light bulb, in 1882 his associate Edward H. Johnson was dubbed the “Father of Christmas tree lights” after decorating his tree with 80 walnut sized bulbs. By early in the 20th century, the availability of inexpensive electric power made it possible for the average person to decorate with electric lights instead of candles. The first public electric light Christmas holiday display is recognized as Christmas Tree Lane, a .7 mile display of lighted cedar trees along Santa Rosa Ave in Altadena, Calif. The Altadena tradition started in 1920 has continued every year after that, except during WWII.

Since the 1960s, people have been outlining private homes with lights. It became a family entertainment to drive around between 8 and 10 p.m. to view the lights each season.

The NOVA Park shows cater to the public's appetite to view ever larger holiday light displays.

All tickets for the NOVA Park shows must be purchased online (no walk-ins) at nova.parks.com. for shows running until Jan. 3, 2021.

NEWS

'Residents Won't Just Hear the Noise – They'll Feel It'

Supervisors approve new homes under Dulles flightpath.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The writing was already on the wall in July when the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors refused to adopt the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority's (MWAA) 2019 noise contours for Chantilly's Land Unit J. Doing so enabled the board to pretend it's still 1993 and later greenlight a slew of new homes in an area experts say is too noisy for human habitation.

Since then, the Supervisors approved two residential developments for construction there – Elm Street's 158 homes and Boulevards at Westfields' 442. And last Tuesday, Nov. 17, they gave the go-ahead for developer Stanley Martin to build Stonebrook's 134 homes in the same place.

All three projects are directly underneath Dulles International Airport flightpaths – yet the Supervisors okayed them, over the vehement objections of the airport, airlines, environmental and land-use groups, and residents.

Stonebrook will have 120, two-over-two, stacked townhouses, plus 14 rear-load townhouses – at the Westfields Boulevard/Newbrook Drive intersection. Rooftop terraces are optional; also planned are 110,000 square feet of open space – where children will experience aircraft noise full blast from jet planes flying just 950 feet above them, 24 hours/day.

The FAA says homes shouldn't be built there because MWAA's updated noise contours place that site clearly inside the 65-70 DNL contour, with a day/night average decibel noise level of 65 decibels and above. But by using MWAA's old 1993 contours, the developer's representative, Andrew Painter, can claim it's below 60 DNL. He says prospective buyers will be told about aircraft overflights and homes won't exceed interior noise levels of 45 DNL.

BOASTING that some homes will be for those earning 70 or 80 percent of the area median income, Painter said, "We view this as a positive step to add new housing here, keep the [nearby] Westfields Corporate Center competitive and help people build equity in the community." He said residents will sign abrogation easements, holding MWAA harmless from their noise complaints, adding, "This won't adversely impact airport operations."

But the many people and entities that wrote letters to the Supervisors about Stonebrook, and called in to speak during last week's public hearing, disagreed. One was retired Air Force pilot Keith Meurlin, president of the Washington Airports Task Force and former Dulles Airport manager.

"Placing this development directly under Dulles's primary flightpath will bring similar issues the county is dealing with in the Mount Vernon District, about National Airport's noise, to the Sully District – but on steroids,"



COURTESY OF MWAA

Jet airplanes will fly 950 feet above the homes in Stonebrook, to be built directly underneath a Dulles Airport flightpath. Blue lines are arriving flights; red lines signify departures.



Site plan of the Stonebrook residential development in Chantilly.

he said. "The aircraft at Stonebrook will be lower, larger and more intense. Why would the county invite the ire of its residents when it can be avoided?"

Furthermore, warned Meurlin, "The most hazardous phases of flight are right after takeoff and before landing." He also noted that United Airlines could change its plans to significantly grow its Dulles hub if hampered by limitations on its operations and might, instead, move somewhere else with less restrictions.

Richard Deitos, Metropolitan Washington Airlines Committee executive director – representing 44 airlines – said using the updated contours is "critical" when making land-use decisions. He then played a video of the aircraft noise Stonebrook residents will hear continuously.

"The growth of an international airport isn't conducive to nighttime, noise restrictions," he said. "But that could happen if Stonebrook's approved and the residents complain."

Agreeing, Tom Michels of United Airlines said, "We account for about 50 percent of the flights at Dulles and employ 5,000 people

there. We're afraid this will lead to a large number of noise complaints and subsequent curfews on our operations – which would seriously impact our growth. Dulles is our north-south hub, and we expect it to grow to 300 daily flights by year's end and 450 within five years."

"When you place homes directly between the approach/departure path, we can't deviate from it," he continued. "Planes will fly overhead every 4-5 minutes, and residents won't just hear the noise – they'll feel it – and they'll complain. Don't put people there."

MWAA's Michael Cooper stressed that the 1993 contours are "expired and aren't used by the airport. We now have triple, simultaneous arrivals and departures, and that's what triggered our noise studies. Flights going over our busiest runway go over the center of Stonebrook."

Representing the Committee for Dulles – comprising 70 businesses, individuals and nonprofits – Scott York called the airport "a jewel to our economy. Stonebrook is in the wrong location. Why would community leaders put all these people in an area with airplanes flying overhead at just 950 feet?

The need for affordable housing should not negate the need to protect the airport and residents' ability to enjoy their yards, rooftop decks and outdoor play areas."

Sully District Council's Sheila Dunheimer said that land was previously "deemed un-touchable" for residential. And, she added, the supposedly affordable housing will actually sell for 52 percent more than homes in other areas of Centreville and Chantilly. "Do the right thing for our citizens," she implored the supervisors. "Don't allow homes to be built in substandard housing conditions."

"This application is a bellwether for disaster," said resident Tammi Petrine. "Dulles isn't the enemy; but allowing residential so close to it is a red flag that defies common sense. Citizens vote for supervisors every four years – and we'll remember who stood up for us and who didn't."

Noel Kaplan, retired Fairfax County environmental staff member, said Painter's incorrect about the decibel levels there. "The actual, maximum noise levels at Stonebrook are in the 80-90-decibel range," he said. "So the homes' interior noise levels after mitigation would be 65 decibels, not 45. It'll be loud, and residents will hear [the aircraft noise] inside."

IN RESPONSE, Painter said, "No one's forcing anyone to live there."

Supervisors Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) and Pat Herry (R-Springfield) both said the county needs to use the updated contours, not ones from 1993. And Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Lee) said, "I'm very concerned about the noise; it's a quality-of-life issue – this site is literally in the flight path."

Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) then recommended approval. She said there's a Montessori school and other homes nearby, and the new residents will be able to walk to a shopping center with restaurants and a grocery store. Said Smith: "People love to live near the airport, and I urge my colleagues to support this."

Herry said several state senators and delegates sent letters to the Board in opposition and urged it to adopt the new contours before considering Stonebrook. He said Virginia's secretaries of finance and transportation did likewise, as did local land-use committees.

"To ignore the 2019 contours is intellectually dishonest – it's relevant data," said Herry. "This project is bad for the county's economic development, the airport and the residents there, so I won't be supporting it."

But Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross said, "Our growing region means more demand for housing, and everybody knows the airport is there. Land-use is the prerogative of local jurisdictions, not the commonwealth or the airports authority."

Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw said the airport's success will be driven by consumer demand and the market, and Board Chairman Jeff McKay called it "a stretch" to worry about complaints of "homeowners who haven't moved in, yet." The Supervisors then approved Stonebrook, 7-3, with Herry, Alcorn and Lusk voting no. Coincidentally, it was on the 58th anniversary of the airport's dedication.

What are you grateful for on Thanksgiving 2020?

Jeff McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

"In 2020 I'm grateful for the residents of Fairfax County, who have shown so much compassion and empathy during these difficult times. We are lucky to live in Fairfax County and part of that is because of the people who live here. A lot has changed since I first took office at the beginning of year, but care for the community wasn't one of those changes. Residents stepped up to support their neighbors and so many volunteered their time this year. 2020 has been challenging, but I have so much hope for the future."



Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville)

"In a year when all aspects of our lives have been turned upside down by an invisible virus, I count my blessings.

I am thankful to be working with my outstanding colleagues on the Board, some of whom barely had time to settle in, as we lead the County through a pandemic with serious public health and economic consequences.

I am grateful to our health care providers, our non-profit and faith-based partners, and our amazing County staff who stepped up to meet the challenges caused by COVID-19. I especially appreciate our police, fire fighters, mental health therapists, and all those County employees who risk their own health by providing services directly to our residents.

I celebrate the re-elections of my friends Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton and Senator Mark Warner and the election of President-elect Joe Biden.

Finally, I am most grateful for my good health and that of my family and friends, and for the birth of my first grandchild, Jackson Willig Foust."



PHOTO BY FCPS

BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

I am grateful for the privilege to serve and do good for Fairfax and for the trust of our community. I am grateful for family and love that are too often taken for granted, for health and sustenance that God provides without due praise, and for the chance to try again with every new day. Abrrar Omeish, Fairfax County School Board Member-at-Large



RESTON ASSOCIATION

Grateful to be part of a Reston community where neighbors have gone the extra mile for each other during this pandemic. Filled with gratitude for Reston Association staff working diligently to keep residents safe and informed during COVID. Thankful to our RA volunteers who make Reston the best place to LIVE, WORK and PLAY. - Julie Bitzer of Reston, Reston Association President



FILE PHOTO

For sure our medical, health, and safety personnel, but the front line goes beyond that. Thanks also to our grocery store personnel, our sanitation and construction workers, landscapers, plumbers and electricians, those supporting our local business neighbors, and so many others at risk who keep us moving forward. - Robert Goudie, Executive Director of Reston Town Center Association



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

For my family and my community of friends and neighbors in Herndon. They have made the isolation of this year bearable. Our potluck dinners changed to bring your own dinner and pretend life is normal. Even at a distance, I am so thankful for the people in my life. - Sheila Olem, Vice Mayor/Mayor-Elect of the Town of Herndon



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Gratefulness through the lens of 2020 reveals cloudiness and uncertainty. Immediately, I think of resilience and the power of love that causes us to overcome. I also remember those who have loved me well and who make this difficult journey worthwhile, and of course, the wise words of my mother who believed simply waking up "in her right mind," was praiseworthy enough. - Karen Keys-Gamarra, Fairfax County School Board Member-at-Large

I am thankful for our FCPS principals and admin staff. They are providing incredible leadership in their schools. They are working on issues including COVID mitigation measures, staffing in-person and virtual classrooms, and staff and student mental health. They are solution-oriented and are working around the clock to bring the best education possible to our students and families in 2020. -- Elaine Tholen, Fairfax County School Board Member Dranesville District



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
I'm just happy to be alive.-Manuel Antonio of Herndon



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
I'm grateful to be here in the United States from Columbia to visit with my family. Omar Mendoza of Herndon



COMMENTARY

Legalizing Pot

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



When settlers to the Virginia colony in the seventeenth century discovered that they would not be able to walk about and pick up gold as some had been led to believe, they had to look around to find a way to make the colony economically sustainable. Most efforts were unsuccessful until John Rolfe discovered that Virginia had a favorable climate to grow the noxious weed tobacco. What followed was centuries of millions of people becoming addicted to smoking or chewing tobacco with the associated cancer risks. Only in recent times has selling cigarettes to minors or smoking in public places been outlawed. Virginia has one of the lowest cigarettes taxes in the country although it is taxed at a rate higher than other products.

Many farmers throughout the centuries of Virginia's history converted their grain crops to liquor as distillers or moonshiners. With the resulting alcoholism, broken homes, and other evils associated with alcohol, Virginia became a "dry" state outlawing alcohol four years prior to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 making prohibition a national policy. With the lawlessness that ensued and the failure to control alcohol, the Twenty-first Amendment was passed to repeal prohibition in 1933. Virginia went from prohibition to strict control through the establishment of the Alcohol Beverage Control board that now exceeds a billion dollars in annual revenue with half that amount going to support government programs.

During its struggles with public policies related to tobacco and alcohol, Virginia treated access to marijuana as an even greater threat. Jails have been filled and criminal records have been established even for the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Smoking marijuana was viewed as a certain step to lifelong drug addiction. That

tough law and order approach to marijuana shifted a few years ago when I and other legislators were able to get the medical use of marijuana approved for the relief of persons who suffered from seizures; that approach has shifted more dramatically since then.

The General Assembly passed a bill earlier this year that decriminalized possession of marijuana, creating a \$25 civil penalty for a first offense. Last week Governor Northam announced that he supports the legalization of marijuana in the coming session of the General Assembly. Virginia would be the first state in the South to legalize marijuana.

According to a report issued last week by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) that I chair, over the past decade law enforcement in Virginia has made between 20,000 and 30,000 marijuana-related arrests. Ninety percent were for possession of a small amount of the substance. Though Black and White Virginians use marijuana at about the same rate, JLARC found Black Virginians are 3.5 times as likely to be arrested and convicted. JLARC also found that it would take two years and between \$8 million and \$20 million to set up a commercial marijuana market in Virginia and that it could ultimately generate \$300 million in annual sales tax revenue.

Virginia has taken centuries to deal with issues of tobacco and alcohol. Progress has been made, and it appears that the state is on the verge of legalizing pot which I support.

DELIVER FOOD TO SENIORS

Adults are needed to deliver food donations to Fellowship Square residents' apartments. This role requires physical activity: walking, bending, stooping, reaching and lifting objects up to 25 lbs.
Hunters Woods Fellowship House (Reston)
Weekly on Thursdays, 10:00 - 11:30 AM and Fridays, 8:30 - 10:30 AM.
Thursday, December 17, 2:00 - 4:00 PM.
Lake Anne Fellowship House (Reston)
Wednesday, December 23, 2:00 - 4:00 PM.
Questions? Contact Diane Beatley at dbeatley@fellowshipsquare.org

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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Announcements

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Announcements

Legals

ABC LICENSE
Bourbon Boulevard Chantilly LLC trading as Bourbon Boulevard, 4301 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly VA. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Mixed Beverage, Onsite & Offsite Beer & Wine license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Kiran P Gunnam, Manager. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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Candidates must apply at www.ocss-va.org

Announcements

Legals

ABC LICENSE
Sunshine Lee Inc trading as Sikgaek Po-cha, 13860 Braddock Rd Ste A, Centreville, VA 20121-2451. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On Premises Mixed Beverage Restaurant license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Hae Lee, President. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

Employment

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Announcements

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Announcements

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Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

VIEWPOINTS

What are you grateful for on Thanksgiving?

Everyone that has come here is grateful to be here. I've been here 30 years in Herndon. From here, I'm able to maintain and help my family. Thank God for this opportunity, the people who have helped us, particularly the church and volunteers... during the pandemic. They help as we try to get status here, get work here, to have stability. The help that we get from local groups and other volunteers gives us continued hope.- Names withheld upon request. The spokesperson for the group from Herndon is in a red shirt.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Health and family-Eiman Ziraknejad. I'm grateful for having a family and being alive- Layli Ziraknejad, 11. I'm happy to have my mom. - Amin Ziraknejad, 8. The Ziraknejad family is from Reston.



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Overall, I am grateful for family and friends, family especially during this time.- Ghadeer Rantisi of Herndon and son, Nedal, 20 months at the Reston Farmers Market



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

In the market context, I'm grateful we've been able to open the market this year, provide a safe place and safe environment outdoors for people to buy great local food, local produce, and support the farmers and small businesses from the area. It's just central for them to have this sales venue. - Keith Strange of Reston, Co-market Manager for Nov.-Dec.



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

I'm grateful for having my son being home. I know he's not happy about missing college, but I've been able to see him every day...I feel close to all the people at the market because we've been through so much. They were all here for me during the summer when my father died of COVID. He was on a ventilator... My son took me on hikes. Let's get your mind off what's going on (he'd say). - Susan Ellis of Chantilly, Reston Farmers Market Team 2020.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

I'm thankful that Dave and I are raising our family in downtown Herndon - such a warm and welcoming community - and that we are healthy during this awful pandemic. I'm also grateful for the trust Herndon residents have placed in me as your mayor. I'm truly the luckiest girl alive.- Lisa Merkel, Mayor Town of Herndon, with her family (left to right) Zachary, 16, Minute, the puppy, 17 months, Lila 12, Lisa and her husband, Dave



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

COVID-19 has cost over 250,000 American lives. Not only that, one in five small businesses in the United States has closed; some of these businesses have been in families for generations. In the midst of this carnage, I am grateful that my loved ones are healthy and that my business is still afloat. God bless us all.- Radhika Murari of Reston, founder and creator of OmMade Peanut Butter with her son Karan, 13.

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A Question of Time



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Let us presume, for the sake of this column, that I only have papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, and that my years as a non small cell lung cancer patient, also stage IV, are over. If true, it begs the question, which I have been asked twice since this recategorization has become - in my circle anyway, public knowledge: how does it make me feel (to no longer be one scan result away from having months to live to now having years to live)? As obvious an answer as it should be: I can't exactly get my mind around it. I keep hearing that "If it's too good to be true, it isn't" advisory in my head. I realize medicine is different, and that's what scares me.

Well, I can't really say I feel as if I have my life back because I never really lived like it was gone. I pretty much - treatments and side effects notwithstanding - tried to maintain my normal life and to continue my routine as well. I didn't stray too far from my well-established dos and don'ts. I didn't write down a bucket list and therefore spent no time pursuing long-standing goals. I just did what I have always done. I didn't want to be controlled by my cancer; doing things, taking trips, etc. just because I had a "terminal" diagnosis. To my way of thinking, that would have been akin to reinforcing a negative: a cancer that was likely to kill me sooner rather than later so I better do such and such or else. Instead, I just lived my regular life and felt no pressure to cross off items on a bucket list before I died. In spite of living life not as if I was dying, but as if I was going to be living, (unlike the country music song that expresses a different sentiment) I survived beyond my wildest timeline: so far, 11 years and nine months after initially being given a "13 months to two years" prognosis.

Fast forward to the most recent - and amazing news: I hadn't miraculously survived non small cell lung cancer after all, I had merely survived a very survivable and slow moving thyroid cancer (that has - or had previously, metastasized to the lung). Though my oncologist still thinks I have two types of cancer, my endocrinologist thinks I only have - and have had, one type, thyroid cancer. The Lombardi Cancer Center head and neck cancer specialist also feels like I have one cancer: thyroid. Her reasoning, after reviewing my medical records was a bit more direct: "if you had lung cancer diagnosed 12 or so years ago, we wouldn't be here having this discussion. You wouldn't be alive." So being alive is proof, a type of proof I suppose, that I've had thyroid cancer all along and never had lung cancer.

Not that I want to be thick-headed but after nearly 12 years of being told that I had lung cancer and living scan to scan every two to three months and anxiously waiting as well for my lab results every three weeks

I find myself unable to let go of the worst case scenario that has been my life since Feb., 2009, and embrace this amended diagnosis. I can't seem to turn off my internal anxiety/fear clock. In fact, it's still stuck in its original position. I'm like an ocean liner headed out to sea. It can hardly turn on a dime and neither can I. Certainly I want to believe it and I don't really doubt the thyroid cancer opinions I've received, but it just seems that having your wildest dreams come true after almost 12 years of trying to accept the reality of your cancer situation/early death is too much good fortune for anyone to imagine/realize. It's the opposite of normal. As much as one might want it to happen, it's just not the way it generally works. I don't suppose doctors hand out terminal diagnosis before giving it extra ample thought. And yet, I'm about to be living proof.

Nevertheless, every day, the shock of it begins to wear off and I can contemplate my future once again. No more will I count the days between scans. No longer will I dread reading my lab work and wondering what it all means. Oddly enough, what it all means is that I'll probably continue/resume my previous life, boring and mundane as it was because, well, it worked for me then so I imagine it will work for me now.

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



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Holding some of the Christmas gifts donated for Santa's Ride are (from left) MPO Ben Kushner, MPO Meg Hawkins, Santa Claus, PFC R.B. Kitchens, MPO Dave Pierce and APO Tony Gul.

Sully Police Collect Toys for Children

For more than three decades, the Sully District Police Station's Motor Squad has been collecting Christmas presents donated by the community. These officers then deliver them to the children at Inova Children's Hospital and the Georgetown Hospital Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center.

This year's gift collection for Santa's Ride was held Saturday, Nov. 14, outside the police station in Chantilly. Local residents dropped off new, unwrapped toys, games, books and other presents, and even Santa Claus, himself, was on hand to greet everyone who so generously donated.

AREA ROUNDUPS

Car Seat Inspections on Dec. 3

Police officers at the Sully District Station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly, will be inspecting children's car seats Thursday, Dec. 3, from 5-8:30 p.m. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis; participants are asked to wear a mask and adhere to social-distancing and safety precautions. The seat must already be installed; then officers will properly re-install it, if necessary, and teach parents how to do it themselves, in the future. Inspections will also be done Dec. 17.

Help Britepaths Feed Local Students

During COVID-19, nonprofit Britepaths is working with staff and volunteers at its partner schools to help them provide food for students in need. In Centreville, it's feeding children at both Bull Run and Cub Run elementary schools. But it can't do it without the community's help. Cash donations are the most useful and allow Britepaths to provide gift cards to assist schools actively providing food support to their families in need.

"On behalf of the Sully District Station, I want to thank everyone that donated toys for the upcoming Santa's Ride," said MPO Meg Hawkins afterward. "We collected above and beyond what we expected. We're so lucky to have amazing community members like you. And if you missed us, there'll be a collection box in the lobby."

People may contribute gifts until Monday morning, Dec. 7, at 9 a.m. Bring them to the Fair Oaks or Sully District police stations, the Fairfax County Government Center or St. Timothy Catholic School, 13809 Poplar Tree Road in Chantilly.

— BONNIE HOBBS

To donate, go to <https://britepaths.org/civircm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=14> or mail checks, payable to Britepaths, to Britepaths, 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. Write "Food4Thought" and the designated school's name (if any) on the memo line.

Firefighters Collecting Toys for Tots

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is participating in the National Capital Region Fire and EMS Departments' 2020 Toys for Toys campaign. Fire stations are now accepting toy donations through Sunday, Dec. 13. Because of the pandemic – and to minimize contact with the firefighters and paramedics – collection boxes will be outside every station's front door, each day, until 8 p.m. for toy drop-offs.

Gifts must be new and unwrapped; toys used as weapons will not be accepted. Checks or money orders must be made payable to Toys for Tots. Toddlers through youths age 17 will receive gifts. Because of COVID-19, the need is even greater this year, than usual, so the firefighters are hoping the community will be as generous as possible.

Volunteers line up all the food items to go into bags on one long counter making for an easy assembly line process.



PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION

Helping Families in Need this Holiday Season

Cornerstones combines Thanksgiving Food Drive with Gifts for Kids.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Cornerstones was back at it again, ready to assist 1000 Reston Herndon families struggling to make ends meet this holiday season. For a total of 36 hours the week of Nov. 16 through Fri. Nov. 20, volunteers accepted, sorted, boxed, and readied donations for the nonprofit organization's Thanksgiving Food Drive.

On Thursday, volunteers assembled 303 food bags in the parking lot of St. John Neumann Catholic Church in Reston and, when fully packed, brought them into the church hall for additional sorting. For many in the community with stressed budgets and financial challenges, a Thanksgiving dinner wouldn't be possible without this assistance.

According to Ralph Tartaglione of Reston, thirty-five volunteers were there at 9 a.m. and they would have two shifts. "We will probably have around fifty volunteers by the end of the day," he said. Like many volunteers, Urania Rodrigues of the Town of Herndon said she was there to help others less fortunate. Jon Yates of Herndon said he planned on staying for three hours.

Susan Alger is Director of Volunteer and Community Engagement. She said that this year because of COVID, Cornerstones was running its Thanksgiving Food Drive with its Gifts for Kids Drive to reduce the number of interactions for everyone involved. This way,



A small portion of the bags containing traditional Thanksgiving food items line the floor at St. John Neumann Church in Reston used as a packing site for Cornerstones' annual Thanksgiving Food Drive.

Cornerstones could get the children's gift cards to the parents before the next COVID wave took off. "We have an elf who's sitting in another room. She went through all the gift cards and checked everybody's wish list twice making sure we had their cards lined up for them," she said.

Looking out over the river of food bags, Alger said people signed up for assistance in August and September. Each family would get 30 things, mainly staples. Asked about the turkey, Alger said, "Gift cards are a whole lot easier to carry than a turkey and they don't fall on you," she said.

Sandra Baron of Oak Hill began sorting the boxes in the church hall. "Everybody wants to do something because the world is such a mess... and this is a great opportunity."