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The C&O Canal National Historical Park celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Last weekend, parts of the Billy Goat Trail were closed due to high water.

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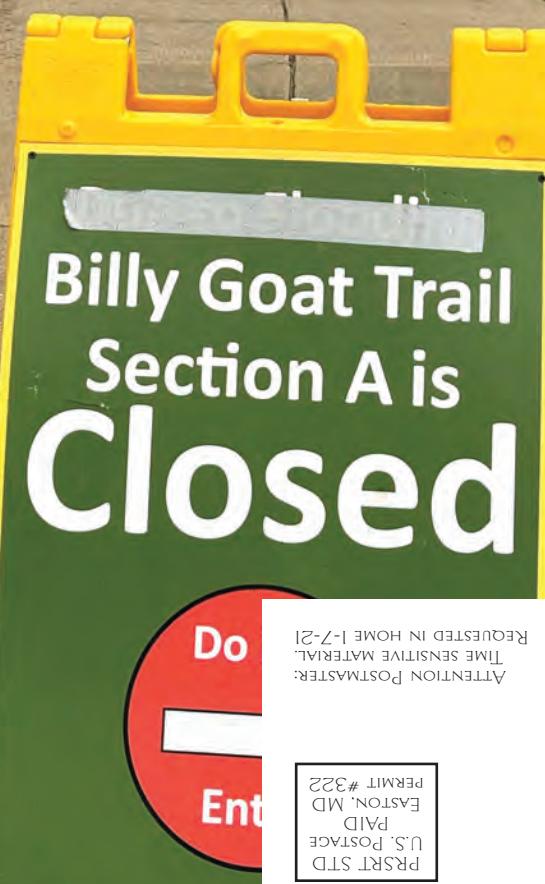
Gentle Resolutions

WELLBEING, PAGE 7

PHOTO BY MARY KIMM

Potomac
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The C&O Canal National Historical Park celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Last weekend, parts of the Billy Goat Trail were closed due to high water.



Looking
Ahead
At Issues
for 2021

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JANUARY 6-12, 2021

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Birders wait and watch in the light rain on Sunday. While the Painted Bunting was spotted Sunday morning, by afternoon birders were disappointed.



"This bird enjoyed quite a bit of fame today; after being absent early, he was found in the same place mid-morning and soon attracted a crowd of birders, which in turn attracted curious non-birders who had come to see the falls," said photographer and birder Kojo Baidoo.

PHOTO BY MARY KIMM

PHOTO BY KOJO BAIDOO

Celebrity Bird

A male Painted Bunting, sporting colors that must be seen to be believed, has been hanging around in Potomac, just south of the Great Falls Tavern, causing quite a stir. Word spread via listservs and FaceBook groups, bringing flocks of hopeful birders to the C&O National Historical Park. I visited twice, but missed the bird both times. By presstime, I might well have made another attempt.

"It was a delight to see this vagrant male Painted Bunting at Great Falls this morning, a lifer for me," birder and photographer Kojo Baidoo said. "This bird enjoyed quite a bit of fame today; after being absent early, he was found in the same place mid-morning and soon attracted a crowd of birders, which in turn attracted curious non-birders who had come to see the falls. ... A great way to start the new year ... let's hope this is a sign of good things to come."

The bird has been photographed by ecstatic birders every day since last Thursday, Dec. 31.

Cornell, on its birding site All About Birds, says that these are fairly common songbirds where



PHOTO BY KOJO BAIDOO

Painted Buntings are related to cardinals, but normally winter in southernmost Florida, southern Mexico or Central America.

they breed in the coastal Southeast and in the south-central U.S., where they often come to feeders. But they are almost never seen in Maryland, and offer public availability even less. Painted Buntings are related to cardinals, but normally winter in southernmost Florida, southern Mexico or Central America.

Advice from Cornell on spotting the bird in its expected habitat also applies to searching for this specimen: "Painted Buntings spend a lot of time hidden in dense habitat so patience might be necessary; however, the wait will be worth it when you finally spot this gem, surely one of North America's finest songbirds."

When Will Those School Bells Ring?

BY PEGGY MCEWAN
POTOMAC ALMANAC

Now that we have rung in the new year and the COVID-19 vaccine is becoming available, will Montgomery County Public Schools return to in-class instruction soon?

Most likely, the answer is no.

In a Dec. 15, 2020 statement, from the Montgomery County School Board said in part, "Delay of Return to In-Person Learning WHEREAS, The Board of Education is committed to the health and safety of the Montgomery County Public Schools students, staff, and community;

and WHEREAS, On November 10, 2020, the superintendent of schools proposed a framework for a safe return to in-person learning that would begin for special student populations on January 12, 2021, if health metrics are met; and WHEREAS, The Board of Education has adopted a health metrics framework that was developed in collaboration with local health officials, and is aligned with the Maryland guidelines framework, that provides guidance for a safe return to in-person instruction; and WHEREAS, Current and forecasted COVID-19 health metrics do

not indicate that Montgomery County will reach the health metrics established by the Board of Education; now therefore be it RESOLVED, The Board of Education delay the return of students for in-person instruction until February 1, 2021, on the condition that established health metrics are met; and be it further RESOLVED, The Board of Education will meet on January 12, 2021, to determine if health metrics can be met by February."

The caveat is, "Current and forecasted COVID-19 health metrics do not indicate that Montgomery County will reach the health metrics established by the Board of Education."

The BOE Dec. 15 "Reaffirmed the health metrics threshold of a 14-day new case rate below 15 cases per 100,000 residents and the test positivity rate below 5 percent."

These metrics are aligned with those recommended by the state and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Current metrics are moving farther away from those determined by the Maryland State Board of Education for safe school opening.

The Montgomery County COVID-19 Surveillance website reports the County with "a very high risk of transmission" with 41.3 cases per 100,000 based on information

Health Metric Matrix for a Safe Phased-in Return to In-Person Instruction – Revised (12/15/20)

	14-Day Raw Average of New Cases	52-105	105 -157	> 157
	14-Day Average New Case Rate* (MD Calculation Model)	5-10	10-15	> 15
	14-Day Average New Case Rate* (CDC Calculation Model)	70 - 140	140 - 209	> 209
Special Student Populations	Partial in-person experience	Partial in-person experience	Virtual	
14-Day Average Test Positivity Rate <5%	Group 1	Partial in-person experience	Partial in-person experience	Virtual
	Group 2	Partial in-person experience	Consider partial in-person experience	Virtual

* Per 100,000 Residents. The models are calculated using a population estimate of 1,05 million residents in Montgomery County

• In-person experience includes physical distancing, mask wearing and frequent hand cleaning

Reassess if new case rate increases by 2 per 100k or if positivity rate increases by 1.5% within 2 weeks

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

Current and projected Covid metrics are well above thresholds set by Montgomery County Public Schools.

from Jan. 3.

That is many more than the BOE determination of 15 cases per 100,000 needed for opening schools.

Test positivity rate is 7.6 percent, well above 5 percent.

Karen B. Salmon, Maryland Schools Superintendent, requested that the Maryland Department of Health, "include teachers,

school staff and early childcare professionals as the first priority in the plan to start COVID-19 vaccinations for essential employees in Maryland."

"Prolonged school closures have resulted in our children experiencing diminished academic achievement and social-emotional distress," she also said in her statement.

This Year, Keep Your Eye On....

By KEN MOORE
THE ALMANAC

Agricultural Reserve

Will the Agricultural Reserve be preserved in perpetuity, as intended, or will County Council press forward in 2021 to permit industrial solar power on agricultural land in its effort to combat climate change?

The Council has a goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 100 percent by 2035.

But despite its lofty goal, Montgomery County Council is in danger of opening the Agricultural Reserve to industrial solar use. The 1980 Council permanently set aside the 93,000 acres of land specifically for agricultural use, a land use initiative praised across the United States.

Council postponed a vote on the zoning text amendment in November to create a working group. Council hoped that advocates on both sides of the debate would reach some consensus during discussions.

But the group, which met more than 10 hours during the holiday season, didn't leave one farmer feeling festive.

"I'm not the one leaving the workgroup with a warm fuzzy feeling. I appreciate each and everyone of you all that has participated in it. I've learned a lot from all of you. But my frustration level is huge. What the hell is the hurry? Why is this County Council on such an accelerated track to approve alternative energy in a zone that has been 50 years in the making? It is imperative to get it right," said Randy Stabler.

The Council is scheduled to hold a committee meeting on Jan. 14, and has voiced intent to vote on the amendment by the end of January.

See past Almanac Stories.

Solar Shines Spotlight on Montgomery County Ag Reserve

Stopping the Combine: Farmers Can't Compete for Land in Montgomery County

Clean Energy or Farmland? Or Both? In Montgomery County: Solar Could Supplant Agricultural Reserve

Key Dates

Thursday, Jan. 14

Montgomery County Council, Public Housing and Environmental Committee, ZTA-20-01, Solar Collection Systems, Agricultural Zone Standards



50th Anniversary

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park celebrates its 50th anniversary on Jan. 8, 2021. The Park will be celebrating this milestone throughout the year with partners and the C&O Canal community, with pandemic precautions changing many of the plans for celebration. See <https://www.canaltrust.org/about-us/50th-anniversary/>

Luxury Lanes Speeding Through?

More than 140 people testified during a series of virtual and live meetings this summer on the State Highway Administration's 19,000-page Draft Environmental Impact Statement that accompanies Gov. Larry Hogan's \$11 billion-plus private-public partnership plan to add four toll lanes from the American Legion Bridge, around the Beltway to Prince George's County, and up 270 to Frederick.

About 127 voiced opposition to the plan, recommending the "no-build" option. Approximately 15 people spoke in support of the plan.

Key Dates:

Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021, 7:30 p.m.

Joint House Environment and Transportation Committee Chair Kumar Barve, Del. Marc Korman, and Del. Jared Solomon plus representatives from the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, CABE, Sierra Club and others to hear the latest on the outlook for legislation and action on the \$11 billion I-495/I-270 toll lane proposal and MDOT's efforts to accelerate the project.

Covid Surging

With a population of 49,194, Potomac 20854 has had 1,270 covid cases, including 115 in the last 14 days, and 47 deaths. Montgomery

County has had 48,089 cases and 1,097 deaths (as of Jan. 5) since the beginning of the pandemic. Maryland has reported 285,319 cases and 5,826 deaths. Currently Maryland has a 9.15 positivity rate, as of Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021, and 1,709 people are currently hospitalized in Maryland due to Covid.

Black people are disproportionately affected, accounting for 36.6 percent of cases, despite being just 20.1 percent of the county's population.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services received the first round of vaccine doses, which are to be earmarked for County health staff engaged in managing the pandemic response, according to county press releases.

Montgomery County is following the priority designations outlined by Gov. Larry Hogan and that all Maryland counties will follow:

1A: Frontline health care workers; staff and residents of nursing homes; and first responders

1B: Essential workers and residents over the age of 75

1C: Individuals over the age of 65

The second priority group includes people in critical, essential infrastructure roles as well as those people at moderately higher risk of severe illness. The general public will have the chance to be vaccinated when the initial priority groups have been fully vaccinated. It is estimated that the general public will have the opportunity to receive the vaccination sometime in the spring of 2021.

Upcoming Dates:
Thursday, Jan. 21, 9:30 a.m.
Montgomery County Council, Public Safety Committee meeting,



Temporary safety improvements to the MacArthur Boulevard bike path separate the path from the road from Brickyard Road to Old Angler's Inn. But while the barriers have been implemented to this section, cars now stack up between Brickyard Road and the Clara Barton Parkway on weekends and sunny days.

Retirement Community on River Road

Spectrum Retirement Communities seeks to transform Potomac Petals and Plants (formerly Behnke's) into a 100 unit retirement community on a 5.04-acre property located at 9545 River Road.

Montgomery County's Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings is scheduled to hear the proposal on Jan. 15, 2021.

"We have been looking on the east coast and in this area for several years and Potomac continuously rose to the top of our list," said Mike Longfellow, with Spectrum Retirement Communities, a company based in Denver, Colo.

Neighbors voiced traffic and safety concerns, and originally objected to the plans for a three-story, 152,655 square foot building. "This project could be among the very top of conditional uses in size and bulk," said David Brown, land use attorney who represents neighbors and West Montgomery County Citizens Association.

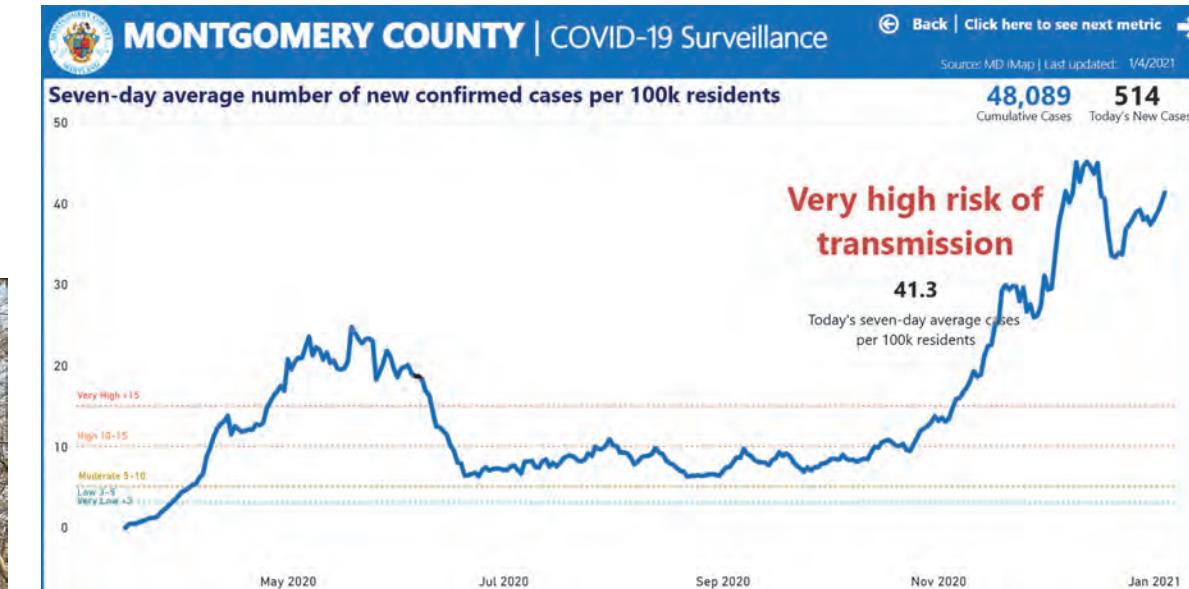
In the 2019-2020 school year, shortened by the pandemic, Black students and Hispanic students accounted for 62 (34 Black students and 28 Hispanic students) of the 71 arrests.

Black and Hispanic students are suspended twice as often as their white peers in elementary, middle and high schools. Special education students are suspended twice as often as other students.

Montgomery County's Board of Education is scheduled to discuss measures the school system can take to address the disproportionately treatment at its Board meeting on Jan. 12, 2021.

Key Dates:
Thursday, Jan. 21, 9:30 a.m.
Montgomery County Council, Public Safety Committee meeting,

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Covid-19 is surging with current levels rising to "very high risk of transmission." <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/>

Get Involved

What's keeping your attention, what's gotten you riled, what are you advocating for, volunteering to do, and passionate about. Email Ken Moore, Almanac reporter, at kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com.

shootings and one death, the killing of Lemp.

Last July, Montgomery County Council passed a Use of Force Policy that prohibits a police officer from using deadly force except when absolutely necessary, and limits no-knock warrants. The legislation requires the Montgomery County police chief to adopt a Use of Force Policy aimed at safeguarding all community members from excessive use of force by police.

According to the investigation of Lemp's killing: "The pre-raid plan indicated that the house was to be 'dual-breached,' meaning that two members of the raid team would conduct a 'break and rake' on Duncan Lemp's first-floor bedroom window while the rest of the team entered the house by using a battering ram on the main front door. These actions were to occur simultaneously with each other. According to the team leader of this raid, he gave the order to dual-breach at 4:42 a.m."

"As the dual-breach was occurring, other members of the SWAT team were tasked with deploying "flashbangs" outside the residence to disorient the senses of the occupants of the house as to what was happening," according to the report.

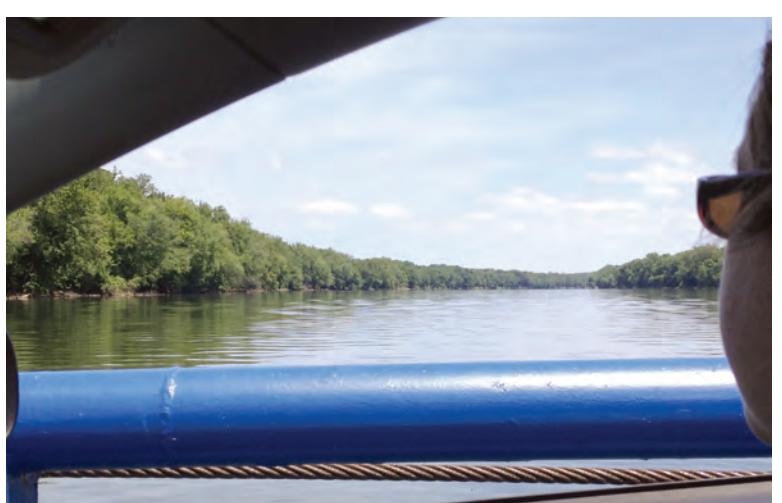
help ensure that all County zoning decisions undergo evidence-based assessments of their potential impacts on Black and Latino residents and other communities. All other Councilmembers are cosponsors.

Zoning and Social Equity

On Dec. 1, the Montgomery County Council unanimously enacted legislation which will require a racial equity and social justice impact statement for each new zoning text amendment. Councilmember Nancy Navarro was the lead sponsor of this legislation, which aims to



For the first time in a decade, the Potomac River's health grade, issued by the Potomac Conservancy, has declined to a B-. "It's a far cry from when we graded the river an abysmal D just ten years ago, but stalled progress could signal a dangerous reversal in course for the river's health if threats aren't addressed," according to the Conservancy. See www.potomacreportcard.com for ways to learn more and to get involved.



Historic Ferry Shut Down

View from a car on White's Ferry. White's Ferry has taken 600-800 vehicles across the Potomac River each day, according to the Loudoun County Department of Transportation. But a lawsuit by Loudoun's Rockland Farm (not Rocklands Farm Winery in Montgomery County) against White's Ferry has resulted in the ferry owners announcing that it will cease operations immediately. According to its website, "Historic White's Ferry is the last of 100 ferries that used to operate on the Potomac River. The ferry connects Whites Ferry Road in Loudoun County, Va. The cars line up on what looks like a boat ramp and drive down onto the ferry. Once loaded, the ferry follows a wire cable to the other side of the Potomac."

advisory committees and testify at public hearings before the Planning Board, County Council, and the Board of Appeals, as well as in Annapolis. When necessary, WMCA retains Counsel in legal issues.

Monthly public meetings October through May feature speakers, citizen concerns, development proposals, and environmental issues relevant to our community. WMCA's Board of Directors meets monthly year-round, and three committees shape its agenda – Environment, Planning and Zoning, and Roads, Bikeways and Sidewalks.

See www.wmcca.org and a letter from West Montgomery highlighting this month's efforts.

POTOMAC ALMANAC ♦ JANUARY 6-12, 2021 ♦ 5

West Montgomery County Citizens Association

VIRTUAL MEETING

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86290042077?pwd=OHR-CeUxOb0JyUld5ND14UVA2ST-BuUT09>

or call in with 301-715-8592 (Meeting ID = 862 9004 2077, Passcode: 004225)

No advance registration required.

A recording of this meeting will be available on our website: www.WMCCA.org

SPEAKER: Dr. Andrew Lazur, Statewide Water Quality Specialist with the University of Maryland Extension

Join us for a discussion on septic systems, wells, and their stewardship. Dr. Andrew Lazur is a Statewide Water Quality Specialist with the University of Maryland Extension focusing on private wells, drinking water quality, and septic system education. He has been involved in the aquatic science field for over 35 years having worked in aquaculture,

conservation of aquatic species, pond management, and water quality management. His passion is to help others learn about water quality and increase adoption of practices that are beneficial to environmental and public health.

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

Are "Stream Restorations" Damaging to Our Streams?

submitted by President Ken Bawer

"To date, the County has completed stream restoration projects, restoring almost 30,000 linear feet of stream..." per the latest report on meeting our MS4 Permit. The inconvenient truth is that in some cases these projects may convert our natural stream valleys into engineered stormwater conveyances without addressing the root cause of the problem – stormwater fire-hosing into streams from developed areas — impervious surfaces such as roofs, roads, sidewalks, driveways, etc. They address the symptoms (stream bank erosion), but not the cause in an effort to check the MS4 Permit box.

Every year, the County spends millions of taxpayer dollars on so-called "stream restoration" projects. First and foremost, the term "stream restoration" is a misnomer since some of these projects may not actually restore streams. See examples of destructive "stream restoration" projects here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zi7SAvswCh-4vNakRtS74vf-bsdiTGsyt/view?usp=sharing>

A "stream restoration", as defined by Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for MS4 Permits, may include stormwater management engineering practices that use heavy equipment such as bulldozers and backhoes to modify a stream channel. Typically, this involves placing heavy boulders from outside sources to armor-plate sections of the stream bank, changing a stream's natural meander pattern based on theoretical mathematical formulas,

cutting down stream banks, and raising the level of stream channels with fill material brought from off-site. This sometimes means removing tons of stream bank soil along with all the plants and animals residing on and in it. To provide access for the heavy equipment, hundreds or thousands of trees are cut down to build access roads, and then many more trees are cut down during the construction project itself. To add insult to injury, the County and Parks asked that their "stream restoration" projects be exempted from our forest conservation laws which further enables wholesale tree cutting during these projects. (Note: infrastructure protection projects such as protecting or repairing sewer lines in stream valleys are not "stream restorations" – they are proper and necessary.)

So, why are such "stream restoration" projects done? They are typically used to help meet the requirements of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit (required under the federal Clean Water Act and issued by MDE) which requires that the County decrease certain pollutants (nitrogen, phosphorus, and suspended sediments) entering the Chesapeake Bay. However, while sediment caused by stream bank erosion may be reduced by these projects which armor-plate sections of streams, research by Robert Hilderbrand has shown that, "Despite the promise and allure of repairing damaged streams, there is little evidence for ecological uplift after a stream's geomorphic attributes have been repaired." https://cbtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/Hilderbrand-et-al_Quantifying-the-Ecological-Uplift.pdf

In other words, while armor-plating streams with boulders may temporarily decrease erosion (since future storms can blow out these structures), the biological health of the area is not improved. In fact, the devastating biological impact of excavations by bulldozers and backhoes in our stream valleys is obvious to even the most casual observer.

Having said all that, the WMCCA has representatives on the Montgomery Stormwater Partners Network Stream Restoration Workgroup in an effort to educate ourselves and reach a consensus position on these stream projects. We remain willing to be convinced that these types of "stream restorations" are good for the environment. Until such time when it can be demonstrated that such "stream restorations" are beneficial to the local environment, we ask that the County and Parks obtain their MS4 Permit credits from alternative, upland (out of stream valley) projects and non-destructive practices such as tree plantings and conservation landscaping.

What can you do? On your own property, create rain gardens and replace turf grass with conservation landscaping to decrease stormwater runoff. Don't pipe your roof runoff to the street. See other ideas at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/water/rainscapes/index.html>. Above all, contact our elected officials and ask that emphasis be placed on alternative practices



PHOTO BY KEN BAWER

Fallsreach Restoration Project. A basketball court built in the floodplain was protected by armor-plating the stream bank. Note the total removal of plants and the newly engineered stream channel.

such as upland (out of stream valley) stormwater control, tree plantings, and conservation landscaping, for example.

RainScapes can be installed on any kind of property, but those on private residential, institutional, and/or commercial properties may be eligible for financial assistance: RainScapes Rewards Rebates <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/water/rainscapes/rebates.html>. The RainScapes program also offers technical and financial assistance to encourage property owners to implement RainScapes techniques on their property. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/water/rainscapes/index.html>

Beltway Expansion Project

submitted by Carol Van Dam Falk

The Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) and other independent analyses have shown that Governor Hogan's beltway expansion project would hurt local ratepayers and Maryland taxpayers, and would be especially devastating for local residents. In March, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) estimated the cost would be \$2 billion to move water and sewer pipes to make way for the project; that's more than double the original estimate from MDOT. The state has consistently refused to acknowledge who will cover the cost. WSSC fears it may have to raise ratepayers' water bills. Despite Governor Hogan's claims that the proposal will cost Maryland taxpayers nothing, the DEIS admits that upwards of \$1 billion in state subsidies might be needed to complete the project (Washington Post).

Local communities will pay the biggest price for the beltway project. The DEIS acknowledges that 1,500 properties will be negatively impacted, and up to 34 homes will have to be bulldozed completely. The project will disproportionately impact local communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, all of whom will be forced to cope with increased noise

and air pollution and increased risk of flooding and water pollution. The proposal would also negatively impact dozens of community resources including schools, parks, and hospitals, not to mention the numerous environmental concerns.

County Council Hearing on Sewer Category Change Requests

submitted by Susanne Lee

A public hearing will be held on Jan. 12, 2021 at 1:30 pm regarding five sewer category change requests for properties located in the Potomac Subregion. They are located at 10400 Boswell Lane, 10401 Boswell Lane, the 12000 block of Piney Meeting House Rd, 9701 Watts Branch Drive, and 13517 Glen Mill Road. The County Executive has recommended approval of the request for 10400 Boswell Lane and disapproval of the remaining requests. It appears that his recommendations are consistent with the law and policy governing sewer use contained in the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, the County Water and Sewer Plan including the Piney Branch limited access policy, and the Maryland Smart Growth statutes. WMCCA plans to testify at the hearing in support of the County Executive's recommendations. The package describing these requests can be found here: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20201208/20201208_2Q.pdf

Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 20-08 Continuing Care Retirement Community

submitted by Susanne Lee

The Planning Board's crazy proposal to use a redefinition of Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) to allow and promote construction of duplexes and triplexes in the County's remaining low-density zones has arrived at the County Council. A Council public hearing is scheduled for Jan. 19, 2021 at 1:30 pm. WMCCA supports efforts to

address senior housing needs documented in Montgomery Planning's recent study where affordability and aging in place were major themes. Our area had already been inundated with facilities, with more on the way, even before the pandemic raised serious issues regarding reliance on congregate living settings for housing seniors. This developer-driven proposal would turn the State law-based definition of a CCRC on its head and appears to be targeted at allowing developments such as Heritage Gardens on South Glen Road – a townhouse development (units starting at \$1.25 million) in a single-family RE-2 (2 acre) zone.

WMCCA is working with the Greater South Glen Neighborhood Association to oppose the ZTA, including testifying in opposition at the upcoming hearing. Information regarding the ZTA appears here:

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20201208/20201208_3D.pdf

REMINDER: IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please renew or become a new member of WMCCA. Go to our website www.wmcca.org to download a membership form or join using PayPal: Individual: \$25 / Family: \$50. We welcome donations to our Legal Fund. While we try mightily to get good results without litigation, sometimes it is unavoidable and highly effective. Contributions from members enabled us to join efforts to successfully fight the Brickyard Road soccerplex, the Old Anglers Inn event complex, and the Heritage Gardens townhouse development on South Glen Road. If you have any issues or concerns in your neighborhood, please contact WMCCA.

Website Assistance Needed

by Peter Poggi:

WMCCA is looking for someone to help modernize our website.

While the current www.wmcca.org website has served us well since 2003, it is built upon an outdated Microsoft Frontpage 2003 platform, written entirely in HTML using frames, and reliant upon one individual. Our objectives are twofold. First and foremost, we need to have a trained backup who will share responsibility for maintaining the current site alongside our current website administrator. Once familiarized with the site, this responsibility will require a minimal time commitment of less than 30 minutes monthly. Our second goal is to identify and begin transforming the site to a more maintainable, template driven, platform. This will require gaining an understanding of the existing website structure and working closely with the WMCCA Board and website administrator to come up with a suitable design.

Interested candidates should have a background in current website design/development methods, and a familiarity with available hosting options. Please contact Peter Poggi, peter.poggi@yahoo.com

Gentle and Subtle Resolutions for 2021

Try small, simple and achievable goals.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE ALMANAC

For 2021, local mental health professionals advise being gentle with yourself when creating the daily schedules and resolutions that often come with the beginning of the New Year. As many are feeling drained and defeated after a tumultuous 2020, making tiny, downsized resolutions can offer reassurance and hope as we embark on a new year.

"The year 2020 really highlighted that we can't control what happens, but we can control how we respond," said therapist Marla Zometsky, manager of the Wellness, Health Promotion for Fairfax County. "We are resilient and we can learn how to adjust based on the changes that are presented to us. It is okay to grieve things that did not turn out how we wanted, we can grieve and move forward."

Create a routine by making a small change to one's day, advises Karina Guzman, Director of Wellness, Prevention and Education at Marymount University. "It might be helpful to create a simple daily routine or make uncomplicated new year resolutions focused on being present," she said.

"Meditating, practicing gratitude and staying connected with our support networks like friends and family are some quick and free activities to incorporate. They can be done at your own pace and are easy to include into a daily routine long-term."

Simple daily routines are great for producing structure. "Most people thrive on having structure in their daily lives and find that it makes them feel more productive, which then helps their mood and feeling good about themselves," said Bethesda therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW. "A great way to add structure is to think about what your goals and responsibilities for yourself are daily. Then make a plan for your day that includes these goals. Make sure the goals are small and specific."

Some have created broad and generalized goals like getting fit in 2021, but Zometsky suggests starting with a purposeful, meaningful and achievable goal. "Instead of focusing on a resolution, which is something that typically focuses on what is lacking, in 2021, perhaps set an intention," she said. "An intention helps us to focus and it is mindful that we are on a journey. What do you aim to do more of this year? Intentions can give you a sense of purpose, and focuses on what is motivating you. Maybe your intention is to slow down or to continue to form deeper and meaningful relationships? Maybe your intention is to be more present in certain situations, or be more holistic in your health and wellbeing. Setting an intention will help you... identify your

and nurturing human connections," said therapist Tara Wooldridge, LCSW of Arlington County Government. "Routines and rituals can provide comfort. Scheduled physical exercise, mindfulness, meditation, quiet, reflective moments, support groups, and sharing with others are all ways to foster well-being. Choose what feels right for you and follow through. Our mental and physical health must remain priorities as we battle the ongoing global pandemic."

What do you aim to do more of this year? Intentions can give you a sense of purpose, and focuses on what is motivating you. Maybe your intention is to slow down or to continue to form deeper and meaningful relationships? Maybe your intention is to be more present in certain situations, or be more holistic in your health and wellbeing. Setting an intention will help you... identify your actions and navigate your response when faced with adversity."

For those who've created broad and generalized goals like getting fit in 2021, Zometsky suggests replacing those with purposeful, meaningful and achievable goals. "Instead of focusing on a resolution, which is something that typically focuses on what is lacking, in 2021, perhaps set an intention," she said. "An intention helps us to focus and it is mindful that we are on a journey. What do you aim to do more of this year? Intentions can give you a sense of purpose, and focuses on what is motivating you. Maybe your intention is to slow down or to continue to form deeper and meaningful relationships? Maybe your intention is to be more present in certain situations, or be more holistic in your health and wellbeing. Setting an intention will help you... identify your

actions and navigate your response when faced with adversity."

Practical resolutions might feel comforting in this year of uncertainty, says psychologist Jerome Short, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology at George Mason University. "Try small changes, evaluate, adjust, and praise yourself for improvements, he said. "It may help to have a daily schedule, usual healthy meals and exercises, and specific times alone and with others."

Paring down ambitious resolutions to those that are practical can feel satisfying this year, suggests Short.

"Declutter your house, wear a basic wardrobe, and eat simple meals. Share work and household tasks with others," he said. "Evaluate when you work most efficiently and what energizes you. Make sure you have time for breaks and enjoy your five senses with favorite sights, sounds, foods, and hugs".

"Meditating, practicing gratitude and staying connected with our support networks like friends and family are quick and free activities."

— Karina Guzman, Director of Wellness, Prevention and Education at Marymount University

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New Year, Old Problem: Cancer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I sit and write here, with too much time on my hands, I can't help but consider my lot in life. In a little less than two months: Feb. 20, I will celebrate (if that's even the right word), the 12-year anniversary of my original cancer diagnosis. On that date, I received a phone call at work from my internal medicine doctor advising me that the previous week's surgical biopsy indicated a malignancy in my lungs. The following week, Team Lourie was sitting in an oncologist's office waiting for the other shoe to drop. And boy, did it drop: non small cell lung cancer, stage IV. Accompanied by a "13 month to two year" prognosis with very little encouragement or statistical probability to give us much reason to hope. In answer to our predictable question, the soon-to-be my oncologist offered up a tantalizing prospect: "Could you be the one" (literally) that outlives your prognosis? It was hardly heartfelt, but his answer was "Yes."

So off I didn't fly into the wild blue yonder. Instead, I shuffled out his office and with my head down, exited the building and staggered into my car where my wife, Dina and I attempted to process the information we had just been given. I don't recall there being much discussion during the 30-minute drive home or even after we had arrived. To tell you the truth, besideS still processing the information we had just received, we were pretty much in a daze (hence the overall name for my columns: "Daze of My Life") and were so blindsided by the seriousness of what we had just heard (no cancer history in my immediate family as well as my being a lifelong non-smoker), we almost couldn't talk, probably didn't talk and any talking we did was likely empty and hollow. Imagine being told, out of the blue, that you could be dead in less that a year, maybe even before your 55th birthday. Heck, both my parents lived past 85. That's what I've been anticipating. To think that 30 years yet of my future life had just been taken away was almost too much to believe. But since the oncologist was not the least bit in doubt about any of the results or how to proceed (we didn't feel the need, given the urgency and conviction with which the oncologist spoke, to even get a second opinion), we decided and committed that very day to starting chemotherapy the following week. It seemed clear that there was absolutely no time like the present.

Though the dozen or so tumors in my lungs "never acted" as my oncologist expected (growing and moving) it wasn't until Dec. '19 a year or so after a large tumor appeared below my Adam's apple that a new surgical biopsy was performed. The results of which indicated thyroid cancer which a few weeks later led to my having a thyroidectomy (thyroid removed) per the direction of my newest doctor, an endocrinologist (who has been treating me ever since). When the post-surgical biopsy confirmed yet again the existence of thyroid cancer, my reclassification as a thyroid cancer patient was official. Soon thereafter, my treatment for thyroid cancer began, first an overnight at the hospital and then daily levothyroxine pills. As a result, I am no longer being treated for lung cancer, just thyroid. The question has raised its ugly head in these last few months: Was I misdiagnosed or did I have two types of cancer? And if I do have two types of cancer and one/the lung cancer is not being treated, am I in reality a "dead man walking?" Ignoring/not treating lung cancer is generally speaking, not advisable. As my oncologist said to me many years ago about my having lung cancer: "I can treat you but I can't cure you." Not exactly words to live by.

It's on these anniversaries and the last few months leading up to them when I focus even more on my circumstances. How does that actually occur when my having cancer already consumes my conscience and subconscious? I can't really explain it other than to express the amazement and good fortune that I'm still alive. All I know is, I'm always happy when I wake up the next day and the anniversary has finally passed.

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

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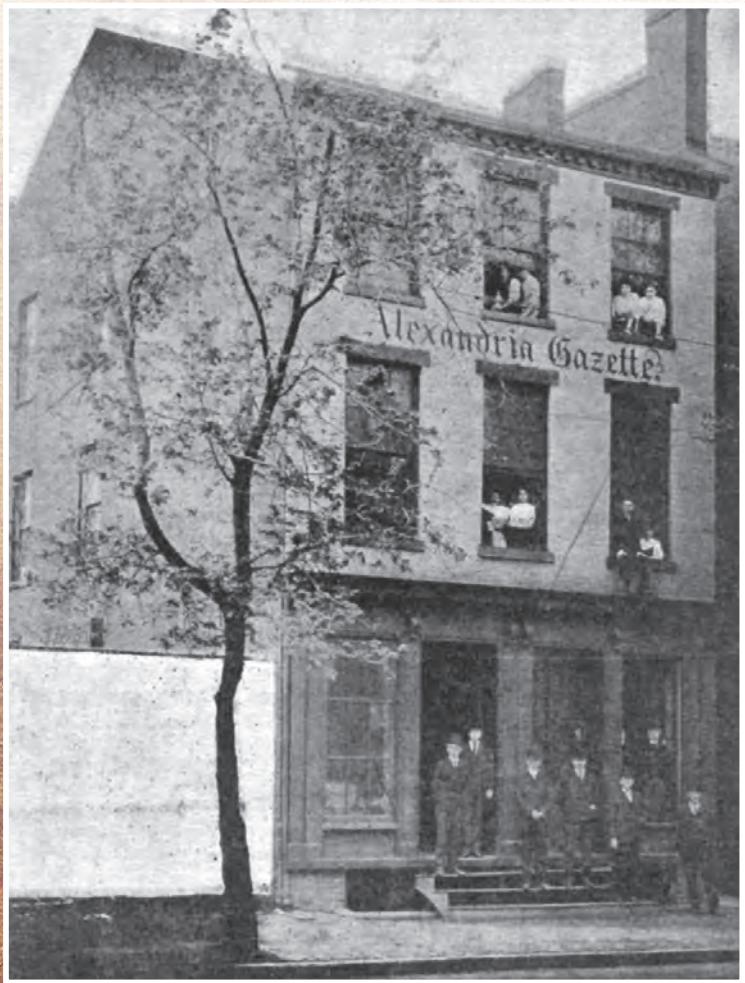
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Pictured: One of the several historical buildings that has housed the Alexandria Gazette Packet since its 1784 founding.

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The pandemic has crushed many newspapers across the country, and one of America's oldest newspapers and its affiliated Connection Newspapers, websites and digital media is at risk. The Northern Virginia, DC, and MD area's best read and most trusted source for community news, which includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region. The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyperlocal news to residents. Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years - countless residents have grown up with this local paper covering significant moments in the life of your family and children, news, sporting events,

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