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Mount Vernon Gazette

HOME LIFESTYLE
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MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 14, 2021

County Residents List Assembly Expectations

Fairfax County General Assembly Delegation holds pre-2021 Session Public Hearing.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County General Assembly Delegation held a Pre-2021 Session Public Hearing on Saturday, Jan. 9. Limited to 70 two-minute speaker slots for County residents who signed up ahead of time, this was an opportunity for delegation members to hear constituent concerns as they prepared for the upcoming session that convenes on Wednesday, Jan. 13 and adjourns on Saturday, Feb. 27. All speakers registered in advance could submit video or call in to submit live testimony during the hearing. Speakers could also submit written testimony by email.

Residents urged the Fairfax delegation to support strengthening our public schools, childcare, and Human Services, expanding access to affordable housing, protecting our environment, modernizing transportation infrastructure, and more. They provided testimony.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors



State Senator Scott Surovell (D-36).

Chairman Jeffrey McKay welcomed all and thanked Senator Richard (Dick) L. Saslaw (D-35) for conducting the public hearing. McKay named actions from banning firearms on county property, removing Confederate monuments from the county courthouse, passage of the Clean Economy Act, which had allowed Fairfax County to procure the

“We need additional financial support from the state of course, and additional state flexibility to weather this storm...”

—Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay

largest solar PPA project in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and increasing and improving access to one of the most fundamental rights as Americans, voting for no excuse early voting, easing ID requirements and allowing valid drop boxes. However, McK-



Marissa Brown of Vienna and her son Paul.

ay said, “We need additional financial support from the state of course, and additional state flexibility to weather this storm...The number one thing counties need right now is flexibility to be spry and be able to do what is necessary to meet the needs of people in their communities. And we know communities throughout the Commonwealth are very, very different and that flexibility has never been more important to counties than it is today.”

SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE Tamara Derenak Kaufax (Lee District) spoke

next. Addressing the Fairfax Delegation, she said that as the state legislative liaison, on behalf of the entire school board, they were concerned about budget implications associated with some of the proposed changes and the difficulty they have in acquiring the



School Board representative, Tamara Derenak Kaufax (Lee District).

necessary local resources. “Please consider more flexibility on your local match requirements.” “We urge you to continue to hold harmless provisions for student enrollment losses, as we believe they’re temporary...Please avoid imposing state level one-size-fits-all mandates, particularly in these uncertain times.”

Marissa Brown of Vienna and her son Paul said there was much to do in the upcoming session. Paul said he was a person with autism. He waited more than six years on the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver List. Marissa said they were concerned that Virginia’s current reimbursement rates don’t support hiring a high-quality workforce.

“This is essential in order to recruit staff who really understand the needs of people with developmental disabilities, particularly people with complex needs like Paul. And as I get older, I need to have the confidence that the system of

SEE COUNTY RESIDENTS, PAGE 7

SCREENSHOT PHOTOS

Northam: ‘Time to Legalize Marijuana’

Virginia looking to be the first state in the south with legalized marijuana.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Legalizing marijuana around the country has moved forward in recent years, and Virginia could be on the agenda this month as the General Assembly gathers in Richmond to kick off 2021.

Governor Ralph Northam opened the discussion in November. “It’s time to legalize marijuana in Virginia,” said Northam. “Our Commonwealth has an opportunity to be the first state in the South to take this step, and we will lead with a focus on equity, public health, and public safety. I look forward to working with the General

Assembly to get this right,” he said.

It’s not just to catch a buzz either, according to the governor’s office. There are many advantages to adult-use legalization, including addressing social and racial equity and creating economic development opportunities for historically disadvantaged Virginians, agribusiness industries, and localities. In addition, the tax revenues can benefit both localities and the entire state while providing funding

SEE MARIJUANA, PAGE 5



Virginia NORML's Tamara Netzel, is the first customer at the recently-opened Columbia Care Portsmouth, for medically distributed cannabis.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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Privatized Incarceration

Alexandria senator leads fight against profiting from prisoners.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

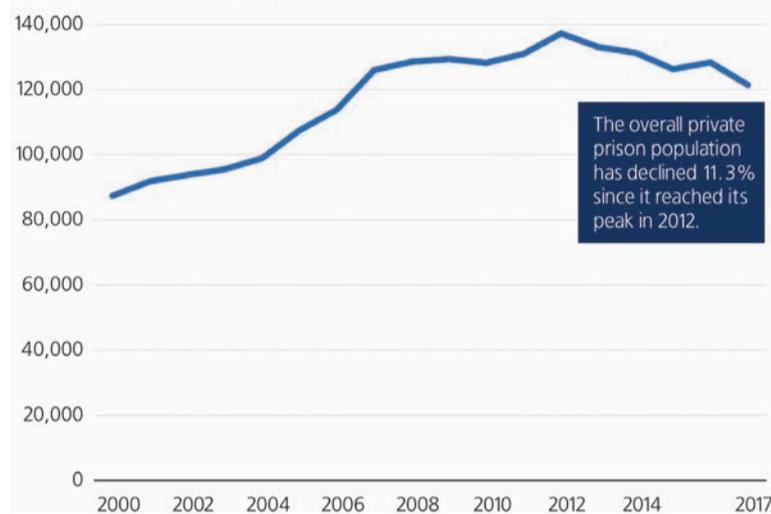
Housing inmates in Virginia prisons costs the state about \$70 a day each. But the private sector can do it a lot cheaper, about \$50 a day. Lawmakers are about to debate whether that's a savings they can afford.

Virginia has only one private prison, the Lawrenceville Correctional Center. Originally constructed in 1998 as Virginia's first private prison, the facility is now operated by Florida-based GEO Group. State Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) says staff there are overworked and underpaid, and he says basic standards of care should not be sacrificed to save money. That's why he's introduced legislation prohibiting the state from privatizing prison management, essentially ending the commonwealth's contract with GEO Group when it ends in 2023.

"People who are under the care of the state involuntarily have the right to a certain standard of care," said Ebbin. "When we put a private organization in charge of people who are incarcerated, there is less accountability. If the state is going to incarcerate people, the state should be the ones that ensure that standards are being met."

Ebbin introduced a similar bill last year, although it didn't get very far. When the Senate Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee took it up, a lobbyist from GEO Group told lawmakers the company has had a "positive and productive" relationship with the Virginia Department of Corrections. A financial impact

Overall private prison population numbers



SOURCE: THE SENTENCING PROJECT

The population of private prisons in the United States increased 47 percent over the last 20 years, although recent years have seen a modest decline.

statement of the bill showed the cost of Virginia assuming control of the facility would be \$30 million, and the cost of operating it would be \$18.5 million a year. The

"If the state is going to incarcerate people, the state should be the ones that ensure that standards are being met."

— Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)

committee killed Ebbin's bill with a vote of 11 to four, including four Democrats who voted against it.

"I'm trying to figure out what problem we're trying to solve," said state Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31), chairwoman of the committee. "This is really expensive."

PRIVATE PRISONS incarcerate about 130,000 people in the United States, according to the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics. That's a 47 percent increase in the last 20 years, an indication that for-profit incarceration is a booming industry at a time when critics of mass incarceration have been calling for criminal justice reform. GEO Group is one of the world's largest private correctional detention management companies, operating about 60 facilities with more than 50,000 beds in the United

States, Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

"Senator Ebbin's legislation is misguided and does not recognize the true value and benefits of GEO's operation of the Lawrenceville Correction Center," said Christopher Ferreira, manager of

corporate relations for GEO Group. "While we work with our government partner to ensure adequate staffing levels, our contract provides for the appropriate amount of staff to safely and securely manage the center."

A 2016 report from the Justice Department found that private prisons have a higher rate of inmate-on-inmate assaults and more than twice as many inmate-on-staff assaults.

The report also found that the Bureau of Prisons failed to ensure inmates were receiving medical care, a growing concern during the pandemic. According to the Virginia Department of Corrections, 99 of the 1,500 inmates at the Lawrenceville facility have tested positive for covid-19. One inmate died, and two staff members have tested positive.

Critics of private prisons say cutting corners on medical services is a recipe for disaster.

"The medical care is insufficient, and people die," said Claire Gastanaga, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia. "If the state is going to deprive them of their liberty and hold them, then the state is obligated to provide them an environment that is safe and secure and doesn't adversely impact their health."

THE LEGISLATION introduced by Ebbin is aimed squarely at closing the Lawrenceville facility and preventing the Department of Corrections from entering into any kind of similar contract in the future. But some lawmakers are concerned about the possibility that the legis-



Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)

lation might have an unintended consequence of closing halfway houses. At issue is a part of the code outlining "any physical betterment or improvement related to the housing of inmates."

Businesses that operate reentry programs are concerned Ebbin's bill might jeopardize state contracts with reentry programs.

"That would be a concern because a lot of these programs are offering offenders a place to land when they reenter society," said David Rook, president of the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences.

"If they don't have a place to land when they come in that kind of helps them get on their feet then we're asking for recidivism rates to rise."

Even if the unintended consequence involving halfway houses is fixed, Ebbin would still need to persuade his colleagues that they can afford the price tag for pulling the plug on for-profit incarceration. As \$18.5 million a year, a study Ebbin commissioned last year showed the cost to be closer to \$9 million a year. Even then, financial concerns might prove to be a difficult argument in a budget environment with all the uncertainty surrounding the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. In addition to that, advocates for criminal justice reform are focused on providing better services to inmates rather than looking at who is providing the services.

"I think it's a red herring," said Del. Don Scott (D-80). "It looks like it's talking about mass incarceration, but it's really only talking about who has the key to the door."

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNews-papers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

TUESDAY/JAN. 19

Genealogy in Print. 1-2:30 p.m. Zoom online network -- Mount Vernon Genealogical Society monthly meeting. Genealogist Sharon MacInnes will speak about how to find and download county and family history books, articles, newspapers, manuscripts, etc. Online access info to be emailed to Society members and registered nonmembers. Email registration by January 15 to contact-us@

mvgenealogy.org. Visit the website: www.mvgenealogy.org/eventListing.php?nm=20

ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (LCNV) is hosting beginning-level adult English language classes from February to May. Due to the continued situation of COVID-19, classes for the spring semester will be held on virtual platforms only, which require students to have a computer, tablet, or smartphone and internet access to participate. Registration begins Monday, January 11, and runs through Friday, February 5, SEE HELPING, PAGE 8

Don't Go to DC for Inauguration

The chief executives of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia held a joint call to discuss planning for the 59th Presidential Inauguration. The leaders discussed the need for enhanced planning and preparation compared to previous inaugurations given the chaos, injury, and death experienced at the United States Capitol during the insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. The Mayor and the Governors agreed to urge Americans not to come into Washington, D.C. for the Inauguration and to instead

participate virtually.

They issued the following statement:

"Jan. 6, 2021 is now a seminal moment in American history. We are grateful for the courageous efforts of every law enforcement officer, Guard member, and first responder who heroically worked to secure the Capitol and ensure our nation's democracy prevailed.

"On Jan. 20, there will be a transition of power, and we will work together, and with our partners in the federal government, to ensure the safety of the National Capital Region. Due to the unique

circumstances surrounding the 59th Presidential Inauguration, including last week's violent insurrection as well as the ongoing and deadly COVID-19 pandemic, we are taking the extraordinary step of encouraging Americans not to come to Washington, D.C. and to instead participate virtually. "In this very trying time, Jan. 6 was a dark moment for our nation. But we know that we will get through this period because American ideals are stronger than one extreme ideology. Together, we will overcome extremism."

Virtual Session Begins!

Here's how to see more of what's happening in the General Assembly.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK



Krizek

This week on Wednesday, Jan. 13, we embark on yet another historic legislative session, our first regular session in 402 years that will be totally virtual (using our computers to go on-line). This will also be the first non-budget year session in decades where we may not have enough votes to extend session from the Constitutionally mandated 30 days to 45 days, which means we will have to work even harder and quicker than ever before to get the people's business done, though the Governor could call us into a special session if necessary. I am very thankful to Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn, Leader Charniele Herring and the rest of our House leadership for the decision to remain virtual. Indeed, with the recent passing of one of our beloved colleagues in the Senate to this terrible virus, as well as the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 throughout the nation, our need to do the people's business while also keeping ourselves, our staff, and importantly, our families safe during this pandemic is our utmost priority.

As I have written before, for this session each House member has a limit of seven bills that we may introduce. With this limited number of bills, I am filing legislation mostly technical in nature and within the policy purview of the subcommittees I chair. A few relate to ABC and gaming legislation, including extending the time skilled

games will be allowed in the Commonwealth to offset the economic devastation sustained by too many small businesses and restaurants, and an important technical clean-up of last year's big casino bill. Also, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I have introduced budget amendments to assist in saving River Farm as the community jewel that it is, fund the undergrounding of the utilities on Richmond Highway, and a host of other important matters which I will write about in the upcoming weeks as we debate their merits during this session.

Visit here to see all of the bills where I am the Chief Patron or Chief Co-patron: <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+mbr+H281>.

So, how can we connect during this session when we will not be able to gather in person in the Pocahontas Building in Richmond?

My staff and I have set up a virtual scheduling system, where we have blocked off 15-minute meeting slots for constituents, lobbyists, and stakeholders to meet with me virtually on Zoom. This way I am able to meet with anyone who is interested in issues that matter to them, including legislation that will be voted on, budget amendments to fund critical projects around the Commonwealth, or important issues concerning us at home in the 44th district. As always, priority for scheduled meetings will always be for 44th district residents. You

can sign up here: <https://go.once-hub.com/PaulKrizek>.

While I will certainly miss welcoming constituents and other stakeholders to my Richmond office in person this session, I believe that virtual office hours will make meeting with me and other legislators even more accessible than during a normal session year. The public will be able to sign up to meet with legislators and give testimony about legislation on committees online, allowing them

to be part of the process without having to make the long trip to Richmond and fighting for space in our small committee rooms.

To review bills, access our daily meeting calendar, view committee live streams, and more you can visit the LIS website. Although we won't be gathering in Richmond, there are still plenty of ways to make your voice heard! Visit the iHOD website to attend online committee meetings and reserve your spot during public comment periods.

My staff and I have set up a virtual scheduling system, where we have blocked off 15-minute meeting slots for constituents, lobbyists, and stakeholders to meet with me virtually on Zoom.

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to give virtual public testimony:

Go to:

<https://lis.virginia.gov/> and click on "meetings."

This brings you to:

<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+oth+MTG>

You are now viewing the Meeting Schedule.

Click on the link next to the meeting you would like to attend.

You will be brought to the HOD Speak homepage.

This is where you can sign up to speak during the public comment period of your meeting of interest. Note: you have to list the bill number of the bill you are speaking to when you sign up. Do not use the bill name.

I look forward to seeing you soon from "Virtual Richmond!"

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Unlisted and Out of Touch

Recently a burglary occurred in the Fort Hunt area, and the Fairfax County Police activated their Incident Alert System which delivered pre-recorded phone calls advising residents to lock their doors and shelter in place. My neighbors received those calls. We did not, so there we were out haplessly walking the dog while the bad guys were on the loose.

Intrigued why we were not advised, I called the police and was told it was because we have an unlisted number. This is ironic given that everyone from home remodeling companies to charities seem to have my number yet I can't get the

call I do want and need a call from local authorities offering urgent guidance. Granted many of the commercial phone solicitors dial randomly — though not all — and by chance they get through, but there must be a work-around for the Fairfax County Police to reach affected residents with unlisted numbers when needed. There are a lot of us.

What if I were involved in an accident and the police needed to contact my wife at home? They don't have access to my number?

Bob Dane
Fort Hunt

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A Connection Newspaper



Marijuana Legalization Is a Goal of the Governor

FROM PAGE 1

to support the establishment of a comprehensive program, education, and public health campaigns, along with addressing inequities that exist due to the criminalization of marijuana.

“According to a report issued [in November] 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,” said Del. Ken Plum. “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.”

WASHINGTON STATE, a state similar in size to Virginia, netted nearly \$400 million in tax revenues from legal marijuana in 2019, said State Sen. Adam Ebbin. “Equitable reform demands appropriate safety regulations, support for disparately-impacted communities, and a structure for taxation,” Ebbin said in a recent column. “Legal cannabis should support Virginia’s small businesses, not simply pad the pockets of massive corporations. Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned (SWaM) businesses can play a critical role in the entire supply chain including farming, processing, and brick and mortar sales.”

Included with Northam’s plan to legalize adult-use marijuana were five principles he will address, he said. These include: Social equity, racial equity, and economic equity; Public health; Protections for young people; Upholding the Virginia Indoor Clean Air Act; Data collection.

The ACLU of Virginia advocates for legalization, with specific key concerns. “Lawmakers must remove all penalties for marijuana possession and automatically expunge conviction records for all crimes that no longer are illegal. ... People younger than age 18 should not be considered delinquent — and legalization should not continue to fuel the school-to-prison pipeline, leading to another generation of Black and brown kids and young adults being criminalized.”

Northam put together a task force on legalizing marijuana, consisting of representatives from the Virginia State Police, the Attorney General’s office, and NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, among others. One focus of the task force was a look at the way other states that have dealt with it. This included Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, and Massachusetts. The task force had a “robust discussion with experts from these states in

the Marijuana Legalization Work Group,” said Bradley Copenhaver, the Virginia Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.

The task force put together a 482-page report, “Impact on the Commonwealth of Legalizing the Sale and Personal Use of Marijuana,” dated Nov. 30, 2020. One of the things this report addressed was concerns about preventing access by the underage crowd. This includes limiting the “proximity of marijuana retailers to schools and other youth-focused places and minimize marketing to youth,” the report said. This includes reducing the appeal of packaging “and that advertisements must be a certain distance (e.g. 1,000 feet) from schools and community centers,” it states.

NORML is monitoring Virginia’s step forward in this process. They look at the support from Governor Northam, State Attorney Mark Herring and House Majority Leader Charniele Herring. Jenn Michelle Pedini, the Virginia NORML Executive Director, released recommendations to lawmakers last month on how Virginia should go about legalizing adult use marijuana. Among their recommendations, NORML said tax revenue on adult-use cannabis in Virginia could yield \$300 million annually and create 11,000 jobs by year five.

TO ADDRESS social equity, Virginia could use some tax revenue to support reinvestment programs for communities most impacted by the drug war. Legislators could also prevent vertical integration and provide loans for small businesses, NORML said.

On the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, there has been a mixed bag of support for this effort. In the Braddock District, Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D) has been for legalization, looking at the number of arrests as an equality issue. “As Chairman of the Board of Supervisors’ Legislative Committee, I advocated in Richmond for our Board’s support of cannabis decriminalization. Personally, I have always supported legalization. Arrests for simple possession of marijuana are one of the most significant drivers of the disproportionality of arrests here and across the nation. The data is quite clear that white Americans and Black Americans use marijuana at similar rates, but Black Americans are much more likely to be arrested for doing so. Marijuana prohibition laws have cost American taxpayers untold billions and devastated millions of families. It’s a failed policy that should end,” Walkinshaw said.

In Mount Vernon, Supervisor Dan Storck “has been generally supportive of legalization,” for a long time, he said.

According to Springfield District supervisor Pat Herrity (R), there are more important issues facing county residents. He looks at Virginia’s pandemic re-

SEE MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION, PAGE 7

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Alexandria Restaurant Week To-Go Adds 60+ restaurants to participate Takeout Dinner Deal for Single Diners Jan. 22 – Feb. 7, 2021

For an extended two-week period, more than 60 restaurants in Alexandria, Virginia, will offer a \$49 takeout, delivery or curbside pick-up dinner for two during Alexandria Restaurant Week To-Go, Jan. 22 – Feb. 7, 2021 www.visitalexandriava.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/.

New this winter, more than half

of these restaurants will offer a \$25 takeout dinner for one in addition to the \$49-for-two deal. This expanded offering was created to meet popular demand from single diners during Alexandria's first Restaurant Week To-Go in August 2020.

The online menu book makes it easy to browse delicious selections from dozens of Alexandria eateries and enjoy special

menus from the comfort of home, through Super Bowl Sunday. view.joomag.com/alexandria-restaurant-week-to-go-january-22-february-7-2021/0069379001610465499

The new to-go model for Alexandria Restaurant Week, which debuted in summer 2020, reflects current customers' desire to enjoy restaurant meals at home while providing new opportunities to support

Alexandria's community of locally owned restaurants. Alexandria's first Restaurant Week To-Go was critical in keeping the city's small business economy energized and essential to preserving a beloved experience of the city for residents and visitors alike as local establishments continue to weather the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Alexandria Restaurant Week

participants include Aldo's Italian Kitchen, an Italian eatery on Eisenhower Avenue; Barkhaus, Alexandria's new dog bar; Carlyle neighborhood eatery Pasara Thai; and The Alexandrian Hotel's new restaurant King & Rye. Restaurants offering to-go deals for one and two people include Los Cuates, Rus Uz, Sonoma Cellar, Village Brauhaus and more.

Alexandria Restaurant Week showcases the inventiveness of local chefs in neighborhoods throughout the city, including Old Town, Del Ray, Carlyle and Eisenhower, and the West End. From neighborhood favorites to restaurants specializing in international cuisine, guests will savor the flavors of Alexandria's distinctive collection of eateries.

View our menu flip-book and make reservations at www.AlexandriaRestaurantWeek.com.

Alexandria Restaurant Week

To-Go Menu Highlights:

- City Kitchen's dinner for two, featuring Vermont Goat Cheese with Blueberry Reduction, a Pork Chop with Bourbon-Cherry Sauce, a Devil's Latte Cream Cake for dessert and the option to add wine pairings for an additional cost.

- Hank & Mitzi's, new to Old Town North and named after chef and restauranter Jamie Leeds' parents, offerings such as Cannelloni Bolognese or Four Cheese Lasagna deals for one or two, with the option to add on a Cannoli Traditional or Chocolate Budino for dessert.

- Black-owned business Haute Dogs & Fries offers a \$25 Lobster Roll, Kettle Chips and a Split of Sparkling Wine deal for single diners.

- Kisso Asian Bistro's \$49 for two offerings, featuring a Sushi Sashimi Combo with Seaweed Salad or various seafood combinations paired with Hot and Sour Soup or Meat Dumplings.

- Bottles of wine included in meal packages from Bugsy's Pizza Restaurant & Sports Bar, Piece Out Del Ray, Café Pizzaiolo and Murphy's Irish Pub; or add on to-go cocktails for an additional cost from Bastille Brasserie & Bar, Café 44 and more.

WHAT: Alexandria Restaurant Week To-Go

WHEN: 17 days and 3 weekends, January 22 – February 7, 2021

WHERE: Neighborhoods throughout Alexandria, Virginia, including Old Town, Del Ray, Carlyle and Eisenhower, and the West End

HOW: \$49 takeout or curbside pickup dinners for two; \$25 takeout or curbside pickup dinners for one

INFO: AlexandriaRestaurantWeek.com; 703-838-5005

ABOUT ALEXANDRIA RESTAURANT WEEK

Alexandria Restaurant Week was launched in 2009 by Visit Alexandria and has since been a favorite amongst patrons and restaurateurs, occurring biannually in the winter and summer. In addition to serving as an economic driver for Alexandria restaurants, Alexandria Restaurant Week bolsters the city's reputation as a culinary destination.

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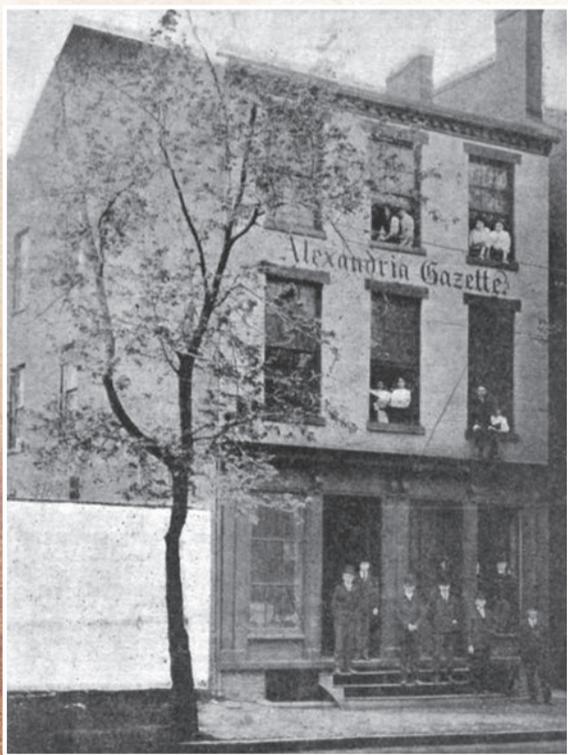


And affiliated newspapers

Mount Vernon Gazette

Potomac ALMANAC

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

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,

school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cars. Internet news and large national newspapers do not provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers provide.

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Marijuana Legalization Is a Goal of the Governor

FROM PAGE 6

sponse numbers on John Hopkins Tracking list, for the number of vaccines administered in Virginia. "Virginia is ranked 46th in the nation for administering the vaccine and 42nd in testing. ... Fairfax County residents need the Governor and General Assembly to focus on those critical efforts right now instead of political agendas," he said. George Mason University student Maritza Martinez thinks it's a great idea, calling it a "step forward," she said. "Weed isn't that big of a deal," she said. Although it's not alcohol, being under the influence of marijuana could impact driving skills,

but "MADD doesn't have a position on legalization," said Cristi Cousins, M.Ed, MADD State Program Specialist. Copenhaver said It could take 18-24 months after legislation is passed for retail sales of adult-use marijuana to take place. The Governor's legislation will include considerations for density caps and local decision-making with regard to the allowance of retail marijuana locations.

For more, see: www.governor.virginia.gov/virginia-marijuana-legalization-work-group/
<http://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2020-marijuana-legalization.asp>

County Residents List Assembly Expectations

FROM PAGE 1

services and support will be there for our son...Finally, criminal justice reform needs to include people with disabilities who are often severely impacted through arrest and incarceration, instead of services and supports," Marissa said.

Tom Blackburn, president of the 4500 member Audubon Society, addressed three topics saying the Society enthusiastically supported a bill considered by Sen. David Marsden (D-37) and Del. David Bulova (D-37).

It required a study of the sale of invasive plants and encouraged the use of native plants. "Next climate change: ASV (Audubon So-

ciety Virginia) supports several of the initiatives to address climate change.

In particular, we support Senator Boysko's proposed legislation that would require the Board of Housing and Community Development to fulfill a statutory obligation to keep Virginia's building code, consistent with the International Energy Efficiency code.

We also urge passage of a bill that would allow retail customers to purchase 100 percent renewable energy from licensed energy suppliers," Blackburn said.

MORGAN JAMESON said far too often he's seen lifelong residents

move out of the County to find affordable housing. He said, "Fairfax County is already experiencing a deficit of 31,000 affordable dwelling units and rental homes... The gap between the need and supply will grow considerably without new approaches...Affordable housing is critically important for all Virginians but obtaining it is particularly challenging in Northern Virginia where housing is increasingly out of reach for low and moderate income earners. Therefore, please allocate funding to the Virginia Rental Mortgage Relief Program, expand resources available, and increase funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund."



The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, VA

The Mount Vernon Rotary Club is initiating the "You Make a Difference Award" to support community service by organizations in the Mount Vernon area.

Specifically, the purpose of the Mount Vernon Rotary "You Make A Difference" Award is to:

- 1) Recognize individuals and organizations who support service to others
- 2) Support community service within the Mount Vernon area

This local support is consistent with the Rotary International Motto: "Service Above Self."

A single award and associated grant of \$1000 will be presented once a year. The goal is to recognize a single individual who sustains community service and to contribute financial support to keep that service continuing.

Nominations will be accepted until noon on March 31, 2021. To receive a nomination form or more information, email rcmvva@gmail.com

Rotary is where neighbors, friends, and problem-solvers share ideas, join leaders, and take action to create lasting change. Visit www.rotary.org for more information.

The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon meets via Zoom on Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 7:30. To request an invitation link email mikej1013@verizon.net

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Wellbeing pages, the first week of every month.

Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

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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NEWS

ASC to Host Nats' Mark Scialabba

Assistant GM to preview upcoming season.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Mark Scialabba, Assistant General Manager, Player Development for the Washington Nationals, will be the featured speaker during a webinar presentation for the Jan. 20 Alexandria Sportsman's Club meeting.

Scialabba, entering his 15th season with Washington, was promoted to his current role in November of 2019 after serving the previous six years as Washington's Director of Player Development. In this new position, Scialabba's responsibilities include the Major League operation assisting Mike Rizzo, the front office and Major League staff.

He continues to work in conjunction with Doug Harris overseeing all aspects of the player development system, including player plans, player personnel decisions, analytics, contract negotiations, budgets, Dominican Academy operations and medical/training programs.

After graduating from Williams College and earning a masters degree in sports management from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Scialabba joined the Nationals in 2006 as an intern



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Mark Scialabba, Assistant General Manager, Director of Player Development for the Washington Nationals, will be the featured speaker via webinar for the Alexandria Sportsman's Club Jan. 20 meeting. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. and is free and open to the public with pre-registration. www.alexandriavasports.org

and worked his way up. He led the development of the team that clinched the World Series in 2019. Prior to that, the Nationals made the playoffs four times between 2012 and 2017 but lost in the first round every year.

The Alexandria Sportsman's Club webinar meeting will be held Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. Participation in the meeting is free and open to the public but pre-registration is required.

For more information, visit www.alexandriavasports.org.

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FROM PAGE 3

with options to register via text message, phone calls, or in-person at certain locations and times.

Classes offered this spring include:

- ❖ Beginning English Class: provides adult English language learners the fundamental skills to understand and communicate in English, helping them to better engage in the community and advance their careers.
- ❖ Family Learning Programs (FLP): provides English language instruction for parents or caregivers, so that they can better communicate with their children and support their education.

Classes are \$85 with books and assessment included. Registration is required for enrollment. Please understand that no children are allowed at in-person registrations. If possible, please bring your interpreter for the process. Strict social distancing precautions will be enforced.

Face masks will be provided. Registration times and dates are available at LCNV's distance learning page (<https://lcnv.org/distance-learning-session/lcnv-classes/>), or call 703-237-0866.

DRIVERS NEEDED TO HELP SENIORS

Mount Vernon At Home is a nonprofit organization serving senior citizens in the Mount Vernon and Alexandria areas of Fairfax County. They are in critical need for volunteers to assist members with driving to medical appointments and grocery shopping. Mount Vernon At Home will supply you with necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), and can provide a donation receipt for your mileage. Volunteers can sign up for driving assignments through the online system which makes it easy to see and accept assignments. Give what

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

Teacher Vaccinations Begin in Fairfax County

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

In accordance with State and local Health department groupings, teachers and school staff in Phase 1b began receiving vaccinations on Monday, Jan. 11. As essential front-line workers, along with police, fire and hazmat, corrections, and homeless shelter workers, teachers are among the first in Fairfax County to receive the vaccination in an effort to move toward reopening physical school attendance to all.

Some teachers were vaccinated over the weekend, leading to Monday's start of the full vaccination clinic, operated in a partnership between the Fairfax County Health Department and INOVA. The INOVA effort will provide vaccines for 40,000 Fairfax County Public Schools personnel. Appointments and pre-screen questionnaires are required for the closed clinics.

Other Phase 1b groups receiving vaccines in closed vaccine clinics include: adults age 75 and older, people living in correctional facilities and homeless shelters, first responders, childcare workers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, and mail carriers (US Postal Service and private). First priority Phase 1a vaccinations for healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents began with the first receipt of vaccine.

The next group, Phase 1c, will include essential workers not listed in Phase 1b (including but not lim-



PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS ADAMS

Fairfax Education Association President (FEA), Kimberly Adams, receives her Covid-19 vaccination jab on the first day of the closed vaccine clinic at INOVA.

ited to utility, construction, and food service workers, people aged 65-74, and people aged 16-64 with high risk medical conditions or disabilities.

Vaccinations now require a pre-registration screening and appointment. Officials indicate that vaccine will later be available a

flu shots normally have been received, from doctors offices, health care providers, hospitals, and pharmacies. More information can be found on the Fairfax County Health Department website.

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In Effect, a Trade

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



Incurable but treatable non small cell lung cancer, stage IV for incurable but treatable papillary thyroid cancer stage IV. And though it may have taken a while to get re-diagnosed: nearly 11 years, the eagle, as they say, apparently has landed. Nevertheless, I'm glad to still be here. Let me amend that. After being given my first "terminal" diagnosis in late February, 2009, with an accompanying "13 month to two year" prognosis, I am glad to be anywhere. Still, it would have been preferred had I received the thyroid cancer diagnosis originally. If that had been the case, I might no longer be a cancer patient with an incurable form of papillary thyroid cancer. If I remember correctly, generally speaking, papillary thyroid cancer is called "the friendly cancer" because it's so curable. Not for me, and not now.

But "alas poor Yorick," papillary thyroid cancer was not my original diagnosis. As such, I have been treated and lived as a non small cell lung cancer stage IV patient whose life expectancy was shortening by the hour.

However, since I was being treated for lung cancer exclusively, my underlying/real cancer was left untreated - for 11 years. And sure enough, after 10 years or so, the thyroid cancer finally manifested itself with the appearance of my "adam's apple" tumor, as I called it. Left untreated for 11 years, it morphed, if that's even the right word, into a rare form of papillary cancer, the "terminal" kind. The thyroidectomy I had in late Jan. 2020 confirmed it once and for all.

And by "terminal" I mean, there is only one drug presently recommended, Lenvima, for my cancer, and its projected effectiveness is three years, give or take. So far the side effects have been fairly minimal and my first two quarterly CT scans since I began this regimen have shown tumor shrinkage. Very encouraging. However, as they say in the mutual fund business: "Past performance is not an indicator of future results." Therefore, though this trade was officially confirmed in the first quarter of this year, I still live and breathe - with somewhat shorter breath, from one CT scan result to the next. I may think I know how I feel, but not until I receive the results from the oncologist, electronically, will I truly know. This is when the rubber officially hits the road. The diagnostic scan results outweigh any feelings I may have on the subject. As is so happens, my next scan is scheduled for Jan. 13. I should have the results before the weekend. A timetable I've experienced many times since Feb. 20, 2009, the date of my original diagnosis.

The trade, unfortunately did not change this cycle. Nor has the situation of there being one drug available left to treat my cancer. I can remember more than once when my oncologist told me the drug he was prescribing was the last one he had confidence in to treat my lung cancer. Now, the drug I'm taking is also the last best choice available. Different from lung cancer drugs, when the drugs worked until they didn't, the thyroid cancer drug I'm taking has a three-year-ish effectiveness limit. After which, as we say in Boston, "it will be Katie bar the door." At the moment, there aren't any additional drugs to recommend. Given what I anticipated my life expectancy to be, considering the age to which both my parents lived, I would say my thyroid cancer is "terminal".

But that's a rabbit hole I'm not going down. Three years may not be a normal life expectancy (that would age me to 69), but it's ample time, I hope, for the cancer researchers to do their work. And I expect there will be some kind of progress even though the type of papillary thyroid cancer I have is not particularly common. Regardless, I will continue my routine of miscellaneous pills (upwards of 60 per day), alkaline water, lab work, scans, treatment and living my life on semi borrowed time. Granted, it's not ideal, but it's a life with which I'm extremely familiar. I have been there and I will continue to do that.

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

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HOME LIFESTYLE

Creating a Calm Interior

PHOTOS BY CHRISTY KOSNIC

Soothing spaces offer serenity during difficult times.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

In the current times of turbulence and uncertainty, many are looking for a haven for serenity and calm. For some, a home's interior has become that place.

"We have a lot of clients that ache for a calm interior," said Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors, who recently designed two spaces to evoke such feelings.

For a client who derived serenity from time spent on the water, Lord designed a living room that is reminiscent of sand and sea. "We used soft tones in this room to create a sense of calm," she said. "On the ceiling is a



For a client who derived serenity from time spent on the water, interior designer Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors designed a living room that is reminiscent of sand and sea.

"We have a lot of clients that ache for a calm interior."

— Sallie Lord of
Grey Hunt Interiors

subtle, soft blue-green fabric wallpaper that creates an elegant, by-the-water vibe. We even had custom art painted of the lake that the owner grew up by. It makes you want to dive in, grab a drink and relax."

As home offices have become more important than ever, Lord says has worked to marry functionality with relaxation. "One of my clients wanted us to create a space that inspired her, but that mainly calmed her," said Lord. "Her life is very busy and go, go, go and she needed a retreat to unwind."

Shades of lavender and white helped create that aesthetic. "We used wallpaper from the Vern Yips



Shades of lavender and white can create a serene and soothing aesthetic.

line of [textile manufacturer] Trend on the ceiling to give the space the spice and power that reflects her spirit, but calmed the room down with soft lavender walls, crisp whites, and soft textures, such as those used in her custom drapes. This room worked so well that she often finds her children in her space relaxing."

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 8

time you can, there is no minimum or maximum number of hours. If you have some time to give to the community and can spare several hours a month, visit info@mountvernonathome.org, or call 703-303-4060.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year.

To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at gronbiz@aol.com or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at lynnieb517@verizon.net.

verizon.net.

United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities or email volunteer@ucmagency.org.

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What our clients are saying!



★★★★★ Highly likely to recommend

Chris White and his team were absolutely superb in every aspect our recent home sale. We listed with Chris as he sold us the house back in 2009 and we knew then to use the Whites when the time came to sell.

Their acumen of the N. VA market and their marketing strategy was extremely successful; above and beyond our expectations. Their advice and counsel on how to prepare our home were spot on. Their network of contractors and the work they performed was superb. The team prepared an information marketing brochure that looked amazing & really highlighted the features & value of our home. Their open house produced multiple offers and their counsel around reviewing and selecting the offers was again extremely helpful. Additionally, they kept us informed, provided expert advice, and watched over the home during the period we moved out and began preparing for our closing.

In summary, we would highly recommend them to anyone buying or selling in N. VA.

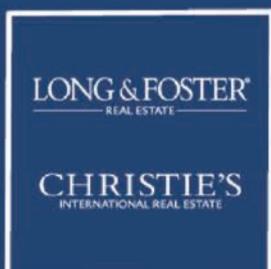
- The Hansen Family



★★★★★ Highly likely to recommend

My wife Jamee and I, both transplants from other cities, recently purchased our first home in Alexandria after deciding to put down roots in the Northern Virginia area. Being that it was our first home buying experience we had a lot of questions and a level of anxiety about the whole process that the White family were not only able to answer but lay out a step by step plan that gave us a sense of comfort. What’s more, the team was extremely easy to get along with and we felt as though we hadn’t just found great realtors but friends that we could see being a part of our lives as we grow our family in this area. The level of care, attention, and patience they provided to meet all our needs and desires in a home was special and has lasted past our closing and settlement as we make the home ours. We cannot emphasize how extremely easy and most of all enjoyable they made this process. Jamee and I highly recommend the White family to assist you whether it be your first or second home purchase. It is evident they know the area better than anyone else and will make you feel extremely welcome.

-The Marquez Family



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