

Potomac ALMANAC

PET ALMANAC FUN

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Anne and George Bolen of River Falls in Potomac, celebrating the Capitals with their pack of rescued terriers.

'Tsunami of Evictions On the Horizon'

NEWS, PAGE 3

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6 13401 Beall Creek Court — \$1,425,000



8 11412 Ridge Mist Terrace — \$1,329,900



5 11511 Ridge Mist Terrace — \$1,420,000

December, 2020 Sales, \$1,495,000~\$1,329,500

IN DECEMBER, 2020, 78 POTOMAC HOMES
SOLD BETWEEN \$4,200,000-\$425,000.



3 11000
South Glen Road
— \$1,429,000

2 9826 Avenel Farm Drive — \$1,490,000



4 8404 Crimson Leaf Court — \$1,425,000

Address.....	BR	FB	HB	Postal	City.....	Sold Price...	Type.....	Lot AC.	Postal Code ...	Subdivision.....	Date Sold
1 11915 GLEN MILL RD	5...	6...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,495,000	Detached..	2.91.....	20854...	NONE AVAILABLE	12/11/20
2 9826 AVENEL FARM DR.....	4...	3...	2	...	POTOMAC	\$1,490,000	Detached..	0.52.....	20854.....	AVENEL	12/31/20
3 11000 S GLEN RD.....	6...	4...	2	...	POTOMAC	\$1,429,900	Detached..	2.30.....	20854..	RIVER OAKS FARM	12/29/20
4 8404 CRIMSON LEAF CT	5...	4...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,425,000	Detached..	0.48.....	20854.....	AVENEL	12/18/20
5 11511 RIDGE MIST TER.....	4...	4...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,420,000	Detached..	0.32.....	20854....	CLAGETT FARM	12/22/20
6 13401 BEALL CREEK CT.....	5...	4...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,365,000	Detached..	2.70.....	20854.....	BEALLMOUNT	12/16/20
7 12066 WETHERFIELD LN ...	5...	5...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,360,000	Detached..	2.73.....	20854....	LAKE POTOMAC	12/10/20
8 11412 RIDGE MIST TER.....	5...	4...	1	...	POTOMAC	\$1,329,900	Detached..	0.22.....	20854....	CLAGETT FARM	12/31/20

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Evictions Imperil Thousands of Families

Economic devastation of the pandemic has 14,000 eviction cases waiting to be heard for failure to pay rent, mostly held in check by a moratorium.

BY KEN MOORE
POTOMAC ALMANAC

A “tsunami of evictions is on the horizon,” said Gabe Alborno, at-large councilmember, at a session on Covid Rental Relief and Eviction Prevention on Feb. 11, 2021. “There are literally hundreds in the queue right now, and as soon as the emergency declaration is lifted by the governor a shot clock will begin.”

“The number of families in the queue is rising by the day,” said Alborno.

In fact, 14,000 failure-to-pay rent cases are waiting to be heard by General District Court judges, said Frank Vitale with Maryland Legal Aid, Montgomery County Office.

“Tenants, unfortunately, are in the position that even with aid from the county or a non-profit or a friend or a church or something, the rent owed is too high to make up,” said Vitale.

“People need money, yesterday,” said Andrew Friedson, Potomac’s councilmember.

FAMILIES ARE BEHIND in rent payments by as much as \$10,000 to \$12,000, and 9,037 applications were received by the county last year asking for help; the average amount owed by households who applied for pandemic assistance was \$3,360.

“This amount was at the time of application,” said Amanda Harris, of the Department of Health and Human Services. “So by the time we’re seeing them, that arrears has gone up significantly.”

The COVID-19 Rent Relief Program provides short-term rental assistance to eligible households who have lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and caused them to fall behind on their rent. While funds are available, the program will provide up to \$4,000 to help each eligible household. The program is funded through a \$20 million supplemental appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Approximately 17 percent of the applicants were new to Health and Human Services, said Harris.

About 13-15 percent of renters are behind on rent, according to councilmember Evan Glass.

“We’re talking about some of the same people who have been hit the hardest due to the economic reality of this pandemic,” said Glass, who leads the Council’s efforts on preventing homelessness.

Once rental protections expire and courts are fully reopened, Glass said, “The work we are doing is to prevent that cliff from coming as best as we can, or at least to limit its

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Household items discarded along a roadside in Potomac in September, a possible eviction? More than 14,000 cases are waiting to be heard for failure to pay rent.

impact.”

“We know this is going to be a big undertaking, a tragic one, quite frankly,” he said.

MORE THAN \$12.1 million of \$20 million of federal support from last year’s CARES Act has been used to help 3,103 households, so far, but more households are in need.

Conditional approvals have been awarded to 379 households and more than 1,213 more applications have been assigned for processing.

Harris, of homelessness prevention, expects approximately \$18 million will have been distributed by the end of February, even though it has until the end of the calendar year to distribute the funds.

The Council’s Health and Human Services and Planning, Housing and Economic Development committees unanimously approved the motion for the full Council to approve a \$31 million allocation from the Department of Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program that was announced in early January.

The full Council is expected to approve the \$31 million allocation on Tuesday, Feb. 23, after The Almanac’s presstime.

THE SHERIFF’S OFFICE is responsible for overseeing eviction processes. In 2020, 24,358 eviction cases for failure to pay were filed by landlords in General District Court, 3,022 eviction orders signed by judges (writs of restitution) were received by the Sheriff’s Office, and 235 evictions were conducted.

For comparison: In fiscal year 2019, 48,922 eviction cases were filed in Montgomery County District Court for failure to pay rent and the Sheriff’s Office received 11,927 eviction orders, according to the

Sheriff’s. The Sheriff’s Office oversees evictions, a two-three month process, said Capt. Robin Lewis. About 938 households were evicted in FY 2019.

“Clearly the numbers you just shared, 24,000 eviction notices that have gone out, I would consider that to be still quite a lot of evictions during what I thought was an eviction moratorium,” said Glass.

During the pandemic, evictions proceeded only for breach of lease, tenant holding over, and forcible entry cases, said Lewis.

“If those are three big categories for what can move forward, it seems that anything can move forward. It’s just the will of the landlord, the discretion of the landlord,” said Glass.

Vitale explained that there is a phasing system to keep the number of cases, and people, down during COVID health concerns. Typically, hundreds of people pack the courtrooms and hallways, he said.

“Many tenants believe that the CDC order or other orders completely prevent any evictions from going forward, which obviously it doesn’t,” said Vitale.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) moratorium on evictions due to COVID income loss ends March 31, 2021. “It is unclear when the Court will reopen to all landlord tenant cases and how quickly failure-to-pay rent cases will be heard once the court re-opens,” according to county documents.

“Moratoriums are certainly helpful, the CDC order has been helpful for our clients and other tenants, but it isn’t the wonderful shield that some people think it might be,” said Vitale.

“Our priority is to keep as many people housed as possible,” he said.

MORE THAN 2,500 households are currently on the waitlist to receive help from the new \$31 million allocation of federal help.

Get Help

The COVID Rent Relief Program is now closed but if you have already applied, the county will continue to work on your application. You can add yourself to the waitlist to be contacted when additional funds become available: Add yourself to the waitlist. <https://forms.montgomerycountymd.gov/f/CRRP-waitlist>

See additional resources at https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/covid-19/eviction_process_and_renters.html

“We will go to the waitlist first,” said Harris, chief of county Services to End and Prevent Homelessness. She said the county expects to spend 65 percent of the \$31.4 million in the next six months.

The average age of people applying for assistance is 40 and 67 percent of the applications were from women. “We know that single family households are more likely to get evicted, so we were quite pleased to see we are reaching that population,” said Harris.

About 88 percent of applicants were people of color (44 percent Black, 38 percent Hispanic, 4 percent multiple races, 3 percent Asian).

The monthly income of 42 percent of households requesting help is less than \$1,000, less than the average monthly rent of those requesting help.

“This speaks to the need of providing longer term assistance,” said Harris.

“We are going to need a serious moratorium and period of forgiveness, I think, at the tail end of this to allow people even a chance to make alternative arrangements,” said Will Jawando, at-large councilmember.

“The challenge we all have is this question of how do we get the money out as quickly as possible and make sure we’re getting it to the people who need it the most. It’s not an easy dynamic,” said Friedson.

GLASS ACCOMPANIES staff from Health and Human Services to identify people sleeping outside and sleeping in shelters and the county invests in hotels and shelters to provide support and temporary housing.

Even during the pandemic, the county reported a 72 percent decrease in family homelessness. “This investment in eviction prevention and homeless prevention is certainly having an impact on families,” said Harris.

Any one eviction can have an enormous toll on families, especially children. “Preventing evictions, housing stabilization and minimizing the effect these have on families, and children in particular, is a huge concern for us,” said Vitale.

But sometimes people, because of stress and anxiety and mental health, “just don’t do anything, just don’t ask for assistance until it’s too late,” said Harris.

“Not every eviction can be stopped,” she said.

PET ALMANAC



Carole Dell writes: “My favorite photo of the dog that changed my world, Carmel, now deceased. Here he thought that my efforts to sweep the patio were not as much fun as making the broom his snow toy.”



“Carmel, a rescue dog now deceased, finally got his way and buried the broom, and my work stopped.” — Carole Dell

PHOTOS BY CAROLE DELL



After being in the barn for several days, these horses enjoyed their romp in the snow.



An Arabian is a desert horse, but this gal prefers a good snowy roll.



Like exuberant children, horses enjoy a romp in the snow.



Anne and George Bolen celebrating the Capitals with their pack of rescued terriers.



Fatiyah, an Egyptian Arabian mare, used all her brilliant form to show off her snow-dance.



After a good refreshing roll in the snow, a shake is in order.



Kilo, a Palomino American Quarterhorse owned by Anne Bolen, enjoying the snowfall.

PET ALMANAC



First day of adoption with Trixie and Anne Bolen.



Trixie is the Bolen's recent rescue from a puppy mill. She is a Jack Russell Terrier.



Stanley and Anne Bolen fending off the chill with matching knit hats. Stanley is an 8 year old Quarterhorse.



Leo, rescued from King Street Cats in Alexandria, Va. now lives with Veronica Kresse and Brian Kimm of Potomac.



Four of the Bolen's terriers, Clipper, Maggie, Bailey and Kasey. All are rescues.

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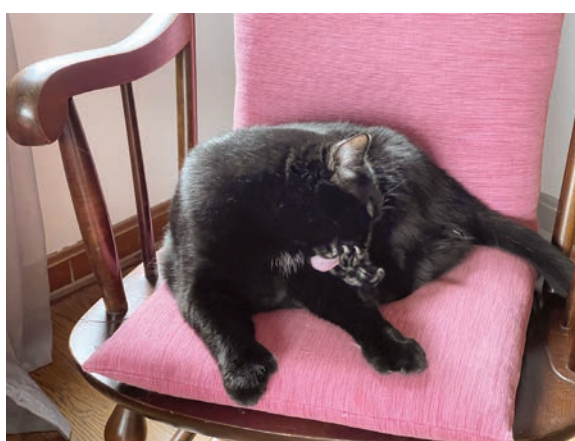
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COVID PUPPIES: Traci Richmond writes: “We have three puppies, and they’ve been a source of laughter and comfort during the pandemic. Here are Tommy Richmond with Siskin, Madelyn Richmond with Bob Ross, and Graham Richmond with Cocoa.”



Evan Glass, at-large member of County Council and his husband Jason Gedeik with Percy and Daisy. “The dogs are Percy (older, bigger one) and Daisy (younger). Both are rescues. We adopted Percy from the Washington Animal Rescue League and he is about 11 years old. We adopted Daisy from Pet Connect and she is about 7 years old.” Percy and Daisy are bundled up for their outing in the snow.



Rose, adopted by Almanac editor Mary Kimm from Lost Dog and Cat Rescue, takes good care of her polydactyl paws, and shares the house with Cumin.

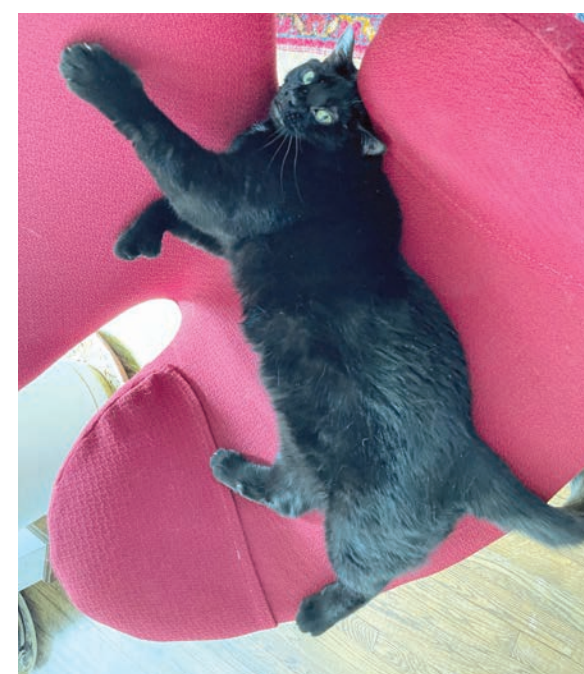


PHOTO BY ALAN KRESSE

Oliver, rescued from Last Chance Animal Rescue in Waldorf, MD, now lives with Veronica Kresse and Brian Kimm of Potomac.



Cumin, adopted from Pet Connect Rescue, apparently always wanted to be on TV. He lives with Rose in Potomac in the Kimm-Moore household, next door to Leo and Oliver.

THIS WEEK AHEAD

Tuesday, Feb. 23

SOLAR IN THE AG RESERVE Montgomery County Council is expected to finalize rules pursuing solar panels in the Agricultural Reserve. On Jan. 26, 2021, the Council approved an additional amendment (by a 5-4 vote) to protect the two most agriculturally important classes of soils in the Agricultural Reserve, 93,000 acres permanently set aside by the 1980 Council for agricultural use.

The Council also held a straw vote (6-3) to require solar projects in the Reserve require a conditional use process, and ask that the Planning Department produce an impact report no later than Dec. 31, 2023.

The Council will officially vote Tuesday, Feb. 23. Hans Riemer, the original lead sponsor, introduced the potential for solar panels in the reserve as a way for the county to help meet its goal of using only clean energy by 2035.

After the straw vote at the end of January, Riemer said he would vote against his own bill. "I can no longer support the zoning change as it was amended by the Council on Jan. 26, 2021. If it comes before the Council again, I am hopeful that we will still find a compromise that provides a clean path forward for a meaningful amount of solar energy; if not, with regret, I will vote against it."

See Almanac story <http://www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2021/feb/18/new-visions-public-schools-montgomery-county/>

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE The Council is expected to approve \$750,000 for the Montgomery County Public Schools to increase its restorative justice program in 40 middle schools.

According to councilmembers Will Jawando and Hans Riemer, who introduced the legislation: "School discipline begins with the teacher, ensuring that all teachers are properly trained in mediating conflicts. Students are another key factor: ensuring that students take steps to atone for the harm they have caused has been correlated with lower suspension and expulsion rates and with students feeling. Principals and other administrators are also a key component, as they frequently request arrests or police intervention as a means of resolving disciplinary problems. Training all employees in MCPS in restorative justice and other practices to ensure equitable discipline from the classroom up through the administration is essential to reducing disparities and ensuring better outcomes for all students."

See next issue of the Almanac for latest story.

EXTREMISM The Council is expected to pass a resolution on Tuesday, Feb. 23 "reaffirming Montgomery County's commitment to combat hate and extremism."

"Montgomery County recognizes the value of cultivating an inclusive, safe and just society and culture. The events of January 6, 2021 shocked the nation as levels of hate and extremism have reached their highest levels in recent history. With this proclamation, Montgomery County is reaffirming its commitment to root out hatred, political exploitation and mistruths in all political and civil institutions."

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS The Council is expected to approve \$31.4 million to allocate for eviction prevention and utility assistance. See related story on page 3 of this issue of The Almanac.

POLICE IN SCHOOLS The Council rescheduled

its Feb. 23, 2021 hearing on Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships within Schools for March 4, at 7:30 p.m. The Council already has one bill which would remove School Resource Officers from schools; this bill attempts to improve the SRO program.

Most who testified at the public hearing on the bill prohibiting officers from being in school's full-time voiced opposition to having police officers in schools.

Montgomery County Public Schools acknowledges disproportionate arrest and discipline of Black students and students of color. It says it will make its own recommendations in May.

See Almanac story <http://www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2021/feb/11/sro-program-fundamentally-mismatched-schools-montg/>

Wednesday, Feb. 24

495/270 TOLL LANES On Thursday, Feb. 18, the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration and the Maryland Transportation Authority announced the selection of Accelerate Maryland Partners, LLC (Transurban and Macquarie Capital), to become the developer responsible for overseeing pre-development work on P3 project to widen the American Legion Bridge, I-495 and I-270 with four managed toll lanes.

"This is another step forward in addressing one of the most significant traffic bottlenecks in the nation," said Transportation Secretary Greg Slater.

"Though there is much more work to do with the local leaders, the community and stakeholders, the selected proposal delivers congestion relief at the American Legion Bridge, strong innovative approaches for minimizing impacts and a real multimodal approach."

Despite opposition to the plan to improve and widen the American Legion Bridge and add two high occupancy toll lanes up to and on I-270, Maryland Department of Transportation chose this to be the best option to mitigate traffic concerns on the beltway. Montgomery County planners and environmental groups have raised many environmental concerns that have not been addressed.

Citizens Against Beltway Expansion will hold a zoom rally Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021 with Sen. Joanne Benson and Jim Rosapepe and delegates Marc Korman and Jared Solomon to "support bills that reform public-private partnership laws and stop MDOT from walking back promises on the \$11 billion I-495/I-270 Luxury Lane plan and putting Maryland at risk of an even bigger Purple Line fiasco." www.cabe495.com/

The Maryland General Assembly is currently in session, and the rally will give updates on legislation still being considered by the Maryland House and Senate.

House Bill HB485 and its Senate counterpart bill SB361 would reform state P3 laws to strengthen oversight and transparency during application reviews and after project approval.

HB67 and its counterpart SB843 would codify state promises for I-495/I-270 expansion, such as completing environmental review before engaging a developer, revenue set-asides for local transit. The Senate Bill is scheduled to be heard Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021.

See past Almanac stories: <http://www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2021/jan/14/maryland-moves-forward-preliminaries-toll-lanes/>
<http://www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2021/feb/04/mdot-prefers-4-toll-lane-option/>

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Not That I Don't Understand But ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... So this is what the process is like trying to schedule a covid-19 vaccination. If you're lucky though, you receive an email reminder - since you've pre-registered, advising you that the time to strike is now. You click on the link, and as I'm witnessing, you wait your turn. The site says there's "High Traffic," and they'll be with you momentarily. There's no calling. There's barely any responding. There's simply sitting and staring - and waiting. There's no indication of how long you'll be waiting. There's no guarantee that the site will even open. There's only instructions to refresh your computer every 30 seconds in the hopes that an interactive-type page will appear and you'll have reached the promised land: the page where you can actually schedule an appointment.

However, as I'm sitting and waiting, I'm getting frustrated. I seem to be getting nowhere, slowly. Though I'm refreshing as directed, nothing is changing on the screen I'm staring at. I've linked but nothing is really linking. So I keep repeating myself: stare, refresh, wait; stare, refresh, wait. It's a loop of nothingness. It seems an endless pursuit. It's almost like whack-a-mole, except in your attempts to get connected, the process is excruciatingly slow and there's nothing to whack. (At least it hasn't cost me anything, other than time, that is.)

I realize that the demand is way more than supply and according to experts, it won't be until June/July when "anyone who wants to get a shot will be able to get one." Nevertheless, I would have thought, given my comorbidity: cancer and age 66, that I'd be closer to the top than the bottom. Not that I'm particularly anxious about my circumstances, but my wife Dina is very concerned about them. (I'm staring steady at the site where this column began. As yet, despite my rigorous refreshing, I still haven't passed "Go.")

I understand that patience is a virtue. But today, while staring at and refreshing this site and seeing no sign of life as we know it, I am testing that virtue beyond its stress points. This process reminds of the days of buying concert tickets online. It was nearly impossible - for a popular show, to break through the internet logjam. That is not until you received a message that all the tickets had been sold. How people ever got through, I'll never know. It was always befuddling to me.

I know however, with respect to concerts, sporting events and the like, there would be a secondary/aftermarket availability. I knew an alternative existed. I also knew the cost would be black market-ish, somewhat over the original retail. Unfortunately, or fortunately, public health solutions cannot be left to the market. In its effort not to discriminate and be fair to all recipients, we're stuck with the present communication and distribution system.

Having endured these kinds of pursuits before when calling the IRS, Social Security, Medicare and The Veterans Administration, et cetera, I know a few precautions one should take before attempting to climb these mountains. First, clear your schedule. Next, go to the bathroom. Then, go to the kitchen and get some refreshments. Find someplace comfortable and cozy from which to call; you need to be prepared for the long haul. And finally, should another call come in while you're on hold, do not risk your spot in line by clicking on your call-waiting. Technology can sometimes break your spirit.

My wait is over. The site was just refreshed. It says the center is closed. Perfect timing. I just finished the column.

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

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