

# CONNECTION

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## South County Police Station & Animal Shelter Breaks Ground

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Animal Protection Police Officer K. Prucnal and dog, Wallace, on-hand for groundbreaking of the dual use South County Police Station and Animal Shelter in Lorton opening in Spring 2023.

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PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION CALENDAR, PAGE 11 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

# Nick Balenger Honored With Victory Gala Award

Lake Braddock School star baseball player earns law degree, opens new chapter in life.

BY JESS KIRBY  
THE CONNECTION

Almost nine years ago in 2012, Lake Braddock Secondary School star baseball player Nick Balenger was vacationing in Maui, Hawaii with his family when he suffered a spinal cord injury that paralyzed him from the neck down. After years of physical therapy and perseverance, he graduated cum laude from William and Mary Law School on May 22 and is now able to walk with one forearm crutch.

"I started [law school] back in 2018, so it's been three years of tough work," said Nick, now 25 years old. "It's just good to finally get over this hump of law school because it's been a fun experience, but it's been tough."

His mother, Sylvie Balenger, and father, Steve Balenger, attended his graduation in person. Sylvie reflected on the progress Nick has made since his injury.

"It was a few years of physical therapy, intense physical therapy actually," she said. "He went from really being bedridden to being in a powerchair... then a manual chair, and then a walker, and on two crutches and now one crutch. He's able to walk, he's able



Nick Balenger



Nick Balenger with his mother, Sylvie Balenger, and father, Steve Balenger, at his graduation from William and Mary Law School on May 22.

to drive, he lives independently and he's a great cook!"

NICK received the Victory Gala Award from the National Rehab Hospital for his "courage to overcome adversity," said Sylvie. He was also recognized by the American Physical Therapy Association and gave the keynote speech at one of their annual conferences.

In addition to his recovery, Nick has made many other accomplishments over the past nine years.

"I've done some public speaking, I've worked at the State Department, I also worked at a science and technology think

tank as an intern, and then I came here to law school after graduating from George Mason," said Nick. "After my first year of law school I worked for a federal judge, Henry Hudson, in Richmond, and eventually got hired as a summer associate at a law firm."

Nick was also on the staff of the William and Mary Law Review after his first year of law school and was part of the Public Service Foundation, which helps "raise money for students that are working for nonprofit organizations pro bono," said Sylvie.

He also coached a West Springfield Little League team.

"He threw out the first pitch at the West

Springfield Little League opening day, and a few years later, on his last semester at George Mason, he decided to put his name in the hat to coach one of the little league teams, because that's the same little league that he played in," said Sylvie.

Nick expressed his appreciation for the Swim With Mike organization.

"[Swim With Mike] supported me throughout college, they gave me some scholarships, and I just wanted to maybe give a shoutout to their organization," he said. "They provide scholarships for student athletes with disabilities, and I've been getting a scholarship from them for most of college."

SYLVIE AND STEVE thanked those who supported Nick and their family after his injury, from the get well cards to the donations.

"People cared for us as a community, and I think Nick has taken that and he's paid it forward," said Steve. "He's on the right path, and that's due in great deal to the support that he received from the Burke community."

After graduation, Nick will be moving back to Northern Virginia, taking the bar exam and working as an attorney at Cooley Law Firm in Reston, as the first lawyer in his family.

"For him to venture into something kind of scary and very challenging, it really is a huge accomplishment," said Sylvie. "To be proud of him is kind of an understatement. He is, I think, very amazing in how great he is."



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# Convention Done, Primary Ahead

Republicans get a head start in the general election; Democrats still fighting each other.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

The way Democrats talk about Donald Trump, you'd think he was on the ballot in 2021. And in many ways, he is.

The former president may be out of the White House and kicked off of social media, but he's still eager to see himself as a kingmaker. Shortly after wealthy businessman Glenn Youngkin secured the Republican nomination in a multi-location convention, Trump endorsed Youngkin and reinserted himself in the conversation. Democrats did not miss a beat, launching a tour of the commonwealth they call the "Where Trump Leads, Glenn Follows" Tour.

"He is just like Donald Trump," said House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn this week when the tour arrived in Old Town Alexandria. "He will stand for the same policies and same initiatives that Donald Trump has stood for."

The contours of a fall campaign season are starting to come into focus as Republicans and Democrats stake out positions on everything from criminal-justice reform and abortion rights to voting access and preventing gun violence. Republicans get a one-month head start, giving them the ability to move from a divisive convention into a general election strategy for the fall campaign season. Democrats, meanwhile, are still attacking each other as the June 8 primary approaches.

"We're running in every corner of the commonwealth, in more seats than we've contested in a half century," said House Republican Leader Todd Gilbert. "I'm more confident than ever that voters will return a Republican majority to the House of Delegates in November."



REPUBLICAN PARTY OF VIRGINIA  
The Republican stateside ticket, from left: Jason Miyares for attorney general, Glenn Youngkin for governor and Winsome Sears for lieutenant governor.

27 percent of the undecideds broke for one candidate, McAuliffe would still be in the lead with \$8.5 million cash on hand.

"This gubernatorial field is the most diverse in the history of the commonwealth, and that has drawn a great deal of interest in the race," said Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo, research director for the Judy Ford Wason Center at Christopher Newport University. "So we're seeing that in the field but we're not seeing that in the leaders in these races, at least for governor and attorney general."

Despite the lopsided nature of the polling and the fundraising, the primary has not lacked for drama. During a televised debate, Fairfax said when he was accused of sexual assault, McAuliffe treated him like Emmet Till or George Floyd.

businesses, who are struggling, and who want to provide the leave to their employees, sick leave, paid family medical leave, and they need our help to do it."

THE JOB OF lieutenant governor is often overlooked, although it plays a key role in breaking ties in the Senate. That responsibility is more important now than it's been in recent memory because Democrats have such a thin majority and the body has a handful of conservative Democrats. Republicans have chosen firebrand conservative former Del. Winsome Sears (R-90), who appears in campaign photos with an assault rifle to show her support for gun rights. She pulled ahead of the pack of other candidates after Sen. Amanda Chase (R-11) and former lieutenant governor candidate E.W. Jackson endorsed her. As an immigrant from Jamaica, she's made opposition to critical race theory a cornerstone of her campaign.

"The Democrats, they're not helping us," said Sears at a candidates forum. "They're pitting the races against each other. You've heard the constant Black, white. Now it's Asian, they're speaking against Thomas Jefferson kids and their successes. They want quotas."

The Democratic primary for lieutenant governor is the most wide open. Polling has Del. Sam Rasoul (D-11) slightly ahead, and he's raised more money than any of the other candidates.

But Del. Hala Ayala (D-51) has the endorsement of Gov. Ralph Northam, who is attempting to play the role of kingmaker on his way out the door of the Executive Mansion. The crowded field of candidates also includes Norfolk City Councilwoman Andria McClellan, Fairfax NAACP president Sean Perryman, NFL player agent Xavier Warren and Del. Mark Levine (D-45). Levine is in the awkward position of trying to defend his House seat from a primary challenger while also competing statewide.

SEE CONVENTION, PAGE 11

## Democrats On the Ballot June 8

In order as they appear on the ballot  
Some voters will also have a delegate race on their ballots.

### Governor



Terry McAuliffe



Jennifer McClellan



Jennifer Carroll Foy



Lee Carter



Justin Fairfax

AT THE TOP of the ticket, voters will be choosing between Youngkin and the nominee Democrats pick as their nominee for governor on June 8. Public polling and campaign finance records show former Gov. Terry McAuliffe has a decisive lead heading into the election in an extremely strong position. Other candidates in the race for governor are Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, Sen. Jennifer McClellan (D-9), former Del. Jennifer Carroll Foy (D-2) and Del. Lee Carter (D-50). A Wason Center poll last month showed McAuliffe with 47 percent support while all the other candidates were in single digits. Even if all

Carroll Foy has been all over the airwaves, thanks in part to \$600,000 from Clean Virginia Fund. And Carter has moved the field of candidates to the left by talking about issues like using tax revenue from marijuana sales to create a fund for reparations to account for the slave trade. McClellan has repeatedly pointed out that she has more state government experience than anyone else in the race.

"Unlike past recessions, we cannot simply focus on luring other companies here to Virginia," said McClellan. "We have got to stabilize and grow the small businesses, particularly our women and minority owned

### Lieutenant Governor



Hala Ayala



Sam Rasoul



Andria McClellan



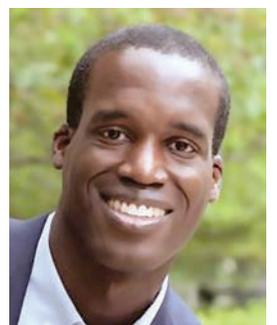
Elizabeth Guzman



Sean Perryman



Mark Levine



Xavier Warren

# Call for School Board Member's Resignation Fosters Heated Conversation

Amid division, voices seek to be heard.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

With Ramadan's ending on May 13 and on May 14, Fairfax County School Board (FCPS) Member At Large Abrar Omeish posted what some considered controversial statements on her personal Twitter and Facebook accounts. The Twitter page qualified posts were her views. Omeish is a Libyan American Muslim. The timing of her posts coincided with airstrikes and rocket attacks. Civilian casualties mounted on the Gaza Strip, and Hamas launched barrages of rockets overwhelming Israel's Iron Dome of defense system.

On May 13, Omeish posted: "Eid Mubarak! Congrats on 30 days of worship! Hurts my heart to celebrate while Israel kills Palestinians & desecrates the Holy Land right now. Apartheid & colonization were wrong yesterday and will be today, here and there. May justice + truth prevail. #EidWith Palestine," - Twitter-Abrar Omeish@Abrar.

The following day, Omeish posted: "War is terrible for everyone. I hear those hurting. I continue to be here for each of you. People of all faiths deserve Holy Land peace. All forms of hate are unacceptable. Ensuring justice & honoring the humanity of everyone remains as urgent as ever. I look ahead to robust & empathetic engagement with Jewish leaders and all allies. Let's build together." - May 14, Abrar Omeish [Facebook].

What followed in the eight days after Omeish's posts were death threats to her, calls for her resignation, emails, and demonstrations. Events came full circle on May 20 during the FCPS School Board Hybrid Meeting held at Jackson Middle School. 3020 Gallows Road in Falls Church. It publicly convened shortly after 7:30 p.m.

**SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR** Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District) opened by reading a statement, "...The School Board understands that the increased violence in the Middle East over the past weeks causes a range of emotions, including grief, anger, and fear... The Fairfax County School Board does not have a role in resolving geopolitical conflicts. However, we recognize that our students and families are hurting and are fearful of what is happening abroad and locally with increased acts of aggression against our Jewish and Muslim communities... In this, and every moment, it is important that we reject Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia."

Omeish is one of the 12 School Board members elected for the four-year term 2020-2024. Out of the 12 members, she is one of three elected county-wide who serve at large, representing all 1.2 million residents of the County rather than the popula-



Abrar Omeish Fairfax County School Board Member At Large speaks without notes during the FCPS School Board Meeting on May 20, 2021, saying, "I want to listen...because that is how we move forward, and that is how we grow."



Chairman Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District) Fairfax County School Board says, "Our students and families are hurting and are fearful of what is happening abroad and locally with increased acts of aggression against our Jewish and Muslim communities."



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON /THE CONNECTION

Demonstrators in support and those against Abrar Omeish, FCBS School Board Member At Large.



MERCIA HOBSON /THE CONNECTION

Omar Elbaba, 15, of Vienna said, "The Fairfax GOP is trying to remove her [Omeish] from office. That is affecting the entire community and not just her."



MERCIA HOBSON /THE CONNECTION

Leslie Sandler of Fairfax Station says that Fairfax County Public Schools is not the place to have political rhetoric.

tion of one of the nine magisterial districts. She is an FCPS 2013 graduate, Yale 2017 graduate, Georgetown Law Juris Doctorate/Master of Public Policy candidate, and Blume fellow.

Omeish's social media posts resulted in a barrage of daily reactionary posts, live media interviews, and press releases by individuals and organizations who called for her to apologize, resign from her position as a school board member, or be recalled. Re-posting these statements occurred, including speakers' interpretations and perspectives of Omeish's views, ultimately resulting in death threats against her.

May 14, fellow school board member Melanie Meren (D-Hunter Mill) @HunterMillFCPS, posted: "As a S.B. Member I'm aghast at the alienation @AbrarOmeish's sentiment has cast on many in our community, including myself, & am appalled at the setback this puts in @FCPSEquity work. Rebuilding of relationships will need to happen. JCRCgw @VOICEVirginia ADAMS (not on Twitter),"

May 15, "Blasting the 'hateful screeds' of Abrar Omeish — and calling for the school board member's resignation," stated Press Release, Fairfax GOP Blasts "Israel Hater" on County School Board - Fairfax County Republican Committee issued by Fairfax Republicans. "Fomenting hatred and division," said Fairfax GOP Chairman Steve Knotts in the Press Release.

May 17, "I don't necessarily support recall efforts unless there's something egregious, and I think in this case there is ...and I will share it publicly," said Fairfax County Board Supervisor Pat Herry (R- Springfield), in the interview on The Larry O'Connor Show.

May 18, "Anti-Semitism and religious intolerance," said Gary Aiken, 2019 Republican candidate for Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Mason District, in a WMAL interview.

May 19, "The JCRC [The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington] has cancelled its decision to honor at its annual meeting to be held tomorrow, May 20, ... She has not taken down her tweet, she has not taken affirmative steps to try to stem the vitriolic, hateful rhetoric on social media triggered by her remarks," said Ronald A. Paul, MD President, JCRC and Ron Halber Executive Director, JCRC, in their joint statement.

Underpinning a selection of the posts and statements against Omeish was the call for FCPS to focus on core education. "The focus seems to be on everything but...You know, anti-racism, equity agenda...We need to take them [Fairfax County Public Schools] back and get them going in the right direction," said Herry in his interview on The Larry O'Connor Show.

While posts and media attention resulted in calls for Omeish to resign, they also triggered support on multiple fronts and for various reasons, including the May 20 demon-

# Yummy in the Tummy at Burke Farmers Market

The direct farm-to-table approach is fresher and more nutritious.

By MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The Burke Farmers Market, operated by Fairfax County Park Authority in the VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway was the first to open in the County program for the 2021 season. It will be the last one to close, currently scheduled for Dec. 18. The market is open on Saturdays, 8 a.m. -noon.

Aimee So of Burke stood in the first aisle with her son, Landon, 4, enjoying the sun, the people, and the market's vibe. "This is his highlight of the weekend. We live nearby, and I put him in the wagon," said Aimee.

The Burke Market garnered several new vendors, a pasta maker, honey bee farmer, jam and jelly specialist, and someone who believes he found the perfect coffee bean to roast for a great cup of coffee. According to the Park Authority website, Foggy Mountain



Hilah Kaufman of Fairfax and her daughter Maya, 6, live close to the Burke Farmers Market. They look forward to many more Saturday trips to the VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway, where the County Park Authority holds the Saturday morning market.

Pasta uses only local or organic flour mills, "amazing" veggies, and pasture-raised eggs. Rock Hill



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON /THE CONNECTION

Farmers Market shoppers enjoy the experience and local, seasonal produce, meats, fish, and dairy at the Burke Farmers Market on May 15.

Honey Bee Farms are purveyors of high-quality honey from Italian honey bee hives and is a 100 percent Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business.

CAE's Artisanal Confections creates small-batch "wine jellies, preserves, and confections meant to awaken the palate and indulge

the senses," according to its vendor website. Not to be outshined, the Haymarket Coffee Company crew found what they consider the best coffee bean. It grows high in the volcanic mountain jungles of El Salvador.

Market shopper Hilah Kaufman of Fairfax watched her daughter,

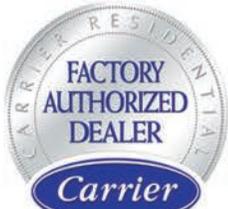
Maya, 6, savor a cold chocolatey treat in a cup. Quickly, it began melting, dripping off her spoon and across her mouth. "I came because it's a great option and close to us. This is our first time here since before COVID," said Hilah.

Like all other Fairfax County Park Authority Markets, "By providing access to locally grown foods, [the FCPA] farmers market program strives to improve the health of Fairfax County citizens, support local food producers, and protect the environment," according to the County website. Market-goers can, if they choose, pre-order items by visiting the county website, Burke Farmers Market | Park Authority. Pre-pay and pick up at the market.

Donna James of Springfield worked the market entrance table, greeting shoppers as they arrived. Given the new masking guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some market shoppers asked James as they were about to enter. "Can we remove our masks now?"

"If you've been vaccinated, it's optional. Just keep your distance, social distance, and be mindful of that," said James.

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# Passey Honored as a 'Woman of Influence'

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax resident Jennifer Passey was recently honored as the winner of the 2021 Woman of Influence award presented by Fairfax City's Commission for Women. A wife and a mother of four sons, she served two years each on City Council and on the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, as well as three years on the Planning Commission.

Calling it "a true honor" to receive this award, Passey said, "We have a lot of smart, talented, brilliant women here in the City, and they all have something to contribute." In her case, besides serving her city, she also works with the nonprofit Girls on the Run, which serves all of Northern Virginia.

"I believe that, when you really focus on the young people in a community, those strong girls become strong women who

then build strong communities," she explained.

"We all need people to look up to, and we need to see a representation of who we want to be, what paths we want to follow or the encouragement to create our own paths," continued Passey. "I think that, with

Girls on the Run, I'm creating that atmosphere in our City and region. And I want us to all take the time to look behind us and bring people along with us."

Later on, in a special Facebook post, Passey shared some further thoughts about being this award's recipient. "Feeling a sense of belonging is a need we all have in life, whether we are young, old or somewhere in between," she wrote. "Your local community is where you should be supported in time of need, feel safe, be able to take risks to reach new goals, find strength in others and thrive. I want to see girls and women of all ages, from all backgrounds, find their place to lead in the City



BONNIE HOBBS/  
THE CONNECTION  
Jennifer Passey



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIN MOLEK

## Fairfax Academy Musical Theater Showcase, May 28

The Fairfax Academy will present a Musical Theater Showcase, this Friday, May 28, at 7 p.m. Viewers will get an inside look at the Academy's Musical Theater & Actors Studio through a collection of songs, monologues, and choreography performed by the Academy students.

The virtual event will be posted at <https://fairfaxacademy.fcps.edu/event/musical-theatre-showcase>. Or guests may go to <https://fairfaxacademy.fcps.edu/> and click on the YouTube icon at the bottom of that Web page.

of Fairfax."

She also expressed her appreciation to the City's Commission for Women for recognizing her. In addition, she thanked her friend and Councilmember, Joe Harmon, for nominating her for this honor.

"And thank you to the many strong wom-

en - yes, Mom, you are at the top - in my life that invested in me," wrote Passey. Then, directly addressing all those reading her words, she told them, "Now is the time to commit to investing your time and using your talents to leave your local community better than when you found it."

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# The Weather, Tee Shirts and Fresh Air Made Bike To Work Day a Success

Nearly 10,000 riders reaped the benefits negotiating area bike paths.

By MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

The weather couldn't have been better for the 20th anniversary Bike to Work commuting event in the metro area, and despite the fact that everyone may not be heading to the office yet, it proved to be a success.

It takes a little more than the promise of a brightly colored tee shirt to make people climb hills and pedal as the sun comes up, but this year they counted 9,487 participants in the event. For Kingstowne resident Aspen Guthrie, the exercise, fresh air and tee shirt were all reasons to participate as she has in years past. She works at the Pentagon, but has been working from home for a while due to the pandemic. "Even if I'm teleworking, I still like the ride," she said. In years past, she's gone all the way to the Pentagon from Kingstowne, or used the Metro for part of the way before pedaling in.

Alexandria resident Frank Reyes was also at the "tee shirt pickup point" in Springfield where they had tee shirts, water and granola bars. This stop used to be called a "pit stop," but the pandemic changed that, and it wasn't as social as it has been in the past. "I try to do it every year," Reyes said.

It was the same for Tom Woodmansee, who was heading to his job on Fort Belvoir. His collection of Bike to Work tee shirts tells the story. "I think

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



The stop was close to the Franconia-Springfield Metro station.

I missed one year, it was raining," he said.

Bike to Work Day is run by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Commuter Connections program, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association is involved by managing the registration process.

Nicholas Ramfos, director of BTWD and co-organizer at Commuter Connections, biked to his stop out on the W&OD trail near Sterling. The fresh air and physical benefits were especially important this year because the event was cancelled last year, and many were cooped up inside from the quarantine. "This was a big year for us, we didn't want to miss it," Ramfos said. There are mental benefits for being outdoors and active," he said. "Most people know the benefits of exercise," he added.



Aspen Guthrie with her new shirt at one of the two Springfield stops.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIN MOLEK

## Fairfax High Staff Shows its Spirit

Some Fairfax High and Fairfax Academy "E-Wing" teachers and staff members recently teamed up for Tie-dye Day to celebrate Spirit Week during the school's Wellness Week. (From left) are ESOL teachers Kate Scrivener and Elissa Robinson, Academy Administrative Assistant Ginny Cate, Academy Career Experience Specialist Erin Molek, Counselor Maria Martin, and ESOL teacher Sara Chae.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Popes Head Road Proposed Through Truck Restriction Fairfax County

Notice is hereby given that the Virginia Department of Transportation is accepting comments through **June 28, 2021** regarding the approximately 1.6-mile proposed restriction of through truck traffic on Popes Head Road (Route 654) from Ox Road (Route 123) to Fairfax County Parkway (Route 286) in Fairfax County.

The proposed alternate route for trucks is approximately 4.6 miles via Ox Road and Fairfax County Parkway.

Submit your written comments to Mr. Nhan Vu, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax VA 22030, or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Popes Head Road Proposed Through Truck Restriction" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.



Community members join police and county officials in the official ground-breaking in Lorton.



Dr. Karen Diviney, Director, Animal Sheltering and Capt. Jerry Watts, Commander Animal Services Division, whose departments will be served by the new facility, along with the police Patrol Division, stand with facility rendering.

# South County Police Station & Animal Shelter Breaks Ground

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

County officials, police, and community members joined in officially breaking ground for the new South County police station and animal services shelter on May 22 at its future site on Lorton Road, between Hooes and Workhouse Roads. The \$30 million dollar, dual use facility includes 34,000 square feet for police, 23,000 square feet for animal services, and 20,000 square feet of outdoor space for use by animals, a fuel island, and parking. The facility, a two year project, is scheduled for completion in Spring 2023.

Many see the irony of building a police station on the former Lorton Workhouse/ Prison site, including Fairfax County Supervisor, Dan Storck, in whose District the facility will rest. Storck explained that in 1910, the workhouse concept envisioned a “place of rehabilitation,” a concept he notes, the County has applied to the area with “investment of hundreds of millions in this community to create a 21st century community.” Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman, Jeff McKay promised the gathered community members, “more resources are coming to South County”.....the Board is “investing here - all corners of the county must succeed if the county as a whole is to succeed.”

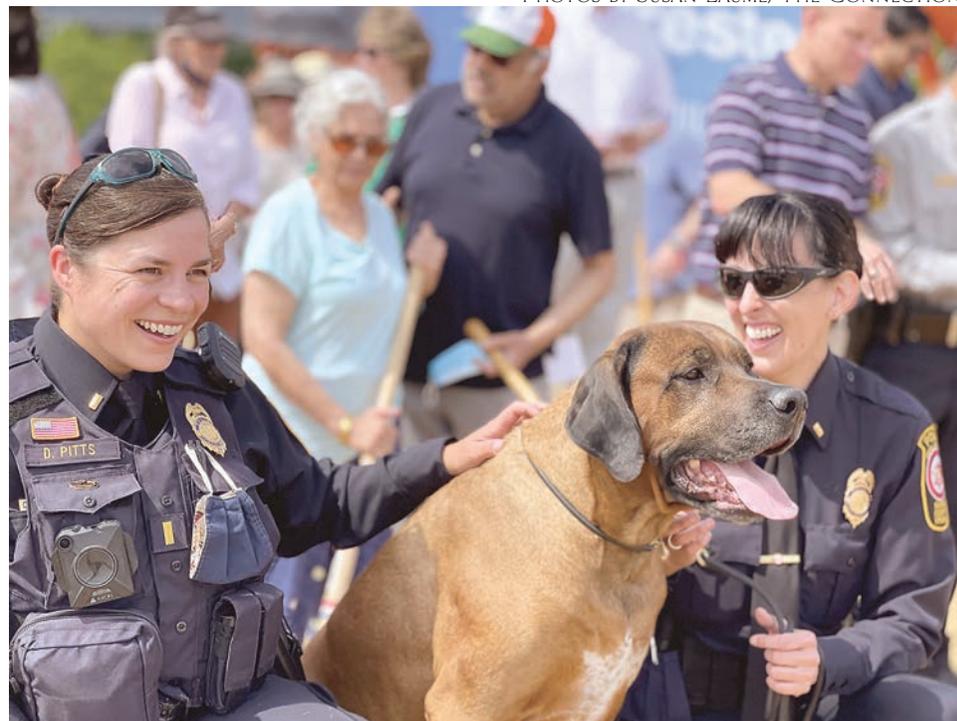
The creation of the new police station is expected to have a ripple effect throughout the county, by making possible a full police redistricting. The area is currently served by the Franconia and West Springfield Police Stations. Major R.A. Blakely, Commander, Patrol Division II, indicates that the new plan will allow all station territories, not just the two current servicing stations, to shrink, even down to the individual officers’ beat responsibility; resulting in greater police pres-



Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay addresses participants promising resources are coming to South County.

ence, faster response times and better service to citizens throughout the county. The new South County station will include Animal Protection Police (APP) presence on site for significantly improved response times to locations distance from their current West Ox Road location. APPs currently cover all 391 land acres of the county from that single location.

**ANIMALS OF ALL TYPES**, and their families, too, will have better access to shelter services with addition of the second shelter. Dr. Karen Diviney, Director, Fairfax County’s Department of Animal Sheltering, credits the Board of Supervisors with understanding the value of pets in peoples’ lives; a lesson learned elsewhere in difficulty, such as during the Katrina hurricane disaster. The County’s current shelter was renovated and



Animal Protection Police Officers D. Pitts, Wallace, and K. Prucnal share a moment during the ceremony heralding coming improvements to animal services in the county.

expanded to 2700 square feet under Diviney’s guidance, about ten years ago, changing it from a sad “pound” environment, to “a state of the art operation on a par with the best facilities across the country; with an increased positive release rate, and a vibrant 300+ person volunteer and foster program.”

The new 2300 square foot shelter, slightly smaller than the West Ox Road facility, will have a slightly smaller kennel area but with a different design for improved cat and dog housing, and a larger veterinary surgery suite, anticipating increased neutering services. Innovations include a secure outdoor “catio” play area, “real life rooms” simulating homes after adoption, and a large fenced play yard with shade trees for dog walks outdoors.

Upon completion the facility will have space for public art, infrastructure for solar energy, electric vehicle charging stations, and natural

landscaping with a bird friendly design.

**THE POLICE STATION AND ANIMAL SHELTER** facility joins a long list of new development in the South County area, championed by Storck and the Board over the 17 years of his tenure as supervisor, including: new South County elementary, middle and high schools; a turf field complex; Lorton Community Center and Library, now under construction; Workhouse Arts Center, including the Lucy Burns Museum; Laurel Hill Park Central Green; Liberty development; Lorton Road realignment; CDD land-fill closure; Lorton Fire Station; Laurel Hill Equestrian Center; bike and walking trails; Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail; Laurel Hill Golf Course; Occoquan Park revitalization; and the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, dedicated on May 16.

# School Board Member's Post Ignites Pro & Con Reactions

FROM PAGE 4

stration outside Jackson Middle School. Starting at 5 p.m., FCSB held a closed meeting inside the school, part of its Hybrid Regular Meeting. Two polarized protest groups formed outdoors in front of the school.

Earlier that day, the cease-fire took effect to end the violent 11-day conflict. Associated Press reported: "At least 230 Palestinians were killed, including 65 children and 39 women, with 1,710 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry... Twelve people in Israel, including a 5-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl, were killed."



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION  
Protestors outside of the FCPS Board Meeting on May 20, 2021

**UNDER THE EYES** of Fairfax County school officers, organizers occupied the dual-walled entry with a wide staircase leading to the cordoned-off and protected front doors to the school and its adjacent patch of grass. At times, the larger group in support of Omeish grew dense, numbering upwards of 100 individuals. Mostly masked, they rallied together with signs signs that read, "Abrar is

an equity champion" and "Melanie Meren, you do not represent us." They chanted following the lead of Mariam Abou-Ghazala of Fairfax and others who yelled into megaphones, "Freedom of Speech. You cannot impeach."

The smaller group, many challenging Omeish and opposing critical race theory (CRT), numbered approximately 30 individ-

uals with a handful wearing masks. Waving U.S. flags, they played loud music attempting to drown out the other demonstrators' chanting. At times, they advanced in unison up to and into the larger group supporting Omeish.

"The Fairfax GOP is trying to remove her [Omeish] from office. That is affecting the entire community and not just her. We're trying to create a platform to raise awareness for our issues," said Omar Elbaba, 15, of Vienna.

"This is clearly an Islamophobic smear campaign to delegitimize her [Omeish's] position... and what she brings to the table... What a world we live in where an elected official cannot pray for her people," said Shayma Al-Hanooti, FCPS graduate and Arlington Public School teacher.

"This is freedom of speech," said Hala Abdelaal of Fairfax, Class of 2015 Thomas Jefferson High School. "This is our Constitution." After multiple failed attempts to get comments from the smaller group, Leslie Sandler of Fairfax Station agreed. "Fairfax

County Public Schools is not the place to have political rhetoric. We're here for our children," she said.

School Board member Omeish was one of the last to comment at the Fairfax County School Board Meeting. Omeish said she took pride in a community where all come to the table and can have a dialog, a place to "confront courageously the differences that come to the table."

"I understand that for many Jewish families, my constituents, that they share a deep and sacred relationship with Israel... I've been able to listen and dialogue with, and I want to continue to listen. The loudest thing I want to be heard today is that I want to listen... because that is how we move forward, and that is how we grow."

"Anti-Semitism is a real and growing threat that must be addressed in our schools, our country, and our world. And conflating the criticism with that only harms those of us seeking to advance justice and diverts our focus," said Omeish. "We must choose to step up and to ensure that we don't allow those seeking to sow hate and division to capitalize on our disagreement... We can and must fight these things together, anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia and especially that which is couched as a response to oppression of all kinds together." Video FCPS School Board Meeting 5-20-21 3:19:40-3:29:43.

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### REAL ESTATE TAX PAYMENTS ARE DUE

Real Estate tax bills have been mailed and are due  
**Monday, June 21, 2021**

### LATE PAYMENT PENALTY

To avoid incurring a 10%, \$10 minimum, late payment penalty and interest of 10% per annum, **payment in full must be received or postmarked by close-of-business on Monday, June 21, 2021**

Taxes may be paid online, by mail, or in-person  
to the City Treasurer's Office (City Hall, Suite 234)  
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)

## IMPORTANT

**Even if you do not receive a physical bill, to avoid late payment penalties you are still responsible for requesting a copy and remitting payment by Monday, June 21, 2021**

For Additional Information,  
please check the City website at [www.FairfaxVA.gov](http://www.FairfaxVA.gov)  
or call (703) 385-7900

# Convention Done, Primary Ahead

FROM PAGE 3

## Attorney General

“When a candidate runs for two offices at the same time, they’re sending two messages,” said Stephen Farnsworth, political science professor at the University of Mary Washington. “One, I want something better than what I have, and two, I’m not sure I’m going to be able to get it.”

**VOTERS WILL ALSO** be choosing between Del. Jason Miyares (R-82) and the winner of the Democratic primary, which features incumbent Attorney General Mark Herring and challenger Del. Jay Jones (D-89). Herring was first elected in 2013, and he’s seeking a third term in office. During his time in office, he’s created a new Office of Civil Rights as well as a new conviction integrity unit and a new worker protection unit while also reorganizing the consumer protection section. Jones has criticized Herring for waiting until election season before making some of those changes, and he attacked Herring for wearing blackface at a college party in the 1980s.

“I sat in the room two years ago with the Black Caucus when you disclosed that you wore blackface just days after you called on Governor Northam to resign,” Jones said during a televised debate. “I was there when you took that paper out of your jacket, smoothed it out on the table and read us a



Jay Jones



Mark Herring

statement with no empathy, no compassion.”

Herring hasn’t been shy about criticizing Jones either. During a televised debate earlier this month, Herring brought up a bill Jones introduced that could have created a loophole for predatory lenders. The bill would have allowed for loans of 36 percent plus a daily fee that could amount to 320 percent a year. Jones never withdrew the bill, although it was left in committee. Jones ended up voting in favor of a different bill, one that Herring made a rare personal appearance to support in committee.

“When I was working to crack down on dangerous predatory lenders, Delegate Jones was actually supporting the predatory lenders and authored a bill that would have allowed them to charge 350 percent interest,” said Herring. “These are hard-working, struggling Virginians just trying to get by.”

will help support the performers.) Contact Charlie Baum, cbaum@fsgw.org. Register at <https://www.fsgw.org/Concerts>, to get the concert link.

### STARTING JUNE 1

”Duck Harbor” Web Series. 8 p.m. Sponsored by 1st Stage in Tysons Corner. Duck Harbor is a web series about a long-distance love in later life. The piece is brought to audiences through a creative series of short scenes in which the actors, just like the characters, are meeting for the first time. Audiences will get to experience the magic of the theater and the excitement of new love between these two lonely hearts reaching out from charming small towns on opposite sides of the country. Every week, each of the two actors, who live on opposite coasts, will be given only their half of the script and will experience the other side of the story with a sincere and genuine freshness, “on stage,” in front of our audience. Performances will take place every Tuesday, beginning on June 1 and ending on August 17. Get your tickets today at [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org).

### SUNDAY/JUNE 6

U-2: Still Essential. 2-3 p.m. On Zoom. Sponsored by the Cold War Museum, 1734 Farm Station Road, Warrenton. You Need to See What’s Happening in That Hot Spot. But the Bad Guys Know When the Satellites Are Coming Over. Who You Going to Call? It’s still the U-2. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/still-essential-the-enduring-legacy-of-the-u-2-tickets-146513940139>

### CALENDAR

#### NOW THRU MAY 31

Dinosaur Drive-Thru Experience. The Dinosaurs are ready to return from extinction. The drive-thru dinosaur exhibit is the first of its kind at the Bull Run Events Center in Centreville. The Museum quality exhibit, with more than 75+ animatronic and static dinosaurs, runs May 14 through May 31. Tours are available Wednesday through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Visit [www.drivethrudinos.com](http://www.drivethrudinos.com) or call 800-830-3976.

#### THURSDAY/MAY 27

Asian American Pacific Islander Celebration. 7 p.m. May is Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, and The Alden in McLean is celebrating these rich cultures through the art of words. AAPI poets Regie Cabico, Gowri Koneswaran and Jenny C. Lares will be featured in a virtual performance, “Celebrating AAPI Heritage Month through Poetry.” The poets will share their work, take audience questions and host an open mic segment for anyone who identifies as AAPI. The event is free, and preregistration is required. Those who wish to participate in the open mic segment may indicate so when they register. To register or for more information, visit [www.aldentheatre.org](http://www.aldentheatre.org).

#### SUNDAY/MAY 30

Cowboy and Western Music. 7:30 p.m. Online. Hear authentic, heartfelt singing about the vanishing American West in a free, online concert. After the concert, join in a sing-around with the performers. Free; Suggested donation: \$20 per listener. (If you feel generous, a higher amount

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## Philosophically Meandering



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I discussed a few weeks back, having all this time off/apart from cancer-related activities is unsettling in a peculiar way. I’m not in remission. I’m certainly not cured, and I’m still receiving regular treatment: a bone-strengthening shot every four weeks at the Infusion Center and of course, my daily lenvima pill. Given the nature of what symptoms/side effects I experience, it’s only after my quarterly CT scan and recently added, a bone scan, followed-up by a post-scan video visit with my oncologist and endocrinologist (combined with my semi annual brain MRI) that I have an accurate/real-time sense of whether I’m coming or going, if you know what I mean?

The result of these intervals and intermittent visits is that I, not the doctors, have my best sense of self. Though I can - and am encouraged to do so, email my doctors and/or call an advice nurse at all hours to discuss whatever ails me, realistically, on a daily, hourly and/or minute-by-minute existence, I’m the one that I have to talk to, and most likely, listen to. And though I think I know myself pretty well, a cancer diagnosis creates a prism through which all of our thoughts are filtered. Sometimes, what initially passes through is not identical to what comes out. Cancer is in control, sort of like the producers of “The Outer Limits” said they were in control of your television during the two years: 1963 and ‘64, when “The Outer Limits” was nearly must-watch television. They controlled more than just the horizontal on your television. They controlled the information going into your head. What you did with that information was entirely up to you. Only then, you were in control.

Much has changed in the almost 60 years since “The Outer Limits” was controlling television sets. And so too, much has changed for those diagnosed with cancer. However positive and hopeful, and effective the evolution of a cancer diagnosis and treatment has become, when “The cancer” (as “Forrest, Forrest Gump” called it) appears on your scan or marks your blood, you are no longer “the master of your domain.” In fact, your domain has shrunk considerably and quite precipitously. Whatever you thought was going to be happening in your life now takes a back seat to everything your oncologist says needs to happen. Integrating into your life all the unexpected, life-changing advisories will be a task unlike any you’ve previously ever undertaken. Pondering your cancer-patient future will not result in one gulp, it will result in a series of gulps. As a consequence of your diagnosis/prognosis, you’ll become an expert in gulps, morning, noon and night, when you’re alone or with others.

And as you are gulping, you are forever trying to find your place in the universe. As a diagnosee, you join an immense club, the kind of club Grouch Marx said he “wouldn’t join, if they would have me as a member.” Ignoring your new reality seems totally irresponsible, but focusing 24-7 on your less-than-ideal circumstances seems like overkill (pardon the double entendre). This focus likely emboldens the cancer while weakening your resolve. I mean, your situation is bad enough, you don’t need to make it worse by having it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Having it once and a while, like a snack is more than enough. The weight of a premature death (any death is premature, right?) is simply too great a burden to bear without making it heavier. I’m not suggesting one ever acquiesce and give into their cancer. Instead, I’m suggesting, find a place for it in your life where it’s sort of along for the ride, rather than it being the driver.

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

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