

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 23, 2023

Nothing Like President's Day at Mount Vernon

Crowds came out to celebrate the occasion.

By Mike Salmon
The Gazette

The tri-corner hats and fancy outfits were out for this year's President's Day event at the Mount Vernon plantation on the Potomac River. The day started with a birthday card drawing event and a wreath laying at George Washington's tomb. This was followed by a Tactical demonstration by the Commander-in-Chief's Guard, and a musical demonstration by The Old Guard Fife & Drum Corps. The rest of the day featured a visit to the George Washington Presidential Library, a meet and greet with their George Washington historical interpreter, food trucks and baked goods at the Half Crown Bakehouse.

PHOTOS BY
MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE



Clear skies and moderate temperatures for the President's Day ceremony at Mount Vernon.



There were those in the authentic colonial uniforms and today's color guard.



The President's Day bouquet at Mount Vernon.

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Garden club members prepare the flowers.



The flower arrangements were carefully prepared.

Garden Club Brightens Lives in Mount Vernon

The Garden Club of Waynewood gave an early Valentine's Day present this year to the recipients of Meals on Wheels. In what is becoming an annual ritual, the Garden Club of Waynewood created 100 miniature floral arrangements for donation to the Meals on Wheels recipients on Feb. 9. Garden Club members worked together

to assemble the arrangements using contributions of flowers and other materials from local businesses. The MOW recipients are largely elderly homebound individuals. A representative from the program said that the arrangements were greatly appreciated by the recipients and he thanked the Garden Club "for bringing a lot of joy to these folks."



Headed out to Meals on Wheels to bring some smiles all around.



Tribute at the Tomb Jim Gilmore, former Virginia Governor and U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and his wife Roxane were among the dignitaries at the wreath laying ceremony at the tomb of George Washington Feb. 22 at Mount Vernon. The ceremony, held on Washington's birthday, was part of a day-long series of free events honoring the nation's Founding Father.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Proposed Budget Has a Long Way To Go

Average homeowner would pay about \$120 more a year in property taxes.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill presented his FY 2024 Advertised Budget Tuesday morning, Feb 21. Hill said that revenue projections in the budget are based on the existing real estate tax of \$1.11, resulting in an increase to an average homeowner of “just under \$120,” because of the rise in property values. Approximately 67 percent of the general fund revenue is derived from real estate taxes which are projected to increase to 6.6 percent over FY23 levels.

According to Hill, the FY2024 Advertised Budget focuses on stabilizing what he called the county’s “core,” meaning its employees and existing programs in place to serve the county’s residents.

“What we are seeing across the board is that it’s costing us more and more to sustain this core,” said Hill.

The focus of his proposal was on employee compensation, Hill said, and on Fairfax County Public Schools.

As for personal property taxes, after a large increase in the fiscal year 2023, Hill said that personal property taxes are projected to be flat in the fiscal year 2024.

Net county resources are projected to increase by \$365.46 million over FY 2023 Adopted Budget Plan. The FY 2024 requirements for County allocation of resources



County Executive Bryan Hill presents the proposed budget.



Chairman Jeff McKay



Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield)



The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

total \$134.51 million for priorities: county compensation- \$92.73 million; debt service/capital requirements- \$9.85 million; inflationary /contract rate adjustments-\$18.05 million; new facilities \$5.31 million, and other priorities- \$8.57 million.

The FY2024 allocation for schools is 52.2 percent of the county’s general fund.

The county’s reserves decreased by \$3.53 million but remained budgeted at the tar-

get of 10 percent of General Fund disbursements. The FY 2024 Requirements for total uses are \$275.24 million. That leaves a \$90.22 million balance for board consideration.

Hill noted that in the capital improvement program, based on inflation and escalation in construction bids, 10 to 12 percent inflationary factors had been added to most projects. Some projects are recommended to be

deferred, such as the Tyson’s Police Station and the Chantilly Regional Library. Other projects are recommended to be accelerated, such as the Tyson’s Fire Station and the Criminal Justice Academy.

“We know that we are not the only ones impacted by this economy; our community partners with which we work every day are

SEE PROPOSED BUDGET, PAGE 15

Grassroots Coalition Calls for Fairfax County Budget that Invests in Community, Local Families, Essential Workers

Invest in Fairfax is a grassroots coalition of local families, faith leaders, small businesses, county employees, educators, first responders, community organizations, and others.

Comments from different stakeholders were provided ahead of Tuesday’s budget presentation, and edited for length here.

“We have good and bad financial years. We need to learn how to make our budget work all the time. This means keeping our current financial commitments and meeting the needs of our residents. Our investments and budget should reflect these needs.”

— David Edelman,
Chair of the Invest in Fairfax coalition.

“As an organization focused on voting and voter registration, the League of Women Voters of Fairfax would like to see adequate funding for the Board of Elections for staffing, maintenance and equipment, and other capital needs. We

hope that the County budget reflects its One Fairfax focus and provides more funding for affordable housing and for schools in less affluent areas of our county. We also hope that the county will allocate enough resources in the budget to ensure it delivers on its resolve to ensure equality and fairness for women.”

— Anu Sahai,
Advocacy Co-Chair, Fairfax League of Women Voters

“The Fairfax County NAACP anticipates the Board will place top priority on allocating funding to properly support essential services equitably, particularly to our vulnerable communities. One of our top priorities in 2023 will be affordable and workforce housing. Affordable housing is consistently being lost to new development and rising rents across the County and the County is already seriously short on housing affordable to most county workers. More funds are needed to incentivize owners to stabilize rents and/or replace affordable units, as well as to help first-time homebuyers purchase homes.”

— Michelle Leete,
President, Fairfax County NAACP

“The Fairfax Education Association stands in solidarity with the Invest in Fairfax coalition in asking this board to continue to make Fairfax County the place where everyone wants to live. To do this we must continue to invest in our community which includes our school system. Yes, hard decisions will have to be made about the trajectory of this county and this is when we must remember that there was a time when Fairfax County could tout how wonderful it was to live on our communities and attend premier schools; that time is fading fast because we are no longer investing in our future.”

— Leslie Houston,
President, Fairfax Education Association.

“The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers believes in the need for a budget emphasizing the importance of public education. The Fairfax County Public Schools FY24 budget reflects the importance of attracting and retaining the best teachers and educational professionals. The FCPS budget also emphasizes the need to adapt to the best research into literacy practices. It also reflects the necessity to raise expectations and outcomes for our most vulnerable students.

The FCFT strongly encourages the Board of Supervisors to fully fund the FCPS budget request. Strong schools are the bedrock to the future economic strength of Fairfax County, and strong schools require the support of the Board of Supervisors.”

— David Walrod,
President, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers and special education teacher with Fairfax County Public Schools.

“Fairfax County deserves a budget which invests in good, safe jobs for all workers, and quality public services for all working families. Frontline workers throughout our community need affordable health care, need fair pay to keep up with the cost of living and address wage compression, and need safe working conditions. That’s why county employees are coming together in SEIU to call for good jobs in this year’s budget and at the bargaining table.”

— Tammie Wondong,
SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax President and 33-year county employee



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

At the lake's 60th anniversary last August, there was an official proclamation.

Lake Accotink Heading for Wetlands Designation?

Dredging cost increases might put the lake out of reach.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

For the fans of Lake Accotink, the silt problem is nothing new, but the silt continues to flow down Accotink Creek creating a situation, which was the topic of the latest conference call and in-person meeting.

The officials and residents involved have a few ideas for the silt in Lake Accotink: dredging it out, trucking it out to a dumping spot, letting it dry before moving it to its final resting place. The costs for this plan have jumped from \$30 million to \$395 million, and that likely puts it out of reach for the county.

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) spoke up in the virtual meeting. "We can't sugar coat it, the prognosis is not good," he said. "We're facing difficult realities."

Allan Robertson, who lives nearby and a member of the Friends of Lake Accotink group, was not happy about the price jump. "Suddenly this \$400 million price tag out of nowhere," he said. "It was clear the FCPA wanted to get rid of the lake," he said.

The plan could be to leave it as-is and let it become a wetlands that they compared to Huntley Meadows Park in the Franconia District. This is unrealistic, Robertson thinks. Without dredging, it will return to a "natural state," they claimed, but it isn't so easy. Stream restoration has occurred above the lake and below the lake, but Robertson said it is not working. "We've gotten 43% more sediment than we thought we had,"

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he said, adding, "natural state is a ridiculous lie."

Robertson indicated that the lake's value in regulatory compliance is "\$200 million annual value to the county," he said.

The official staff recommendation from Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and the public works director recommend that Lake Accotink not be dredged and become a more wetlands type of park like Huntley Meadows. But the ultimate decision will be up to the Board of Supervisors. Right now, the issue is going through a comments period, during which residents can ask questions or make comments online thru April 1.

Some are hoping this will keep the dredging under consideration.

Kristin Brown posted a plea for saving the lake on social media, suggesting a smaller dredge and possible places to dump the silt. With a smaller dredge, the expense would not be as much and it would buy time for the Lake Accotink community to think of a better solution, she said. "We don't need 8-feet of depth, just DO SOME NOW to give us time to come up with better plans, please!" she wrote.

"The lake is a recreation asset for the community," said Robertson.

Comments can be submitted through the comment box below, via email to F515@PublicInput.com or to the project manager Charles.Smith@fairfaxcounty.gov, or by US Mail to Fairfax County DPWES - Lake Accotink Dredging, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 449, Fairfax, VA 22035.

A vibrant community enriched and supported by strong businesses

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce was created by combining the former Mount Vernon Lee Chamber and the Greater Springfield Chamber into a new regional chamber of commerce. Joining forces expands our reach, offers a stronger support network for businesses, a greater voice to our members and more opportunity for all. The future is bright for a united chamber of commerce working to strengthen our community.



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Released February 14, 2023

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Problem Gambling Awareness

Calls increased 56.7% in the past year in Virginia to 24/7 hotline for problem gambling, 1-888-532-3500.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

The final week of the legislative session in Richmond is here, and the House and Senate are working hard to finish voting on legislation and the state budget to send to the Governor by Saturday. As I write this, six pieces of legislation that I filed this year have already passed both the House and Senate and are waiting for the Governor's consideration.

During this session, I spent much of my time working on various efforts related to problem gambling prevention and treatment. As the former Chair of the ABC & Gaming subcommittee as well as the Appropriations subcommittee on Transportation and Public Safety, I am highly attuned to the gaps that exist in public safety related to supporting Virginians with gambling addictions. To help raise awareness about this issue, I gave a point of personal privilege speech on the House Floor last week on problem gambling:

"As all of you know, just three years ago this body granted five cities across the Commonwealth the opportunity to petition voters

to build casinos and so far, four cities have held successful referendums to do so.

Sports betting, online Lottery, historic horse racing machines, live horse races and charitable gaming have all expanded, and unregulated skill games, or "gray machines" have spread to convenience stores, truck stops, and restaurants all over the Commonwealth. They are in all of your districts.

Gaming expansion is a double-edged sword. It has brought jobs, tourism, and tax revenue to the Commonwealth, as well as raised funds for charities that help millions of Virginians. But, it would be remiss of this body to forget that with gaming expansion, we have also opened the door to an increase in gambling addiction.

Problem gambling affects approximately 2-3% of US adults, or 4-6 million people. It impacts Americans of all ages, ethnicities, races, and genders. Differing from a substance abuse disorder, gambling addiction is an impulse-control disorder in which sufferers cannot control the impulse to gamble despite the fact that it is caus-



Krizek

ing problems in their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

If left untreated, gambling addiction can become very serious and can impact every aspect of an individual's life, including family, work, and finances.

Sadly, those who have a gambling addiction are twice as likely to die by suicide compared to other common addictions.

Fortunately, problem gambling is treatable, and treatment is effective in minimizing harm to both individuals and society. The Virginia Council on Problem Gambling is doing excellent work on responsible gambling education, as well as providing access to support and treatment of gambling addiction to help Virginians get back on their feet. This includes a 24/7 hotline that has seen an increase in calls of 56.7% in the past year. The helpline number is 1-888-532-3500.

As we transition into a gaming-friendly Commonwealth, this body has a duty to prepare for and address the negative public health aspects of this too.

This upcoming March marks the 20th year of National Problem

Gambling Awareness Month. In fact, this body still has the opportunity to vote on a measure coming over from the Senate, SJ 232, that would codify this designation in Virginia as a permanent education and destigmatization tool for public health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker."

I am happy to report that SJ 232, which is identical to my HJ 518, has since passed the House unanimously. Problem Gambling Awareness Month will now be recognized in the Commonwealth every March. In addition, my bill HB 1465, which creates the Problem Gambling Treatment and Support Advisory Committee, has passed the Senate unanimously and is headed to the Governor's desk. This bipartisan effort will enable collaboration and long-term relationship building among prevention and treatment providers and operators of legal gaming in the Commonwealth in efforts to combat problem gambling.

If you or somebody you know is struggling with gambling addiction, please visit www.vcpa.net to chat online, or call or text this confidential and toll-free 24/7 helpline: 1-888-532-3500.

General Assembly Is Finalizing Bills

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL (D-36)

Now that the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates have completed work on all bills from each chamber, each chamber has begun work on bills from the other chamber. Some of the more difficult bills met their fate last week.

It appears that both houses will approve around 20 of my bills which I will discuss in a future column. This column focuses on several of my bills that the House of Delegates rejected.

Protecting Choice

In the aftermath of last year's Dobbs decision, we must do everything we can to protect Virginia women and healthcare providers from prosecution for exercising their reproductive healthcare rights. Virginia is likely to become a sanctuary for women seeking reproductive healthcare

due to our geographic position and existing laws. My legislation would prohibit the extradition of Virginia medical professionals who provide reproductive healthcare to other states. It failed on a party-line vote.

I also sought to allow Virginia women to sue any company that sells or provides access to their personal reproductive healthcare information such as their menstrual data or location history derived from phone use that can be used to determine if they have visited a reproductive healthcare clinic. None is covered by state or federal healthcare privacy laws. My bill would have effectively ended the dissemination of this information for monetization or use in prosecution. The Senate approved my bill on a bipartisan vote, but a House committee killed it on a party-



Sen. Scott Surovell

ty-line vote.

The same House committee also rejected my legislation to clarify Virginia's emergency protection order or "red flag law." Red flag laws permit a court to order the temporary removal of firearms from people that may be a danger to

others or themselves. These laws have reduced suicide by 9-14% in adopting states, but these laws do nothing if they are not used. About 60 of Virginia's 140 jurisdictions saw little to no use of the law. After the Senate approved my legislation on a bipartisan vote, a House committee defeated it.

In 2020, former Governor Ralph Northam's comptroller advised state agencies to redact the names of all state employees using their official employment credit cards for paying for things like hotels and restaurants. I crafted a bill with the

Virginia Coalition for Open Government to end redaction of this information so Virginians can see the names of state employees who spend taxpayer dollars. The Senate passed my bill unanimously, but a House subcommittee killed it on a party-line vote.

Making Solar More Available

I also carried two bills to make shared solar energy more available. Shared solar allows consumers and small businesses to purchase access to a solar farm and net the energy produced by the farm against their home electricity bill. This allows people to have access to solar if they cannot construct panels on their own roofs due to tree cover, homeowners' association rules or financial constraints or because they do not own their roof.

In 2020, I passed legislation authorizing a shared solar program in Dominion Power territory, but Vir-

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OPINION

Still On the To Do List: Budget, Judges, Finish 1,800 Bills

BY SEN. ADAM P. EBBIN

The clock is ticking as the General Assembly moves rapidly towards adjournment. Legislators and staff are putting in long hours in committee and on the floor to complete business by “Sine Die,” the final adjournment of the 2023 legislative session. With only 46 days to complete our business, there is little time remaining to find agreement on a budget, nominate and approve judges, and review the remainder of the over 1,800 pieces of legislation introduced this year. With both bodies having reported an amended budget, a small group of senior legislators, known as budget conferees, from the Senate and House money committees are hard at work on producing a compromise budget that both bodies are comfortable signing off on and sending to the Governor. It may seem improbable to produce such a document when the two proposals have a \$1 billion gap in proposed spending. At a micro level, the proposals are also in disagreement on close to 100 substantive policy decisions and smaller alterations to state agency and program funding. Despite these wide differences, compromise, like the late night coffee the conferees are consuming, is already brewing.

Before we adjourn on Saturday February 25th, the General Assembly must also take up the nomination and appointment of a number of judges from across the Commonwealth. The process by which Virginia selects its judges – from general district to the Supreme Court is fairly unique. Virginia is one of only two states where the legislature elects judges. The Governor can only weigh in on the process during the interim between sessions, when he can make short term appointments to unfilled seats, pending the approval of the legislature. This year we are tasked to fill seats in all five levels of Virginia’s courts, and, fairly unusually, to appoint two judges to the State Corporation Commission (SCC). The SCC is the independent regulatory authority that oversees utilities, insurance, and businesses in Virginia. There are currently two vacancies on the three member panel, one of which has been empty for a full year after House Republicans removed an exceptionally qualified judge from the commission for purely partisan reasons. Leaving the Commission short-handed for this long reduces consumers’ safe-



Ebbin

guards against unfair business practices. To help alleviate these concerns, Del. Kathy Byron (R-Bedford) and Sen. Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) have introduced legislation to streamline the process of appointing these important judges. The extended debate this session about the role of the SCC in reviewing energy rates and the enactment of clean energy underscores how necessary it is that we take action and fill these positions as soon as possible.

The last major agenda item is to finish business on all remaining bills. A portion of the still outstanding legislation must have passed both chambers, but with different amendments offered by each body which can sometimes substantially change the underlying policy. To rectify these differences, these bills will be placed in committees of conferences – small groups of legislators who are tasked with ironing out the differences outside of the normal chamber and committee process.

So far, it appears nine of my bills are poised to pass the House. My SB 1091, which would allow condominium owners to apply for joint grants to complete flood mitigation projects, has now passed both chambers and is heading to the Governor’s desk for his signature. SB1087 which establishes the nation’s strongest privacy protections for your genetic data collected by ancestry.com and 23andme has reported favorably out of its House Committee, and will soon be voted on by the whole body. I was also glad to pass legislation providing living organ donors 60 days of unpaid leave to recover from this life saving procedure, and institute studies to address the rampant and frustrating vehicle noise we have seen across our region, as well as review how to license and regulate vaporized nicotine stores.

However, I was disappointed that my two bills designed to help promote safety and reduce gun violence were defeated in the House of Delegates and that my SJ 242, which was constitutional to repeal Virginia’s prohibition on same-sex marriage, was defeated in subcommittee in the House of Delegates.

While I am disheartened that those important pieces of legislation did not pass, I will continue to fight in the future to ensure Virginia has a constitution that reflects its values.

It remains to be a great honor to serve the 30th district.

General Assembly

FROM PAGE 6

ginia’s State Corporation Commission set a minimum bill amount to cover a share of costs of using the legacy or traditional system, but failed to fully consider the benefits of solar, such as climate change mitigation, better air quality, fewer service outages and grid upgrades. My second bill would have created a new program in Southwest and Southside Virginia. The House rejected both bills on party-line votes after the Senate passed them with large bipartisan majorities.

Finally, the COVID pandemic taught us how critical and exposed our healthcare and grocery store workers are in their jobs serving us every day. Recent polls show

that 81% of Virginians support sick leave for all workers. Our frontline workers deserve it more than anyone. When frontline workers are regularly exposed to viruses and get sick, they are forced to choose between getting paid and getting better and many have no choice but to work sick. A modest sick leave benefit would help everyone. A House committee killed my bill on a party line vote.

This week, both chambers will act on some of the toughest bills filed in this session and legislators will conduct negotiations on final budget amendments before we adjourn this Saturday.

Please send me your feedback at scott@scottsurovell.org

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The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, VA

The Mount Vernon Rotary Club, in 2021, initiated 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 29, 2023. 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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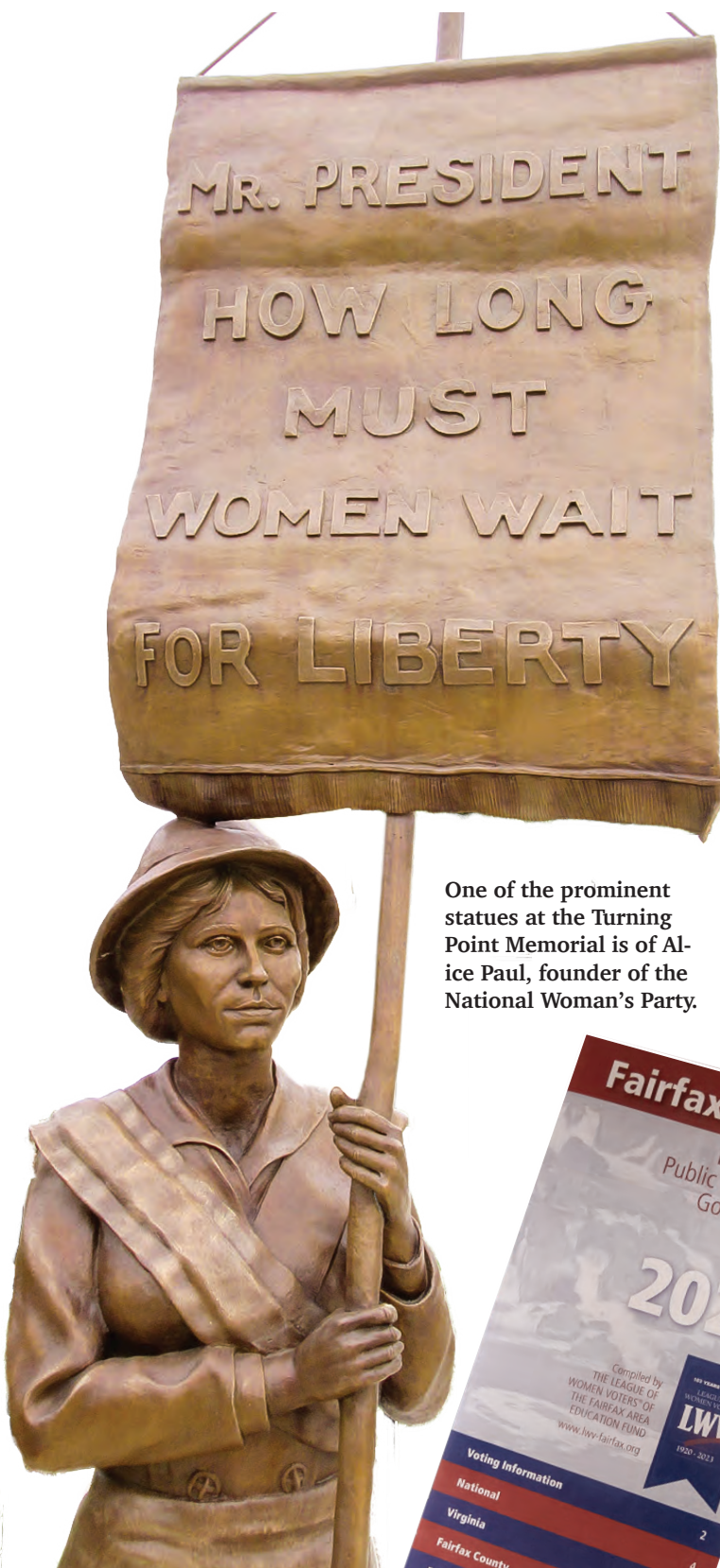
J.S. Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, BWV 1046, F major

Jonathan Kolm: TBA (World premiere commission)
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One of the prominent statues at the Turning Point Memorial is of Alice Paul, founder of the National Woman's Party.



The Fairfax League of Women Voters has registration events all over the county many times a year.

VOTING RIGHTS

Still Fighting for Voting Rights

In 1920, the National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters.

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Love was in the air last week on Valentine's Day. For the League of Women Voters (LWV), love is always in the air, the love of voting. Feb. 14 was the 103rd anniversary of the national League of Women Voters and this year marks the 75th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area.

Registering voters is the heart and soul of the organization. Registration volunteers go to farmers' markets, festivals, libraries, town meetings, high schools, colleges and new citizen ceremonies. In 2022, the Fairfax LWV registered 4,500 voters in the Fairfax area, including over 2,000 at local high schools and 2,300 at naturalization ceremonies for new citizens. Nationwide, the League registered 35,000 new citizens as first-time voters. This spring, members will conduct voter registration drives at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College and recruit the next generation of LWV members.

Annandale resident and Fairfax co-president Pat Fege especially enjoys registering high school students. "I strongly believe that voting is the most important right of citizenship and must be accessible, valued and used," she said. "When students register to vote, the information they learn in government classes has a real-life connection. They understand that through voting, they can have an impact on their government."

On Feb. 22 at Mount Vernon Estate, the Fairfax League, which has members in both Fairfax City and County, will register new citizens at a naturalization ceremony. "This is the first act these people take as new American citizens, to register to vote, because we are there," says Arina van Breda, Director of Voter Registration for the chapter.

The League is strictly nonpartisan, never endorsing candidates, with around 2,000 members, men and women, in Virginia. "Lots of other organizations get involved in voter registration once every four years," notes van Breda. "We are



Statue of Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and founder of the League of Women Voters, at the Turning Point Memorial.

doing this year in and year out. We promote civic engagement and do so in a civil manner. And because we have been doing this for over 100 years, people know they can trust the information the League provides."

"The League of Women Voters is the largest organization that has its ears to the ground to voters," says Alma Couverthie, chief programs officer for the national League. "Our power and influence as the oldest voting rights organization support our mission to empower voters and defend policies that support a strong and equitable democracy."

Voting Not Always Assured

Voter registration and voting have had a bumpy history. Voting advocates cite obstacles throughout U.S. history like literacy tests, partisan and racial gerrymandering of districts, inconvenient polling

"Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it."
— Suffragist Susan B. Anthony

place hours and locations and photo identification requirements.

It took the suffrage movement 72 years of zealous activism to get women the right to vote into the U.S. Constitution, finally succeeding in 1920. That happened after suffragists persistently picketed the White House, lobbied a recalcitrant Congress, staged parades, had endless meetings and conducted wide-

spread pamphleteering.

Fairfax County was the scene of a turning point in that movement. In 1917, over 1,000 suffragists, dubbed the "Silent Sentinels," peacefully picketed President Woodrow Wilson on the White House sidewalk seeking his support for the suffrage amendment. On Nov. 10, 1917, police arrested 27 women picketers for "obstructing traffic" and jailed them in the Occoquan Workhouse at Lorton, fed them mostly hard bread and maggot-laden soup and denied them water. Guards chained Lucy Burns by her wrists to her cell door all night. The night of Nov. 15, 1917, at the workhouse became known as the "Night of Terror." In 2021, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial commemorating the movement opened near the former Workhouse.

The League was born out of the suffragist movement when in 1920, the National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters.

Deb Wake, president of the Virginia LWV says, "103 years ago, women knew we could not change laws until we had the right to vote and that to vote, women needed to be educated on the issues."

Paying to Vote

Until 1851, in Virginia, only adult, white, property-owning men



A naturalization ceremony at USCIS District Office in Merrifield, Virginia earlier this month after which the new citizens were registered to vote by LWV volunteers.

had the right to vote. In that year, the legislature repealed the property ownership requirement, thus en-

Panel Discussion

March 8, panel discussion:

"Finding our Voice - The Vote," with the Fairfax County Public Library system. <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/9940341>
What's on the 2023 Ballot, Fairfax Facts and LWV activities. Primary date is June 20. <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/>.

franchising all white men. After Reconstruction (1865 to 1877), many southern states, including Virginia, enacted a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting, which effectively disenfranchised poor people and Black people.

Virginia's poll taxes remained in effect until the 1960s and ended, in part, due to the efforts of Evelyn Thomas Butts a 41 year old Black community activist, mother of three and grandmother who was married to a disabled veteran and worked as a seamstress. In November 1963, Evelyn Thomas Butts and her attorney Joseph A. Jordan Jr. filed the first suit in a federal court seeking to have the poll tax declared unconstitutional. In March 1964, Annie E. Harper and a group of people from Fairfax County filed another federal suit against the poll tax. The two cases were later combined. On March 24, 1966, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the combined cases called Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections that the use of a poll tax in

all elections was a violation of the U.S. Constitution. <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/71>
In 1964, the states ratified the 24th U.S. Constitutional amendment, outlawing any tax as a precondition for voting in federal elections. In 1966, a U.S. Supreme Court decision extended this policy to all elections.

In Bernice Colvard's history of the Fairfax LWV chapter, she wrote, "In those early years League members compared the local registrars' books with the poll tax list. Residents who had paid their poll tax but were not shown as registered to vote were so advised by post cards, urging them to check their voting status. This created a furor and brought about changes in voting registration procedures."

By Colvard's accounting, "The impetus for a League of Women Voters in Fairfax County came during the period of dramatic change wrought by World War II and the construction of the Pentagon which brought burgeoning population growth and concomitant demands for public services. In 1943, Fairfax County residents, many of whom were members of the District of Columbia League of Women Voters, began meeting to discuss foreign policy. A year later the Fairfax County Voters League was formed," and in 1948 the chapter gained official status.

SEE STILL FIGHTING, PAGE 10

Fairfax County resident Lynn Garvey-Hodge often re-enacts suffragist Mrs. Robert "Mimi" Himes and will be a panelist at the LWV March 8 event.



LWVFA volunteers after registering students at South County High School: (from left) Beth Tudan, Jessica Storrs, Sheryl Williams, LWVFA co-president Pat Fege, Arina van Breda, Debby Pool, Judy Smith.



Fairfax League members had a life-size cutout of suffragist Susan B. Anthony at Supervisor Dan Storck's Feb. 11 town meeting. Here, left to right, Elizabeth Woodruff, Teresa Knox, "Susan B. Anthony" and Arina van Breda.



A recent voter registration and information event on campus at NOVA Annandale, with volunteers Kristen Ferrand (center) and Mary Ann Bradley speaking to a student.



Elizabeth Woodruff, Arina van Breda and Teresa Knox encouraged people to register and vote at Supervisor Dan Storck's Feb. 11 town meeting.

VOTING RIGHTS

Still Fighting for Voting Rights

FROM PAGE 9

Active Advocates

The Chapter soon began to take on several local public policy issues, including advocating for a strong public school system and dismantling racial segregation in schools. "Complete integration of Fairfax County Public Schools was achieved by the late 1960s," wrote Colvard. Since the 1970s, the League has championed the equal rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 2022, the League convinced the Board of Supervisors to endorse the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Every year, the chapter publishes Fairfax Facts, a compendium of local government information.

League members also lobby state legislators, including making trips to Richmond during General Assembly sessions. This year, among other measures, they supported repealing the witness requirement for absentee ballot envelopes, the right to marry amendment, ranked choice voting and bills requiring safe gun storage. They opposed diverting public funds to private schools.

A major initiative in 1993 was the "motor voter" bill, to enable citizens to register to vote at motor vehicle agencies automatically and by mail and at agencies that serve the public.

While most Americans today take the right to vote for granted, League members are quick to draw on suffragist Susan B. Anthony's words: "Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it."



A newly naturalized citizen being registered to vote by LWVFA volunteer and former president, Anu Sahai. In 2022, the LWVFA registered nearly 2,300 new citizens to vote.

PHOTO BY ARINA VAN BREDA



LWV volunteer Kristen Ferrand at a recent South County high school voter registration event explaining voter registration in the classroom.

PHOTO BY ARINA VAN BREDA



At the Turning Point Memorial, panels tell the story of the American women's suffrage movement.

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH



Curator Carl Sell looking at a map from 1959 when Springfield was a lesser-known community.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CAZETTE

Local Museum is Expanding Horizons

Franconia Museum looking to include Springfield history when they relocate.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Now that the ground has been cleared for the new Franconia District Government Center, the folks at the Franconia Museum are looking at plans for a bigger museum space and want

to expand the coverage to tell the Springfield story too. The new building has a bigger museum space in the plans when it opens in a couple of years.

"We're looking to expand our reach and responsibility," said museum curator Carl Sell. "We don't know a whole lot about

SEE FRANCONIA, PAGE 11



Exhibits out in the lobby.



The floorplan of the new building has a space for the museum.

NEWS

Be the SPARC

BY KAITLIN PAYNE

I am encouraged that Virginia's General Assembly is considering a budget amendment that will have a profound impact on my life and that of so many friends. The \$250,000 amendment will support Specially Adapted Resources Clubs (SPARC), a day program that provides vital continuing education, leisure learning and chronic long-term care to adults with severe disabilities at five locations in Northern Virginia.

I have been a member of SPARC for eight years and love attending four days a week. I am 35 and can't walk or use my hands due to quadriplegic cerebral palsy. I also have low vision, and my voice is slow and difficult for some to understand. At SPARC, I have friends and involvement in the community, and the activities are adapted. I love it. No other day program offers opportunities that truly include me.

SPARC was founded in 2006 and changed the long-term care blueprint for young adults with severe disabilities. From the beginning, SPARC provided a safe and caring environment where young adults with severe disabilities learn and simply have fun together. SPARC provides the same supportive structure and continues the learning that we had in school while also giving us a place to socialize with a community of our peers.

SPARC has spent almost two decades proving how to efficiently deliver high-quality day programs to our community. It leverages ex-



Kaitlin Payne.

isting resources and funding pools available to it and the families and people like me that it serves. It's a model that should be replicated. I know that the program is more effective and less costly than other options, but the funding SPARC receives is not enough.

My mom pays \$600 a month for me to attend, and even though it hasn't risen in several years that is a lot for us to afford. I am sad when I think that the cost limits the benefit of this wonderful program for other people like me.

Virginia is regularly ranked as the top state for conducting business, second for hospital patient care and safety, and fifth in education. But sadly, it ranks 39th for quality of life for people with disabilities. Investments like this can improve that and also save taxpayer dollars.

I am hoping that Virginia supports this amendment. I also hope that more people understand that enhancing lives for people with severe disabilities is a worthy and smart investment.

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Franconia Museum

FROM PAGE 10

Springfield so we're looking in that direction," he added. Groveton, over in Hybla Valley, is another area they'll try to cover.

The museum is in one room at the current government center on Franconia Road and it is about as full with memorabilia as possible. They even have material out in the hall, and other stuff in a storage room, which they switch out from time to time to keep the displays fresh. When the new facility opens in a few years at a nearby location down Beulah Street, their space will be bigger and will include electronic displays too.

"We're going to use the whole building for display," Sell added.

Right now, the museum's coverage range is approximately from Telegraph Road on the east to the railroad tracks on the west, and Alexandria in the north to Fort Belvoir in the south. They are now

looking into the Springfield area, and encouraging people to "check your attic," said Sell, "that's where a lot of this memorabilia is stored."

Sell looked up on a map from 1959 that had a small part of the Capital Beltway under construction. "Springfield was almost the last frontier in the 1950s," he said. As far as memorabilia, and the stories that are passed down from generation to generation, they are lacking from Springfield. "There's got to be some [memorabilia] somewhere, we need help," he said.

In the current museum, there's much about the local schools, construction, farming and the Civil War and they are looking for longtime residents to fill the void. There is time though, the new building won't be ready until about 2025.

Anyone that wants to get involved, email Carl Sell at SellCarl@aol.com.

HACKATHON

Teen Turns Sensory Disability to Focus on Seeing Farther

Met Edward Zhang, the teen behind CodeOn, an event with ambition to change the world for about ten million people in the United States affected by retinal diseases. Zhang's own condition inspired him in his quest to make life better for others with severe vision problems.

If that seems a gargantuan task, consider what Zhang has accomplished so far. Zhang has a rare retinal disease called Retinoschisis, and is legally blind with a visual acuity of 20/200. Although he could see normally until about 4th grade, the next three years would be traumatic as the disease took hold. He was forced to miss a considerable amount of school during this period as he endured multiple operations because of complications with internal bleeding from retinal detachments and ensuing recovery periods. His treatment was complicated by a lack of doctors with this specialty on the east coast, forcing travel to Detroit, Michigan for treatment. His condition would stabilize eventually, but with a trade off. His vision remains at about a fifth of normal vision.

Zhang has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for school and wears a special telescope attachment mounted on trifocal glasses to see the board. Dealing with schoolwork and other simple



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/
THE GAZETTE

Edward Zhang



PHOTO COURTESY EDWARD ZHANG

Edward Zhang (right) works with Pranav Kappa during their lunch break to prepare for the hackathon event

tasks, like reading a restaurant menu or navigating streets on cloudy days when he can't discern traffic lights, required him to come up with new ways to cope. He describes his situation until high school as having to "essentially just do this by myself, because we

didn't really, my family and I, know of anyone else that had this condition and since this was a rare condition, even the doctors

didn't really know what to do ... so I had to come up with my own solutions."

Things look brighter for Zhang now that he's reached high school and met a "visually impaired community."

He says, "I chanced upon a local visually impaired community – a support network of low-vision teachers, researchers, patients, and doctors." Also through his specialty optometrist he met others through groups like the Foundation Fighting Blindness and Virginia Lion's Eye Institute Foundation. "By

meeting and engaging with this visually impaired community over the years, I began to realize that I wasn't alone and that I could make a difference in the world by focusing on my abilities."

Part of that focus on abilities meant applying for Thomas Jefferson. Although he had missed foundation learning areas, he did well on the entrance tests and essays. His only accommodation in application consideration was use of large type test booklets with 16 point font instead of 12 point. Zhang doesn't claim the description of "gifted," but he says, "If I want something, I really dive into it. I feel like when I really dive into something, I'm very good at it."

Other things that Zhang is good at include: mastering the Rubik's cube, made more difficult by being color recognition challenged; computer science and artificial intelligence (AI), starting an AI school club; and attaining "Master" in Google's Kaggle machine learning.

Zhang shares: "Over the past two years, I have been trying to give back to this community who have helped me so much, from helping mentor younger students to embarking on my own computer science research with Artificial Intelligence algorithms on retinal disease research. I hope to continue this path through CodeOn."

Those interested in participating see the registration form found at www.codeon2023.org. More information on the event also is available on that web site.

CodeOn 2023 Seeks Hackers

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

We may soon be adding more remarkable computer solutions to the list through efforts of high schooler Edward Zhang and his team of teens. A senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Zhang is organizing a student participation event, CodeOn 2023, where 7th-12th grade students can take on the challenge of designing novel solutions for those with vision impairment and a variety of social issues.

A hackathon, also known as a codefest, is an event that brings computer programmers and other interested people together to build new software and other approaches to bring solutions to a target issue.

Zhang says vision solutions may include, "a mobile application navigation aid for the blind or new algorithmic solutions to improve rare retinal disease diagnosis." For those with other interests, solutions will address computer literacy, gender and disability equity, and the environmental factors of



Abhinav Angirekula and Ethan Valentine diagram connections of computer solution impacts

food and water security. For the event, a group of student volunteers will support an anticipated 150 to 200 participant hackers. Hackers can expect the challenge of hackathon problem statements for the event held at Edlin School, in Reston, on March 12, beginning at 8 a.m. The event seeks to attract students with computer interest and skills from across the metropolitan area. A variety of technical skills workshops also are planned.

The hackathon's search for solutions to visual impairment is in partnership with the non-profit Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB). The organization's on-going efforts seek to speed low vision awareness, fund clinical trial research from donations, and collaborate to create innovative solutions to problems related to vision and disability.

More information is available at www.codeon2023.org.

Hackathon in search of solutions for vision impairment.

PHOTOS COURTESY EDWARD ZHANG

#CODEON2023

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REGISTER HERE

CODEON2023.ORG

Hackathon seeks participants

PET CONNECTION

For Dogs, Warm Day Walks... & Ice Rinks??

Chasing the warmth in February.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

Teasingly spring-like warm days have popped up amid seasonal and unusually cold ones this February. Many residents are ready to leave the area's coldest month, January, behind to enjoy February's warmer averages of 31 to 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Instead, dog walkers were surprised to find some February days dipping near zero with wind chills after slipping on leashes to head outdoors in past weeks. Those chills helped many, including our dogs, appreciate the unusually warm February days all the more. On those sunny days, we found area dogs out walking jauntily with smiling owners, all in good spirits, brought on by the enjoyment of easy weather and discarding winter coats. Some owners took time to tell stories of the mischief that can come of too much time inside escaping the cold and memories of past fun.

In one last grasp at winter sport, and picking up on the theme of warm love in February, NOVA Parks and the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) asked animal lovers to extend the warm spirit of Valentine's Day with their "Share the Love" event on Feb 19. By donating needed pet supplies, participants received a discounted entry ticket to ice skating at Cameron Run Regional Park. As temperatures on that day shouted Spring not Winter, it was a reminder that the

While less well appointed dogs walk, some are able to roll in their own special conveyance, complete with a ramped rear entrance. Although there's no sauna or mini-bar in their limo, yet, Titan and Roscoe, two senior Dachshunds, need chauffeuring these days regardless of weather to enjoy the same trails they once walked with ease. Caring owner Sarah Chey, of Springfield, makes sure they get their beloved outside time, and a chance to do their old men grumbling at passers-by. They know they have a good ride, and they will brook no possible carjackers getting too close.

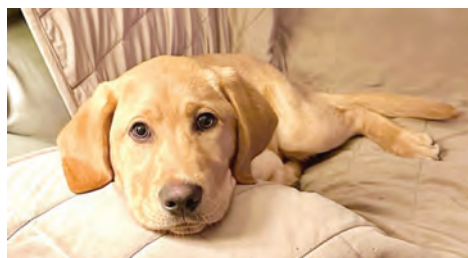


PHOTO COURTESY B. BELETSKY

He's an advocate of long walks on any day and needs only short rests between. Here practicing a look of innocence only young pups can achieve before his next round of mischief, is 5-months-old Bogey. He was recently accused of stealing two steaks being prepped for the grill in the kitchen at his Springfield home by owner Bill Beletsky. Bogey's advocates pointed out that there was no evidence to support that beef, his short legs, and that this country has a doctrine of innocence until proven guilty. What could have made his owners think HE did it?

skating park is marking its last days until its end of February closure. Soon it will transition into its Spring and Summer role of waterpark, mini golf, batting cage practice and picnic area with the chill of winter left behind. And while dogs were not invited to ice skate, they are welcome in the park to join their people in celebrating the warm days of spring and summer.

Cameron Run Regional Park is located at 4001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria; see <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/cameron-run-regional-park> for more information and reservations.



Homeless dog at AWLA returns the warmth of a caring volunteer during enjoyment of a break from the kennel for an outside walk in the sunshine.

PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS



Enjoying the sun and shared breed friendships, are (back row) Laura Chipkin, of Arlington, Terri Everett, of Alexandria, Danny Reighard, of Alexandria, James Dickey, of Arlington, Evelyn Novins, of Falls Church, and (front row), Mango, Bowen, Tia, and Haley. Though the dog friends have some medical challenges among them, they still insist on nice day outings and the comrade of walks together.

Out enjoying the Spring-like temperatures, the Coopers, once a family of three, expanded with the addition of Cooper, now 13 months old. First "son" Charlie, an 8-year-old-terrier mix, a big cuddler in a small body, has had to give up some lap time to Cooper, but still loves his new brother, say parents Amy and David Merkel, of Springfield.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE



Lexi, 15 months, is the color of white sand. Turns out she loves everything beach. She's a sand digger, specializing in destroying the precarious foundations of beach chair legs. Being something of a food gourmet, always ready for a treat, and continuing in her beach theme, she scored a counter surfed swordfish. She hangs ten, or would that be 20, with Steve and Tia Noff, of Lorton.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS

SEE MORE PET CONNECTION, PAGE 20

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Employment

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VA
CAREER WORKSHOP & HIRING FAIR**

The City of Alexandria, VA will host a **Career Development Workshop and Hiring Fair** to provide opportunities for job seekers, particularly those who were recently affected by the mass tech industry layoffs around the region and nationally. City Employees exploring other opportunities within the City are also encouraged to attend.

CAREER WORKSHOP
Monday, February 27 · 9 a.m.-12 p.m. · Nannie J Lee Center
1108 Jefferson St, Alexandria, VA
This program will provide job seekers with coaching on interviewing skills, resume reviewing and critiquing and strategies for creating your next opportunity after a layoff.

JOB HIRING FAIR
Tuesday, February 28 · 10 a.m.-2 p.m. · Nannie J Lee Center
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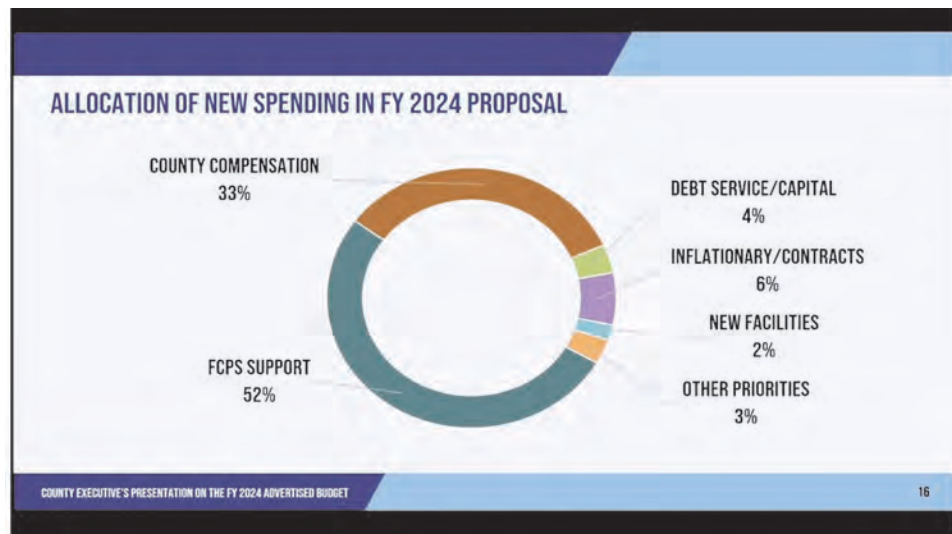
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The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, visit the web site www.goldengirls.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
STEM VOLUNTEERS. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips at www.senior-scientist.org. To volunteer, contact donaledge@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.
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.
Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil (Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov) at 703-324-4547.

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Allocation of new spending

SUPPORT FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS \$144.26M

- Provides funding of \$144.10 million towards the School Operating transfer request included in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget
- Superintendent's budget requested increase of \$159.6 million
- Proposed budget includes:
 - \$84 million in increased sales tax and state aid
 - Projected revenues did not account for \$12.7 million state error, which was not identified until after release of the Proposed budget
 - 3% Market Scale Adjustment for all employees and Step Increases for eligible employees
 - Salary scale extension of one step
 - 1% retention bonus
- The additional \$0.16 million for School debt service is discussed later in the presentation

Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S PRESENTATION ON THE FY 2024 ADVERTISED BUDGET 17

Support for Fairfax County Public Schools

Proposed Budget Has A Long Way To Go

FROM PAGE 4

similarly struggling with labor and cost increases," said Hill.

Reactions from the supervisors varied. "I think probably all of us have a sense of a mixed bag here. To say the least, this kind of feels a little bit like watching the stock market. One day things are looking good, and the next day it's all gone," Chairman Jeff McKay said. McKay added that he wanted people to understand that this budget proposal "fully funds" the FCPS transfer request. "We know, as recently as last week... there will likely be significant changes at the state level, sitting on historic, unprecedented ... surplus."

Vice Chair Penny Gross (D- Mason) said, "The MRA (Market Rate Adjustment) was a little bit of a disappointment at 2 percent, but we need to work through this. I think part of our challenges (is) with supposedly, the pandemic being behind us. The crushing effects of the pandemic are not behind us- supply chain issues and others. It's going to take us a long time to get out of the pandemic economy."

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) provided a written statement after that session.

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FAIRFAX COUNTY BUDGET TIMELINE

- February 21:** County Executive releases FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan
- February 23:** School Board adopts FY 2024 (proposed) Budget Plan
- February 28:** Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2024 budget and tax rate
- March 7:** Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2024 tax rate
- April 11-13:** Board of Supervisors holds public hearings on FY 2024 Budget
- April 28:** Board of Supervisors Budget Committee meeting for pre-markup
- May 2:** Board of Supervisors marks up FY 2024 Budget
- May 9:** Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2024 Budget
- May 25:** School Board adopts FY 2024 Approved Budget
- July 1:** FY 2024 Budget Year begins

"It is no surprise a tax increase on the average homeowner is still on the table with this Board's unrestrained spending, a declining commercial real estate tax base and the end of federal pandemic aid. Surrounding jurisdictions, not to mention prior Fairfax County Boards, have been doing what I have been proposing: looking at ways to cut spending and find efficiencies. This Board has refused and our residents, who are already suffering due to the pandemic and inflation, are paying for it."

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspaper mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news 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 hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

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Sides Can Sometimes Have Scary Effects



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

My mother-in-law, Peggy Morrison died from cancer in late Oct. 1986. Since Peggy was an extremely private person – and lived two hours away from us by car in Harrisburg, Pa., her daughter/ my wife Dina, and I were kept mostly out of her health loop. We knew a little when there was an awful lot more to know. Part of what I remember hearing/learning then was, as insidious as cancer is, sometimes it's the side effects of the treatment that contributes nearly as much to the patient's death.

At my initial Team Lourie meeting – where we all first met my oncologist in late Feb. 2009, I remember his reading the diagnostic reports from the multiple doctors who participated in my assessment: "Stage IV, lung cancer," "Stage IV lung cancer," "Stage IV lung cancer," and "Stage IV lung cancer" yet again from the pulmonologist, radiologist, thoracic surgeon and finally from the general surgeon who performed the biopsy (along with the pathologist's report), all in agreement. Dumb-founded, blind-sided (I'd been symptom free for nearly two months) and completely blown away by this finding/the consensus that I had non-small cell cancer, stage IV, I summoned up the poise to ask a scenario-type question grasping for the unreachable: definitive answers about my future. Remembering the circumstances surrounding my mother-in-law's death 23 years earlier, I asked if there was any truth to the theory that sometimes it's not the cancer but rather the side effects that hasten the patient's death? My oncologist gave me a qualified answer: "Yes. Sometimes."

With that backdrop – and with minimal cancer knowledge and/or experience from which to draw, I have been emotionally very sensitive (make that scared) when the side effects of my various chemotherapies and immunotherapies were discussed with my oncologist. And even though I've been on a roller coaster of emotions these last 14 years, it's been only recently when there's been significant side-effect anxiety and an inevitability almost.

It manifested in my most recent bloodwork. Two levels were outside the perimeters (provided in parentheses on the report) even for me: my liver and kidney functions. So much so that my oncologist directed me – and submitted the order, to get an MRI of these two vital organs. Two major organs which, if damaged/compromised, would be, as we say in New England "Katie bar the door," which means trouble. As you can probably imagine, this blip on my health radar brought back all the fear I'd been keeping "in the vault."

This is the scan I wrote about a few weeks ago when I had scheduled an MRI on a Fri. (first available) aware that the lateness in the week might mean I wouldn't get a result until Mon., given the ebb and flow on medical stuff. (It's not quite akin to the wheels of justice, but it's never quick enough). Invariably, I suffer accordingly. Amazingly, I was rewarded for my self-control. Later that same day – before the weekend, I received the radiologist's report in my email: "Stable MRI." No indication of anything.

Then this week, part two. My internal medicine doctor emailed me requesting that I get another blood test, specifically to measure my A1C (diabetes). He was concerned that my bilirubin level (liver) was trending higher going back three months and perhaps I had crossed over to the dark side (full on diabetes). I returned to the lab for the second visit this week per doctor's orders, and once again, I was rewarded for my compliance. The light was shining – and it showed these two levels had declined a minimum 20%-plus and my A1C number was still a bit high, as was feared, but not problematic, all things considered.

If you all heard a huge sigh of relief on Tues. afternoon, Feb. 7th, that was me. For the moment it appears as if I can continue my life-sustaining daily medication for the treatment of my stage IV, papillary thyroid cancer, going on two-plus years now. No side-effect complications. No change in my medication/protocol. No urgency. No or else. No nothing. Just plain old "Stable," which as I've said many times before, is an assessment with which I can live.

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



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