

THE CONNECTION

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Reston ♦ Vienna ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

From left are Warren Shang plus Nathan and Rebekah Brierly, opposing the data center.

Residents Oppose, Supervisors Approve Massive Data Center

PAGE 4

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 9 ♦ OPINION, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Can We Say No to Casino?
PAGE 3

Chocolate Madness
PAGE 8



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Offered for...\$1,174,900

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 BEAUTIFUL 4BR/4.5 BA brick colonial home located in the Berkshire neighborhood. The lite-filled kitchen and dining rooms are updated with ss appliances, gas cooking, and ample cabinet space. Main level features dining, living, family (or optional bedroom) rooms with a full-size bathroom and laundry. There is a lovely private cedarwood screened in porch just steps from the kitchen and dining rooms. Upper level features primary bedroom w/ ensuite and large walk-in closet. 2 add'l bedrooms, den and full-size BR. LL has recreations room with Murphy bed and built-ins and full-size updated bathroom. Close to Arlington schools and East FC Metro!

FOR SALE! FRANKLIN PARK!



2049 Rockingham Street
 McLean, 22101
 \$4,695,000
 NEW CONSTRUCTION!

FOR SALE!



Offered for...\$1,649,900

6144 Farver Road, McLean
 STUNNING 5BR/3.5 BA colonial home with 3 spacious finished levels (almost 5000 sq ft) in sought-after CHESTERBROOK WOODS location! Featuring gleaming hardwood floors, large windows and wooded views. Light-filled gourmet kitchen with huge picture window, gas island cooktop; 2-story family room off the kitchen with gas fireplace, skylights and walk-out to 2-tiered deck area. Huge primary suite with luxury full bath, walk-in closets, dressing area and elevator access. Main level laundry, lots of UPDATES, cul-de-sac location and located in Chesterbrook, Longfellow and McLean Schools!

Under Contract!



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 Falls Church, 22043
 \$774,900

Under Contract!



201 W. Cameron Road
 Falls Church City 22046
 FC City Schools!

SOLD!



1562 Forest Villa Ln
 McLean, 22101
 \$1,550,000

SOLD!



2336 N. Oak Street
 Falls Church, 22046
 \$2,000,000

SOLD!



1639 Macon Street
 McLean, 22101
 \$2,215,000

SOLD!



1313 Merrie Ridge Rd
 McLean, 22101
 \$1,637,500

Curious what your home is worth? Call to chat with JD and Ed today!

County Jackpot in Tysons Casino?

Or ‘a concept derived in a vacuum.’

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Slots, table games, poker, and more — casinos could generate ongoing revenue for state and local governments, provide short-and long-term employment, and drive economic growth. On the other hand, casino gambling can lead to addiction and social costs, including family problems and bankruptcy, crime, and the displacement of small businesses.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors discussed the possibility of a casino development in Tysons and the processes toward it during the public-packed Legislative Committee Meeting on Friday, January 26. The proposed Class III casino gaming opportunity for Fairfax County stems from Virginia Senate Bill 675, introduced by David Marsden (D-Fairfax). It was heading toward the state’s Economic Development subcommittees.

Chairman Jeff McKay emphasized that the justification for the casino from the start was that Fairfax County needs money. Yet, 70 percent of the revenue goes to the state, with the county keeping 30 percent. “So under this model, the state actually needs money,” McKay said.

“We get hosed. We are the state’s ATM. The financial model here at a minimum would have to improve dramatically at least before I would consider any referendum or any other thing as a result of this [bill].” McKay said.

“Our starting point is these properties that are on this map are supported by the Silver Line that largely the public paid for,” McKay said. “These are extraordinarily valuable pieces of property that are assets of Fairfax County. Fairfax County ... has not substantively been involved in the development of the casino concept envisioned by stakeholders and the patron of this legislation.”

Claudia Arko, the county’s legislative representative, gave a historical overview of the processes and best practices for municipalities to open a Virginia gambling facility and the economic impact on tax revenue and job creation as a stimulus. After the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) studied casino gambling in 2019, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation to authorize casinos in five localities if the projects secured local voter approval through required referenda for each location. She described them as locations as “looking for economic development” and wanting “to revitalize their economies.”

The locations were Bristol, Danville, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Richmond.

But one reason the commonwealth might press forward with a Tysons location for a casino was cited in the JLARC report, although not discussed by supervisors. Authorizing a casino in the Northern Virginia market would dramatically increase state revenue and economic benefits, according to the JLARC report on Gaming in the Commonwealth.

“A casino in Northern Virginia would in-



Jeffrey C. McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.



Virginia Senator David Marsden introduced SB 657.



Claudia Arko, Fairfax County’s legislative representative



Map of possible casino sites held up during meeting

crease statewide gaming tax revenue by an estimated additional \$155 million (59 percent) and employ an additional 3,200 workers,” according to JLARC. “A Northern Virginia casino is projected to attract substantial revenue from out-of-state customers and retain in-state about \$100 million that Virginia residents are currently spending at casinos in other states.”

In Marsden’s presentation, which Arko said she reviewed, Adam P. Ebbin, (D-39), who chairs the full committee, asked what if Fairfax County wanted a casino in a different location? Arko relayed that Marsden clarified, “That wouldn’t be available to them because the location is part of this [SB 675] legislation.”

As for revenue, Arko said the host locality receives 6 percent of the first \$200 million in gross receipts, 7 percent of \$200 million to \$400 million, and 8 percent of \$400 million. Arko “That’s the formula for everyone,” Arko said.

Arko said SB 675 will advance to the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate if it passes the Subcommittee on Economic Development. No companion House bill exists. If the locality gains authority, it can work with a developer to choose a casino operator. The operator needs Virginia Lottery Board approval; otherwise, the state is little

involved. Finally, the board could propose a referendum on casino gaming. Then, Fairfax County residents would decide by referendum if a casino would come to Tysons.

According to McKay, a stated rationale for the legislation was that Fairfax County needed “to revitalize Tysons.” He rebuked the statement, saying that while the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shift to remote hybrid work had impacted Fairfax County’s commercial office market, “Tysons, and especially the Class A office space in close proximity to Tysons for Silver Line Metro stations, continues to thrive, is poised for continued success, and will be the economic engine of the Commonwealth for decades to come.”

“Our focus needs to be on at this point in time, reminding folks that we didn’t ask for this. This concept was derived in a vacuum. I saw the bill only after the General Assembly had begun their session, and that we need to protect ourselves in the event that this bill could be approved by making sure that we put out there what our concerns are with this,” McKay said.

McKay added the easiest thing to do would be to oppose the bill instead of monitoring it. “We can change our position on this at any time,” McKay said.

Supervisor Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon, voiced that the bill’s process is flawed,

and the county should be engaged, be part of the conversation, and see where it goes. “Sometimes you start back at the beginning and say, Okay, what’s the concept here? What’s the objective here? I’m not clear exactly what the bill’s authors are trying to do. I understand the general objective, which is maybe to provide more tax revenue to the state and to Fairfax County, but the formula itself is deeply flawed and not one that I think any of us would really accept as an appropriate way to do it,” Storck said.

Supervisor Jimmy Bierman, Dranesville, said he listened to some of Marsden’s comments and had a personal conversation with him. “This bill is actually not, not about bringing more money to Fairfax County. Senator Marsden was very clear that he’s concerned that the LCI number [labor cost index] has been going down in Fairfax County.”

Supervisor Walter Alcorn Hunter Mill questioned the next steps leading to a referendum: “Frankly, I’m not sure any of us who are district supervisors would want this in our districts. So, I mean, if that’s the case, I’m not sure why we don’t just oppose it. I oppose the bill.”

Supervisor Dalia Palchik, Providence, opined that since Friday’s board meeting was the first committee meeting on the matter, “there’s still a lot of time in the process. ... And my understanding is [it] is only a Senate bill at this moment. There is no House bill... I think continuing to monitor this is the right call right now.”

McKay said Storck’s and Bierman’s messages must be shared. “As others have said, it’s a continuation of a mindset in Richmond that when the state needs money, they can just come to Fairfax and get it, and we’re at the breaking point.”

McKay noted that communities that have sought new casinos, such as Bristol and Danville, “are literally bankrupt ... [with] no taxable value.”

Fairfax County’s starting point is that the Silver Line supported properties, and the public primarily paid for them. “They are extraordinarily valuable pieces of property, assets of Fairfax County with public infrastructure,” said McKay, referencing a colored map.

“So the audacity to think that the one-size-fits-all model for those other parts of Virginia is a fair starting point of conversation when it comes to Fairfax County is not fair ... I have repeatedly said to the media, to the public, and to everyone [that] the starting point of that revenue breakout is not only unfair, it’s insulting to Fairfax County.”

McKay noted that SB 675 requires Fairfax County to consider a casino gaming establishment within a quarter-mile of a Metro Silver Line station, one-quarter of a mile of a coordinated mixed-use project development, two miles of a regional enclosed mall with a minimum gross building area of 15 million square feet, and outside the 495 Beltway. Tysons is the only place that fits.

The newly introduced bill, with its specific parameters for a location, could lead to a county referendum on casino gambling in Tysons. He added that the county needs to ensure it is part of the state’s conversation and doing everything possible to protect its constituents.

Supervisors Approve Massive Chantilly Data Center

They say strong proffers, high standards will improve it.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

It was a “he said, she said” kind of thing. Opponents of a huge data center proposed for construction near Chantilly’s Pleasant Valley community gave Fairfax County Supervisors a slew of fact-based reasons why they shouldn’t approve it.

They did so last Tuesday, Jan. 23, at the public hearing for Penzance’s rezoning and special-exception requests to build this facility. And its representative, land-use attorney Evan Pritchard, had an answer for almost everything.

Pleasant Valley residents said they’d be able to see the 110-foot-tall, 402,000-square-foot data center from their homes, just 4/10 of a mile away. They also said they’d hear its constant hum, and that this facility would pollute the soil, air and water.

Pritchard said those things wouldn’t happen and, in the end, the Supervisors sided with him and approved the application. That means Penzance may now go forward with

its plans to build the data center off Route 50, Stonecroft Boulevard and Auto Park Circle, adjacent to the Cub Run Stream Valley.

The land is partly zoned commercial and partly industrial, so Penzance asked the county to rezone all of it to industrial. It also sought a special exception so the building could be higher and have more density than is currently allowed there.

It’ll arise on 12.1 acres of a 79-acre parcel, with the remaining 67 acres dedicated to the county Park Authority for preservation as a Resource Protection Area (RPA). Components of the data center include 27 diesel generators on the Pleasant Valley side of the building, plus a rooftop HVAC system that residents say will emit an ongoing hum.

In addition, 135,000 gallons of diesel fuel plus 13,500 gallons of diesel-exhaust fluid will be stored onsite. Penzance hasn’t revealed who the data center user will be, exactly where the electric substation needed to power it will go, and how much water and electricity it will consume. But the supervisors still gave it their blessing.

“In the context of the entire county, we have far less data centers than Loudoun and Prince



Artist’s rendition of the 110-foot-tall, 402,000-square-foot data center to be built in Chantilly.

William counties do,” said Board Chairman Jeff McKay. “And we’re holding data-center developers here to far-higher standards than were done in those counties because theirs were approved a long time ago.”

In his presentation last week, Pritchard said the applicant commits to noise levels being no more than 60 dBA (decibels) during emergency and testing times. During normal operation, he said it would be low around 42-50 dBA. And Penzance has agreed to have tier-4 generators, meaning they meet EPA’s highest particulate-emissions standards.

Pritchard said baffles and an enclosure will help muffle the sound of the generators, and “we’ll do acoustical analyses before and

after construction.” He also said the low-frequency sound emissions would be “no different than other industrial/commercial uses.”

“We’ll have an inter-parcel-access easement over the Auto Circle properties to the east, so Route 50 won’t have to be the only entrance,” he continued. “And we’ll construct a right-turn lane off eastbound Route 50 and complete the asphalt trail there, too.”

Pritchard said the building won’t be able to be seen until someone is three-quarters of a mile away from it. “The majority of it will be 75 feet, with some at 90 feet,” he said. “It’ll be 110 feet at the very top, including all the equipment and the HVAC system.”

SEE DATA CENTER APPROVED, PAGE 5

Data Center Tax Revenue Versus Quality of Life

Residents decry pollution, constant hum, human and environmental costs.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Since all their previous pleas asking Fairfax County to reject a proposed mega data center in Chantilly fell on deaf ears, the opponents tried a different tack. Shortly before the supervisors’ Jan. 23 public hearing and vote on this matter, a coalition of community representatives held a press conference in front of the county Government Center.

Realizing that – with an estimated \$6 million in tax revenue on the line – the supervisors were likely to approve the facility, opponents tried to make the best of what they believe is a terrible idea. This time, they simply asked the supervisors to make some “commonsense modifications” to make the project more palatable and less intrusive to the neighbors and environment.

Their recommendations included reducing the data center’s height and size, relocating its diesel generators away from the Cub Run Stream – thereby safeguarding the county’s drinking water in case of a spill, and conducting a more accurate noise study. Coalition members represented the West Fairfax County Citizens Association (WFCCA), Sully District Council of Citizens Associations (SDC), Save Pleasant Valley, and Vir-

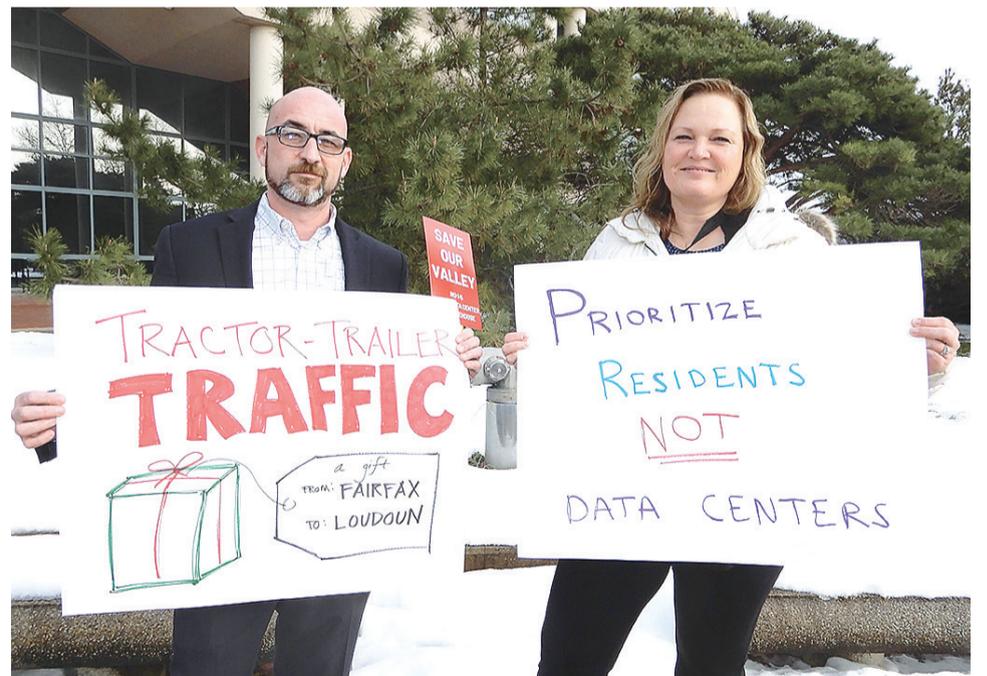
ginia Run residents. Also supporting them were the Piedmont Environmental Council and Sierra Club.

“Eighty million square feet of the area’s office space is vacant now,” said WFCCA President Stephen Chulick. “The county is using data centers as a magic bullet [to replace this lost revenue]. But this one would be one-fifth the size of Tysons Corner Mall and would adversely affect our quality of life.”

Cynthia Shang, president of Save Pleasant Valley – the neighborhood within a half mile of the data center – noted that Sully District already has 4.3 million square feet of data centers currently under construction. But at 110 feet, this one would be the tallest and require even more power and cooling, resulting in 24/7 noise. It’ll also need electricity from a new substation, plus transmission lines in unrevealed locations.

Land-use attorney Craig Blakely, with the Alliance Law Group, said, “We believe the coalition has the right idea. And in the event the Board doesn’t seriously consider their comments, we stand ready to assist the coalition in considering its legal options.”

Keith Elliott said the supervisors must recognize Pleasant Valley residents don’t want this data center. One of them, Scott Gorvett, said the noise “would be constant and would



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Pleasant Valley residents Matt and Kate Maisel

overcome people.” He also said homebuyers aren’t calling Realtors and saying, “I want to live near a data center.”

Reston’s Tammi Petrine said the 110-foot facility would be equal to an 11-story building. And she asked Board members to pause, instead of “rushing this through today.”

“My main concern is the constant, low-pitched hum that doesn’t go away,” said Pleasant Valley’s Trevor Brierly. “I know data

centers are necessary, but do we need them here, in the middle of our neighborhood, ruining our lives?”

Summing up, Shang urged the supervisors to “not turn our beautiful Virginia into an industrial wasteland.” As things stand now, she added, “Virginia is no longer for lovers, it’s for data centers.”

SEE DATA CENTER OPPONENTS, PAGE 5
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Data Center Approved

FROM PAGE 4

He stressed that land in the diesel-fuel storage area will be graded so that, if there's a spill, it'll flow away from the RPA and stormwater facilities and be contained in an oil/water separator and other equipment. "We'll analyze the water productions and will do any necessary pre-treatment of it before it enters the wastewater," said Pritchard. "We're using nonchemical water treatment and will monitor the sodium chloride and fluoride levels. We worked hand-in-glove with the county on this."

Regarding electricity, he said Dominion is up to the task of providing power to the building. He said the facility will be energy-efficient and will seek LEED silver certification. Furthermore, said Pritchard, "County staff said it concurs with the Planning Commission's recommendation of approval."

Dranesville District Supervisor James Bierman Jr. asked what would happen if the operation failed its post-construction acoustical analysis. Penzance's civil engineer, Jamie Cox, replied, "We'd have to make new design changes until county staff is satisfied that we've muffled the noise."

McKay added that, "Once built, you'd be guided by Fairfax County's noise ordinance, with no requirement for further reporting back." However, Cox said that, if there's a complaint, the county's Department of Code Compliance would contact Penzance to rectify it.

Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez thanked the residents for their time and comments and said he'd like the data center to strive for gold LEED certification. Providence District Supervisor Dalia Pal-

chik asked how the proffers for this site compare to others its size regarding soil and water remediation, plus site monitoring. The Department of Planning and Zoning's Billy O'Donnell replied that this applicant's proffers are higher and more stringent than the county has received for other sites this size.

Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) then made the motion to approve the project and Palchik seconded. She, too, thanked the citizens for their input and said the 67-acre RPA "creates an extraordinary buffer" between the data center and the nearest residential community. She reiterated everything the developer agreed to regarding sound, water treatment and type of generators and concluded that she was satisfied with the application.

"It's in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan, and the purpose and intent of the I-5 district, and won't adversely affect residential properties," said Smith. "The public input prompted real improvements and change to this application."

However, Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) disagreed with her. "I support data centers as long as they're properly sized and located, and this height is precedent setting," he explained. "Regarding the traffic impact, trips in cars and trips in semi-trucks are different."

"Even the Planning Commission didn't approve this unanimously," continued Herrity. "The height is three times the size of the surrounding buildings, and it bothers me what we're going to do here. I'm not going to be supporting this."

SEE DATA CENTER APPROVED, PAGE 7

Data Center Opponents

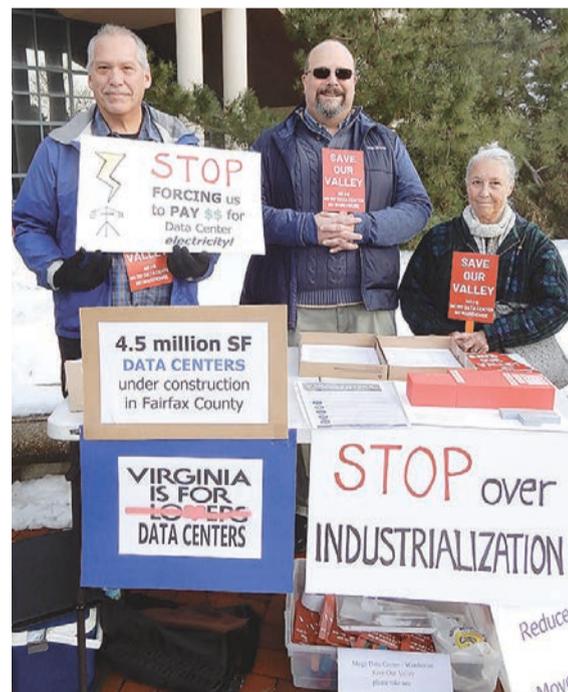
FROM PAGE 4

In addition, SDC's Jay Johnston earlier commented that Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties together contain the largest concentration of data centers in the world – and that's concerning. "We don't yet understand the cumulative impacts of energy consumption, water usage, wastewater contamination, diesel-fuel storage and exhaust filtration, and noise impacts on the environment, wildlife and humans," he explained. So, said Johnston, more review is needed "before we create further harm to ourselves and the environment."

They and others also spoke at the public hearing. SDC President Jeff Parnes called protection of the Occoquan Watershed and residential communities "of paramount importance. Because of its height, this building will stick out like a sore thumb and is an aberration of the highest magnitude." He said the generators shouldn't be on the side closest to the residents and that a smaller size facility would be better.

Elliott said the building's size is out of character with its surroundings and will hurt nearby homeowners' home values. And acoustics expert Braxton Boren, of American University, said the low-frequency sound emitted from this data center wouldn't be absorbed by the air and would travel long distances. He said it would be stressful and annoying, reduce people's cognitive ability, disrupt their sleep and harm wildlife ecology. He also said decibel level (dBA) isn't an accurate measure of this type of sound.

Another acoustics expert, David Steele, said that the data center "will generate an unprecedented amount of low-frequency noise [that] would actually have a 70 dBA impact on the residents." And Nathan Brierly said it would affect both their physical and mental



From left are Warren Shang plus Nathan and Rebekah Brierly

health and "degrade their quality of life." "We live close to Cub Run Stream," said Pleasant Valley's Wendy Meeusen. "A data center's noise directly interferes with wildlife communication and alters animals' behavior. It also harms plant life and could result in less pollen and trees. Vote to go lower or quieter or deny."

SEE DATA CENTER OPPONENTS, PAGE 7

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Reston Association Board of Directors has authorized a referendum regarding the repeal of Reston Deed Section VI.2(b)(15) concerning RELAC and the prohibition on individual HVAC units.

Relevant members of the Association are invited to submit testimony at either of two virtual public hearings.

DATES

Monday, February 5, 6:30 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/491pLqJ>

Monday, February 12, 6:30 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/47GL1B1>



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Local artist Cynthia Schoepfel was voted first place winner in the Springfield Art Guild's contest for her acrylic work "Autumn Mandela"



Residents take advantage of the opportunity to speak to Supervisor Lusk and to socialize.



Franconia Supervisor Rodney Lusk provides an update on District development projects during his annual Open House

Franconia District Holds Annual Open House

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The Franconia Supervisory District held its annual Open House on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Supervisor Rodney Lusk described the event as a great opportunity to see fellow Franconia District residents, and

Other guests included the Springfield Art Guild, and Franconia Museum, which is collocated with the Franconia Government Center. Residents were invited to bring donations for local food pantries and participate in an art competition.

Other guests included the Springfield Art Guild, and Franconia Museum, which is collocated with the Franconia Government Center. Residents were invited to bring donations for local food pantries and participate in an art competition.

About 60 people turned out to hear Lusk describe the status of district development

projects, including Top Golf re-use, the Springfield Mall parking area traffic patterns, Rose Hill retail development, and the current district government building site when the facility will be replaced in early 2025 with new construction on a Beulah Road site. Several projects have been deferred for further input based objections raised by the nearby communities.

Open house participants voted for their favorite art piece in the art guild's event lead by Chairs Claire Bentley and Sandy Olszowy, with assistance from Pat Hafkemeyer. Voters selected Cynthia Schoepfel's "Autumn Mandela" from 40 entries; a second win for Schoepfel who won Best in Show for a Bright Path charity show event in 2022.

Biden, Harris Visit Northern Virginia

Second stop of Vice President Kamala Harris's Reproductive Freedom Tour.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris visited Manassas on Jan. 23, with their spouses, First Lady Jill Biden and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff. They were there to mark the 51st anniversary of the landmark abortion rights case, Roe v. Wade. The event is part of Harris's announced Reproductive Freedom Tour, a series of events across the country to "bring together people to address the freedom of every American to make decisions about their own body."

Described as a campaign event for the Biden-Harris ticket, the timing of the Manassas gathering on Tuesday provided a counterpoint to the first GOP primary in New Hampshire on the same day, where former President Donald Trump led in polling among Republican voters at the time. Trump received a higher percentage of the vote than challenger Nikki Haley.

Reproductive rights and related women's health issues are expected to be major issues in the Biden/Harris re-election campaign.

Harris' first tour event was on Jan. 22 in Wisconsin, with at least three additional locations planned in the next two months. The President joined Harris in Manassas to highlight steps the administration is taking to expand access to abortion medication and contraception, to counter state abortion bans that have sprung up in many states. Biden spoke about expanded coverage for no-cost contraception through the Affordable Care Act. He indicated the Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services are issuing new guidance to clarify standards and support expanded coverage of a broader range of FDA-approved contraceptives, at no cost, under the Affordable Care Act among other actions.

This session, Democrats in the Virginia legislature in both houses have introduced constitutional amendments to guarantee the fundamental right to reproductive freedom in the Commonwealth. Hearings on those amendments are being deferred until 2025 to match the State's administrative rules for addressing constitutional amendments which when passed, are on the general election ballot, then must be followed by pass-



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke in Manassas on the VP's second stop of her Reproductive Freedom Tour on Jan 23.

ing a second time in the General Assembly. Voters in Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Kansas, and California already have rejected abortion bans in new legislation.

On June 24, 2022, The Supreme Court,

Justices appointed by Trump, held that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion, taking away the right to reproductive choice outlined in Roe versus Wade that had stood for 50 years.

Data Center Approved

FROM PAGE 5

Mount Vernon District Supervisor Daniel Storck said data centers should be in industrial areas and this one has “met and exceeds some of the board’s standards for data centers – especially in protecting the Occoquan [Reservoir]. There’s a need for data centers, and this one will have minimal impact. And having the RPA as a park adds to the value of this application.”

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Brad-dock) said, “This is an issue the county has to get right, and we have an opportunity to establish standards that are the highest in the county, if not in the nation. I was [initially] concerned with the water-discharge issue and who decides the amount of salinity that can be in the water. And the answer is UOSA – the Upper Occoquan Service Authority – so I’m satisfied with that.”

“Building data centers here with high standards will be better for the climate than building them elsewhere with less-stringent standards. I’m satisfied with LEED silver, and we’ve got to hold Dominion accountable to meet our clean-energy goals.”

“We do listen to the public,” added Bierman. “One individual said data centers must be planned and operated responsibly, and another said we should include recommendations from staff’s Jan. 9 data-center report – and we did that. Another said it’s all smoke and mirrors, but things in the application now weren’t there in October.”

“But that’s our job and that’s the process – and we did improve this application,” he continued. “We got a lot out of this applicant to make this a responsible plan, so I’ll support it.”

McKay then thanked the residents and staff for all their work and said he was pleased that the county created higher standards for data centers. He said they’ll serve as the blueprint for any other data-center applications the county receives. In Penzance’s case, he said, “It’s not the first choice of what I’d like to see built there. But this will be less intrusive than some other things, plus we get the land dedication. And the proffers are extensive and legally binding.”

The supervisors then voted and approved the application, 8-1, with Herrity voting no. Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn was absent from the proceedings.

Data Center Opponents

FROM PAGE 5

“This is in a watershed-protection area,” said Kate Maisel. “The developer doesn’t want to spend the money to redesign this building and move the generators – and that jeopardizes our drinking water. Supervisors, knowing you could protect it, why wouldn’t you want to?”

Warren Shang said, “Shoehorning this mega data center here is environmentally irresponsible.” He then noted that, on both Supervisor Kathy Smith’s (D-Sully) and Board Chair Jeff McKay’s Websites, both stressed the importance of protecting the environment. “Were all those words just empty promises?” asked Shang.

“This application will hurt the environment and affect the county’s ability to meet its climate goal to be emissions-free by 2030. Sully water- and air-quality issues will affect all of Fairfax County. Vote with integrity, do the right thing for your constituents and the environment, and do not approve this application.”

Noting that this massive building would be larger than two football fields in its length and width, Cynthia Shang said reducing its size would decrease its needed numbers of “noisy HVACs and air-polluting generators.”

“This building would become an undesirable landmark,” said Realtor Kathy O’Neal. “People won’t want to buy homes here. This would be the county’s highest data center and be a detriment to people and the environment. Is this really part of the legacy this board wants to leave?”

Her husband, Fran O’Neal, said this building would “drop a quality-of-life bomb on area residents. Let’s not leave a boatload of negative impacts on the backs of our neighbors, just [for] profit. Are the benefits so compelling that you’re ready to override the risks you’ve heard about?”

“Does anybody really care?” asked Matt Maisel. “This is smoke and mirrors by the applicant, and trees won’t provide a visual barrier from the building in the winter.” And Julie Bolthouse showed a video about the dangers of data centers, which stated there’s “very little regulatory oversight of this industry.”

Clyde Miller said the Mason District Council Board “doesn’t trust this applicant to respect the residents or protect the environment. Critical unknowns and ambiguities remain, and the money is not worth the risks.”

“This data center and its electric substation will bring more pollutants,” said Pleasant Valley’s Aaron Gagnon. “Allow us peace and quiet in our neighborhood so we can raise our children and live our lives.”

The Sierra Club’s Ann Bennett said a large data center consumes as much power as 50,000 homes and its fuel emissions will impact everyone. “Rapid data-center growth in Virginia is driving Dominion’s reliance on fossil-fuel generation and is projected to double the state’s greenhouse-gas emissions,” she said.

“Instead of using diesel generators, this applicant should be required to secure renewable-energy sources of electricity. It would also protect ratepayers from bearing the burden of costly infrastructure investment needed for this [data center].”

Christopher Bell said the data center’s processors will also produce more heat as time goes on. And, he warned, “It’s going to be an eyesore, regardless of what you say.”



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FESTIVAL



Nellie Bartkowski, 11, and Nora Bartkowski, 13, of McLean, can't say no to the fruit and carb kabobs for lunch. The melted chocolate takes them to another level, making the treat irresistible.



Young Henry Zarick listens to Joanne Cosial as she hands him a curious wooden implement with a slender handle and knob at the end. It is a Mexican molinillo used to whisk frothy chocolate drinks by rubbing the handle between one's palms.



Arden Zhu, 2, and Zhen Li, of Tysons: Having enjoyed the chocolates, it is time for a little face-cleaning.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Rotary's 12th Annual McLean Chocolate Festival

Sponsor Mars Inc. makes a difference.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Sunday, Jan. 28, the McLean Rotary Chocolate Festival returned to the McLean Community Center for its 12th annual event. Everyone, from club members to multi-aged volunteers to sponsors, pitched in to help with the event's production. They collected the \$3 admissions, packed tote bags with information and samples of chocolate treats, and helped out in the kids' game room.

John McEvilly, a Rotarian and spokesperson for the club, said he expected the club to make between \$25,000 and \$27,000 after expenses. "With that, in addition to the interest from dividends the club receives from its foundations and endowments, it will be able to provide grants to the different organiza-

tions in the range of \$40,000 to \$45,000."

McEvilly identified MARS as the event's major sponsor. "We would have had a very hard time being successful without their help," he said.

Asked which of the club's fund recipients was his favorite, McEvilly, without pause, said Homestretch, Inc., which is based in Falls Church. According to McEvilly, the nonprofit helps children and single mothers who are going through extremely difficult times get back on their feet by teaching them the skills and knowledge they need. Many of Homestretch's clients arrive at the nonprofit's doorsteps in despair. Many are fleeing for their lives from domestic abuse; many are trapped in the cycle of poverty. Homestretch helps many of them go on to have successful careers.

Among its long list of 2023 projects funded through the proceeds of the McLean Rotary Chocolate Festival, the club awarded graduating high school seniors \$10,000 in college scholarships. It donated funds to a nearby children's center so the young clients could eat a healthy breakfast and lunch



Twins Amina and Arman, 8, of McLean, carefully choose their selections with the help of Rebecca from Le Papiyon and place them in their golden boxes to enjoy later.

every day, and it provided funds to a local homeless shelter so families could get gas and Uber cards to get them to work, school,

and doctor appointments.

The McLean Rotary Club meets Tuesdays at noon at 1545 Chain Bridge Road, McLean.



Clockwise, volunteers Connie Sawtell, Herndon; Yusuf Ali, Falls Church; Thilini Wani-gasinghe, Falls Church; Jon Berkson, McLean; Todd Dempsey, Centreville; and Lesley Arietta, Falls Church, stuff the totes bags with chocolates and information.



The Capital Candy Jar is a hit at the McLean Rotary's 12th annual Chocolate Festival.

ENTERTAINMENT

FORB'S ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Online ordering for FORB's annual Native Plant Sale opens on Thursday, February 1, 2024 and closes on Sunday, March 24, 2024. Go to the website at www.forbpark.org, and click "2024 Native Plant Sale" on the home page. There are over 500 plants from 56 species from which to choose including Virginia Bluebells, Cardinal Flowers, several varieties of Phlox and many, many more. All orders will be picked up on Saturday, April 13, 2024 at the Riverbend Park Educational Pavilion on Potomac Hills Street.

THE MCLEAN TREES FOUNDATION, NEIGHBORHOOD TREES PROGRAM, WANTS TO HELP YOU PLANT A NATIVE TREE IN YOUR YARD!

Don't know how to plant a tree but want to support the environmental health of your community? Want your family to have the experience of planting a tree? If you live in McLean, the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF) (a local nonprofit) will help you select an appropriate native tree for your property, deliver the tree to your yard, help you plant it, provide information on maintenance, and even check back with you a few months after planting to see how your tree is doing. If you are interested in participating in this program to boost our native tree canopy in McLean, visit the website at <https://www.mcleantreesfoundation.org/neighborhood-tree-program> and submit your application! A fee of \$100 is assessed to cover the costs of the program (limit one 6-7 foot tree in 15 gallon container per household). There is a separate program for those who are interested in spearheading a community tree planting campaign in their neighborhood. MTF's Tree Champion program makes it easy to help your neighbors plant more trees!

NOW THRU FEB. 11

"The Who's Tommy." At Workhouse Arts Center, Building W-3 Theater, Lorton. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. If you already know The Who's remarkable rock opera, then you'll be singing along. If you don't, then you're in for a real treat! This spirited stage production offers some startling, fascinating variations from the movie, so if you think you know Tommy...come see what's new!

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

BONITA LESTINA FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES

Enjoy an evening of music showcasing a variety of genres in the elegant interior of historic Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive) in the heart of Fairfax City. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. and run from October to April. Admission is free. Visit: www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts.

SCHEDULE

February 2: Kadencia – Puerto Rican Orchestra (part of the Chocolate Lovers Festival!)
February 16: Matt Trkula – Classical Guitar
March 8: Mandoleers – Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra
March 22: James & Victor – Jazz Duo/Steel Pan
April 5: Francesca Hurst – Solo Piano
April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo – Harp/Brass

NOW THRU FEB. 4

Eleanor Mahin Thorp: **Metopic Ridge**. At Tephra ICA at Signature. Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) presents Metopic Ridge, a solo exhibition by artist Eleanor Mahin Thorp. Thorp's paintings take us on an immersive site visit to examine the Blue Ridge Mountains exploring stability and change, the seen and the hidden within rocks. Through her discerning gaze rocks are more than geological entities; Instead, they metamorphose into vessels of history and human connection. Drawing inspiration from the fascinating transformations depicted in Persian miniatures, Thorp traces the hidden figures and forms in the rocks. Her paintings reveal the duality of rocks' existence as both a firm witness to time and a medium for that which is intangible.

NOW THRU FEB. 17

McLean Project for the Arts' Winter Exhibitions. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Project for the Arts will open its winter exhibitions—Moving Beyond Beauty: Reverence and Reclamation (Emerson Gallery) and To March is to Love: Weavings by Janel Leppin (Atrium Gallery)—on December 7, 2023. Both shows will run through February 17, 2024, with an Opening Exhibition Reception on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 7-9 p.m. Bringing together five artists—Adjoa Jackson Burrows, Jacqui Crocetta, Maggie Gourlay, June Linowitz, and Elzbieta Sikorska—Moving Beyond Beauty features work that is at once aesthetically pleasing and philosophically compelling.

JAN. 20 TO FEB. 4

"Shakespeare in Hollywood." Presented by the Vienna Theatre Company and Vienna Department of Recreation. Performances Jan. 20-Feb. 3 at 8 p.m.; Sundays Jan. 28 and Feb. 4 at 2 p.m. Venue Address: 120 Cherry Street, Vienna. Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

FEB. 1-18

"Shutter Sisters." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. This sweet and funny tale explores the parallel lives of two women. A white woman named Michael struggles with strained family rela-



The Year of the Dragon with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performs on Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

tionships at her adopted mother's funeral, while a Black woman named Mykal navigates a challenge of her own: becoming an empty nester. A surrealist journey through womanhood, identity, and what it means to belong. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1st-stage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

THURSDAY/FEB. 1

"After Life" Foreign Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. (Japan; Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda). Shown in Japanese with English

subtitles. In this acclaimed film, a group of people who have recently died find themselves in limbo. Counselors are on hand to help new arrivals pick one memory from their lives to bring with them into eternity. Once the memories are chosen, the staff makes a short film representing each one, and the films make up a collage of thoughtful cinematic moments.

THURSDAY/FEB. 1

Author Col. Gregory Gadson. 6:30-8 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Join in an evening of inspiration with Workhouse Board member and decorated veteran, Col. Gregory Gadson (Ret.) as he speaks about his recently released

book, which details his courageous comeback following the loss of both of his legs in an IED attack in Iraq. Colonel Gadson and co-author Terese Schlachter will be present for the talk and book signing.

FEB. 2-4

City of Fairfax Chocolate Lovers' Festival. Get ready for the most delicious event of the year. The Chocolate Lovers Festival is coming back to Fairfax Feb. 2-4, 2024. All your favorite chocolate events and vendors return this year, so stay tuned for more information. <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/chocolate-lovers-festival/schedule-of-events>

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra's The Four Seasons. 8 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, Fairfax. Prepare to be transported to breathtaking musical landscapes as violinist Chee-Yun showcases the virtuosity and passion of two iconic compositions: Vivaldi's Four Seasons and Piazzolla's Four Seasons of Buenos Aires.

FEB. 3-4

Virginia Opera's Sanctuary Road. Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. This compelling and historically resonant opera, composed by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Paul Moravec, with a libretto by

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11

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CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

Announcements

City of Fairfax
Urgent Election Notice

The registration deadline to vote in the March 5, 2024 Dual Party Presidential Primary is Monday, February 12, 2024. Applications must be postmarked by this date or received in-person by 5 p.m. You may also apply online by 11:59 p.m. at <https://elections.virginia.gov>. Office hours: M-F 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. 10455 Armstrong Street, Suite 300 Fairfax, VA 703-385-7890.

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Pedestrian Dies after Hit and Run in December

A woman died Jan. 29 of injuries sustained from a hit-and-run crash on Dec. 27 in the West Springfield Police District.

Around 7:53 p.m., Dec. 27, 2023, officers responded to the intersection of Huntsman Boulevard and Bridlewood Boulevard in Burke for a pedestrian who was struck by a vehicle whose driver fled the scene before police arrival.

Preliminarily, detectives from our Crash Reconstruction Unit determined Fu-Tzu Wong, 63, was crossing Huntsman Boulevard from west to east within the crosswalk when she was hit by an unidentified vehicle. Wong was transported to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. There is no indication of alcohol involvement on Wong's part.

Yesterday, on Jan 29., detectives were notified that Wong died from injuries sustained in the crash. The investigation into the crash continues as detectives continue to locate both the vehicle and the driver involved.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - (703)-246-4676

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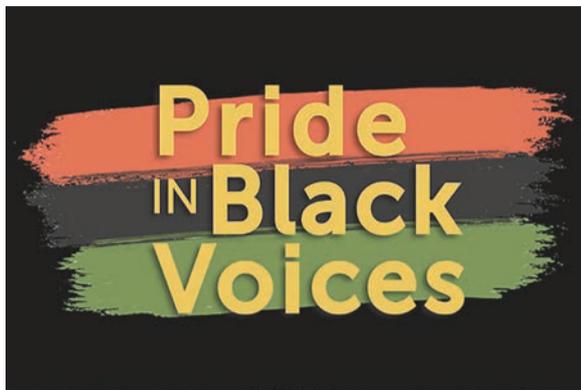
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FROM PAGE 9

Pulitzer Prize-winner Mark Campbell, brings to life the harrowing and inspiring tales of those who escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad. Visit Virginia Opera's website at <https://vaopera.org/sanctuary-road>.



"Artist in Conversation: Cotton" – The Virginia Opera performs on Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024 at Mason Arts in Fairfax.

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Annual Seed Exchange.

12:30-4 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. It costs \$15 to participate if you are a member of the Friends of Green Spring (FROGS) or if you are a Washington Gardener subscriber. It's \$20 for the rest. Bring your surplus seeds for a lively exchange, and depart with a bountiful bag of seeds, newfound gardening companions and expert planting advice. Discover the joy of cultivating connections within the gardening community at this must-attend event.

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Lunar New Year.

1-3 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Celebrate the Year of the Dragon in the heart of Northern Virginia at Tysons Corner Center! Enjoy a free family-friendly afternoon filled with Lunar New Year festivities. This year's lineup include live performances, featuring:

- Lion Dance (Choy Wun Dance Troupe)
- Chinese Dance (Sun Maiden)
- Dragon Dance
- Indonesia Dance (Santi Budaya Performing Arts)
- Magic Show
- Chinese Dance, Beauty in the Rainy Alley
- Fashion Show
- Korean Drum (Korean Culture and Art of MD)
- Dragon Dance (Chinese Culture Institute)

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

Mosaic Harmony Presents Peace.

4:30 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church. Featuring performances by Koleinu - Temple Rodef Shalom, Mosaic Harmony, Muzic on a Mission, Silk Road Dance Company, Sufi Melody, Tema Choir USA, Temple Sinai Choir, and Voices of Hope Youth Choir.

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

Kwame Alexander – Children's Author & Poet.

3 p.m. At Reston Community Center, Reston. Kwame Alexander is a poet, educator, producer, New York Times bestselling author of 38 books and regular contributor to NPR's Morning Edition.

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

Year of the Dragon with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.

Festival 12-4 p.m.; Performance 4 p.m. At the Alden Theater at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Celebrate Chinese Lunar New Year with a performance created just for this upcoming Year of the Dragon. The program will feature this and other Nai-Ni Chen repertoire favorites that bridge the richness of Asian artistic heritage and the energy of American dance.

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

Traditional Celtic Music.

At 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Champion fiddler, Gàidhlig singer and harper Seán Heely returns to the Concerts at the Old Brogue.

MONDAY/FEB. 5

Fall for the Book.

"Battling the Opioid Epidemic" with bestselling author Beth Macy. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Journalist Beth Macy unveils

the raw, human side of the opioid crisis - from its beginnings in small-town Virginia and its stratospheric rise, to the everyday heroes fighting to save lives ten years on. In *Dopestick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America*, Macy weaves a complex tale of public health, company avarice, shadowy finances, political intrigue, racial dynamics, and class struggles. Her follow-up, *Raising Lazarus: Hope, Justice, and the Future of America's Overdose Crisis*, profiles "treatment innovators" working to help those suffering. Free, reserve tickets by visiting: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts/arts-partner-groups>

TUESDAY/FEB. 6

"Artist in Conversation: Cotton" – Virginia Opera.

7 p.m. Mason Arts in Fairfax. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Part of Virginia Opera's 2nd annual Pride in Black Voices program as well as a free, open-to-the-public presentation of the Friends of the Center for the Arts Artists in Conversation Series, this event features a performance of composer Damien Geter's moving song cycle inspired by the haunting "Cotton" photography of acclaimed artist John Dowell, whose works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other galleries. Free, registration required: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/hmhRzK3/cotton>

WEEKEND OF FEB. 9

Valentine Sweetheart Deals.

McLean Art Society will host a February art show and sale, with "Sweetheart Deals" featuring original art under \$150 by its talented artists the weekend of Feb. 9 at Walker Chapel in Arlington. It promises to offer a great opportunity to find a special, one-of-a-kind gift for your loved ones or yourself. Admission is free and open to the public. Hours are Feb. 9, 5-8 p.m., including a Reception and refreshments, Sat., Feb. 10, 10-4 p.m. and Sun., Feb. 11, 10-2 p.m.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

"Moonlight and Love Songs": Robin Spielberg Performs.

8 p.m. At Reston Community Arts Center, Center Stage, Reston. Renowned for her emotive and masterful piano artistry, Steinway Artist Robin Spielberg will take you on a journey through time and emotion, performing her original compositions as well as timeless classics. Expect to be captivated by the delicate notes that evoke nostalgia and moved by the powerful crescendos that stir the soul. Tickets available at <https://Restoncommunitycenter.com>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Featuring



McLean Art Society hosts "Sweetheart Deals" the weekend of Feb. 9, 2024 at Walker Chapel in Arlington.

Dancing Beethoven. Performance Sponsor: The Mather

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Ping Pong Tournament.

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. No fee to enter. All ages and levels of experience welcome. To register, visit <https://c25k.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament-2024>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

"Animaniacs" in Concert!

7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Voices and Songs of the Iconic Animated Series LIVE on Stage. Join the leading voice cast of "Animaniacs" for a zany, animany and totally insane evening! Randy Rogel—the show's original Emmy-winning composer—and voice talents Rob Paulsen and Maurice LaMarche perform the world-famous songs from the beloved cartoon TV series... backed by video projections of the equally world-famous animations!

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Beatles 60th Anniversary Tribute.

7:30 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons. The special concert collaboration of the Classical Mystery Tour with the Fairfax Symphony celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Beatles' first performance in the United States on February 11, 1964, when the Beatles performed at The Washington Coliseum direct from their debut on The Ed Sullivan Show. The performance will feature the original 1964 concert set list performed by The Classical Mystery Tour. The Fairfax Symphony will join the group in the second half of the performance to present hits from the Beatles' catalog conducted by Martin Herman. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

The Kiwanis Club of Tysons Polar Dip.

12:30 p.m. check-in; 2 p.m. Jumping Begins. At Lake Anne Village Plaza, Reston. Participants can sign up to jump, donate, or create a team today by visiting the website at kiwanispolar-dip.org. Attendees can also enjoy the Kiwanis Polar Dip Winter Market, organized by LAWPA. There will be opportunities to shop, as well as children's crafts and other activities. All participants on-site who raise at least \$100 will receive an event t-shirt. Individuals who don't want to jump are still welcome to donate to the event. To join the Winter Market as a vendor, email LAWPA at lakeannewashingtonplaza@gmail.com.

Much Ado About Something



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That 'something' being the off-hand reference (use of the "R" word/"remission") from my oncologist explaining why we need to focus on my kidney health at the expense of restarting my cancer treatment (a pill a day). It came in an email response to my question about my cancer status/treatment timetable based on recent lab work especially ordered for this reason. It's the first time I've heard that r-word in a decade. Moreover, it wasn't a word I heard a month or so ago when I had my first in-person, post-PET scan appointment with my oncologist in over two years. Seems like that would have been an appropriate time. But no. Let's be realistic: using the "R" word to a cancer patient is akin to waving a red cape in front of a bull. We may not exactly charge but you'll certainly get our attention.

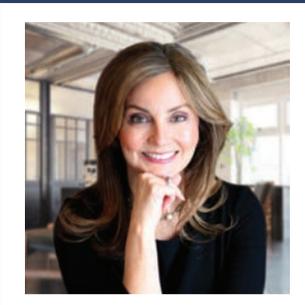
If the reason not to restart my cancer treatment is the potential damage (irreparable) to my kidneys (as indicated in the kidney function/creatinine level in my recent "chem 7" lab work), I can certainly understand and appreciate that. If you're going to mention that my thyroid cancer is in remission as a reason to stop treatment and avoid further (irreparable) harm to my kidney – potentially leading to dialysis, I'm happily on board and grateful for this preemptive strike. However, you can't bury the lead: "REMISSION." Since when, and why am I hearing about now in an email no less? This is the kind of news/characterization that cancer patients dream about. And if it's at all applicable to me – or any cancer patient for that matter, given the stress and pre-occupation with our disease and life expectancy that dominates our daily lives, tell me more. If you have an ounce of above-average-sounding news, please, as I said when I was about to receive bad news (initial Team Lourie meeting in Feb.'09 when I was first diagnosed and "prognosed"), give it to me straight. I can take it. And if I can take that, I can certainly take this: "Remission." Elaborate. Don't just drop that word in the middle of a paragraph and offer no additional context or suggestion that perhaps we should talk because of this relative bombshell of amazing but unexpected – and so far, not really corroborated news of my health.

For 14 and half years, I've lived with that original "13 month to two years" prognosis hanging over my head – like the sword of Damocles, permeating my brain and affecting every decision I make. You must know that the use of this word is not going to fall on deaf ears – or blind eyes. It's the word all of us cancer patients have been straining to see on any correspondence that we receive from our oncologists. To use it in this context, without any further explanation concerning its legitimacy/relevance to my life as an excuse no less for what we're now not doing (continuing my cancer medicine/treatment: chemotherapy/targeted therapy, pills and of course infusions galore, going on almost 15 years), deserves more than just a passing glance. Granted, I LOVE the sound/look of it but without further ado/additional information/clarification, I am no closer to a good night's sleep. It's not exactly a chicken-little situation, but for a cancer patient whose sky fell years ago, we're very susceptible and inclined to exaggerate good news. We've been waiting our whole lives (it only seems that way) since our original diagnosis for it. News or a reference of this significance/substance must be treated very carefully. Giving us/our health an inch will lead to a mile of unfounded and unrealistic, and possibly inaccurate information. And if us cancer patients need anything, it's precise and exact information so we can live what's left of our lives with clarity of purpose and dignity. Maybe even hope if there's some substance to his use of this word.

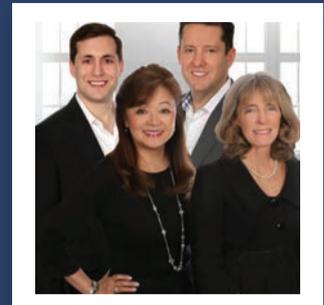
Because ambiguity is unhelpful. Considering that many cancer patients are enduring treatment with no guarantee of survival, the lines of communication – in person, and especially in print must be unequivocal with no basis for misunderstanding. And the misuse of a word, or in this case, the context in which the word "remission" is used, a word all of us cancer patients have dreamed of hearing/seeing, is unfair and dare I say insensitive.

We're all clinging to life here, emotionally certainly, and physically it varies. Make no mistake: being diagnosed with cancer or surviving cancer leaves a mark. My late mother used to quote Bette Davis: "No one gets out of this life alive." For cancer patients, life is not a given. Due to the cancer, it's more a taken.. All your decisions/considerations will be made with this underlying, overriding harsh bit of reality. And in that reality, we're all looking for morsels/cornels of positive sounding anything to give us hope. Don't presume that we can take it all in stride. In fact, I wonder if the longer I survive, the shorter distance I'll have to travel.

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



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