

THE CONNECTION

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

Artificial Intelligence and Art

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Teacher Oliver Lee with Leah Zhang and her mom, Tracy Yuan, at the pop-up art exhibition, AI & Us. Zhang organized show at the Reston Art Gallery and Studios



Can FCPS New Hires
Live in Fairfax Co?

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Changes Coming in
Animal Protection

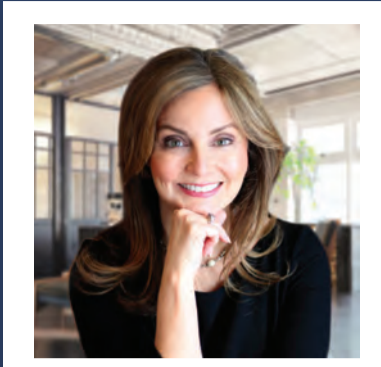
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PHOTO BY CAROL NAHORNIK



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NEWS

FCPS Seeks 2% and 6% Pay Hikes

Could county taxpayers shoulder a quarter billion dollars in school raises?

MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It would be unusual for someone in Fairfax County to argue that the public school system should not provide excellence in education and competitive compensation, which are two of the division's most pressing needs, according to the FCPS FY 2025 Proposed Budget. However, county taxpayers will likely face higher real estate taxes; a 4-cent real estate tax increase is proposed in Fairfax County's FY 2025 Advertised Budget presented by the county executive on Feb. 20, 2024. The Board of Supervisors will set the tax rate.

Only so many tax dollars and other revenue sources are available to fund county and public school needs. The county's budget fund limitations may force leadership at Fairfax County Public Schools to consider alternatives and their consequences, such as achieving competitive pay scales focusing on greater equity.

Already, high-end leadership pay could be limited, particularly since the superintendent has the authority to set pay with the supervisors' final approval. Continued growth for the top percentages leaves fewer gains for lower-level school em-

ployees and widens the gap between high and low earners.

On March 5, the Board of Supervisors advertises the tax rate, and on April 16-18, holds public hearings on the budget.

The Fairfax County Public Schools Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Advertised Budget, adopted by the school board in February, emphasizes providing "competitive compensation and excellence in education." Compared to the FY 2024 approved budget the school board adopted nearly a year ago in May of 2023, Dr. Michelle C. Reid, division superintendent, is requesting a 6 percent "compensation adjustment" and a 2 percent "required adjustment compensation supplement" for all employees, herself included, in the Budget. The Board of Supervisors will adopt the county budget, tax rates and transfer to FCPS on May 7, with fiscal year 2025 starting on July 1, 2024.

The Executive Summary of the public school system's Budget includes a Message from the Superintendent. In it, Reid requested \$170.7 million to give all division employees the 6 percent pay raise. Reid also requested an additional \$55.3 million

SEE PAY HIKES, PAGE 16



Teacher Emily Mextorf uses sand to help students learn letter sounds at Bren Mar Park Elementary School.

FCPS EMPLOYEE NEWS

A compensation adjustment of 6% and a compensation supplement of 2% equals 8% increases for compensation in FY 2025 compared to employee pay stubs as of Dec. 31, 2023.

Can Prospective Public School Employees Afford Fairfax?

School pay scale for emerging professions hurts recruitment.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Amid nationwide teacher shortages, with school districts competing for applicants, Fairfax County Public Schools reported on March 5 that it is looking to fill instructional vacancies anticipated for the 2024-25 school year. Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, said on Feb. 9, speaking about the FY 2025 Budget, that the division must "attract and retain a world-class workforce."

The school division is facing a perfect storm of high-priced rent roadblocks as it prepares to offer contracts to full-time applicants whose annual income, according to the FY2024 Pay Scale effective Jan. 1, may not be sufficient to live comfortably in the county. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, Fairfax County is the ninth least affordable district for beginning teachers to rent a one-bedroom home.

Many teachers and other applicants, particularly those in one-or-two-person households, would benefit from having accessible, affordable, and easy-to-navigate housing options. This could lead them to choose Fairfax County Public Schools over another offer, and without extra help, signing onto Fairfax County Public Schools could be a significant hurdle.

According to Best Places, the average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Fairfax County is \$2,280 per

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SCREENSHOT

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools

month. Fairfax's average one-bedroom rent is \$2,000.

According to Best Places, candidates with offers in hand must also consider that in addition to high housing costs, Fairfax County's cost of living is 42.4 percent higher than the national average and 37.7 percent higher than the Virginia average. "To live comfortably in Fairfax, a minimum annual income of \$125,280 for a family and \$80,000 for a single person is recommended," states Best Places.

SEE AFFORD FAIRFAX, PAGE 16



FCPS EMPLOYEE NEWS

New teacher in August 2023, Sandra Benitz started her first day as a high school teacher four years after graduating from Annandale High School.



Coyotes (*Canis latrans*), and Black bears (*Ursus Americans*) once a rarity in Fairfax County are increasing found here, emphasizing the area's increasing wildlife component changes.

Feral cats, or community cats released with an ear nip after spay/neuter and vaccination, are often the subject of conflict between those who advocate for the cats, versus those who advocate for wildlife on which feral cats prey.

Animal, Wildlife Reorganization Ready for Approval?

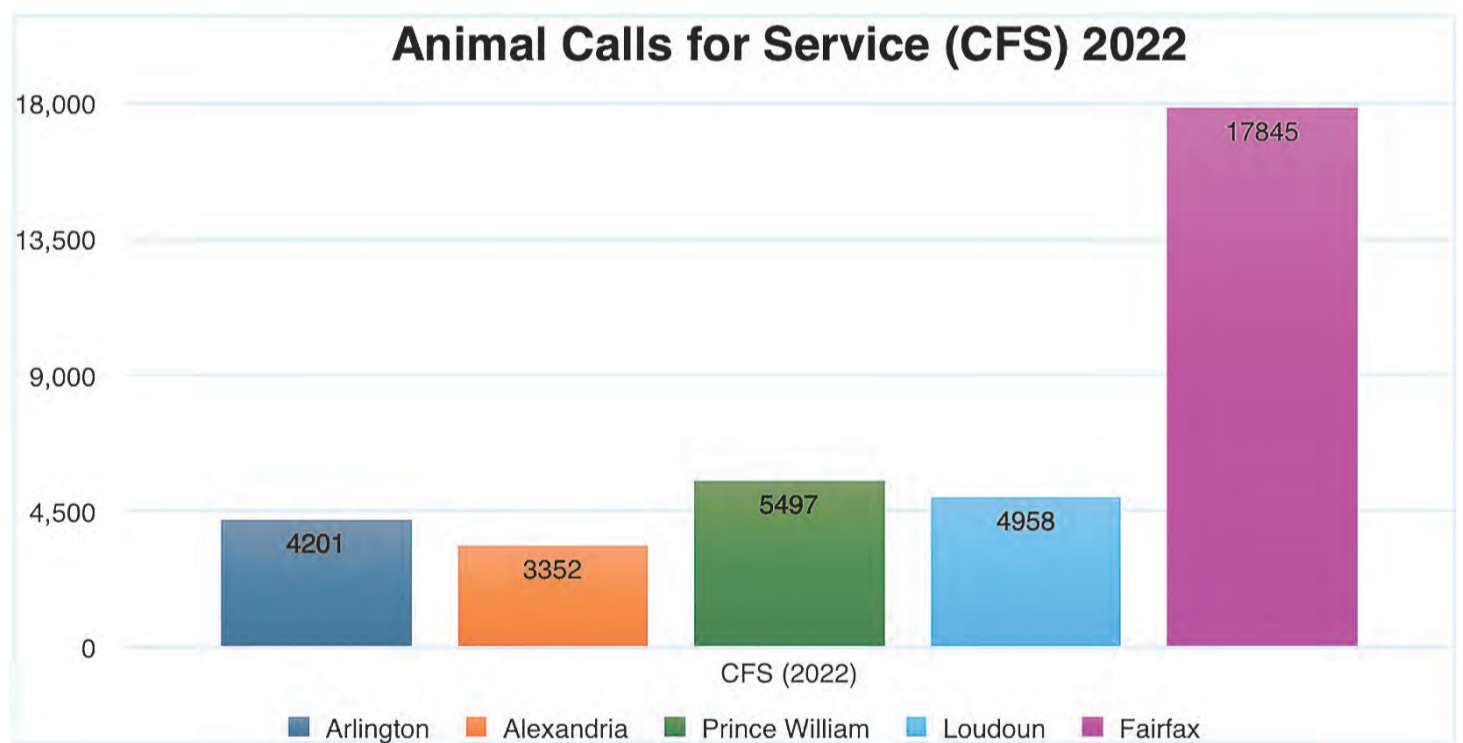
BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County officials seek to ease public concerns about their proposal to reorganize animal law enforcement, wildlife management, animal welfare and sheltering within a single unit under the Department of Animal Sheltering. Under the original proposal, the 37-position Animal Protection Police Officer unit, created in 2016, would be eliminated and replaced with civilian Animal Control Officers under direction of Animal Sheltering, instead of the Police Department. Both groups now fall under the organizational management of Deputy County Executive for Safety and Security Thomas Arnold.

In a virtual meeting, held Feb. 29, County representatives focused on countering the concerns cited by wildlife rehabilitators, conservationists and naturalists, announcing an amended proposal. "The Fairfax County Police Department and the Department of Animal Sheltering listened to feedback from residents, industry experts and other county agencies and determined the wildlife management program, including the deer management program and other services, is not best suited to operate under the Department of Animal Sheltering's mission and will not be included in the consolidation of animal services." The announcement followed a meeting Feb. 21 between the Board of Supervisors Chairman's office and several leaders in the conservation community who outlined their concerns and provided signed petitions opposing the change. No alternate landing place for the function has been identified. The County indicates, "Fairfax County Police Department will continue to work with the Park Authority, other county agencies, and the community to determine the best placement for this program to ensure its long-term success."

Positions on the Revised Proposal

For the Police Department, it's time to change from enforcing animal laws to pro-



COURTESY SSPBA

Comparison of Fairfax County APPO calls with other jurisdictions.

viding animal welfare services

Police Department spokesperson, Deputy Chief Robert Blakely, says "The Police Department believes we have the best animal program in the country ... and a great Animal Protection Police force." However Chief Blakely and Deputy County Executive Tom Arnold said the time has come to move "away from emergency response to county-wide services" and away from missions "police shouldn't be doing." Blakely said law enforcement entities have no recourse but to enforce the laws, leaving no room for social considerations impacting pets and their owners.

According to the proposal, these changes support the goals of One Fairfax and promote equity.

"Research shows that an emphasis on enforcement in animal control services dispro-

portionately affects low-income communities, particularly people of color. Sworn law enforcement serving as the face of animal services can act as a barrier to accessing services for some residents."

The proposed approach, with Animal Control Officers connecting pet owners with shelter services and resources, addresses some of these concerns.

The county has suggested moving one management position from the police department to the shelter in FY-25. The transfer would create four director level positions for the shelter's two-site department. Further movements of the 36 position APPO unit would not be made until FY-26, if approved. No savings beyond those related to reduced training and salaries for ACOs have been targeted in the proposal.

Blakely emphasized that only a limited number of search warrant executions and custodial arrests, functions which ACOs may not perform, were required in the unit (in 2023 - 3 search warrants, 1 arrest). He did not share the number of felony and misdemeanor charges made by the APPO unit which routinely require officer testimony in District Court.

Wildlife Rehabilitators and Conservation Naturalists

Wildlife missions versus domestic pets management don't mix.

Shelter management traditionally works with companion animals and the laws and ethics of animal rights within a pet owner's duty of care; directed by the Common-

SEE ANIMAL, WILDLIFE, PAGE 13

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BULLETIN BOARD

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 6

Annual Housing Symposium. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, 4471 Aquia Creek Lane, Fairfax. Housing professionals, developers, advocates, and others interested in Fairfax County's affordable housing industry are invited to join the Fairfax County Housing Symposium. The event will feature elected leaders, industry professionals, policy experts, affordable housing users, and others who are working toward a common goal of a Fairfax County everyone can afford to call home.

Attendees will participate in discussions about affordable housing development and preservation challenges; the 'lived experiences' of affordable housing; the direct line between homelessness and housing; and other Fairfax County housing topics. They will also enjoy a brief tour of One University, Fairfax County's new premiere affordable housing community located next to George Mason University. The new community, scheduled to be completed this Spring, will feature affordable independent living senior homes and multifamily apartments as well as student housing.

Past Housing Symposium presenters and discussion leaders have included:

Congressman Gerald Connolly, U.S. House of Representatives
Jeffrey Little, General Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Jeffrey McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Jenny Schuetz, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute Metro
David Swift, Senior Product Manager, Amazon Housing Equity Fund

THURSDAY/MARCH 14

Attend Last-Minute College Financing Strategies. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Virtual. Learn how you can find and win scholarships even if you're just starting the process or are already in college. Sponsored by Reston Community Center in Reston. Join if you've applied to college and just started looking for scholarships or you're currently in college and you need or want additional funds to pay the tuition bills. Register at www.scholarshipworkshop.com/reston2

FREE ST. PATRICK'S DAY LYFT RIDES

Preparing to combat that time of the year when according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), nearly half (44%) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers, a local nonprofit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during next month's St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2024 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide program will be in operation beginning at 12:00 p.m. Sunday, March 17th (St. Patrick's Day) and operate until 12:00 a.m. on Monday, March 18th as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this 12-hour period, area residents 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add

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

Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2024 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide promo code will be posted at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 17th on www.SoberRide.com.

WASHINGTON'S AIRPORTS SET NEW PASSENGER RECORD

The Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority hosted 50.6 million total passengers in 2023, setting a new travel record at Reagan National and Dulles International airports. This achievement was driven by strong demand at both airports, resulting in a new passenger record at Reagan National and an

international passenger record at Dulles International.

Reagan National 2023 Results: Reagan National broke its all-time passenger traffic record with 25.5 million passengers in 2023. This count exceeded the previous record in 2022 by 6.2 percent, despite flight reductions to accommodate a runway rehabilitation project and capacity limitations at New York City airports. To further improve the passenger experience, DCA Reimagined is underway to upgrade Terminal 2 restroom facilities, enhance shopping and dining options and create innovative spaces to relax at the gates and throughout the terminals.

Dulles International 2023 Results: As

the fastest growing international gateway airport in the United States, Dulles International raised the bar in 2023 with 9.3 million international passengers – a new record that exceeded 2022's international activity by 26.9 percent. Combined with domestic activity, the airport logged 25.1 million passengers for the year. The upward trend can be credited to a strong resurgence in travel demand that led to eight new airlines launching nonstop flights to destinations around the globe over the past two years. With new flights announced for 2024, this brings the airport's total to 42 airlines and 139 destinations (80 domestic, 59 international).

FINMARC MANAGEMENT SELLS WAREHOUSE BUILDING IN SPRINGFIELD

Finmarc Management, Inc., a diversified commercial real estate investment and management firm headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, has announced the sale of 8000 Grainger Court, Springfield, a building containing 88,000 square feet of flex/warehouse space to C2 Imaging for \$15.9 million. The asset is part of an 11-building portfolio totaling approximately 740,000 square feet of flex/office, industrial and data center space in Springfield, Virginia, which Finmarc acquired for \$127.5 million from Boston Properties, Inc.

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Major Sewage Line Fails Near Potomac River in Great Falls

Fairfax tests wells, positive results for coliform and E. coli.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The DC Water and Sewer Authority's Potomac Interceptor sewer line at Manhole #31, approximately 400 feet (just more than a football field) from the Potomac River, and varying proximity to 18 private wells in Great Falls, 158 feet to 2,755 feet, failed on or before Feb. 12.

As part of its emergency response plan, DC Water immediately activated an on-site bypass pumping contractor. On Tuesday, Feb. 13, "the site experienced a substantial amount of rain," and on Feb. 14, the pipeline again failed. "The eroded area expanded substantially," DC Water reported. The utility company provided the words as captions for slides presented by the Fairfax County Health Department at the Feb. 27 virtual Great Falls Community Meeting.

"I recognize that DC Water was handling certain things, but they don't report to you, our county staff, and I do," said Fairfax County Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (Dranesville) at the meeting. "I'm not very happy with DC Water right now for a number of reasons... I felt like we needed to have a follow-up community meeting and that we needed to bring in the experts that we have in the county to try and give you as much information as possible."

The utility company collects sewage for several adjoining localities in Maryland and Virginia, including Fairfax County, transporting about 60 million gallons of wastewater

SEE SEWAGE LEAK, PAGE 7



SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO, DC WATER.COM
Discovered Monday, February 12, the sinkhole at DC Water's Manhole #31 appeared small.



SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO, DC WATER.COM
Orange fencing encircles the initial affected area adjacent to Manhole # 31



SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO, DC WATER.COM
Sewage flows in DC Water's Manhole #31 in Great Falls, located approximately a football field length from the Potomac River and within proximity of 18 private wells. Fairfax County responded to the emergency.



SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO, DC WATER.COM
A drone captures the image to identify the manhole collapse as sewage continues to flow through the breached pipe. At the time, DC Water reported no overflows.

Comment by DC Water

On Tuesday, March 5, John Lisle, vice president of marketing and communications at DC Water, said Fairfax County's Feb. 27 presentation at the Great Falls Community meeting was comparable to DC Water's previous community meetings held the week before.

"We had a hydrogeologist present his findings from his assessment, and they were very similar to what Mr. Harrington presented [on Feb. 27]. The conclusion was the same. There was no evidence that the pipe's failure had compromised the water quality of those homes."

Lisle clarified that the broken pipe was part of a larger Manhole 31 Project to upgrade and rehabilitate the Potomac Interceptor (PI).

Lisle explained that a sinkhole formed when dirt entered a pipe, potentially blocking the flow and causing it to expand into a sinkhole. According to Lisle, DC Water conducted all water quality testing at the homes until the transition to Fairfax County last week. DC Water informed residents of positive coliform and E. coli test results in their water supply, and Fairfax County provided guidance on boiling water as a precaution.

According to DC Water, it is rehabilitating 140 feet of the 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipe downstream from Manhole 31, replacing 200 feet of 54-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipe immediately upstream of Manhole 31, replacing Manhole 31 and demolishing the old existing piping as part of the Manhole 31 Project, DC Water. "The old manhole is very close to the new one, Lisle added.

The Potomac Interceptor (PI) is an essential part of DC Water's sewer system that serves Virginia's Loudoun and Fairfax counties and Montgomery County, Maryland. These locations send sewage to the Potomac Pumping Station in DC via the Potomac Interceptor. The Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant treats discharge from the Pumping Station. DC Water is assessing the PI and has several Capital Improvement Projects to rehabilitate defective segments.

Total coliform results

Site	17-Feb	19-Feb	20-Feb	21-Feb	22-Feb	23-Feb	24-Feb	25-Feb
Well 1	absent	absent		absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 2	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 3	absent	absent	present	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 4	present	absent	present	present		absent		
Well 5	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 6				absent	absent		absent	
Well 7				absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 8					absent	present		
Well 9		absent	present	present	present	present	present	present
Well 10		absent	absent	absent		absent	absent	absent
Well 12				absent	absent		absent	absent
Well 15					absent	absent	absent	
Well 16						absent	absent	absent
Well 17				absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Well 18			absent	absent		absent	absent	absent

SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO
Private wells in Great Falls tested "present" for total coliform results after Fairfax County tested 18 nearby wells.

SCREENSHOTS VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO



Fairfax County Supervisor James Bierman (Dranesville District)



Dr. Param Dubarry, deputy director for Medical Services, Fairfax County Health Department

Sewage Leak in Great Falls

FROM PAGE 6

daily via the Potomac Interceptor to the Potomac Pumping Station in Washington, DC. Flows from the pump station are then sent to the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment before discharge into the Potomac River. DC Water provided the updated statements in the captions of photographs shown as slides at the Fairfax County Health Department's community meeting.

The broken pipe was part of a larger project to upgrade and rehabilitate the Potomac Interceptor.

Concerns and speculations had spread among the close-knit Great Falls community, particularly after the Fairfax County Health Department issued a boil-water advisory to potentially affected households. The county conducted bacteriological tests from Saturday, Feb. 17, to Sunday, Feb. 25, excluding testing on Feb. 20. Coliform bacteria were detected in 11 of the 77 test results of the 18 impacted wells.

Breaking it down further by well occurrence, Fairfax County reported that four of the 18 private wells tested positive for coliform organisms, with one positive for E. coli. Wells #3 and #8 tested positive for coliform bacteria once each; well #4 tested positive three times; and well #9, the furthest away from Manhole #13, tested positive six times.

Questions arose about evaluations of well water quality, safety precautions, well disinfection with response options, how the contamination occurred, and whether there was an impact on the Potomac.

Seamus Mooney, coordinator for Fairfax County's Department of Resources and Emergency Management, provided an overview of the repairs from the DC Water perspective. Mooney said DC Water installed four pumps and was bypassing pumping with a fifth pump installed and pumping water back into Manhole #31. The process had been ongoing for five days, with DC Water moving slowly "to ensure the pumps can handle the capacity." According to Mooney, DC Water was to decide when to insert the plug into the line at the end of the week to begin the dewatering process.

Christopher Harrington, P.E., director of Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environ-

mental Services, presented findings from the hydro-geologist's report and an overview of what the lab reports on the well testing indicated. Other issues might be with the private wells or homes' plumbing.

Harrington stated that while the county's Department of Public Works does not directly regulate or monitor groundwater, he was there to assist the Health Department because, as a professional, he had over three decades of experience with water quality and investigation across multiple aquifer systems.

Going through several slides, Harrington described Manhole 31 as being north of the wells and having a higher elevation gradient than the Potomac interceptor. "Water flows downhill unless it is under pressure," Harrington explained. He pointed to the 18 well locations and stated there was no reason to believe any sewage traveled over land.

Local patterns indicate that the groundwater gradient was flowing towards the excavation rather than from it to the wells. Regarding what could be going on underground — bedding planes, faults, or fractures in the bedrock that could potentially convey water — Harrington stated that the pressure gradient in the bedrock beneath the excavation site is believed to be going downhill toward the excavation.

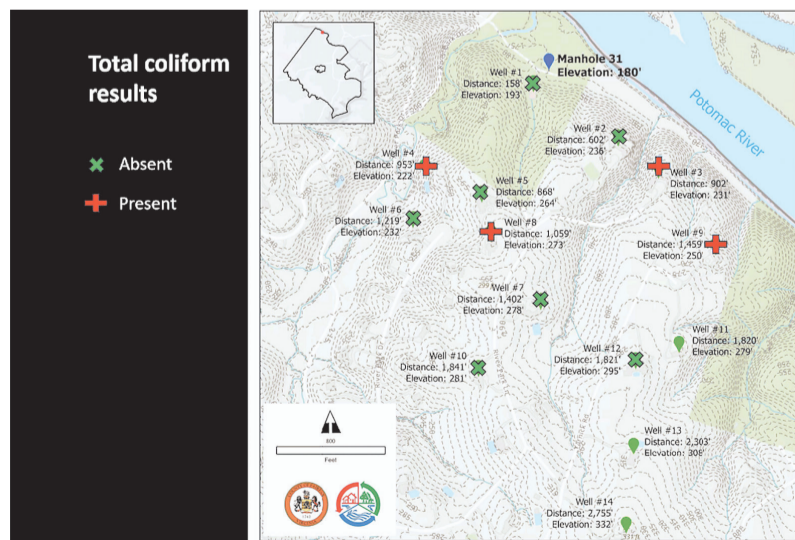
According to Harrington, E. coli in water samples is a good indicator of bacteria because it indicates fecal contamination. The sewage that would have filled Manhole 31 contained hundreds of thousands of colony-forming units of E. coli bacteria per deciliter. When they examined the data, they found only one well had a few samples with E. coli indicator bacteria. Furthermore, given that the groundwater flow is heading north toward the Potomac, some of the intervening wells should have detected E. coli, but they did not.

"I can say that there is no conclusive evidence that Manhole # 31 sewage contaminated these wells," Harrington said.

Dr. Param Dubarry, deputy director for Medical Services, Fairfax County Health Department, discussed coliforms and explained that they are found in soil and indicate fecal contamination. E. coli is a specific type of coliform that can cause serious illness. The Health Department advises homes with positive coliform and E. coli tests to boil water and disinfect their wells. The department will issue new letters outlining these recommendations.

Dubarry emphasized the importance of retesting two weeks later to ensure that the biological contamination had been removed. He also said that pipes could have biofilm buildup. Dubarry considered that it is possible that in homes with coliform, the septic system is not functioning optimally and may add additional contaminants to the environment. "It's a good idea also to check your septic system."

Fairfax County reports more than 15,000 homes and businesses rely on groundwater wells for their domestic water supply.



SCREENSHOT VIA LIVE FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO

Locations for DC Water's Manhole #31, the Potomac River, and Great Falls wells possibly impacted by the failed sewage pipe.

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PHOTOS BY CAROL NAHORNIK AT RESTON ART GALLERY AND STUDIOS



Jennifer Wessmiller with her painting, “Regenerated Rabbit,” embellished with images of AI’s interpretation of her work displayed at the AI & Us art exhibition.



Brendan Li’s pencil illustration, Soul Sucked, was awarded for Best Technical Skill at the AI & Us art exhibition.



Pat Macintyre, artist and owner of Reston Art Gallery and Studios, with Howard Stregack of The Arc of Northern Virginia, the local charity that received more than \$3,000 from art sales and donations at the AI & Us exhibition.

Art Exhibit Raises More Than \$3K for Arc of N. Va.

‘AI and Us’ and fundraiser conceived by TJ student Leah Zhang.

Leah Zhang, a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), organized a thought-provoking art show that produced some

impressive results in “AI & Us,” a week-long pop-up exhibition at Reston Art Gallery and Studios. Twenty-two works of art were displayed, submitted by 15 artists

who aptly followed the theme of the impact of artificial intelligence, “sharing the anxieties and inspiration that come with this exciting – and often unnerving – innovation in our lives,” as stated by Zhang.

The creativity was also evident in the relatable titles, such as “Bad Freedom,” “Soul Sucked,” and “Planted in our Lives.” The

works were awarded by gallery owner Pat Macintyre, and also sold to the public by silent bidding. All proceeds – more than \$3,000 from sales and contributions – were donated to The Arc of Northern Virginia, a local nonprofit that utilizes assistive technology to help people with disabilities.



Teacher Oliver Lee with Leah Zhang and her mom, Tracy Yuan, at the pop-up art exhibition, AI & Us. Zhang organized show at the Reston Art Gallery and Studios.



Pat Macintyre, artist and owner of Reston Art Gallery and Studios, with Leah Zhang, organizer of the pop-up art exhibition, AI & Us..

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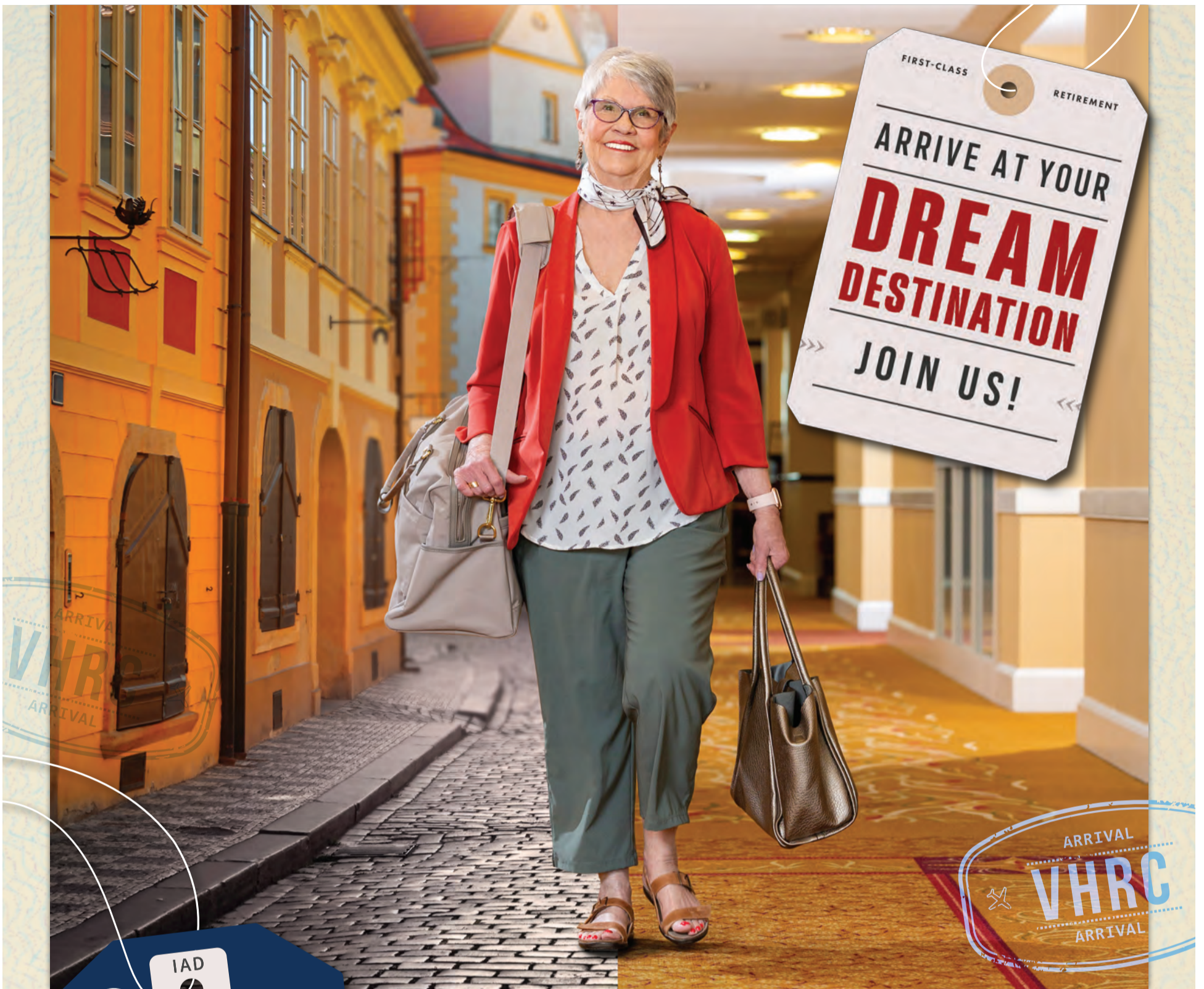


Nowruz Festival March 10

Ring in the Persian New Year at the 10th annual Nowruz Festival on Sunday March 10, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. at Hilton Fairfax. Please visit our vendors inside and outside the hotel to explore our grand Nowruz Bazaar. Kids activities room, Haft-Sin table, food and beverage by @mobydickabobs and much more.

www.nowruzfestival.org





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VH

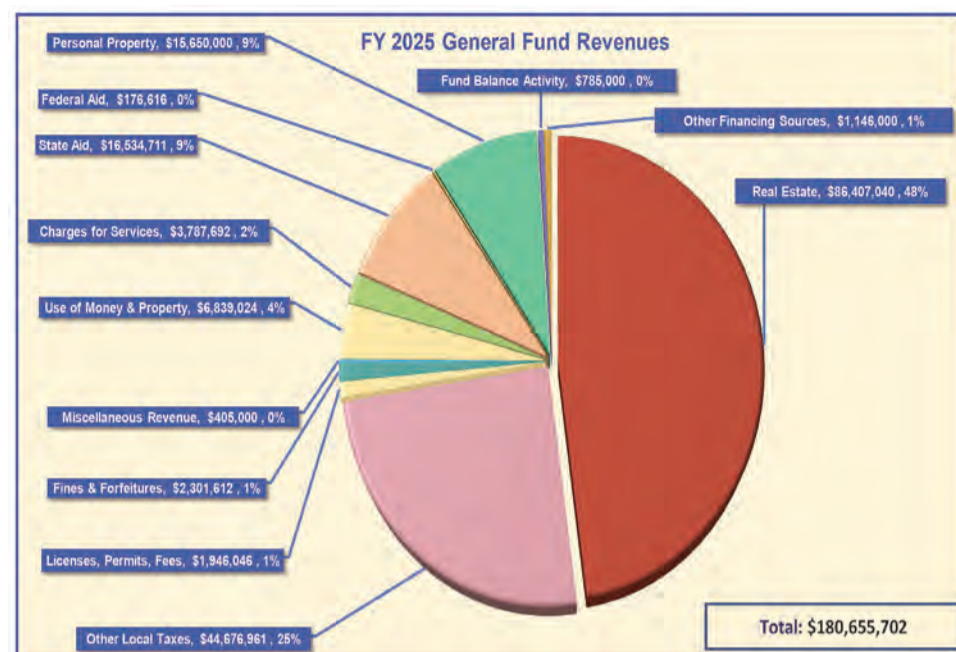
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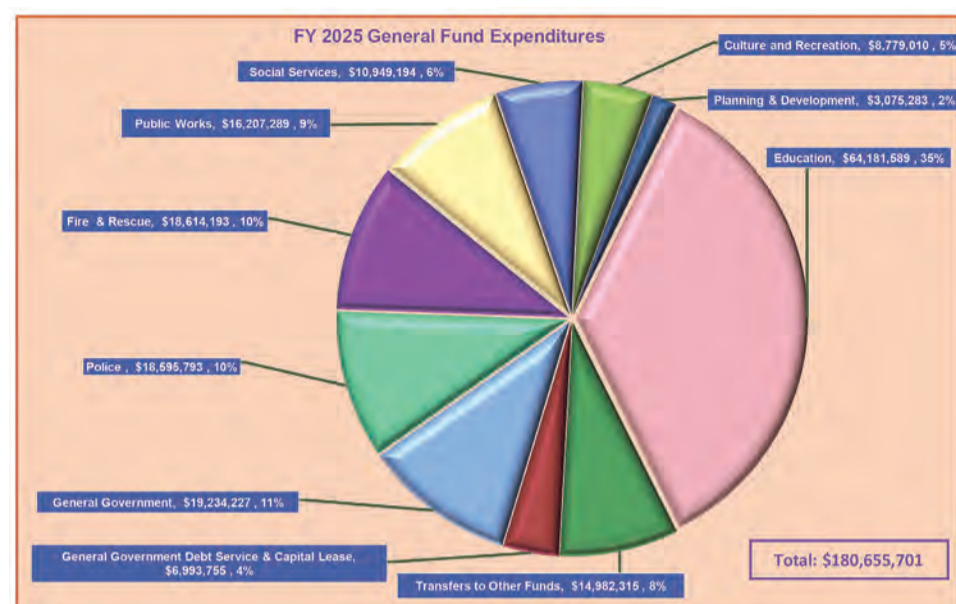
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CITY OF FAIRFAX



City of Fairfax FY 25 General Fund revenues equate to \$180,655,702 for FY 2025, which represents an increase of 4.42% (\$7,641,843) from FY 2024.



City of Fairfax FY 25 General Fund expenditures are budgeted at \$180,655,702 for FY 2025. The largest spending category remains Education, followed by the Fire Department, Police Department, General Government and Public Works.

Fairfax City's Proposed FY 25 Budget Unveiled

Recommends a 1-cent, residential real-estate tax hike.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

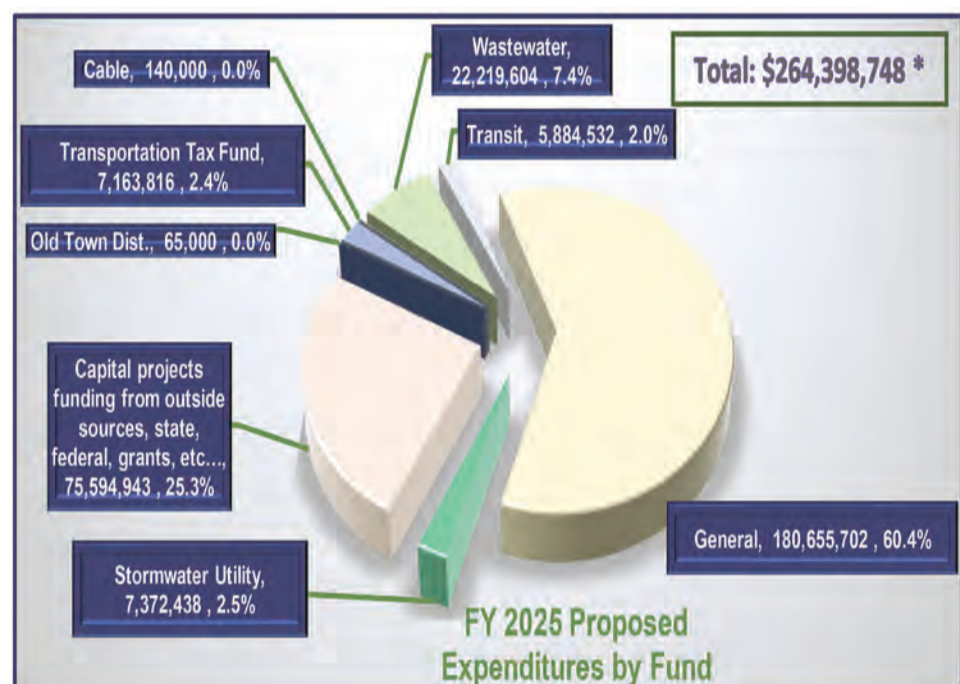
Before retiring last week, outgoing Fairfax City Manager Rob Stalzer unveiled his proposed FY 25 City budget during the Feb. 27 City Council meeting. He presented detailed information explaining how he and City staff arrived at all the numbers contained within it, as well as how it aligns with Fairfax's vision for a strong, sustainable economy.

"We used our prioritized, strategic goals and their outcomes as the basis for this budget," he said. "These goals are economic development, environmental sustainability/stewardship, community, transportation and governance."

There are a lot of things on the City's plate, including a slew of capital projects, and it takes money to accomplish them all. So Stalzer's budget proposes an increase in both taxes and fees, including a real-estate rate hike of 1 cent per \$100 assessed valuation, raising the current tax rate from \$1.025 to \$1.035 and yielding \$784,308 to the City coffers.

Since the assessed value of the average Fairfax City home has just increased by 2.63 percent, that action alone will raise a homeowner's tax bill by \$162/year. This amount, coupled with a 1-cent tax-rate increase, would result in the average homeowner paying another \$62 for a total of \$224/yr. more in real estate taxes.

In addition, 6-percent increases are proposed to both the stormwater utility and wastewater utility fees, costing the average homeowner an estimated annual increase of \$9.15/year for stormwater and \$20.18/year for wastewater. And although the City



Overview - All Funds Expenditures for all funds total \$296,120,056 less fund transfers (\$31,721,308), result in net total expenditures of \$264,398,748, an increase of 6.1% from the FY 2024 adopted budget.

classifies these items as fees, not taxes, they still add up. Combined with the proposed real-estate hike, they mean the average residential taxpayer will be paying some \$253/year more in fees and taxes.

Stalzer pointed out, however, that a \$1.035 tax rate would still be one of the lowest in the region, compared to other Northern Virginia cities and towns. And, he added, "Since real-estate taxes comprise 48 percent of the City's General Fund revenues, continuing to grow the tax base is imperative."

Fairfax saw a 2.2 percent real-estate valuation growth rate (new and existing construction) from January 2023 to January 2024. The projected regional average is 4.1 percent for the same period; but Fairfax is constrained by its size of just 6.34 square miles.

In the proposed FY 25 budget, General Fund revenues and expenditures equal \$180,655,702 - an increase of \$7.6 million,

or 4.4 percent, from the adopted FY 2024 budget. Net total expenditures for all funds (General, Capital Projects, Old Town Service District, Transportation Tax, Cable, Wastewater, Stormwater Utility and Transit) equal \$264,398,748 - a 6.1-percent jump from FY 2024.

Capital Fund expenditures for General Fund-supported projects equal \$32,840,376 (\$12,136,540 General Fund transfer represents 6.7 percent of the General Fund expenditures), an increase of 28.1 percent from the FY 2024 amount of \$25,641,595. The unassigned General Fund Balance is projected to be 16.6 percent of General Fund revenues, helping ensure the City's continued AAA bond rating.

"There's a hefty bump in capital funds," said Stalzer. "But debt service [on money borrowed for capital projects] is a big part of it." He noted as well, the City's significant

CIP (Capital Improvement Program) investments, specifically in the areas of recreation (\$11.2 million), transportation (\$19.1 million), wastewater (\$15.1 million) and general government projects (\$17 million).

He also said one of this budget's goals is fully funding Fairfax's FY 25-29 CIP so the City has the money to plan, design and construct the 141 projects this document contains. This goal would be achieved by allocating \$82.6 million for FY 25 and \$374.3 million over that five-year period. Stalzer said these projects would be funded 60 percent by debt and 40 percent by cash.

The proposed budget also recommends the full funding of the City School Board's tuition request of \$58,815,777. But that's not all. "Additionally, the process of establishing a multiyear plan to finance the renovations of all City schools is underway," said Stalzer. "The preliminary cost estimate to renovate the two elementary schools, the middle school and the high school is \$700 million. If approved by the City Council and the School Board, this work would occur from FY 26 through FY 39."

Regarding tax rates, the Commercial and Industrial real-estate tax rate remains unchanged at 12.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. The personal-property tax rate will also remain the same at \$4.13 per \$100 assessed valuation. However, the Old Town Service District add-on, real-estate tax rate is recommended to rise from 4 to 8 cents per \$100 assessed valuation, and some of it will help fund the City's many public events held in Old Town Fairfax.

As for fees, the wastewater-utility rate increase of 6 percent goes toward paying the City's 6-percent share of capital-project costs required for Fairfax County's Noman Cole wastewater-treatment facility, plus other capital and operating costs there. And the 6-percent stormwater-utility fee increase is to support the utility's capital-improvement and operating costs.

SEE FAIRFAX CITY BUDGET, PAGE 18
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Rob Stalzer Retires as Fairfax City Manager

Reflects on his career in public service and gives thanks.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Rob Stalzer's retirement as Fairfax's City Manager last Friday, March 1 marked the close of his illustrious, 43-year career in public service. And that career also included 18 years as one of Fairfax County's top administrators before he came to the City.

At the beginning of the Feb. 27 City Council meeting, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read and the Council formally recognized Stalzer's many achievements, especially in Fairfax City. Read said he began his foray into local government in 1979 as a city planner for the City of Buena Vista, Va.

Next came stints with Roanoke County from 1983-1989 as its director of planning and zoning, and the Town of Herndon from 1989-2000 as its town manager. Stalzer then served from 2000-2018 as Fairfax County's deputy county executive before retiring there and shifting to Fairfax City.

"I had a really good career in Fairfax County, was involved in memorable projects

and I enjoyed it," he said shortly after joining the City. "But there's a difference in being the assistant and being the leader. And I felt like I had more to offer and needed to go somewhere else to do it."

Stalzer was appointed city manager in November 2018, officially starting his new job in January 2019. And during last week's Council meeting, Read read a proclamation listing some of his accomplishments here.

"Under Stalzer's leadership, the Economic Development Office grew physically and through staff, and he prioritized economic development as a leading force in the City and Northern Virginia," said Read. "He provided enormous support for the EDO and the creation of a strategic plan, as well as mentorship and thoughtful leadership."

Noting that he led the City through the worst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Read said Stalzer "thoughtfully administer[ed] federal CARES Act and ARPA funding to help residents, the business community and nonprofit partners while the City remained fully operational."

SEE STALZER RETIRES, PAGE 12

Laszlo Palko Hired as Fairfax City Manager

He formerly held that post in Manassas Park.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION



Laszlo Palko

By the end of April, Laszlo Palko will take the reins as Fairfax City's new city manager. But he won't have to travel far from his last job, since he was most recently the city manager of Manassas Park.

He replaces Fairfax's former City Manager, Rob Stalzer, who retired last Friday, March 1, after serving in that post for five years. Palko is expected to start around April 29; until then, Fairfax's Deputy City Manager Valmarie Turner will be the acting city manager.

The announcements about both Palko and Turner were made at the start of the Feb. 27 City Council meeting. And since Stalzer unveiled his proposed FY 25 budget for the City, that same night, Palko will have to hit the ground running in the midst of budget negotiations as soon as he begins his new job. But obviously with his experience City officials believe he's more than qualified for the task.

"When City Manager Rob Stalzer notified City Council last year of his plans to retire March 1, we began a nationwide search," said Mayor Catherine Read. "We were fortunate to have a great field of candidates from which to choose. Laszlo Palko is a good fit for our urbanizing community, and we look forward to his leadership as we navigate unprecedented opportunities ahead here in our city."

Palko attended Harvard University, focusing his studies on local government administration en route to obtaining a master's degree in public policy. Palko's roles as a leader began in the military as an Army officer from 2005-2010. He earned the rank of captain, served two tours of duty in Afghanistan as part of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and was awarded the Bronze Star.

Palko then spent more than 10 years working in management in both the private and public sectors. He was a financial consultant for IBM and a management consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton before becoming the town manager of Lovettsville, Va.

SEE NEW CITY MANAGER, PAGE 19

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Sunday, March 17 | 11 am - 1 pm | 10200 Colvin Run Road | Great Falls



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THE CONNECTION ♦ MARCH 6-12, 2024 ♦ 11

Rob Stalzer Retires as Fairfax City Manager

FROM PAGE II

Then, she said, “Following the summer of 2020, when racial tensions were running high in cities across the country, Stalzer oversaw Connecting Fairfax City for All, an initiative that addressed legacy Confederate nomenclature, broadened the way in which City history is told on monuments and markers, and identified other ways to make the City more equitable and just for residents, business owners and visitors.”

Furthermore, said Read, “Stalzer transformed [Fairfax City’s] Capital Improvement Program into a realistic plan with attainable, prioritized projects and identified funding sources. The revised CIP provides details about the various funding sources, financing plans and delivery schedules for each project.”

In conclusion, she said, “Now therefore, I, Catherine S. Read, mayor of the City of Fairfax, express our profound and heartfelt appreciation to Robert A. Stalzer for his public service of successfully combined transformational leadership, innovative local-government management, relationship building and strategic partnering to build community and improve people’s lives.”

Accepting the plaque from Read, Stalzer thanked her and the Council for acknowledging him that way. As for his retirement, he said, “I have many mixed emotions. On the one hand I’m ready to do something different and not be on call 24/7/365 or feel the constant pressure to be responsive.”

“On the other hand, 43 years serving the City of Buena Vista, Roanoke County, the Town of Herndon, Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax is a great run. Like anyone after 43 years in local government management, I’m shaped by the significant events and projects in my career.”

Stalzer said they included “the Pennino Building elevator fatality, The Pentagon on 9/11, two anthrax attacks, the Sniper, Hur-

ricane Isabel, Hurricane Katrina, the Sully District police shootings, Snowmageddon, Snowzilla, Carmaggedon, the Derecho and, oh yeah, the Pandemic.”

But that’s not all. He also listed the Hollins Community Development Project, the Herndon Municipal Center, the McConnell Public Safety Transportation and Operations Center, the Reston Station/Wiehle East Reston Metro Station and helping lay the groundwork for the new Willard/Sherwood Health and Community Center in 2027.

“There are too many memories, experiences and friendships to recount tonight,” said Stalzer. Then focusing solely on Fairfax City he said, “This is arguably the best job I’ve ever had. The staff is amazing, the organization is solid, the community is incredibly supportive. We’re making a real difference. As I share often with staff, we’re building community and improving people’s lives. On some days, we may save a life. As local government professionals, what could be better than that?”

“As an organization and a team, I feel we’ve really progressed over the last five years – I admit I’m biased,” he continued. “I also acknowledge that I walked into a great situation. We’ve had challenges that needed to be acknowledged and managed. We still do. But continual improvement is a never-ending quest for any organization. My successor will have stalwarts on staff, the mayor and council, boards and commissions, and the community to assist and guide him on the journey.”

Then, speaking directly to Read and the City Council, Stalzer said, “I really enjoyed working with all of you. To the staff, you are true professionals. You punch above your weight every single day and make me look so much better than I really am.”

He also acknowledged former Mayor David Meyer and Councilmembers Janice Miller, Michael DeMarco, So Lim, Jon Stehle, Sang Yi and Jennifer Passey for hiring him



Back row from left, Councilmembers Billy Bates, Jon Stehle, Kate Doyle Feingold, Jeff Greenfield, Tom Ross and So Lim, with (front row from left) Catherine Read and Rob and Cathy Stalzer.

“Following the summer of 2020, when racial tensions were running high in cities across the country, Stalzer oversaw Connecting Fairfax City for All, an initiative that addressed legacy Confederate nomenclature, broadened the way in which City history is told on monuments and markers, and identified other ways to make the City more equitable and just for residents, business owners and visitors.”

— Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read

in 2018, plus the Councils of 2020/22 and 2023/24 for their support and commitment.

“Finally, and most importantly, I want to acknowledge and thank my wife Cathy for

her unwavering support and love for the last 31 years,” said Stalzer. “She’s my rock and we’re a team. I couldn’t do this job by myself. Thank you again for this recognition.”

ROUND UPS

Car Seat Inspections on March 14

Parents may get their children’s car seats inspected on Thursday, March 14, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It’s at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants should install the child safety seat so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed if necessary, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly. Everyone is eligible. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for March 28, at the same place and time.

Self-Defense Classes for Women

Registration is now open for the upcoming women’s self-defense classes presented by the Fairfax County Police Department. They’re free, but participants must attend all four nights. The classes are on March 12, 14, 19 and 21, from 6:30-9:30 p.m., at the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy, 14601 Lee Road in Chantilly.

Women will learn essential tips on crime prevention and personal safety. There’ll also be some hands-on self-defense practice (optional). Girls between 13-17 years old are welcome to participate but must bring along a registered female parent or guardian.

12 ❖ THE CONNECTION ❖ MARCH 6-12, 2024

Space is limited and it’s first-come, first-served. Register at <https://bit.ly/49xlhrs>. However, if the registration is full, keep checking the link because spots might open up if someone decides to cancel.

Donate to the Feminine Supplies Drive

Period poverty is defined as the lack of access to safe and clean menstrual products and hygiene facilities. The inability to acquire these essential hygiene products impacts the overall physical and emotional health of those who menstruate.

So to support the local shelters and nonprofits serving those in need, Fairfax County is holding a drive to collect these items. Community members may help by donating new and sealed packages of tampons, pads, liners and menstrual cups from now through March 29. The two, main drop-off locations in the Sully District are at:

❖ The Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. The collection bin is available 24/7 in the building’s lobby.

❖ The Sully Community Center, 13800 Wall Road in Herndon. The collection bin is just inside the front doors by the information desk, and the building is open Monday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

In addition, donations may also be brought to any public library (hours may vary, so check first). For more information, contact Kim Jaramillo at Kimberly.Jaramillo@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-560-6946.

Driving ‘Reality Check’ Course for Teens, Parents

For teenagers, car crashes are the leading cause of injury and death. So Inova is holding a free, “Reality Check” course for teens and their parents or guardians. It’s set for Saturday, March 16, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (please arrive between 10-10:20 a.m.), in the Physicians Conference Center of the Inova Fairfax Medical Campus, 3300 Gallows Road in Falls Church.

While all drivers are welcome, this three-hour program is ideal for drivers with learner permits or newly licensed drivers and their parents. This is not a drop-off event. Parents or guardians must stay for the program. Registration is limited, so those interested are encouraged to sign up soon. Register at <https://bit.ly/3SXZW4z>. Here’s what’s planned:

- ❖ Student Program
 - Interactive slideshow and video presentation
 - Trauma bay & ER tour
 - Mock trauma resuscitation
 - EMS unit ambulance tour, Q & A Session with Fire & Rescue personnel
 - Crash survivors who share their experiences
 - Interactive driving simulator demonstrating effects of impaired and drowsy driving.
- ❖ Parent Program
 - How to be an effective role model to teen drivers
 - How to coach and teach teen drivers
 - How to talk to teens about decision making, alcohol, and other difficult subjects
 - How to implement a parent-teen driving-safety contract.

For questions or more information, contact Linda Watkins at linda.watkins@inova.org or 703-776-3259.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Animal, Wildlife Reorganization Ready for Approval?

FROM PAGE 4

wealth's Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. While wildlife management is handled consistent with principles that guide wildlife management and conservation in the U.S., and falls under the Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The goals of protecting animals in the two groups can conflict. A frequently cited example relates to protection of community, or feral cats, versus protection of the wildlife on which the cats prey when left in the environment.

Care of injured wildlife typically falls to certified volunteers who advise and have an established network with the experienced APPOs. Lack of this knowledge achieved over years of experience and of the network places wildlife in jeopardy if inexperienced ACOs respond to calls for service involving wildlife.

While the County plans to offer current APPOs the option of accepting lower level ACO positions without salary impact, there is no guarantee that experienced officers will accept the positions. The police Animal Services Division receives direction from the State's Attorney General's Animal Law Unit.

More Shelter Services

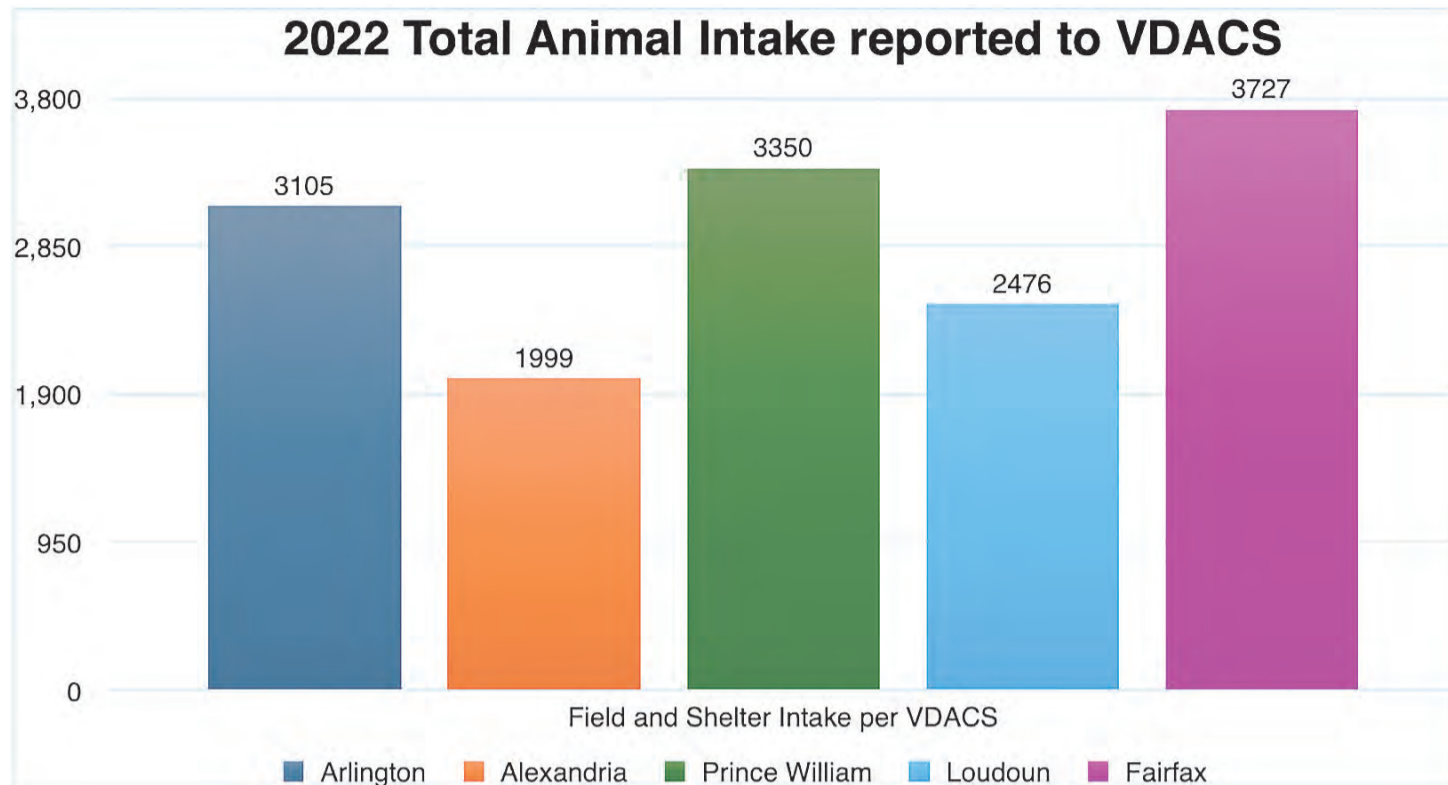
To Keep Animals Out of the Shelter

The shelter director, Reasa Currier, indicates the proposed change aims to better address the complex reasons pets enter shelters, which are often related to human factors, such as lack of access to veterinary care or pet-friendly housing. She says newly assigned ACOs will facilitate access to a range of shelter services, including free pet food and supplies, the PetHaven Program for victims of domestic abuse, behavior and training support and free and low-cost veterinary care.

In a 2020 study by the University of Denver, researcher Kevin N. Morris writes, "most cities' animal control ordinances emphasize code enforcement over actual human or animal health and welfare outcomes. This finding identifies a major gap in the ability of animal control policies to account for broader factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and built environment) that influence animal welfare in a community."

Currier believes that ACOs, as shelter employees, would be better positioned to link those in need with shelter programs than sworn law enforcement officers, citing use of ACOs in other localities. Providing such services mirrors a national program for vulnerable communities developed by the Humane Society of the United States, for whom Currier previously worked. The HSUS program provides ongoing and comprehensive owner support services, including spay/neuter, flea/tick preventive, dewormer, microchipping, vaccinations, minor surgeries, antibiotics, grooming, skin treatment, food and treats; collars, leashes, litterboxes and other supplies. This approach is more effective than punishing individuals for lack of access to services or waiting until individuals and pets are in crisis.

The local Shelter now offers rabies and spay/neuter procedures. The Shelter has not yet indicated what new free or low-cost programs might be available here for those in need.



COURTESY SSPBA

Comparison of animal intake for Fairfax County shelter with other jurisdictions.

Upcoming Town Halls on Animal Program

The Department of Animal Sheltering and the Fairfax County Police Department are hosting two town halls in March to discuss the proposed changes and answer residents' questions about the proposal.

Town Hall Meeting One

Date: Monday, March 11
Time: 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Location: Fairfax County Animal Shelter - Michael R. Frey Campus, 4500 West Ox Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030

Town Hall Meeting Two

Date: Wednesday, March 13
Time: 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Location: Fairfax County Animal Shelter - Lorton Campus, 8875 Lorton Rd., Lorton, VA 22079

For more information on the county's proposal, including signing up to be heard, see: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/fairfax-county-animal-services-consolidation-proposal>

Police Union Opposes Elimination of APPO Unit

The Southern States Police Benevolent Association, representing APPOs, opposes the proposed elimination of the unit, citing their mission "to protect the public while defending and promoting animal welfare and the humane treatment of animals." An ani-

mal related violation does not equate to an automatic issuance of a criminal summons; APPOs often work with pet owners to obtain voluntary compliance, they say. A September 2023 Animal Services Division information sheet describes several instances in which APPOs worked with pet owners over extended periods, to ensure better outcomes for humans and pets.

The union argues APPOs are experienced and equally able to connect owners with shelter programs, as appropriate, without reorganization. Moreover, they note the move from the newly unionized police unit to the non-unionized Shelter is in conflict with the spirit of the collective bargaining ordinance which the county recently implemented.

Does the County Need to Satisfy Critics?

Concerns of wildlife rehabilitators and naturalists may be taken care of by the recent change in the proposal leaving the wildlife components out of the move to the Department of Animal Sheltering.

Are those critical of the proposed plan mollified by the announced revision for wildlife in the proposal? Certified wildlife rehabilitator Dr. Clare Thorp, shares that those in the wildlife conservation community fear that the deer management program would be carved out from other wildlife protection. "We see the wildlife work that the APPOs do more broadly than the deer management plan. So we are concerned about the implications that switching back to ACOs has for the day to day humane management of wildlife. This includes the availability of on the spot euthanasia, which requires the ability to carry and discharge a firearm on public lands. We cannot see how this proposal - even with the reassurances that 'nothing will change' - is anything other than fixing something which isn't broken."

Environmental scientist, master naturalist, tree commissioner, and former director

of Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District Jerry Peters says he, and other impacted parties he has talked to, find "the consolidation proposal is too vague, lacking necessary coordination with the impacted parties, particularly APPOs and private wildlife rehabilitation volunteers, and has other issues, too many [to list], to be kept in the County Executive's proposed budget."

Wildlife advocates from Audubon Society of Northern Virginia wonder about resolving care philosophy conflicts which will arise with ACOs under shelter supervision handling wildlife calls.

Currier also proposes forming "a wildlife advisory committee including community members, licensed wildlife rehabilitators, and industry experts, to ensure the program meets the community's needs and embraces industry best practices for wildlife issues." Now that there is no plan to move wildlife management programs to sheltering, it is not clear if or how a wildlife advisory committee would be organized.

Where to learn more

Two town hall meetings to address questions and concerns from residents about the proposed changes. Public town halls are scheduled for Monday, March 11 at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter - Michael R. Frey Campus, 4500 West Ox Rd, Fairfax; and Wednesday, March 13 at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter - Lorton Campus, 8875 Lorton Rd, Lorton, both begin at 5:30 p.m.

The Board of Supervisors could approve this reorganization through the FY25 Budget Process. Public comment on this proposal will be part of the FY25 Budget Public Hearings.

For more information on the county's proposal, including signing up to be heard, see: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/fairfax-county-animal-services-consolidation-proposal>

ENTERTAINMENT

FORB'S ANNUAL

NATIVE PLANT SALE

Online ordering for FORB's (Friends of Riverbend Park) 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!

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

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 MARCH 7

Vienna Teens Work to Provide Support for Troops. U.S. troops serving overseas are about to get some care packages from the home front. Vienna's Club Phoenix Teen Council is teaming up with the HeroBox organization to launch a donation drive to support U.S. armed forces deployed across the world, and they need your help to make the drive a success! Now through March 7, residents who wish to help may drop off the following items at the Vienna Community Center:

- ❖ New socks and undershirts
- ❖ Non-perishable food items such as beef jerky, canned tuna, or dried fruit
- ❖ Hygiene items such as body wipes, hand sanitizer, and sunscreen
- ❖ Other common supplies like pens, books, or journals.

The Vienna Community Center is located at 120 Cherry St. SE. Donations may be dropped off at the Community Center lobby, Mon-



Vienna Restaurant Week 2024 takes place March 3-10, 2024 at restaurants in Vienna.

day-Friday from 8 a.m.-10:30 p.m.; Saturday from 8 a.m.-9 p.m. and Sunday from 12-6 p.m. Donations may also be dropped off at Club Phoenix Teen Center (located in the Community Center's basement) Monday-Thursday, 2:30-6:30 p.m. and Fridays, 2:30-9 p.m.

MARCH 3-10

Vienna Restaurant Week 2024.

At various locations throughout Vienna. For the third year in a row, chefs and eateries all across the Town of Vienna welcome diners to Vienna Restaurant Week from Sunday, March 3 to Sunday, March 10, 2024. Vienna's variety of cuisines are guaranteed to please any palate. The 50+ participating restaurants (from fast-casual to fine dining) will offer special deals for dine-in, delivery, or takeout. From Asian to Italian, French to Lebanese, Indian to Latin American, burgers to baked goods and more, diners are sure to find their favorite meal at a great price during Vienna Restaurant Week. To kick-off the culinary week, the Town of Vienna will be hosting a drop-in social event on Tuesday, March 5 from 4-6 p.m. near the Town Green adjacent to Maple Avenue with restaurant week promo item giveaways and live music. Website: exploreviennava.com/restaurantweek

THURSDAY/MARCH 7

"Tales of the Night" Foreign Language Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. (France; Directed Michel Ocelot) Shown in French with English subtitles. "Tales of the Night" weaves together six exotic fables, each unfolding in a unique locale, from Tibet, to medieval Europe, to the Land of the Dead. This movie is told through gorgeous animation and is appropriate for all ages.

THURSDAY/MARCH 7

"Tales of the Night" Foreign Language Film. 6:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Tales of the Night" weaves together six exotic fables, each unfolding in a unique locale, from Tibet, to medieval Europe, to the Land of the Dead. This movie is told through gorgeous animation and is appropriate for all ages. Not rated.

MARCH 7-10

Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. A 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Thursday, 7 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Friday, 8 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests.

FRIDAY/MARCH 8

The Music of Billy Joel with Michael Cavanaugh. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Celebrate the 45th Anniversary of Billy Joel's iconic album "52nd Street" and the Piano Man's upcoming 75th birthday with the remarkable Michael Cavanaugh, star of the Broadway sensation "Movin' Out." Experience an incredible night of Billy Joel's greatest hits, including "Big Shot," "My Life," "Just the Way You Are," "Piano Man," "You May Be Right," "New York State of Mind," "Uptown Girl," "Movin' Out" and so many more.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

World Premiere of Malek Jandali's Clarinet Concerto, Performed by Anthony McGill. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Experience a historic musical collaboration between Syrian composer Malek Jandali and virtuoso Anthony McGill, Principal Clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic, in the world premiere performance of a new Clarinet Concerto dedicated to the victims of injustice everywhere. This groundbreaking composition weaves together Jandali's innovative vision to preserve the cultural heritage of his homeland with McGill's breathtaking artistry, resulting in a symphonic masterpiece that unites us through the transformative power of music.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Arts Of Great Falls Spring Fundraiser: "An Evening at Monet's Garden." The Arts of Great Falls (AGF) will sponsor "An Evening at Monet's Garden" a spring fundraiser to promote and support the fine arts through teaching and exhibiting in the community. This year's gala will focus on expanding youth programs and will feature live art demonstrations

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ENTERTAINMENT



“The Many Disguises of Robin Hood” will be offered on March 16-17, 2023 at the McLean Community Center.

and a performance by renowned soprano, Melissa Mino, along with the Great Falls Philharmonic presenting classic French music. The evening venue will include dinner and dancing and both a live auction and a silent auction that runs from Feb. 24-March 9, featuring artwork, beauty treatments, interior design consultations and much more. Experience the magic of the arts, all in one evening, at River Bend Golf and Country Club, March 9 from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. For more about the Gala and buying tickets visit: <https://artsofgreat-fallsgala.cbo.io>

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Teen Job and Opportunity Fair. 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Westfield High School, Chantilly. Presented by Springfield Supervisor Pat Herry. Job fair focuses on students and young job seekers looking for a variety of employment opportunities; full time, after-school, seasonal positions, internship opportunities, and volunteer positions. Students of all ages are encouraged to attend, but most opportunities will be geared toward students ages 16-18.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Children’s Consignment Sale. 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Grace Weekday Pre-school, 7434 Bath Street, Springfield. Cash only and all sales final.

MARCH 9 TO APRIL 14

“Every Brilliant Thing.” At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center Performing Arts, announces its newest production, Every Brilliant Thing, a heartfelt one-person play that celebrates the little things that make life brilliant. “Every Brilliant Thing” is an interactive solo performance piece that explores the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity to find joy in all the little things. Showtimes are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are on sale now and range from \$25 to \$35. For more information, visit the website (www.workhousearts.org).

MARCH 9-10, MARCH 16-17

Traveling Players Presents Thrills & Chills: A Festival of Two Plays: Dracula: A Comic Thriller— 1 p.m. and Jane Eyre— 7 p.m. At Traveling Players Studio, in Tysons Corner. Tickets are now available for Traveling Players’ Thrills & Chills play festival, which runs weekends March 9-17 at their Studio in Tysons Corner Center. Performed by Traveling Players students, the festival will breathe new life into intrepid heroines and memorable monsters, with modern twists on beloved novels. Visit travelingplayers.org or call 703-987-1712.

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

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. Featuring KA/PO: Karen Ashbrook and Paul Oorts: hammered dulcimer, harp guitar, mandolin, musette accordion, to name a few! Visit www.oldbrogue.com or call the Old Brogue at 703-759-3309

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

The Peking Acrobats. 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. For more than 30 years, The Peking Acrobats have revitalized Chinese acrobatics, fusing ancient athletic discipline with modern special effects to create a kaleidoscopic marvel for all ages. These world-class gymnasts, jugglers, cyclists, and tumblers provide a gravity-defying spectacle with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility, and control. Accompanied by live musicians who skillfully play traditional Chinese instruments, The Peking Acrobats execute daring maneuvers and display their technical prowess at trick cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting, and gymnastics. Visit cfa.gmu.edu.

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

Fairfax Choral Society Performs. 4:30 p.m. The Vocal Arts Ensemble presents The Earth, The Air, The

Deep: Songs of Nature and Life. At Annandale United Methodist Church. This concert intends to depict nature and life in music. Join the Vocal Arts Ensemble and Vocal Arts Singers as they embrace the elements - human beings, flora and fauna - and life’s journey, incorporating the joy, sadness, and humor that life has to offer.

TUESDAY/MARCH 12

NARFE Vienna-Oakton Chapter Meeting. 1 p.m. At the Vienna Community Center. Guest speaker - Mala Persaud, Manager of Trace - Zero Waste Store on Church Street, Vienna, VA. (Learn how to explore sustainable, plastic-free living from the manager of Fairfax County’s only bulk refill shop! They have a full range of dry foods, household cleaning supplies and eco-friendly household and personal items.) Free for NARFE members and guests. Call 703-205-9041.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 13

Film, “Nanny.” 5-7:45 p.m. At Johnson Center Cinema at GMU, Fairfax. The Visiting Filmmakers Series is pleased to welcome award-winning filmmaker (and Film at Mason professor) Nikyatu Jusu to campus for a free public screening of her psychological horror film, Nanny, followed by a post-screening discussion hosted James Bah, Film at Mason student and President of GMU’s Black Filmmakers Association. Nanny is the first horror film to win the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. Seating is limited, so reserve your place today!

MARCH 14-17

2024 Women’s Storytelling Festival. In Fairfax City and Online. The 5th Annual Women’s Storytelling Festival (WSF) is hosted by Better Said Than Done. Showcasing a wide range of storytelling styles, the 2024 festival features 21 storytellers who will be perform-

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 19

Here’s What’s Happening at MCC!

Presented by The Alden

MAR
7/20

**Foreign Language Film
“Tales of the Night”**
(France; Directed by Michel Ocelot)
Shown in French with English subtitles.
Thursday, March 7, 1 p.m. and
Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 p.m.
Free admission

MAR
15

Old Firehouse 5th & 6th Grader Party

St. Patty’s Party
Friday, March 15, 7-9:30 p.m.
\$35/\$25 MCC district residents
\$10 OFC members

MAR
16/17

The Alden’s 2024 Youth Spring Production

“The Many Disguises of Robin
Hood” By Brian Guehring
Saturday and Sunday,
March 16 & 17, at 2 p.m.
\$10/\$7 seniors
\$5 MCC district residents

MAR
20

MCC Governing Board Meeting

Monthly Meeting + Public Hearing
on FY2026 Programs
Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 p.m.
All Governing Board meetings are open
to the public.

MAR
22

The Old Firehouse Friday Night Trip

Washington Capitals Game
Friday, March 22, 4-10 p.m.
\$70/\$60 MCC district residents



MAR
23

Special Events

**Fiesta Del Sol: Latin American
& Caribbean Festival**
Saturday, March 23, 5-10 p.m.

Free admission. Drink and food
tickets sold onsite. Patrons must be
21 years old or older to purchase
alcoholic beverages.



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FCPS Seeks 2% and 6% Pay Hikes

FROM PAGE 3

to fund the recurring cost of the 2 percent raise for all FCPS employees effective January 1, 2024, ending on June 30, 2024. The 2 percent raise in place now results from the Virginia General Assembly's final budget adopted on Sept. 14, 2023.

Virginia lawmakers belatedly passed the state's fiscal year 2024 budget agreement on Sept. 6, 2023, slightly more than two months late. Virginia's fiscal year 2024 began on July 1, 2023, and runs to June 30, 2024. Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed the state's budget on Sept. 14, 2023. The Virginia State Budget FY 2024 included an additional \$645 million to state public schools and gave a 2 percent raise on top of the 5 percent raise last year. In the News Release from the Office of the Governor, Youngkin discussed putting politics aside, focusing on "common-sense solutions," and committing to students and teachers.

On Oct. 26, 2023, the Fairfax County School Board approved the Fiscal Year 2024 Revised Budget, which included the state's 2

ADVERTISED BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS		
Change from FY 2024 Approved Budget - \$ in millions		
Compensation		
Compensation Adjustment of 6%	\$170.7	
Benefit Rate Changes	24.1	
ERFC Legacy Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP)	6.5	
Market Comparative Cyclical Review	0.3	
Compensation Base Savings	(37.6)	
Compensation Subtotal	\$164.0	
Multiyear Investments*		
Inclusive Preschool Expansion	\$2.1	
Joint Environmental Task Force Year 3	1.9	
Fine and Performing Arts Stipends	1.1	
Athletic Expansion - Boys Volleyball and Girls Wrestling	0.8	
Human Capital Management (HCM) Project Year 3	0.7	
Certified Athletic Trainers Year 2	0.6	
Family Liaison Position Conversions	-	
Multiyear Investments Subtotal	\$7.1	
Total Expenditure Adjustments*	\$301.8	
Required Adjustments*		
Compensation Supplement of 2%	\$55.3	
Enrollment and Student Needs	46.6	
Recurring Baseline Adjustments	14.4	
Contractual Services	12.3	
Transfers to Other Funds	2.1	
Required Adjustments Subtotal	\$130.6	

*Does not add due to rounding.

FCPS's FY 2025 Advertised Budget Highlights.

SCREENSHOT VIA FCPS

percent compensation increase. All division employees saw the increase on their January 2024 pay stubs. The 2 percent increase expires on June 30, 2024, according to Virginia's FY 2024 budget.

Reid's proposed FY 2025 6 percent compensation adjustment and the 2 percent

compensation supplement for all FCPS employees results in an 8 percent increase over what employees earned on their last paycheck in December 2023. Fairfax County Public Schools is one of Virginia's largest employers, with an estimated 25,175 full-time workers.

GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY		
(Amounts shown are in millions, net change over FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan)		
PROJECTED REVENUE INCREASE		
Revenue Increase at Current Real Estate Tax Rate		\$225.57
4-cent Real Estate Tax Increase		\$129.28
Cigarette Tax Increase		\$1.29
Fee Adjustments		\$2.74
Revenues associated with Expenditure Adjustments		\$3.86
Net Impact of Transfers In		\$0.48
Total Available		\$363.22
FY 2025 REQUIREMENTS		
	County	Schools
School Operating Support	—	\$165.00
County Compensation	\$148.10	—
Debt Service	\$11.60	\$8.90
Transportation	\$12.15	—
Other Priorities	\$6.76	—
Subtotal	\$178.61*	\$173.90
Reserve Adjustments		\$6.88
Total Uses		\$359.39
Available Balance for Board Consideration		\$3.83

SCREENSHOT VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

Revenue and Requirements.

Can Prospective Public School Employees Afford Fairfax?

FROM PAGE 3

Looking at Fairfax County Public Schools FY 2024 Unified Scale, 260-days (12-months), effective Jan. 1, 2024, provides a good overview of sample base salaries from lowest to highest. According to the division, the lowest income is \$35,930, which falls within HUD.gov's definition of "very low income." It is for administrative and operational employees in Step 1 (Grades 001 and 002). At \$35,930, it falls at the lower end of the 40 percent Area Median Income (AMI), just a few thousand dollars more than the "extremely low" poverty level at 30% AMI. According to the division's Teacher Salary Scale, beginning teachers with a Bachelor's degree earn \$67,501. According to HUD guidelines, this is within 70 percent of the area median income.

Without considering the superintendent's salary, the highest Fairfax County Public School pay, effective Jan. 1, 2024, is \$269,191 for leadership team members. Pay for Dr. Michelle Reid, division superintendent, rose from \$380,000 to \$387,600 starting Jan. 1, 2024.

The first challenge for Fairfax County Public Schools applicants on the lower end of the division's 260-day, 12-month pay scale is that a household should spend no more than 30 percent of its gross monthly income on rent. A single teacher earning \$67,501, would be forced to stretch their budget \$300 a month beyond 30 percent to afford a one-bedroom rental in Fairfax County, which costs an average of \$2,000.



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay



SCREENSHOT FCPS

The welcome center inside the Fairfax County Public Schools Gatehouse Administration Center.

It would be unlikely for a one-person administrative and operational employee candidate, with an income of \$35,930, to qualify for a one-bedroom apartment in Fairfax County without some form of rental housing assistance.

Therein comes the second challenge to prospective Fairfax County Public Schools applicants whose pay scale would be low to moderate: navigating, finding, and obtaining rental housing assistance.

The county offers a detailed online overview of its affordable rental housing programs and privately owned affordable rental housing options with links to more specific program details such as eligibility requirements, applications, and waitlists. However, the county announced that waitlist applications are closed.

Applicants could check out the county's magnet housing program for contracted teachers, bus drivers, public safety recruits, and some Inova employees. It offers afford-

able rental housing with seven properties. Legato Corner Condos in Fairfax offers a one-bedroom apartment for \$905, and Wescott Ridge offers a one-bedroom apartment with a den for \$905.

Another rental option would be federal low-income housing tax-credit community apartment complexes like Arrowbrook at Ovation in Herndon, which opened in the spring of 2023, and One University in Fairfax, which will open in 2024. These complexes participate in a housing program that provides low-income tenants with affordable housing at a set rent. As an affordable housing/tax credit property, they set rents based on the current market at 30, 40, 50 and 60 percent of the area median income.

"One University is a powerful demonstration of this county's determination to provide more affordable and accessible housing opportunities in every corner of the County," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay.

According to Jan Haub, affordable housing policies differ by community and can affect eligibility and obligations. She oversees the low-income housing tax credits and affordable housing compliance for Paradigm, which manages Arrowbrook at Ovation, owned by SCG Development, and One University, also managed by Paradigm but owned by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

"Things vary tremendously from property to property It's very different at One University; it's different at the community down the street that has affordable housing, and every single community is going to be different," Haub said in a mid-January interview.

One University is accepting online applications and has apartments priced for people at 50 and 60 percent AMI. Haub said Fairfax County will fill the positions based on the lower-income 30 percent and 40 percent AMI.

Kayde Morton, leasing professional Ovation at Arrowbrook, wrote in late February, "Currently, we do not have any availability. We are 100 percent leased. Should an apartment become available, we offer it to our waitlist applicants first Please keep in mind that the waiting list is about 6-12 months long."

Ultimately, attempting to navigate Fairfax County's rental housing market for those at the lower 2024 pay scales offered by Fairfax County Public Schools may cause qualified applicants to look outside the county. As Haub said, referring to the units provided at more modest rents, such as 30 percent AMI, "My point is that these things are very complicated. And it is easy to get confused."

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Cornerstones Proposal Raises Local Residents' Concerns

Would build 34 units of permanent, supportive housing in Fair Oaks.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In February 2022, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors authorized consideration of a Comprehensive Plan amendment for a 1.12-acre, county-owned site in Fair Oaks. It asked county staff to look at the possibility of allowing affordable housing, up to a density of 35 units/acre, as an alternative use there.

That action paved the way for Cornerstones' application to build permanent supportive housing on that property. A local nonprofit, Cornerstones promotes self-sufficiency by providing support and advocacy for people in need of food, shelter, affordable housing and financial aid.

The land at issue is in the Sully District, on Washington Corporation Drive, northwest of the interchange of Route 50 and West Ox Road. Currently, the Comprehensive Plan recommends residential use at two units/acre or low-intensity office use.

Fairfax County held an online, informational meeting about Cornerstones' proposal on Jan. 22. Hosting it were Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) and staff from the county's Department of Planning and Development.

Attorney Lynne Strobel, representing the applicant, presented details about the project. She said there'd be 34 units of housing for low-income people in a 27,000-square-foot building about 34 feet high.

"It would be permanent, supportive housing in a nice, attractive building," said Strobel. "They'd all be very small, one-bedroom units with a generous common area. And the occupants – primarily single individuals – would receive services from Cornerstones."

Paul Browne, an affordable-housing consultant working with Cornerstones on this proposal, said the Harris Teeter grocery store is within walking distance, and public transportation is available on Route 50. He noted, as well, that "the rent will be far less than market rate, and the occupants may get rent subsidies."

Some myths about affordable housing arose at the meeting.

A man who didn't identify himself commented, "These people will bring crime with them."

But, replied Strobel, "It's not transient housing. It's an opportunity for individuals to have stable housing in a supportive setting." Browne added that property man-



The location proposed for permanent, supportive housing for low-income people.



Artist's rendition of the proposed apartment building in Fair Oaks.

agement will be on site to protect both the occupants and the nearby residents.

Another man then spoke up, worried about the possibility of there being "sex offenders and people with a violent, criminal history there." However, Kerrie Wilson, CEO of Cornerstones, assured him that wouldn't be the case.

"HUD [the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] and the Fairfax County Housing Authority determine [people's] credit and do criminal-background checks," she explained. "People with those types of felony convictions wouldn't be allowed to live there."

"Usually, they've been victims, themselves," continued Wilson. "And when they're not living on the streets and have permanent, supportive housing, crime goes down."

Amy Lemieux, president of the nearby Fair Oaks Estates Home-

owners Assn., asked, "Why wasn't there any outreach to the neighborhoods closest to this? The county should have given us more notice of this meeting and project."

In response, Graham Owen, a planner with the Department of Planning and Development, said, "We sent out about 2,500 mailers for this meeting, and we're happy to reach out to your HOA and fill them in about this."

Wilson said all the occupants would be from Fairfax County, and she also stressed that this facility would not be a shelter. Lemieux then asked what services would be provided there.

"On-site case management with social workers and, as needed, AA meetings and substance-abuse counseling," replied Wilson. "We'd also offer jobs training to get them back into the workforce, and we'd have a van to take them to and from appointments. We'd give them access to the county services

they need, and they could also join clubs and do hobbies."

Harmonie Taddeo, executive director of Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM), which provides food, emergency rent and utility assistance, plus other services to local residents in need, spoke up, as well. "We know the need for affordable housing is great and we support Cornerstones and this project," she said. "And we would help provide food for those who need it."

Wilson said the people living in this new facility would mainly be individuals with disabilities, elderly people and people who've experienced homelessness. "They'll sign a lease and will have to pay their portion of the rent," she said. "Cornerstones has been helping people like this for some 50 years, and we've been very successful at it."

Next, Joshua Booth with YIMBYs (Yes in My Neighborhood) of Northern Virginia, also voiced his support for this proposal. "I'm for this project," he said. "I think it's fantastic to help these people and get them back on their feet. And it's great that the county gives them supportive services."

Lemieux, though, was still apprehensive. "Hundreds of children and houses are within walking distance of this facility," she said. "We have empathy for these folks' situation, but we have a concern about formerly homeless people – whose substance abuse and mental health led them to become homeless – living near our communities."

Wilson countered that "permanent, supportive housing is a

national model with proven benefits. Fairfax County has a limited number of these types of projects, and that's why it's so important and there's such a need. There are about 300 individuals in Fairfax County today who could use this type of housing with the supports."

"The county does provide support for people who've experienced homelessness, in apartments throughout the county," added Browne. "We think the strong advantage here is that, in this setting, Cornerstones can provide 24/7 services and monitoring."

Barbara Davis of Greenbriar, about a mile away from the site, said, "Criminal activity in our community has increased in the last couple years. Do you screen for all crimes committed, such as car thefts and packages being stolen?"

"We do screen for felony offenses," replied Wilson. "And misdemeanor crimes may also show up."

"And if they commit a crime while they're living there, would they be evicted?" asked Davis.

"Yes," answered Wilson. "And, also, for the use of illegal substances – that would violate their lease."

Resident Charles Tennyson said, "This sounds like Section 8 housing, which brings an unwanted element. When can the citizens vote on this?"

Graham said it's definitely not Section 8 housing and serves another population. He also said, "The Board of Supervisors, which represents the citizens, makes the decision."

"There'll be public hearings, and people can contact us with their concerns," said Supervisor Smith. "We want to hear what the public has to say." The Planning Commission public hearing is scheduled for May 1, and the Supervisors will hold their public hearing on June 11.

Resident Reggie Henry asked, "Assuming this building is approved, when will it become occupied?" Browne said construction would start about 18 months after the Supervisors' approval, while the site plan is being done and approved, and take about a year to complete, so it would be about 2-1/2 years total.

Hoping to allay citizens' fears, Browne said the bottom line is that "it's an apartment building where Cornerstones will provide services to the residents, as needed."

The issue will next go to the joint Sully District Council and West Fairfax County Citizens Assn. Land-Use Committee on March 18.

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Legals

DL United LLC trading as Jacalito, 8081-A Alban Road, Springfield, Fairfax County, VA 22150. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Beer and Wine On and Off and Mixed Beverages license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Jose DeLeon. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

Legals

ABC LICENSE
Ono Brewing Company/Food And Stuff Llc trading as Ono Brewing Company and Odd BBQ, 4520 Daly DR, STE 102, Chantilly, Fairfax County, Virginia, 20151-3735. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Retail Restaurant or Caterer Application - Restaurant, Wine, Beer, Consumed On and Off Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Scott Hoffman, President, Ono Brewing Company. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

Legals

Moxley Loft Studios LLC trading as Loft Studios, 4010 Gateway Dr, Fairfax, Fairfax County, Virginia 22030-0000. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Day Spa license, for on-premises of beer, wine license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

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NEWS

Fairfax
City
Budget

FROM PAGE 10

The proposed FY 2025 budget also includes a January 1, 2025, 3.5-percent merit-pay increase for the City's eligible, general pay-scale employees and a 2 percent market-rate adjustment to general pay scales, effective July 1, 2024, to retain parity within the region. These increases are important, said Stalzer, for greater recruitment and retention of employees.

In October 2022, public-safety employees were moved from pay ranges to a step system. The proposed budget includes a 1-percent cost-of-living adjustment for them, effective July 1, 2024, and the programmed annual step increase.

Furthermore, the budget recommends a net increase of 24.5 full-time positions supported via the General Fund, with 8.75 of them to support the Police Department, Public Works, Communications, the City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation, and Historic Resources.

Proposed, as well, is the conversion of 22 temporary positions to part-time benefited positions; this action would equate to 15.75 full-time employees with benefits. These employees would support the Economic Development Office, Fire Department, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works.

Stalzer said the proposed budget also builds on the City's FY 24 investments supporting economic development to stimulate and grow Fairfax's commercial base "in an impactful and sustainable way." Overall, he said, "The proposed FY25 expenditures of \$264,398,748 for all funds and \$180,655,702 for the General Fund support the significant progress we have made over the last several fiscal years and will help to ensure a financially stable and vibrant City of Fairfax for generations to come."

Public hearings on the budget are scheduled for March 12 and 26, plus April 9 and 30, with budget adoption slated for May 7. Following Stalzer's presentation, Mayor Catherine Read thanked him and everyone else involved in "putting this budget together. This is a very good foundation for us to continue discussing it, going forward."

New Fairfax City Manager

FROM PAGE 11

Next, in June 2017, he became Manassas Park's city manager. There, he was responsible for overseeing the day-to-day and strategic executive management of that city's departments as well as developing and recommending policies, strategies, annual budgets and ordinances. In addition, he managed the execution of the city's budget and capital improvement program.

However, perhaps Palko's most impressive achievement during his tenure was getting Manassas Park on a solid, financial footing. When he started his job there, the city was in fiscal distress. But he helped

lead its financial turnaround from a negative fund balance and no credit rating to a more than \$16 million fund balance – equaling more than 25 percent of Manassas Park's operating revenues – and a AA credit rating.

Now, though, he's ready to start a new chapter and a new challenge in Fairfax. "I am honored and grateful to the Fairfax City Council for giving me the opportunity to serve as city manager for such a wonderful community with such a great and talented team of professionals on City staff," said Palko. "I look forward to working for the City Council and helping them achieve their goals for the community. I am eager to engage with and provide high-quality service to City residents and cannot wait to provide

my support to an amazing City staff as we work collectively to accomplish our shared mission to serve our great City."

Like Mayor Read, Councilmember Jeff Greenfield, the longest-serving person on City Council, is also enthusiastic about the skills and experience Palko brings with him. "He's got a passion for the budget process that is impressive, and he is the first bilingual city manager we have hired. His fluent Spanish will be valued in our community, and he is committed to being out in our City, meeting people where they are."

— MATT KAISER CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 15

ing spoken word stories, intended for a mature audience. Ticket holders, whether in-person or virtual, will be able to watch the festival videos for one month after the festival concludes. In-person performances will take place at The Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, from Friday March 15 – Sunday March 17, with a special virtual-only showcase premiering on March 14. For schedules, other details, and tickets, visit <https://www.bettersaidthandone.com/womens-festival/>

MARCH 15-17

Super Pet Expo. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Hours: Friday March 15, 3 p.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday March 16, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sunday, March 17, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Super Pet Expo encourages visitors to meet their forever pet at the Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, March 15-17, where nine rescue groups will exhibit. They are: Akita Rescue Mid Atlantic Coast, Inc; Furever Haven Animal Rescue; K-9 Caring Angels; Katies Kats Island Rescue; Margaret's Saving Grace Bully Rescue; Nalani Horse Rescue; Only Maine Coons Rescue; Shenandoah Shepherd Rescue and Virginia German Shepherd Rescue. Visit <https://www.superpetexpo.com/>

FRIDAY/MARCH 15

St. Patty's Party – The Old Firehouse 5th and 6th Grader Parties. 7-9:30 p.m. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. Old Firehouse 5th & 6th grader parties are themed and decorated accordingly. Free catered food and beverages will be distributed to participants. Parties feature a DJ, an open dance floor and a variety of activities.

SATURDAY/MARCH 16

Shenandoah Conservatory and Friends "Slavic Dreams." 3:00 p.m. At Reston Community Center's Center Stage, Reston. Violinist Akemi Takayama and her musical colleagues perform a concert celebrating their history.

MARCH 16-17

Virginia Opera: Madam Butterfly. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Composed by Giacomo Puccini. Saturday, March 16 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 17 at 2 p.m. Performance Sponsor: Woodleigh Chase.

MARCH 16-17

"The Many Disguises of Robin Hood" By Brian Guehring. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. In merry ol' England, the townspeople are



The Super Pet Expo takes place on March 15-17, 2023 at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly.



An Irish Dance Performance takes place Sunday, March 17, 2024 at the Reston Regional Library.

overtaxed and unfulfilled. Lucky for them, the mysterious outlaw, Robin Hood, is outsmarting the rich with clever disguises and returning their funds to the poor. Frustrated by these tricks, the sheriff, his daughter, and the prince scheme to capture Robin Hood and maintain control of the taxes. Are Robin Hood and the band of outlaws ready for their riskiest deceit yet? Produced by special arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Company, Inc., of Woodstock, Illinois.

SATURDAY/MARCH 16

String Theory Presentation. 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Presentation by Dr. Howard Jeffrey Bender on String Theory, including how it influences consciousness and personality, the origin of the universe, and an explanation of Dark Matter.

SUNDAY/MARCH 17

Irish Dance Performance. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a performance by the Foley Academy of Irish Dance as they present classic and modern dance routines!

ARTSCREEN: A FREE FILM SERIES

CELEBRATING THE ARTS

Join in a free film series on Friday evenings in the City of Fairfax at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Doors open at 7 p.m.; Films begin at 7:30 p.m. Free popcorn, candy, refreshments and door prizes, too!

April 12: *Midnight in Paris.* (2011) PG-13 - While on a trip to Paris with his fiancée's family, a nostalgic screenwriter finds himself mysteriously going back to the 1920s every day at midnight.

Locked Up ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... but not freaked out. It's happened again, and I'm sure it won't be the last time, given it's me manning the controls. Not to worry though. I have a neighbor who, among many neighborly attributes, unlock my computer with his eyes closed (bit of an exaggeration but you get the point). The point being that all is not lost or all that could be found won't be delayed a week or so if I must take my computer to a store, where a computer professional will unlock the damage, I have "mouse-clicked.". What a resource for a person who if his (my) life depended on computer knowledge, like so many of us of a certain age I'm sure, it would be a life soon forgotten. Moreover, one of my greatest fears if ever I needed to be computer literate for my income/daily bread. Fortunately, I am not dependent on too much technology for food, shelter, dollars, and sense. However, being frozen out from my computer does present challenges that can be hard to overcome – without paying through the nose at your local repair geek.

Thankfully, I, as does everyone else in the neighborhood, have Robert to rely on. He's a middle-aged man who works out of his house along with his mother and sister, in an E-Bay world of buy and sell. Some of their recent purchases have been prom dresses, and bucket and buckets of hand sanitizer. Two purchases which cost pennies on the dollar, almost literally, and according to them are sure to return a profit. From the various items they've bought and sold/sold and bought, I imagine they could provide a layman's "Art of the Deal." They may not have the panache of the original author, but they might have some prime examples of deals getting done – at the non-corporate level.

If not for Robert's expertise and/or my new relationship with my smart phone I can now (after a 90-minute phone call with Verizon) retrieve my emails which comes in quite handy after you've been locked out of your main computer. Meaning, I am not stuck, like I used to be. Can you imagine, as an example, that had I no other resource than my desktop, on the day, as it so happens that I'm waiting for an email from my oncologist to update me on my most recent PET scan. A PET scan which will indicate if there's been any growth in the papillary thyroid tumors in my lungs since I've been off my cancer medicine for two months. This is "... Kind of a big deal" to invoke Wayfair, Red Lobster and KFC advertisements. The anxiety I'm likely experiencing while waiting for the result – with commentary posted by the doctor, would be exponentially worse if I didn't have access to my computer/emails for more than a minute. Yes, when you're a cancer patient, some days, minutes matter, in your head anyway. As I've said to my oncologist on more than one occasion, time is of the essence and waiting for medical results can be excruciating. Whether they are good, bad, or indifferent, their substance can't be overstated. We need to know, we must know, we better know – do you know what I mean?

In this context, you can guess how important access to our computer/phone is. It's everything, and if cut-off from your doctor while awaiting results from a medical procedure which might indicate whether you're in medical trouble or not, it would be impossible to sit still, remain calm even breathe normally regardless of where your seat tray is. These kinds of rubber-meet-the-road moments matter way more than when rubber actually meets the road. That's transportation. This is life and/or death. But having a resource like Robert a phone call away, within walking distance no less and often available for an immediate rescue is to invoke a Jack Nicholson movie: "As Good As It Gets." And when you're a dope like me, when it comes to computers, who is afraid sometimes to even stroke a key for fear of the consequences to the computer and by association your life that day on said computer is a problem; especially, if on that particular day, you're waiting to hear back from your oncologist concerning a recent medical scan which quite possibly could spell the kind of trouble you've rarely had in the previous 15 years of "cancer hood," well; the impolite description is initiated s.o.l., the polite version is you're screwed. There really isn't an appropriate way to describe the level of fear, anxiety, and impatience that one might experience – when your life may be hanging in the balance and you're waiting to hear, and now you have no means of computer access to learn your fate. Eliminating all this drama is what Robert provides. If there was a neighborhood award for knowledge and availability above and beyond the call of neighborliness. I would nominate Robert. I am forever in his debt. I just wish I would hear back from my oncologist. I've eliminated the problem on my end. Now I need him to eliminate the problem on his end. It's been three days since my scan was completed. As my late mother would say: "It's enough already."

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



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JD and ED Sold More Homes Last Year in 22101 Than Any Other Agent!

Per MLS

FOR SALE!

Offered for...\$2,599,000

6813 Tennyson Drive, McLean
SPECTACULAR 8BR/5.5BA Craftsman, just a few blocks from the center of McLean. Boasting over 8000 finished square feet, this finely detailed and expansive home features 3 finished levels of naturally bright open floor plan design with 10 ft. ceilings and a beautiful 2-story foyer. Stunning family room with coffered ceiling and a wall of windows that opens to the gourmet kitchen with high-end appliances, oversized kitchen island, and custom cabinetry. Sprawling owner's suite on the upper lvl with expansive lux. spa like bathroom. LL w/ large rec, media, and 2 BRs. Franklin Sherman, Longfellow, McLean Schools!

FOR SALE!

Offered for...\$1,599,900

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!



FOR SALE! FRANKLIN PARK!

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

SOLD!

Offered for...\$1,600,000

1409 Layman Street, McLean
GORGEOUS 6BR/3BA home located in a serene cul-de-sac in sought after Potomac Hills. Fabulous additions -remodel by notable DC architect firm Barnes Vanze. The main level features a spacious living room with gas fireplace and formal dining room; expansive kitchen w/Wolf appliances and breakfast room with walk-out to deck. Primary bedroom located on the main level with 2 additional BR's. Lower Level includes a large family room with fireplace; 2 spacious BR's and a full-size bathroom; huge mudroom. Lowest level has 2 expansive recreation rooms. Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!

SOLD!

201 W. Cameron Road
Falls Church City, 22046
\$1,400,000

SOLD!

6709 Pine Creek Court
McLean, 22101
\$1,200,000

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!