

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 28, 2024

## Franconia District Holds Budget Town Hall

Public hearings on the budget April 16 - 18.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE GAZETTE

As Fairfax County moves closer to FY25 budget public hearings April 16 through 18, individual districts are holding budget town halls to gather residents' input. The year's budget planning cycle began with County Executive Bryan Hill's presentation of the "advertised budget" to the Board on Feb. 20.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Franconia District, held his town hall, virtually, on March 22, with assistance from Bryan Hill; Franconia District school board member, Marcia St. John-Cunning; and school board chief financial officer Lee Burton. Lusk invited residents to provide input and submit questions through email, call-in and Facebook.

Opening the session, Lusk noted, "One of the most important roles that I have in this job is to advocate on behalf of the Franconia District residents for budget priorities and improve their lives and grow our community as your county supervisor." Lusk spoke of regional market forces which drive rising real estate tax assessments and personal property values. Real estate assessments have risen this year by 3.2 percent. Lusk said Fairfax County is "one of the most desirable locations to live in the country. As a result, housing prices are increasing as more and more people compete for fewer homes. ... I remain committed to advocating for a reasonable adjustment to the real estate tax rate and personal property tax assessments."

Lusk called this budget year "especially challenging," citing a very competitive labor market for employees, with increased competition for police officers, firefighters, teachers, trash collectors, engineers, planners, transit workers, and others needed to maintain a high level of service. Meanwhile, the post-pandemic decrease in office values and rising vacancy rates negatively impacts county revenue. The county's FY25 budgeted operating contribution of \$203.7 million is a 21.3 percent increase over the \$167.9 million subsidy over FY24. As a final factor, Lusk recognized "the approximately 51.4 percent of every dollar in the proposed budget goes to supporting our school system. The budget request from the school board this year includes a 10 percent increase over last year's budget request, for about \$254 million."

The advertised budget could raise average



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

County and school officials, Rodney Lusk, Marcia St. John-Cunning, Bryan Hill, and Lee Burton present the proposed budget during Franconia District Town Hall.

### FY 2025 Advertised Budget Highlights

- Modest revenue growth, with real estate tax base increasing 2.73 percent
- Partially funds the Superintendent's Proposed Budget
  - JLARC study highlighted the need for additional state funding for Virginia schools
- Includes funding for the County's compensation program
  - Fully funds collective bargaining agreements with IAFF and SSPBA
  - Performance, Merit and Longevity Increases and 2.00% Market Rate Adjustment for non-represented employees
- Adjustments included for required debt service payments
- Metro and Connector funding based on preliminary estimates
- Funding these items requires a 4-cent increase in the Real Estate Tax rate to \$1.135 per \$100 of assessed value
- All other County priorities are offset by agency reductions and revenue enhancements
  - Reductions and revenue enhancements total \$36 million and 84 positions
  - User fees and indirect cost chargebacks adjustments increase by a net of \$3 million
  - Targeted investments for inflationary increases and Board priorities including parks and early childhood totaling \$39 million, net of revenue, and 42 merit positions

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S PRESENTATION ON THE FY 2025 ADVERTISED BUDGET

FAIRFAX COUNTY

### FY25 budget highlights.

residential tax bills by about \$524. That is without fully meeting the school board's request.

Hill commented that, "The largest net increase included in the advertised budget is to support our county schools." This year the school board budget request includes a six percent salary increase for all FCPS employees, and other funding, totaling \$253 million, or about a ten percent increase. Hill's proposed budget included \$165 million.

Burton speaking of the 10.5 percent increased school board request said, "one might think that is really high, but as it turns out, our surrounding neighbors stepped out with a 11.3 and a 10.6 percent increase in their county transfers as well."

Hill added, "The largest driver of the county increase portion is due to compensation, with the proposed pay and benefits increase totaling \$148 million." Compensation increases were driven by collective bargaining agreements for police, fire, and transit workers, with matching pay increases for non-represented employees.

County residents who joined the discussion, spoke either to ask questions about the increases or to advocate for spending in preferred areas. Jerry, from Hunter Mill, asked whether residents are seeing a "return on their investment" in from school funding, or are most children educated here leaving the

SEE PUBLIC HEARINGS, PAGE 7

## The Deal Is Dead

BY MARY KIMM  
GAZETTE PACKET

On Wednesday afternoon, March 27, with Ted Leonsis and D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser announcing a deal that would keep the Washington Capitals and Washington Wizards in D.C., and Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin conceding defeat, the deal to create a sports arena and entertainment district in Potomac Yard is dead.

The announcements came just after Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson said that the City of Alexandria had ended negotiations related to the Potomac Yard Entertainment District opportunity and that the proposal would not move forward.

"We trusted this process and are disappointed in what occurred between the Governor and General Assembly," Wilson said.

Youngkin said: "A one-of-a-kind project bringing world-class athletes and entertainment, creating 30,000 jobs and \$12 billion in economic activity just went up in smoke."

The metrics and assumptions raised by Youngkin as he kissed the project goodbye were met by many with skepticism throughout the process.

The idea that the arena could create 30,000 jobs was not backed up by data. Calculations and assumptions employed were kept secret.

"This is ludicrous," Heywood Sanders, a professor of public policy at the University of Texas San Antonio told Gazette Packet reporter Michael Pope. "It's simply not plausible."

An area of economics that has examined the return on public financing of professional sports facilities has concluded it rarely if ever pays off.

Neil deMause, co-author of the book "Field of Schemes," points to decades of research he says show these kinds of deals are bad for taxpayers. Team owners rake in profits, he said, and some businesses stand to benefit. But, he says, in example after example the rich get richer while the public gets fleeced. "I guess it's possible that Alexandria [would] be different from all of the other hundreds of times this has happened since the 1980s," deMause told Pope in an interview earlier this month. "But I would not put my money or Virginia taxpayer money on it." He could not cite any example of a good result for the pub-

SEE POTOMAC YARD, PAGE 3

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## Dry Spell Leads to Fires

## Fairfax County Fire and Rescue on Alert.

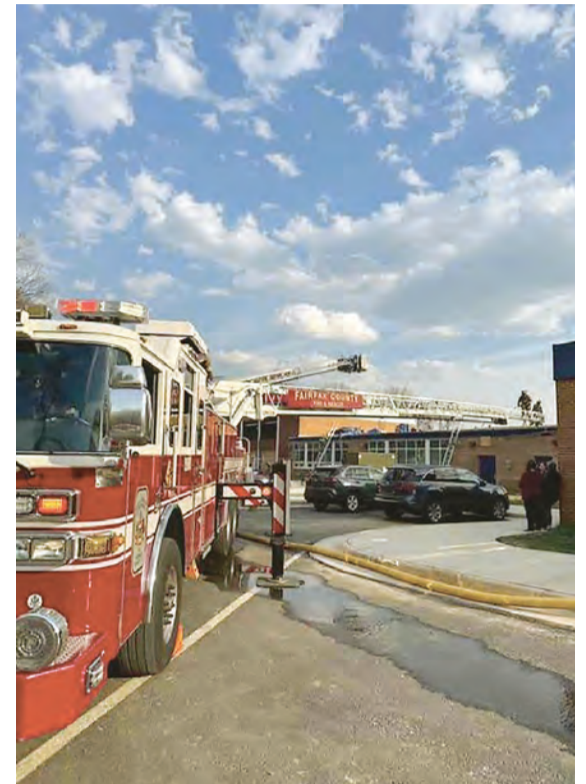
PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE



Townhouse fire in Lorton on Wednesday, March 20.



Fire in Fair Lakes on March 14.



Fire at Wakefield Forest Elementary School on Thursday, March 21.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

The recent dry spell on the east coast led to fires across the region prompting action from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and neighbors to minimize injuries.

At the Board of Supervisors meeting in early March, Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) recognized the Raceway Farms neighborhood for coming together during a house fire. The fire was spotted by the neighbors from the street, so they knocked on the front door, using the ring doorbell camera and calling 911 before the home's fire alarms went off. Everyone, two adults, a young child and the family dog got out safely, even as smoke was pouring into the house. The family credits neighbors with saving them. In the aftermath, "the family has been amazed by the outpouring of neighborhood support, some

taking off work to help, buying groceries, babysitting and even launching an on-line fundraiser. The family says they will rebuild in the neighborhood that has shown them so much love," wrote Storck in his newsletter.

This was one of several fires this month. On March 14, firefighters arrived on scene of a fire at a landfill in the 4600 block of West Ox Road in the Fair Lakes area. The fire was contained and crews remained on scene for an extended period of time, the Fire and Rescue Department reported.

On Wednesday, March 20 the FCFRD responded to a two-alarm townhouse fire in the 5700 block of Walnut Wood Lane in Burke. The fire was quickly brought under control and one person was transported with non life-threatening injuries, FCFRD said.

FCFRD reported that they responded to 26 outside fires in addition to the six structure fires since Monday, March 18. Later that week they released a warning to

the public highlighting the significant fire activity, partially attributed to the high winds. "Dispatchers are getting a lot of calls for reports of smoke in all areas of the county. Significant fires in surrounding jurisdictions and high winds are bringing smoke to the area. Additionally, FCFRD is currently working six outside fires throughout the county," the FCFRD announcement said.

FCFRD urged everyone to exercise caution if handling open flames or equipment that create sparks. Also, use caution disposing of cigarette butts, matches, and other flammable items in appropriate containers. Keep vehicles off of dry grass and obey local burn bans. Most dry grasses, dead leaves, and

other tree litter could easily ignite and spread fire quickly, FCFRD said.

### Fatality from Winter Fire

The dry weather began earlier in the winter and there were several fire emergencies and one led to a fatality. On Saturday, Jan. 20, at approximately 5:58 p.m. FCFRD units were dispatched for a reported house fire in the 3800 block of Kings Hill Court in the Mount Vernon area. Units arrived on the scene to find a two-story, single-family home with fire on the first floor extending to the second floor. Crews worked to extinguish the fire quickly. During search and rescue operations, one elderly male was rescued and transported

to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries. The man died later that evening. The cause of death is pending an autopsy and toxicology report from the medical examiner.

A neighbor observed the fire from the rear of the structure and called 911. While smoke alarms were present in the residence, it remains uncertain whether they were activated.

The ongoing investigation has identified the living room as the origin of the fire, although the exact cause is yet to be determined, FCFRD said. Red Cross assisted with the additional displaced occupants who were not home at the time of the fire. Damages were estimated at approximately \$475,500.

## Potomac Yard Entertainment District

FROM PAGE 1

lic. The proposal also faced significant opposition from Alexandria residents.

Andrew Macdonald, former Vice Mayor who co-founded the opposition group Coalition to Stop the Arena at Potomac Yard, noted earlier that other proposals will come forward. "I think there are other development options that will result in far fewer environmental and quality of life impacts, and create a more sustainable revenue stream," he said in an earlier interview with Gazette Packet

reporter James Libresco. "There needs to be development in Potomac Yard, but a sportsplex is simply not suitable for Alexandria."

Results from a recent poll of Del Ray, Hume Springs, Lynhaven and Rosemont residents conducted jointly by the neighborhood civic associations which had 496 respondents found that 58 percent oppose the project, 29 percent support it, 12 percent have mixed opinions and less than 1 percent are unsure.

"[Arena proponents] failed to prove this was a good public investment," said Macdon-

ald. "The city failed to engage the community from the start in a meaningful way, preferring instead to ignore public concerns and hire lobbyists (using our local tax dollars) to push the bill through the General Assembly."

There's plenty of blame to go around, but Sen. Scott Surovell, majority leader of the Virginia Senate, says the Governor's failure to include stakeholders is where the deal went awry.

"The failure of this deal falls squarely on Governor Glenn Youngkin," said Surovell. "This isn't a Carlyle deal. The Legislature is

a co-equal branch of government, and key members – Republicans and Democrats alike – were not included at every stage of the process. By the time the deal was brought to the table it was essentially non-negotiable, even for myself as the bill's sponsor.

"The arena proposal failed because the Governor failed to include the stakeholders in state government who would have to deal with the consequences of this decision long after he left office with a photo opp breaking dirt."



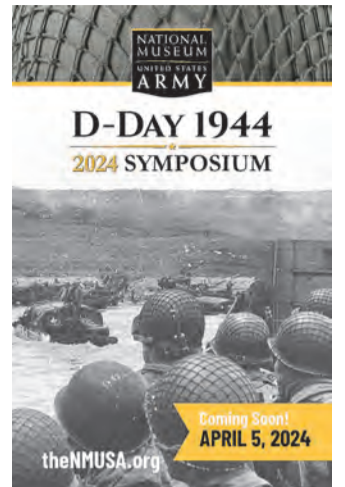
D-Day medals of honor are together for the first time in the exhibit.



80th anniversary of D-Day; exhibit opens April 6 at the National Museum of the U. S. Army.



80th anniversary of D-Day; exhibit opens April 6 at the National Museum of the U. S. Army.



Register for the virtual symposium at [bit.ly/DDay2024](https://bit.ly/DDay2024).

# Honoring Courageous Soldiers

## Army Museum Commemorates D-Day's 80th Anniversary.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
THE GAZETTE

If you ever fantasized about parachuting out of an airplane, check out the new D-Day exhibit at the National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir. But if you successfully land, you'll be in a Nazi-occupied country on D-Day in the heat of World War II.

To honor those who participated in the invasion of German-occupied France on June 6, 1944, when the multi-nation Allied Expeditionary Forces landed on Normandy, France's beaches, the museum will stage a D-Day exhibit and host many educational programs from April 6 to mid-November.

D-Day, code-named Operation Overlord, was one of the most complex land, sea and air opera-

tions ever at that time, the largest amphibious invasion in military history.

Historian David Ambrose wrote in his book, *D-Day*, "In one night and day, 175,000 fighting men and their equipment, including 50,000 vehicles of all types, ranging from motorcycles to tanks and armored bulldozers were transported across 60 to 100 miles of open water and landed on a hostile shore against intense opposition. They were either carried by or supported by 5,333 ships and crafts of all types and almost 11,000 airplanes ... It was as if the cities of Green Bay, Racine, and Kenosha Wisconsin, were picked up and moved - every man, woman, and child, every automobile and truck - to the east side of Lake Michigan in one night."

Led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, the military alliance had meticulously planned the unprecedented invasion. The troops

crossed the English channel, secured Normandy's beaches and went on to liberate Paris. Many credit the historic battle with turning the tide against the Nazis, lead-

**"I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory."**

- General Dwight D. Eisenhower

ing to the defeat of the Axis Powers led by German chancellor Adolph Hitler.

For the war, the United States had grown the U.S. Army from 170,000 men in 1940 to 7.2 million by 1944. U.S. factories had doubled their capacity between 1939 and 1944, manufacturing airplanes, boats, ships, tanks and weapons, Ambrose wrote.

### Museum Events

At an exhibit titled "D-Day: Freedom from Above," visitors can make airborne landings behind

enemy lines through interactive "HistoPad" technology, virtual simulations, and through the true stories of U.S. Army paratroopers who were loaded with gear. Their backpacks typically carried, for example, a bazooka, a knife, an automatic rifle or a machine gun, grenades, a medical kit and radio equipment.

The invasion and future World War II battles involved 13,000 paratroopers and 4,000 glider infantry men. The paratroopers jumped from airplanes behind enemy lines just after midnight. Their mission was to prepare for the invasion force that would arrive at dawn. Throughout the war, the paratroopers captured roads, created river crossings, blew up bridges, destroyed communications and cut off supplies and reinforcements.

Museum-goers will learn the stories of individual soldiers' landings and actions on the ground after they landed, including efforts of French villagers who provided

food and medical aid to the paratroopers.

The museum will also display four medals of honor awarded to soldiers for actions performed on D-Day, medals never before displayed together.

The museum's Global War Gallery has permanent exhibits including World War II artifacts like a parachutist's steel helmet, an M4 Sherman Cobra King tank, a landing craft called a Higgins Boat, a soldier's pocket Bible and the story of the development of the atomic bomb.

At an April 5 symposium, (with some virtual seats available on March 26) Mitchell A. Yockelson, a former U.S. Naval Academy professor, will describe the paratroopers' airborne operations, from leaping from airplanes to landing.

At the April 5 all-day, free, public symposium, held both in-person and virtually, historians and military experts will discuss the invasion's planning, execution and significance.

Register here: <https://www.thenmusa.org/2024-dday-symposium/>.

The opening weekend will also feature an equipment and parachute-packing demonstration by U.S. Army Aerial Delivery Unit soldiers. In the next few months, the museum will have documentary screenings, hands-on demonstrations, author presentations and history talks. Topics include the WASPs of World War II, tactical intelligence for D-Day and the African American Experience in the war.

Information: [www.thenmusa.org/dday80/](http://www.thenmusa.org/dday80/)



The National Museum of the U. S. Army at Fort Belvoir.



A World War II Sherman Cobra King tank on display at the museum permanently. The exhibit on the 80th anniversary of D-Day opens April 6.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

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## No to Arena Deal; Yes, Bipartisan Budget!

By Delegate Paul Krizek

The Governor's recent statewide publicity tour, labeling the budget we just passed 62-37, as a "Backward Budget," necessitates a clarification of its true merits. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I am compelled to set the record straight about the strong bipartisan budget awaiting the Governor's signature by the April 8 deadline. This budget, a product of a General Assembly Session-long collaborative effort on both sides of the aisle, stands as a testament to our commitment to Virginia's progress and fiscal responsibility. With vital allocations for education, healthcare, community safety, transportation, environmental preservation, and economic development, this budget reflects the dedication to serving the needs of all Virginians. As we await the Governor's decision, it is imperative to recognize the importance of delivering a balanced budget by July 1, in line with our constitutional obligation.

I was proud to join our House and Senate Democratic leadership this week at George Mason University for a stop on the Virginia Families First Tour for a dialogue directly with Virginia residents and the media on how this budget pri-

oritizes their needs and helps us keep Virginia moving forward, especially as it concerns our young people.

Our \$188 billion budget exemplifies our commitment to ensuring all students have access to a world-class education, from pre-K through college. Our educators across the Commonwealth will be getting a raise of 3% each year to ensure we can keep their talent in Virginia. \$371.3 million will be allocated over the biennium to implement several Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) recommendations to expand funding provided for at-risk students. Funding is provided to support additional English Learner and special education teachers, expand the reading specialist staffing standard to include positions to serve students in grades 4 through 8, and more, to ensure students have their unique needs met. \$527.8 million over the biennium will support early childhood care and education programs, representing a \$116.7 million increase above the introduced budget.

Our budget supports an additional 3,440 developmental disability (DD) waiver slots and an increase in provider rates, provides



Krizek

\$30 million in funding to combat the opioid epidemic, and fully funds \$745.2 million over the biennium for the Medicaid and children's health insurance forecasts. For behavioral health, the budget provides \$25.0 million the first year and \$2.6 million the second year to continue developing crisis infrastructure, provides \$10.0 million each year for Community Service Board (CSB) workforce development and staffing, and invests \$10.0 million the first year for additional mobile crisis units.

Preventing violence in our communities continues to be at the forefront of everything we do. This budget invests \$110 million for community violence intervention programming. When you experience domestic and sexual violence, you should be able to get the help you need. Our budget funds Victim Witness, Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Victim, and Victim Services grant programs. The budget also provides \$19.1 million for start-up costs at two new veterans care centers.

The budget allocates \$200 million to the Community Flood Prevention Fund to support flood mitigation, provides additional direct

support to 14 historic and cultural sites across the Commonwealth, and gives \$5 million over the biennium to implement statewide coordinated invasive species management. A language amendment also requires that the Commonwealth re-enter the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Also accounted for was \$175.0 million for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to support the creation or preservation of affordable housing, \$5 million I requested for mobile home park preservation, \$30 million in funding to help with costs related to "make ready" work on American Rescue Plan Act-funded broadband infrastructure projects, and \$40.0 million in investments over the biennium for the Virginia Business Ready Sites program.

For those of us in Northern Virginia, the budget includes my request for \$149.5 million over the biennium in dedicated support for Metro, including lifting the current 3% cap on annual increases to Virginia's funding for Metro. Also, I was successful in creating a Northern Virginia firefighter occupational cancer screening pilot program, and support for an African American Research Fellowship at Mount Vernon requested by the community-based charity, Black Women

SEE NOT TO ARENA, PAGE 15

## \$1 Billion in Refunds for Tax Year 2020 Unclaimed

### Taxpayers face May 17 deadline.

The Internal Revenue Service says that almost 940,000 people across the nation have unclaimed refunds for tax year 2020 but face a May 17 deadline to submit their tax returns.

The IRS estimates more than \$1 billion in refunds remain unclaimed because people haven't filed their 2020 tax returns yet. The average median refund is \$932 for 2020.

In Virginia, 25,900 people who have not filed their 2020 returns are owed an average of \$914 for a total of \$28,944,600, according to the IRS release.

"There's money remaining on the table for hundreds of thousands of people who haven't filed 2020 tax returns," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "We want taxpayers to claim these refunds, but time is running out for peo-

ple who may have overlooked or forgotten about these refunds. There's a May 17 deadline to file these returns so taxpayers should start soon to make sure they don't miss out."

Under the law, taxpayers usually have three years to file and claim their tax refunds. If they don't file within three years, the money becomes the property of the U.S. Treasury.

But for 2020 tax returns, people have a little more time than usual to file to claim their refunds. Typically, the normal filing deadline to claim old refunds falls around the April tax deadline, which is April 15 this year for 2023 tax returns. But the three-year window for 2020 unfiled returns was postponed to May 17, 2024, due to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The IRS issued Notice 2023-21 on Feb. 27, 2023, providing legal guidance on claims required by the postponed deadline.

The IRS estimates the midpoint for the individual refund amounts for 2020 to be \$932 — that is,

half of the refunds are more than \$932 and half are less. This estimate does not include the Recovery Rebate Credit or other credits that may be applicable; the IRS has previously reminded those who may be entitled to the COVID-era Recovery Rebate Credit in 2020 that time is running out to file a tax return and claim their money.

"People faced extremely unusual situations during the pandemic, which may have led some people to forget about a potential refund on their 2020 tax returns," Werfel said. "People may have just overlooked these, including students, part-time workers and others. Some people may not realize they may be owed a refund. We encourage people to review their files and start gathering records now, so they don't run the risk of missing the May deadline."

By missing out on filing a tax return, people stand to lose more than just their refund of taxes withheld or paid during 2020. Many low- and moderate-income workers may be eligible for the

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). For 2020, the EITC was worth as much as \$6,660 for taxpayers with qualifying children. The EITC helps individuals and families whose incomes are below certain thresholds. The thresholds for 2020 were:

- ❖ \$50,594 (\$56,844 if married filing jointly) for those with three or more qualifying children;
- ❖ \$47,440 (\$53,330 if married filing jointly) for people with two qualifying children;
- ❖ \$41,756 (\$47,646 if married filing jointly) for those with one qualifying child, and;
- ❖ \$15,820 (\$21,710 if married filing jointly) for people without qualifying children.

The IRS reminds taxpayers seeking a 2020 tax refund that their funds may be held if they have not filed tax returns for 2021 and 2022. In addition, any refund amount for 2020 will be applied to amounts still owed to the IRS or a state tax agency and may be used to offset unpaid child support or

SEE TAX PAYERS, PAGE 7

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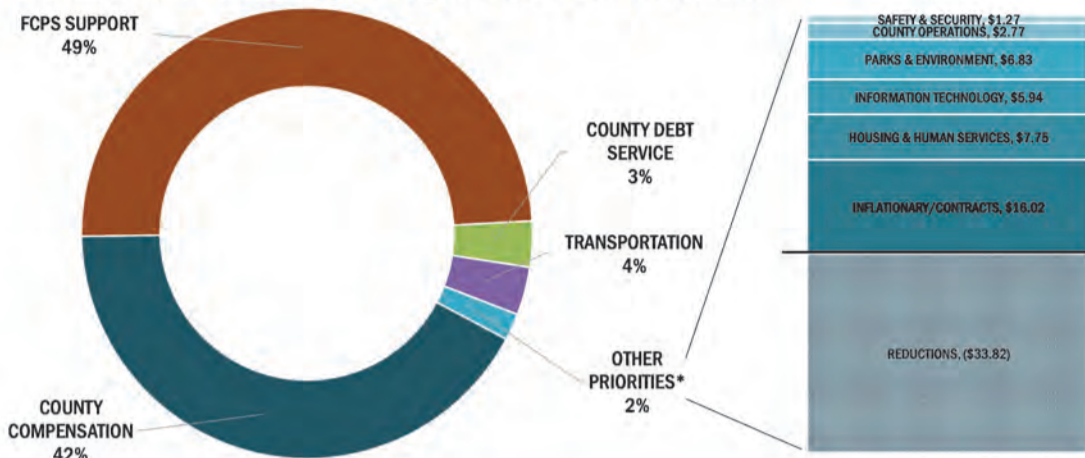
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### Allocation of New Spending in FY 2025 Proposal



\* The disbursement impact of Other Priorities is completely offset by targeted fee increases and revenues associated with specific expenditure adjustments.

GRAPHICS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S PRESENTATION ON THE FY 2025 ADVERTISED BUDGET

FY25 proposed spending allocations.

## Public Hearings on the Budget April 16 - 18

FROM PAGE 1

area after high school or college graduation.

Lusk said that part of attracting companies to our area, with their jobs and revenue, is to meet their number one concern, that we have talented people to fill their vacancies; and affordable housing.

Another speaker noted real estate assessments in the last four years have risen 41 percent higher than CPI. Lusk noted the state requirement to reassess properties every year and people's willingness to pay more for houses.

Lauren, who works with Meals on Wheels clients, said one of whom is concerned that her tax bill is higher than her mortgage once was. Lusk acknowledged that the County needs "innovative revenue sources so that home owners aren't bearing the tax burden." He is looking for emerging areas to offset the residential real estate taxes.

Other speakers supported public library funding and the park system. Not all questions were reached during the hour and a quarter time period.

While this would be Fairfax County's first real estate tax rate increase in six years, residential tax bills have continued to rise due to rising assessments.

**HOW TO PROVIDE INPUT**

Online at [engage.fairfaxcounty.gov/FY25Budget](https://engage.fairfaxcounty.gov/FY25Budget)  
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Testify at a budget public hearing in person, by video or phone. Sign up at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form). Call the Clerk to the Board's Office at (703) 324-3151 (TTY 711) or email [clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov) for more information.

Attend a Budget Town Hall in your district. Times and details available at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2025-budget-town-hall-meetings](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2025-budget-town-hall-meetings).

### How to provide budget input

While Supervisor Lusk pointed to regional market forces impacting real estate assessment, the nearby jurisdictions of Alexandria, Loudoun, and Prince William have not proposed increases to their real estate tax rates for FY25; Arlington has proposed a 1.5 cent increase.

Residents can see more about the proposed budget at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/Assets/Documents/fy2025/advertised/FY2025AdvertisedBudgetPresentation.pdf>; or sign up to testify at the budget public hearing.

## Taxpayers Face May 17 Deadline

FROM PAGE 6

other past due federal debts, such as student loans.

Current and prior year tax forms (such as the tax year 2020 Forms 1040 and 1040-SR) and instructions are available on the IRS.gov Forms and Publications page or by calling toll-free 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

### High-income Non-filers: IRS Compliance Letters Coming

The IRS also announced Feb. 29 a new effort focused on high-income taxpayers who have failed to file federal income tax returns in more than 125,000 instances since 2017 with taxes being owed in many of those cases.

The new initiative, made possible by Inflation Reduction Act funding, began with IRS compliance letters going out in February on more than 125,000 cases where

tax returns haven't been filed since 2017. The mailings include more than 25,000 to those with more than \$1 million in income, and over 100,000 to people with incomes between \$400,000 and \$1 million between tax years 2017 and 2021.

Need to file a 2020 tax return? Several options to get key documents

Although it's been a few years since 2020, the IRS reminds taxpayers there are ways they can still gather the information they need to file this tax return. But people should start early to make sure they have enough time to file before the May deadline for 2020 refunds. Here are some options:

Request copies of key documents: Taxpayers who are missing Forms W-2, 1098, 1099 or 5498 for the years, 2020, 2021 or 2022 can request copies from their employ-

er, bank or other payers.

Use Get Transcript Online at IRS.gov. Taxpayers who are unable to get those missing forms from their employer or other payers can order a free wage and income transcript at IRS.gov using the Get Transcript Online tool. For many taxpayers, this is by far the quickest and easiest option.

Request a transcript. Another option is for people to file Form 4506-T with the IRS to request a "wage and income transcript." A wage and income transcript shows data from information returns received by the IRS, such as Forms W-2, 1099, 1098, Form 5498 and IRA contribution information. Taxpayers can use the information from the transcript to file their tax return. But plan ahead – these written requests can take several weeks; people are strongly urged to try the other options first.

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## The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, VA

The Mount Vernon Rotary Club, in 2021, initiated the "You Make a Difference Award" to support community service by organizations in the Mount Vernon area.

Specifically, the purpose of the Mount Vernon Rotary "You Make A Difference" Award is to:

- 1) Recognize individuals and organizations who supportservice to others
- 2) Support community service within the Mount Vernon areaThis local support is consistent with the Rotary International Motto: "Service Above Self."

A single award and associated grant of \$1000 will be presented once a year. The goal is to recognize a single individual who sustains community service and to contribute financial support to keep that service continuing.

Nominations will be accepted until noon on Friday, March 29, 2024. To receive a nomination form or more information, email [MVRotaryVA@gmail.com](mailto:MVRotaryVA@gmail.com)

Rotary is where neighbors, friends, and problem-solvers share ideas, join leaders, and take action to create lasting change. Visit [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) for more information.

**The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon meets via Zoom on Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 7:30. To request an invitation link email [mikej1013@verizon.net](mailto:mikej1013@verizon.net)**

# IDES OF BARK



Hard to tell who has the bigger smile, Supervisor Dan Storck or Cash, grinning about being at the Ides of Bark festival, as Dollie and Sebastian look on. Dogs with Furever Haven rescue.



Catherine Steen, a certified trainer who teaches canine courses at Fairfax County parks, attended with her two Belgian Tervuren dogs, including her two year old pictured



Keller & Riley were just a step ahead to win "Cutest Couple" Award, with Becky Reed

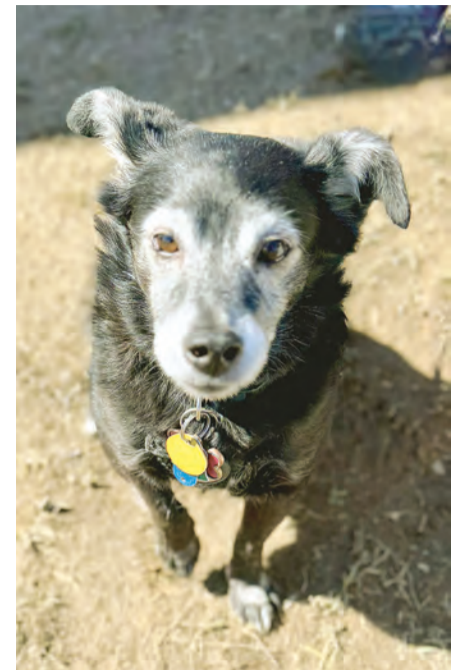
PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



A.J. Keane, 10, shows off the certificate won by Xander, a shy 2-year-old Bluetick Coonhound, pulled from farther back in the crowd to win the "Best in Show" Award

## Notable Pups at Ides of Bark

Sebastian, a Black Mouth Cur, temporarily of Forever Haven rescue, takes a moment out from puppy play to thank Supervisor Dan Storck for hosting Ides of Bark



Piper, 12, attending with Cher Terry, wins the "Most Charming" Award with a soulful eye connection to the judge



Izzy, 2 yo, attending with her Lind family, is a less common Isabella Tan Dachshund, inheriting a recessive gene from her parents which lessens the common brown fur color found in most dachshunds



Gibbs, a 4-year-old Fox Red Lab attending with his family, is named "Most Photogenic"

# Calling All Dog Lovers!

## Ides of Bark selects its doggie champions.

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

The alert sounded well ahead of time: "Calling all dog lovers!" The invitation: join Supervisor Dan Storck "for the most PAWSome event of the year — the Ides of Bark Dog Festival! Bring your best canine friend" to Grist Mill Park for games, prizes, food, vendors and family fun on March 24.

If anyone noticed that the event didn't fall exactly on the Ides, it certainly wasn't the dogs. Pups of all sizes, shapes, breeds and ages were digging into the many tempting treats on offer, and greeting the many other dogs in the usual dog way, nose first.

Storck says, "This is one event that you have to like: people and animals. And you can show up and feel the love of the community... You can come if you have a dog or not. One of the first events of the season, only rained out once in seven years; with the opportunity to get out of the house and reconnect."

While dog noses were busy, accompanying humans appeared just as distracted by an array of pooch product and service vendors,

games, prizes, swag and food trucks. If the humans attending happened to be in need of additional dog companionship, rescue groups, such as

Furever Haven Animal Rescue of Fairfax Station (fureverhaven.com), brought along some new best friend possibilities.

As an event climax, dogs were informally judged for several awards. It wasn't a dog eat dog competition, just a fun chance to step forward if a dog felt representative of the Most Charming, Best Hairdo, Most Photogenic, Gentle Giant, or Little & Feisty category, among other awards.

The free event, sponsored by the Fairfax County Park Foundation, and supported by

the Mount Vernon District, described as a "paw-sitively" wonderful time, drew both first timers and those who make it an annual outing. The event is conveniently located

within walking distance of the Grist Mill Dog Park for those doggies who really want to stretch their legs and enjoy a rousing chase off leash to work off the treat calories.



It was deja vu for Rachael Michael and Theo, 2, who won the "Little and Feisty" Award for a second year running. Michael said, "It's good to come as Theo needs exposure and socialization, and to see the dog products and services."



Stacy Cambell and the dog known as X, are smiling over their win for "Gentle Giant"



Animal Protection Police Officers PFCs H.M. O'Neil and S. M. Paisley, with two and six years of unit experience respectively, staffed a table explaining the unit's work



Sapphire Z, a Staffy mix, attending with Emily Bee, makes a fashion statement with her Easter collar and designer sweater



Attending with the Colles family, Loki, 2 yo, a Peruvian Inca Orchid, a hairless breed variety, wearing a sweater to protect her skin, attracts attention from young pups, and wins the "Runway Ready" Award



Cedar Patch tries for a better look at his "Sassy & Cure" Award, with Brad Taylor



James Anderson and Min Oo didn't bring a dog, but they did bring an appetite, sampling the foods on offer from the food trucks, describing all as delicious





Del. Marcus Simon (D-13).



Del. Laura Jane Cohen (D-15).



Pastor Jung Pyo Hong.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY FCPS PRIDE

# FCPS Pride Rally Mobilizes Leaders Against Lawsuit

## Will FCPS continue to be safe for LGBTQIA+ students?

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Last Thursday, an hour before the regular 7 p.m. March 21 Fairfax County School Board meeting, Fairfax County Public School Pride students

organized and prepared to rally with their supporters outside Luther Jackson Middle School in Merrifield. They rallied to protest a legal complaint that challenges FCPS transgender policies, calling them sex and religious discrimination and violation of free speech rights. The lawsuit was filed against

FCPS school board by American First Legal. Andrew J. Block, former senior advisor to former president Donald Trump and president of American First Legal, filed the complaint, Jane Doe v. Fairfax County School Board, Case No. 2024-03171, in Fairfax County Circuit Court on March 4.

If the court were to rule in the plaintiff's favor, it would threaten FCPS Regulation 2603, adopted Oct. 9, 2020, and revised April 21, 2022. The procedures and guidelines for schools ensure that all students, including gender-expansive and transgender students, "experience a safe, supportive, and inclusive school environment."

Laura Truong, an 18-year-old senior in FCPS said the lawsuit amounts to an attack on safety for transgender students. "This lawsuit could tear apart the safe space that school has been — or should be — for transgender students. It's an attack on the rights and safety of students and on student expression."


"FCPS Pride stands with all transgender, non-binary, gender expansive, and other marginalized students in Fairfax County Public Schools in the face of an abhorrent lawsuit filed by Stephen Miller's America First Legal Foundation against our school board," posted FCPS Pride @FCPSPrude.

"Students should not be put at risk of bullying, harm, or discrimination." According to FCPS Pride, "1 in 4 FCPS students identify as LGBTQIA+, so teachers should always assume that there is a transgender [student.]"

Opposing the anti-trans litigation, elected officials, representatives of education associations, and clergy, such as Delegates Marcus Simon and Laura Jane Cohen, Amber Beichler from Transgender Education Association of Greater Washington, Chuck Ronco of the Fairfax Foundation Association, and Pastor Jung Pyo Hong spoke at the rally.

Del. Laura Jane Cohen, former Fairfax County school board member (2019- 2023), said, "I was proud to have the opportunity, as we approach Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31, to not only speak as a delegate and former school board member, but also as the mom of a trans young person. As we continue to bear horrific tragedies in our community, most recently the tragic loss of Nex Benedict, we are reminded that family love and acceptance aren't always enough," Cohen said. "As a mom and a Delegate, I will continue to fiercely fight to ensure schools across the Commonwealth are inclusive, affirming, and supportive places where all our children can thrive."


SEE FCPS PRIDE RALLY, PAGE 13



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Carla Okouch, music educator and choral director in Fairfax County Public Schools.

# FCPS Explains Opt-Out Notification for Holocaust Speaker

## FCPS and Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington share insights.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Against the backdrop of rising antisemitism in the county, state, and across the U.S., the release of an electronic letter from a Fairfax County Cooper Middle School assistant principal to 7th-grade families, with an offer to opt their children out of the March 18 Holocaust speaker presentation, apparently misled some.

FCPS released an explanation on March 22, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington responded to “erroneous” media reports the day after the presentation.

“We apologize if this notification led anyone to believe that we do not value these important learning opportunities, which Cooper Middle School has been providing for many years,” an FCPS spokesperson said in a March 22 email to The Connection.

The day after the presentation, on March 19, Guila Franklin Siegel, associate director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, responded to those media reports and provided her insights in “JCRC Statement on Holocaust Survivor Presentation at Cooper Middle School.” The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington coordinated the visit from Holocaust survivor Col. Frank Cohn.

“Recent media reports have suggested that Cooper School officials offered an opt-out to excuse non-Jewish students from learning about the Holocaust. These reports are erroneous,” Siegel wrote. She added that FCPS noted the same. “The opt-out was designed for Jewish families “due to Jewish children in the past being subjected to bullying, teasing, taunting, and other forms of unacceptable behavior, specifically during Holocaust-related lessons and programming,” according to Siegel.

Siegel added that no Cooper student requested to opt out of the program based on the subject matter. “Indeed, students lined up after the presentation to get Col. Cohn’s autograph. That speaks to the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that Cooper created today, a culture which must be replicated in every school,” she wrote.

In her initial March 11 letter to families, the assistant principal

wrote, “Students in History 7 are currently learning about World War II, which includes a lesson focused on the Holocaust. Cooper has engaged a Holocaust survivor to visit and speak to our 7th-grade students. This year’s speaker is Ruth Cohen ... If you prefer to opt your child out of participating in this presentation, please email your child’s teacher, and they will be provided an alternate assignment.”

According to the FCPS spokesperson, Cooper Middle School in McLean “invited a Holocaust survivor as a guest speaker to talk with students as a supplement to classroom learning about the Holocaust and World War II.” She noted that some years ago, several Jewish students at Cooper Middle School voiced anxiety about the visit, so they partnered with parents to work with them.

“They [the families] could make the best decision on behalf of their child,” the spokesperson for FCPS wrote. “To be clear, students are not able to opt out of our lessons about the Holocaust, which are part of the social studies seventh-grade curriculum,” she wrote and provided the 2024 FCPS 2023-234 Grades K-8 Opt Forms. According to FCPS, the Holocaust is included in the Virginia Department of Education History and Social Science Standards. “The learning objectives around the Holocaust are a required part of the curriculum,” said the FCPS spokesperson.

Holocaust-specific “important learning opportunities” refer to the “supplemental learning opportunities” to hear directly from a Holocaust survivor “after students complete FCPS curriculum lessons on World War II and the Holocaust.” The school letter by the administrator indicated an opt-out for “the speaker’s visit, which enhances classroom learning,” the spokesperson clarified.

The Cooper Middle School administrator’s published letter erroneously stated, “This year’s speaker is Ruth Cohen.” An FCPS spokesperson noted that “Col. Frank Cohn spoke.”

According to FCPS, it will continue to work with administrators and educators to prepare all students for comparable learning experiences so they feel comfortable in these programs and understand behavioral standards.

“We hope this message clears up any confusion, and we are grate-

ful to continue our work partnering with the Jewish Community Relations Council to offer this meaningful learning experience for our students and families,” the FCPS spokesperson said.



Cooper Middle School in McLean, a Fairfax County Public School

SCREENSHOT FCPS

## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

# 2024

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## NOW THRU APRIL 15

**Exhibit: "Searching for Truth in the Garden" at Freedom House Museum.** At Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke Street, Alexandria. Gonzaga High School's groundbreaking research on slavery, "Searching for Truth in the Garden," found new life at the Freedom House Museum. The traveling exhibition, on view through April 15, 2024, delves into the life of Gabriel, a teenager enslaved at Washington Seminary (now Gonzaga) in 1829. Gabriel's story offers a poignant lens through which to examine the complexities of slavery and its lasting impact.

## 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/>

## NOW THRU APRIL 7

**Seen Better Times Exhibition.** At Multiple Exposures Gallery, The Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N Union Street, Studio 312, Alexandria. MEG is pleased to announce Seen Better Times, a new fine art photography exhibition juried by Michael Borek. The exhibition features 24 images that depict scenes that have "seen better days." Juror Michael Borek says the images he chose from the 14 included photographers go behind the surface of obvious decay and "invite viewers to use their imaginations to finish the hint of a story that is sketched out, but unfinished." Exhibition Artists: Soomin Ham, Eric Johnson, Irina Lawton, Sandy LeBrun-Evans, Matt Leedham, Francine B. Livaditis, Maureen Minehan, David Myers, Van Pulley, Sarah Hood Salomon, Alan Sislen, Tom Sliter and Fred Zafran.

## MARCH 1-30

**March Luck.** At Van Lindingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria. March Luck explores the serendipitous forces that drive artistic expression. Join us to reflect on the role of luck in shaping both art and life in the Van Lindingham Gallery. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association presents a group exhibition including jewelry, paintings, photography, mixed media work, hand pulled prints, and more during the month of March.

## MARCH 1-31

**Woodlawn Needlework Show.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Woodlawn Plantation. Every Wednesday and Friday at 2:30pm in March - Special Tours of 61st Anniversary Woodlawn Needlework Show (Fee: \$18, includes Needlework Show Admission) Join the special tour for a brief history of Woodlawn while discovering the unique stories behind many

pieces of the Needlework Show as a Woodlawn guide and Nelly's Needlers expert lead visitors through the house. Monday March 25th, and Wednesday March 27th at 3:30pm - Beginners Needlework Techniques (Fee: \$25 per class or \$65 for all three, includes Needlework Show Admission and supplies) Join members of Nelly's Needlers to learn the basics of three fundamental needlework techniques; counted cross-stitch, canvaswork (needlepoint), and surface embroidery.

March 25 - cross-stitch towel  
March 27 - embroidered hat  
Virtual Programs (All virtual programs are free, with a suggested donation to support Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House) Saturday, March 23rd at 4:00pm ET -What Linens Know with Ruth Tabancay Enjoy a fascinating virtual presentation by multi-disciplinary artist Ruth Tabancay as she discusses "What Linens Know" on exhibit at the Woodlawn Needlework Show. Ruth's exhibit is a unique spin on this year's theme, "Needlework in Everyday Life" as she examines the uses of vintage linens in everyday living and embroiders a lasting memory of the remains.

## MARCH 1-30

**"The Power of Two" Exhibit.** At Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mount Vernonn Ave., Alexandria. Features art that showcases two related items in one piece of art; for example, two-of-a-kind, complementary items, double-exposures, duos, twins, or multiple generations. "Double your pleasure, double your fun." Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed Sunday, March 31). Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## MARCH 23 - APRIL 13, 2024

**Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express.** At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. Adapted by Ken Ludwig. It's 1934, just after midnight, and a snowstorm has stopped the opulent sleeper train in its tracks. A wealthy American businessman is discovered dead, and the brilliant and beautifully mustachioed Hercule Poirot must solve the mystery before the murderer strikes again.

## MARCH 5 THRU APRIL 28

**Mosaics by Nina Tisara and Photographs by Steven Halperson.** At Green Spring Gardens, 4601 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. The Opening Reception is Sunday, March 10, 1-3 p.m. The mother-son team had worked together at Tisara Photography in Old Town for three decades. Steven now manages the Alexandria portrait studio as well as creating painterly photographic images and unique etched copper art. Nina creates intricate mosaics of unglazed porcelain tile which are widely exhibited and collected. Their work may also be seen by appointment at Serenity Place Gallery, Nina's in-home gallery.

## MARCH 9 TO APRIL 14

**"Every Brilliant Thing."** At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Work-



"Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express" will be featured March 23-April 13, 2024, at the Little Theatre of Alexandria. <https://thelittletheatre.com/performances/>

house 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](http://www.workhousearts.org)).

## BEGINNING MARCH 20

**Water Taxi to The Wharf to See Cherry Blossoms.** Departs from the Alexandria Marina, 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Cruise from Old Town Alexandria to Washington, D.C., to enjoy the famous cherry blossoms. City Cruises Potomac Water Taxi offers a 25-minute direct water taxi from Old Town to The Wharf in D.C. From the dock at The Wharf, it is a 10-minute walk to the cherry blossoms at the Tidal Basin. The water taxi docks at the Transit Pier, 950 Wharf St. SW, near the Tidal Basin, the National Mall, Hains Point and a Capital Bikeshare station.

## MARCH 16 THRU APRIL 21

**Cherry Blossom Cruises with City Cruises.** Departs from the Alexandria Marina, 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Traverse the Potomac River from Old Town Alexandria and cruise past the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. on the Monuments Sightseeing Cruise from City Cruises. View and listen to the history of the iconic monuments, memorials and bridges as the D.C. region awakens to spring. See beautiful cherry blossom trees as you glide past the Tidal Basin and head onward to Georgetown. The cruise is 45 minutes one-way and approximately 90 minutes roundtrip. Riders also have the

option to explore Georgetown and return on a later boat.

## MARCH 23 TO APRIL 14

**Pink Torpedoes: Cherry Blossom Art in An Old Munitions Factory.** At Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N Union St., Alexandria. Explore all three floors of Torpedo Factory Art Center, home to the nation's largest collection of working artists' open studios under one roof, to view a building-wide exhibition of art inspired by the iconic cherry blossoms. Participating artists will exhibit one or more unique artworks in their studio or gallery. Each artist will explore their interpretations of the cherry blossoms—culturally, colorfully and viscerally—and visitors will discover new ways of thinking about the region's seasonal pink event. Visitors will receive a "Pink Torpedoes" building map with locations of the artwork to discover. Each studio artist in the Art Center is selected by art experts and rank among the best in the region. Artists work in front of the visitor and discuss their work on view. Visitors may shop for one-of-a-kind art inspired by the cherry blossoms, plus more. Can't visit the exhibition? A select exhibition of artwork will be on view at torp

## THURSDAY/MARCH 28

**Jane Franklin Dance Presents Prime.** 7 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Prime journeys through the visual art of exhibiting artist Christine Ruksenas-Burton whose "paintings are conversations of colors inspired by her homeland (Australia) as well as modern art, minimalism, modernist architecture, and design." Jane Franklin's work positions solo dancers in conversation with color, duets in conjunction with line, and trios in hard edge abstractions of color and mood.

## MARCH 29-30

**The Art of Acting.** At The Art Loft,

119 S. Fairfax Street, Loft Floor, Alexandria. Dates: March 29, from 6-8 p.m., and March 30, from 4-6 p.m. The Art Loft's first workshop will be "The Art of Acting: Theatre Tools for Everyday Life" by Pablo Andrade. In this 2-day workshop, New York-based, Award-Winning Actor, Director and Producer, Pablo Andrade will be teaching us useful acting techniques that can be applicable to our professional and personal lives. For both actors and non-actors. Contact: [info@ncocreative.com](mailto:info@ncocreative.com), 202-798-2505, [ncocreative.com](http://ncocreative.com)

## APRIL 4 TO MAY 12

**Special Gallery: "Japanese Inspiration."** At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. To complement Washington's festivities celebrating the Japanese cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin, the Athenaeum Gallery is featuring the work of three local contemporary artists whose work is influenced and guided by traditional Japanese art. Sean Doonan is an illustrator whose fanciful posters are inspired by Japanese mythology, anime, video games and pop culture. David Gootnick creates lacy and delicate designs out of wood using an ancient Japanese art form called Kumiko. And Yoshiko Ratliff's paintings are bold, but intricately detailed, representations of Japanese characters and kimonos.

## APRIL 5-27

**"Same But Different" Exhibit.** At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features art that explores notions of identity, distinctions and similarities in our natural and manmade world. This exhibit showcases the interconnectedness of humanity and the uniqueness of things that may appear to be the same. Opening Reception: Friday, April 5, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

# ENTERTAINMENT



The 2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm takes place April 12-13, 2024. <https://ahsgardening.org/about-river-farm/events-programs/springgardenmarket2024/>

## SATURDAY/APRIL 6

### All Lit Up Like a Japanese Lantern:

The Japanese Aesthetic in Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-Leighey House. 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Hwy, Alexandria. By 1941, the year Pope-Leighey House was completed, Frank Lloyd Wright had studied Japan for almost a half-century. He had become a serious collector of woodblock prints—even writing a book on the subject—and had won acclaim for his design of the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, one of the few buildings to survive the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. On this special tour, visitors will discover how the famous American architect incorporated his love of Japanese art, architecture, and philosophy into Usonian homes, and how this East Asian influence shines in Wright's Pope-Leighey House.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 6

**Used Book Sale:** 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

## APRIL 12-13

**2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria. Celebrate the start of gardening season with the American Horticultural Society's annual Spring Garden Market at River Farm. This much-anticipated outdoor event, one of River Farm's largest and most popular fundraisers, brings together plant, seed and garden accessory retailers, nature-focused artists and authors, gardening experts, food vendors, and fun for the whole family. Proceeds from the Spring Garden Market directly

contribute to the maintenance, beautification and preservation of River Farm, headquarters of the AHS since 1973. Online tickets are now available for River Farm's annual plant and nature-inspired marketplace. Visit [www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024](http://www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024).

## SUNDAY/APRIL 14

**Epics & Fantasies.** 2 p.m. Featuring the President's Own United States Marine Band. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, Alexandria. John Mackey's Wine-Dark Sea carries a bulk of the narrative in this Marine Band concert of poetry and stories. The 30-minute work draws its inspiration from Homer's Odyssey, distilling the epic poem into a handful of musical highlights. Vocal features include Sousa's "Annabel Lee," set to the chilling verses written by Edgar Allan Poe, and a whimsical tale of "The Green-eyed Dragon" by Wolseley Charles. Debussy's Syrinx flute solo derives its name from a nymph in Greek mythology and the instrument known as "panpipes." The Marine Band's new Assistant Director 1st Lt. Jose Toranzo will also make his debut, conducting Alfred Reed's El Camino Real, also known as The Royal Road: A Latin Fantasy.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

### Historic Garden Week Old Town.

Take a behind-the-scenes peek into the spectacular homes and gardens of six historic Old Town Alexandria properties kicking off the Garden Club of Virginia's historic annual statewide tour. Offering a glimpse into the town's storied past, the tour features homes dating from 1785. Expertly updated, tastefully furnished, and filled with spectacular floral arrangements designed by blue ribbon garden club members, each property features lovely, curated gardens filled with bountiful Spring flowers timed to bloom in concert with the tour. Tickets include admission to five private homes and gardens, Lee-Fendall House, a one-time private home with a rich history

that now houses a museum and garden, as well as six nearby public properties, including: Mount Vernon, River Farm, Carlyle House, Gunston Hall and Green Spring Gardens. Advance tickets are \$55 online at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org) and may be purchased tour day at the Alexandria Visitor's Center located at 221 King Street. The Garden Club of Virginia's (GCV) eight-day statewide tour from April 20 to 27 includes 170 private properties throughout Virginia. The Old Town Alexandria tour is hosted by the GCV's two local garden clubs, Hunting Creek Garden Club and Garden Club of Alexandria. For more information, visit [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

**Third Annual ALX Dog Walk.** 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. A 2-mile dog walk and celebration is back in Old Town Alexandria. Walkers meet at Oronoco Bay Park in Alexandria for an unforgettable experience. Walk and spread awareness about the importance of plastic-free and sustainable living. It's time to educate the community and make a positive impact. Pre-event registration check-in on Wednesday April 17th, from 12 pm to 7 pm to check-in and collect your sustainable Goodie Bag, t-shirt and doggie bandana, treat, and more. Register now! [www.alxdogwalk.com/register](http://www.alxdogwalk.com/register)

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## MARCH

Wed. 27: The Zombies w/ Wendy Colonna. \$59.50  
Thu. 28: Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives w/ Wyatt Ellis. \$76.00. **SOLD OUT!**  
Fri. 29: Johnnie Steele & The Steele-4Real Band. \$35.00  
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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY FCPS PRIDE

Chris McCormick, one of FCPS Pride's co-chairs, addresses the school board.

## FCPS Pride Rally Mobilizes Leaders Against Lawsuit

FROM PAGE 10

The students also plan to celebrate Transgender Visibility Day in Fairfax County on March 31. On March 19, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved a proclamation in a vote of 9-0, with Supervisor Pat Herrity of Springfield out of the room, that March 31 be designated as Transgender Visibility Day. Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisors Bierman, Walkinshaw, Lusk, Alcorn, Jimenez, Storck, Palchik, and Smith requested the proclamation. Reading the proclamation, Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (D-Dranesville) said in part, "In celebration of the county's richly diverse population and our One Fairfax policy, we affirm and restate our commitment to building a culture of inclusion and acceptance of transgender individuals ... and urge all residents to support the transgender community."

Shortly before the 6 p.m. rally, a FCPD officer responded to Luther Jackson Middle School. An LGBTQIA+ supporter reported a larceny, according to a police spokesperson in an

email to The Connection. The spokesperson wrote that the complainant advised police she posted two pride flag signs on school property, and as soon as she walked away, a man took both signs and put them in his vehicle and drove away. "The motive of the larceny is currently under investigation," the police spokesperson said.

"I am very sad that the yard signs were taken in front of our eyes," Rigby texted to The Connection after the rally. "It seemed just a very uncharitable thing to do. He took our symbols of inclusion and community during our celebration," he said.

The American First Legal release on March 5 states, "FCPS Regulation 2603 requires all students to refer to 'students who identify as gender-expansive or transgender by their chosen name and pronoun, regardless of the name and gender recorded in the student's permanent pupil record.' In practice, this rule requires stu-

SEE FCPS, PAGE 14



Chuck Ronco, Vice-President of the Fairfax Education Association and Math teacher.

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**FCPS  
Pride Rally**

FROM PAGE 13

dents to adhere to a woke agenda that denies reality [and] even more disturbingly, the rule allows students to use the restroom and locker room 'consistent with the student's gender identity.'"

The lawsuit is on behalf of an FCPS practicing Roman Catholic high school student "for allowing teenage boys to use the female restrooms and for forcing a radical, government-sponsored gender indoctrination and approved-speech scheme that discriminates against students on the basis of sex and religion and violates their free speech rights under the Virginia Constitution," according to America First Legal.

Jane Doe v. Fairfax County School Board, stems from Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Virginia Department of Education Model Policies on Ensuring Privacy, Dignity, and Respect for All Students and Parents in Virginia's Public Schools, 2023, effective July 18 of last year for the treatment of transgender and non-binary students.

The Virginia Department of Education Model Policies 2023 sparked criticism from LGBTQIA+ advocates, like FCPS Pride. School divisions, including Richmond, Arlington, and Fairfax, refused to adopt the new version of policies that limit access to restrooms, in tension with federal law (Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board), prohibit teachers and school staff from calling students by their affirming names and pronouns unless there is written permission from a parent; and allow teachers and staff to disregard parent's written instruction and misname and misgender students in the classroom based on their personal beliefs among other things.

ACLU Virginia reacted with Breanna Diaz, ACLU of Virginia Policy and Legislative Counsel, who said at the time, "We are horrified that VDOE opted to move forward with proposed model policies that at best invite — and at worst, require — discrimination, that violate state and federal law, and that have no place in Virginia schools."

The "guidance document," as the Virginia Department of Education termed it, rolled back protections for trans and non-binary students enacted under Gov. Ralph Northam's administration, the Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (2020).

On Aug. 15, 2023, Michelle Reid, Ed.D, Superintendent of the

SEE FCPS PRIDE RALLY, PAGE 15  
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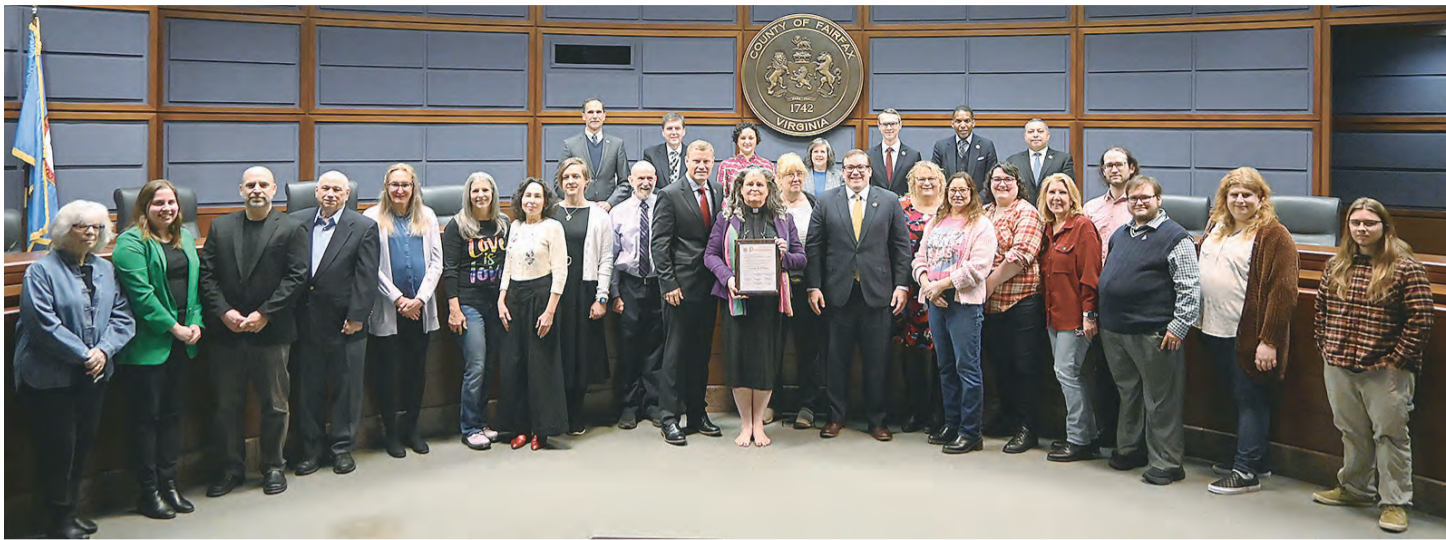


PHOTO BY FXCO. MARCH 19, 2024 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**PROCLAMATION** — To designate March 31, 2024, as Transgender Visibility Day. Requested by Chairman McKay and Supervisors Bierman, Walkinshaw, Lusk, Alcorn, Jimenez, Storck, Palchik and Smith. (Center) Rev. Emma Chatten of the Transgender Education Center in Burke accepts the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors proclamation recognizing March 31 as Transgender Visibility Day.

## FCPS Pride Rally Mobilizes Leaders Against Lawsuit

FROM PAGE 14

Fairfax County Public Schools, rejected the Model Policies 2023, issuing a Superintendent Message, telling parents the district's existing policies still stood "for our gender expansive and transgender students." Reid added that a detailed legal review determined that the current Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) policies on transgender and gender-expansive students were consistent with federal and state anti-discrimination laws.

In reaction, on Aug. 23, 2023, Jason S. Miyares, Attorney General of Virginia issued an official Attorney General's Opinion, saying that "model Policies on Ensuring Privacy, Dignity, and respect for All Students and Parents in Virginia's Public Schools ... do not violate federal or state discrimination laws ... [and] pursuant to Code § 22.1-23.3, local school boards are required to adopt policies that are consistent with these model policies."

**Students of FCPS Pride, their families and supporters.**



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY FCPS PRIDE

**FCPS Pride and supporters listen to speaker remarks**



## No to Arena Deal; Yes, Bipartisan Budget!

FROM PAGE 6

United for Action.

Finally, the Governor has stated that this budget creates new taxes. Our budget does not, in fact, introduce any new taxes beyond what the Governor himself proposed. Indeed, we accepted the Governor's own modernization proposal to apply the existing sales tax to digital commerce, including digital downloads and streaming which are not currently taxed in Virginia, which he dubbed in December as the "Big Tech Tax Loophole." These forms of commerce did not exist when sales tax was first introduced. However, he would have offset those increases by cutting

personal income taxes to especially benefit the wealthiest taxpayers, which we did not include in our budget.

The Governor's deadline to act on legislation, including the budget, is April 8. With his Alexandria arena deal, which I was proud to vote against twice, now thankfully "dead in the water" with the District of Columbia's Attorney General's opinion that the Caps and Wizards cannot leave DC before 2047, a line item amendment by the Governor putting the arena back in the budget is no longer likely.

I stand firm with Democratic leadership in championing the budget awaiting the Governor's signature by the April 8 deadline.

This budget, a testament to our commitment to Virginia's progress, prioritizes education, healthcare, transportation, community safety, environmental preservation, and economic growth. From funding for education enhancements, behavioral health initiatives, and affordable housing, to investments in flood prevention and transportation, this budget is a blueprint for a thriving Commonwealth. I urge the Governor to get serious and finally drop his quixotic, unpopular Alexandria arena deal, and sign this bipartisan budget bill knowing that it fulfills our constitutional duty and serves the best interests of all Virginians.

## Dad, I Need Your Help



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I started writing this column on Sat. March 9, but stopped. I have already written/published three time-sensitive columns ("Rocky Road Ahead," "Not Great News," and "The Shoe Has Dropped") on the immediate (and I mean immediate) subject at hand: living with both stage IV chronic kidney disease and stage IV papillary thyroid cancer. Rather than put the figurative cart before the horse, I'm going to hold this column in abeyance (to use one of my late father's favorite words) and wait instead until we've seen the nephrologist (kidney doctor) on March 14. I imagine I'll be a bit clearer about my prospects – and expectations, after I've met – and spoke with this specialist, the likely point doctor of my care, especially if dialysis becomes my only option. (Side bar: I wish there' was more/regular communication between my oncologist and this recently referred-to nephrologist. They each seem to defer/refer to one another on the patient portal when I ask electronically about "this, that and the other" (to invoke Elaine Benes from Seinfeld), but I wish there was more togetherness. After all, it is my life at stake here. I am stopping now. I don't want to speak too much without thinking (a la Oscar Madison in "The Odd Couple" television show).

I am now restarting this column on Thurs., March 21. I can now write, with some knowledge of my medical situation since I've met the nephrologist and heard her recommendations: stop all the supplements, especially vitamins "d" and "k", stay hydrated but not to exceed 68 ounces per day, no colas or any dark liquids (ice tea is out), be aware of sodium, phosphorus and potassium as they stress out the kidneys. In summary, kidneys don't get better once they're damaged, as mine are (down to 25% of their normal function), and most importantly: no restart of my thyroid cancer medicine, as the damage to my kidneys is a direct side-effect-result of it (the graph of my levels shows a steady drop from stage III – where it had been the previous 10 years, to stage IV corresponding to the time three-plus years ago when I began my thyroid cancer treatment). Moreover, I should try to eat healthier, what they call a "renal diet." Lastly, she said that there is no medicine which is appropriate, given the cancer and chronic kidney disease and I'm not eligible for a kidney transplant. Other than that ...

Where that leaves me is in "trouble with a capital t," to quote Robert Preston from "The Music Man," (1962) with "A Rocky Road Ahead" now that "A Shoe Has Dropped." Most of what I heard from the nephrologist is "Not Great News." So, my last three cancer-centric columns, as listed above have been the precursor to this reality check: what kidney damage has been caused by my thyroid cancer medicine is irreparable and after visiting (I use that word lightly) the nephrologist, I now know some of what she knows and all of what she feels: I am indeed between a rock and hard place. To quote my late mother (and many others I'm sure) concerning this kind of predicament: "Nobody gets out of this life alive." And that's what I'm afraid of. During my early cancer days I used to wonder if I was further from the beginning or closer to the end. I no longer wonder. A damaged kidney that prevents treatment for the underlying disease: that's what I call my thyroid cancer now (that's some 'underlying disease') may be a bridge too far, unfortunately, to overcome.

I'm not down in the dumps, by any means. But hardly am I jumping for joy. Having faced similar obstacles previously, like being "prognosed" with "11 months to two years" to live - back in Feb. 09, (as I sit and type in year 16): I have certainly been down this road a time or two before. Nevertheless, two competing diseases where treatment for one damages the other and where no treatment at all damages the one may very well be, even for a positive thinker like me a bit of an emotional climb. For the moment though, my immediate focus is to stay off dialysis (just like Chris Rock would joke about his daughters "staying off the pole,") and see if the health chips fall in my favor again. I don't want to sound naïve and say since the chips very often have fallen in my way during the previous 15-plus years - from when I was originally given that terminal diagnosis, that they are like to fall again in my direction. Not. But who knows? Literally. Who does know? No one knows. As my father used to joke about similar conundrums: "I'm very seldom wrong but this time I'm right." That's my fear. Unable to get a straight answer. However, I don't think there will be anything funny about it.

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



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