

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

APRIL 18, 2024

Economic Outlook 2024

**“Higher For Longer Is Here For Interest Rates,”
But Growth Is Seen In Several Sectors.**

BY DAVID GRIFFIN
MOUNT VERNON SPRINGFIELD CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

This past Thursday, April 11, business professionals across Fairfax County gathered for the annual Economic Outlook event. The event, presented by Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, and Walsh PC., is produced by The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation and features experts from critical industries who discuss the significant developments of 2023 and provide insights into the economic course for the current year.

Eric Christensen, Chairman of the Chamber and General Manager of Springfield Town Center, opened the event by welcoming the local politicians in attendance, Supervisor Dan Storck, Sen. Scott Surovell, and Del. Mark Sickles, followed by recognizing the sponsors.

Terry L. Clower, Ph.D., Northern Virginia Chair and professor of public policy in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University, discussed recent economic performance and outlook compared to national numbers.

“Throw away all your old college economics textbooks,” said Clower, “because nothing we are seeing now is how we would expect the economy to function.”

According to Clower, rising interest rates should equal slowing job growth. However, that’s not what we witnessed in the first quarter of 2024, where job numbers exceeded expectations. Despite some job growth, our local economy is still trailing behind the national average. This is in part due to rising insurance costs, the cost of housing, and the cost of automobiles, he said.

“While an interest rate of 6% isn’t bad, it’s not as good as the 2.75% we once had,” said Clower.

The Northern Virginia job sectors that saw growth over the past year include education and health services, state and government, leisure and hospitality, construction, and manufacturing. Retail, as well as business and professional services, saw a decline. Clower pointed out that the area is falling behind the national average in job growth. One of the issues stems from relocation, where potential employees are not willing to move to Northern Virginia, where the cost of living, including housing and childcare, is high compared to other metro areas around the nation. Before leaving the stage, Clower spoke of the importance of data storage facilities due to AI and how the high demand can lead to rapid job growth, something every state is racing to attract.

With that, the panelists were introduced:

❖ David Boyle, President & CEO, Burke & Herbert Bank

❖ Rachel Carter, Coldwell Banker Realty, District Manager Northern Virginia and Branch Vice President

❖ Eric Christensen, General Manager, Springfield Town Center

❖ Jack Perkins, Vice President, Elm Street Development

❖ Roberta Tinch, President & CEO, Inova Mount Vernon Hospital

Mike Kitchen of Christopher Consultants, now IMEG, asked the panelists questions related to the housing industry and interest rates, new housing development, office vacancies, retail, and healthcare.

David Boyle, President & CEO of Burke & Herbert Bank, cited higher interest rates that will be with us for a while as an issue. “When the Fed does cut rates, we’re not going back to where we were five years ago,” he said. “However, we will still trend down.” The commercial real estate sector is also struggling as people continue with remote and hybrid work. Despite this, Boyle mentioned how banks like Burke & Herbert are in a good position in terms of credit posturing and underwriting, making the difficulties easier for businesses to manage.

Rachel Carter, Coldwell Banker Realty, echoed Boyle, saying 5%-6% interest rates are here to stay. However, buyers are comfortable with that rate, she said. A big concern in real estate over the past several years is the lack of inventory, which affects the resale market. Carter stated that those waiting for the interest rates to drop before buying should go ahead and buy, as rates will not move much. Buyers and sellers should also note that, “Inflation will continue to be a problem. ... Bathroom and home remodeling are 30% higher than a few years ago, but that’s a challenge we can prepare for.”

Jack Perkins, Elm Street Development Vice President spoke on new home construction. While builders have seen record sales lately, land development continues to be costly and unpredictable and can constrain supply. This makes it a challenge to increase the housing supply to meet demand. Interest rates are especially challenging for new construction as multi-family projects are interest rate sensitive. Despite the rise in rates that started in 2022, Perkins referenced Fairfax County’s Economic Incentive Program as very helpful for getting projects going. Created in 2020, the “EIP provides an economic incentive to the private sector to purchase, assemble, revitalize and redevelop property for economic development purposes through financial and regulatory incentives.”

Roberta Tinch, President & CEO of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital, said the healthcare



The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber Economic Outlook event. From left: Terry L. Clower, Northern Virginia Chair and professor of public policy in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University; Mike Kitchen of Christopher Consultants, now IMEG; Rachel Carter, Coldwell Banker Realty, District Manager Northern Virginia and Branch Vice President; Roberta Tinch, President & CEO, Inova Mount Vernon Hospital; David Boyle, President & CEO, Burke & Herbert Bank; Jack Perkins, Vice President, Elm Street Development; Eric Christensen, General Manager, Springfield Town Center



Panelists answer questions from attendees at the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber annual Economic Outlook event.

workforce and supply chain have fluctuated over the past few years since the pandemic. However, the industry has adapted well to the change, adjusting as needed. As Clower had mentioned, the health services sector has seen steady growth in jobs. Tinch reflected on this, saying the industry has been able to attract new talent with higher wages and more incentives.

“We are working to better incorporate A.I. and virtual nursing — ways to bring technology to the bedside to supplement and help support the nurses so we don’t have to double the number of people.”

For the retail industry, Eric Christensen, General Manager of Springfield Town Center, said he and others were hesitant about the sector following the pandemic. However, it has bounced back, specifically at Springfield Town Center, with a wave of new entrepreneurs and stores. The restaurant row and Lego Discovery Center have especially been very successful and create a lot of traffic.

Throughout their answers, all panelists emphasized how more affordable housing

would help the area in many ways, including attracting new talent and ensuring the money employees receive is circulated back into the community.

The program concluded with a Q&A session with the panelists, during which attendees could ask questions and learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in 2024.

The event sponsors were Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, and Walsh PC., ECS Mid-Atlantic LLC, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, IMEG Consultants Corp., Sam Media Productions, Bean, Kinney & Korman PC, Jennifer Molden, Realtor at Coldwell Banker, Elm Street Communities, Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives, and the Seward Group. The program sponsor was Hoodwinked in London, a fast-paced thriller written by former Chamber Board member Gavin Carter under the pen name James Oldham.

Photos, slides, and videos from the event can be seen at www.mountvernon.springfield.com/economic-outlook/.

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BabsBeckwith.com



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Janet Catterson Price 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com



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No expense has been spared, and every detail has been addressed in lovingly reinventing this 5-bedroom, 3.5-bath home on a quiet cul-de-sac. Living room addition with 13-ft ceiling, chef's kitchen, & lower level in-law suite. 609 Malcolm Pl
Wendy Santantonio 703.625.8802
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TheLynnTeamRE.com



OPEN SUN 4/21, 2-4

Rosemont Park | \$1,195,000

Charming 1918 farmhouse has been thoughtfully expanded and renovated over the years. Easy walking distance to two Metro stops, Del Ray, and Old Town. 3 bedrooms and 2.5 baths. 112 E Walnut St. thearnoldteamsells.com
Robin Arnold 703.966.5457
Jamie Arnold 703.835.5892



OPEN 4/20: 12-2 & 4/21: 1-3

Fair View | \$1,150,000

Entertainer's Paradise - Spectacular chef's kitchen in this 2020 remodeled Colonial boasting over 3K sqft with 5 beds, 3.5 baths, 3-car garage, a cost saving solar panel system & saltwater pool on over 1/3 acre 3100 Franklin St
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MasonBavin.com



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Pat Tierney 703.850.5630



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Heidi Burkhardt 703.217.6009
RealtorHeidiB.com



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AnnDuff.com



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Many Needs in Schools, County

Testimony will highlight priorities for spending.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Chairman Jeff McKay said 79 people had signed up to testify on the evening of April 16. It was the third public hearing of the day for Supervisors. The hearing, with people advocating for budget priorities, would continue on Wednesday and Thursday.

School Board Chair Karl Frisch related that the Fairfax County School Board and Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid requested an additional \$254.0 million, or a 10.5 percent increase, from the Board of Supervisors.

“With a strong education, there is no limit to the success that our students can achieve, that every child can achieve,” Frisch said. He highlighted the importance of investing in education. The budget proposal aims to increase teacher pay and staffing to accommodate changing student populations. While the overall number of students is down from pre-pandemic levels, it is rebounding, and the students enrolled need more services. He said there is a 7.4 percent increase in students receiving special education services and 5.1 percent increase in multilingual language support.

“Nearly \$47 million in budget requests represent the cost of enrollment growth ... and of that, 84 percent of the support is needed for these populations that require additional support,” Frisch said.

He called for increased state funding to address Virginia’s underfunding of public schools, as cited in a recent Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study. The underfunding results in \$2,000 less funding per student than in neighboring states. “If JLARC’s recommended state

education funding changes were implemented, FCPS would receive an additional \$568 million each and every year from the Commonwealth,” Frisch said.

❖ **James Quigley, chair of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority Commission**, urged the board to prioritize business investment and talent acquisition. He described how, with county funding, the commission helped more than 17,000 local businesses connect with more talent and hosted more than 50 career showcases with 20 businesses in six Fairfax County middle schools. Through its partnership with the Fairfax Values Veterans Program, Fairfax County hired more than 5,300 transitioning military veterans and military spouses.

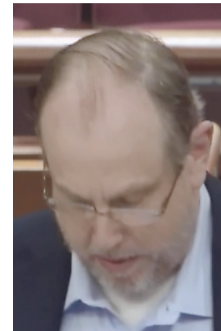
❖ **Siobhan Chase, vice president of the Fairfax County Chapter of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association**, opposed the proposal to eliminate animal protection police officer positions. She argued that the county’s animal intake is lower per capita than surrounding jurisdictions and that animal protection police officers are animal control officers with specialized training. She emphasized the importance of partnership and transparency and challenged the board on decision-making processes and proposal integrity.

❖ **Louise Epstein, who testified on behalf of the McLean Citizens Association**, highlighted FCPS’ plan to spend \$80 million on a new school, Dunn Loring, without adequate data.

❖ **Michelle Jefferson, chair of the Community Action Advisory Board (CAB)**, addressed poverty in Fairfax County and urged the supervisors to invest in affordable housing and social services. Childcare



Karl Frisch,
chair of the Fairfax
County School
Board



James Quigley,
chair of the Fairfax
County Economic
Development Au-
thority Commission



Michelle Jefferson,
chair of the Com-
munity Action
Advisory Board



Heather Thomas,
vice chair of the
Community Action
Advisory Board

costs in the county are prohibitively expensive for many families, leading to financial hardship and difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities.

❖ **Heather Thomas, vice chair of CAB**, discussed the county’s housing crises. She said the county’s lack of truly affordable housing leaves many in poverty and without rental subsidies. Affordable housing means being able to afford rent and basic utilities, even if you’re working a minimum-wage full-time job, without needing assistance for food, housing, medical care, or childcare. “When looking through this lens, we have no other choice but to admit to ourselves that the reality is that there is no truly affordable housing in Fairfax County,” Thomas said.

On Wednesday, April 17, union members united in the SEIU Virginia State Council took action at the Fairfax County budget hearing to demand fair raises, job protections, and affordable health care for front-line county employees.

Maria Jose Padmore, a Fairfax County Health Department employee and union member of SEIU Virginia 512, addressed the

Board of Supervisors and testified that the county Health Department treats residents well “with respect and consideration.”

“Today, we ask you to do the same for us,” Padmore said. “The way to do this is through making sure that we continue to be adequately paid. How can we progress if we cannot afford to even live? Every worker deserves to earn a livable wage, regardless of their preexisting conditions or the type of job that they do,” Padmore said.

Earlier that day, S 32Bj SEIU and SEIU Virginia 512 announced the launch of the SEIU Virginia State Council to build power and win unions for all working families across the Commonwealth.

“Under the new structure, members and not-yet-union workers will come together to organize, mobilize, elect champions, and hold corporations and elected officials accountable.”

On Thursday, April 18, home care workers, public service workers, allies, and community members planned to join airport workers, elected officials, and candidates for Congress for a march and rally at Dulles Airport in support of access to affordable health care and paid sick leave for airport service workers.

March Home Sales Down from Prior Year, According to NVAR

Prices continue to rise as supply remains tight.

In a reversal from February when sales had grown over the prior year, March home sales in Northern Virginia dropped 13.8% from the previous March. However, a recurring theme was that tight supply contributed to increases in home prices, according to the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR).

“We had a reprieve in February as sales grew year over year for the first time since 2021, but March was a return to what we have been experiencing: lower sales from the previous year. That said, I think February’s positive news represents a change that is going to slowly transform the housing market, getting us back to more normal market dynamics,” said NVAR Board Member Christina Rice, Pearson Smith Realty. “As the year progresses, I expect to see more people start sell-

ing their homes, which will help bring more parity between supply and demand.”

Overall, home sales were down in March, but they were still up compared to February — nearly 14.4%. Supply remained tight at a 0.90 month’s supply — the same as last year and similar to this past February. A reflection of high demand and low supply was that homes stayed on the market only 16 days in March 2024, down 27.3% compared to March 2023 when the average days on market was 22 days. This was also a theme that was repeated from February.

These market forces continued to make houses more expensive. The median sold price for a home in March 2024 was \$730,000, up 9.8% compared to March 2023. This was also an increase from February 2024 when home prices reached \$687,250.

NVAR’s 2024 economic housing forecast, produced in conjunction with George Mason University’s Center for Regional Analysis in late 2023, revealed that the residential and commercial real estate market has not yet reached a post-pandemic normal. The forecast reported a possible downturn despite the economy attracting regional workers and creating jobs. As such, overall sales activity is expected to decline in 2024.

Background

The Northern Virginia Association of Realtors reports on home sales activity for Fairfax and Arlington counties, the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church and the towns of Vienna, Herndon, and Clifton. Below is March 2024 regional home sales compared to March 2023 for Northern Virginia with data derived from Bright MLS as of April 9, 2024 (total sales and listings may

not include garage/parking spaces):

❖ The number of closed sales in March 2024 was 1,191 units, down 13.8% compared to March 2023.

❖ The volume sold in March 2024 was \$973,604,474, an 8.5% decrease from March 2023.

❖ The average sold price was \$835,575 in March 2024, an increase of 7.4% compared to March 2023.

❖ The number of new pending sales in March 2024 was 1,606 units, up 0.4% compared to March 2023.

❖ Active listings in March 2024 totaled 1,210 units, down 14.6% compared to March 2023, when active listings were 1,417.

❖ New listings in March 2024 were 1,504 units, a drop from March 2023’s 1,744 new listings.

Read more about the NVAR region housing market at NVAR.com/public.

Military Kids Club Helps Students Bond Over Moves, Parent Deployment Stress and Shipping Pets Across Country

STORY PROVIDED BY FCPS

Second grader Myla Boyd is showing off a picture of her cat, Blur, to a group of students in the Clermont Elementary School Military Kids Club. The photo represents her family's military service, Myla says, because she had to pack Blur in a crate and say goodbye to him for a few weeks while Blur was transported from California, where her family had been stationed, to their newest post in Virginia.

"We shipped him on a plane," Myla says. "I was really, really happy when we picked him up in Virginia because I hadn't seen him in a long time. This represents being a military kid to me because some kids never have to ship their family pet anywhere, but in the military we move a lot."

School Counselor Paula Treger asks if anyone else has ever had to ship their family pet somewhere and some students around Myla nod in agreement. Creating connections between students from military families is one of the major goals of the Clermont Military Kids Club, which has 50 student members and is in its second year of operation.

April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize military-connected youth for their service and contribution to our community. Fairfax County Public Schools is proud to have more than 14,000 military-connected youth as a part of our student body.

The Origin of a Supportive Group at Clermont

Multilingual learner teacher Tiffany Velishka has been married to an active duty field artillery U.S. Army soldier for 26 years. She stepped up to help lead the program at Clermont Elementary — where roughly 7.5% of the 540 students are military affiliated — after watching her own children handle multiple moves and different schools.

"You can feel isolated here off base, compared to living on base where you attend a school that is usually 100% military kids and everybody gets it because they're living that life themselves," Velishka said.

"Kids from military families are adjusting to the new norms when they move — everything from the culture of a school, what behaviors are acceptable here, who are my teachers, my new friends, my new mascot, to academics that can be completely different based on the



Fifty students at Clermont Elementary gather each month for Military Kids Club meetings to bond over shared experiences, participate in activities that recognize military service and honor the traits of those who serve.



A sign at Clermont Elementary for the Purple Star School's Military Kids Club.

new school district."

Lana Blomberg, a veteran, military spouse, and mother of two, has been volunteering for the Military Kids Club since her family moved to the area and her kids enrolled at Clermont at the start of the 2022-23 school year. Blomberg's husband has been in the U.S. Air Force since 2008.

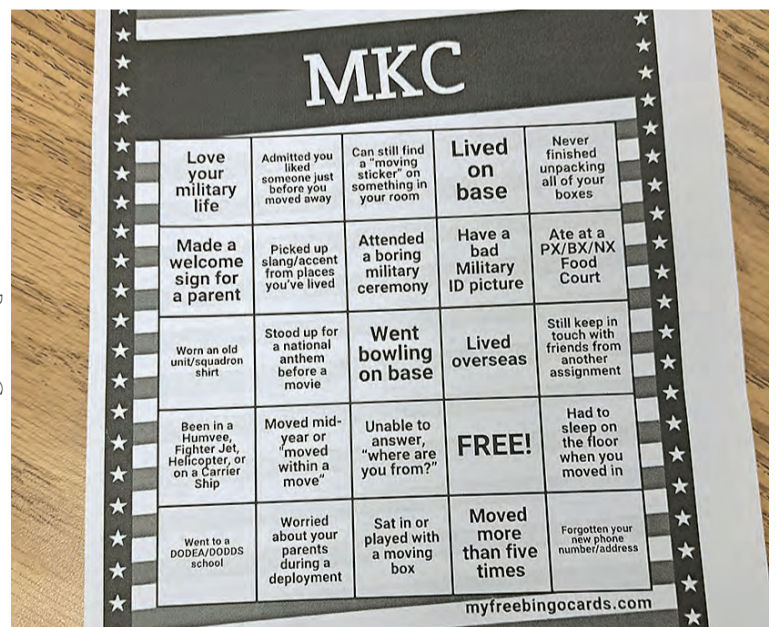
Clermont Elementary has been designated a Purple Star School, meaning it was recognized by the state Department of Education and the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Op-

portunity for Military Children for commitment to meeting the needs of military students and their families.

"The benefits this club brings to these kids is having the chance to meet all the other military kids in the school," Blomberg said. "Discussion topics can range from moving all the time, deployment, saying hello/goodbye to friends, living in new places including overseas."

Military Connected Kids

Blomberg has two kids at Cler-



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Students in the Military Kids Club play Bingo, using a card with squares denoting shared experiences for military families.

mont. Andrew, 8, is in third grade, and his big sister Haley is 11 and in the sixth grade. "Haley has been at school in Montana, one time in Germany, then Kansas, then back to Germany and now here in Fairfax County — five different schools already," Blomberg says. "Seventh grade will be another school for my kids as we are headed to Japan."

After show and tell, the students

pivot to a BINGO game, but instead of numbers on the BINGO placards, they're placing chips on a potential shared military kid issue they've experienced.

"Who here has had a bad military ID picture?" master of ceremonies Treger calls out. "Who has attended a boring military ceremony? Lived on base? Worried about your parents during a deployment?"

SEE MILITARY KIDS. PAGE 5
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Students play Bingo in the Military Kids Club program at Clermont ES.

Military Kids Club

FROM PAGE 4

Been in a Humvee, a fighter jet, a helicopter, or a carrier jet? Picked up new slang or accent from a deployment yourself?"

Chips go flying on the board as kids also call out when something particularly memorable gets mentioned.

Beyond creating connections between military students (and a few State Department families who have also joined the group, given their shared experience of deployments and frequent moves), the Military Kids Club also aims to build an additional support system for children and develop a sense of pride in students whose families are serving our country, Treger says.

The monthly meetings often start with instructors reading a book — one favorite was about a horse that carried ammunition during the Korean War, illustrating the character trait of grit shown by those who serve. Another book was about a World War II pilot who dropped chocolate bars for people, illustrating kindness.

Students then participate in activities to reinforce those character traits, such as relays in the gym where kids pull each other on carpet squares, bringing (pretend) food rations to each other to demonstrate their own grit. Students also read a story about dandelions, the official flower of the Military Child, whose seeds can scatter around the world when uprooted, and grow where they land in most cases, to show perseverance.

The Military Kids Club also writes letters to veterans, looks at maps and labels spots where their family has served, and marvels at how extensive their combined military service is around the world.

"I always tell my family, 'Bloom where you are planted,' because there is beauty everywhere you go," parent volunteer Blomberg says. "We ask these kids to go through a lot. A Military Kids Club might seem like something small but it is giving something back to them and honoring them in a way."

Learn more about Purple Star Schools in FCPS and about Month of the Military Child.



One student in Clermont's Military Kids Club pulls another on a carpet square during a relay race designed to illustrate how military service requires grit.

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Public Hearings

Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2025-2030 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will take your comments into consideration as it develops the FY2025-2030 SYIP. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds.

Meeting materials will be available <https://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/springmeetings2024/default.asp>.

Public meetings begin at 4 p.m. in each of the locations except as noted below:
A formal comment period will be held at these meetings.

<p>Thursday, April 18 Richmond District Hawthorne Room 2430 Pine Forest Drive Colonial Heights, VA 23834</p>	<p>Wednesday, April 24 Staunton District Laurel Ridge Community College 173 Skimisher Lane Middletown, VA 22645</p>	<p>Thursday, April 25, 5 p.m. Northern Virginia District Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison Street, S.E., 1st Floor, Leesburg, VA 20175</p>
<p>Wednesday, May 1 Lynchburg District Lynchburg District Ramey Auditorium 4303 Campbell Avenue Lynchburg, VA 24501</p>	<p>Thursday, May 2, 5 p.m. Hampton Roads District James River Auditorium 7511 Burbage Drive Suffolk, VA 23435</p>	<p>Monday, May 6 Bristol District Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center One Partnership Circle Abingdon, VA 24210</p>
<p>Tuesday, May 7 Salem District Salem Civic Center Community Room 1001 Roanoke Boulevard Salem, VA 24153</p>	<p>Wednesday, May 8 Culpeper District Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission Water Street Center 401 East Water Street Charlottesville, VA 22902</p>	<p>Thursday, May 9 Fredericksburg District Fredericksburg District Auditorium 86 Deacon Road Fredericksburg, VA 22405</p>

Additionally, DRPT will host its own public meeting on Thursday, May 16 at 4 p.m. Individuals may participate and provide comment either virtually (register here: <https://bit.ly/3Q7UqM7>) or at the following locations: 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, VA 23219 or 1725 Duke Street, Suite 675, Alexandria, VA 22314.

You can submit comments online at <https://bit.ly/SYIP2024>, or by email or mail by May 20, 2024.

For roads and highways: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or Infrastructure Investment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

For rail and public transportation: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond VA, 23219.

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Police Officer First Class Steven Monahan of the Fairfax County Police Department receives the 2024 Bronze Medal of Valor. Standing from left to right: 2024 Valor Awards Master of Ceremonies Larry Miller, WUSA9; Andy Klaff, Executive Managing Director, Newmark, 2024 Valor Awards Gold Sponsor; Police Officer First Class Steven Monahan, Fairfax County Police; Chief Kevin Davis, Fairfax County Police; and Chairman Jeffrey McKay, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Valor Awards Honor 230 First Responders

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The 46th Annual Fairfax County Valor Awards celebrates 230 first responders. On Thursday, April 11, the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce honored first responders at the 46th Annual Fairfax County Valor Awards. A steering committee composed of law enforcement agencies, representatives, the Sheriff's Office, event sponsors such as platinum sponsors Inova Hospital and Transurban, and members of the Fairfax County community selected the recipients, guided by specific criteria per category.

"We are proud to bring together members of our community to honor the 230 first responders who received a Valor Award this year," said Charles Kapur, president, and CEO of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce. "Extraordinary heroes protecting us and our families."



Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce CEO Charles Kapur provides welcoming remarks to open the 46th Annual Fairfax County Valor Awards.

It's Going to Cost More To Do More

Public Hearings on the tax rate and sewer rate.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Due to rising service demands and challenges in funding them, Fairfax County faces significant challenges addressing its FY 2025 advertised budget of \$3.8 billion, an increase of \$301.8 million or 8.6 percent over the FY 2024 approved budget, according to statements on the Department of Management and Budget website. External factors, such as revenue diversification restrictions due to state control, have severely limited Fairfax County's flexibility in addressing budget requirements and continue to place a disproportionate burden on property owners, mainly residential taxpayers. The county faces an aging infrastructure, and the population requires more facilities.

A Fairfax County Board of Supervisors public hearing on April 16 opened testimony on the FY 2025 Effective Tax Rate Increase, and another public hearing, this one on sewer availability charges, service charges, base charges, and hauled wastewater charges

Fairfax County staffer Philip Hagen, director of the Department of Management and Budget, explained that the advertised effective real estate tax rate increase of \$1.35 per \$100 of assessed value is the rate upon which the FY 2025 advertised budget is balanced and an increase of over \$0.04 of the real estate tax rate.

The assessed value of residential real property will increase by 2.86 percent and non residential prop-



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 13

Chairman Jeff McKay



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 13

Katie Gorka, chairman of the Fairfax County Republican Committee

erty values will decrease by 1.24 percent. Overall, existing properties will increase 1.91 percent.

Public Testimony on the Advertised FY 2025 Real Estate Tax Rate

❖ Thomas Cranmer of Great Falls quoted a text from Supervisor Pat Herrity's newsletter that said people are leaving the county because of tax increases. "[It] is a problem for the county because these are the people who have to pay the taxes," Cranmer said. He maintained that non-residential properties are

SEE TAX RATE, SEWER CHARGES, PAGE 7

STATIONARY ENGINEER APPRENTICESHIP



Applications for the IUOE Local 99 Apprenticeship Program will be accepted during the period of May 6-10, 2024, inclusive. Applications must be completed in person by the applicant at Engineer Center 9315 Largo Drive West, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. \$35 application fee includes drug screen.

For additional information scan the QR Code.



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SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

Reclaimed water at Fairfax County's Norman Cole Wastewater Treatment Plant

Tax Rate, Sewer Charges

FROM PAGE 6

generally office buildings, and "the whole office market in this area has really gone to hell."

❖ Arthur Purves, president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance, argued that the proposed tax rate increase is not four cents, as the director of management budget said, but instead six cents. "The extra two cents is due to rising residential and commercial assessments," Purves said.

❖ Katie Gorka, chairman of the Fairfax County Republican Committee, said that county housing prices have grown more than double the rate of income, placing a burden on families on top of higher prices for food, gas, and energy. "You want to impose an additional 7 percent tax increase through a tax rise and increased assessments. ... We say no to the tax hikes; time to tighten your belts," Gorka said.

❖ Charles McAndrew, a Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance member, compared the FY 2025 advertised tax rates per \$100 of assessed value of surrounding areas to Fairfax's. Arlington County is \$1.038; Prince William is \$0.966; Stafford is \$0.9175; and Fairfax is \$1.135. "This is outlandish," McAndrew said.

Chairman Jeff McKay said the record remains open until the budget markup on April 30.

Sewer Fees

The second public hearing provided testimony on Proposed Amendments to Section 67.1-10-2 of the Fairfax County Code Relating to Sewer Availability Charges, Service Charges, Base Charges, and Hauled Wastewater Charges. If approved, the proposed rate increases for FY 25 are the same as the county proposed for FY 25 last year.

"Those include a 2 percent rate increase for availability charge, 1 percent of which is to support a new solar investment program;

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SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 13

Thomas Cranmer

"The whole office market in this area has really gone to hell."

— Thomas Cranmer, Great Falls



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 13

Charles McAndrew

a service charge increase of 4.14 percent or 35 cents per 1000 gallons; the base increase of \$1.64 per month for residential units, and accordingly varying increases based on meter sizes for different types of units. The total impact of proposed increases on an average sewer bill is 5.8 percent or \$3.51 monthly. And lastly, no increases are proposed for hauled wastewater charges," said Shahram Mohsenin, director of the Wastewater Planning and Monitoring Division at Fairfax County.

No one testified, and Chairman McKay closed the public hearing.



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed. Route ID	State	Route Name	Structure	Effective Date
BLAND	3099	617	WADDLETOWN ROAD	BIG WALKER CREEK #3	4/4/2024
GLIES	8514	772	SINKINGCREEK ROAD 772	SINKING CREEK	4/2/2024
SCOTT	16685	619	BIG STONY CREEK ROAD	BRANCH	3/21/2024
RICHMOND (M)	21531	161	NORTH BOULEVARD	CSX RAILWAY	3/19/2024
DINWIDDIE	6046	622	BALTIMORE ROAD	GEORGE'S BRANCH	3/19/2024
WAYNESBORO	22301	0	HOPEMAN PARKWAY	CSX RAILWAY	3/14/2024
BEDFORD	2834	699	BORE AUGER ROAD 699	BORE AUGER CREEK	3/13/2024
SMYTH	17395	16	B F BUCHANAN HWY	WHITE OAK BRANCH	3/6/2024
TAZEWELL	18583	631	INDIAN CREEK ROAD	INDIAN CREEK #2	3/6/2024
BEDFORD	2879	746	DICKERSON MILL ROAD 746	WOLF CREEK	3/4/2024

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

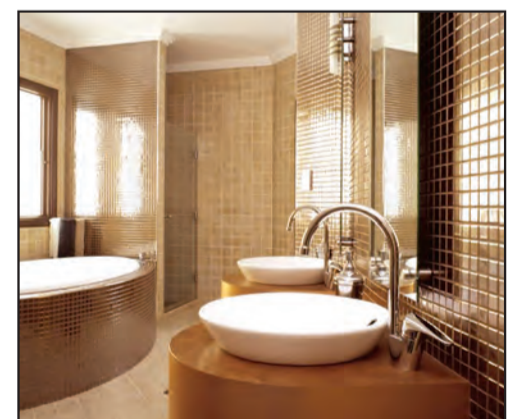
Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

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Around 2,300 people shopped at the American Horticultural Society's annual garden market on April 12 and 13.



Vegetable plants, especially tomatoes, were popular.



Matt Goldman from Plants with Purpose Farm sold raspberry plants that produce yellow berries.



Plants, Art, Alpacas and a Big Hotdog

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Pumped-up gardeners were ready to prowl, peruse and purchase.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

By 11 a.m. on April 12, the rainy drizzle ended and River Farm's front lawn was jam packed with vehicles. Pumped-up gardeners and plant lovers poured out, more than ready to prowl, peruse and purchase at the American Horticultural Society's annual spring garden market on West Boulevard Drive in Mount Vernon.

From peonies to peppers, milkweed to marigolds, bluebells to borage, the 47 vendors' tables were bulging with greenery, crafts, treats and gardening know-how. By noon, wind gusts were dismantling tents, sending hats aloft and blowing down banners, but the "plantophiles" were undeterred. By Sunday's close, 2,300 people had visited, browsed and shopped.

Mount Vernonite Dorothy Keough goes every year to buy tomato plants and pineapple sage that lures hummingbirds to her Hollin Hall garden. It was a first time for Alexandria's Emily Seaton, a gardener, and a fun outing for her daughter, Aelin, age three, who slurped up a gelato from the Moo Thru Ice Cream Truck.

"I'm a berry guy," said Matt Goldman, from Ashland, Virginia's Plants with Purpose Farm. He promotes using yards to grow food and was selling blueberries, raspberries and blackberries. Two of his specialties are yellow raspberries and white blackberries which he says birds don't eat because the birds are attracted to bright colors.



Two Huacaya alpacas owned by Judy Howe charmed many visitors.

Shoppers were picking up Virginia-grown Japanese maples at the Acer Acres stop, trees native to Japan. Radical Roots Community Farm had organic vegetables, herbs, heirloom tomatoes and many pepper varieties shimmering in the breeze. Peony's Envy (get the pun?) offered bare root peony plants. Nature by Design, Hillhouse Farm and Bee American sold plants native to Northern Virginia.

Alexor and Meaghan Moore from Rio, West Virginia, offered medicinal herbs and flowers. Tobacco plants for sale can get up to five feet tall, Alexor explained, and their white flowers bloom all summer and attract pollinators. He also offered hops, a perennial herb, which among other purposes is used to make beer. "It has relaxing qualities," he maintained.

Shoppers enjoyed more than botanicals, like fungi, ungulates, arts, crafts, gardening accessories and a large hotdog on wheels.

Lisa Marie Meginnis came from her farm, Peasant's Parcel in Pawpaw, West Virginia, to sell shiitakes. She explained how they grow mushrooms on oak logs and displayed a waist-high, box-shaped stack of logs. They drill holes into the logs and inject mycelium (mushroom spores), a process that propagates mushrooms in six months.

Clyde Lake from Springfield's Virginia Spores and More sold mushroom-growing supplies which include three pounds of a wood-based product like sawdust and mycelium packed into a plastic bucket. "Anyone can grow an oyster mushroom," he touted.



Alexandrian Ashley Smith makes oyster crafts and promotes oyster recovery.

Nature Art

Oyster shells were attention grabbers at the Gryffin Conservatory and Conservancy's stand, where Ashley Smith sold handmade oyster shell wreaths and garlands. She gets the shells from the Alexandria restaurant Whiskey and Oysters and advocates for oyster restoration in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Mount Vernon-area resident and potter Bruce Ciske was selling his Kurinuki-inspired vases. He explained that for the squarish vases he starts with a clay block and carves the texture and inside opening.

Alluring Alpacas and a Hotdog

Two big-eyed, female Huacaya alpacas enchanted all. Judy Howe from Fredericksburg, www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

assisted by local Joyce Diedrich, sold alpaca yarn, dryer balls, hats and other products, as their two patient alpacas sniffed visitors. On Wednesday, the alpacas will "get naked," quipped Howe. Now sporting four-inch-thick fleeces, they'll be sheared for summer comfort — and more products.

The bright red and yellow Oscar Mayer Wienermobile was hard to miss. Chloe Van Caesele said that the vehicle "is 27 feet long or the length of 60 hotdogs," and versions have been around since 1936. Visitors examined the interior's "six ketchup and mustard seats for 12 buns." There are six wienermobiles total that travel all over the country. "Our mission is to spark smiles," Van Caesele said. "It makes people's day."

Rocklands Real Barbeque food truck offered www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

ings satiated many appetites with tasty barbeque, baked beans, macaroni and cheese and coleslaw.

The 25-acre River Farm was the northernmost of George Washington's five farms and once home to Tobias Lear, Washington's secretary. It's been AHS's national headquarters since 1973.

This year's market sponsors were Bartlett Tree Experts, Wegmans, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Lauren Bishop, Thomas Fannon and Sons, Alexandria Living Magazine, Linemark Communications and the Zebra Newspaper.

For a list of the vendors and links, visit <https://ahsgardening.org/about-river-farm/events-programs/springgardenmarket2024/>



Youngsters like Aelin Seaton got a hotdog-shaped whistle at the wienermobile.



The Oscar Meyer wienermobile was an attention-getter.



The wienermobile's glove compartment inside the vehicle.

SPRING GARDEN MARKET



Clyde Lake from Virginia Spores and More grows mushrooms, sells growing products and teaches home mushroom growing.



Oyster mushrooms are easy to grow, Clyde Lake maintains.

American Horticultural Society

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Flowering plants were popular with many shoppers.



Mount Vernonite Bruce Ciske, a potter, makes Japanese-style vases.



Radical Roots Farm sold herbs and vegetables.

Vetoes Devastate Environmental Progress

Governor vetoed 153 bills, amended 117, including dozens of priority conservation and environmental bills.

By DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

This week, the General Assembly reconvenes in Richmond to consider Governor Youngkin's unprecedented number of amendments and vetoes to legislation we passed during the regular session. All told, the Governor vetoed 153 bills and amended 117 others, including the biennial budget bill. This veto count may creep even higher, because if the General Assembly rejects the Governor's recommendations on a bill during the Reconvene, the Governor may then veto that legislation when it returns to him.

Hanging in the balance among those vetoed and amended bills are dozens of priority conservation and environmental bills. With Earth Day coming up next Monday, I wanted to highlight the environmental policy and funding that our Democratic leadership in the General Assembly will be fighting to preserve and restore during the Reconvene session.

The Governor gutted critical environmental provisions from the state budget, including stripping out language requiring the administration to rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Virginia's participation

in RGGI helps low-income households lower their energy bills and localities combat flooding. Also removed were grant programs and incentives to adopt parking lot solar canopies and rooftop solar, and proposed funding to establish the Office of Commonwealth Resilience which the Governor included in his own introduced budget. Funding to support meeting Virginia's clean water goals and Chesapeake Bay restoration were reduced, including staff positions for Soil & Water Conservation and wastewater projects.

For those of us in Northern Virginia, the Governor saw fit to slash the funding allocated to WMATA by 76%. Delegate Sickles and I carried the original House budget amendments to close WMATA's operating funding gap and meet matching formula commitments by DC and Maryland.

Perhaps most egregious is the elimination of all funding and staff positions added into the budget to mitigate the impact of invasive species in support of the goals outlined by the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan. As you may remember, the Governor handed down my first-ever veto this session of HB 1167, which would have authorized any locality to adopt an ordinance to prohibit the

sale of English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) within its jurisdiction. The Governor doubled down on this action by vetoing two more bills that would have required signage posted at retailers that sell invasive plants to educate consumers about invasive plant species and encourage consumers to ask about alternatives. Without adequate public education, funding and local options and support, Virginians and our natural areas are left at the mercy of the unmitigated spread of invasive plants, which will continue to cost millions of dollars to remove.

While your elected legislators are fighting for Virginia's environment here in Richmond, there's so much you can participate in locally to volunteer or learn more about how to care for our planet. The efforts we have made as a community have reduced Fairfax County's greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent between 2005 and 2020.

The easiest ways to make an impact are to properly recycle and compost your household waste to reduce the items that end up in landfills, decrease air and water pollution, reduce greenhouse gases and maintain our precious natural resources. Fairfax County has several helpful guides and resources available online to help you learn the process: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash>.



Krizek

If you are interested in installing solar panels on your home, there are three programs available to Fairfax County residents to install a quality rooftop solar system at lower costs. Using solar power can reduce your monthly energy bills, increase

your home's value, and benefit the environment. Visit solarizeva.org to learn more. Outdoors, you can incorporate native Virginia plants and pollinator-friendly elements into your landscaping.

This Saturday, you can join me and Sen. Scott Surovell for our annual cleanup of Little Hunting Creek from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Supplies such as trash pickers and bags will be provided. During this popular event, volunteers collect dozens of bags of trash out of the creek every year, including odd items such as tires, mattresses, and even shopping carts. Visit <https://friendsoflittlehuntingcreek.org> to choose a site to participate.

I also encourage you to attend Supervisor Dan Storck's annual Mount Vernon Environment Expo on April 27 at Fort Hunt Park. This free, family-friendly event is designed to educate and inform attendees about the environmental challenges that we face daily and how we can all act to save our planet. Bring your family and enjoy live music, food, live reptile and raptor programs, electric vehicle showcases, electric bikes, and more.

Groups Urge the General Assembly To Reject Youngkin's Metro Budget Amendment

Gov. Glenn Youngkin slashed the General Assembly's additional funding for Metro by 76%, allocating no money in FY25 and just \$35 million in FY26 (Amendment 179 of Item 433).

The General Assembly had committed \$65 million in FY25 to match \$65 million from Northern Virginia localities, and \$84.5 million from the state in FY26, which would also be matched by Northern Virginia. These additional funds were the minimum additional funding needed to help close WMATA's operating funding gap and were necessary to match formula commitments by DC and Mary-

land.

Failure to provide additional state funding will have dire consequences for the workforce and economy of Northern Virginia and the DC region. It would mean massive service cuts and fare hikes at Metro, higher transportation costs for workers, and more congestion on the roads, and discourage next generation companies and workers from locating in the DC region.

The groups signing onto this press statement urge the General Assembly to reject Youngkin's budget amendment and restore the funding the General Assembly agreed to. They should also reject the Governor's budget language requiring a redundant set of stud-

ies of WMATA. The General Assembly has already passed SJ28, which establishes a comprehensive study of transit in Northern Virginia including WMATA.

The General Assembly recognized the critical value of Metro to the economy, workforce, and transportation system of Northern Virginia and the over \$1 billion per year in tax revenue that Metro-generated economic activity provides to the state (NVTC analysis). We thank the legislators for their support for Metro and urge them to reject the Governor's amendments regarding Metro.

Coalition for Smarter Growth; Sustainable Mobility for Arling-

ton County; Washington Area Bicyclist Association; Greater Greater Washington; Sierra Club - Virginia Chapter; Active Prince William; Grassroots Alexandria; CASA; Clean Fairfax; Piedmont Environmental Council; Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke; Southern Environmental Law Center; RVA Rapid Transit; Nature Forward; Virginia League of Conservation Voters; Friends of Dyke Marsh; Virginia Bicycling Federation; Chesapeake Climate Action Network Fund; Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets; Fairfax Families for Safe Streets; Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions.



Residents Discuss Franconia Center Reuse

Will Franconia Government Center move support affordable housing?

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

In just about one year's time, the Franconia Government Center will move into a new facility at a new location after many years of waiting for a new modern center, police station, library, and other services. Residents of Franconia, and the county, must consider how best to reuse the nearly three-acre property on which the government center now sits. The formal public participation process to collect input on options and design features, began on April 13. The meeting was hosted by Supervisor Rodney Lusk, at John R. Lewis High School, assisted by staff from Neighborhood and Community Services, and Housing and Community Development, and others.

The big question for many attendees: Should the site be used for low cost housing, as the County had proposed several years ago, or some other purpose?

In the first of two scheduled public input meetings, the nearly 200 attending encountered an input process very different than the typical town hall meeting. With the assistance of professional facilitators and scribes, six-to-ten people at each of nearly two dozen round tables were asked to engage with each other, to answer questions and share their thoughts on needed community amenities, possible uses of the property, mobility, and area recreation.

Normally soft spoken, Supervisor Lusk was loudly emphatic in acknowledging attention paid to community input, saying, "Some have said this is a done deal [low cost housing]. This is not a done deal. It's not a done deal, because all of these steps have to be completed. All these many planning and zoning processes still have to be addressed. There will be many points of engagement with the community to talk about anything that is proposed. This is not something to be rushed." Lusk went on to describe the process which involves a county staff review, report and recommendation presented to the public; followed by similar activities by the land use committee and rezoning departments. Lusk added, "I just want to make sure that people leave this room understanding that nothing has been decided at this point. This is the very first point [in the process]."

Housing and community development director, Tom Fleetwood, indicated that the County had not entered into an any agreement with the proposed development partnership identified in the exploratory February 2021 RFP process. Fleetwood indicated if the decision ultimately is to pursue the low cost housing option, the qualified RFP developer would be given an opportunity to determine continued interest in the project. If an alternate use is selected, a new RFP likely would be advertised.

The next meeting for citizen input is scheduled for April 22, 6-8 p.m. at the John Lewis High School cafeteria. At a meeting



On April 13, Supervisor Rodney Lusk explains the resident input process concerning the reuse of the Franconia Government Center.



The public meeting about the reuse of the Franconia Government Center on April 13 drew about 200 participants



Those attending were asked to share their thoughts and interests in the Franconia Government Center reuse project



Supervisor Lusk circulates among tables to listen as residents discuss options and amenities

"This is not a done deal. ... This is not something to be rushed."

— Supervisor Rodney Lusk

on May 6, 6-8 p.m., at the same location, the county will report out what options have been suggested in the April meetings. At the conclusion of the process, the County Board of Supervisors will determine what option will be pursued.

Project History

This is the third year of the county's implementation of the Consolidated Plan for FY 2022 - FY 2026, with a goal to produce 10,000 new units affordable to households earning up to 60 percent of AMI by 2034. The Franconia property is one of nine projects in the pipeline relied upon to assist in reaching the low cost housing goal.

Currently located at 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria, the "Proposed One-Year Action Plan for Country FY-2024" lists the Franconia Government Center project. The



Facilitators and scribes record points of discussion on a series of questions related to the land reuse and community needs

plan indicates, "The Board of Supervisors transferred ownership of the Franconia Governmental Center site to the FCRHA [in March 2021] for redevelopment of affordable housing."

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) announced plans to hold a public hearing on the pro-

posed agreement on Jan. 25, 2024. Residents raised concerns at a Board of Supervisors public hearing on the land transfer on Jan. 23. At the Feb. 20 Supervisors meeting, Lusk formally deferred a decision to convey the property to "ensure that our entire community has an opportunity to voice their opinions on the property transfer."

ENTERTAINMENT

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/>

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.



Japanese Inspiration will be featured April 4 to May 12, 2024 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.

APRIL 1-30

Cherry Blossom Dreams. At Van Landingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Gallery 311, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. Embrace the ethereal beauty of spring this month in the Van Landingham Gallery. Cherry Blossom Dreams features a collection of works presented by the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association. Artists participating in the exhibition interpret the essence of spring through a diverse range of mediums and styles.

APRIL 4 TO MAY 12

Japanese Inspiration: Sean Donnan, David Gootnick, Yoshiko Ratliff. At The Athenaeum, 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 Donnan 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 artform called Kumiko. And Yoshiko Ratliff's paintings are bold, but intricately detailed representations of Japanese characters and Kimonos.

APRIL 9 - MAY 19

There and Back Exhibit of Photographic Art by Maureen Minehan. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N Union Street, Studio 312, in Alexandria. There and Back reflects Maureen's ceaseless desire to explore the beauty inherent in solitude. Through her artistic vision, she portrays isolated landscapes not as desolate or forsaken, but as sanctuaries where quietude reigns supreme, and narratives yet untold

await discovery. Maureen will be at the gallery on Sunday, April 21st from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

MAY 3 TO JUNE 2

"The Art of Tea" exhibit at Del Ray Artisans gallery features art that explores themes and stories woven around this aromatic beverage. From tea cups and tea pots to the Mad Hatter or Boston Tea Party, this exhibit intrigues and delights. Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Reception: Friday, May 3, 7-9pm. Open Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm (June 2, 12-4pm). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

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

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 17

Poem in Your Pocket Celebration. 6:30 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Featuring Zeina Azzam, Poet Laureate, City of Alexandria, who will lead the Poem in Your Pocket Celebration. The formal program begins at 7 p.m. She will be joined by winning poets of the 2024 DASHing Words in Motion poetry contest, who will have their poems displayed inside the DASH buses and trolleys in April through August. Limited seating will be available, so reservations are encouraged. If you wish to read a poem, or to make a reservation email poet@alexandriava.gov.

THURSDAY/APRIL 18

Jive After Five Networking Reception. 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. At Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria. Join in an evening of professional networking and camaraderie at the upcoming Jive After Five event, hosted by the Northern Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria, this exclusive gathering promises an opportunity for businesses to foster meaningful connections and cultivate prosperous relationships. Elevating the ambiance of the evening, indulge in a curated selection of fine wines or beers and live music by guitarist Tito Dorante as you engage in dynamic conversations with fellow professionals from diverse industries.

APRIL 20-21

Family Animal Day. At George Washington's Mount Vernon. Discover Mount Vernon's adorable animals



The Metropolitan School of the Arts will present its Spring Ballet: Coppelia on April 27-28, 2024 at George Washington National Masonic Memorial in Alexandria.

during Family Animal Day on April 20th and 21st. This is a rare opportunity to see sheep, oxen, and horses and learn about their jobs in the 18th century.

SATURDAY/APRIL 20

Rock the Ave Block Party. 12-4 p.m. At SaltBox, 4700 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. This outdoor, free, family-friendly event will feature kid-friendly activities, local Eisenhower businesses and area artisans, live music from Yellow Door Concert Series, a pop-up Cider Garden hosted by Lost Boy Cider and much more. The Eisenhower Partnership will also be offering bike valet services provided by Two Week Valet, to encourage individuals to bike to/from the event.

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 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

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

APRIL 20-21

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra - Bernstein/Shostakovich. Saturday/April 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center; Sunday, April 21 at 3 p.m. at George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Featuring the Alexandria Symphony with James Ross, conductor; Aldo Lopez-Gavilan, piano; Jorge Amado: Alexandria Shuffle; Leonard Bernstein: Three Dance Episodes from On the Town.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 24TH, the Friends of the Duncan Library will be holding their Spring Book Sale.

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NEWS



ARTWORK CONTRIBUTED
Silver Shield Anti-Scam Task Force.

Silver Shield Anti-Scam Task Force to Help Seniors

Mission:
To keep phone and internet scammers at bay.

7th Annual Scam Jam,

Friday, April 19, 2024 - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax
National Elder Fraud Hotline at 1-833-372-8311

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

There is a county initiative called the "Silver Shield Anti-Scam Task Force" that is battling the scammers on multiple levels to spread awareness that the scammers are out there using phone calls, web contacts, email and text messages to fraudulently steal money and property.

"If it's too good to be true, it probably is," said Melissa Smarr, the facilitator of the task force that has about 30 members from nine different agencies. The taskforce efforts are split into outreach and assistance when the Fairfax County Police Department gets involved.

Silver Shield was launched in 2017 at the Lincolnia Senior Center and Supervisor Penny Gross was part of its introduction. "We need to talk about this more and learn more," she said. The whole Board of Supervisors was behind the effort and since then, it has

SEE SILVER SHIELD, PAGE 14

Silver Shield Anti-Scam Task Force to Help Seniors

FROM PAGE 14

grown.

Martin Bailey is the AARP Virginia representative on the task force. He has a number of podcasts on the county senior website, including the latest on crypto currency and the scams surrounding that. In one case he describes on the podcast, "the victim lost \$84,000," he said. Bailey was awarded the AARP Virginia President's Award back in 2020 for his work organizing the "Scam Jam" and his efforts towards addressing the senior scamming issue.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 13

In addition to providing an opportunity to get great books on the cheap, this sale benefits the operations of one of Alexandria's neighborhood library branches.

FRIDAY/APRIL 26

Shopping at George Washington's Mount Vernon. Shop for heirloom vegetables, herbs, annual flowers, native perennials, trees, and shrubs grown in Mount Vernon's greenhouses. Members can shop one day early, on April 26, with a reservation. Advance tickets are not required on April 27 for the general public sale. Members receive a 10 percent discount on plants.

FRIDAY/APRIL 26

Homeschool Day. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Hwy., Alexandria. Discover the architecture and history behind two American houses from different centuries. Special guided tours of the houses will be available on the hour starting at 10 AM, 11 AM, 12 PM, and 1 PM. Hands-on activities will explore different aspects of the homes' histories. Visit the website: <https://www.woodlawnpope-leighey.org/nwshow24>

SATURDAY/APRIL 27

Native Plant Sale in Northern Alexandria. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Largest native plant sale in D.C. Metro Area hosts 11 vendors from three states and D.C. selling native perennials, shrubs, and trees for sun or shade. This event is free. 1701 N. Quaker Lane in Church of St. Clement parking lot, Alexandria. Call 571-232-0375 or cscottknudsen@gmail.com or

A senior at Fairfax High School will be at this year's Scam Jam to highlight the work he's done on an app for seniors he calls "Scam Cops," and this helps the effort.

Golden Gazette Story

In the April 2024 Golden Gazette, there is an article about driveway paving scams. "The schemes usually begin with solicitation, or a knock at the door," the article starts, and goes into the whole con artist conversation. One of their tips was to look at the solicitor identification.

www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 27

Environment Expo. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Fort Hunt Park, Alexandria. This free family-friendly festival will feature loads of activities and exhibitors sharing information about climate action, environmental challenges we face and how we can take action to make Fairfax County, and the world at large, a healthier, more sustainable place. There will be live music, reptile and raptor demonstrations, food, face painting, make and takes, giveaways, solar cooking, CCTV Robot Camera Demos, touch-a-truck, the Purple Glass Monster, an EV Showcase and more.

APRIL 27-28

Metropolitan School of the Arts to Present Spring Ballet: Coppelia. At George Washington National Masonic Memorial in Alexandria. Showtimes at 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. Coppelia, a captivating tale of love, mischief, and mechanical dolls. Audiences can experience a village brought to life by dance, where fantasy and reality blur in this heartwarming story, perfect for all ages. In addition to the performances, MSA will also feature a Springtime Marketplace and a meet-and-greet session after the show. Tickets are from \$18 to \$25 and can be purchased at metropolitanarts.org

SUNDAY/APRIL 28

PNC Parkway Classic Race. From Mount Vernon Estate to Old Town Alexandria, the PNC Parkway Classic, produced by Pacers Running, celebrates its 40th-year and returns Sunday, April 28, 2024. The race, sponsored by PNC

Bank, attracts thousands of runners and spectators throughout the DC Metro region and beyond to experience the historic George Washington Memorial Parkway from a different vantage point during the Springtime. The signature adult race, beginning at 8:00 a.m., will feature two distance options for runners - 10 Mile or 5K. The 10-mile course will start at the beautiful Mount Vernon Estate and will take runners down the tree-lined George Washington Memorial Parkway and through historic Old Town Alexandria; a unique opportunity for runners of all skill levels. Featuring a pre-race with family-friendly activities, a Kids Dash 600-meter race will take place for kids under 12 years old. For registration information, race route details and event day activities, visit: <https://www.parkwayclassic.com>.

"We not only cover scams that specifically target older adults, but also how scams are evolving," Jones said. They recently ran a series of articles written by Bailey about Artificial Intelligence - what it is and how it is being used to fuel scams and create deep-fakes.

THURSDAY/MAY 2
May Coffee & Connections. 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. At The Landing Alexandria, 2620 Main Line Blvd., Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network May Coffee & Connections. Hear from ACT for Alexandria President & CEO Heather Peeler who will share her amazing story.

THURSDAY/MAY 2

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>.

SATURDAY/MAY 4

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>.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Interested in becoming a foster parent? There is always a need for caring foster parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit fcsvanow@gmail.com or www.FCS-VA.org. Or call 703-817-9890.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

STEM VOLUNTEERS. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern

Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips at www.seniorscientist.org. To volunteer, contact donaldrea@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org. United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Ford-

son Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities or email volunteer@ucmagency.org.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil (Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov) at 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See www.ophrescue.org for information and all volunteer opportunities.

Diagnosis to Date



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I have been lucky - and/or terribly diagnosed, so that my story/diagnosis has been all wrong. Originally diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer stage IV, I was given a "13 month to two-years" prognosis in late Feb. 2009. I was treated with all manner of conventional - and mostly unpronounceable chemotherapy infused every three weeks for years. Occasionally, depending on the chemotherapy I was getting, and on what my monthly lab work was indicating, my medicine was changed, and the infusion schedule was even extended as well. Despite the mortality statistics, I continued to survive this "terminal" diagnosis leading my oncologist to boast that I was his "third miracle:" a lung cancer patient who didn't die within the expected - according to the hypothetical book I often refer to, time frame.

As the years passed, my continued survival became even more incredible/rare. Why? Because lung cancer is a killer. Based on easily found statistics, lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths annually. In fact, more people die from lung cancer than the combined totals of the next three cancers. Yet, I lived, and the longer I lived, the more invested I became in my survival and prouder of it too. It was a "Star Trek" kind of adventure: I had gone where few men had gone before.

For nearly 10-plus years I was able to live my life reasonably well until I noticed a jaw-breaker-sized growth above my Adam's apple. Certainly, I pointed it out to my oncologist (those days appointments were in office - not on zoom). He took note of it, even measured it, but said it was a clone of the lung cancer and because of some skin fact, was basically inoperable. This non-action continued for almost a year. Eventually, he felt compelled to refer me to an endocrinologist, across the hall no less. When she saw me, she immediately asked what that was on my throat. I gave her the short story which ended with a "No. Dr. (name withheld) never recommended it." She said, "we're doing a biopsy right now." I asked if I needed to make an appointment. She said "No." After the needle biopsy, she said she'd have the results in a few days and would call me. The next day she called and told me. I had "papillary thyroid cancer, stage IV," she said, not the lung cancer with which I had been unexpectedly living. Not sure if it was a relief, given this new unknown diagnosis, but I was grateful nonetheless that there seemed to be an updated diagnosis (and from I had learned over the years as a cancer patient, almost any cancer other than lung offered a better life expectancy).

In communicating the results to Team Lourie, the endocrinologist felt that papillary thyroid cancer is what I'd had all along, not lung cancer. Moreover, we learned that thyroid cancer is often curable and has earned the nickname "the friendly cancer" because often when treated properly, lives are saved. And 'treating properly' is not what I had experienced for the past 11-plus years. I had been treated for non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV. I was told, unfortunately, that receiving the wrong kind of chemotherapy/targeted and/or immunotherapy as I had for lung cancer would have minimal effect on my actual thyroid cancer. Apparently, what I had for 11-plus years was a very slow-moving type of thyroid cancer which had been basically untreated since 2009. Finally, it manifested as a lump on my throat.

Here I thought I was superman, having survived lung cancer well beyond my doctor's original prognosis/expectation, but it turns out I was more like mistake man. I didn't have a terminal form of cancer after all. I had a curable form that had been untreated. My entire narrative changed that day. I went from beating the odds to what were the odds of misidentifying a tissue sample as lung cancer when it was actually thyroid cancer?

From here my care changed. Within the next few months, I had a thyroidectomy to remove my thyroid and the para thyroid. Going in for the operation, I was hopeful that this recent biopsy had discovered the answer to my prayers: normal life, free of cancer. "But alas, poor Yurick," it was not to be. When I woke up from my two-hour outpatient surgery, it had actually been a seven-hour surgery as the cancer had spread and embedded itself under my collarbone. The surgeon spent the extra five hours attempting to "get" all the cancer. As much as he tried, ultimately, he was unsuccessful, and I've been treated for papillary thyroid cancer ever since - until three or four months ago. That's when it was determined that the side effects of the thyroid cancer medicine were damaging my kidneys. So much so in fact that I stopped that medicine and have been unmedicated ever since. Here I am, 15-plus years into thyroid cancer during which I've been on medicine for only three years and now I'm forced to stop. Comparatively speaking, I had only recently started. Now what? Apparently there is no 'what.'

It was slow moving to begin with; I must hope it will be slow-moving to end with (prepositions notwithstanding).

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



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