

THE CONNECTION

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

Black History Is American History

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"FROM THE THREADS OF OUR
TO THE FABRIC OF OUR FUTURE"



Student Peacemakers Honored

PAGE 5

Some of the student speakers at FCPS Black History Month celebration: From left are Elijah Wickham, Yemmy Tekabe, Hiroko Rose, Sean Cranford, Kye Leiva and Jabari Britt.

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OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 20 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 22



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Some of the student speakers: From left are Elijah Wickham, Yemmy Tekabe, Hiroko Rose, Sean Cranford, Kye Leiva and Jabari Britt.



From left are authors Etta Willson, Rondia Prescott, Linneall Naylor and Jenee Lindner.

‘Make No Mistake – Black History Is America’s History’

FCPS holds special event at Woodson High School.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Featuring the theme, “From the Threads of Our Past to the Fabric of Our Future,” Fairfax County Public Schools celebrated Black History Month, Feb. 19, with a special event at Woodson High. Participating were FCPS officials, School Board members, students, a GMU professor, local authors and a music ensemble.

Etta Willson, Linneall Naylor, Rondia Prescott and Jenee Lindner – four of the authors of the book, “Black Communities of Fairfax: A History” – took part in a panel discussion. And throughout the evening, Woodson and other FCPS students quoted passages from their book.

Emcee was Darnessia Semper, who deals with equity and cultural responsiveness for FCPS. She noted that several of her relatives – born in the early 1900s in rural South Carolina – got college educations. “So I had a fabric to grow from,” she said. “They’ve paved the way for me to be where I am.”

The first speaker was Marcia St. John-Cunning, representing School Board Chairman Karl Frisch. She said she’d attended a birthday celebration that morning for the late congressman John Lewis at the Springfield high school named in his honor.

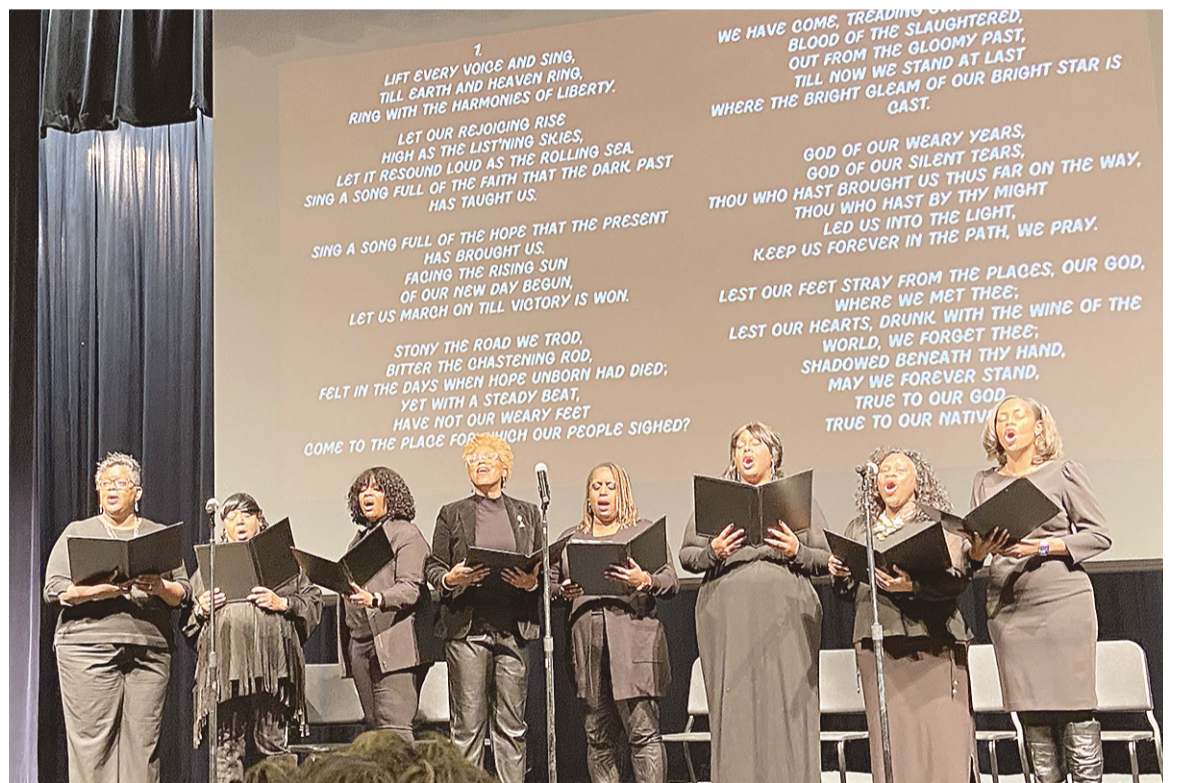
“This annual event is one example of [FCPS’s] unwavering commitment to celebrating diversity and uplifting the voices that have shaped our history,” said St. John-Cunning. “Make no mistake – Black history is America’s history. Black History Month, in particular, is a time to reflect, learn and continue the work of those who came before us. But at FCPS, our commitment goes be-
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yond just one month; it’s embedded in everything we do. FCPS affirms its dedication to fostering an inclusive community where every student feels welcome, respected and valued.

“That commitment extends to the very names on our school buildings, ensuring that they reflect the values of equity and justice that define us as a community. FCPS is a place where every student is empowered to achieve their full potential [and] where the next generation of learners are given the tools, support and encouragement to create the future they deserve.”

She then quoted a message she called “as timely and meaningful today” as when it was spoken by Lewis. He said: “Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month or a year. It is the struggle of a lifetime. Never ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble – necessary trouble.”

Mason District School Board Representative Ricardy Anderson said the impact of Black labor, ingenuity and resilience extends far beyond the confines of a single month. “This year’s Black History Month theme is ‘African Americans and Labor,’” she said. “And it’s not just about work; it’s about building, sustaining and transforming this country, despite historical and systemic



With the words of the song on the screen behind them, 360 Worship Music Ensemble performs, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

barriers, from the enforced labor of the enslaved – who literally laid the foundation of this nation – to the Black workers who led the great migration in search of opportunity, to the educators, activists and entrepreneurs who continue to shape our society today.”

Noting that Black labor has been about progress, Anderson said FCPS personnel “stand on the shoulders of trailblazing, African American educators and leaders who paved the way for equity, inclusion and excellence. The legacy of Dr. Luther Porter Jackson – whose name graces the only secondary school that served Black students in Fairfax County during segregation – reminds us that education has always been a battleground for justice. And while progress has been made, the work is far from over.”

“Black labor is about the right to dignity, fair wages, opportunity and justice,” she con-

tinued. “It’s about ensuring that every person, regardless of race, has a real shot at the American Dream. [But] the current political climate has introduced policies to dismantle initiatives designed to foster understanding, equity and opportunity for all. These intolerable actions not only undermine decades of progress but also send a heartbreaking message to marginalized communities.

“In the face of these challenges, our commitment to celebrating and teaching our Black history becomes even more crucial. Black history isn’t just about recognizing Black contribution; it’s about the struggle to overcome the obstacles that have tried to silence those contributions. Let’s commit to building a future where equity isn’t just an ideal, but a reality.”

Former FCPD Sergeant Sentenced to Five Years

Mother of fatal police shooting victim, Timothy McCree Johnson, speaks out.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

“Nordstrom Asset Protection associates observed Johnson act in a suspicious manner, saw him select designer sunglasses and believed a ‘larceny’ was about to occur,” says the video narrator in FCPD press conference (video): McLean OIS 2.22.23.

Former Fairfax County Police Sergeant Wesley Shifflett was processed into the county jail Friday evening, Feb. 28. At his sentencing hearing earlier that day, Fairfax County Circuit Judge Randy I. Bellows



SCREENSHOT

Chief Kevin Davis, joined by Captain Carolyn Kinney, commander of the McLean District Police Station, provides an update to the community on the officer-involved shooting on Feb. 22, 2023.

Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024. On Oct. 4, a jury found Shifflett not guilty of involuntary manslaughter but guilty of reckless handling of a firearm, a Class 6 felony. Last month, the defense filed a motion to set aside the verdict. It was denied.

Prosecutors said at the jury trial that Shifflett acted recklessly. He chased Johnson into a dark, wooded area and fired two shots without identifying a firearm.

Shifflett was sentenced to serve three years of incarceration with an additional five years of supervised probation. (His sentence was commuted by Gov. Glenn Youngkin; see related story on this page.)

Shifflett’s defense attorney, Caleb A. Kershner, said he plans to appeal the sentence.

Bellows told the courtroom, “I recognize the jury’s finding that Sgt. Shifflett’s

SEE FORMER FCPD
SERGEANT SENTENCED,
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“I’m not reaching for nothing. I have nothing ... I’m shot, man. Hurry.”

— Timothy McCree Johnson, unarmed, fatally shot, on police body worn camera

sentenced Shifflett, 36, to five years in prison with two years suspended.

The criminal trial of Wesley Shifflett began on



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Timothy McCree Johnson (Oct. 28, 1985-Feb. 22, 2023)



Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R)



Steve T. Descano (D), Fairfax Commonwealth’s Attorney

“It is in the interest of justice that he be released immediately.”

— Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin (R)

“I’m outraged at Youngkin’s decision tonight.”

— Steve T. Descano (D), Fairfax Commonwealth’s Attorney

Youngkin Commutes Shifflett’s Sentence

Fairfax Commonwealth’s Attorney: “Insult to all Virginians who value an untainted justice system.”

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In a statement Sunday night, March 2, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin (R) said he commuted the sentence of Wesley Shifflett. “I have today used the executive clemency authority granted to me by the Constitution of Virginia and commuted the sentence imposed on Sgt. Wesley Shifflett was convicted of recklessly discharging a firearm by the Fairfax County Circuit Court.”

Former Fairfax County police officer Shifflett admitted during his jury trial last fall that he shot and killed Timothy McCree on Feb. 22, 2023. Shifflett testified at his trial in October of 2024 he shot Johnson in self defense because, after Johnson fell during a foot pursuit, he saw him reaching into his waistband, possibly for a gun.

“I am convinced that the court’s sentence of incarceration is unjust and violates the cornerstone of our justice system — that similarly situated individuals receive proportionate sentences,” Youngkin said in his statement. “I want to emphasize that a jury acquitted Sgt. Shifflett of the more serious charge of involuntary manslaughter.”

Commuted means terminating a sentence that is being served for

guilt. A commutation can change someone’s prison sentence, but unlike a pardon, a commutation does not wipe out a conviction. The Code of Virginia, states that the power to grant pardons or reprieves is vested in the Governor, as provided in Article V, Section 12 of the Constitution of Virginia.

Less than two days before the governor’s commutation, on Friday, February 28, Randy I. Bellows, Circuit Court Judge for the 19th Judicial Circuit (Fairfax), sentenced Shifflett to five years in prison, the maximum penalty allowed as punishment of Class 6 convicted felony of reckless discharge of a firearm and a five-year probation. After the sentencing, Shifflett was jailed to be processed. He remained in the detention center until just before 8 p.m. Sunday, having spent two nights in jail before walking free, according to the The Washington Post.

On Oct. 4, 2024, the jury found Shifflett not guilty of involuntary manslaughter but guilty of reckless handling of a firearm,

Youngkin said the court rejected the Senior Probation and Parole Officer’s recommendation of no incarceration nor supervised probation.

SEE YOUNGKIN COMMUTES,
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SCREENSHOT

Dimly lit officer body-worn camera footage, released Thursday, March 23, 2023, shows the aftermath of officer foot pursuit into a wooded area near the busy Tysons Corner shopping mall and Timothy McCree Johnson, a shoplifting suspect, surrounded by officers rendering aid; another officer has shot him.

ROUNDUPS

Car Crash Kills Teen Girl in Centreville

Although police haven't released her name since she's a minor, those who knew the 16-year-old Chantilly High student killed in a car crash last week are mourning her loss. The tragedy occurred Thursday night, Feb. 27, on a curvy, hilly and dark section of Pleasant Valley Road near Cox Farms in Centreville.

Police charged the driver who hit her vehicle, Carlos Parada-Hernandez, 23, of Herndon, with Driving While Intoxicated. Meanwhile, detectives from the Fairfax County Police Department's Crash Reconstruction Unit are continuing to investigate the circumstances leading to the fatal crash.

Officers responded at 10:28 p.m. to the 5600 block of Pleasant Valley Road. They said Parada-Hernandez was driving a 2023 Toyota Corolla northbound on Pleasant Valley while the teen was driving southbound. Neither had passengers.

According to police, Parada-Hernandez "crossed over the double-yellow line into the southbound lanes and struck the victim's 2013 Toyota Camry head-on. The teen girl was flown to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries and succumbed to them later that night.

Following his arrest, Parada-Hernandez was initially held without bond in the Adult Detention Center. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to please call the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

Greenbriar Man, 88, Charged with Killing Wife

Fairfax County police have charged 88-year-old Douglas Sommer with killing his wife, Marilyn, 87, inside their home in Chantilly's Greenbriar community. Last Friday, Feb. 28, at 6:09 a.m., officers responded to a report of a shooting in the 13000 block of Pennypacker Lane.

The caller was the couple's daughter, and police say she reported that her father had shot her mother. Officers found Marilyn Sommer, 87, suffering from trauma to the upper body. She was declared dead at the scene. The daughter was in the home at the time of the shooting, and police say it happened after an argument between the couple.

Douglas Sommer was arrested and taken to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center where he was charged with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. He's being held without bond.

Detectives continue to interview people and process evidence recovered from the scene to determine the circumstances that led up to this fatal shooting. Anyone with any information about it is asked to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2.

Car Seat Inspections on March 13

Parents may get their children's car seats inspected on Thursday, March 13, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants should install the child safety seat so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed, if necessary, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly. Everyone is eligible. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for April 10, at the same place and time.

Food for Neighbors Drive at North County Government Center

Ensuring local middle and high school students don't go hungry.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) is hosting a Food for Neighbors Food Drive. What started in Herndon in 2016 has grown to partnerships at 50 middle and high schools across Northern Virginia, most in Fairfax County, ensuring students don't go hungry.

"We're joining the food drive for this non-profit that serves middle and high school students, including at South Lakes and Herndon and Middle and High Schools," posted Alcorn on his Facebook Page.

Food for Neighbors provides the schools with individually packaged, student-specific donations to distribute to students when they might otherwise go hungry. Donation www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

examples are shelf-stable milk cartons, chocolate preferred; individual Cup of Noodle and Mac & Cheese cups where water is the only added ingredient; packs of cheese or peanut butter crackers; microwave meals – Prego/Campbell's/Pace Ready Meals, chicken or tuna snack packs with crackers; as well as toiletries. Residents should drop off the individually packaged, student-specific donations at the Fairfax County North County Government Center, 1801 Cameron Glen Drive, Reston, by the close of business on Friday, March 7. People can also make a monetary donation online.

Kyle McDaniel, Fairfax County School Board Member At-Large, recently dropped off his donations and is encouraging other residents to participate. Donations will benefit the South Lakes Food Pantry, Herndon Middle and High Schools, and other area schools.

For more information, visit <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/red-bag-program/what-s-in-a-red-bag/>

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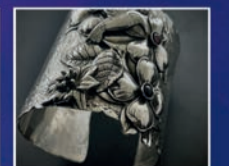
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FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) speaks at the 2024 Fairfax Student Peace Award



Winners of the 2025 Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County.

Winners of the 2025 Fairfax Student Peace Awards

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Students and organizations from 25 Fairfax County public high schools and two private high schools have been named recipients of the 2025 Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County, designed to recognize young people who work as peacemakers. The event took place on Sunday, March 2 at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax.

The 2025 Student Peace awardees are:

- ❖ Annandale HS – Sage Nagle
- ❖ Centreville HS – Jayden Lee
- ❖ Chantilly HS – Nila Elangovan
- ❖ Edison HS – Mia Martin-Escandarani
- ❖ Fairfax HS – Kiran Ashok
- ❖ Falls Church HS – Shri Bala
- ❖ Hayfield SS – Ava Saunders and Grace Varughes
- ❖ Herndon HS – Clarissa Dantes
- ❖ Justice HS – Muslim Student Association
- ❖ King Abdullah Academy – Essam Jazzar
- ❖ Lake Braddock SS – Manas Puri
- ❖ Langley HS – Annyiah Rizvi
- ❖ Lewis HS – Madison McLaughlin
- ❖ Madison HS – Hunter Guthrie
- ❖ Marshall HS – Ghalia Sakly
- ❖ McLean HS – Bushra Ekhikhamenor
- ❖ Mount Vernon HS – Jennifer Vilalobos-Saenz
- ❖ Mountain View HS – Julia DeVera
- ❖ Oakton HS – Isaac Rodriguez
- ❖ Quander Road School – Jonathan Johnston
- ❖ Robinson SS – Jasmine Sklarew
- ❖ South County HS – Ghazi “Zizo” Hanania
- ❖ South Lakes HS – Jahnavi Nandanavanam
- ❖ Thomas Jefferson HS for Science and Technology – Send-a-Smile Club
- ❖ West Potomac HS – Salaiha Najeeb
- ❖ West Springfield HS – Simeon Samuel
- ❖ Westfield HS – Westfield Unified Sports
- ❖ Woodson HS – Harun Khan

The Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County began in 2006 to encourage people to think more about peace as both a means and an end and to recognize young people working as peacemakers. Each year, every public high school and two private high schools in Fairfax County are asked to select one junior or senior or a group of students whose work has promoted peace.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly was speaker at the awards and the U.S. House of Representatives is recognizing the 2025 Fairfax County Student Peace Awards recipients by entering their names into the Congressional Record.

Event organizer and program co-founder (2006), Margaret Fischer said Megan E. Corrado, Acting Deputy Director of Alliance for Peacebuilding of The United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) was the keynote speaker. In addition to her role at the Alliance for Peacebuilding, she is an adjunct professor at the George Washington University, where she teaches gender, human rights, and international law.

The Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County is organized by volunteers and funded by donations from 17 secular and religious sponsoring organizations, including the Peace Awards founders and the Herndon Friends Meeting, a Quaker community in the Town of Herndon. Fisher said that for the students’ efforts toward peace, they will be gifted the book, “Sweet Fruit from the Bitter Tree: 61 Stories of Creative & Compassionate Ways out of Conflict,” donated by author Mark Andreas and the publisher.

Six years ago, on March 10, 2019, Connolly stood before a crowd of student peacemakers, their loved ones, friends, and others gathered late that Sunday afternoon to celebrate the 2019 Fairfax Student Peace Makers at the Sherwood Community Center. Connolly said in his remarks, as reported by The Connection, “It’s not easy to be the peacemaker. Sometimes, it is really hard, especially when you make those around you,

even friends, angry when you speak out and stand up for what is right. And sometimes it can be dangerous. But in all instances, being the peacemaker requires courage and commitment.”

Among the 27 well-deserved 2025 Peace Awardees are the following students. Their resolve to courageously and compassionately stand up for peace, putting differences aside and taking decisive steps for peace and understanding reflects the actions of all awardees.

❖ Jayden Lee is a senior at Centreville High School. He established the Centreville High School chapter of Amnesty International, where club members learn about and advocate for human rights. As the president of the school’s UNICEF club, Jayden organized the “Water Walk,” to promote awareness of the needs of impoverished children. Local “students walked about two miles carrying a gallon of water, raising money for UNICEF while helping people concretely understand some of the challenges faced by children who have to walk long distances to obtain water for household needs.”

❖ Jahnavi Nandanavanam, a South Lakes High School senior, is part of a 250-person Indian Classical Symphony joined by 600 dancers. “We were celebrating the unity of humans and showing how we can overcome conflict through sharing our culture and artistic diversity. A worldwide audience sees that peace can begin through cultural exchange and understanding,” Nandanavanam says.

❖ Ava Saunders and Grace Varughese are the co-presidents of the Hayfield chapter of Students Demand Action. The nonpartisan organization works to end gun violence by advocating for common-sense firearm legislation, promoting safe and secure firearm storage, and endorsing political candidates based on their gun policies rather than on party affiliation. They went to Richmond for Students Demand Action’s advocacy day

and received a standing ovation as they discussed that guns are the number-one cause of adolescent deaths and that students should feel safe at school.

❖ The Muslim Student Association at Justice High School fosters a community for Muslims and educates their fellow students about Islam and Islamic culture. The association organized a school-approved demonstration to spread awareness about Palestine that was attended by a few hundred Muslim and non-Muslim students. A video of the event received some hostile comments online, but club members did not respond in kind. Club President Dania Eldirdiri says, “Instead of meeting hostility with hostility, we wanted to have a conversation. We took time to respond to comments with the message that Islam is a religion of peace.”

❖ Jonathan “JJ” Johnston is a senior at Quander Road School. He finds inner peace in his artistic work, which positively influences all aspects of his life and the people around him. School staff reports “that his positive leadership has resulted in his ability to calm down students and help his classmates understand that avenues other than anger can help them get out of negative situations.”

❖ Mia Martin-Escandarani, a senior at Edison High School, works to counter antisemitism through dialog and education. She participates in conversations in the Jewish Community Relations Council Student-to-Student program, allowing space for “respect, curiosity, and empathy between groups,” and in the StandWithUs Kenneth Leventhal High School Internship program. Exchanges with people who disagree with her can be challenging, but Mia has learned to remain calm. “Silence allows evil to take place. None of us can be bystanders. We must do something,” Mia says.

Video link to the 2025 Student Peace Awards ceremony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5M0FgCVZeg>

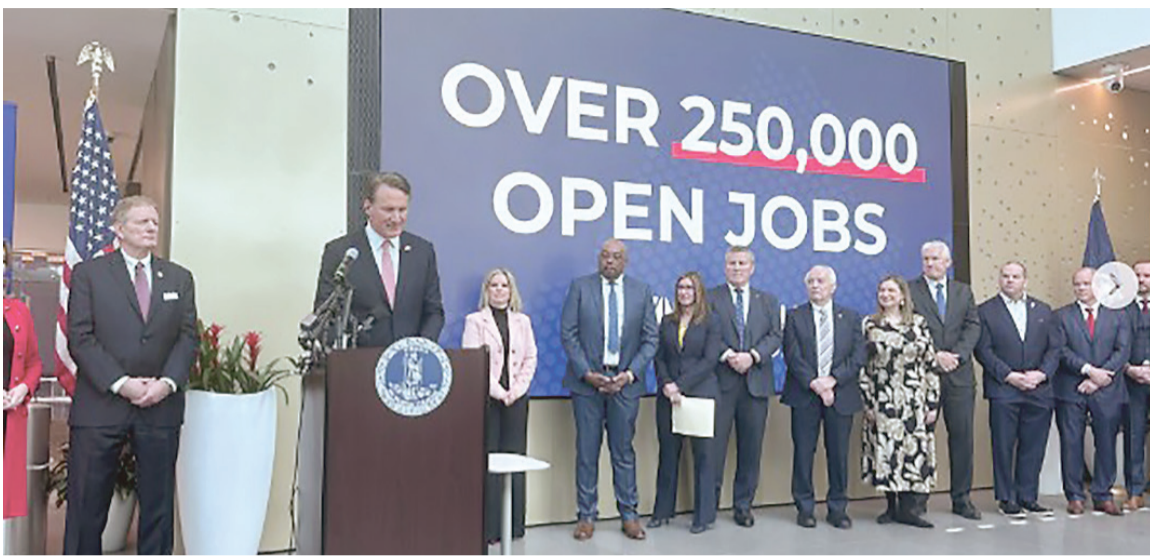


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Governor Youngkin launches a jobs initiative.

Government Layoffs Hit Hard

Contractors face layoffs too.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The lashing of the federal government workforce is not good news for Fairfax County where the local economy and many families are dependent on a steady government job or with the many government contractors that go with them.

On the Virginia Employment Commission website there is a special section for recently unemployed government workers called “Resources for Virginia’s Former Federal Employees and Other Workers Impacted by the Federal Government Transition.”

Mount Vernon resident Jim Weinstein is an employment specialist that now has his employment assistance office in his house in Hollin Hills. From his viewpoint the job outlook he sees isn’t good. “It’s horrifying,” he said. “People are hoping things aren’t that bad,” but this is not realistic, he added. Despite what is advertised on the computer with Monster, Indeed and other job sites like that, companies aren’t hiring a lot of people.

Beefing up the resume may be a place to start but networking is his best recommendation. “That’s going to be the way to go,” Weinstein said. One USAID worker at the FCPS job fair experienced applying for jobs along with hundreds of other applicants that Weinstein mentioned. “It’s very over-saturated now.”

Braddock District Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw noted the latest move that’s impacting Federal employees and has some links to higher up elected officials in the Congress and Senate. He pointed out the moves that the Trump administration made recently in his newsletter The Walkinshaw Advisory.

“While it was clear that President Trump intended to attack and denigrate those who choose to serve their country, the recklessness, cruelty, and chaos he has deployed against our friends and neighbors is stunning,” it stated. Although the local government’s power to do something about this is minimal, he recommended reaching out to the county’s Congressional delegation.

On Monday, Feb. 24, Governor Glenn Youngkin (R-Virginia) launched the “Virginia Has Jobs,” initiative, laying out details of the Federal Worker Support Resource Package, designed to assist Virginians impacted by changes in the federal workforce. Youngkin’s package highlights 250,000 open jobs in Virginia. In the Northern Virginia section, there are private

jobs with Fortune 500 companies such as CACI and Booz Allen Hamilton, for example, and in the public jobs section, Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria are listed along with several school systems.

The Fairfax County Public Schools recently had a job fair to attract former Federal employees for jobs on the service and administrative side. School Superintendent Michelle Reid felt good about attracting former Federal employees because of the work ethic in the Federal government. “We want people that have that service-above-self mentality and we know our Federal workers have that,” Reid said.

With this government downsizing, contractors downsize too and then some of the surrounding offices go empty, just like during the pandemic a few years ago. With all these empty offices, the corner deli doesn’t have the lunch crowd they once had, there are fewer commuters and less money going around everywhere. Weinstein sees this too. “If you get laid off you, aren’t going to take your family out to a fancy dinner,” he said.

Resources

In late January, the Virginia Employment Commission launched a newly redesigned website.

Go to www.vec.virginia.gov

Openings with Fairfax County Government can be found here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/jobs>

Openings with Fairfax County Public Schools can be found here: <https://www.fcps.edu/careers/career-opportunities/current-job-openings>

Openings with Arlington County Public Schools can be found here: <https://www.apsva.us/careers-aps/>

Openings with Arlington County government can be found here: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Careers>

Openings with City of Alexandria government can be found here: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/alexandria>

Openings with City of Alexandria public schools can be found here: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/departments/human-resources/employment-opportunities>

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Candidate Petition Packets will be available starting **Tuesday, Feb. 18, at 9 a.m.** Completed packets must be returned by **Monday, March 17, at 5 p.m.**

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General Assembly Proposed Budget Differs from Governor's

End of session report

By SEN. ADAM EBBIN

The 2025 General Assembly session concluded in February. We are scheduled to meet again on April 2 when we will reconvene to act on vetoes and amendments from the governor on legislation that we passed during our 46-day session.

Governor Youngkin received 1,895 bills from the General Assembly this year. The governor must act on all bills by midnight on March 23, which is 30 days after adjournment of the General Assembly.

I am happy to have worked with a diverse group of stakeholders, constituents, and subject matter experts to navigate nineteen of my bills and one constitutional amendment through both chambers of the General Assembly, a majority of which received bipartisan support. Except for the Marriage Equality Constitutional Amendment, which he has no role in, the

nineteen other pieces of my legislation head to Governor Youngkin for his consideration. Here I have linked the status of the bills that were sent to the governor.

In our budget, we are providing \$1.1 billion for immediate and ongoing tax relief to Virginia's families. Virginians will receive a \$200 rebate for individuals and \$400 for joint filers by Oct. 15, 2025.

In addition, \$686.1 million is appropriated over the biennium to fully fund Medicaid and the children's health insurance forecast. We are also increasing state funding for public education by \$728.4 million over the biennium as we strive to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education. The budget fully funds support staff with \$222.9 million to provide critical resources for students and educators. The budget also includes \$310 million in school construction grants over two years — an additional \$150 million to modernize and repair school buildings.

The General Assembly's bud-



Ebbin

get would also invest \$134.4 million for a \$1,000 bonus for our hardworking instructional and support personnel in June 2025. We voted to boost special education funding by 10% with a \$52.8 million increase to provide resources to students with disabilities. This budget would also expand access to early childhood education with a \$25 million public-private partnership to set children up for success from the start.

We also voted to dedicate \$12 million to initiatives that improve student achievement and close learning gaps.

In higher education, we would invest \$55 million to maintain affordable access to public colleges and universities, and would continue our commitment to Virginia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with \$20 million in funding.

Finally, we voted to invest in public employees and working families by appropriating \$83.1 million to fund a 1.5% bonus for state and state-supported local em-

ployees — recognizing the essential work of public servants across Virginia.

Our total General Fund Budget will be just north of \$69 billion for FY25 and FY26.

The General Assembly's priorities differ from the Youngkin administration. The General Assembly has appropriated more for K-12 Education, VA Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program, disaster funds for Hurricane Helene Victims, and community violence intervention programs than the Governor.

Resources for Federal Workers

Many of you join my concern for the cuts to federal workers by the Trump Administration. I have put together a resource page for federal workers here. Please share this page with anyone you know that is affected by these cuts.

I have worked this session to pass legislation to help out my constituents with unemployment benefits, and will continue to use my voice to speak out against cuts to the federal budget.

Thanks for the continued opportunity to serve you in the State Senate.

Oppose Release of PFAS In Virginia Waters

Join Wild Virginia for an on-line program this Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 7 p.m. to oppose permits drafted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that would allow releases of dangerous per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to state waters. We will be calling on DEQ to hold public hearings to give residents and water users a better chance to share their opinions and concerns about these threats to our environment and our communities. And we will insist that the permits include monitoring for PFAS and limitations to stop known PFAS releases.

One permit under review is supposed to control polluted stormwater from Fort Belvoir that is discharged to Accotink Creek and other tributaries to the Potomac

River. The U.S. Army has found serious contamination of land and water by PFAS in and around its facilities. Those findings make it essential that DEQ impose stringent requirements to protect Virginians. So far, DEQ has failed to even address the known PFAS sources in its draft permit - let alone enforce the law to stop the discharges.

The other permit would allow pollutants to be discharged from a municipal wastewater treatment plant owned by the Arlington County Water Pollution Control Bureau. Data collected by the plant's owners show that dangerous levels of PFAS have been discharged to Four Mile Run, another tributary to the Potomac River. As with the Fort Belvoir permit, DEQ has refused to acknowledge the problem or live up to its legal duty to stop the pollution.

RSVP:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/commenting-writing-party-oppose-permits-allowing-discharges-of-pfas-tickets-1247356790739?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

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SCREENSHOT: VIDEO FAIRFAX COUNTY

Bryan Hill, county executive

“In light of the potential impact on our residents, I cannot recommend fully funding the FCPS request.”
 — Bryan Hill, county executive, Feb. 18, 2025

Board of Supervisors, School Board Joint Meeting

Given project revenue increases, FCPS reports a negative \$149.62 million available balance for meeting FY 2026 requirements.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
 THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board participated in a two-hour joint budget meeting with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Feb. 25. Fairfax County’s chief financial officer, Christina Jackson, said the FY 2026 County budget shares available revenue proportionally with Schools.

She and Leigh Burden, assistant superintendent of Financial Services, FCPS, presented their sides of the slide presentation, Adjustments Included in the FY 2026 County and Schools Advertised Budgets.

The Projected Revenue Increase Total Available for Schools is \$154.18 million, with the Requirements Total Uses at \$303.79 million and the Available Balance at (\$149.62) million.

The FY 2026 Advertised Budget for Fairfax County Public Schools, approved by the school board and presented by Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent, is “needs-based budget,” according to Reid. The Budget totals \$4.0 billion, a net increase of \$297.1 million, and includes \$240.8 million for collective bargaining, providing a 7 percent salary increase for all employees.

The County FY 2026 Advertised Budget Plan includes the proposed \$23.2 million increased state revenue, a seven percent compensation adjustment for all employees effective July 1, 2025, and \$20 million in funding to address student demographic and enrollment changes.

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill wrote in his message to the Board of Supervisors within his FY2026 Advertised Budget Plan released Feb. 18, 2025 [Page 4] and referencing the 7.0 percent compensation increase for all employees, “With the Governor’s budget funding only a 3.0 percent increase — and the state contribution remaining at an estimated 20 percent of the total cost — the potential impact on County taxpayers is significant. In light of the potential impact on our residents, I cannot recommend fully funding the FCPS request. Doing so would require an additional \$149.62 million — equivalent to another 4.5 cents on the real estate tax rate, above the 1.5-cent increase upon which this budget is balanced. This would bring the total increase for the average homeowner to just shy of \$1,000.”

Board members said at the Tuesday, February 25 joint meeting, the key is to educate the public, clearly communicate the budget realities, present a united

front, and show the critical need to the state for funding. The two boards must also collaborate to realize efficiencies.

Robin Lady, school board representative of the Dranesville District, said, “We can’t emphasize enough that our demographics continue to change. It costs us a lot more to educate multi-language learners, special education students, and free and reduced lunch students.”

Lady said that she understands the public may think a seven percent compensation increase across the board seems aggressive. However, when she reviewed the Fairfax County FY 2026 Advertised Budget, she saw several increases of 2 percent, COLA (cost-of-living adjustment), step, and merit pay. “There’s no merit pay in education, folks,” Lady said. “So if I break those down each and they’re 2 percent, 2 percent, 2 percent, hypothetically you’re at 6 percent, which is almost seven.”

Jeff McKay (D), chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, said, “We know teacher pay increases mean giant invoices coming to us. ... It is particularly egregious when that is set at a time when the state is sitting on a gigantic surplus that was generated here, on the income taxes of people in Northern Virginia, based on largely federal spending. ... All the house money that’s being used in Richmond this year not only was generated by Northern Virginia but was largely generated in the industry that is right now under attack.”

McKay’s second comment clarified salary increases for county employees. “Most of our employees in the proposed budget get a 4.19 percent pay increase,” McKay said.

School Board Representative Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Braddock) said, “We are really at this inflection point with our schools. Do we want, in Fairfax County, and I think the answer in this room is yes, to continue the excellence for which we are known? And that requires resources, especially in the changing needs of students and the changing demands on schools. ... It’s a good thing we recognize students can’t learn if they’re hungry.”

She added the hope that the two boards can find ways to collaborate, find efficiencies and partnerships in centralized services, and create funding solutions. “Now is the time we’ve got to get creative together, and I look forward to finding ways to collaborate so our schools and counties can stay strong.”

McKay mentioned they had attempted collaboration between the county and school divisions but “got stopped dead in our tracks for various reasons. ... The school board chair and I will be talking about ways that our two boards can be involved in the already ongoing conversations that the superintendent and county executive are having.”

The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., in Conference Room 11 in the Government Center.



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Fairfax City's Proposed FY 26 Budget Unveiled

Recommends a 9.5-cent, residential real-estate tax hike.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Normally, during Fairfax City's annual proposed budget presentation, its city manager recommends raising the real estate tax rate by a few cents. But when Acting City Manager Bryan Foster unveiled his FY 26 budget recommendations, last Tuesday, Feb. 25, he delivered two shocks to the residents.

First, he proposed a residential real-estate tax hike of 9.5 cents – increasing it from its current \$1.03 per \$100 assessed valuation to \$1.125. He then advised the City to raise its meals tax from 4 percent to 6 percent, making it more expensive for people to dine out here.

As a result of the property-tax jump, owners of an average City home valued at \$694,503 would see their annual, real-estate tax bill increase by \$1,126. That amount includes the average 7-percent increase in residential real-estate assessments in the City.

And since residents' stormwater and wastewater bills are each proposed to rise by 6-percent, that means they'd also pay an estimated \$9.70/year more to the City's Stormwater Utility Fund and \$42.12/year more to the Wastewater Fund. These fee increases are needed to meet regulatory, operational and required infrastructure improvements.

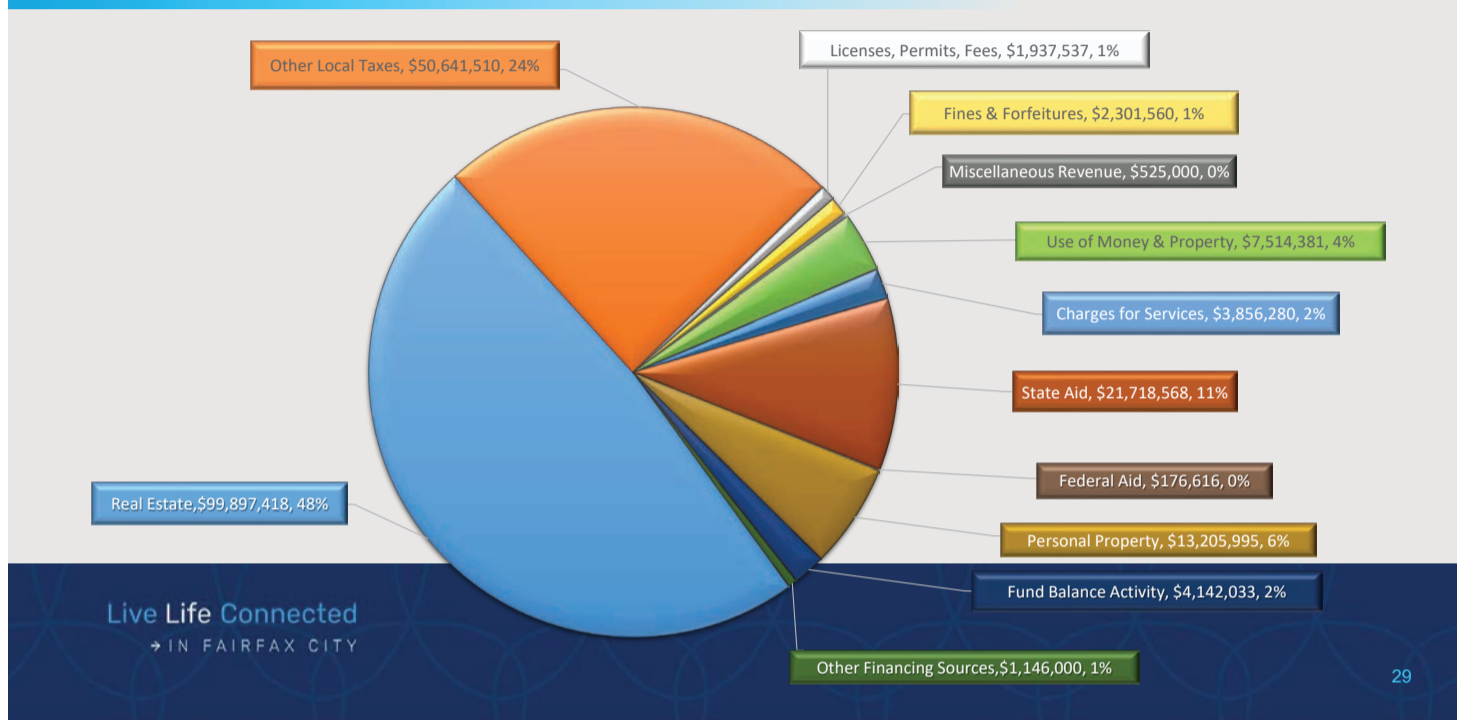
However, said Foster, even at \$1.125, Fairfax's residential real-estate tax rate would still be "one of the lowest, compared to the other Northern Virginia cities and towns. The projected proposed rate for the City of Falls Church is \$1.21, and the Town of Herndon, \$1.47. We currently have the third-lowest tax rate among our neighbors. And even with the proposed tax increase, we'd be the fourth lowest."

Real-estate taxes comprise 48 percent – almost half – of Fairfax's General Fund revenues and make it possible for the City to provide the high level of services its residents have come to expect. Indeed, explained Foster, "This budget will enable the City to plan, design and build the 130 projects in its proposed CIP [Capital Improvement Program] by appropriating \$105.1 million for FY 26 and forecasting \$618.3 million for FY 26 to FY 30."

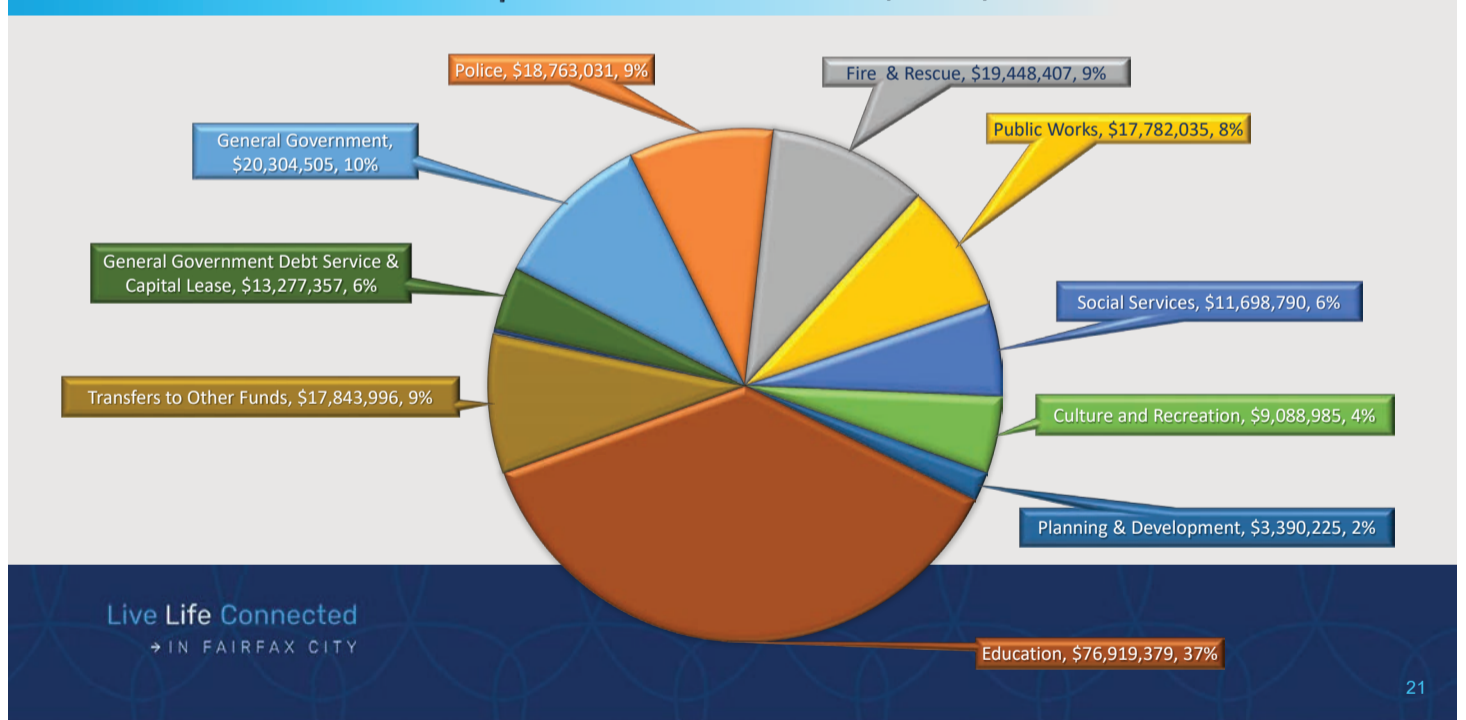
He said the document includes "significant, capital investments in key areas that will directly support the City's ongoing development." These include \$10.3 million to Recreation to enhance community engagement and wellbeing; \$30.6 million to Transportation to improve mobility and reduce traffic congestion; \$11.8 million to Wastewater to ensure sustainability and address future environmental needs; and \$24.5 million to General Government Projects to modernize operations and improve services.

Among the largest CIP amounts included in the proposed FY 26 budget for specific projects are \$18 million toward the eventual construction of a new fire station to replace Station 3 on University Drive, and \$14.3 million for the Jermantown Road corridor improvements.

FY26 General Fund Revenues-\$207,062,898



FY26 General Fund Expenditures - \$207,062,898



million for the Jermantown Road corridor improvements.

But Foster stressed that only half of the CIP is funded by City money, with the rest coming from both state and federal funding sources. For example, he said, "In recent years, \$20 million of local dollars has leveraged \$250 million in other funds – which is a 12-times return on our investment."

He said his budget is also fully funding the City School Board's "request of \$71,427,547, which represents a 21.4-percent increase from FY 25." The biggest share of General Fund expenditures – nearly \$80 million, or

37 percent – goes toward education, with the majority earmarked for the tuition payment.

Foster noted, as well, that the City is "allocating \$3 million as the initial funding for a multi-year plan to finance the \$220 million school-bond referendum approved by City voters on Nov. 5, 2024."

The bond money will be used to renovate the two elementary schools and give Fairfax High a new roof. The total includes \$177 million for Providence and Daniels Run elementaries, \$43 million for the roof, and financing costs. The work is anticipated to be

done between FY 26 and FY 31.

Fairfax City's proposed net total expenditures for all funds – General, Capital Projects, Old Town Service District, Transportation Tax, Cable, Wastewater, Stormwater Utility, Transit and Debt Service – equal \$306,551,165. This amount is an increase of 21.3 percent from FY 25.

General Fund revenues and expenditures equal \$207,062,898, a 14.6-percent jump from the adopted FY 25 budget and a 9.6-percent rise from the estimated FY 25

FAIRFAX CITY BUDGET

Weigh In

Fairfax City residents will be able to weigh in on this budget proposal during 7 p.m. public hearings slated for March 11 and 25, and April 8 and 22, in Council chambers. Budget adoption is set for May 6.

FROM PAGE 10

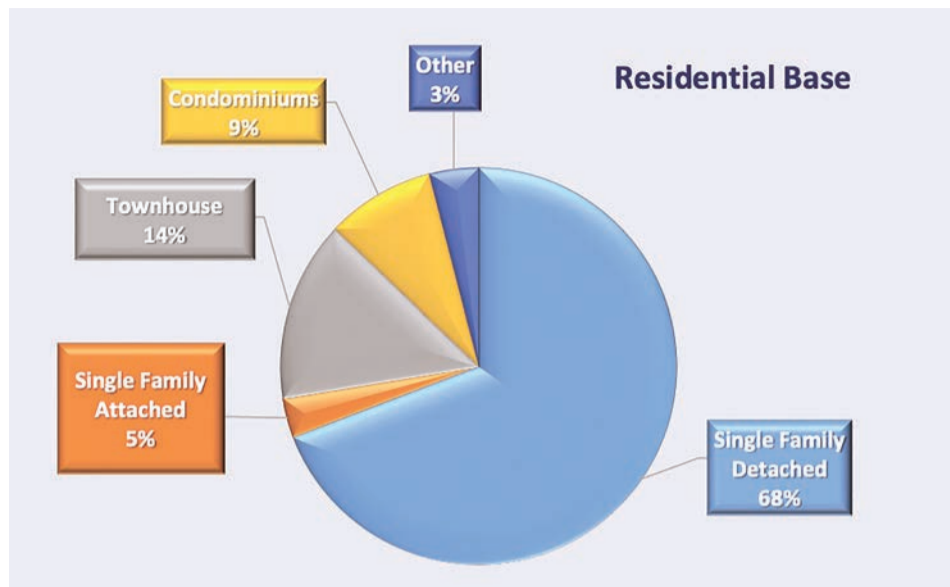
expenditure. And Capital Fund expenditures for General Fund-supported projects equal \$50,714,164 – an increase of 55.4 percent from the FY 25 amount of \$32,640,376.

Foster said the “primary budget driver” this time is the increase in the school-tuition amount of \$12.6 million. It represents the City’s payment to Fairfax County Public Schools for its program of instruction used in the four City schools.

“Without any other revenue changes, a 13-1/2-cent [residential real estate] tax rate would be required to pay for this,” he said. “And there’s another potential 8-percent increase in [calendar years] 2026 and 2027 – and that’s not sustainable.”

But, said Foster, “The City’s still in good financial health, especially because of its AAA bond rating. And our real-estate tax base – which contributes to homeowners’ equity – has increased almost 50 percent over the past nine years.”

Regarding the proposed hike in the meals-tax rate, Foster said it’s needed because the revenue from a real-estate tax increase alone isn’t enough to fund the budget. And taking it from 4 to 6 percent would only cost a diner an additional dollar for a \$50 meal.



Sources of the City’s residential tax base.

Fairfax’s meals tax has historically been a stable source of revenue for the City, and Foster contends that bringing in more money this way would lessen the tax burden on City property owners, while supporting Fairfax’s growing needs. Each 1-percent increase is projected to generate approximately \$2.2 million in additional revenue.

According to the budget document, the 4-percent meals tax yielded \$8.7 million to the City’s coffers in FY 24 and is projected to reap an estimated \$9 million in FY 25. But with a 6-percent meals tax, that figure is expected to jump to \$13.5 million in FY 26.

“The meals tax hasn’t changed in 21 years

– since 2004 – when it went from 2 to 4 percent,” said Foster. “And it’s one way of capturing the costs from nonresidents who come here and benefit from the City’s amenities and services.”

He also recommended a 3.5-percent merit-pay increase for eligible, general pay-scale employees totaling \$649,000, plus the annual step increase for public-safety personnel. These increases are intended to maintain the City’s competitiveness in recruiting and retaining top talent in its fire and police departments. And unlike with past budgets, he didn’t use any unallocated funds to help balance it.



Bryan Foster

“This budget positions the City for future success by creating debt capacity for the future,” explained Foster. “By doing the heavy lifting this year, you shouldn’t have to have a [tax] increase next year to facilitate the City’s debt service – especially on the school-bond projects.”

Overall, he said his proposed budget will support “the significant progress we have made over the last several fiscal years and will help ensure a financially stable and vibrant City of Fairfax for generations to come.”

City residents will be able to weigh in on this budget proposal during 7 p.m. public hearings slated for March 11 and 25, and April 8 and 22, in Council chambers. Budget adoption is set for May 6.

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Immigrants Face New Fears Locally

Governor orders local ICE cooperation.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The attention of northern Virginians has been captive to the uncertainties of agency dissolutions, federal employee terminations and layoffs impacting neighbors living here. The sudden changes come with the fear of major impacts to the local economy which is home to about 80,000 federal workers.

But on Tuesday, March 4, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrests were reported in several spots around Northern Virginia, including Herndon and Arlington, bringing fear to a different group. Immigrant neighbors are experiencing anxiety over possible detainment, arrest and deportation. A Feb. 27 action by Gov. Glenn Youngkin puts immigration law enforcement in the spotlight again. Youngkin issued Executive Order 47 “to direct state law enforcement and corrections officers to assist with federal immigration enforcement and to request localities fully cooperate with U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement removal and other enforcement operations,” according to a release.

Local Jurisdictions Value All Residents

Northern Virginia, home to people from around the globe, has been welcoming to those coming from other countries. Local jurisdictions’ open acceptance is reflected in published policy statements:

* “Fairfax County is a vibrant, welcoming community for everyone. ... The County is devoted to protecting the rights of all its residents, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status, and to ensuring they have an equal opportunity to participate in our economic vitality.”

* “The City [Alexandria] is committed to providing a wide range of effective and essential safety net services to improve or maintain the well-being, safety and self-sufficiency of all its residents — including the hundreds of refugees and immigrants we welcome into our community every year.”

Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria have chosen not to participate in memorandums of understanding to support federal immigration and custom enforcement. Such agreements, permitted by 1996 law, under Section 287(g), could allow ICE to delegate authority to perform specified immigration officer actions under ICE direction, to federally trained and certified local law enforcement officers. Agreements also could allow ICE use of local detention centers under the management of local sheriffs.



Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy members advocating for immigrant safety

Alexandria’s Sheriff Sean Casey said, “I want to reassure everyone that the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office does not and will not participate in any type of immigration enforcement in our community. The Alexandria Adult Detention Center will never be used to house individuals arrested by ICE during their enforcement of immigration laws. Additionally, we will never use any taxpayer funds or accept any funding for immigration enforcement activities. This policy is unwavering and will not change under any circumstances.”

Arlington County’s policy states, “Arlington has long prided ourselves on being an inclusive and welcoming community that respects and equitably serves all of our residents. Recent actions on immigration enforcement at the federal level have understandably created uncertainty in our community. ... Simply, Arlington County’s policies and operations have not changed. We will continue to live up to our core values as a community that values diversity, inclusivity, and treats everyone with human dignity and respect.”

Fairfax County’s Sheriff Kincaid terminated an agreement for use of the county detention center in May 2018, stating, “We intend to comply with all federal obligations as they pertain to ICE. The current contract is not necessary for us to do this as evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of localities in the Commonwealth have no contractual arrangement. We found it expedient to no longer have an agreement that required us to extend our resources beyond these obligations. We remain committed to our mission and mandate.”

Local Response to Executive Order

Governor Youngkin’s executive order

number 47 is forcing localities to reexamine these stated positions. A spokesperson for the Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office indicates, “the Sheriff’s Office is aware of Governor Youngkin’s executive order and is in the process of reviewing it. The Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office has always followed, and will continue to follow all local, state, and federal laws.”

A spokesperson for the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office says, “We await contact from the Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security for additional details but based on the initial information, there will be no change in Sheriff’s Office policy or procedures.” She refers all to the Sheriff’s previous statement.

Community Help Outlined

Fairfax County has a list of resources available to immigrants, addressing legal, education, and hotline support.

Ayuda, a 501(c) nonprofit organization, advocates for, and provides, legal, social, and language services to help low-income immigrants in access justice and transform their lives through direct legal, social and language services, training and outreach.

In a communication to its 20,000 members, the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) expressed “serious concerns with this executive order.” They fear the order will “lead to an increase in racial profiling and continue to damage the relationship between Black/Brown communities and law enforcement.” Further the VICPP raises concerns over the implication that immigrant neighbors are dangerous criminals; the broken immigration system without action to address underlying problems; and the risk of cre-

Organization	Region	Phone Number
CASA	Maryland Virginia	(888) 214-6816
La Red de Ayuda Mutua para Migrantes (MIRMA)	DC	(202) 335-1183
Linea de Ayuda Urgente Inmigratoria Red de respuesta rapida de Virginia	Virginia	(855) AYU-DAR1 (855) 298-3271

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(855) AYU-DAR1
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EN TODOS CASOS
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IMMIGRATION RAPID RESPONSE HOTLINE
VIRGINIA NETWORK

IF ICE IS AT YOUR DOOR
Don't open it! Call us for assistance

IF YOU SEE ICE ON THE STREET
Maintain distance! Call us to verify what's happening

IN ALL CASES
Remain silent and don't sign anything!

*Only use in urgent situations encountering ICE like raids and home arrests

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

Advocates try to reach immigrants wherever they might be with support information, such as this notice posted in a community restroom

ating less safe communities by harming relationships between law enforcement and immigrant communities. In partnership with the Congregation Action Network, VICPP is calling on Youngkin to reconsider his Executive Order number 47. Co-executive director, Reverend Dr. LaKeisha Cook shares, “Almost 1,000 emails have been sent asking [Youngkin] to reconsider this action.”

Executive Order Number 47

Youngkin, who began his term in 2022, has used past executive orders to address his policy positions on issues, such as education and drugs. A large number, 13, declared weather emergencies.

Executive order number 47 cites three instances which involved undocumented immigrants in crimes: a fatal car crash, a sexual assault and a rape, as justification. The order seeks to maximize Virginia’s “collaboration with the federal government to enforce immigration law in the Commonwealth of Virginia and using all available methods to facilitate the arrest and deportation of inadmissible and removable criminal illegal immigrants.”

The executive order directs the Virginia State Police, and the Virginia Department of Corrections to enter into 287(g) memorandums with ICE. The order also directs that every Sheriff or entity with a local jail be requested, by the Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security, to certify they will cooperate with ICE in all enforcement and removal operations under Section 287(g), which allows the Department of Homeland Security to delegate immigration enforcement duties to state and local law enforcement.

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Immigration Raids Evoke Horror in Fairfax County

Three so far this week; more expected.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids are sweeping across Northern Virginia this week. The Connection confirmed ICE action took place this week in Reston, the Town of Herndon, and Arlington County. In two of three of these, enforcement removal occurred.

The ICE action in Reston took place at Cornerstones' Embry Rucker Community Shelter. Cornerstones responded on Wednesday morning: "On Monday, March 3, 2025, Department of Homeland Security officers arrived at the Embry Rucker Community Shelter with an arrest warrant. The individual was not at the shelter, so the officers left. There was no enforcement removal. Cornerstones' policy is not to answer questions or provide details about our shelter guests."

Whether enforcement actions result in removal or not, they ignite fear, traumatizing the immigrant communities and others. Family members, including children, are being swept into the uncertainty of the deportations.

The Department of Homeland Security posted on Feb. 14, "We have immediately gone after the worst of the worst first. Dangerous criminals do not belong in our communities. President Donald J. Trump and Secretary Kristi Noem are delivering results to make America safe again."

Four days after Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed Executive Order Number Forty-Seven (2025) on Thursday, Feb. 27, which gives local law enforcement the power to assist ICE, Va. Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-38) learned an immigration enforcement action occurred Tuesday in her hometown, the Town of Herndon.

The town saw an "enormous influx of foreign-born residents, especially from Central and South America, since the 1990s," a fact first published by the Town of Herndon Police Department on June 19, 2006, describing the impact of the short-lived Herndon Official Workers Center. It opened in Dec. 2005 and closed less than two years later. Day laborers eventually returned to the 7-Eleven site.

On Tuesday, March 4, an immigration raid swept the town's 7-Eleven and gas station at 1121 Elden Street. Since the 1990s, immigrants and others have gathered at the unofficial day labor site, seeking work and waiting for local contractors to pick them up.

Herndon Town Councilmember Cesar del Aguila provided eyewitness video and narrative.

Translating the comments from Spanish to English, del Aguila told The Connection that immigration officials raided the local 7-Eleven and gas station on Elden Street. According to de Aguila, a large unmarked yellow box truck pulled up, as seen in the video. Eyewitnesses watched individuals getting out dressed in what looked like military garb, "not police." Many day laborers

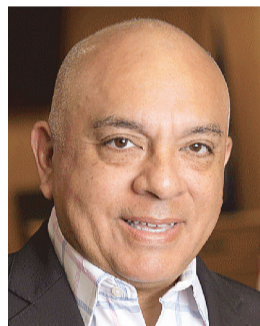


SCREENSHOT SOURCE: VIDEO

A person is handcuffed in an enforcement raid at the 7-Eleven and Shell station on Elden Street in the Town of Herndon on Tuesday, March 4

"There's a lot of buzz in the community. 'What do we do now? Who do you talk to? Who do we go to?' I'm trying to put together a Q and A session this week."

— Herndon Councilmember Cesar del Aguila



"I am very disturbed with folks sweeping in and potentially splitting up families who are living peacefully in our communities. I'm concerned about people being harmed through this."

— VA Senator Jennifer Boysko (D-38)

when they saw the van and the military-like forces scattered. Agents led people away in handcuffs.

"A lot of people want to know where they were taken. It's not clear where. There's a lot of buzz in the community. 'What do we do now? Who do you talk to? Who do we go to?' I'm trying to put together a Q and A session this week," del Aguila said.

There are limited options for legal and practical actions the town council can take to protect the community from the impact of ICE raids, according to del Aguila. He suggested a public statement condemning it. "I probably will at the work session tonight, but there's not much we can do. I don't know to what extent legally we can push back on this."

Videos, seen on Tuesday evening's news, captured the ICE raid in Arlington County that same day.

Tuesday evening, Boysko focused on the rights of immigrants in the United States and the need for them to prepare for potential immigration enforcement actions. Boysko said it is important that families make plans with loved ones now.

"We should make certain that everyone understands what their rights are as people who live in the United States and some

of the resources from the Legal Aid Justice Center. There is the 'Know Your Rights' document in Spanish and other languages because immigrants come from all over the world."

Boysko provided key advice: Do not open doors without seeing a warrant; have documentation ready and in a safe place; know that schools and churches will not allow entry without a warrant; and have a family plan prepared in advance. The Legal Justice Center adds that a Power of Attorney (POA) document for immigration purposes "can be used to grant a trusted family member or friend the authority to act on your behalf in case of deportation or detention."

Boysko's key message for children is one of protection and solidarity. She said children should know that multiple community institutions and individuals are committed to their safety and well-being during these uncertain times. "There are many adults who are watching out for the children. Your teachers care about you, your pastors at your church, your elected officials here in the community care deeply," Boysko said.

Addressing practical concerns and emotional support for children, Boysko reiterated that schools will not allow ICE entry without a specific arrest warrant and are

committed to protecting their students. She emphasized that children should not feel alone or afraid.

Boysko acknowledged her concern, though. "I am very disturbed with folks sweeping in and potentially splitting up families who are living peacefully in our communities. I'm concerned about people being harmed through this."

Boysko recommended that community members contact the Legal Aid Justice Center for the most up-to-date and comprehensive information. She added, "There are the Red Cards, but they're basically to Know Your Rights."

Know your constitutional rights.

DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR. No one can enter your home without your consent: "I will not open the door if I do not see a court order signed by a judge or magistrate."

If ICE enters your home, say: "I DO NOT consent to the search."

Exercise your right to remain silent. "I will not answer any questions and I exercise my right to remain silent."

DO NOT SIGN ANY DOCUMENTS: "I will not sign any documents without first speaking to my lawyer."

Keep calm, and it is better to remain silent.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS

New clear-cutting in Vienna is apparent beneath Dominion Energy's transmission lines in the easement of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park, a 100-foot-wide linear regional park featuring the W&OD Trail.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS

Recent clear-cutting within the easement of the W&OD Railroad Regional Park under Dominion Energy Virginia's transmission line in a four-mile section from Vienna to Dunn Loring; plans are to do the same along the park in Reston.

Dominion Energy Clear-Cuts Four Miles Along W&OD Trail

More clearing planned; local officials react as Dominion rejects long standing agreements.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Since November 2024, Dominion Energy has been clear-cutting shrubs and trees on a wide swath of the W&OD Trail to reestablish the entire width along a four-mile section from Vienna to Dunn Loring. According to Paul Gilbert, executive director of NOVA Parks, it also plans to do the same into Reston.

The Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park is a 100-foot-wide linear regional park featuring the W&OD Trail administered and maintained by NOVA Parks. The inter-jurisdictional organization owns and operates over 10,000 acres of parkland: woodlands, streams, trails, nature reserves, countryside and historic sites in Northern Virginia.

Gilbert said that through late fall 2024 and early winter 2025, with few people using the snow-covered paved trail, Dominion Energy has been replacing the wires on the electric transmission line above the W&OD Trail in the Town of Vienna, Mill Street NE, to Sandburg Street, (Mile Markers 9-12) and Mill Street NE in the Town of Vienna, clear-cutting all brush and trees under the line and in the easement.

Dominion Energy withdrew from the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding on Vegetative Management of the W&OD Trail, Gilbert says. The Memo expresses an understanding and clarifies the parties' roles, responsibilities and goals. It is a non-binding

ing formal document that does not carry the same legal weight as a contract. Actions are "voluntary," Gilbert said.

"This creates a vacuum that is not great for Dominion, NOVA Parks, or the public we all serve," Gilbert wrote in a Dec. 12, 2024, letter to Mark S. Allen, Dominion Energy. "The W&OD Trail is unlike any other right-of-way. It is a high-use park in the middle of an urban area with thousands of neighbors and millions of annual users. ... As an urban park, these trees are viewed by the community as having a high value and significance. This creates both ecological and political considerations, unlike other rights-of-way," Gilbert said in the letter to Allen.

Gilbert offered Allen two proposals in his Dec. 12 letter, one of which he called a "win-win," investing in transforming areas of this corridor into large-scale pollinator gardens. "Carefully managed native grasses and wildflowers could significantly increase the biodiversity and ecological value. This kind of vegetation poses no long-term threat to the power infrastructure and would result in management strategies that would keep the right-of-way clear," he wrote. Gilbert's second proposal was to replace the 2005 MOU with an agreement between Dominion and NOVA Parks, in which "Dominion committed to the long-term costs of creating the pollinator garden and maintaining it for every acre impacted by cutting."

The clear-cutting by Dominion Energy continued, and in response, on Feb. 6, 2025, Del. Holly Seibold and Chairman Jeff McKay

sent separate letters to Edward Baine, president of Dominion.

Seibold took Dominion Energy to task for its "decision to move forward with extensive tree-cutting along the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail without a comprehensive plan to mitigate the environmental and canopy damage this plan has, and will continue to cause."

"Dominion's rejection of the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding on vegetative management is extremely unfortunate. Even more unfortunate is Dominion's decision to decline NOVA Parks' proposal to replant native grasses, flowers, and shrubs to establish pollinator habitats, citing the ongoing financial support required to implement this plan," Seibold added. While Dominion offered a one-time donation, the amount fell "significantly short of what is needed to address the environmental damage caused by these actions."

Seibold urged Dominion Energy "to reconsider its position and work collaboratively with NOVA Parks to reaffirm a vegetative management agreement and/or approve NOVA Parks' proposed plan for native replanting with adequate financial support."

McKay wrote that Dominion's tree-cutting is a detriment to the park space and communities in Vienna, Dunn Loring, and Reston. Like Seibold and Gilbert, McKay expressed concern about the loss of vegetation and sought a solution. McKay said he appreciated Dominion's role in providing energy and the need to update infrastructure accordingly, and he expressed hope that the organizations can "work together to achieve common goals and meet expectations in providing the highest quality to our community."

McKay said, "I am troubled that Dominion will not consider a new agreement with

NOVA Parks. It is critical that Dominion assumes responsibility of the damages and consider ensuring sustainable land practices are initiated at the time of initial disturbance for capital projects and establishing maintenance practices that would reduce herbicide use by also including native species seeding and planting."

Nearly two weeks later, on Feb. 19, Edward H. Baine, president of Utility Operations and Dominion Energy Virginia, sent a letter to McKay and included Supervisor Walter Alcorn who represents Vienna, Reston and a portion of Herndon, all areas the W&OD Trail runs through.

Baine said he understood the importance of supporting "a cherished community feature, such as the Trail" and "ensuring critical energy reliability and safety for all customers in the area and across the Commonwealth."

Baine said that after further discussions with representatives of NOVA Parks and local jurisdictions, Dominion is currently developing a long-term plan that he would share with NOVA Parks by the end of February. Talks are continuing into March but no agreement has been reached.

"Items in this plan include topics previously discussed with NOVA Parks, such as pollinator habitat plots and enhanced control of invasive species that will align with Dominion Energy's requirements to maintain a safe and reliable electric transmission grid," Baine wrote.

"I'm encouraged that Dominion Energy recognizes the need to develop a long-term plan to avoid the impacts of widespread tree culling, and I look forward to learning more about their proposal to work with NOVA Parks to restore the areas where they have cut trees along the trail," Alcorn said.

Comstock Fails to Transfer Property Back to Herndon

Town files termination declaration in Fairfax County Circuit Court.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

From 2017 to 2025, the Herndon Downtown Redevelopment Project between the Town of Herndon and Comstock Herndon Venture, LC, never reached the “dirt stage” of development. Nothing but a fence remains surrounding a large portion of the 4.675-acre parcel that held the community’s dreams of a mixed-use development in the historic downtown district and within the town’s arts district.

After Comstock sent the Town of Herndon its Dec. 6, 2024, “Notice Not To Proceed, Herndon Downtown Redevelopment Project,” two and half months later, the Town of Herndon published a news release on its website and Facebook page titled “Update: Town of Herndon Downtown Redevelopment Project, Feb. 28, 2025.

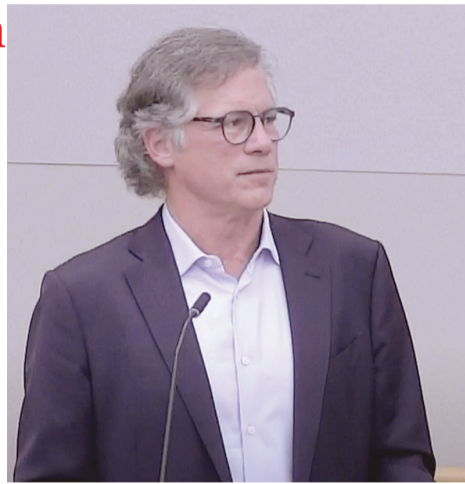
In January 2025, the town notified Comstock it was exercising its contractual right to have the town’s property returned: “Comstock was supposed to execute certain documents to transfer the property back to Herndon, but to date, it has failed to do so.”

Those documents include the title to the property. In December 2020, the town transferred the 4.675-acre parcel to developer Comstock as part of the public-private partnership to redevelop downtown Herndon. Chris Clemente, chairman of the Board of Directors and chief executive officer, founded the Comstock organization. Neither he nor anyone else at Comstock has publicly commented on why the company has not returned the deed after giving Notice Not To Proceed with the Herndon Downtown Redevelopment Project on Dec. 10, 2024.

At the Town of Herndon Public Hearing on Aug. 13, 2024 Clemente said, “We’re excited to be in a position by the end of this year to get this thing started, and we’re excited to deliver a world-class project for the downtown.”

Now, the town is about to embark on a two-part plan in accord with the Comprehensive Agreement. The town will first initiate mediation.

“In the hopes that Comstock’s failure to return the property is easily resolvable, the town has demanded that the parties submit to nonbinding mediation. This would allow the parties to work with a neutral mediator, with the hope that the town can avoid having to file a lawsuit against Comstock.” Such action follows the mutually signed and executed Comprehensive Agreement (November 1, 2017) for the project, Article 20. [DIS-
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FILE IMAGE/ CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS
Chris Clemente of Comstock at the Town of Herndon Public Hearing on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2024.

PUTE RESOLUTION, Section 20.1 Claims], page 64.

The town states in the update, “This mediation process will last no longer than 90 days, by which time Comstock will reconvey the property or won’t, which would regrettably require that both sides spend money on litigation.”

The town said in its update that it terminated Comstock Herndon Ventures LC’s interest in property given to it for redevelopment in the downtown area of Herndon. The termination declaration is filed with the Land Records Division of the Fairfax County Circuit Court.

The stage is set for mediation, which, according to the Agreement on page 64, will occur in Herndon and be administered by the McCammon Group.

Herndon and Comstock executed five amendments (2020-2024) to the 2017 Comprehensive Agreement, collectively known as the Comprehensive Agreement. On Dec. 6, 2024, Comstock sent the Town of Herndon its “Notice Not to Proceed,” saying in part, “In accordance with Section 8 of the First Amendment to the Comprehensive Agreement, “Comstock elects to not proceed with the Commencement of Construction. This letter shall be deemed a Notice Not to Proceed under the Comprehensive Agreement, which shall be deemed to expire and be of no further force and effect on the date hereof. Comstock will have no further obligation under the Comprehensive Agreement without being in default thereof.”

According to the town’s update, the “agreement involved the town transferring its interest in the property to Comstock, with the requirement that Comstock develop it and, if it didn’t, the property would be returned to the town.”

A spokesperson for the Town of Herndon said in an email late Friday afternoon, Feb. 28, that it had “nothing more to share now.”



SCREENSHOT SOURCE: HERNDONVAPORTALCIVICCLERK

The Herndon Town Council meets on Feb. 25, 2025, three days before the town’s news release.

“In the hopes that Comstock’s failure to return the property is easily resolvable, the town has demanded that the parties submit to nonbinding mediation.”

— Town of Herndon News Release, Feb. 28, 2025



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON

The Art Space building at 750 Center Street remains subleased by the nonprofit organization Arts Herndon. Arts Herndon’s current sublease with the town expires on March 31, 2025.

Comstock did not respond to The Connection’s request for comment.

What About Arts Herndon?

What this means for the nonprofit organization Arts Herndon, which anticipated occupying a space in Comstock’s redevelopment plan, is yet to be determined. The town did not comment when asked by The Connection. Arts Herndon holds a temporary sublease agreement for using the town’s building and surrounding property at 750 Center Street, effective expiring on March 31, 2025.

In an email dated Oct. 30, 2024, subject

line, Listing of Below Market Rate Commercial Leases from Scott Robinson, PE, Deputy Town Manager, Operations (Acting) to the 2023-2024 Town Council, Art Space, 750 Center Street, Robinson described Arts Herndon’s use of the space for “retail and assembly.” He estimated it at 70 percent of the market rate to account for the building’s poor condition, “leaking roof, sanitary sewer that needs to be replaced, unreliable heating and air conditioning, etc.” It estimated total rent/year is \$44,800; the actual total rent/year is \$1, the same as the \$1 leases for the ten other town-owned properties.

BLACK HISTORY

Two Woodson Students Share Their Thoughts

Taking pride in one's heritage to create a better future.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During the Black History celebration at Woodson High, two students shared their thoughts about its importance with the audience. Speaking were Yemmy Tekabe and Hiroko Rose.

Yemmy Tekabe

"I'm of Ethiopian origin, and my name means 'adorned by God's wisdom.' But there are three parts of me. The first is that I was born in Beijing, China. I only knew Mandarin. I didn't know what being Ethiopian was, or what being Black was.

"The second part of me is when I moved here at age 8, with a new language and new cultures to learn. I learned more about my Ethiopian culture and about Black culture in America. I had the feeling of being different.

"This is the third part of me. I can understand the Ethiopian language of Amharic, but can't speak it, at all. So this has made me feel like an outcast among my community, along with other reasons. The same is true for being among my American Black counterparts, at times. There's a stigma in how to be Black among non-Black folks and how to be Black in the community, as well.

"I'm in the arts; I've been in theater and chorus for as long as I can remember. I know how hard it is to deal with feeling like an outsider and to be ridiculed for the passion and career I have chosen, within my own community. I've felt outnumbered many times.

"My identity isn't one thing; I am many. Appreciating all parts of me makes me proud



Yemmy Tekabe

to be who I am, and that's what I celebrate this month. That's what my Black identity means to me. This month is [about] remembering the good and the bad. Black history is infinite, forever growing – the past, present and future. I've noticed that now, more than ever, the voices of the young are being muted. Older generations are turning away from us. Why?

"We hear as kids to 'be grateful; everything is at your fingertips. You have access to bountiful knowledge with just a few clicks.' Then how come, when we take advantage of our blessings, we're shooed away? When you silence young, Black voices, you'll eventually silence the young voices of all minorities.

"I ask you all to give us a chance. We're more intelligent than you think. A chance to

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Hiroko Rose

be heard could lead the trail to peace. Don't let the ignorant ones blind you from the majority that cry out for help. Don't turn away from us as if we don't know what we speak. Don't forget – we are history."

Hiroko Rose

"My name is Hiroko Rose, and I'm a student representative with the Carter G Woodson student renaming committee here at Woodson. I'm proud to have been a part of my high school changing its name to honor Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the father of Black History and originator of Black History Month.

"Dr. Woodson believed that understanding one's history was key to creating a better future. Through his work, he encouraged

everyone, especially African Americans, to take pride in their heritage, to embrace their history and to teach it to others.

"As a junior at Woodson High, I recognize that many of my peers may feel disconnected from the past, especially when we are learning about it in ways that often seem distant and disconnected from our own lives. But it's crucial to realize that history is a living, breathing part of our present. Every person who contributed to the shaping of our country – whether through acts of courage, leadership or innovation – still influences our world today.

"As part of the committee, we worked to educate our peers through artwork, stories, presentations and activities. Dr. Woodson's work shows us that history is not just something that happens – it's something that we create. He once said, 'If you can control a man's thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions.'

"In other words, the way we understand history influences how we approach the world around us. By understanding the struggles and triumphs of those who came before us, we gain insight into how we can build a more inclusive and just society moving forward.

"So, as we celebrate Black History Month, let's remember that it's not just a time to reflect on the past, but also a call to action. As the class of 2025 graduates as the first class of Carter G Woodson High School, let's remind ourselves that history is not static. It's still being written, and we all have a part to play. Dr. Carter G. Woodson dedicated his life to ensuring that Black history would never be overlooked. Let's honor that legacy by continuing to learn, to teach and to build a future where all histories are recognized, celebrated and understood."

GMU Professor Warns of Censorship

'Your Power Is In Curiosity,
So Be Fearlessly Inquisitive'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The keynote speaker at the Black History celebration at Woodson High was Wendi Manuel-Scott, a GMU professor of Integrative Studies and History. She had a class to teach, the night of the event, but still presented a powerful message to the audience via video:

"Carter Woodson, the son of formerly enslaved Black parents, understood that education is key to unlocking a people's full capacity. He lived in a time when books were banned – when histories of indigenous people, Asian Americans, women and African Americans were erased. Teachers were silenced for daring to teach the truth. They were fired, lynched and had their homes burned.

"Woodson understood this violent strat-

egy of silencing and knew that ignorant people didn't know the facts. So he didn't just study history, he built the infrastructure for its survival.

He founded the Association for Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. And in 1926, he created Negro History Week – the foundation of Black History Month.

"Woodson insisted that history wasn't just about the past, it was about equipping students to resist oppression in the present. So he called for teachers to be courageous to teach the truth, even when the system pushed back against their efforts. So how will you carry on his legacy?

"Woodson knew teaching was a radical act. Enslaved people risked their lives to teach other folks how to read. Black teachers and community members during the Reconstruction Era built schools that were then burned to the ground – because some people feared what an educated, Black population could do. Those teachers and students chose courage over comfort because they understood that education should never be about

obedience and dominance but, rather, about freedom.

"These choices weren't easy. Woodson's time was marked by racial terrorism, legal segregation and systematic, purposeful exclusion. And yet his work didn't cease. He built institutions, wrote books and supported Black teachers and students because he understood that America was at a crossroads and in an era where history was being sanitized. Some preferred to erase the past violent struggles, rather than courageously confront their legacy laid bare in the present.

"So Woodson, teachers, students and families chose courage because they understood that attacks on history and the past were about controlling the future. I hope you



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

GMU professor
Wendi Manuel-Scott

understand the legacy you carry and the importance of your inheritance. I hope you'll commit to encouraging critical thinking and seek out evidence – archival records, scholarly sources – and read books that challenge you and expand your mind – books that generate questions."

"And I hope Woodson's legacy inspires you to never ever stop asking questions, because your power is in your curiosity. So be fearlessly inquisitive. I hope this [school] renaming is

more than a ceremony for you. Let it be a lifelong commitment. Let none of us forget this lesson that, if you control a person's mind, you control their future.

"But if you free their mind, there are no limits to what they can do, be or imagine. So let's free some minds and build a future worthy of Woodson's name. Onward!"



Emcee Darnessia Semper



Marcia St. John-Cunning



Ricardy Anderson



Nardos King

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Special Event At Woodson High

FROM PAGE 3

Speaking next, FCPS Chief Equity Officer Nardos King called it fitting to reflect on the legacy of Woodson High's namesake, Carter G. Woodson, "the father of Black History. His groundbreaking work ensured that the contributions of African Americans would no longer be overlooked. The recent renaming of this school is a powerful testament to our community's commitment to honoring those who've paved the way for justice, education and opportunity.

"Black history isn't just a distant story; it's right here in our communities, schools and the roads we walk every day. Threads of our past are woven into the fabric of our present, and they guide us as we work together to create a future that honors the sacrifices and contributions of those who came before us. Our students are the brightest threads in this fabric. The lessons of history are important, but they truly come alive when they're carried forward in the lives of young people."

Addressing the students directly, King



At the podium are (from left) students Elijah Wickham and Sean Cranford.

said, "You have the power to challenge injustice, lead with compassion and dream boldly about the future you want to see. Whether in the classrooms of today or the boardrooms, studios, laboratories and communities of tomorrow, your voices and actions are shaping

the world to come. Dr. Carter G. Woodson's work reminds us that history isn't a relic – it's a tool. Use it to empower yourselves and inspire change. Each of you carries the potential to leave a more inclusive and equitable future."

"This evening is [also] a call to action," added King. "Let us commit ourselves to building a Fairfax County Public Schools where every student, family and community has the power to thrive. Tonight, we're creating something extraordinary. Let's carry this spirit not only through Black History Month, but every day, as we honor our past and work toward a brighter tomorrow."

Then following the keynote speaker (see sidebar), everyone stood and sang the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," led by the 360 Worship Music Ensemble. Two students shared their own stories (see second sidebar), as did some of the authors of "Black Communities of Fairfax: A History."

Etta Willson mentioned her enslaved ancestors, noting that her mother's grandmother was also a slave and "had many stories to tell." And Fairfax City historian Jenee Lindner noted that, at one time, 30 percent of the population here was African American. "Yet in our history, they're hardly mentioned, at all," she said. "I'm proud that those stories are finally being told."

'It's Going to Take All of Us to Take Our Government Back'

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

The atmosphere in the packed Yorktown High School hall was intense. As people lined up to ask questions during Virginia Del. Patrick Hope's Town Hall meeting on Saturday, they talked about not wanting their names used or a photo taken of a speaker who worked in the federal government. They talked about oligarchs, not just in Washington, D.C. but in Arlington. There was anger and there was fear. But there was also a sense of community and resolve. Spontaneous applause erupted for many of the speakers.

Margarite Gooden, of Hall's Hill, stole the show. One of the last people to speak at the meeting, she got up, looked around the room and announced, "I don't see a lot of people that look like me in this room." But that was exactly why she and a few friends came. She had something important to say: "Ever since Trump was elected, we hear a lot about 'DEI and wokeism.' We Black people had no idea what wokeism was! But

now we understand. I'll tell you what this talk about DEI is. It means Black people. It's discrimination. We need to get our young people involved in fighting back against what is going on in Washington right now. People who don't vote need to vote. Because, I don't know if you need to be reminded ... Arlington County has always been known for changing things. It was in Arlington where desegregating schools in Virginia started, kids in my neighborhood, right down the street, broke that barrier. It was in Arlington that the first black firefighters south of the Mason Dixon Line were paid to fight fires. We black people are used to fighting for our rights here in Arlington. We'll be okay. But y'all aren't used to this kind of treatment, and now we are going to have to pull together. It's going to take all of us to take our government back." Gooden got a standing ovation for a long minute.

Patrick Hope applauded and said, "Margarite, I just hope you don't ever run against me!"

Mike Ingram, an energy auditor, got up to ask a question of Hope. "I'm 75," he said.

"And my lineage goes all the way back to the 'Arlingtonians for a Better County' (ABC) which heralded the "Arlington Way" concept. Well, the Arlington Way is no more. But my question is, in addition to making sure we don't pay the bill for the data centers' increased energy cost, Dominion Power is asking for more money when homeowners connect their solar energy installation to the grid. It acts as a disincentive for solar power and stifles our efforts to lower energy costs and make energy more renewable. I want to know what the Democrats in Richmond are doing to stand up to Dominion. What are you doing?" Hope, who stopped accepting campaign funds from Dominion in 2019, told Ingram the State Corporation Commission (SCC) which regulates the energy industry in Virginia was looking into it. Ingram indicated later he did not really get an answer to his question, particularly since the SCC was cited. Dominion Energy has a reputation



EDEN BROWN/
THE CONNECTION
Margarite Gooden

for strategic campaign donations aimed at influencing lawmakers who choose the SCC members.

One longtime Arlingtonian who also works with the National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) said the attitude towards federal workers was shocking. In one phone-in talk show, someone said it was about time feds got laid off and that "Now these federal employees who have never had to worry about job security will know what it is like to get laid off." The NARFE member took note of the direct impact on federal workers in Arlington and advised residents to check out the website <https://www.narfe.org/federal-benefits-institute/> for guidance on cuts. This recurring theme at the town hall of "don't just sit there and take it" and "we are here to help" was perhaps an indication that the Arlington Way is not dead after all.

Former FCPD Sergeant Sentenced to Five Years

FROM PAGE 4

conduct at the time he shot Timothy Johnson showed a reckless disregard for human life.” Judge Bellows’s decision came 737 days after Shifflett, acting in his role as Fairfax County police officer, shot and killed Johnson, a shoplifting suspect in a nighttime foot pursuit.

Shifflett fatally shot and killed unarmed 37-year-old Timothy McCree Johnson outside Tysons Corner Center mall after a short nighttime foot pursuit around 6:30 p.m. on February 22, 2023. Shifflett, a 7-year veteran of the department in uniform, and another Fairfax County police officer in plain clothes, an 8-year veteran assigned to the Tysons Urban Team, pursued Johnson. Loss prevention officers reported to FCPD officers a “theft that was in progress,” Chief Kevin Davis said in a video update to the community the evening of the shooting. Davis said the officers approached the person, and he fled.

According to the police release published the next day, Feb. 23, “An officer observed the man exiting the store near a parking garage. As he exited the store, an anti-theft alarm was activated as he fled.”

Fairfax County Police Department announced in March 2023 that Shifflett, identified as the officer who fired the fatal shot, would be terminated.

Dimly lit body-worn camera footage of the two officers released Thursday, March 23, 2023, shows the pursuit through the parking garage and into a wooded area near the mall, where the officers verbally command Johnson to get on the ground. Pops of gunfire can be heard on the video of body-worn camera footage as the officers fire their weapons. Johnson is struck in the chest once and restrained. On the video footage, Johnson says, “I’m not reaching for nothing. I have nothing . . . I’m shot, man. Hurry.”

“While in the wooded area, two officers discharged their firearms, striking Johnson in the chest one time,” states the police release. Johnson was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead, officials said.

FCPD officially fired Shifflett on April 14, 2023.

Shifflett was “unsatisfactorily separated from service” in accordance with Chapter 9 of the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations, according to the Fairfax County public document, Wesley Shifflett v. Bryan J. Hill, et al. CL-2023-8048, filed July 6, 2023, in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Fairfax County Courthouse.

On Oct. 12, 2023, Descano announced that a special grand jury had indicted Wesley Shifflett for shooting and killing Timothy McCree Johnson, 37. Descano noted in his announcement of the indictment in the Tysons Mall shooting, “A criminal indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Former officer Shifflett was indicted on felony charges of involuntary manslaughter and reckless discharge of a weapon.

At Shifflett’s sentencing last Friday, his defense lawyer, Caleb Kershner, described Shifflett as an officer who feared for his life when he fired at Johnson. Kershner said during his closing arguments that Shifflett reasonably believed his life was in danger when he saw Johnson reaching for his waistband. Shifflett made his split-second decision to shoot, citing what Kershner said was a police officer expression: “Better to be judged by 12 than carried by six.”

Shifflett briefly addressed Johnson’s family members in the courtroom on Friday before the sentencing. “I want to express my deepest and heartfelt con-



SCREENSHOT GMU.EDU

Fairfax County Circuit Judge Randy I. Bellows

“I recognize the jury’s finding that Sgt. Shifflett’s conduct at the time he shot Timothy Johnson showed a reckless disregard for human life.”

— Fairfax County Circuit Judge Randy I. Bellows

lences to the Johnson family. I recognize the immense pain they’ve been experiencing over the last two years and the grief they face in losing a loved one. I’m very sorry for their loss,” he said.

Melissa McCree said after the sentencing, “This is a victory for everyone, and I don’t say ‘victory’ as any kind of loose term, because it will not bring our son back.”

“Trust in policing is essential to community safety,” said Fairfax County Commonwealth’s Attorney Steve Descano (D) in a statement after the hearing. “When tragedies like this occur, trust can only be repaired by seeking accountability through the justice system, and failing to do so would make the work of our police force – who are as dedicated to community safety as I am – that much harder.”

Only once before in the history of the Fairfax County Police Department has a police officer faced charges for shooting and killing someone while on duty. That incident was the Aug. 29, 2013, police shooting by Officer Adam D. Torres of an unarmed man, John B. Geer. Torres was charged with second-degree murder. He pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to one-year imprisonment, including time served. Torres was released on June 29, 2016, five days after he was convicted.

After Judge Bellow ruled on Friday, Melissa Johnson, the victim’s mother, said, “I want to acknowledge that this is historical and unprecedented, and for that, I am grateful,” said. “I wish it was my son’s sentencing that I was here for. Had he been found guilty for stealing some sunglasses, we would still be able to see him, he could still be a father to his children.”



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Melissa Johnson at the NAACP Justice Rally outside the Fairfax County Government Center on Saturday morning, April 1, 2023. “He was our son, and he was loved.”

Youngkin Commutes Shifflett’s Sentence

FROM PAGE 4

“Sgt. Shifflett has no prior criminal record and was, by all accounts, an exemplary police officer. It is in the interest of justice that he be released immediately,” said Youngkin. “My action does not limit Sgt. Shifflett’s right to appeal his reckless discharge of a firearm conviction.”

Steve T. Descano (D), Fairfax

Commonwealth’s Attorney, responded <https://x.com/Fairfax-CountyCA>: “I’m outraged at Youngkin’s decision tonight. Glenn Youngkin has spent the last four years honing his Trump impersonation, and now he’s following in his footsteps by commuting sentences just to score political points. This is an insult to all Virginians who value an untainted justice system.”



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Detention Center



Every winter, volunteers conduct a waterfowl count on the Potomac River.



Sunrise over the Potomac River. Dyke Marsh in the foreground.



The Potomac River looking south from Riverside Park

What's the Impact of This Winter's Snow?

Drought persists in some areas.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

In this 2024-2025 winter season, the Washington region as of mid-February had received 14.8 inches of snow, the snowiest season in several years and an amount nearly double last winter's snow.

How has this winter's snow impacted the region's water supply?

Occoquan Reservoir

The 2,100-acre Occoquan Reservoir between Fairfax and Prince William Counties holds 8.5 billion gallons of water and provides drinking water to over one million residents of southern Fairfax County, eastern Prince William County, Fort Belvoir, Dale City and Alexandria.

"The recent snow and rain have helped add to the water supply in terms of quantity," says Susan Miller, Fairfax Water's Communications Director. "The reservoir is at full pool, meaning that the water level in a reservoir has reached its maximum designed capacity, and stream flows in the region are normal." Fairfax Water is the official water authority that manages the reservoir and provides potable water.

Potomac River

The Potomac River provides drinking water to around five million people in the basin. "The water supply has benefited from the recent snow and rain," said Renee Bourassa, Communications Director, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. "The drought monitoring map has improved immensely over the past few weeks, with much of the southwestern part no longer dry." The Potomac River basin or watershed drains 14,670 square miles and stretches across four states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

Bourassa cautioned, "Despite the recent rain and snow, the basin still carries a precipitation deficit of 1.3 inches over the past three months and 3.4 inches over the past six months." The commission will have updated data in April.

Groundwater

Around 15,000 Fairfax County residences and businesses get water from wells that withdraw groundwater, according to Fairfax County's Environmental Quality Advisory Council's latest report.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

State studies have found that groundwater withdrawals from the Potomac aquifer in the Eastern Groundwater Management area are occurring at an unsustainable rate, stressing the water supply. On recent snowfalls, William Cloe, manager of the state's Office of Water Supply, said, "Statewide, the snow has helped the groundwater supply, but Northern Virginia groundwater wells have not responded as fast, and we are still advising a drought watch for all Northern Virginia jurisdictions."

Despite improvements in soil moisture and increased stream flows in much of the state, "pockets of low soil moisture and lingering groundwater deficits continue to be observed in the northern and northeastern portions of the state," stated their Feb. 24 press release.

The state lifted the drought advisories for 28 Virginia localities, but the drought watch advisory continues for Northern Virginia and portions of the Northern Coastal Plain and Shenandoah and Eastern Shore regions, according to the state's Feb. 24 drought advisory update.

Be Salt Smart

Fairfax Water officials report that "salinity levels have increased in local waterways. The utility cannot remove salt using traditional drinking water and wastewater treatment processes, which are designed to treat fresh water only, not salty water. "Removing salt from drinking water would require adding expensive, energy-intensive treatment processes," says Miller.

And she offers, "Chloride levels in the Occoquan Reservoir increased about 39 percent over the last quarter century (1999-2024)." The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin has a similar conclusion: "Chloride concentrations in the Potomac River have risen substantially in recent decades."

On salt's harm, see our Jan. 8 article at <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2025/jan/08/when-snow-and-ice-come-be-salt-smart/>.

More Winter?

The crocuses may be popping up, but the Feb. 25 Washington Post had this prediction about March's forthcoming weather: "At present, weather modeling signals that new wintry threats appear to grow as the early month progresses."

More Information

Washington region drought and water supply reports, www.mwcog.org/

Fairfax Water, www.fairfaxwater.org

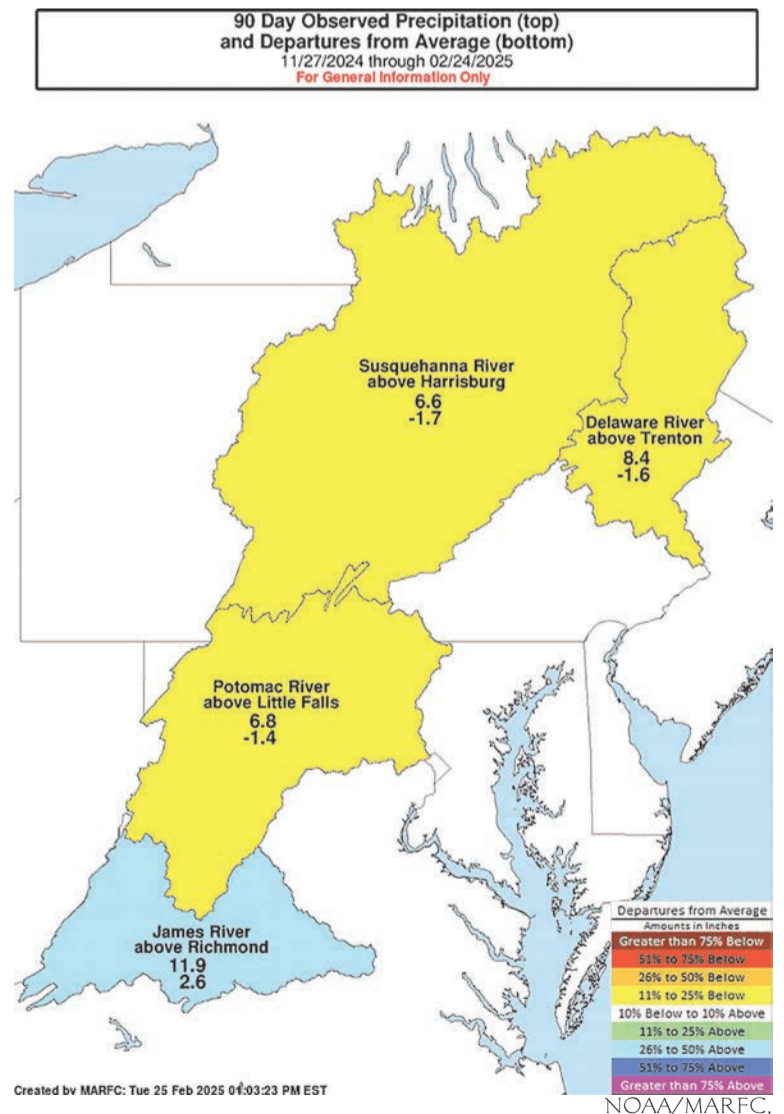
Salt Tips, www.novaregion.org/1495/Snow-and-Ice-Maintenance-Tips-for-Reside



Snow on holly leaves.



Salt spread on pavement in front of the Hybla Valley Home Depot.



PROVIDED BY THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN
Precipitation in the Potomac River above Little Falls is 1.4 inches below average for the past 90 days.

ENTERTAINMENT



2025 Youth Art Shows

MCLEAN PYRAMID - MARCH 4-16
Reception, Thursday, March 6, 4:30-6pm
Also open 1-4pm on Sunday, March 9

LANGLEY PYRAMID - MARCH 19-26
Reception, Thursday, March 20, 4:30-6pm
Also open 1-4pm on Sunday, March 23

March is Youth Art Month! McLean Project for the Arts invites you to its annual Youth Art Shows, featuring work by FCPS Langley and McLean Pyramid students from elementary through high school.

McLean Project for the Arts
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, VA 22101.
2nd floor, McLean Community Center
www.mpaart.org

2024 Youth Art Shows
sponsored by
HBC
Lizzy Conroy

The McLean Project for the Arts Youth Art Shows take place March 4-16, 2026 in McLean.

PLANT A TREE

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

NOW THRU MARCH 23

Workhouse Arts Center Unveils (un) Endangered Species: Re-imagined Places by Andi Cullins. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton, Bldg. W3 Theater.

CITY OF FAIRFAX EVENTS

Funday Monday. 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. This is a free program perfect for preschoolers, but children of all ages are welcome at the Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. For more information, visit the website at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts> or contact Megan DuBois at 703.273.6097/ Megan.DuBois@fairfaxva.gov.

The Bonita Lestina Old Town Hall Performance Series is now in its 35th Season! 8 p.m. at the Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. For more information, visit the website at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts> or contact Megan DuBois at 703.273.6097/ Megan.DuBois@fairfaxva.gov.

SCHEDULE

March 14 – Baltimore Composers Forum “Intersegmental 38”
March 28 – Dr. John “JJ” Mitchell, Organ Recital (held at Truro Anglican Church, Fairfax)

April 11 – Bobby J and the Hot Lanes

ARTScreen Free Film Series celebrating the Arts at the Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd, Fairfax. Doors open at 6:30; Film begins at 7 pm. FREE admission includes popcorn, candy and refreshments. For more information, visit the website at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts> or contact Megan DuBois at 703.273.6097/ Megan.DuBois@fairfaxva.gov.

SCHEDULE

March 7 “Field of Dreams”

MARCH 4-16



Sat, Mar 15
8am-2pm

CHILDREN'S CONSIGNMENT sale

CLOTHING
SHOES
BOOKS
INFANT ITEMS
TOYS
AND MORE!

A Children's Consignment Sale takes place on Saturday, March 15, 2025 at Christ Church in Fairfax Station.

McLean Project for the Arts Youth Art Shows. At McLean Project for the Arts 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. March is Youth Art Month! McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) invites you to celebrate by attending its annual Youth Art Shows, featuring work by FCPS McLean and Langley Pyramid students from elementary through high school. Opening Exhibition Reception Thursday, March 6, 4:30 – 6 p.m. Also open 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 9 and 16. March 19-26, 2025 – Langley Pyramid Show. Opening Exhibition Reception March 20, 4:30 – 6 p.m. Also open 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 23. Visit www.mpaart.org or call 703-790-1953.

MARCH 6-9

Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. At 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Thursday, 6 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Friday, 7 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 8 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, 9 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Visit the website: <https://www.tysonslibraryfriends.org/>

THURSDAY/MARCH 6

Foreign Language Film “Wadjda”. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. An enterprising Saudi girl signs on for her school's Koran recitation competition to raise the remaining funds she needs to buy the green bicycle that has captured her interest. This is the first Saudi Arabian film directed by a woman. Rated PG, runtime 98 minutes.

FRIDAY/MARCH 7

Resident Panel Discussion. 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At The Woodlands Retirement Community, 4320 Forest Hill Drive, Fairfax. Join The Woodlands Retirement Community for an exclusive Resident Panel event! Hear firsthand from current residents as they share their personal experiences and the reasons behind their decision to embrace a maintenance-free, stress-free lifestyle. Discover how making the move to The Woodlands has enhanced their daily lives, provided peace of mind, and fostered a

vibrant, welcoming community. Whether you are considering a change or simply curious, this is a wonderful opportunity to ask questions and gain valuable insights.

MARCH 7-16

Vienna Restaurant Week. At restaurants throughout Vienna. Diners can indulge in everything from fine dining to fast-casual favorites. Whether you choose to dine in, order delivery, or pick up takeout, enjoy exclusive discounts, prix fixe menus, and à la carte specials crafted just for the occasion. Sponsored by the Town of Vienna Economic Development Department, this initiative not only highlights the incredible chefs and eateries throughout Vienna but also drives foot traffic, boosts local businesses, and enhances the town's visibility as a dining destination. Visit explorevienna.com/restaurantweek

MARCH 7-9 & 14-16

“Steal Away.” At The Theatre at Seneca Ridge Middle School in Sterling. Sterling Playmakers will perform Ramona King's “Steal Away” as part of the Women's History Month celebration. This comedic and dramatic play is set during the Great Depression and explores the unexpected and outrageous idea of a group of black church ladies who decide to rob a bank to support funding scholarships for education. Time: Fridays and Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Tickets: www.sterlingplaymakers.org/tickets

2025 FAIRFAX COUNTY TEEN JOB FAIRS

Supervisor Pat Herry will host teen job fairs and career-building workshops:

Saturday March 8th, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. (with final workshops ending at 1:30 p.m.) at West Springfield High School.

Saturday March 15th, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. (with final workshops ending at 1:30 p.m.) at Chantilly High School.

These fairs focus on students and young job seekers looking for a variety of employment opportunities; full time, after-school, seasonal positions, internship opportunities, and volunteer positions. Students of all ages are encouraged to

attend, but most opportunities will be geared toward students ages 16-18. They will also host resume and career building workshops during the fairs with our Chamber of Commerce partners.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

RCC Spring Flea Market. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. At RCC Hunters Woods, Reston. Are you looking for small appliances, books, jewelry, clothing, tools or toys? Support your neighbors – and our environment – by finding hidden gems to take home and enjoy rather than sending them to the nearest landfill. Visit <https://bit.ly/400eN1C>

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Astronomy Festival. 6-8:30 p.m. At Turner Farm Park, Great Falls. Experience guided star gazing, peek through telescopes, and gather 'round the campfire for ancient constellation tales. Enjoy fun games and activities PLUS FREE hot chocolate! Buy tickets online: <https://bit.ly/4ivSsAX>?utm_source=instagram&utm_medium=social. Limited tickets available at the door, first come, first served.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Jigsaw Puzzle & Lunch. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Reston Association Headquarters. Do you enjoy putting together jigsaw puzzles? If so, this is a perfect opportunity to challenge yourself with puzzles featuring beautiful, themed photos of Reston. Join us for coffee, conversation, and one of America's favorite pastimes. Lunch will be provided. Contact Ashleigh at 703-435-6577.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

2nd Saturday Open House & Art Walk - Theme: Art Madness. 6-9 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton.

MARCH 8 TO APRIL 6

Workhouse Arts Center Presents Clyde's by Lynn Nottage. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton, Bldg. W3 Theater. At a truck stop sandwich shop, a group of formerly incarcerated kitchen staff get a second chance at life. Under the oppressive rule of their tough-as-nails boss, they find

ENTERTAINMENT

purpose, redemption, and even inspiration in their quest to craft the perfect sandwich. This witty and uplifting play explores themes of resilience, reinvention, and the power of dreams as these five characters navigate life's twists and turns as returning citizens.

SUNDAY/MARCH 9

Aurora Dance Fest 2025. 5 p.m. At Capital One Hall. Featuring a vibrant evening of dance performances hosted by Gin Dance Company and featuring works by 10 companies and 16 talented choreographers. This event promises to be a delightful mix of contemporary ballet, modern dance, and the fiery passion of Flamenco from Southern Spain.

SUNDAY/MARCH 9

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring KA/PO - Karen Ashbrook and Paul Oorts. Tickets must be purchased in advance at <https://oldbrogue.com/winter-celtic-concert-2025> - \$21 general admission.

SUNDAY/MARCH 9

The Peking Acrobats. 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax.

For more than 30 years, The Peking Acrobats have revitalized Chinese acrobatics, fusing ancient athletic discipline with modern special effects to create a kaleidoscopic marvel for all ages. These world-class gymnasts, jugglers, cyclists, and tumblers provide a gravity-defying spectacle with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility, and control. Accompanied by live musicians who skillfully play traditional Chinese instruments, The Peking Acrobats execute daring maneuvers and display their technical prowess at trick cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting, and gymnastics. The Peking Acrobats will leave you and the whole family breathless with a performance full of exuberant pageantry and amazing feats that need to be seen to be believed.

MONDAY/MARCH 10

Providence District Budget Town Hall. 7-8:30 p.m. At Im Scott Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. Providence District Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik and School Board Chairman Karl V. Frisch will host a town hall to discuss the Fairfax County FY 2026 proposed budget and its impact on our schools, transportation, emergency services, parks and libraries, housing, and economic development.

TUESDAY/MARCH 11

NARFE Meeting - Chapter 1116 (Vienna-Oakton). 1:00 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center. The Guest Speaker will be Gaston Gianni, NARFE's Virginia National Legislation Chair (previously scheduled for last month). He will talk about the issues that NARFE is focused on with Congress. He will also discuss the Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82, that repealed WEP/GPO after 40 years. Members and guests welcome. Free.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 12

Foreign Language Film "Wadja". 6:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave.,



"Forbidden Broadway" takes place on Sunday, March 16, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

McLean. An enterprising Saudi girl signs on for her school's Koran recitation competition to raise the remaining funds she needs to buy the green bicycle that has captured her interest. This is the first Saudi Arabian film directed by a woman. Rated PG, runtime 98 minutes.

THURSDAY/MARCH 13

Sleep Issues: Discussion Series for Parents. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Presented by the Safe Community Coalition in partnership with the McLean Community Center. Led by Facilitators: Melissa Sporn, Ph.D., Amber Syed, M.D. and Laura Gray, Ph.D., we will delve into the causes and consequences of sleep issues and their impact on mental health. This presentation will cover common sleep disorders, the mind-body connection in sleep and evidence-based techniques for improving sleep quality. Attendees will learn practical strategies for managing insomnia, reducing stress before bed and creating healthier sleep habits. This session is ideal for anyone interested in understanding how to achieve restful sleep and support mental wellness.

MARCH 13-30

"Hang." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. Times: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. One crime. One room. Three people. A woman's unspeakable decision as the criminal's fate hangs in the balance. Set in a haunting world where every word is a revelation and every silence speaks volumes, this electrifying production will take you on a journey through the complexities of justice and human nature.

MARCH 14-16

Super Pet Expo. At Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly. Attend a Pet Influencer Panel with Brian Benson & Magnus the Therapy Dog (6.8M followers), Amber Aquart & Whiskey Toller (1.1M followers), Chris Equale and Hammy the Corgi (16.8M followers) and Jessica Hatch with Gone

to the Snow Dogs (6M followers). They'll learn how these pets went from being ordinary to ones with a worldwide audience.

Meet animal communicator Raven Noel who will explain what their pet is really thinking and show how to speak with a pet.

See Tiny, who may be the world's smallest dog and, is available for selfies. A micro teacup Chihuahua Applehead, he weighs just over a pound and is only 4 inches tall. Connect with Gerry Burch, who says his parrots are the friendliest in the world. He will share his knowledge of exotic birds at his Parties by Parrots exhibit.

FRIDAY/MARCH 14

St. Patty's Party: Old Firehouse 5th & 6th Grader Party. 7-9:30 p.m. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. Old Firehouse 5th-6th Grader parties are themed and decorated accordingly. Free catered food and beverages will be distributed to participants. Parties feature a DJ, open dance floor and a variety of activities. Preregistration is recommended. Parents who wish to volunteer for parties must register their participant first, then submit an email request to oldfirehouse@mcleancenter.org. Volunteer spots are limited.

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Summer Job Fair. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Summer job fair for high school students with support from McLean, Langley, and Marshall High Schools. MCA is proud to host the annual McLean-area summer job fair. No sign-up needed. Just walk in. Students will have the opportunity to fill out applications on the spot - or leave behind a resume.

MARCH 15 - 16 & 22 - 23

Traveling Players Presents Sea Changes: A Festival of Two Plays. Treasure Island — 3 p.m.; Orlando — 7 p.m. At their Studio in Tysons Corner Center. Tickets are \$16 online, \$20 at the door. Call 703-987-1712. Performed by Traveling Players students, the festival will breathe new life into satirical romances and scurvy sailors, with

modern twists on two beloved novels.

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Cherish the Ladies. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Kick up your heels with U.S.-based Celtic music sensation Cherish the Ladies in a rousing program of traditional Irish melodies and original arrangements performed with virtuoso instrumentation, beautiful vocals, and spirited step dancing. Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025, this all-female ensemble has captivated audiences with its "passionate, tender, and rambunctious" (Washington Post) sound that has earned a GRAMMY nomination as well as recognition as the BBC's "Best Musical Group of the Year" and the Irish Music Awards' "Top North American Celtic Group."

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

The Hot Lanes Performs. At St. Stephen's Methodist Church, Burke. 12:15 p.m. The Hot Lanes continues its tradition of performing at a beloved preschool to commemorate the founding of St. Stephen's Preschool. This 30-35 minute program is aimed towards children of all ages (notably 2-6) and will feature music from Sesame Street and cartoons.

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Children's Consignment Sale. 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Christ Church, 7600 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Your one day, one stop shop for all your kid's needs-all at bargain prices! Clothes, toys, books, baby equipment, toys, bikes, shoes and much more! Over 60,000 items from 300+ families. 40-90% off retail. Quality items. Organized in categories. Awesome deals. Affordable for all.

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Jimmy Vivino Band. 7:30 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E Vienna. Jimmy Vivino is best known for serving 26 years as Conan O'Brien's musical director. He has produced, lead bands and recorded with a countless number rock and roll and blues artists for five decades including the likes of Hubert Sumlin, Warren Haynes, Bob Weir,

Keith Richards and Elvis Costello, just to name a few. Tickets: \$24 - \$30. Visit <https://www.unionstage-presents.com/jammin-java/>

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

11th Annual Nowruz Festival. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Hilton Washington Dulles Airport. Join in a vibrant celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, and the arrival of spring! This event is free and open to the public, so bring your friends and family for a day of fun, culture, and community. What to Expect: Live music and dance performances by talented local artists DJ music to keep the energy flowing all day long Fun and exciting kids' activities A grand Nowruz Bazaar featuring amazing art & craft vendors, delicious sweets, and a variety of services to explore

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

N Gauge Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will have N gauge model trains on display and running at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors and military (active and retired), \$4. <http://www.fairfax-station.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

"Forbidden Broadway". 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. For ages 13+. Broadway talent. Broadway tunes. Off-Broadway humor. This long-running New York institution parodies current plays and musicals and is perfect for Broadway lovers and new audiences alike. "Forbidden Broadway" the one-stop ticket to all the shows and all the nonstop laughs.

MARCH 20-23

2025 Women's Storytelling Festival. At Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. The festival features 19 of the nation's top storytellers, hailing from as far away as Alaska to Fairfax County, sharing a range of stories - from personal to folk, historic to fantastic - intended for a mature audience. Hosted by Better Said Than Done, in-person performances will be held at the Sherwood Community Center, with a special virtual only showcase premiering on March 20. The festival will also be live-streamed online. It kicks off Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 8:00 p.m. ET, with the virtual showcase, and the in-person and live streaming storytelling begins on Friday March 21, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. The festival concludes Sunday, March 23, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. For schedules, other details, and tickets, visit <https://bettersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/>

SATURDAY/MARCH 22

The Workhouse Ball. 6-11 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Join in an unforgettable evening at the Workhouse Ball and secure your sponsorship and table today to be part of this exciting event that celebrates creativity, community, and the arts!

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 23

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Employment

Employment

Senior Data Scientist w/ Red Hat, Inc. in McLean, VA. Telecommuting permitted: work may be performed w/in normal commuting distance from the Red Hat, Inc. office in McLean, VA. Dvlp data analyses for sales leaders & participate in structured & ad-hoc projects, incl sales forecasting, pipeline analytics, customer analytics, product analytics & resource optimization to support planning & go-to-mkt decisions. Position reqs a Master's deg (U.S. or foreign equiv) in Data Sci, Data Analytics, Stats, Quantitative Mgmt or rel field & 2 yrs of exp in the job offered or rel role. Must have 2 yrs of exp w/: Python, SQL, & R; Amazon Redshift, Bus Objects, MS Excel, Tableau, SAS Visual Analytics, RStudio, & JBoss Data Virtualization; Reporting in a CRM system like Salesforce.com; Building data pipelines & automating data loads; Clustering, time series forecasting, & mkt basket analysis stat methods; & cross functional teams on data gathering & result-driven processes. Job ID: R-046251 Qualified Applicants: Apply online at www.redhat.com/about/work. Sal: \$144,580.00 - \$238,580 /yr. Actual offer will be based on your qualifications.

Legals

Legals

**PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE OF VOLUNTARY REMEDIATION**

Pursuant to the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Regulations, Virginia Administrative Code section 9VAC20-160-120, Jennings Business Park, LLC (Participant) with an address of 4303 SW 25th Place, Cape Coral, FL 33914 hereby provides notice of voluntary remediation at the following site (Site):

Jennings Business Park #1
7601 Loisdale Road
Springfield, Fairfax County, Virginia 22150
VRP Number VRP00555
Map#s 0904-01-0006A2 and 0904-01-0006A5

The Site consists of two non-contiguous parcels 6A-2 and 6A-5. The parcels and contiguous properties have a history of use as a gravel pit from the 1950s-1970s and were subsequently backfilled with fill dirt and construction debris. Parcel 6A-2 was redeveloped as an automotive dealership in 2014 and Parcel 6A-5 as a parking lot in 2015. Sampling on the Site detected the presence of volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, metals, petroleum hydrocarbons and polychlorinated biphenyls in soil, herbicides in groundwater, and volatile organic compounds and methane in soil gas. The Participant applied to and was deemed eligible to participate in the Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) in order to assess and address any environmental risks associated with the detected constituents. A Site Characterization Report and a Risk Assessment have been reviewed and accepted as complete by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Risk Assessment includes an assessment of the risks to human health and the environment that were evaluated in accordance with DEQ guidelines. The risk evaluation found that the following restrictions placed on the future use of the Site pursuant to the VRP will be protective of human health and the environment: (1) groundwater beneath the Site shall not be used for any purpose other than environmental monitoring and testing, or de-watering in compliance with law; (2) the Site will not be used for residential purposes or for children's (underage 16) daycare facilities, schools or playgrounds (although hotels and motels are not prohibited); (3) the existing methane mitigation system under the building on Parcel 6A-2 will continue to be operated and maintained in accordance with an operation and maintenance plan, and (4) a methane mitigation system will be installed and operated and maintained in accordance with an operation and maintenance plan on any new structure constructed for occupancy on the Site.

Persons wishing to comment on the voluntary remedial action or request additional information should contact the following person who is familiar with the Site:

Michael Bruzzesi
ENVECO Environmental Solutions, LLC
818 18th St NW, Washington, DC 20006
703-608-5969
mbruzzesi@envecoenvironmental.com

Written comments will be accepted until 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

LETTER

**Fairfax County
CERT: Beacon
of Resilience in
Our Community**

To the Editor,

In times of crisis, the Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) stands as a crucial pillar of strength and preparedness for our community. This all-volunteer organization empowers residents with essential knowledge and skills to navigate emergencies, from natural disasters to everyday incidents. You can learn more about CERT's services and initiatives at <https://fairfaxcountycert.org/about/why-cert/>.

CERT volunteers are rigorously trained to assist themselves, their families, and their neighbors when the need arises, and they continuously extend this training to others. Another vital part of CERT's mission is to support Fairfax County's first responders. These dedicated volunteers assist with traffic and crowd management, participate in exercises and drills as role players, and more recently, provide canteen services at major incidents across the county. CERT's contributions, described in more detail at <https://fairfaxcountycert.org/about/table-of-services/>, exemplify community service at its finest.

Despite the program's importance, its future hangs in the balance. The proposed budget for the coming year includes plans to eliminate the CERT program, with a vote scheduled by the Board of Supervisors on May 13, 2025. Last year alone, over 500 CERT volunteers dedicated nearly 20,000 service hours, providing over \$1M in value to aid the county's residents and first responders. The elimination of CERT would create a significant void in community preparedness and support.

Community members are urged to act and help save this vital program. By contacting the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay at chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-2321, residents can express their support for retaining the CERT program. Fairfax County residents should also reach out to their district supervisors with the same request. If you are unsure of your district supervisor, you can find out by entering your address at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/myneighborhood/>.

Let's come together to ensure that CERT continues to be a beacon of resilience and service in Fairfax County.

Ray Katona
Secretary,

Fairfax CERT Association

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 21

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 19

Guest Artist Speaker. 7-9 p.m.
At Grace Presbyterian Church, 7434 Bath Street, Springfield. Springfield Art Guild will be hosting guest artist Diana Cull to discuss and give a demonstration of Ikebana, traditional Japanese flower arranging. Free. Visit the website: <https://www.springfieldartguild.org/>

MARCH 21-23

Capital Art & Craft Festival at Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly. Featuring painting, clothing, jewelry, glass, woodworking, leather, photography and ceramics. Dates are Friday, Mar 21 and Saturday Mar 22: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday Mar 23: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Tickets: \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door; Senior & Military discounts available; children under 12 free. Ticket information: www.CACFart

SATURDAY/MARCH 22

Fiesta del Sol Latin American & Caribbean Festival. 5-10 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Taste sumptuous tapas, enjoy great live music and hear the sounds of Latin America and the Caribbean right here in McLean with renowned live bands, top notch chefs, quality artisan exhibitors and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Learn how to dance the salsa, meringue or cumbia from the best dance instructors, free throughout the evening. Free Admission. Drink and food tickets sold onsite.

SATURDAY/MARCH 22

Huge Rummage Sale. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Providence Presbyterian Church, 9019 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Gently Loved Items at Low Prices. Furniture, Clothing, Shoes, Books, Toys, Accessories, Housewares, Glassware, Linens, Books, Home Décor, Kitchenware, Seasonal Items, Boutique with higher-end items, and more! Presale: Friday,



The Fiesta del Sol Latin American & Caribbean Festival takes place on Saturday, March 22, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

March 21, 2025; 12-3 p.m., \$5 admission; Main Sale: Saturday, March 22, 2025; 8 a.m.-1 p.m., free admission. Visit the website: <https://www.providencechurch.org>.

SUNDAY/MARCH 23

Guided Pokemon Go Hike. 2:30-4 p.m. At Riverbend Park, Great Falls. Learn about nature while enjoying playing Pokémon Go with your family or friends. Participants must be familiar with Pokémon Go, supply their own smart device, and have Pokémon Go already installed. Backup battery or charger recommended. Program will be outdoors, so participants must dress for the weather. Visit <https://bit.ly/3QrP7GV>

SUNDAY/MARCH 23

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Heather Cole, author of Virginia's Presidents: A History and Guide, will speak on the stories of our eight Virginia born presidents. Free.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 26

Senior Movie Day. 10 a.m. At Reston Town Center movie theater. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day. Join us on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie.

MARCH 28-29

2025 Mason School of Dance Gala Concert Performances. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. This year's program showcases George Mason School of Dance majors in four varied, critically acclaimed works by well-known choreographers: Robert Battle (The Hunt), Christopher d'Amboise (Twist), Robyn Mineko Williams (Cloudline), and Yue Yin (Through the Fracture of Light).

SATURDAY/MAY 10

44th Annual Spring Civil War Mosby Bus Tour, "Mosby and the End of the War." Sponsored by the Stuart - Mosby Historical

Society. Tour Leaders will be Kevin Pawlak and Rob Orrison. Follow Mosby's Rangers during the closing acts of the Civil War, from the final fights to the disbandment at Salem. Cost is \$80 members of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society \$90 for non-members. Tour does not include lunch. To sign up contact Rob Orrison at 703-431-2869 or email mosbytours@gmail.com or send your check to Rob Orrison (make checks payable to Rob) at 102 Melody Lane Stafford, VA 22554. Venmo: @Robert-Orrison. No refunds after May 1, 2025.

SATURDAY/MAY 17

Spring Civil War & Militaria Show & Sale. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Featuring books, relics and memorabilia from all wars. Admission: \$5 per person. All vendors are welcome! For additional information contact Don Hakenson at dhakenson@verizon.net, or call 703-785-5294 or contact Bud Mayo at mayo5304@cox.net or call 703-389-1505

SYN, a Rooftop Bar and Lounge, Opens in Expanded Reston Town Center

SYN Rooftop Bar & Lounge, with indoor and outdoor seating, debuted on Saturday, March 1, in the expanded Reston Town Center mixed-use development. SYN plans to appeal to business travelers, tourists, and the local community.

Located at 1975 Opportunity Way, SYN Rooftop Bar & Lounge Reston is an all-season spot for shareable plates, craft cocktails, and panoramic views of Northern Virginia from the 16th floor of AC Hotel & Residence Inn by Marriott. SYN is open Tuesday through Saturday from 5 p.m. to midnight.

"Named after the Greek word for "together," SYN's inviting atmosphere and ambiance makes it the prime gathering place for locals and out-of-town visitors to partake in dinner and late-night drinks and bites," according to a release by SYN. Its menu, curated by Executive Chef Alexis Hernandez and Food & Beverage Director Ceren Hunt, showcase cocktails and shareable plates, and "blends influences from various culinary traditions."

Hunt said: "Great hospitality isn't just about serving food and drinks — it's about creating a space where people feel welcome, connected, and taken care of. At SYN, every detail is designed to make guests feel at home, whether they're here for a quick cocktail or a long, lingering evening with friends."

On February 5, Donohoe Construction announced the completion



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY ADELENE UNG, LRA PR

SYN Rooftop Bar & Lounge

of The AC Hotel & Residence Inn by Marriott in Reston. Donohoe Development constructed the building, which Cooper Carry Architects designed.

For more information on SYN, visit www.synrooftopreston.com or follow SYN on Instagram at [@synrooftopreston](https://www.instagram.com/synrooftopreston).

— MERCIA HOBSON

Not About The Beatles



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It was not 20 years ago today (it was only 16), and there was no Sgt. Pepper teaching a band how to play (only an oncologist to share a very unexpected initial non-small cell lung cancer diagnosis), and certainly there was no Billy Shears to introduce and/or sing (only Team Lourie to absorb the devastating news. Moreover, the oncologist had said in his presentation to us that he could treat me, but that he couldn't cure me. It seemed simple enough to hear but oddly enough, it was puzzling in a way). It was, as we realized a few minutes later, a "terminal" diagnosis. And a "terminal" diagnosis/prognosis like that kind of takes the bounce out of your step. It may not keep you from singing; well, maybe the infused chemotherapy does a little bit physically, and emotionally, the hills are not exactly "alive with the sound of music." Remembering some of those early, heavy-duty chemotherapy days, getting out of bed and onto the living room couch was as much as I could muster. And singing? Maybe in the shower if I could ever gather the strength to get there - which I rarely could. And when I did manage to get in the shower, I barely felt like standing, let alone singing. That was then. This is the next paragraph:

Now there's a Beatles channel on Sirius XM Radio and televisions in the Infusion Center. In addition, my chemotherapy these days is "targeted" and treated at home where I take five pills a day. Also, a few years ago my cancer diagnosis was changed from non-small cell lung cancer to papillary thyroid cancer, a much better scenario, generally. Unfortunately, when all my things are considered however, not so much. Instead of quarterly CT Scans, I'm now getting a PET Scan every four months or so. (A PET Scan provides more/accurate detail of what's happening in my lungs.) And most importantly, I have a new oncologist who I see at a different facility. One that I hadn't ever been to all those previous years dating back to Feb. '09 when this cancer business first began.

It would be naïve to say one is happy to see their oncologist. Because if one is seeing an oncologist, it's not what you'd call "a pleasure trip," as the late, great, Henny Youngman joked repeatedly, about "taking his mother-in-law to the airport." It likely means there's a cancer diagnosis that needs treating. And cancer is the medical version of a four-letter word and likewise one you'd rather not hear said in your direction. Nevertheless, the oncologist we're now seeing/being treated by has made a difference in our lives. And to invoke "Forrest, Forrest Gump," "That's all I want to say about that."

My perspective has also changed. When I was first diagnosed, my future was behind me, sort of. All I had was the present. Statistically, according to what my oncologist had said, my best days were behind me. He said there was a two-percent chance I'd survive beyond five years. Hardly was I the kind of horse you'd bet to win. Probably not one you'd bet on at all. No doubt I was a long-shot. But here I type, 16+ years later. Now that's something to sing about. But since I rarely sing, I'm left to toot my own horn (and I don't even play any instruments).

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



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#1 Virginia Agent 2020 - NEWSWEEK



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

Per MLS

FOR SALE!



Offered for...\$1,449,000

543 Great Falls Street, Falls Church City
Step into timeless elegance with this beautifully maintained and updated 4BR/2BA historic farmhouse, built in 1896 and nestled in the heart of Falls Church City. Inside, you'll find a thoughtfully renovated kitchen featuring quartz countertops, ss appliances, a breakfast bar, and sunlit breakfast room. The main level boasts hardwood flooring, a formal dining room, and a spacious living room with a wood-burning fireplace. Add'l there is an office/bedroom and laundry on this level. Upstairs, you'll find a spacious en suite with claw foot bathtub. There are 3 add'l rooms with built-ins. Large yard with detached workshop/garage. **Falls Church City Schools!**

SOLD!



Sold for...\$1,635,000

1448 Highwood Drive, McLean
Discover this stunning classic 4BR/3.5 colonial home located in the highly coveted Chesterbrook Woods neighborhood. Nestled on a corner lot, this residence offers 3250 sq ft of beautifully finished living space on 3 levels. The main level features gleaming hardwood floors; formal dining room; living room w/ fireplace and walkout to deck; gourmet kitchen w/ breakfast bar and ss appliances; large family room w/ brick woodburning fireplace. Upstairs is the primary en suite with 3 additional BR's and hall bath. LL offers a spacious rec room; office; full-size bath; laundry room. Private level backyard! **Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!**

BEST WASHINGTONIAN 2024

SOLD!



Sold for...\$1,350,000

6239 Kellogg Drive, McLean
GORGEOUS 5BR/3.5BA colonial home on 3 finished levels in sought-after Potomac Hills community! This welcoming home has a updated gourmet kitchen, dining area with bar area, and spacious living room with fireplace and walkout to back patio. Add'l walk-out to a covered private patio with skylights and ceiling fan from the dining room. The third level offers an updated private ensuite with a beautiful bath. There are 3 add'l BR's on this level with a hall bath. The first level features a family room or bedroom with a fireplace and updated bathroom. Private backyard w/ patio/decks. **Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!**

Under Contract!



5850 Aspen Wood Court
McLean, 22101
\$1,599,000

SOLD!



1940 Foxhall Road
McLean, VA 22101
\$1,425,000

SOLD!



2049 Rockingham Street
McLean, 22101
\$4,350,000

SOLD!



6813 Tennyson Drive
McLean, 22101
\$2,550,000

SOLD!



1409 Layman Street
McLean, 22101
\$1,600,000

SOLD!



2910 Cleave Drive
Falls Church, 22042
\$910,000

SOLD!



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

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