

# Blue Ridge LEADER & LOUDOUN Today

MARCH 2021

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## COVID-19 legislation cancels Vineyard Square expiration?

BY VALERIE CURY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Virginia General Assembly last year passed a bill which extends the approval date of site plans. But the bill didn't take effect until March 1, 2021. It appears that developers had lobbied for this change, which was introduced by Lynwood W. Lewis, Jr. (D-6) in bill 15.2-2209.1:1. The extension will keep site plans active until July 1, 2022, "or such longer period as may be agreed to by the locality." Any site plan that was valid on July 1, 2020, it appears could have become valid again on March 1, 2021, even if it might have expired – which is the case with the Vineyard Square project's site plan and Certificates of Design Approval

which expired on Feb. 16, 2021.

At the Purcellville Planning Commission meeting on Feb. 18, Town Attorney Sally Hankins started the discussion by giving an update on the Vineyard Square project and its Certificates of Design Approval.

Knowing that the Vineyard Square project was set to expire, Purcellville Mayor Kwasi Fraser, Council Member Stan Milan, and members of the Planning Commission, have been asking staff for an update on the project; but until the Feb. 18 meeting, they received no information.

The Vineyard Square project, which extends from 130 to 144 N. 21st Street in Historic Downtown Purcellville, was approved by a previous Town Council, for a

total of 171,000 square feet of mixed-use space. The six-story plan currently includes 30,000 square feet of retail and 40 condos.

Vineyard Square's site plan and Certificates of Design Approval had already expired once before in 2016, but the Zoning Administrator at the time, and at the request of the developer to make a zoning determination on whether the project had indeed commenced, made a formal determination that the project had "commenced," although little work had been done. The project has sat without any significant progress for over eight years, facing strong and sustained public opposition.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »



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## Irish or not, celebrate St. Paddy's Day in fun ways

BY LAURA LONGLEY

Oh, for the days of green rivers and joyous crowds celebrating Saint Patrick's Day in parades from Australia to Argentina, Brazil to Boston, New Orleans to New York, and of course, Chicago.

While most parades are canceled this year, there are still plenty of other ways to get your yearly boost of leprechauns, shamrocks, and Irish music. And don't forget streaming "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" when a very young Matthew Broderick hops a float and belts out a sensational rendition of "Twist and Shout."

With so many parades and other festivities canceled or postponed, it's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

## Birds, birds, birds

BY ANDREA GAINES

The group known as Artists in Middleburg is hosting a Bird, Birds, Birds juried art exhibit from Saturday, March 13 through Sunday, April 11.

The show will feature a \$200 Anita Baarns Award for Best-in-Show. Baarns is an acclaimed author and artist.

AiM President and Executive Director Sandy Danielson said the organization is extremely excited about the upcoming exhibition. Artist submissions are coming in fast and furiously. Daniels hopes to feature two to three dozen artists, and up to 60 or more individual works of art, along the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

Anita Baarns is an award-winning artist and author, also well known for her magnificent Christmas cards. More information on Baarns can be found at [www.DogBranchPublishing.com](http://www.DogBranchPublishing.com).

Right: Robin Hill's painting of the Australian Ringneck (a large parrot), watercolor and gouache. This quintessential parrot species is mostly green, with an obvious yellow band on the hindneck.



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# 2 Browns + 1 Whitehurst: a natural recipe for success at The Hamilton Mercantile

BY LAURA LONGLEY

When word got out last February that 34-year Hamilton resident Sue Phillips was planning to sell the Natural Mercantile, the town's beloved, 1970s organic food store, faithful health food patrons across the region took the news with much trepidation. What if an "outsider" were to buy it and turn it into, say, a ritzy restaurant?

Their worries were groundless. In fact, the community couldn't be luckier than to have a homegrown farmer and his partner, John and Meredith Brown, step up in December and buy "the Merc," as locals know it. A 2003 Loudoun Valley High School graduate, John is a member of the sprawling family of Browns

who own several farms stretching from Purcellville to Lincoln to Hamilton.

He continues to work his family farm near Lincoln, as well as a client's farm in The Plains. Meanwhile, he and Meredith have launched Meadowview Farmstead on Sands Road, tending flowers, fruits, vegetables, chickens, and a copper-haired toddler named Ada, who promises to be a regular at the newly named Hamilton Mercantile.

Add one more partner to the Merc, and



L to R: Meredith Brown and Sue Phillips.

you have the perfect mix for its future: Abbie Whitehouse, owner of Leesburg's favorite King Street Coffee, where Mere-

dith had worked as a barista.

Meanwhile, before taking off to travel with her husband and visit her son and his family in Florida, Sue Phillips has stayed on to help Meredith, Abbie, and John learn the ropes of running the store.

The Natural Mercantile building, circa 1890, has been a presence in Hamilton for 131 years. It became a health food store in 1972 when two California women came east, launched their business, and caught the first waves of Loudoun's farm to table trend.

When Sue Phillips purchased the operation in 2005, Natural Mercantile took the charge of maintaining the region's premiere health and wellness destination to a new generation of consumers. Always looking for the latest health foods, she has provided an exceptional variety of provisions—bulk beans, fresh produce, organic dairy, eggs, ice cream, locally made soaps, essential oils, sup-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

## 51st annual Bluemont Fair seeks poster design

Organizers of the rescheduled 51<sup>st</sup> annual Bluemont Fair, invite artists of all ages to submit designs for consideration for this year's unique poster. The fair will be held Sept. 18-19.

The theme is Loudoun's home-grown fresh produce and or farmer's markets. Artists' interpretations can be as broad or narrow as they choose, but keep in mind that the winning design and colors will need to be suitable for replication on Bluemont Fair's distinctive poster, which measures 14" by 22," T-shirt, and merchandise.

Artist's name should be on the back of the art. Please also include contact infor-



Fair Co-Chair, Cynthia Morris, modeling last year's t-shirt.

mation and a brief biography for inclusion in publicity. The selected artist's name will be printed on the poster and his/her work acknowledged in fair publicity. Multiple entries from individual artists are permitted.

"The fair is legendary for its use of original art produced by individuals as young as elementary school age, both amateur and professional. Fair organizers always have a hard decision, but base their selection on how well the art captures the theme for the year. Last year it was "pollinators" and the winning design was by a high school student. We loved the

design so much, that even though we had to cancel the fair because of the pandemic, we made it into a t-shirt and included the words, 'I'd rather be at the Bluemont Fair-Quarantine 2020'. We're hoping for a full-on fair this year, though," said Publicity Chair Deborah Snyder.

Artwork should be mailed to Bluemont Fair Poster Design Competition, P.O. Box 21, Bluemont, Virginia, 20135, and must be received by April 10. To arrange to hand deliver art contact [chair@BluemontFair.org](mailto:chair@BluemontFair.org). Individuals requesting return of their submission should also include a self-addressed, stamped mailing receptacle. For further information call 540-554-2367, or email [chair@BluemontFair.org](mailto:chair@BluemontFair.org). For examples of past designs go to [www.BluemontFair.org](http://www.BluemontFair.org).

## BRMS student wins scholarship to space camp

Blue Ridge Middle School 8th grade student, Izabella Hortega, applied for and won a full scholarship to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama.

Receiving the scholarship required Izabella to apply her characteristic hard work ethic, her passion for learning and creativity to complete a science experiment.

For her experiment ideas, she turned to her 7th grade life science teacher, Andrew McClellan, for support. They worked to streamline her hypothesis as it applied to measuring the impact of different light forms (white, UV and infrared) on microorganisms found in water as they may apply to sanitation.

Hortega, with the support of McClellan and school science equipment, worked independently to gather stream water from a local source, set up independent and dependent variables, created multiple trials, gathered and finally analyzed her data. Her summary supported UV light as the factor with the greatest sanitation impact on microorganisms in water, making it safe to consume or use.

The hard work and analysis paid off when she learned about her scholarship win.

"I did it! I got the full scholarship to Space Camp. I couldn't have done any of this without you. So thank you, thank you, a million times thank you." This is what she emailed McClellan after getting the award. McClellan said, "She did it! Izzy is fantastic, and I knew she had a chance to win the scholarship. I told her that she can do anything she puts her mind to." Brion Bell, the principal at Blue Ridge Middle School said, "I am so pleased with her persistence and efforts."

The scholarship will cover tuition, room and board and \$500 towards travel to attend a 6-day Space Camp program this summer from Northrop Grumman Corporation.



Izabella Hortega with the science equipment she used in her independent research.

She will be spending the week participating in the Aviation Challenge at the United States Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama learning and collaborating with other kids her age from around the globe.

Hortega will experience the unique sensation of being three times her normal weight in a one-of-a-kind centrifuge, learn about aeronautics, propulsion and aviation history, fly in a UAV drone simulator, simulate aerial combat, and embark on a search and rescue mission to bring a downed pilot back from behind enemy lines while communicating with a team and evading hostile force.

For more information about Space Camp scholarships, visit <https://www.spacecamp.com/scholarships>.



# Five Ways to Help Protect Your Family from Fraud

From listening to music to ordering groceries, almost all aspects of our daily lives are connected to the Internet in some way. Nearly a third of Americans say they're "almost constantly" online, with 81% using the Internet at least once a day.<sup>1</sup>



RICHARD RICCI

But our always-connected nature can come with risks: The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center<sup>2</sup> averages more than 900 complaints a day; the center recorded \$2.71 billion in victim losses in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

Here are some ways you can help protect your family online.

## 1. Learn to spot imposter scams.

Have you ever received a call, text, or email purporting to be from your credit card provider regarding suspicious activity detected on your account? It could be a scammer trying to convince you to share sensitive information that would enable them to access your accounts.

Increasingly, these criminals may be able to spoof caller ID or an email address so it appears they are legitimate. When in doubt, do not respond. Instead, alert your provider

about the suspicious communication. Learn more about how to spot common scams at [www.wellsfargo.com/scams](http://www.wellsfargo.com/scams).

## 2. Manage and monitor your credit.

If your data has been compromised through a security breach, consider placing a fraud alert on your credit file with the three major credit bureaus. Visit <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft> for more information on identity theft prevention tips and resources you can share with your family.

Make a habit of reviewing credit reports for you and your child at least once a year. Look for unauthorized accounts that may have been opened in your names.

More than 1 million children were victims of identity fraud in 2017, according to one study from banking industry research firm Javelin Strategy & Research.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Limit what you share on social media.

Thieves scour social media profiles for clues to security questions, passwords, and other information that could help them impersonate potential victims online.

First, set your profiles to private—and encourage your family members to do the same. Also, restrict your social media contacts to

people you know personally. Finally, watch what information you disclose. Revealing too much personal information in your social profiles can put you at greater risk of identity theft, especially if your bank or other companies use that information to verify your identity.

## 4. Protect your home network.

Create a strong password for your wireless network in your home. Consider using a unique phrase with a mix of letters and numbers. Avoid using any part of your email address or information shared on social media, like the name of your pet, favorite movie, or anything else someone could easily guess. When you are configuring your router, the Department of Homeland Security recommends choosing the Wi-Fi Protected Access 2 (WPA2) Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) setting, which is the strongest encryption option.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Stay up to date.

Cybercriminals change their tactics frequently, so families should stay on top of the latest threats. Be sure to work with Wells Fargo Advisors and other financial providers to understand ways to protect yourself as you conduct financial business online.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/25/americans-going-online-almost-constantly/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup>[https://pdf.ic3.gov/2018\\_IC3Report.pdf](https://pdf.ic3.gov/2018_IC3Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.javelinstrategy.com/coverage-area/2018-child-identity-fraud-study>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.ready.gov/cybersecurity>

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— Ask Dr. Mike —

By Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D.

## Three parenting tips toward healthy technology use

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

In these technology driven times, managing our children's screen time is a daily – and sometimes moment to moment – parenting task. With the changes we've had to make societally as parents due to COVID-19, that task has certainly become even more imperative.



DR. MIKE

Think about it. Many children are on screens for full school days now, then they do their homework on a screen, and then

they enjoy much of their free time with screens. If your children are awake about 16 hours a day, the majority of their waking time is likely being spent with some form of technology.

In short, screen time, or technology overuse, was a real problem for a lot of children before COVID-19, and it's an even larger one today.

Numerous research studies have shown that screen time or technology overuse is associated with a variety of problems – social problems, emotional problems, academic and learning problems and increased rates of ADHD and obesity – so striving for balance and for quality over quantity technology time is important.

But how do you manage your children's screen time during a global pandemic and during winter when were home so much? Here are a few thoughts to consider as a parent.

Turn technology time into together time. Children are engaging with technology very fluidly these days, and in many ways, it's difficult for parents to understand or keep up. It's also common for parents and children to be in differ-

ent rooms in the house where they're using different forms of technology. All of that's fine, but it's also important to connect over technology as a family.

Watching a TV show that you regularly watch together as a family is a great way to connect. I personally enjoy introducing my children, age appropriately, to the TV shows and movies of my childhood. Watching TV shows or movies together is positive family time, and it also opens up opportunities to discuss the topics or themes that are portrayed in the shows or movies.

Whether your child is six or 16, I also recommend showing interest in their sought after on-line or screen time activities. By watching shows or movies your children want to watch, or by playing video games with them, you're validating what they like, which in turn will bring you closer together.

Model healthy technology use. Children learn from observing the world around them, and what they internalize from us as parents largely shapes and defines who they will become as adults.

If you want your son or daughter to manage their technology time better, model that. For starters, when you're with your children, be mindfully present; make putting your phone down or turning your devices off the norm. By doing this, you are demonstrating to them that you are not distracted and they have your undivided attention. If you need to check your phone when you're around your children, let them know what you're doing. This way your child won't think you're looking at your phone for no reason.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

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# Mercy, Mercy Me

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

Marvin Gaye's lyrics are apt for Loudoun:

*"Hey, mercy, mercy me, oh  
Hey, things ain't what they used to be  
What about this overcrowded land?  
How much more abuse from man can  
she stand."*

Another of his hits was "What's Going On," in which he sang: "I'll tell you, what's going on." Since Marvin's dead, I'll tell you what's going.

## February

What a miserable month. Snow, mud, icy temperatures, almost no sunshine. This has been a wretched time for our spirits; I hope March will be restorative.

## COVID

Our lives have been changed for the

worse. I particularly hope mask wearing is not the new normality. On a positive note, we have vaccines and our case fatality rate is only 1.8 percent. That betters all but one European country. Their misery is cold comfort, though.

February bleakness suits conspiracy theories about COVID's origin. Was it purely zoonotic (i.e., transmitted from animals to humans) or was it genetically engineered in China's Wuhan Institute of Virology, which has been involved with coronaviruses for many years? Suspiciously, most western nations have been hit hard, and China benefits from a weakened west.

## Fiscal responsibility

It's budget time and Supervisors are hunkered down with numbers. I always

look askance at government spending and there are some easy targets: Washington, to a lesser degree Richmond and to an extreme degree, our profligate school system.

Personal belt-tightening isn't pleasant. We've cut back, selling my sports car to replenish savings. Painful. Why can't governments tighten their belts?

## Conservation

Several years ago, I bemoaned the lack of a true leader for western Loudoun's conservation community. No one has risen to fill that void, and to me there seems to be less energy. (Though miserable February and miserable COVID may have jaundiced that personal view.) Worse, something major is going on: ZOR - the new zoning ordinance rewrite. The new ordinance will govern what every part of Loudoun will become. Tired of

huge data centers? Seas of subdivisions bother you? Nightmarish traffic? Missing the scenic pastoral views? Whatever your issue, the new zoning ordinance will be important to you.

One old-line conservation group, the Loudoun Preservation and Conservation Coalition, may be looking for leadership when its long-time and stalwart leader steps down. I hope Al van Huyck will remain engaged in one capacity or other. I also hope the Coalition's executive committee considers outsiders as candidates to fill Al's very large shoes. Three superb leaders come to my mind, though I won't mention names.

Everyone in Loudoun should thank Chuck Kuhn. His philanthropy has saved thousands of acres and his reported purchase of White's Ferry is great news. Loudoun's leading appraiser reports

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

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Please include your name, address and phone number.

We reserve the right to edit submissions as necessary. Deadline for print edition is the third week of each month, or, online any time.



— It Seems to Me —

## The failing Electric Power Grid – The coming perfect storm

BY JOE LAFIANDRA

The events in Texas last month show how vulnerable the electric power grid is. At one point over two million homes were without power. The cause was a relatively rare ice storm that knocked out at least 20 percent of the state's generating power. The main reason for this loss of power to the grid was that the wind turbines that supplied the power froze up due to ice on their blades, and ro-

tating mechanisms, and solar panels didn't generate enough electricity.

This ice storm also deposited ice on overhead power lines and transformers. Electrical system designers never realized that such event could happen in Texas, despite the fact that ice storms do happen periodically. There were only limited back-up options available, such as natural gas fired generators despite the fact that Texas is the equivalent to Saudi Arabia when it comes to natural gas.

So what happened? The state retired coal and natural gas fired generators, in favor of windmills and solar panels that don't produce power under these conditions. We also stopped building pipelines that provided fuel to generating stations nationwide.

According to a recent Wall Street Journal piece, "A Deep Green Freeze" (pg. A16, 2021), while the U.S. is not building any coal fired generating plants, China has 250 gigawatts of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 »

## The end of capital punishment – A good thing

BY JOHN P. FLANNERY

Whatever one thinks of capital punishment, there must be general agreement that the state should never execute an innocent man or woman.

Our criminal justice is so badly broken, no one should be sentenced to death.

I've argued in and out of court to abolish capital punishment.

Many have fought against the Commonwealth of Virginia executing anyone including U.S. Senator Tim Kaine.

Virginia's General Assembly has decided in recent days that it is wrong for Virginia to execute anyone.

Those who might resist this reform should know how, and why it's necessary.

It's not just because the Bible says to

turn the other cheek.

It's because our system is broke.

It's because our laws are not fair and just.

Earl Washington was pardoned in 2000 after DNA evidence excluded him as the perpetrator of a rape and murder, for which he was sentenced to death.

He's not the only one who was found innocent by evolving forensic tools.

We continue to convict innocent people in Virginia because of false eyewitness testimony, false confessions, over-eager snitches, faulty forensics, bad defense lawyers but also, and this is the worst of all, because of prosecutorial misconduct and police misconduct.

In this last category, what we often mean by "misconduct" is that the gov-

ernment is concealing or destroying evidence that is exclusively within its possession that demonstrates, or tends to demonstrate, that the accused is innocent or his accusers raise credibility issues.

Many assistant commonwealth attorneys will fight to hold onto information, not disclose it, saying there's nothing there, and they keep it confidential from the accused, even at the risk of convicting the innocent unjustly.

The best prosecutors have an "open file policy" to allow defendant's counsel to inspect the file, and thus to avoid injustice for failing to disclose critical information.

The best defense lawyer in the nation,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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## Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Church's Store

BY TIM JON

It didn't look like it was closed for repair; the place appeared to be in suspended animation, commerce-wise – perhaps awaiting the machinery of real estate. The one “Live Bait” sign on a front window was outnumbered by several “No Trespassing” placards in prominent spots about the structure. The once-proud sign out front had fallen from grace – losing a good portion of its original pigments – I had to perform a little interpolation to make out “Church's Store.”

It had been some 12 years since I'd first

encountered this interesting little stop-ping-place along Watson Road in the general south-central part of Loudoun County; it had made such an impression I'd always assumed the landmark represented the nucleus of what surely must be a Watsonville – but I've never been able to find reference to such an actual place.

And why do I remember this one, single, solitary (not to say unique) place of business after a decade had slipped by? Well, I'd actually delivered the US Mail here back in about 2008, when I started that crazy, careening career back at one of the Leesburg Auxiliary Offices; on



performing this portion of that particular route, the mail carrier was instructed to secure the mail truck in the store's minimalist parking area, enter the store and deposit the day's mail on the store's front counter near the cash register.

Having performed these actions, this would ostensibly include exchanging pleasantries (or otherwise, depending upon the nature of the establishment and its 'inhabitants'!) with the staff of one and the stray customer or two. This would probably represent the highlight of that mail-person's day, so these things tend to stick in the mind (or what

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

## LVHS football plays!

BY JULIE ALEXANDER

Ten Loudoun Valley High School seniors got a chance to don their Viking jerseys one last time as they took to the football field last week, months after a traditional season would normally commence.

While the pandemic caused fall sports to be pushed to later in the school year, that did not deter the athletes at LVHS who have altered practices and found unique ways to train privately in anticipation of returning to the field one last time.

After missing out on their final Homecoming Dance and not knowing whether they will have a Senior Prom or traditional graduation ceremony, having a football season gives the seniors a chance to focus on some normalcy.

“Playing football has given me an outlet to be with friends and teammates, and we're pumped up to play,” said Matthew Hessler, a senior and team captain.

The Valley football coaching staff has noticed the dedication of the seniors as well.

“The seniors have continued to put in work over this past year with so many unknowns,” Valley

Football Head Coach David Bishop said. “They haven't complained and kept grinding. I'm proud of them and their leadership. The seniors deserve this opportunity to play, and we are excited for them to compete again.”

The talent on the team does not end with the

senior class. There are numerous underclassmen to carry on the traditions of the team. The Varsity starting lineup includes juniors Cam Miller, Blake Moore, Lance Weller, and Conner Van Tassel as well as sophomore Jake Slade.

After ending last year's season with a 7-5 record and winning their first playoff game, fans expect a lot of excitement in this six-game season. This close-knit team has a lot of talent, with over half of the seniors preparing to continue their football careers in college. Team Captain Tommy Gaertner attributes the team's success and camaraderie to, “developing relationships with everyone and making sure we're on the same page. Eleven men on the field working for one goal is hard to beat.”

The season kicked off Feb. 23, with Loudoun Valley playing at Tuscarora High School. The next game was a home game against Independence High School on Feb. 28. All games will be broadcast live via the NFHS network. You can purchase a subscription at <http://www.NFHSNetwork.com>.



Back left to right: Declan Nash, Matthew Hessler, John Lohr, Max Christie, Austin Blizzard, Nick Schiavone, Sean Davis. Front left to right: Jonathan Bacigalupi, Cam Miller, Tommy Gaertner, Tyler Alexander.

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## Purcellville Planning Commission to hold March 9 joint meeting on building heights

In keeping with the new Comprehensive Plan to preserve Purcellville's small-town feel and character, the Planning Commission is proposing to amend the Zoning Ordinance so that buildings constructed in the Town's Historic Downtown / Central Commercial District (C-4 Zoning District) be limited to by-right heights of two stories and 35 feet, as measured from the street front.

**GOVERNMENT**

Existing buildings that are taller would not be affected by this change and would be grandfathered in. This would be the second time the Council has lowered the allowable height in this district. The size and scale of development in this area should remain consistent with the existing compact small community and character of this neighborhood, according to overwhelming citizen input for the C-4 District during the recent Town's Comprehensive Plan Review citizen input

process. The vision for this area in the new Comprehensive Plan is for one or two stories.

The amendment would allow buildings to be constructed up to three stories and 45 feet, if a Special Use Permit is first obtained from the Town Council, following public hearings. This change would allow the community to weigh in on a particular proposal, should someone propose something higher than two stories, and this special exception process is opposed by developers who want the heights to remain at three stories.

The Purcellville Planning Commission has scheduled a special meeting on Tuesday, March 9, at 7 p.m. They will hold a joint public hearing with the Purcellville Town Council to receive comments on, consider, and possibly vote on Ordinance 21-02-01, which contains amendments to the Town of Purcellville Zoning Ordinance regard-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

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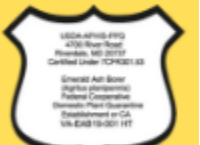
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# LAWS – helping those who are suffering; Wexton visits non-profit in Feb.

BY ANDREA GAINES

Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-VA10) visited to the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter in mid-February. She, along with Rep. David Joyce (R-OH) recently introduced the Domestic Violence Public Health Emergency Guidance Act, which addresses similar issues.

## GOVERNMENT

Families of all income levels are suffering greatly from the ongoing effects of COVID-19, as they try to hold on to their homes, jobs, and kids. And, for families torn apart by domestic violence and/or other unsafe situations, the suffering is particularly severe. With the onset of COVID, LAWS and other groups have seen dramatic increases in people needing help. They are also straining under other hardships related to social distancing, the dangers of COVID in their facilities, and funding. Said LAWS Chief Executive Officer Judy Hanley: "Staying home is safer for COVID, but it is not safer for victims."

## Legislative action can help

As Wexton noted in a recent press release, "In Virginia, and across the country, we've seen a spike in calls to domestic violence hotlines and police ..."

Noted Rep. Joyce, "When I was a prosecutor, I saw my fair share of terrible crimes, but none haunt me more than those of domestic and sexual violence ... Unfortunately, the threat these crimes pose to our communities has grown exponentially as we've worked to rein in the COVID-19 pandemic."

Hanley has been fighting day and night to help her organization adapt to the realities of COVID.

LAWS shelters that could provide a safe place for many people before, have been forced to "remain empty," said Hanley. As a "communal living center," they had three bedrooms with 12 beds. This is not OK under COVID. So, they had to use alternative housing paid for by grants, and others have helped fill the gap. But, "it is

not easy," said Hanley. Continuing, she noted that the numbers of those in need have, literally doubled, or more – overnight.

"At the height of the pandemic, LAWS was sheltering over 30 victims at one time. That is well beyond our 12-bed capacity, [but], as the designated Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Crisis Center, we do not turn anyone away who is fleeing imminent danger," Hanley said.

According to the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, beginning just about a year ago, Virginia's statewide hotline saw a 73 percent increase in contacts. LAWS reports that their shelter caseload increased by over 647 percent within a similar timeframe. Numbers are back down, now, but still two-and-a-half times what they were prior to COVID.

## The Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter – the pebble in the pond fighting for victims of crime

LAWS is fighting both the problem of violence in the home, and the issues that arise from these horrific crimes.

As is the case for many organizations of their kind, a national funding program called the Victims of Crime Act, or VOCA, is their lifeline; as, they are the lifeline for men, women, and children in need. VOCA monies do not come from the taxpayer. The effort is unique in that regard. VOCA monies are collected as federal crimes are committed, prosecuted, and tried – and include everything from court fees, to settlements.

Thousands of organizations like LAWS get VOCA funds from their respective states. They are known as "victim service providers" – non-profits, prosecutors,



state VOCA administration and compensation agencies, "millions of survivors of crime," and lots more.

In a recent letter to numerous members of the Congress and Senate, these organizations spoke on behalf of these victim services providers in an effort to get VOCA funding restored.

"We, the undersigned organizations representing thousands of victim service providers, prosecutors, and state VOCA administration and compensation agencies, as well as millions of survivors of crime, urge you to include in the year-end Fiscal Year 2021 omnibus spending bill the updates to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) that are needed to stabilize the Crime Victims Fund (CVF or the Fund). This is the only way to prevent ongoing, catastrophic cuts to programs that provide services and direct funding to victims."

VOCA, the group emphasized, takes a unique, non-taxpayer funded approach, based on "... Direct federal criminal settlements [and] deferred prosecution agreements, currently deposited into the General Treasury, into the Fund ..." What LAWS and others seek, continues the letter, will provide "\$4 to \$7 billion of non-taxpayer money available to serve and compensate victims over the next few years; ... Increase the percentage that state compensation programs are reimbursed from 60 to 75 percent; ... Allow states to apply for a no-cost extension for VOCA assistance grants; ... Give states

the ability to waive subgrantee match requirements for VOCA assistance grants; and, Provide additional flexibility for state victim compensation programs to provide compensation for victims, even if they do not interact with law enforcement."

By not acting, say LAWS and others, "Victims across the country, particularly in rural and small jurisdictions, will experience an accelerated loss of services in the coming year ..." In reference to Loudoun County specifically, Hanley said, "Currently, approximately 50 percent of LAWS' organizational budget is covered by VOCA funding. Any decrease in funding will result in fewer services and fewer Loudoun victims served. LAWS provides safety, hope, and empowerment services to 1,200 victims per

year."

## As COVID wanes, LAWS will be ready

The LAWS organization is hoping to build a new shelter and is: "Conducting a study," said Hanley, "to determine our 2022 readiness to launch a capital campaign ..." In reference to a new shelter, she said, "a feasibility study, developmental audit, and several other efforts will determine if the community has the capability to help us with this specific undertaking, as well as whether LAWS has the infrastructure in place to conduct a capital campaign."

LAWS CEO Hanley noted that donations are "up" due to COVID. But, reductions in VOCA funding are a real threat. February was National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. It is an issue, professionals in the field note, that impacts everyone, including parents, teachers, friends, and communities.

An organization called 100 Women Strong has issued a challenge grant to the community to help LAWS raise funding to continue to provide free legal services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. Every little bit helps. Like the proverbial "pebble in a pond," every voice, every grain of awareness has meaning. Said Wexton as she met with the group, "I am thankful to have you in the community ... [even though] it's still going to be a rough year."

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# LCPS springs forward with learning choices

BY LAURA LONGLEY

Remember last March 13, the day the schools closed in Loudoun County? Who would have thought nearly a year would pass before Loudoun's public school students could be back in

**GOVERNMENT** a classroom—even if only two days a week, sitting six feet apart, and wearing masks?

This March, it's a different story. We're springing forward, not only by the clock but also by reopening Loudoun County's public schools for hybrid learning. Elementary school students whose parents elected hybrid learning for second semester cheered their return to the class-



That's a smile behind the mask. A student arrives at Creighton's Corner Elementary, clearly happy to be back at school.

room on Feb. 16. For parents of middle and high school students, their back-to-school celebrations kicked off on March 3.

The only thing that could make them happier is a full week of school. But even two days have been a godsend. As one Emerick Elementary School parent put it, "The joy is back on my children's faces."

## Mixed reviews for LCPS decision-making

Getting to this point, however, has been far from easy. Ask parents such as Brandon Michon who throughout the year stepped up to the microphone at bi-weekly school board meetings, pleading with the members to "figure it out."

Many of these parents continue to feel that the school board still has a long way to go and that the decision to go to even two days a week resulted only from changes in the guidelines of the state of Virginia and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with the blessing of Dr. David Goodfriend, Loudoun County Health Director.

In February, after reviewing local data, as well as data from school systems throughout the country, he reported to the school board that schools following mitigation strategies, including distancing of six feet and wearing masks, have not seen significant spread of the coronavirus within buildings. "It's just as safe, if not safer, having students and faculty in the schools as it is having them in the community, outside their homes."

Many parents elected remote-only schooling for their children for second semester. According to a Blue Ridge Middle School father, "We're not doing the hybrid but instead finishing the year via distance. It has worked well for us, and there has been way too much uncertainty with LCPS planning and operations to have trusted them back in January when we had to decide for second semester. Everyone's situation is different, and I don't envy anyone in the planning process."

The mother of a Loudoun Valley High School sophomore and Blue Ridge Middle School seventh grader faced a tough decision but ultimately made the choice based on what seemed best for each child: The Valley student will continue remote learning, while the son at Blue Ridge will go to hybrid. The mother's views are tempered, however. "It's nice to see Loudoun County finally making efforts to get the kids back to school. But I'm still very disappointed about how long it has taken considering many neighboring counties have been in person for months." She cites Clarke and Frederick counties and the city of Winchester. "Loudoun County does not seem to have any clear reasoning for taking so long to get the kids back."

She added, "The other disappointing aspects, which I don't think a lot of people realize, is the kids will still be learning from their Chromebooks, just in the classroom. This is called 'concurrent.' They still won't get the in-person, teacher-to-student, face-to-face benefit of traditional school."

## Changes in guidelines

Loudoun County Public Schools' steps forward to hybrid learning are largely the result of changes in guidelines at the federal and state levels. Enhanced mitigation strategies and adherence to them are making a significant difference in school safety and, if faithfully followed, may lead to an increase in classroom days, perhaps as many as four days a week later this spring.

For students engaged in sports and activities of all public school organizations, there's more good news. Activities

held in indoor venues now can welcome as many as 250 people or 30 percent of those allowed by the certificate of occupancy. Outdoor events can have up to 1,000 attendees or 30 percent of occupancy, whichever is less. Masks and distancing of 10 feet for non-family members are required.

## Loudoun's mitigation strategies

Parents or guardians receive a daily medical questionnaire survey, and must fill it out and return it promptly. No one

can enter a school building if they have entered "yes" to any of the screening questions.

Everyone must wear a mask and observe six feet of separation from others. That requirement extends beyond the classroom to hallways, cafeterias, and other communal spaces. Frequent and proper handwashing is also a key protocol.

To monitor the temperatures of students, staff at each school check

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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# Gable dump back in County's court; DEQ says it will not intervene

BY ANDREA GAINES

According to a letter sent to Loudoun County Zoning in February, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality will not intervene in the Gable Farm landfill case.

The letter was sent to Loudoun County Zoning Administrator Mark Stultz by Richard Doucette, DEQ's Land Protection and Revitalization Program Manager.

Activity at the landfill has been halted by a County Stop-Work Order for years.

The bottom line: ongoing permit violations related to unauthorized and potentially hazardous dumping will not be addressed by DEQ, and is now back in the County's court.

## Massive dumping, with no accountability

Complaints from neighbors and professionals in the field of solid waste management have been continuous. If something really bad is happening beyond permit violations, the public is on its own.

Since the Gable Farm landfill started out as a Personal Recreation Field, zoning regulations alone applied here, as truckloads of waste were dumped and graded for the landowner's personal use.

But, over time, the activity revealed itself as a very profitable solid waste dumping site, and the County shut it down.

By that time, however, the dumping had totaled some 34,000 truckloads and 500,000 cubic yards of refuse, by some estimates. And, it was by then a landfill of more than 18 acres.

The waste was piled higher and higher, more than 10 feet higher than allowed by County permits. The debris included soil, liquid waste, cinderblock, broken bits of PVC pipe, plastics, rocks, gravel, and big chunks of asphalt.

Permit violations in 2017 and 2018 lead the County to issue the Stop-Work Order.

## Enter the Wood Study, which identifies lethal contaminants

As the questions of both zoning violations and the potential build-up of toxins began to heat up, a company named Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. was hired by the County to double check whether "the imported fill material [contained] contaminants considered harmful to human health and the environment ..."

Personal Recreational Fields can only accept "clean fill," and, as such, do not

require owner/operators to use liners, tarps, and other things to keep toxins from getting into water, soils, and the atmosphere. Landfills, of course, do.

The backup studies conducted by DEQ were visual and cursory in nature, only. They did not characterize Gable's fill as problematic, but, neither did they clear it as purely "clean fill," and they would not certify that the landfill does not contain hazardous or noxious materials.

The Wood Study, on the other hand, thoroughly analyzed the 17 soil borings taken earlier on the 18-plus-acre landfill, each approximately 20 feet deep. In doing so, Wood noted that the borings did not reach the bottom of the landfill, and groundwater had not been collected from any of them.

Wood also said that the boring soil samples had been analyzed for a range of contaminants ... but not for pesticides or herbicides.

Wood found "two of the soil samples contained TPH concentrations [Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons – a family of chemical compounds originating from crude oil] exceeding 50 ppm ..."

Continuing, Wood wrote, "as such, these concentrations would characterize this material as Category C which would exclude them as unrestricted clean fill

... require appropriate disposal of this soil at a permitted and approved landfill equipped with liners and a leachate collection system."

In other words, a large, full blown landfill was being regulated as if it were a simple, "clean fill" Personal Recreation Field. Not only were County permits being violated in terms of how big the site had gotten, the debris was potentially dangerous as an unregulated landfill.

## DEQ "observations"

The latest DEQ February letter includes simple "observations," but does not address the inadequate testing issues raised by the Wood Study.

In its February 2021 letter to the County, DEQ references its review of the Environmental

Soil Characterization Report, dated July 22, 2020; and the Technical Memorandum – Gable Farm Soil Characterization Report Review, dated October 21, 2020. Unfortunately, DEQ does not really address the fundamental and profoundly troubling things the Wood study say is going on here.

DEQ got involved, did its own cursory site visit, and has now punted the decision back to the County.

## Financing opportunity for first-time homebuyers available

Loudoun County continues to accept applications from first-time homebuyers for funds made available through the Virginia Housing Sponsoring Partnerships and Revitalizing Communities Program. The program provides lower interest rates on homeownership loans in the County.

To qualify for the program, the prospective homebuyer must meet the following criteria:

Have an annual household income between 70-100 percent of the Area Median Income for a

household size of four. Currently, income must fall between \$88,200 and \$126,000;

Be a first-time homebuyer, which is defined as someone having had no ownership interest in real property in the past three years;

Currently live and/or work in Loudoun County for a minimum of six months immediately prior to submission of the application;

Purchase a new or existing home for \$525,000 or less located in Loudoun County; and

Receive a mortgage loan from a VH-approved

lender participating in a VH mortgage loan program.

Homebuyers do not have to participate in Loudoun County's homeownership programs, such as the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program, to participate in the SPARC program. Program participation is subject to availability and approval.

For full program information and eligibility requirements, visit [loudoun.gov/HomeLoanPrograms](http://loudoun.gov/HomeLoanPrograms) or contact Hannah Choi at [hannah.choi@loudoun.gov](mailto:hannah.choi@loudoun.gov) or 703-777-0353.



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# Loudoun Fire Chief Keith H. Johnson appointed – President of Virginia Fire Chief’s Association

The Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System has announced the appointment of Chief Keith H. Johnson to President of the Virginia Fire Chief’s Association.

**COMMUNITY**

The mission of the VFCA is to serve the communities of Virginia through its fire service leaders and advance the Fire & Rescue service through leadership, education, and advocacy. The VFCA brings Virginia fire service leaders from across the Commonwealth together to:



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Develop and deliver public education programs focused on fire prevention and life safety.

Cooperate with all organizations in the promotion of the goals and objec-

tives of the fire service to include state-wide legislation.

Support and encourage the delivery of pre-hospital emergency medical services by the fire service.

Johnson is a fourth-generation firefighter who began his fire service career in 1982 as a Volunteer with the North Merrick Volunteer Fire Department in Long Island, New York.

After retiring from a career with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department in 2014, Johnson was hired as the Assistant Chief of Operations for the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System. In May of 2018, he

was promoted to System Chief, where he continues to lead and oversee the 1,300 members of the LC-CFRS.

In addition to his role as the President of the VFCA, he serves as Vice Chair of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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Stone columns frame its gated entrance, and a long tree lined drive leads to the early 19th c. stone house. Located off the front hall is a living room with a high ceiling and fireplace, a powder room, a dining room with a beamed ceiling and fireplace, and a paneled library with a home office.

The spacious flagstone family room was designed by noted lo-

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cal architect William Dew. With a massive stone fireplace, a wet bar and a 20' wall of windows, it's a perfect place to enjoy breathtaking sunsets over the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Heading from the front hall to the east wing, an elegant butler's pantry with wet bar, ice maker and beverage fridge affords access for guests to the back patio, or through to the chef's kitchen.

Kitchen design was optimized for a serious cook, with professional level appliances (Blue-Star, Wolf, Viking, Miele and Bosch) and expansive counter space. A 26-foot wall of windows to the south flood the room with natural light and a French door leads to the back patio. Adjacent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 »

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## Purcellville Pharmacy offers COVID-19 vaccine

Purcellville Pharmacy is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to health care and frontline workers, patients with underlying conditions, and seniors. Purcellville Pharmacy is located at 609 E Main Street #Q, Purcellville (the Purcellville Shopping Center). Their telephone number is 540 751-0750.

Please fill out a consent form on [www.purcellville-pharmacy.com](http://www.purcellville-pharmacy.com) to get an email invitation. The pharmacy is offering the vaccine for 1a and 1b population, as stipulated by the Virginia Department of

Health.

Healthcare and frontline workers are required to show employer ID or healthcare license.

Patients with underlying conditions are required to bring PCP note to confirm eligibility.

Purcellville Pharmacy is open six days a week and closed on Sunday.

The Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 Vaccination is a collaboration between the federal government, states and territories, and 21 national pharmacy partners and independent pharmacy networks to increase access to COVID-19 vaccination across the United States.

### COMMUNITY

## Teen artists sought for virtual concert event

The Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services is seeking local teen artists to perform at a live, virtual concert on Saturday, May 8. PRCS is hosting the event to provide an opportunity for bands and soloists to experience playing on a professional platform in a safe, socially-distanced environment.

The performances will be livestreamed on the Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center's YouTube channel.

To foster a concert-like experience for the artists and virtual audience, the number of acts will be limited to twenty. Event restrictions will be in place, in accordance with the Forward Virginia COVID-19 guidelines, and no audience members will be allowed on site.

Acts will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. More details about the event and how to register are available online. Registration closes at 5 p.m. on March 16. For additional information, email [yac@loudoun.gov](mailto:yac@loudoun.gov).

### COMMUNITY

## Goose Creek Association Video Wins Grand Prize



Left to right: Drew Babb, Peter Buck, and Sarah Huntington.

The Virginia Environmental Film Festival has just awarded its Grand Prize to a video about a vital local waterway. The

Goose Creek Association's video "Goose Creek" (also called "Life's Blood") was produced by the Lincoln Studios, headquartered in Fauquier County.

The video's three creators and producers form The Lincoln Studios film company, based in the village of Paris. The partners are Sarah Huntington, producer and award-winning portrait photographer; Peter Buck, director and videographer, and Drew Babb, writer and adjunct professor at Shenandoah University.


The short documentary features brief interviews with local citizens and envi-

ronmentalists Nina Fout, Mike Morency, Richard T. Gillespie, Purcellville mayor Kwasi Fraser, and Goose Creek Association board members. Two widely known pieces of music add dimension: "Riverside" by Agnes Obel and "Take Me to The River" covered by Eva Cassidy. Powerful aerial footage of the Goose Creek from the feature film "Crazy Like a Fox" (written and directed by Richard Squires) opens the video in dramatic fashion. Former CBS News correspondent Bettina Gregory voices the piece.

"It has been an honor to bring this beloved and underestimated waterway to life," said Lincoln Studios producer Sarah Huntington. "We appreciate all the many other individuals who

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 »

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## ~ Remembering ~

### John Duncan Marsh

John Duncan Marsh, age 89, passed away peacefully on Monday, Feb. 1, at Spring Arbor in Leesburg. He was born Oct. 6, 1931 to Edward Henry Marsh and Helen Hirst Marsh.

He grew up in Brooklyn, NY and summered annually in Purcellville, visiting many generations of the Hirst family. In 1950, he and his family were drawn southward to Loudoun County by the magnetism of small-town life and open space. He made a permanent home, and lived a joyful life in Purcellville, establishing himself as an esteemed pillar of his community.

Growing up, Marsh attended Kent School in Connecticut. He went on to Washington and Lee University, which he often referred to as THE university of Virginia (to the frustration of two of his sons who actually went to UVA). His college experience was interrupted when he joined the US Air Force during the Korean conflict. He developed a profound appreciation for different cultures and worldviews as a result of this experience.

After Korea, he returned to and graduated from his beloved W&L in the Class of '57. He held a number of professional roles in Personnel and Human Resources for Marriott, Navy Federal, and Computer Sciences Corp. He went on to become a Financial Consultant with Wheat First Securities.

Marsh discovered his greatest passion while volunteering in the Town of Purcellville, a town he dearly loved. Following in his grandfather's and his mother's footsteps, John served as a member of the Purcellville Town Council from 1986 to 1994 and as Mayor from 1994 to 2002.

He spent many years volunteering with the Purcellville Business & Professional Association, Loudoun Historical Society, and served as Director of the Purcellville Preservation Association, respecting the past with an eye to the future.

He carried through with this dedication by restoring numerous centuries-old structures on his family's Montcalm Farm, located just north of town, which garnered much of his focus and energy.

Following his tenure in town politics, he remained involved with Virginia Regional Transit, helping to establish transit connections between western Loudoun and the greater Washington metropolitan area. He was a proud member of Rotary International, serving as president of the Leesburg Chapter and recipient of the Paul Harris award.



Marsh treasured his friendships, which are too voluminous to list, and was always looking for ways to connect with people. He welcomed any excuse to lift his dog, Maverick, into the back of his white Jeep and head to downtown Purcellville, or the Round Hill Diner, to say hello to whomever he might encounter.

He was a brother to the late David H. Marsh; husband to the late Nancy Dickey Marsh; and father to Lea (Adam), Sue (Tom), David, Chris (Malinda) and Michael (Megan). He treasured time with his grandchildren Aryn, Christine, Zach, Alexandra, Abbey, Matt, Lexington, Jackson, Sean, Danny, Indra, Xavier, and Annabelle. He was immensely proud to be godfather to Ken and Katherine.

He will be remembered warmly as a man who mixed a warm, inviting personality with an enduring sense of adventure. He will be greatly missed, but his spirit lives on, in all who loved him dearly.

Given the reality of current health risks, the family plans a celebration of his life later in 2021. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to the Rotary Club of Leesburg, where he served and whom he trusted as worthy stewards to serve others.

**PLANNING COMMISSION**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9  
ing the following:

- ZTA21-01 Definition of "Building Height" & ZTA21-02 Building Height Calculations
- ZTA21-03 C-4 Central Commercial Zoning District – Height Standards
- ZTA21-04 Destruction of Nonconformities

As of press time, due to COVID\_19, on-line participation will be through Go-

ToMeeting, join the meeting at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/341850645>. Or go to the Town website at [www.Purcellvilleva.gov](http://www.Purcellvilleva.gov), click the Government tab, click on agendas and minutes, and you will find the link to view the March 9 joint meeting.

The Planning Commission encourages citizens to weigh in and you can email them at [planningcommission@purcellvilleva.gov](mailto:planningcommission@purcellvilleva.gov) with your comments on this issue.

On March 18, 7 p.m. there will also be a joint meeting to review the proposed Historic Corridor Overlay District ordinance.



**IT SEEMS TO ME, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6**

coal fired plants under development, enough to power 330 million homes.

Coal now accounts for 60 percent of China's energy. How's that for limiting CO2 emissions? China is allowed to do this according to the Paris Climate Accords, because they are a "Developing Nation." So while people are freezing and yes, dying of the cold in Texas, China is toasty warm and pouring tons of CO2 in the atmosphere. The environmentalists are against building natural gas, coal, nuclear energy and even hydroelectric plants. So what's left, solar panels and windmills?

The present Administration's plan to ban fossil fuels is really going to get interesting, when all automobiles will have to be battery powered. With a power grid that is already at a tipping point, imagine what would have happened if Texas only had electric powered vehicles. Not only would you have frozen in your home, you couldn't even escape to a warmer state.

Charging electric cars takes energy. Keep in mind that there is more energy in two gallons of gasoline than in the entire battery of a Tesla car. For reference, an electric toaster takes 1 kilowatt to operate. Overnight electric car chargers take 4 kilowatts, a reasonable amount for the grid to handle. If you want to charge a car in 15 to 25 minutes, you will need a fast charger that takes 150 to 250 kilowatts, much more than the present grid can handle, if everybody wants to charge their car at the same time. Electricity generated must be consumed as it is generated; there is really no storage capability. So even if you spend billions and billions of dollars to build charging stations, you must completely update the entire electrical transmission, and generation network, to power a nation of electric cars.

So why are we doing this? All in the name of "Global Warming." Environmentalists have created a mass hysteria crisis that says we must eliminate fossil fuels to reduce the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere. This whole house of cards we have built, is based on the false

premise that CO2 is causing a global warming crisis.

Yes, CO2 is a greenhouse gas, and it has an effect on the climate, but climate change isn't that simple. Water vapor is the major greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, not CO2. The Earth's temperature over the past 500,000 years has varied enormously over roughly 100,000-year periods, because of what are known as Milankovitch Cycles. These cycles are caused by the variations in the Earth's orbit, axis tilt and eccentricity that change the amount of sunlight that the Earth receives, and thus cause global warming and cooling. In fact the Earth has gone through four ice ages during that period of time. We are warming from the last ice age, 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.

Humans lived in the U.S. in the time when there was one mile of ice over Chicago and other Northern Hemisphere cities. Long Island wasn't even completely formed yet. This is considered very recent in geological time. The geological ice core record shows that for approximately 80 percent of the past 500,000 years, the Earth's temperature was below today's average.

With a growing population, plants will die during a period of cool weather lasting hundreds or thousands of years and there will be mass starvation. Since most of the time in the last 500,000 years it was colder than it is today, we should be trying to figure out what to do about global cooling in the future.

The ice core records also show that rising CO2 follows the Earth's temperature rise by hundreds or thousands of years, because CO2 comes out of warm ocean water just like it does in a warm bottle of beer on a hot summer day.

This climate movement permeates our entire culture, and ends up causing people to freeze to death in Texas because of the lack of electricity, and it's only the beginning of the real crisis, which is the lack of electrical energy generation in the U.S. It's time for us to regain control of the people's electric grid, and reveal that the "global warming" emperor has no clothes.

**GOOSE CREEK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16**

helped us create this film. One of our on-camera neighbors said, 'The Goose Creek is life's blood.' We could not have said it any better."

The Goose Creek Association's Lori Keenan McGuinness (Fauquier), who co-chairs the organization with Paul Lawrence (Loudoun), added, "Most people think of the Goose Creek as a charming little waterway that snakes through the countryside. In fact, it's a river. And a State Scenic

River at that. It's an essential part of our ecosystem. It needs to be protected. We're delighted our video has received this recognition. We salute our friends at the Lincoln Studios," she said.

To contact The Lincoln Studios, call or text Sarah Huntington at 540-338-7809, or email [sarah@sarah-huntington.com](mailto:sarah@sarah-huntington.com). To view the video, visit the Goose Creek Association website <https://goosecreek.org/video/>.



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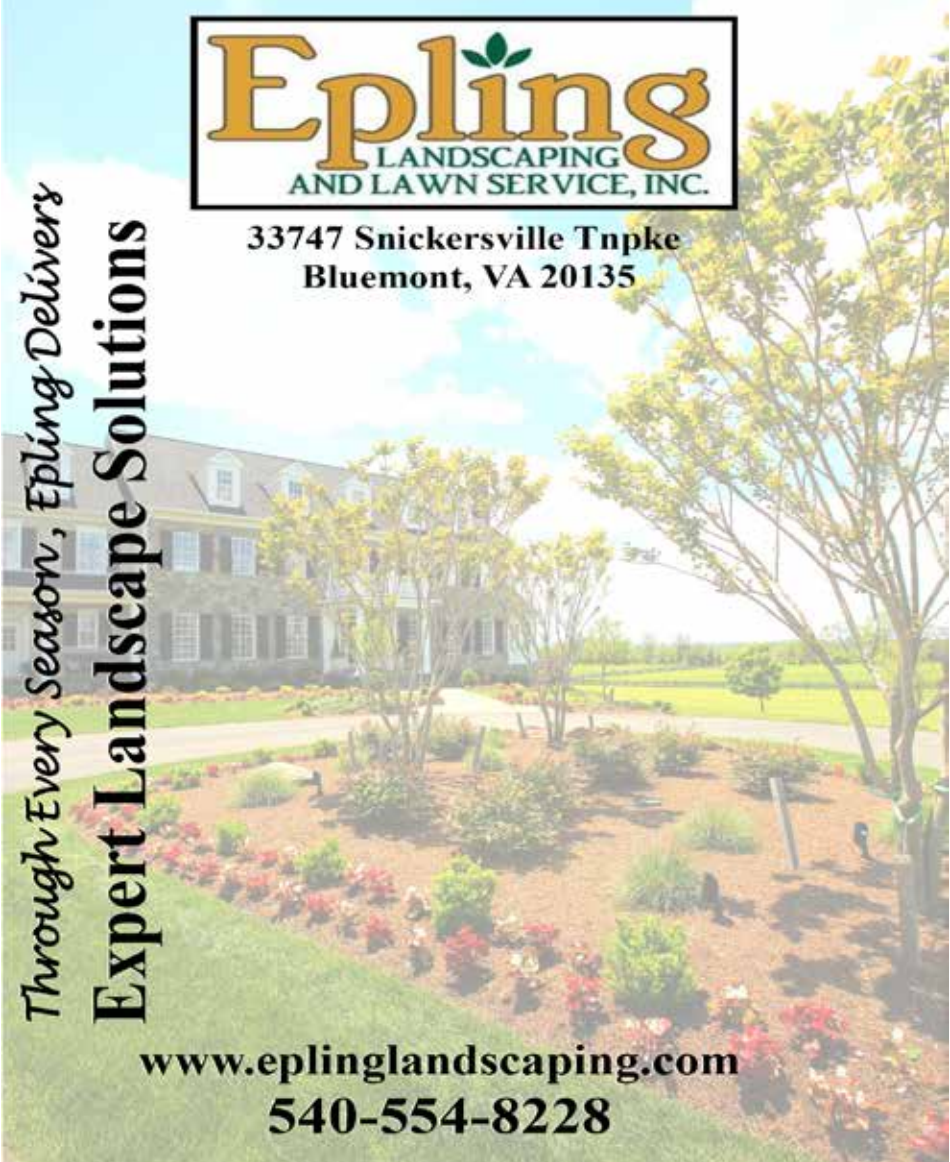
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~ Remembering ~

## Shelby Harris Decker

On Wednesday, Feb. 3, Shelby Harris Decker of Purcellville, loving wife and mother, passed away at the age of 81 in Berryville, Virginia. She courageously battled Alzheimer's disease for 16 years.

Decker was born on August 29, 1939 in Long Island, Virginia and raised in Norfolk and Chesapeake, Virginia. She graduated from Great Bridge High School in Chesapeake in 1958.

She is survived by her husband of 60 years, Robert R. Decker, Sr., and their four children Robert R. Decker, Jr., Laura D. Ward (Richard), Lisa D.

Beatty (Tom), Dana L. Decker, and her four grandchildren Emily Beatty, Annie Beatty, Colin Ward, and Lillian Ward. She is survived by her sister Peggy H. Doxey (Issac) and many nieces and nephews. Decker was preceded in death by her parents Overton Fontaine and Annie Mae Harris, and a sister Juanita H. Weeber.

She was active during her lifetime in

the Catholic Church of St. Francis de Sales in Purcellville. After raising her four children, she worked for the Farm Credit Administration, in McLean, Virginia. She retired in 1996.

Decker had many hobbies, including traveling, painting, crocheting, knitting, and cooking. She loved gatherings with friends and relatives. Lately, she and her husband, enjoyed meeting with his FAA and federal retired friends. She was a devoted mother and grandmother with a beautiful smile and will be missed by all.

The family received friends, and held a funeral mass on Feb. 8, at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Purcellville. In Lieu of flowers, the family has asked for donations to be made to the Alzheimer's Association ([www.act.alz.org](http://www.act.alz.org)), 225 N. Michigan Avenue, Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601 or St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.



### REAL ESTATE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

is a charming breakfast room, a nicely sized laundry room, mudroom and separate half bath.

Upstairs there are three guest rooms, each with a fireplace, deep windows and lots of natural light. Two full baths have been completely renovated with marble tile floors and white marble vanities. The eastern most guest room has a small dressing room with a window seat.

The master suite is privately situated at the western end of the house and has a private staircase, and large "his and hers" walk-in closets. The master bath is tastefully appointed with a soaking tub, marble tiled shower with Barber Wilson fixtures, his and hers custom vanities and a separate WC.

Outside, a generously sized flagstone patio looks onto the recently built 60' x 20' dark bottomed pool, mature perennial gardens and the two ponds beyond.

Just off the back porch is a charming c. 1810 one bedroom stone cottage with fireplace, small kitchenette and bathroom.

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**TIM JON**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

little thereof we may find in that individual carrier).

Speaking only for myself, I always felt welcome here, and wished I could remain a bit longer; however – duty calls... So, of course I made a mental note at the time – in bold Magic Marker – that Church's Store on Watson Road was a cool place to find oneself, and I should return at first, second and third opportunities.

Well, in case you haven't noticed, a lot can happen in 12 years: that's three US Presidential terms, that's your first grader graduating from high school, it's enough time for most iconic little roadside store staff to move on to bigger and better opportunities; as I discovered on my last actual, official visit to Church's Store, a period of a hundred 44 months represents sufficient accumulation of time for the fondly-remembered, iconic little roadside store in question to close its doors for a last time (at least for the general public) and enter the faint, far-off halls of memory.

Why did it close? I usually don't ponder the inevitable, but I can hear my friends asking me about this; my answer would be something like, "to be honest, I'm surprised it had remained open for so long." You can pretty much count on all fingers and toes the number of stand-alone, one-of-a-kind general convenience markets still in existence in

Loudoun County – and this with a population which has been in a state of explosion since the take-off of Dulles Airport; we shop online, or at least patronize the giant, "We sell everything!" warehouse-type businesses to economize on time, energy and personal savings.

And, returning to the factors in the close of Church's Store – I would venture to say that Watson Road (aside from periodic detour traffic in construction season) generally carries local residents, not high-volume numbers of potential new customers: it's a windy, two-lane blacktop requiring utmost attention to the foreground and not much else.

Perhaps a day will arrive when – as I drive by the former site of my treasured memories – I won't even notice the vacant lot or replacement construction in its place; but, as I sit and mull over this very small story in overall local history, I'll still feel welcome in what once was "a cool place to find oneself."

And I'll bet that some of the folks who formerly stopped in there and bought a paper or a pack of bologna or bread, have a similar sensation as they recall, "That place that used to be along the road there, at..." And, now it's not.

Funny thing, though : in an emotional sense, I still feel like those doors are open for commerce and – Gee, I must have been there, just yesterday – maybe the day before. Yup, it's still there - inside. And thanks for the service.

**DR. MIKE**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Parents can also announce that they're leaving the area briefly to send or respond to a text or to connect with someone for work or for other reasons. And if you get a text message from someone, try not to respond right away or in the middle of a conversation with your child.

If you want to take a picture for grandma or grandpa, it's also best if you ask or let your child know that you'd like to take a picture or video to send to their grandparents. By doing these sorts of things, you will be messaging to your children that you are fully present with them relationally, that you are in control of technology and not distracted or consumed by it. Over time, your children will learn to be more present, and to use technology in positive and healthy ways that

serve to compliment a moment or their lives.

Turn off technology. Spending time with your children and teens away from technology is an important part of managing screen and technology time balance. By engaging in other sorts of activities, you'll likely also cut down on disagreements or arguments over technology. The message isn't "turn that off now," which is negative, and usually happens when parents have become upset. More proactively and positively, the message to your children could be "let's go for a walk," or "let's play a board game," or "let's cook a meal together," or "let's do some arts and crafts," etc.

When you're engaging your children in various other activities, you're not saying "no" to technology, but rather "yes" to doing more. If you're more

present as a parent in these fun ways, balance will be something that naturally occurs, rather than something that is forced upon your children by limiting screen time.

With COVID-19 numbers improving, and with spring being right around the corner, we will likely be getting out more, but managing screen time will still be a parenting task. Focusing on quality over quantity and together time will help with healthy and balanced technology use for your children during and after the pandemic.

*Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D. "Dr Mike" is a clinical psychologist in private practice. He can be reached at 703-723-2999, and is located at 44095 Pipeline Plaza, Suite 240, Ashburn.*

**CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ignorant of a client's factual innocence because the commonwealth is sitting on the evidence of his innocence, or information that raises questions about the credibility of a government witness is helpless to save his client from prison or death row.

We know that the innocent have been convicted in Virginia because DNA evidence has allowed us to exclude individuals as suspects in crimes – when the DNA evidence has been preserved.

Arthur Lee Whitfield spent 22 years in prison for the double rape of two women in Norfolk, within the same hour. Both women positively identified him. Whitfield pleaded guilty to one of the charges to get a lesser sentence. The commonwealth had destroyed the DNA. But one serologist had violated lab protocol and saved a sample that exonerated Whitfield, and implicated another prison inmate for the crime.

We must reform a system that provides less information to a person accused of a crime, than a party would get if sued for a \$200 bad debt in civil court.

We must abolish the culture that a criminal prosecution is some sort of sport that is all about winning a conviction, rather than doing justice.

Another bad rule that hurts the defendant arises when a defendant's counsel fails to raise an appealable issue in the trial court, or misses a deadline, through no fault of the defendant, because then that defendant may be barred from arguing what went wrong.

In other words, the objective should be to get at the truth, hear the objections, not play gotcha with the Accused's reputation and freedom.

It should be inconceivable that our society would allow the innocent to be executed.

It is unacceptable that disproportionately persons of color are executed as

compared with white defendants. Have we made such modest progress that we are still "hanging" persons of color?

In Virginia, a capital offense was meted out by a hangman's noose for 300 years.

The first electrocution occurred in 1908.

Earlier this month, on Feb. 3, the Virginia Senate passed a resolution to abolish the death penalty. The House of Delegates agreed a few days later. The Governor has indicated that he will approve the resolution.

This is a significant step forward in the South, but there's more that needs to be done to protect all defendants.

I was instructed when sworn in as a federal prosecutor of the enormous power that had been delegated, that it could destroy an individual's life with a mis-spent word, and was further instructed, in the words of former Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland:

"The [Prosecuting] Attorney is the representative not of an ordinary party to a controversy, but of a sovereignty whose obligation to govern impartially is as compelling as its obligation to govern at all; and whose interest, therefore, in a criminal prosecution is not that it shall win a case, but that justice shall be done. As such, he is in a peculiar and very definite sense the servant of the law, the twofold aim of which is that guilt shall not escape or innocence suffer. He may prosecute with earnestness and vigor – indeed, he should do so. But while he may strike hard blows, he is not at liberty to strike foul ones. It is as much his duty to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction, as it is to use every legitimate means to bring about a just one."

There is a lot of work yet to be done, but ending capital punishment in a Southern State is a really good start.



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**LOUDOUN FIRE CHIEF**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

the Governor's appointed Fire Services Board, and is a board member of the Governors appointed Virginia's Board of Housing and Community Development.

Johnson will continue to advocate legislation to benefit career employees, volunteers, and, most importantly, the civilians that they serve. "My road to this personal accomplishment has been built with dedication, passion, personal commitment, and a lifelong journey of learning," said Johnson. "As president, I remind all fire and EMS leaders in the Commonwealth of Virginia that the VFCA is a

vital resource that will allow us to work as a team to tackle challenges we face in our own communities."

Annually, fire and EMS stakeholder organizations from across the Commonwealth of Virginia meet to discuss not only their specific legislative needs, but the key issues concerning the organizations and the fire service as a whole. These legislative topics vary from the inclusion of automatic residential fire sprinklers, to the Virginia Uniformed State-wide Building Code, to Establishing Workers' Compensation Benefits for COVID-19.

For more information about the VFCA, visit <https://vfca.us>.

**ST. PADDY'S DAY**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

like everything else this year: moderate your expectations, and plan for the kinds of activities your real—or adopted—Irish ancestors enjoyed, especially with children.

Wear green, create a Saint Paddy's Day wreath, whip up shamrock cookies, bake soda bread, prepare an Irish meal.

All you need for shamrock cookies is a recipe for sugar cookies, or a roll of sugar cookie dough from the grocery, plus a cookie cutter. Add green coloring to the dough and lots of green sprinkles. Once they're out of the oven, take a picture and send it to us at [editor@blueridgeleader.com](mailto:editor@blueridgeleader.com).

Now, for your very Irish meal. Nothing says Irish more than corned beef and cabbage with potatoes, baby carrots, and turnips—unless you want to try your hand at Shepherd's Pie. There are countless recipes that will delight your taste buds and tummy. An easier option is a Shepherd's Pie stuffed potato. Follow a basic recipe for beef stew with peas and carrots. Bake russet potatoes in the oven or microwave, scoop out the potato and mash, then fill the empty potato cooked shell with the Shepherd's Pie stew and top it off with the mashed potatoes. Pop them in the oven until golden brown. Fun and yummy.

Plan an Irish Games Day. Treat your kids to a puppet show with leprechauns, set up a coin toss with a black pot and gold coins, or play a classic bingo game with a Saint Patrick's Day theme. Most versions, available online, include shamrocks, rainbows, pots of gold and more in assorted colors. Or go all in with Gaelic games.

Most of all, don't forget Irish music: The Dubliners, Sinead O'Connor, U2, Enya, The Clancy Brothers, and the incomparable Colm Wilkinson will make your Saint Patrick's Day complete.

**LCPS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

students upon arrival. LCPS also has installed thermal cameras at the most-used entrance to each school. These cameras can scan up to 45 individuals per second, and are set to identify any person with a temperature at or exceeding 100.4 degrees.

Quarantine is a critical component in the school district's commitment to comply with CDC, state, and local guidelines. To prevent COVID-19 transmission, any students or staff members who have been in close contact with a person diagnosed with coronavirus is expected to comply with quarantine guidelines.

Vaccinations for teachers and school staff are not part of the mitigation equation. As LCPS Interim Superintendent Scott Ziegler wrote to parents, "I want to stress that being vaccinated is not a prerequisite

for student and staff taking part in hybrid learning."

**Concerns going forward**

Parents who prefer to have their children maintain 100 percent distance learning will continue with that program through the end of the year—but many of them continue to have concerns about its implementation: Why aren't the computer cameras required to be on? Why have there been no efforts to curb or address widespread cheating among those at home? What are the definitive plans for next year?

Clearly, the Loudoun County parents' and students' experiences of the past year—and for the foreseeable future—will inform thinking about teaching, learning, and school administration for years to come. For now, though, the big question for everyone is, What's next?

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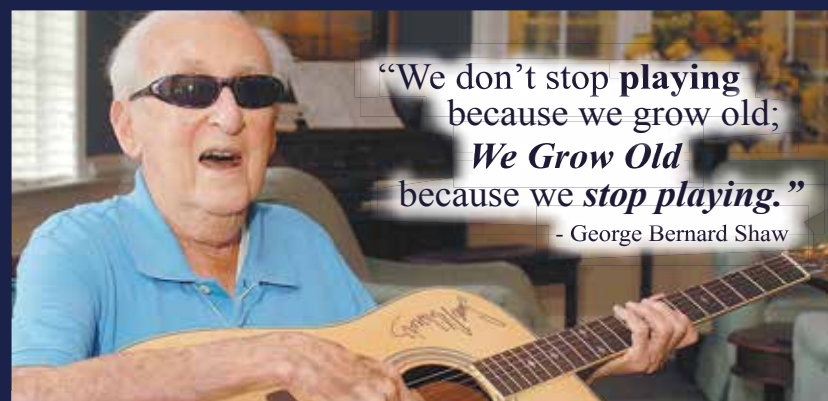
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**BIRDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

theme Birds, Birds, Birds. See the AiM's website for deadlines and other details at [www.TheArtistsInMiddleburg.org](http://www.TheArtistsInMiddleburg.org). The website notes that donations are appreciated.

Juried by internationally-celebrated artist Robin Hill, the show will feature some of the most wonderful avian works of art you will ever see.

Hill, is well-known in Middleburg. His work was heavily influenced by what were known as "walkabouts" in his native country of Australia, and his early experiences as a farmhand. His bird paintings are magnificent, legendary, and both beautifully decorative and scientific in nature. For more information on Hill, see Robin Hill Artist & Naturalist on the web at [www.RobinHillArtist.com](http://www.RobinHillArtist.com).

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**VINEYARD SQUARE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Explained Hankins, “A site plan was approved for Vineyard Square in February 2016, and would have been valid for five years. And, if you don’t commence construction within those five years, so it expired this week [Feb. 16, 2021].

“The plan would become void and you would have to recommence the process,” she said. “The General Assembly in 2020, at a Special Session, passed remedial legislation, to provide relief for people because of COVID, and extended by state law, the expiration dates of plans that were valid as of July 1, 2020. And the Vineyard Square application was valid as of July 1, 2020. So that’s all I can say for now.”

However, Hankins went on to say that there is a “legal argument that allows the Town to take a different position that the remedial legislation does not have the effect of extending this particular site plan, and so I need to consult with Town Council, to understand what position they would like the Town to take. It won’t matter unless some kind of action is requested pursuant to the site plan by the property owner. But

we should be prepared for that.”

Council Member and Council liaison to the Planning Commission, Stan Milan, asked Hankins “Why was this not explained to the Council months ago, when I have been asking about the status on this? And several other people have been asking as well.” Hankins did not answer.

Milan noted that Council was under the assumption that the Vineyard Square project would expire on Feb. 16, 2021, and “now you are saying in July 2022.”

Hankins replied, “right.” Milan continued, “You said there would have to be significant progress on the project to move forward. I asked you what is significant, and nothing has been significant with this project since 2016.”

Hankins again pointed out that the General Assembly passed a law that “says the validity of your site plan is extended even if you don’t take significant steps in getting it developed.” Hankins said the site plan “will now be valid until July 1, 2022, and then it will expire if it has not been acted upon.”

Chair of the Planning Commission Nedim Ogelman reminded Hankins that the new law is subject to legal

interpretation. “So, you said that the Town might argue whether that state decision is applicable?” he asked.

Hankins let the Planning Commissioners know that the legislation hasn’t even taken effect yet, and will not take effect until March 1, 2021. “Yes, in fact,” said Hankins, “the legislation that accomplished this was adopted in the 2020 General Assembly, but the effective date of the legislation was made effective March 1, 2021. In fact, so it hasn’t come into effect yet, and the site plan expired this week [Feb. 16]. So, I think there’s a real case to be made that this legislation does not operate to extend the validity of this particular site plan.

“However, I can tell you that other jurisdictions who have similar circumstances, may choose to handle that differently. I am telling you, there is a legal issue there, and the Town will have to take a position,” said Hankins.

Again, Milan asked why the Town Council wasn’t made aware of this several months ago, when “we were inquiring about the status of Vineyard Square? The Town should have been made aware of this to prepare for some defense to take care of the situ-

ation. We have been asking about this forever.” He did not receive an answer.

Ogelman said, “I hear you saying at this point, in fact there is a statute, that has not gone into effect, not enacted, and there are a series of Certificate of Design Approvals that have expired. So, today, you could say, by the fact that the other statute that has not yet been enacted, and is going to be enacted in March – that the Certificate of Design Approvals have expired, period.”

Hankins replied, “yeah.” Ogelman said, “As of today the site plan has expired, and there is no relief as of today, since the other legislation hasn’t been enacted.”

Hankins answered, “As of today, the site plan is expired ... that’s right.”

Don Dooley, the new Director of Planning and Economic Development reaffirmed, “If the project has expired, it’s done.”

Ogelman said, “This is and has been an issue of high interest for the citizens of our Town, so I will say echoing Stan’s raising of this issue ... to staff, we would like to be kept informed of what is happening with this issue. We want to know what is going on.

**HOUSTON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6**

strong activity in conservation easements. That’s super.

**Mountainsides**

The new Comprehensive Plan says that “Mountainsides...are a distinctive feature of the County’s scenic beauty” and calls them “scenic viewsheds” that frame our countryside. Despite those affirmations, mountainsides now face an existential threat, illuminated by a preliminary inquiry for building a camp on the slopes. What could happen? Look at the FEMA site south of Bluemont. It expanded several years ago, creating an obscene scar on the Blue Ridge. Subdivisions would be just as bad, and a splatter of wineries and breweries on the mountains would be dreadful.

I’ve heard County planners and zoning stakeholders claim that the mountainsides are protected by the Mountainside Development Overlay District (MDOD)

within the Zoning Ordinance. They are flat wrong and here’s why: The basic premise of the MDOD is “to regulate land use on the mountainsides” and to avoid “substantial damage.” Thus, development is hunky-dory if it’s regulated, and damage is swell as long as it’s not substantial. Bah! Any use that’s permitted in western Loudoun is permitted on the slopes by right (meaning with no oversight by key county bodies.) It also permits subdivisions. Horror! Clearing for roads and structures is permitted, and in most cases another acre or more can also be cleared. So, the MDOD contemplates that the mountains can be developed. Bad! Bad! Bad!

The MDOD’s basic premise needs to be flipped 180 degrees. Instead of “regulating” development, its purpose should be to restrict development and to preserve the slopes and their tree cover. Only single-family housing should be allowed, with

a density of perhaps 40 acres per house. All structures should be required to blend in with their surroundings. Without these changes, development on the mountainsides is a bomb waiting to explode.

**ZOR**

The Zoning Ordinance Rewrite is proceeding, with plentiful monographs from consultants. Some have been on-target, while others appear to be mainly academic musings. The road ahead is long and we face a fundamental problem: The zoning code will assuredly focus on “managing growth.” Instead, I’d love to see it emphasizing the goal of stopping growth, or even making people leave. Chuckle, chuckle. At least the new ordinance should abandon the existing “by right” permissiveness, and require large projects to get specific approval.

It would be a sea-change for any planning staff to plan on keeping the status

quo, though.

Public outreach sessions are upcoming. Please participate. Find out what’s being proposed by going to <https://www.loudoun.gov/5274/Zoning-Ordinance-Rewrite>. Read carefully, think about unintended consequences and be cynical.

**ZOC**

The Zoning Ordinance Committee’s central duty is providing input to Staff during the zoning rewrite. To me, that implies that Staff has a reciprocal duty to give some importance to comments from ZOC. However, a senior staffer once said that comments from ZOC would be given the same importance as those from others. I took that as minimizing ZOC’s role.

Instead, Staff and ZOC should work collaboratively, with ZOC giving its thoughts to Staff earlier in the process as well as reviewing drafts of text. Ultimately, though, Staff writes the final document. If it disagrees with something, ZOC may comment to the Planning Commission (to which ZOC reports).

ZOC itself has not yet settled into a good working order.

**The Weather**

The forecast for early March is encouraging. May our days be sunny. And myself, less grouchy.

*Charles Houston developed office buildings for an Atlanta-based firm. He lives in Paeonian Springs.*

**HAMILTON MERCHANTILE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

plements, local honey, organic wines, beer, chips, nuts, seeds, chocolate, gluten free breads and baking supplies, and fresh local meats.

“We are very excited about continuing the legacy of the Mercantile as a source of healthy food for the community,” said Meredith. “It’s been wonderful to work with Sue through the transition, and she’s been so great in

helping us learn the ropes and introducing us to the customers.”

Expect the Browns and Whitehurst to not only maintain that expansive inventory but also grow it with produce and meats from the Browns’ Meadowview Farmstead. And, while Abbie whips up new brews, count on her to also bring King Street Coffee’s biggest hits with her. Just wait ‘til you taste her vegan cinnamon rolls,

scones, and breakfast empanadas.

“We think the coffee bar will add a new and exciting element to the business and a positive thing for the community,” said Meredith.

The Hamilton Mercantile is located at 341 East Colonial Highway in Hamilton and their number is 540-338-7080. Parking for cars and bicycles is available onsite. Hours: 10-6 and open seven days a week.





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