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MAY 2021

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The Solar Dilemma: County leaders to fast-track policies on solar installations

BY LAURA LONGLEY

Virginia is now fourth in the nation in solar power installations. Only California, Texas, and Florida rank higher. Blame the pandemic, but Loudoun County government and community leaders agree it's past time for the County to create solar policies.

There's only one problem: The County is in the middle of a major review and rewrite of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances.

But on April 20, at the

Board of Supervisors business meeting, Vice-Chair Koran T. Saines (D-Sterling) came up with a proposal—to incorporate regulations for large solar arrays into the County's current zoning ordinance rewrite without slowing down that process.

He also recommended that the Board direct County staff to move forward with "an interim process and policy to address solar farms inquiries from our property owners, and our businesses until such time as a zoning ordinance and other ap-

plicable ordinances can be amended."

Saines' motion received the hearty approval of seven of Loudoun's nine supervisors.

The two dissenting Supervisors—Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) and Tony Buffington (R-Blue Ridge), who represent rural Loudoun—said an all-County study approach wouldn't work for western Loudoun.

Their objections reflected their concerns for the agricultural and tourism economy that the County's

Rural Economic Development Council has spent the past 20 years creating, with the full participation of the County's farmers.

"I have big, serious concerns because I think this will eventually end or have serious repercussions, not just on the visibility of what we know as western Loudoun, but also on the rural economy and everything we've been doing and have worked so hard to achieve," Kershner said.

"It could very well cause

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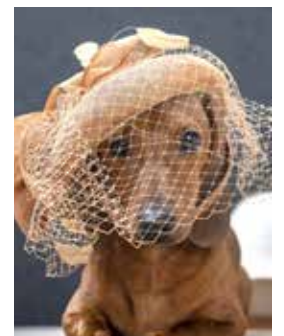
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VOTED BEST OF LOUDOUN

Cicada fashion ... get ready ... we are

BY ANDREA GAINES

Everyone knows they are down there. And, as temperatures climb, they will be climbing out.



Are you ready for them? We are. With cicada fashion advice.

Arming ourselves with everything from old wedding veils, to 99-cent hairnets, to the piled up old sheets and tablecloths we were about to throw away, we are ready.

All the tools you need are right there in

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Grewe lectures PC based on anonymous sources; Commission members push back: Let's not go political, let's just do our work

BY VALERIE CURY

At the end of an almost four-hour meeting, the Purcellville Planning Commissioners heard comments and reflections from Town Council Member Joel Grewe, who was invited to speak by Vice Chair Ed Neham at the commission's April 15 meeting.

Grewe was there to reiterate his comments at the Town Council meeting two

days prior.

He said what he had to say was "an amalgamation of feedback; there are not specific emails I can forward ... the conversations were "phone calls or in person," of about a dozen people. He said he was not at liberty to say whom, however. But he said the people said communicating with the Planning Commission would be pointless, or they feared retaliation.

He then said these residents of the Town have concerns about the Planning Commission's current work – specifically, "the historic overlay district, and [the idea of] lowering the height limit in the C-4 District."

Grewe said that these citizens ... "had concerns" ... with Commissioners "routinely interrupting people when they are

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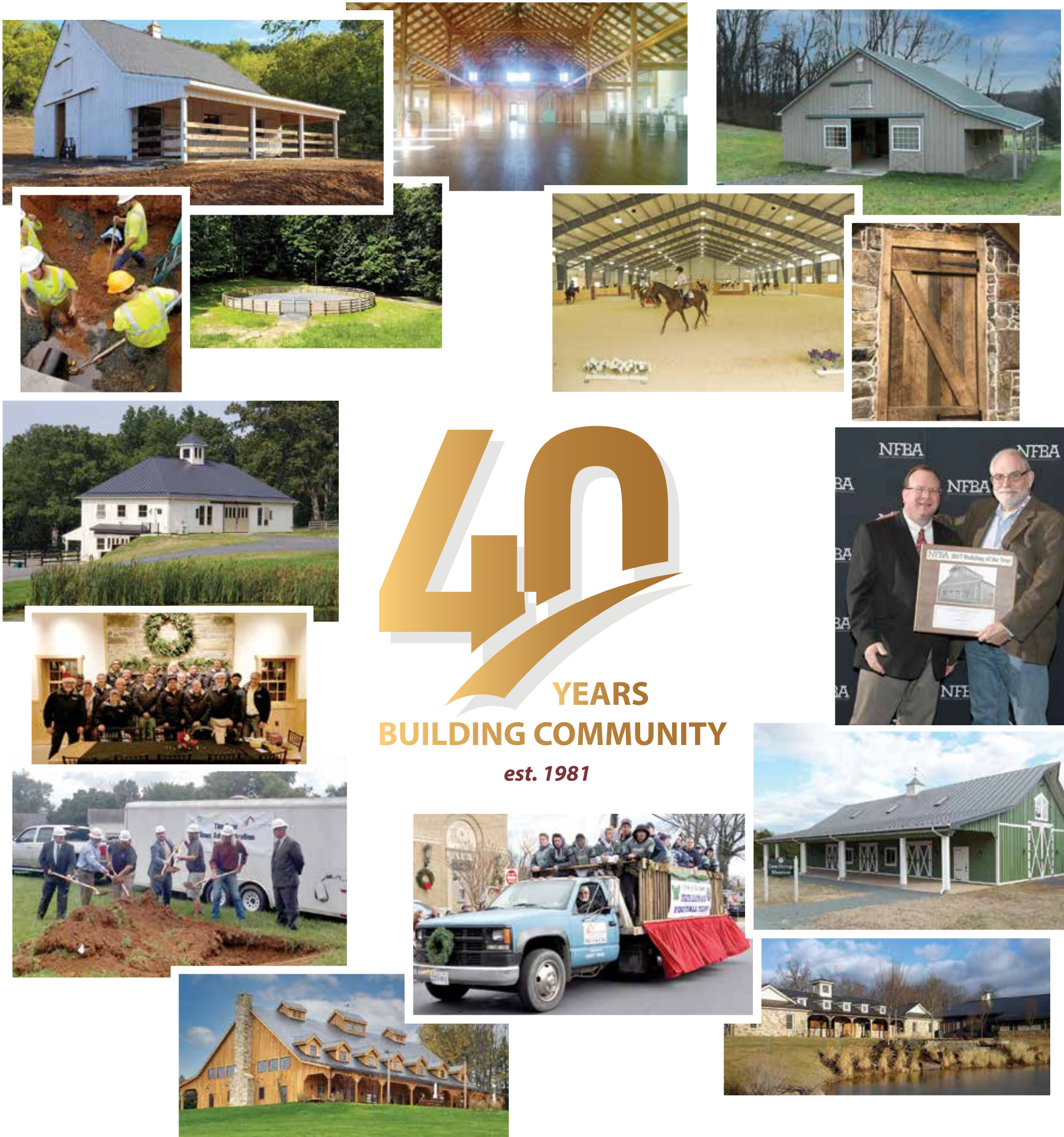
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And how does your garden grow...? How do you want it to grow? Or don't you know?

BY LAURA LONGLEY

Then it may be time invest in the knowledge and skills of an expert landscape designer.

Ah, were those dollar signs flashing before your eyes? Take a deep breath. While many nurseries and landscape firms focus on big contracts—corporate campuses, government facilities, large private estates—there are companies that can refer you to designers who are happy to help you with that patch of soil around your patio or the three acres around your home.

One of western Loudoun's favorite nurseries is Abernethy & Spencer, located in the village of Lincoln two miles south of Purcellville. David Lohmann, owner of Abernethy, keeps a list on his website of several designers he knows do superior work. Among them is Holly McCrann Raymond, best known for her design work with homeowners. She's been working with Abernethy & Spencer for more than 10 years.

As a landscape design consultant and master gardener, Holly will help clients from the time they sign a deed for a brand new house with little landscaping or for a historic one with old plantings that have seen better days.

With our planting season shifting into full gear, Holly is generously sharing valuable advice here to meet a va-

riety of challenges:

If you're moving into a new house, don't put pathways in right away. See how you go from the house to the yard, the garage to the front door. Consider how you use the property, and that means avoiding the temptation of looking at the house and saying, "There should be a beautiful walkway here."

Think about how you want a larger property to look in three years. Avoid the temptation to put in shrubs around the foundation and leave the rest of the grounds bare.

If you need a privacy screen, put it in right away.

Plant only native species: right plant, right place.

Temper your expectation for plants' growth. They need time and space to sleep, creep, and grow.

"Because people are afraid that a landscape designer will run up their costs," Holly explains, "I've created a smaller offering for the reticent homeowner who'd like



her affiliated nursery, basing her costs on the estimates for plants and labor.

With wise counsel, it's possible to save money on your landscape over the long haul.

Remember, the sticker price on that pretty fruit tree

to get started with a new plan or a renovation while watching the budget. It's what I call a 'Walk and Talk.' I spend an hour to an hour and a half with the property owners discussing their dreams and how to realize them. Or, as is often the case, I'll suggest optional plantings that might be more affordable or better suited to our soil and climate.

"I'll also help people learn how to amend the soil, prune properly, and nourish stressed plants, shrubs and trees. If I see a tree that may be suffering from mold or root rot, I'll recommend local arborists to treat it professionally." Like other landscape designers, she also works with

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LVHS's Tadepalli and Willis awarded National Honor Society scholarship

The National Honor Society has announced that Arya Tadepalli and Julie Willis, seniors at Loudoun Valley High School and members of NHS, have been selected NHS Scholarship semifinalists.

Tadepalli and Willis were chosen from nearly 10,000 applicants and will each receive a \$3,200 scholarship toward higher education.

Since 1946, more than \$19 million in scholarships have been awarded to outstanding NHS senior members to support college access and student success. The scholarship program is supported by the parent organization of NHS, the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

In the 100 years since NHS was founded in 1921, members have been making a difference in their schools and communities. The NHS Scholarship is NASSP's way of recognizing the most exceptional of these student leaders.

Recipients are chosen based on their demonstrated work to support the four pillars of NHS: scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

According to her NHS advisers, Heidi Trude and Taylour Hudson, "Arya is an asset to the Loudoun Valley High School NHS chapter and the LVHS community. As the mentorship chair, Arya works closely with our tutoring program to provide opportunities for

students to support each other, and has been instrumental in coming up with ways for NHS members to support fellow students in this very challenging year. We are thrilled to see Arya recognized for all her service to the Valley community!"



Julie Willis



Arya Tadepalli

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The Grove Theatre: Everything's goin' their way...!

BY LAURA LONGLEY

It's been a year of mighty big challenges for all of our high school students, but things are looking up, especially for Woodgrove High School's theater students, who are performing the musical Oklahoma! this month.

First, they have theater teacher Addie Schafer Benko to thank for her grant-writing talents in landing Wolf Trap funding for technical resources and for striking up partnerships with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and Virginia Piedmont Heritage Foundation. The grant also is helping launch a Pop Up Purcellville museum—a socially distanced walk-in museum to visit on your way to your seat.

Speaking of seats—more of them: They might be the best news of all. On April 19, you could hear the bravos! all across the Commonwealth as Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) responded to parents' petitions and the pleas of arts education organizations to expand capacity limits at school arts performances such as musicals and plays. Previously, they'd been categorized as social gatherings with restricted attendance.

"I've heard a lot of feedback from parents and students that these events

should be treated the same as athletic events, and I agree," said Northam. "So we'll increase the number of people to 100 indoors or 30 percent of that venue's capacity. If it's outdoors, it will increase to 500 people or 30 percent of capacity."

That's a significant and encouraging jump. Woodgrove's Benko explains, "Basically, before the governor's decision, the size of audiences and participants for a concert or play could be 50 people total inside, including cast and crew, and a 20-person audience. You could have 100 total outside. But for bigger programs and schools, with cast sizes bigger than 50, their performances were canceled outright. We advocated as a community to get the same opportunity as athletics with their teams and spectators, and we succeeded in gaining parity."

For Woodgrove's four live and two streaming performances of Oklahoma!, The Grove Theatre company can now welcome more theatergoers to Lovettsville's WeatherLea Farm, the rural venue they chose to capture the musical's sense of place in the "Oklahoma and Indian Territories." The live shows can have a 100-person audience socially distanced in an outdoor arena

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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: New Jerusalem Lutheran Church

BY TIM JON

Tradition, steadfastness, physical and spiritual comfort, moral strength, reverence, timelessness: these are some of the first qualities that come to mind (mine, anyway) whenever I pass a familiar, long-standing place of worship. I found all of the above and more on my last visit to the grounds of the New Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Lovettsville; the red-brick building seems ready to stand up to any tests of time within reasonable imagination, and its cross-topped spire reaches out to observers from afar as it extends skyward.

I recall a sense of reassurance from these images: the epic scale of construction, the stained glass, and the bedrock-solidity – and my most distant memories provide similar feelings; having grown up in a small farming community in South-central Minnesota, it should come as no surprise that my family attended a local Lutheran Church – which enjoyed a massive congregation – including many of my childhood chums – who in turn became lifelong friends.

The theme of longevity certainly fig-



JON

ures into the extended history of the New Jerusalem in Lovettsville; its formation pre-dates the American Revolution, and the adjacent churchyard includes gravestones indicating burial of some of the soldiers from our country's fight for independence. The present-day sanctuary heard its first service shortly after the American Civil War – in 1869



– and the familiar bell-tower added its classic silhouette in 1903. Originally a German-speaking congregation, the services continued in that language for about 75 years – from the Church's inception until around 1830 (initially in a log building, then a stone church prior to the present-day facilities). That's cover-

ing some ground in the scale of time, but considering Eternity, who's counting?

Now, back to today's page of writing: even in Northern Virginia – a region featuring a rich array of historic landmarks – the well-known facade of the New Jerusalem Lutheran Church can boast of a prominent place in the collective memory of its neighboring citizens. And digging much further back in time and wonder, we recall that the Holy Bible speaks of the certainty of finding strength in the Lord; I would add that one could rest assured upon some of that support from a brief visit and walk about the grounds of this local place of worship – just South of the Town often referred to as the 'German Settlement,' off Berlin Turnpike along

Lutheran Church Road. A sense of great power – to my finding pervades the place – even if only in the residual energy of the teams of builders (over the decades, even centuries), their massive materials and myriad tools used in the careful placement of each piece in this spiritual site.

So – one could ask, "Does the visitor feel these sensations as a result of a connection to the divine, or is it just the imagination – wishful thinking?" To me, this question, in itself, speaks of a gap in understanding; it is all one. The sacred is inherent at the cellular and molecular levels – prior to the atom's existence and after its obliteration. I and I. Or – Eye and Eye.

Well, OK: Let's call in some help on this from our friends. I can summon reference to my viewpoint in modern culture: just about anything written by Dr Seuss, George Harrison's penning the song "Within You, Without You", the verbal – and non-verbal – chemistry shared by the comedians Carol Burnett, Tim Conway and Harvey Korman, Dylan Thomas' inference of 'church-bells of the spirit' in A Child's Christmas in Wales, the wonderful imagination of Walt Disney, and the more recent pop song by U2 – giving clues in its title – "One"; lastly, the mutual joy created in our laughter at one of those Latter-day Saints – any circus clown (thanks, friends); I believe we enjoy the Lord's approval – and participation – in each of these examples.

Even further: The Eternal exists in

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The art of leadership

BY SAMUEL MOORE-SOBEL

As promised, I'm back this month with more thoughts about leadership.

I just finished the book *How to Lead* by David Rubenstein. The author is a leader – a lawyer turned entrepreneur who founded the private equity firm, The Carlyle Group. "Sometimes lightning strikes for those who take chances," he writes.



MOORE-SOBEL

In his book, Rubenstein interviews leaders across professions, including business, government, entertainment, and the arts. Reading about this assortment of leaders at the

top of their fields is a fascinating journey. Seeing the commonalities between what they cite as contributing to their success is especially insightful.

I was struck by a number of key take-aways. First is the role of risk-taking in a leader's success. Whether climbing the corporate ladder or striking out on their own, nearly all of those interviewed took calculated risks in their careers. Getting the timing right is also important. "I read that entrepreneurs tend to start their companies by the age of thirty-seven," Rubenstein writes, "and after that age individuals are much less likely to start companies."

Second, being a great leader doesn't

require exhibiting strong leadership skills from a young age. "You have to have some innate skills, but it [leadership] can certainly be learned," Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google/Alphabet said. He cited the importance of specializing and being exemplary in one area. "I don't think it matters where you start, but you need to be incredibly good at that one thing and then broaden your skills," Schmidt said. After that, there is no limit to what can be achieved. "Discipline, hard work, and loving what you do will get you very far."

A desire to keep learning and growing is also required for a leader. "I have always had the viewpoint that every sit-

uation is a learning opportunity," Ginni Rommetty, former Chairman, President and CEO of IBM said. She cites this as an important quality she looks for in hiring potential candidates. "When we hire, we look for a propensity to learn," she said. After all, no matter how far you travel in life, there is always more to learn.

I was also struck by the importance of remaining accessible to the people you are leading, even in senior positions at large companies. The bigger the company, the more likely it is for employees to feel disconnected and unknown. Indra Nooyi, former Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, tried to mitigate this effect

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— Ask Dr. Mike —

By Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D.

The good, the bad and the ugly of competitive youth sports

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

As a psychologist, I frequently work with children and teens involved in competitive team sports, and while there are certainly advantages to being a great athlete, there can also be a number of challenges.



The Good

The positives of youth sports are manifold. Research studies have shown that highly athletic children and teens do better academically, socially, and emotionally, and are more physically fit when compared to those who do not participate in competitive organized sports.

According to Niko Eckart, Founder and Technical Director of Virginia Revolution Soccer Club in Loudoun County (<https://varevolutionsoccer.com/>), "Team sports are a great source of confidence building, character development and social inter-

action. All of these traits are important to instill in children at a young age. We at Virginia Revolution Soccer Club truly believe in exposing children to the positive aspects of team sports at an early age."

The research supports Eckart's experience. Competitive high school athletes display greater self-confidence and self-respect, possess significantly more leadership skills, graduate at higher rates, and actually end up earning more money later in life than their non-athletic peers.

One study found that former competitive high school athletes earn somewhere in the ballpark (pardon the pun) of 5 to 15 percent more across their careers, than students who did not participate in organized sports. That study did not find higher earnings for students later in life for any other extracurricular

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According to Purcellville Mayor Kwasi Fraser: 'Purcellville is in a great place with glasses prepared to be filled.'

In late April, the Blue Ridge Leader interviewed Purcellville Mayor Kwasi Fraser and here's what he had to say about Purcellville's future and its extraordinary promise.

BRL: What's next on moving the Town's budget towards greater sustainability?

Fraser: Well, we have accomplished a lot over the past six years to achieve fiscal sustainability. We have lowered our overall debt from over \$60 million to \$53 million. We have restructured and refinanced our Utility Enterprise Debt to insulate our citizens and businesses from significant debt payment increases, all while maintaining our stellar

credit rating.

A few years ago, a consultant the Town hired told us that we needed to raise our sewer and water rates by nine percent each to be structurally balanced.

A few members of the Town Council characterized our Town as being at the edge of some "fiscal cliff." I characterized the advice to raise water and sewer rates by nine percent as the "mythical 9 percent," because I know our calculations for Capital Improvement Project funding lack precision.

We made the right call by not taking the recommendation of the nine percent in water and nine percent in sewer increases, and three years later we are being told we need only three percent in water and five percent in sewer increases.

Further, we were able to engage the USDA to pursue 40-year 2.125 percent loans for CIP projects. We are now in a better position financially than we were



six short years ago. The recent restructuring of our debt bought us time to continue to pursue initiatives to generate revenue to offset utility rate increases, thus easing the burden on our citizens. Furthermore, the terms of the restructur-

ing carry no penalties for prepayment.

Looking ahead, we will continue to pursue initiatives to monetize our assets to lessen our reliance on taxes and fees from our residents.

It's key to note what we are accomplishing with our asset monetization strategy. Just from having fiber optics placed in a few miles of our right-of-ways, we are generating over \$30k per year, with that being increased to \$48k in the coming year.

We are in the final stages of negotiating a deal to obtain net revenues of over \$700k from a nutrient credits and reforestation project on our Aberdeen property. Aberdeen is an example of how a community should approach preservation. No community should ever give away its assets in the name of preservation and for a front page headline, and not receive any monetary value for it. As we are showing, it is possible to monetize and preserve

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Charlie Houston's Greatest Hits

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

OPINION

My Op-Eds have almost always been about protecting western Loudoun County, often taking a circuitous route to make my points. What if all the columns were distilled to their land-use essence? Have I been right?

2017

May: A survey says 69 percent of Loudoun citizens think that too much growth, and too much traffic are our biggest problems.

June: The county belongs to its people, who can say enough growth and sprawl.

July: The phenomenon of induced demand says that when new roads are built, they quickly fill up and generally spur even more development and traffic.

August: Some landowners resist more protective zoning by making the claim of a "property right" to make every red cent they can, and to heck with others. That's bogus since no one has unfettered use of their property thanks to existing zoning.

September: Property taxes are too high. Reckless spending by the school system is the culprit.

October: Could affordable housing cause problems with densities?

November: Developers want to fill the entire county with new houses.

December: I pen a nightmarish vision of Loudoun in 2050, after years of unchecked growth.

2018

January: Loudoun shouldn't chase the humongous Amazon HQ2 deal, which would change the county's character for the worse.

February: The Planning Commission recommended to the Board of Supervisors that there be 18,000 new houses in the transition zone between east and west. Supervisor Matt Letourneau stopped it with one question, "What planet are you from?"

March: An allegory highlights the beauty of western Loudoun.

April: Conservation easements can be better than selling out.

May: The new Comprehensive Plan envisions 7,500 new houses in western Loudoun. Through 2040, these would cost taxpayers over \$500 million. Developers would make over \$800 million profit.

June: Envision Loudoun was an

oily prelude to a new Comp Plan. Public comment was negative, but developers on the had the final say.

July: I sent to Amazon's Jeff Bezos, saying stay away, our roads were clogged, our taxes were high and citizens didn't want the project.

August: Land trusts, which hold conservation easements, need to reinvent themselves to be more aggressive.

September: Development forces out-gun conservationists, but the 2019 Board of Supervisors election holds hope.

October: Western Loudoun is full of beauty and appeals to all the senses: Sight, smell, touch, taste, sound.

November: The county's latest survey showed that 87% of our citizens said that growth and traffic were our biggest problems.

December: The Planning Commission at the time was a den of development devilry. Thankfully, the Board was not buying what they were selling.

2019

January: The Envision Loudoun pig continues to root in the

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Are you prepared for a financial emergency?

Preparing for a planned or unplanned life event during these challenging times may beg the question: "What's the biggest threat to my financial stability?" Job loss likely comes to mind, perhaps followed by a serious illness or a natural disaster. But, lack of cash flow should make the list too.



RICHARD RICCI

Consider cash flow and liquidity management a tool, not a goal: Much more than tracking your income and spending, liquidity management is also about planning for unexpected cash needs. Without proper planning for an emergency, you might have to dip into cash reserves or liquidate a long-term investment which could potentially disrupt your long-term investment plans. For example, retirement account assets may be subject to tax penalties* for taking non-qualified distributions prior to retirement, or you may be liquidating your investments at a low point in the market. You might do better keeping those assets invested to potentially generate a long-term return thereby keeping your overall wealth strategy intact.

It's important to keep in mind that cash flow and liquidity management planning is complementary to investment planning. Not only does cash flow and liquidity management allow you the flexibility to access money in the event of an emergency, it's a defensive tool to help ensure your investment plan is well positioned and not disrupted.

Here are three steps you should consider as part of a cash flow and liquidity management plan to help protect your loved ones and keep a natural disaster from becoming a financial catastrophe.

Set up an emergency account: In addition to accounts where you currently keep cash assets (including checking, savings, certificates of deposit (CDs), money markets, or other cash alternatives), fund an emergency account as part of your cash flow and liquidity strategy to help protect all your assets. Set aside enough to cover three to six months of expenses (the right amount for you will depend on your risk tolerance). Keep cash on hand in case your area loses power and ATMs are out of commission.

Review your short-term and longer-term payment needs: Understanding when you will need to draw on your money is key to an effective plan. Establish a strategy to cover your day-to-day expenses for funds you will need to access immediately, such as for food, clothing, medical, and transportation expenses. Your cash for short-term expenses should be very accessible, perhaps in a checking or savings account.

For longer-term expenses that reoccur on a regular basis, such as property taxes, you may wish to consider a less liquid investment, such as a CD. This type of investment typically offers a slightly higher return than a regular checking or savings account and you can manage the payout schedule to around the same time you will need the money. Generally, CDs may not be withdrawn prior to maturity. CDs are FDIC insured up to \$250,000 per depositor per insured depository institution for each account ownership category. There are other more sophisticated solutions available where appropriate to help you meet your cash flow and liquidity needs, and we suggest you discuss these with your financial advisor.

Establish a line of credit for ready access to cash, and if used, pay the funds back with an appropriate source when the timing is right: Borrowing against non-retirement investments or other approaches can provide for short-term cash needs if your emergency fund does not stretch to meet all your expenses. These strategies help prevent disruption to your long-term investment plan and can help keep you on track toward your investment goals.

A line of credit can also help you avoid dipping into retirement accounts too early. Depending on your situation and the type of retirement account, it may expose you to potential tax consequences*.

Be aware, costs and risks are associated with any borrowing decision, so it is important for you to seek good, objective guidance. Your financial advisor can help you begin the process of determining what type of line of credit option is appropriate for you.

Life brings expected and unexpected events—an important part of every investment plan is identifying where to access cash when you need it. Talk with your financial advisor about managing your cash flow and liquidity needs.

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Planning Commission meeting reflects rivalries in Town government — Rift over RFP

BY VALERIE CURY

Local politics can rival the shenanigans sometimes seen in Washington, D.C.

The first hour and a half of Purcellville's April 1 Planning Commission meeting might be a good example of that, as Commissioners, and Town staff – including the Town Manager and Town Attorney – discussed how much involvement the commission would have in lining up the Town's Zoning Ordinance with the new Comprehensive Plan.

The Town's draft Request for Proposal to consultants for help in the rewrite seemed to cut the Planning Commission out until the end of the process.

The RFP process is normally pretty routine. A new Town Comp Plan is passed, as was done in 2020. An RFP is sent out to hire a consultant when the Planning Commission has complet-

ed its scope of work, to assist it in updating the ZO.

But, there is a lot at stake in this ZO rewrite, and the draft RFP seemed to leave the initial rewrite to the staff and the consultant.

It seems that some Purcellville politicians and staff who don't like the managed growth model championed by Mayor Kwasi Fraser and others on Council see the ZO RFP process as a way to slow down Fraser and the citizens' march towards more managed growth.

Why is the Zoning Ordinance so important?

The ZO is a way for towns such as Purcellville to manage growth, and to guide businesses and residents on what they are permitted to do with their property.

A Comprehensive Plan sets the framework – residential here, businesses there, schools, and public buildings, and parks and roads, here

and there.

The ZO fills in the details. How many houses in a particular area, how many stories, what uses go where, how far apart houses and business should be, and how close to the sidewalks, etc.

This includes identifying areas, and outlining what can and can't be built, how large structures should be, all reflecting the intent of the Comprehensive Plan, based on citizen feedback.

The process is arduous, detailed, and necessary; because without it, a bar ends up next to a school, or a busy road that is not safe to cross, or a noisy place next to a residence ... and no one is happy.

RFP draft for consultant Town staff approached the Planning Commission to start the RFP process – the consultant part of this whole thing – as early as August 2020, and two more times that year – then again in this February.

At the time, the Planning Commission was waiting for the finished

Comprehensive Plan – which took the consultant over seven months to deliver. Members of the Commission felt it was too early to hire a consultant at that time, since they were working on a gap analysis – finding the differences in the old ZO versus the new Comp Plan. They were also working on a project plan – how to move forward.

Who's in charge here

The Commission wanted to be involved from the beginning in the RFP process, instead of waiting a year or more for a consultant to hand over a draft ZO that would not reflect the new Comp Plan and the small town feel of Purcellville.

The back and forth

Vice Chair Ed Neham said he “spent a fair amount of time” reviewing the staff's draft RFP.

“I would rewrite the statement of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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The developing tale of two villages: What's the story on St. Louis and Aldie?

BY LAURA LONGLEY

Out of the haze of proposed land swaps, buyouts of by-right developments, and sale of County-owned parcels for a commercial “gateway” to Western Loudoun, the futures of the historic villages of Aldie and St. Louis are beginning to take shape.

With the overwhelming support of the region’s preservation and civic groups, the Board of Supervisors is expected to move forward with a new offer from an Aldie resident that promises the survival of that small, historic village known for its working mill.

The outlook is far less certain for St. Louis, the historically African American community established after Emancipation when a former slaveholder subdivided his land and sold it off in one-acre plots for \$20 each. Many of the descendants of those emancipated buyers—the McQuays, Howards, and Berrymans—still live in St. Louis, and now find themselves fighting for the community’s future.

From the very beginning, St. Louis residents have been challenged by poor farmland and wetlands with poor drainage, but by the end of the 20th century, increasing development became the bigger threat.

“As urban expansion began to reach St. Louis, new, more expensive homes went up, property taxes also went up, which had the domino effect of many ancestral families selling their land and homes,” wrote Charles Thompson, pastor of the historic Mt. Zion Baptist Church, in an editorial in the Middleburg Eccentric.

So when the development group

named MOJAX, LLC bought the Howard family’s 16.4-acre wooded parcel with by-right zoning, there was good reason to launch a nonprofit organization dedicated to stopping a 27-house cluster with individual wells.

Finally, in the fall of 2020, Loudoun County’s Supervisors, who are committed to preserving St. Louis from this kind of intensive development, made an offer to the developer: The County would pay MOJAX \$1.5 million to put a conservation easement on that land, and use the then-16 dug wells to augment the local water supply. The County would create a passive recreation area and protect a historic cemetery.

But, it’s fair to say, greed got in the way

The MOJAX developers—John “Jack” Andrews, architect Michael Oxman, and consultant Leonard “Hobie” Mitchel—backed out of that deal, but came back to the County with a grander one.

As MOJAX attorney Jim Campell told the Board of Supervisors at its public hearing this past Jan. 13, “Our clients have \$2.7 million out of pocket in St. Louis, but the current appraised value is \$3.4 million.” To balance the scales as they saw them, the MOJAX developers proposed that in addition to the \$1.5 million for the St. Louis easement, the County transfer to them the “Aldie Assemblage”—three parcels totaling 6.3 acres the County had purchased for a new Aldie fire station, a location rejected by the community.

What MOJAX put forward as an add-on to the St. Louis transaction, was a project called Aldie Park that, said Campbell, “would get us back to whole and allow us to do something we’ve had passion about for decades.”

The project they presented to the Board comprised 35,000-square-feet of commercial structures including a brewery, retail shops, an administration building, an artist studio, and a high-end restaurant and inn, plus parking for 170-some vehicles.

The deal required rezoning, a \$600,000 escrow payment by the County to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the developer for building renovations and construction of an access road from Rt. 50 to the 60 adjoining, landlocked acres owned by developer Andrews.

But Aldie had a savior

Guy Gerachis, a lifelong Loudoun and

GOVERNMENT

The New Aldie Proposal

Guy Gerachis, of Gerachis Construction Group, LLC, has proposed “restoring /refurbishing structures primarily for residential use, and clearing away decrepit outbuildings. No new structures would be built, and no zoning changes requested. Needed commercial and residential space, made attractive, would be available in the village and back on the tax rolls . . . Over time, depending on the ultimate disposition of the existing firehouse, a community center could be visualized.”

The Board will consider other offers until May 26.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

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Wexton and baby shine at April event

BY ANDREA GAINES

Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton (D-10) visited three signature working farms in Loudoun County in April.

Wexton, who presided over the relaunch of the Ag-ritourism Caucus in the U.S. Congress visited the three local agricultural businesses – Great Country Farms in Bluemont, Bee’s Wing Farm, also in Bluemont, and Wheatland Spring

Farm & Brewery in Waterford – in an effort to instill some energy into these rural economic powerhouses.

Wexton founded the caucus in 2019. There are more than two-hundred and thirty such agritourism businesses in Wexton’s district.

The visit highlighted how such businesses have fared innovated their business model during the COVID pandemic.

Wexton’s visit to these three



businesses, tracking their progress amidst the pandemic is vital to the local economy.

“The agritourism sector accounts for \$2.2 billion in economic activity in Virginia as a whole,” said Wexton’s office in a statement, “and supports more than 22,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the Commonwealth.”

We like the fact that at least one adorable baby – appeared as the star of the Wexton show.

Former Millwood antique shop: a valuable investment for a buyer with vision

BY LAURA LONGLEY

If you ever needed an old lamp rewired or a chandelier repaired, chances are you’ve traveled over the Blue Ridge to Berryville, then south through Boyce to the historic village of Millwood and this former iconic antique shop.

If you still need work on a lighting fixture, you’re out of luck, but if you’re looking for a unique home that won’t deprive you of your last penny, then you’ve found it here at 1133 Bishop Meade Road.

A promising investment at a below-market price, this former antique shop offers the buyer with a vision an opportunity to craft a comfortable home from what was once an old dairy barn and cabin dating to the 1800s.

Bay windows and beamed ceilings, staggered shake siding, standing seam metal roof, plus a separate workshop/garage and Xfinity internet service, add character and utility to the property. At 2,700

square feet, the building gives your imagination plenty of space to play with.

It’s fun to know, too, that this charming place comes with happy memories. Ginny and Bill Elliott, who operated their antiques and lamps business here for 42 years, were well known throughout the area’s hunt country. Among their patrons, for example, were Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and U.S. Senator John Warner (R-VA). Bill Elliott turned the senator’s

old riding boots into a lamp for him.

Proximity to grocery stores, shops, restaurants, doctors, and dentists is a must, and 1133 Bishop Meade Road in Millwood is close to all you’re likely to need. It’s just 5 minutes to Boyce, 8 minutes to Berryville, 24 to Middleburg, 30 to Purcellville, and 36 to Leesburg. You can be at Dulles in less than an hour.

In Millwood, you are also close to several special places: Blandy Arboretum is 6 minutes up the road; the 1,850-acre Sky Meadows State Park with its spectacular views and 22 miles of hiking trails and Appalachian Trail access is 10 minutes away. And right in Millwood, you’ll find Locke Store, a country store and deli focused on supporting local agriculture and community. The 1780s Burwell-Morgan Mill, one of the oldest operational grist mills in the country, sits across the road, and still grinds local grains.

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Warner, Northam visit Tysons vaccine center

BY ANDREA GAINES

With its proximity to Washington, D.C., and its relationship to the key battle-ground state of Virginia, our area sure gets a lot of political traffic.

GOVERNMENT

United States Senator Mark R. Warner, and Gov. Ralph S. Northam toured a COVID vaccination center last month – located at the iconic old Lord & Taylor building in Tysons Corner.



Governor Northam focuses on significance of federal/local cooperation

What a great idea – repurpose the old Lord & Taylor store property, closed now, into a big COVID vaccination center.

Northam appeared there last month, and toured the facility with Warner.

In announcing the event, Northam's office highlighted how important it was that the event included representatives from state and local governments and the work of the Tysons Community Vaccination Center, providing updates on Virginia's response to the pandemic.

The former Lord & Taylor build-

ing serves as the space for the Tysons Community Vaccination Center's work, offering walk-in and same-day appointments. More info at www.tysonscornercenter.com.

At the conclusion of the event, for Northam, staged in press conference-style format, press attendees were given a tour of the vaccination center.

The center is a great example of Virginia's ongoing and collaborative response to COVID.

As Northam's statement emphasized: "This CVC is organized by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Virginia Department of Health in cooperation with the Fairfax County Health Department and the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management."

Senator Mark Warner joins Northam at Lord & Taylor

Warner joined Northam for the vaccine center event.

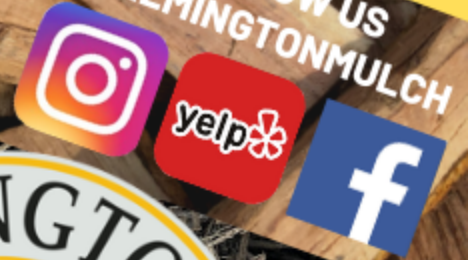
As the Warner's office said in a statement, "Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Sen. Warner has been a strong advocate of ensuring that states and localities have the funding and resources they need to slow the spread of the pandemic and take a step towards a future where COVID-19 is managed."

Warner's office also highlighted the more than \$3 million in federal funding that had gone to Fairfax County for the purchase and distribution of personal protective equipment for essential workers "as they deliver vital services to the community."

In addition, his office discussed the nearly \$80 million in federal funding to his state's community health centers to support testing, treatment, and vaccinations. These things, along with American Rescue Plan monies, are targeted towards "rural and underserved communities ... and designed to help American families, workers, and businesses fight [the virus] ... and put our country on a path toward economic recovery ..."

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Historic District height limit runs into a snag

BY VALERIE CURY

The Purcellville Town Council, on April 27, voted 3-3, with Council member Ted Greenly absent, on lowering the height in the downtown C-4 District.

Vice Mayor Mary Jane Williams, and Council members Joel Grewe and Tip Stinnette voted against lowering the height limit from 45

feet and three stories, to 35 feet and 2 ½ stories. Mayor Kwasi Fraser, along with Council members Chris Bertaut and Stan Milan, supported the motion.

The ordinance will go back to the Planning Commission, and commissioners will decide whether to support Stinnette's amendment – which would make a request for height increases a Special Exception and not a Special Use Permit. Special Use Permits go to the Town Council for a decision. Special Exceptions go to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Developers want to avoid the Town Council.

The Special Exception Process

This process takes the height decision away from the elected body, the Town Council, and puts it in the hands of a judicial body.

"Pushing it to the Town Council gives it more control, what ever that decision may be," said Don Dooley, Director of Planning and Economic Development.

Different points of view

Comments by Council Member Tip Stinnette focused on what process the developer would have to go through to get a higher building height in the district. He asked how long would it take a developer to apply for a Special Use Permit, and how much would it cost.

"I was looking at this from an applicant's perspective," said Stinnette, "who puts down \$1,000 ... I don't really have any way to really measure my chances of getting my application approved ..." Stinnette also said there were not enough guidelines.

"The provisions currently that limit

"It sounds like there is a level of advocacy for developers, and I am just here to be an advocate for our citizens – because ultimately they put us in here to represent them."

– Mayor Kwasi Fraser

Mayor Kwasi Fraser said that based on the line of questioning, "it sounds like there is a level of advocacy for developers, and I am just here to be an advocate for our citizens – because ultimately they put us in here to represent them."

Fraser pointed out that the emphasis on the application cost to build higher than the allowed limit was "being painful to the developers and hidden costs ... [We] need to make sure we are addressing the hidden costs to our citizens."

April 15 Planning Commission Meeting

The Planning Commission had discussed lowering the building height in the C-4 zoning district and voted 7-0 in favor of lowering the height, and sent its recommendation to the Town Council.

buildings to size and scope of neighborhood ... we would go back to the Comprehensive Plan," said Dooley.

Vice Mayor Mary Jane Williams was concerned about the cost to the applicant. She said there were more costs other than the \$1,000. You have to make 12 copies, and it holds up construction, she noted.

Council Member Stan Milan remarked that the discussion was supposed to be about lowering the height limit, not the appeals process. "There's guidance in the ordinance that identifies those things," said Milan.

This is one step the Planning Commission took to bring the current zoning ordinance in line with the new Comprehensive Plan.

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Assistance available for Loudoun residents impacted by COVID-19

While COVID-19 vaccines are bringing hope for the future, the pandemic's economic impact continues to affect Loudoun County residents.

If you or someone you know has been economically affected, Loudoun's Information and Referral Program can connect you with a variety of services such as food resources, employment services, housing and homeless services, utility assistance and childcare assistance.

Contact an Information and Referral Line specialist at 703-777-0420 or online, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours and on the weekend, complete an online form or send an email to dfs@loudoun.gov and a specialist will respond the next business day.

Depending on individual household needs, the following county programs may be able to assist:

- **Behavioral Health and Developmental Services:** Behavioral health and developmental services, including support and referrals for all ages. Same Day Access is a walk-in service, Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. or call 703-771-5155. For cri-

sis assistance, the Loudoun County Crisis Intervention Team Assessment Center is open daily from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and individuals may walk in to receive assistance or call 703-777-0320 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

- **Complementary Safety Net Payment Program:** This program supports residents who test positive for COVID-19 and require financial assistance to maintain good standing with debtors while safely isolating. Individuals may receive up to \$1,500 for household expenses. For more information, contact Information and Referral at 703-777-0420.
- **Distance Learning Childcare Program:** In response to a community need for families who had childcare issues during the school day because of the pandemic, Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services has developed a Distance Learning Program, which operates at 12 school sites and two private locations. DL sites currently offer both a school hours program and an after-school recreation-based program. For more

information, visit loudoun.gov/dl-childcare or email casa@loudoun.gov.

- **Foreclosure Prevention / Homeowner Relief and Relief Programs for Landlords and Realtors:** To learn more about these programs, contact Information and Referral at 703-777-0420 or visit loudoun.gov/housing.
- **Home-Delivered Meals Program:** Assistance is available to eligible Loudoun County residents who are 60 and older. To learn more about eligibility, call 703-777-0257.
- **Isolation and Quarantine Program:** Loudoun County has established temporary isolation and quarantine housing for Loudoun residents to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. For more information, contact Information and Referral at 703-777-0420.
- **Rental Assistance:** Since April 2020, the County has provided assistance to 437 eligible Loudoun households, totaling more than \$2.4 million. Each household may receive up to 9 months of assistance. The program

has been funded largely by federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) dollars and is currently supplemented with local dollars. Learn more and apply at loudoun.gov/lra or call 703-777-0420.

- **Utility Assistance Program:** Administered by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington and Loudoun Cares, this county-funded program makes direct payments to utility providers on behalf of Loudoun residents. Residential customers, including those in the seven incorporated towns, can request support with paying their utilities up to \$1,750. These utilities include electric, water, and gas bills, and propane, oil, or wood, if used for heating or cooking. For more information, call the COVID-19 Emergency Fund and Helpline at 703-669-5040.
- **Workforce Resource Center:** Individuals seeking employment opportunities can get free training, job search and career counseling services from the Loudoun County Workforce Resource Center. For more information,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

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Purcellville's Kim Patterson nailed it

BY LAURA LONGLEY

What in the world happened to your neighbor? She shows up for lunch at one of Purcellville's eateries, and your jaw drops at her lush eyelashes, dazzling nails, and suddenly svelte, bikini-ready body.

She may not let you in on her secret, but we will: It's Kim Patterson's Top Coat Nail Spa at 170 West Main St., which is just around the corner from Re-Love It, the consignment boutique she and her husband, Michael Oaks, launched a decade or so ago.

COMMUNITY

Patterson has a natural instinct for identifying a community's needs, and it wasn't long before she saw an opportunity in stylish nail salons with specialty services.

So she opened Top Coat Nail Spa at the Old Theatre Centre near the Giant, but just as she was ready to move and expand, the pandemic changed everything.

And yet, while other personal service businesses closed or halted operations, Patterson took up the challenge, implementing and marketing Top Coat's hospital-level disinfecting protocols to ensure a safe environment and customers' peace of mind. And she hired only licensed technicians trained in the proper Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational and Regulation nail treatment methods.

The firm's focus, says Patterson, is the integrity and beauty of your nails. "The products we use are as natural as possible within the guidelines of the beauty



L to R: Kim, Angela, and Maria.

industry. We carry more than 400 bottles of nail polishes, and we are dedicated to offering 'five-free' with many of our polishes." No, that does not mean Top Coat gives, say, five-time customers a free manicure for five of their fingers. "Five-free" is a term the healthy beauty community coined to mean that a nail polish formulation does not contain five of the more toxic ingredients that some traditional colors use. Those ingredients are formaldehyde, toluene, formaldehyde resin, camphor, and the plasticizer dibutyl phthalate.

Top Coat Nail Spa also can extend your existing lashes or give you the glamorous look of a supermodel by using silk lashes measuring 12 to 22 millimeters.

Now, on to that bikini-ready body. If you want to look younger and reduce inches, Body Frame sculpting is a

natural process that can do just that. A nonsurgical procedure that creates more collagen, it can reduce fat in the stomach, melt away cellulite, and firm up your face and neck.

Patterson chose Body Frame for her spa because, she says, it's the most natural process of all body sculpting brands. "The radio frequency jumbles up the fat cells. Some turns into energy; some is expelled from your body. This is the same natural process your body goes through when losing weight. With Body Frame, we are targeting a very specific part of your body."

Patterson's goal is your stress reduction and relaxation, which is why she'll soon add reflexology and reiki. But the pampering actually begins the moment you walk in the door, and waiting for you is a complimentary glass of white or red wine, fruit or vegetable infused water, freshly brewed coffee, a small snack, or a cup of tea specially blended for Top Coat Nail Spa by Dominion Tea.

For parents who've been doing double-duty this year as home-based learning managers, there's a special blessing—no children.

Top Coat Nail Spa, 170 West Main St., Purcellville, VA 20132. <https://www.topcoatnailspa.net/> for prices, bookings, and e-Gift Cards. (703) 297-7919. Hours: Tues. – Fri. 10 – 6, Sat. 9 – 4. Closed Sun.– Mon.

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Have a beautifully simple Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9 — It's all about the little things

BY ANDREA GAINES

Some say that Mother's Day is a completely created holiday.

A holiday started to help the candy makers and florists and restaurants boost their sales as we all head into Spring.

Maybe so.

But, who cares.

Moms love Mother's Day. I think that's because moms are all about showing how much they love their children. And, one of

the most fulfilling ways to do that is to show us that whatever you give

them for Mother's Day, or whatever you do for them, is sheer perfection.

Am I getting a bit sentimental? Yes. But, again, that's OK. Mother's Day is all about sentimentality, so let's simply, enjoy.

Memories

I surveyed a parcel of my own favorite moms for this article.

I asked them to talk about their most fond memories of Mother's Day. And, what I found will, I hope, make your smile, and laugh, and nod your head.

One mom said that one of the best gifts she ever received was from her daughter.

This daughter loved to cook and to experiment in the kitchen. So, one Mother's Day she made her mom some delicious, crispy, and unexpectedly sophisticated

The history of Mother's Day

The ancient Greeks celebrated Mother's Day — with festivals in honor of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele.

A woman named Anna Jarvis is credited with helping to launch Mother's Day here in the United States. Her work related to efforts to reunify the nation following the Civil War. The day is also associated with a suffragette and abolitionist named Julia Ward Howe, and a man named Frank Hering — aka “the Father of Mother's Day.”

Mother's Day became a national holiday in 1914, and is thought to be linked, originally, to Lent, when “the faithful” would go to their “mother church” for special services.

ed Spring rolls. With homemade peanut sauce. Mom... was in heaven at everything about it — the taste, the thought, the moment, the peanut sauce.

Two other moms said that their sons would take them to their favorite garden shop for Mother's Day... and let them buy whatever they wanted for their Spring gardens.

You see, most moms have very simple tastes when it comes to their kids and gift-giving. Spend some time with me and take me to a garden shop. That's all I ask.

And, this is one of my favorite Mother's Day remembrances.

One daughter, had the routine of serenading her mom with a song that is on an old record from her late grandfather's collection. I guess that man, and that music, always meant a lot to the mom, and she still cherishes the memory of it.

It's gotta be sweet

Now, my mom was all about the sweet. She had a sweet personality, and she loved sweet foods. She once told me that her family had always told her that she had a bad diet.

She did not care.

She put herself to bed each night with a pint of ice cream.

There was a freshly iced poundcake on our kitchen table pretty much all the time.

And, she put the same attention into her housekeeping as her pound cake.

Fresh flowers were everywhere, all from her own garden.

For her, Mother's Day was very special. Whatever we did for her was perfect. Particularly if it involved whipped cream and something sweet to eat.

Moms have a sense of humor

If motherhood requires anything, it certainly requires a good sense of humor.

A friend of mine said that her “ex” once said to her: “You are not my mother.”

(I think everyone has felt that way about someone at some point in their life.)

Perhaps in response, this woman's daughters tried to make light of the comment, and on Mother's Day would bring her hand-drawn cards, in crayon, proclaiming her to be “the best mommy” ... complete with hot tea and cinnamon toast.

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Discover Purcellville initiates new art project

“Words on a Fence,” this year’s Discover Purcellville community art project, is seeking local Artists to contribute their talent to paint a word on a fence. There will be 40 words all uplifting and fun, such as love, peace, hope, family, and more.

Each letter of the word will be approximately 24” to 30” and when finished, it will be attached to an eight-foot section of a picket fence. The completed “Words on a Fence” will be displayed all summer into early fall in front of local sponsor businesses and public locations around Purcellville.

Discover Purcellville a 501(c)(4) community nonprofit, will use funds raised from this project to promote Purcellville as a tourism destination to help increase sales for local businesses during this pandemic.

Also, Discover Purcellville will have the public vote on the top three favor-



ite “Words on a Fence,” and the top vote getters will be awarded first place \$500, second place \$300, and third place \$200.

If you are a local artist that would like to participate, or a business that would like to sponsor a “Word on a Fence,” contact Michael Oaks by text at 540-383-0009, or email dpurcellville@gmail.com. “I’m so excited to see the completed words all around Purcellville starting in June. I hope when people see them it will brighten their day and put a smile on their face,” said Oaks.

All participation is greatly appreciated. Discover Purcellville is not affiliated with the Town of Purcellville.

I see you!

BY ANDREA GAINES

Have you ever wondered why your car has so much bird droppings by the side mirrors?

According to Joe Coleman of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, “cardinals are notorious for pecking at their image in windows and car side mirrors – as they think the reflection is a rival.

“Their hormones are raging, and they will continue to do this until the hormones calm down. Pooping while doing this is also common.” Piliated woodpeckers, wild turkeys, and other

species share this fascinating habit.

They can do it all day, pecking at their image, then coming up for a little rest.

A friend of mine witnessed this phenomenon last month on her own car’s side view mirror.

A beautiful male cardinal was pecking wildly at her passenger car’s side view mirror; flying to the driver’s side mirror – when my friend covered the first one ... and then, going after her basement window when both mirrors were covered. Lots of bird debris on the side of her car.

Funny thing when she parked at the market, she saw several cars with the same bird droppings in the same location as hers.

Spring, you gotta love it.



Male cardinal busy battling his reflection in the car mirror.



Our friend coming up for a little rest.



Our friend changing locations. But the battle with his image goes on.

Open burning ban in effect

The Loudoun County Fire Marshal’s Office reminds residents and visitors that open burning is prohibited in Loudoun County and the incorporated Towns of Hamilton, Hillsboro, Leesburg, Lovettsville, Middleburg, Purcellville, and Round Hill, between May 1 and Sept. 30.

These regulations prohibit open air fires or open burning with the following considerations:

- Campfires, no larger than three feet in diameter by two feet in height and used for cooking purposes, are exempt from these prohibitions, provided they are not within 50 feet of any structure.
- Portable outdoor fireplaces and chimineas are not considered open burning but must be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and shall not be operated within 15 feet of a structure or

combustible material. Single-family, attached and detached, homes are exempt from the distance mandate but are strongly encouraged to follow this fire safe practice.

On a year-round basis, open burning (to include campfires) is always prohibited in the town limits of Lovettsville, Middleburg, Purcellville, Round Hill, and all subdivisions (“urban or built-up areas”) throughout the County.

Fire Marshal Disclaimer: The Loudoun County Fire Marshal may impose regulations, at any time, based upon complaint, atmospheric or other environmental circumstances, to restrict

or extinguish any fire that is otherwise permitted according to these guidelines.

Violations and Penalty: Any person who violates the fire code could be convicted of a Class 1 misdemeanor, which carries a penalty of a fine up to \$2,500 and up to a year in jail. Further, if convicted, a person may be required to compensate the locality for the full costs of fighting a fire.

Questions regarding open burning regulations should be directed to the Loudoun County Fire Marshal’s Office at 703-737-8600, or you can access this information on the following webpage www.loudoun.gov/openburning.

The tears never stop, seven years later – May 2014 shooting death of Purcellville teen a raw memory

BY ANDREA GAINES

The pain of losing her young son is clearly still raw for this mother, Sandra Sierra, even seven years later.

Sierra’s 17-year-old son, Christian Sierra, was shot dead by Purcellville Police Officer Timothy Hood in May 2014.

We reconnected with Sandra Sierra a few weeks ago. We wanted to know how

she and her family were doing. The tears never stop, even seven years later. What to say? We don’t know.

Sierra’s son’s death started so innocuously. Can I use that term?

He was with friends, but talking about harming himself. He was troubled. His friends wanted to protect him. He had a small knife, and his friends called police for help.

When police got there, there were

conflicting reports. He was outside, and at least one friend was trying to get the small knife away from him. But a policeman’s firearm was now in the mix, too. And, within seconds, Sierra was dead on the ground, with four bullets in him, three to the chest and one in to the shoulder.

The first moment of reckoning came on that day – May 24, of 2014, as Police Officer Timothy Hood drove up on

the reportedly suicidal Sierra and determined he posed a threat.

The second moment of reckoning came when the officer’s fatal shooting of Sierra was ruled “justifiable.” Within a few months of the shooting, then-Loudoun County Commonwealth

Attorney James E. Plowman had decided that the shooting was indeed, “justifiable.”

The third moment of reckoning came after a dramatic and emotional six-day, civil trial where the jury concluded that the officer had acted improperly, and, might also have altered the scene to make it look more dangerous than it

Remembering Mary Craig “Mary Beth” Anderson

A very caring and loving person passed away on April 20, 2021, and her family will miss her beyond description.

Mary Craig Anderson (Mary Beth) was born in Coatesville, Pennsylvania on February 26, 1948, and grew up in Carlisle, PA. She graduated from Carlisle High School, earned her Bachelor’s Degree from Lycoming College, and then earned her Master’s Degree in Education from Shippensburg University.

Mary taught school in a number of areas over the years, but her favorite role in her over 30-year career, was as a third-grade teacher at Emerick Elementary School in Purcellville.

Mary is survived by her husband of 52 years, Robert Anderson, daughter Jennifer Ducharme and her husband Brian, all of Purcellville, son Bobby Anderson and his wife Mallory, of Charles Town, WV, and grandchildren Graham, Kaylee, Hannah, Luke, Harrison and Everly. She is also survived by her brother Charles (Trudy) Craig, sister Nancy (Philip) Brown, and many nieces, nephews, cousins, their spouses and families.



Mary Beth had a deep sense of compassion and a total commitment to her family, friends, and students. She received literally hundreds of messages of appreciation and thank you notes over the years, which spoke about her commitment and bond to her students and their families.

She always spent many hours at school, before and after the school day, arriving at home long after student dismissal. She also regularly attended student athletic events and any other events her students were participating in on the weekends. She kept and treasured all of those messages, and those students were always in her heart.

After her retirement, she spent much of her time enjoying conversations with her sister-in-law, Debbie Massimiano, and her close friend, Mary Ann Fank, and many other friends, discussing books, world affairs, politics, and any nonsense that might be the topic of the day.

Over the years, Mary could be counted on to be a loving strength and presence for her loved ones, and in turn, her family and friends have an undying love and commitment for her.

The Hollies recorded a song in 1974 called The Air That I Breathe, and a segment of that song includes the following words: “Sometimes all I need is the air that I breathe and to love you.” She was that kind of person.

While Mary was in the hospital, shortly before she passed, granddaughter Kaylee sang to her the song “Clouds” by Zach Sobiech:

*“We’ll go up, up, up; But you’ll fly a little higher;
“Go up into the clouds because the view
is a little nicer;
Up here my dear;
It won’t be long now, it won’t be long now;
If only;
I had a little more time;
If only;
I had a little more time with you;
We could go up, up, up;
And take that little ride;
We’ll sit there holding hands;
And everything will be just right;
And maybe someday I’ll see you again;
We’ll float up in the clouds and
we’ll never see the end.”*

Due to Covid health concerns, a memorial service will be held sometime this summer.

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COVID RELIEF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

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In addition to county-administered programs, the Loudoun County Board of

Supervisors has allocated \$2 million in general fund dollars to support residents through services provided by nonprofits and faith-based organizations.

These services include continuing

rental assistance for nonconforming leases, utility assistance to all residential utility customers, safety net program services and food assistance. To date, the County has allocated

\$1,833,346 to nonprofits for services to support residents.

More information about assistance related to COVID-19 is online at loudoun.gov/needsassistance.

GREWE LECTURES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

talking,” and “talking over Town staff.” These residents, he said, were concerned about “muzzling Town staff” when they were giving an account of their work.

Grewe said he listened to the April 1 PC meeting – and other meetings – and suggested the Planning Commissioners review the Town Code of Conduct for Committees.

“There may be better ways for you to operate ...”, Grewe said. “Your conduct is a matter of Town concern.” He then reminded them that they were “political appointed officers of the Town.”

Finishing up, Grewe quoted “a carpenter from Galilee,” “Love our neighbors as ourselves.”

Bennett responds

Planning Commissioner Boo Bennett – referring to the anonymous individuals represented by Grewe asked, “Who are these people? We are just neighbors, and we live in the Town; we are hardly a threat.” She said the Planning Commission discusses important issues – issues that have two sides. “So, there are going to be some disagreements; what you presented was all one sided.”

Bennett said she has been attending meetings for a couple years, and instead of the customary two staff members who attend – since August there have been four or five. She said that the meetings have become “very inefficient, because we have had interruptions. We have had people commenting as if they were also appointed commissioners. It’s very frustrating.”

Continuing, Bennet said, “We are not being rude, and as I said, we live in the same darn town – and these people can’t speak up and reveal their names? ... These people need to come forward and speak to us, and not hide behind you or someone else ... All these things you

are saying, I have heard for ten years.” Bennett said it was because they didn’t agree with the direction of the Planning Commission’s work.

Bennett summed it up by saying, “Not everybody in the Town wants to do things the same way as maybe the other people.”

Grewe’s political agenda?

Chair Nedim Ogelman pointed out that Grewe was the lone Council member who voted against the Comprehensive Plan.

“I think that is telling ...” Ogelman said, having been a Council member himself, “I don’t share Council member Grewe’s values ... when people don’t share values, this is when, in a political context, there are disagreements and differences.”

Ogelman said that he thought Grewe’s comments “reflect his political position, more than anything about conduct.” Ogelman said he “could take that same Code of Conduct and point out times when other people have not adhered to them.”

As far as “doing unto others as you would have done unto you, it is important to not be hypocritical with saying things like that, I think,” said Ogelman.

Milan and Forbes weigh in

Commissioner Stan Milan then asked; “When does disagreeing with somebody turn into being hostile? Or, trying to get clarification on a topic become hostile?”

“When you are a public figure, and you are listening to the citizens’ voices – their opinion on things – I don’t agree with not disclosing who is having these issues with the Planning Commission ... All these anonymous concepts and issues people in the background ... that some Council members support, are the loudest voices that we hear.”

“The majority of the Town’s residents voted for me on the issues that I ran on ... I am going to continue to support what I ran on. Some people may not like it. I am not a politician; but, I am beginning to see what is required of politicians.

“The Town Council needs someone to speak for them, and not be persuaded by those with power monetarily,” said Milan. “There’s a lot of things that happened in this Town that kept me from retiring and going to the Philippines – that was my goal.

“My daughter told me, ‘Dad, there are some issues going on in Town that you need to look at.’ I came and listened to a meeting, and I saw Council members goofing off, and disrespecting the mayor. So, I stopped my move, and ran for office. I want to make sure that this Town is well taken care of.

“This anonymous – and ‘I can’t disclose this and that’ – and address the Planning Commission as if we were rambunctious adolescents is insulting. I do not appreciate back door political slight on the Planning Commission,” concluded Milan.

Commissioner Nan Forbes said, “It is very difficult to respond to an anonymous third-party complaint. And, I am troubled by it.”

She said the other issue “is that your comments seem to tar the Planning Commission and every member of the Planning Commission with a broad brush. It is so broad and unspecified, that I really don’t know what to make of it.”

Forbes said that the Planning Commission was being accused of a violation of a code of conduct. “I have not heard any particular examples or instances of when that may have occurred or how that may have occurred ...

“I sit in these meetings, and I think that we have open discussions; we invite comment; we argue among ourselves; we ask for input from staff.”

TALE OF TWO VILLAGES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

30-year Aldie resident, Aldie Heritage Association member, and an award-winning builder known for his expertise in historic properties, came forward.

In no time, his modest plan and offer based on current appraised value, won the community’s enthusiasm and formal support of Loudoun’s preservation and conservation groups.

Before their 9-0 vote on this process, Supervisor Tony Buffington (R-Blue Ridge) cited the support of residents and organizations.

“We’re opening this up for 30 days,” explained Chair Phyllis J. Randall (D-At Large), “but for me there’s one offer on the table, and I’m in support of it,” she added.

But what about St. Louis?

The end of the Aldie-Andrews “gateway” proposal spelled the death of the Loudoun County-MOJAX deal, with

Loudoun County paying MOJAX \$1.5 million in exchange for a permanent conservation easement on the St. Louis land.

Now, as a step toward protecting St. Louis, Buffington has initiated a public input process, to engage St. Louis residents in a review of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances, with the aim of restricting planned or permitted uses and density.

But St. Louis residents are skeptical. At an April 27 meeting in St. Louis, Randall tried to explain the obstacles, including MOJAX’s right to develop the property without Board approval, and the doubling of the original price tag, from \$1.5 million to \$2.7 million, and possibly higher.

She explained a process for fast-tracking the County’s review of zoning ordinances relevant to St. Louis, ahead of the overall 2019 Comprehensive Plan review. But until there are

firm dates on the calendar for hearings and action items, residents and friends of St. Louis are likely to remain anxious about their future.

Sharon Peterson, who spoke at the April 20 Board meeting, cited water and taxes as her major worries, but she also touched on the heritage she feels she may lose forever.

“My family has been here since the late 1700s. My great-uncle, Phil McQuay, came back from St. Louis to buy land here and gave the place its name. My grandmother, Mattie Berryman, lived in the area and taught at a one-room school. My mother was a secretary at Banneker in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, just to give you an idea of why St. Louis is so important to me and so personal.

“Am I going to have to leave here, where I was born and grew up?” she asked.

“I am a retired widow on a budget.

I have no one to depend on. If there were too many houses here and my well runs dry, I can’t afford to dig a new one. I can’t afford for my property taxes to go up ... The water smells now, and I don’t want the day to come when I turn on the faucet and nothing comes out ...

“Protect us from the development. Protect us from MOJAX. We thought everything was going to be taken care of, and now that isn’t so ... Please don’t let me lose my home.”

At the same Board meeting, speaking on behalf of the Piedmont Environmental Council, Gem Bingol urged the Supervisors to “act immediately to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the St. Louis residents. Please pass a resolution to pause any additional well permits until the County completes a hydrogeological study to understand the physical carrying capacity of the land in and around the village.”

INTERVIEW WITH MAYOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

natural assets at the same time.

BRL: On the issue of small-town character, which is also about financial strength and sustainability, what would your number-one priority be there?

Fraser: The charm and small-town character of Purcellville is one of our competitive advantages, and the wellspring of our economic vitality. It is what makes tourists driving past other places, stop and enjoy the sights, sound, flavors, and activities of Purcellville.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to focus on delivery of exceptional services to our citizens, and to continue to be the economic hub of western Loudoun.

We will achieve this by wisely investing the funds we will be receiving from the American Rescue Plan, and to continue to pursue ways to generate non-tax revenue that will not compromise the character and charm of our Town.

Our strategy of slow growth – and rejection of annexation with high density residential development – is paying dividends by making our community inviting, and highly-desirable, and our residents are seeing this with ever increasing property values.

To our new residents; we know you paid a premium price to live in this community, I will continue to reject high density residential annexations that would negatively impact the value of our homes.

BRL: Your administration has an innovative edge to it, new ideas such as drone applications for agriculture. What's new?

Fraser: We will continue to pursue pre-

cision agriculture with drones. Innovation is one of the key ways to fund a slow growth strategy. Innovation has led us to monetize our right-of-ways, our green space, and even to transform a dilapidated facility into a maker-space and manufacturing hub.

Revenue generated from innovation does not require heavy operational costs, and the Town receives high returns on such investment.

I am looking forward to the more than \$700k in revenue the nutrient credits and reforestation project at Aberdeen will generate. This project will result in more than 78,000 trees being planted. This is an innovative marriage of capitalism and environmental sustainability.

I am still committed to lowering our water and sewer rates, by generating new revenue that is not dependent on the rate payers – such as the Aberdeen nutrient credit project.

Western Loudoun needs an aquatic and recreational center, and Purcellville is the most suitable place for it, based on our water and sewer infrastructure, and we are the home to five schools. We have made our Board of Supervisors aware of our interest in having the center in Purcellville.

In addition, we will be pursuing ways to bring true broadband service to every home and business in Purcellville that is affordable and competitive.

On the operational front, I'm looking to "automate" our Town's thousands of repetitive functions, from tax collection, to public meetings, to applications processing. They all cost the taxpayer money. Robotic process automation can dramatically lower operational costs.

Purcellville's operational study, conducted two years ago, recommended we look at getting something like this going.

the job. I have administrative issues as a parent ... any job I have ever held has administrative difficulties."

"The staff and the Planning Commission don't have to always agree on everything; we have different areas of expertise," said Commissioner Stosh Kowalski.

Chair Nedim Ogelman pointed out that as long he had known about the ordinances, the Town has always had height and story parameters.

Regarding staff's mention of administrative difficulties, Commissioner Nan Forbes said that at this point "this is not an amendment that addresses the zoning ordinance comprehensively." She explained that the review will come at a later date, when the commission will be addressing the definitions and all the details in the zoning ordinance.

I think that robotic process automation can get us to lower costs.

Embracing Artificial Intelligence with a data-driven online platform will increase our businesses' visibility, make it easier to interact with the Town, and increase sales. Further, we should never buy a product elsewhere when we can buy it here. Town prosperity is measured by how long it takes a dollar to leave Purcellville.

BRL: What do you want the people of Purcellville to know about your biggest hopes for the Town in the coming year?

Fraser: My hope for Purcellville is for it to be the most desirable community in which to live, shop, learn, and grow, and we are getting there by continuing to embrace the strategy of slow growth, low taxes, innovative solutions, and infrastructure improvements.

I will continue to ensure that the aspirations of our citizens, as reflected in our Comprehensive Plan, have a voice at Town Hall and become the policies they expect from that process.

BRL: What are your challenges as mayor of the Town of Purcellville?

Fraser: The continued pressure for high density residential growth under

the guise of affordable housing is a big concern. We do need affordable housing; but I don't subscribe to the belief that increasing the volume of homes will achieve affordability. I believe we cannot begin to address housing affordability without discussing wage increases, especially for our teachers, and determining how many individuals truly want to live where they work.

BRL: Any other thoughts on the Town's response to COVID?

Fraser: Our Town has been resilient throughout the pandemic; we worked on addressing the needs of our elderly community in partnership with the Tree of Life Ministry. We distributed 2,000 boxes of food to replenish our food banks.

We were one of the first communities in the U.S. to test our sewer system for the virus using wastewater epidemiology in collaboration with Biobot and researchers at MIT, Harvard, and Brigham and Women's Hospital. We also distributed over \$900k in relieve funds to local businesses and nonprofits.

Guests to our restaurants benefited from our voucher program, and over \$200k in meals tax reduction. Purcellville is in a great place with glasses prepared to be filled.

HEIGHT LIMIT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Staff recommended removing the limit on the number of stories and just capping the change to 35 feet. However, this recommendation could have allowed for three stories, which is the current limit.

If someone wanted to build higher, developers would have to go through a Special Use Permit process via the Town Council, thus giving the community a chance to weigh in on the matter.

Staff's recommendation of taking out the story limit was "in order to avoid the administrative difficulties caused by attics, basements [which would not be counted in the story limit anyway], and the space under gabled roofs."

Commissioner Boo Bennett said that "administrative issues are part of



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CICADAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

your house.

So, don that old wedding veil.

Drape that old sheet or tablecloth over your head. Cut out two small holes, so you can see. And, make sure all windows in your house and car are closed.

Then, put on your protective gear and make a mad dash for the car. And, be swift. Use the wedding veil, or tablecloth, or sheet to protect you, and jump in.

Keep the insects out of your hair, off your kids, and out of your cars and windows by any means possible.

Here they come, and we are ready.

The 17-year cicada.

Billions ... even trillions of them, are coming in mid-May.

The last year we welcomed the lovely insect into our lives was 2004.

Most of the discussion, frankly, has been about what to do to protect yourself from them. And, we think protective cicada fashion is the answer.

When will it start??

Last month we reported on the coming cicada explosion. The emergence of what is known as "Brood X," or Brood 10.

The cicada is a remarkable insect. Millions of years old. And, they have the longest life cycle of any insect on earth.

As we noted in April, Brood X insects have been, as it were, "maturing in the ground" right under our feet – about eight inches down – for 17 years.

In this stage, we affectionately refer to the insects as "nymphs" ... another word for "baby" insects. In biological terms, nymphs are the "immature form" of some invertebrates. Baby bugs, basically. But, boy-oh-boy

are they tough. Not to be underestimated.

Brood X is described as "endemic" in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and other parts of the eastern US.

Nationally, some 15 states will experience a cicada emergence this year – including Delaware, Illinois, Georgia, Indiana, New York, Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Michigan, as well as Washington, D.C.

Now, importantly, from a predator's perspective, the insects are a great protein source. And, the cicadas, know it. Their life

cycle, as with all living things, has adapted itself to protect them. The infant form of the insect spends most of its life underground, and safe. The insect crawls out from the ground, sheds its skin, flies around, mates, lays its eggs, and lives for just a few weeks with us. As Joe Coleman of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy said, "This is anything but a dreaded event for many of us. It's an incredible natural phenomenon, which causes little harm, and greatly benefits the natural world. Wildlife of all kinds fortunate enough to be born during a big cicada year should thrive because of the abundance of food available to them. If you look at cicadas closely, their colors are beautiful, and their songs, which will surround us during this time period, are fun and exciting to listen to. We are lucky that we can experience something so wonderful." Cicadas are related to crickets, and grasshoppers – two insects we humans have great affection for.

All this is to say, we cherish the things that rely on this 17-year cicada explosion for their own livelihoods.

Cicadas have a history, too

The cicada phenomenon has been studied by scientists for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Brood X, in fact, was first recorded by a guy from Philadelphia in the early 1700s. His name was Andreas Sandel.

Another Philadelphia gentleman, John Bartram, recorded observations about the insects laying their eggs in particular places in 1732.

Both men foresaw a possible emergence of the insect in 1749.

A third man who absolutely delighted in the insect world, Pehr Kalm, said this:

"The general opinion is that these insects appear in these fantastic numbers in every seventeenth year. Meanwhile, except for an occasional one which may appear in the summer, they remain underground. There is considerable evidence that these insects appear every seventeenth year ..."

Bob Dylan and Ogden Nash loved cicadas

The American poet Frederick Ogden Nash wrote a famous poem about cicadas, and their ilk.

Singer/songwriter Bob Dylan liked the creatures, too.

GARDEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

at the nursery is not its full cost. You have to get it into the ground, and that takes labor. Maintenance can also be costly, even if you're doing it yourself. Plant your property with maintenance in mind.

And take your four-legged neighbors into consideration, too. As a local resident, Holly knows all too well about returning from vacation only to discover your beautiful garden served as salad for the local deer.

If you're in search of inspiration, Holly

Raymond suggests visiting nearby public gardens and historic sites. Among them are Oatlands Plantation in Leesburg (gardens and grounds now open 10-5 daily, \$10 admission); the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandy, near Boyce (open dawn to dusk 365 days); and Glen Burnie House at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester (gardens open April 1, Tues.-Sun., 10-4 on a donation basis).

For more information email Raymond at hsraymond@aol.com.

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NHS SCHOLARSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

At Loudoun Valley High School, Tadepalli has served as the mentorship chair of NHS, the co-president of Mu Alpha Theta, the captain of the LVHS Academic Team, and the team leader of a two-year research project focused on synthesizing a membrane for carbon. She also is a Varsity member of the Loudoun Valley Girls Varsity Track and Field, Loudoun Valley Girls Cross Country team and various travel soccer teams. Tadepalli is the co-founder and COO of InteGirlsDerived, the co-founder of Safe At Home VA, and

the president of the Purcellville Teen Leadership Council.

This fall, she hopes to attend either Georgia Tech's College of Computing, or the University of Virginia's School of Engineering and Applied Science Rodman Scholars Program, to study computer science and computer engineering.

According to Trude and Hudson, who are also Julie Willis's NHS advisers, "Julie is an asset to the Loudoun Valley High School NHS chapter and the LVHS community. Without all of Julie's leadership and innovative

ideas, the LVHS NHS would not have been a success this year. Julie was instrumental in finding service opportunities, managing membership, and leading the organization during a pandemic. She does everything we ask of her and beyond. Julie is simply phenomenal. We are so grateful to have her as our leadership chair. We are thrilled to see Julie recognized as a NHS Scholar for all her leadership and service to the Valley community!"

At Loudoun Valley High School, Willis has served as the leadership chair president of the NHS, the pres-

ident of the American Sign Language Club, a member of the Library Advisory Board, and the Captain of Sports Medicine. She volunteers as an EMT for her local community. In addition, Willis serves as a board member for Sara's Acts of Kindness, a childhood cancer nonprofit. She also volunteers as a math tutor for Mu Alpha Theta. This fall,

Willis plans to attend university to study Biology.

For more information about the NHS, the scholarship, and the 2021 recipients, visit www.nhs.us.

THE GROVE THEATRE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

at the farm. The live streaming events can pretty much have an unlimited audience

The play's not the only thing

Oklahoma!—the first collaboration of famed partners Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II—established the standard for American musical theater. Set in the town of Claremore in 1907 just before President Theodore Roosevelt dissolved the territories and proclaimed Oklahoma the 46th state, the play focuses on a spirited rivalry between the local farmers and cowboys. That friendly competition provides the backdrop for the love story between Curly, a handsome cowboy, and Laurey, a beautiful farm girl. The road to true love is anything but smooth, but there is no doubt that these two will succeed in making a life together. As the road to romance and the road to statehood converge, Curly and

Laurey are poised to spend their new life together in a brand new state.

In the course of readings and rehearsals, Woodgrove's students have had the opportunity to explore more than character development and artistic storytelling. The Wolf Trap grant encourages "project-based learning." Addie Schafer Benko's program serves as an example of what project-based learning success looks like.

While students have been portraying life in 1907 Claremore, they've also been studying life in the same period in Purcellville. They've learned how Loudoun's 400 dairy farms supplied the greater Washington area and how a swelling population and increased development over the past century have brought about the end of dairy farming in Loudoun. Only the Potts family's Dogwood Farm two miles south of Purcellville remains.

They've also learned about small rural towns' schooling, cultural life, and businesses, such as Nichols Hard-

ware and Loudoun County Milling.

And they've expanded the theater experience with a "Purcellville Pop Up Museum" installation at WeatherLea Farm, which will feature audio and in-person stories related to Western Loudoun history from around the period spanning 1880 to the 1920s.

But what still matters most to any performer is their audience's enthusiasm. So when The Grove Theatre's players come to their finale, don't be shy about joining them in their last, rousing "YEEOW!"

Tickets, Times, Location

Get your tickets now at <https://whsva.booktix.com/> for live and/or streaming performances.

Live (4 total): May 14 – 6 p.m.; May 15 – 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.; May 16 – 1 p.m. Streaming (2 total): May 22 at 6 p.m.; May 23 at 1 p.m. WeatherLea Farm, 39595 WeatherLea Farm Lane, Lovettsville, VA 20180.

DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

high school activity.

The Bad

Competitive youth sports can be very time consuming. When a child or teen athlete goes from the recreational level to the competitive level in any sport, free time becomes harder to find. Conditioning requirements, nights and weekends being booked with games, travel and daily practices, altogether leave most competitive youth athletes little to no time to participate in any other sort of activities.

Between fees, equipment, travel, etc., competitive youth sports are expensive. One research study found that some families are spending as much as 10 percent of their incomes on their children's sports. With around \$1000 to \$20,000 annually, that study revealed what a lot of parents know too well, that the investment into a child's athletic endeavors can place a strain on a family's finances.

The Ugly

The emotional commitment to a competitive team sport, beyond time and money, can also be great. While the pressure to perform, and to be expected to give 110 percent – can increase a child or teen's grit and resilience, it can take a toll. If not managed, the stress can lead to a host of larger psychological problems and harmful behaviors such as anxiety, substance and alcohol use, steroid use, and eating disorders. According to Eckart, "We have a wide va-

riety of talent and aspirations within our club. Some kids love to play soccer every day - all day. Some just practice twice per week and use soccer as an alternative sport. I believe any sport has to be fun. If your child does not have fun, he or she will fall behind in their development and ultimately quit the sport. The higher their enjoyment the more the athlete will invest their own time and will succeed."

Even with the right approach, getting hurt while playing sports competitively, is also a reality for our youth. It is well accepted that the risk of serious injury increases with contact sports such as football or hockey. But injuries can occur for any sport. Overuse injuries are actually quite common in competitive youth sports and injuries can become chronic.

I have worked with many professional athletes over the years as a psychologist, and several of them are adamant about not allowing their children enter their field for this reason. A highly successful athlete one expressed to me that he is in constant pain, due to the injuries he sustained in his career. It is also a reality that the likelihood of a concussion increases when playing contact sports; and recent research has found a link between playing tackle football in preadolescence and later developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

Excessive parental pressure and strained parent-child relationships can also be an ugly aspect to competitive youth sports. It is important for parents to reflect on their own motivations, and behaviors when it comes to their child's participation in competitive sports.

Eckart acknowledges the stress of competitive

sports on the parent-child relationship, "Striking a balance between working hard in a competitive sport and having fun is very important." He said, "We are setting expectations at the beginning of each season with parents and players. We want our players and parents to enjoy games and practices. The more parents positively support their kids, the better the experiences are."

Our children are extensions of ourselves, and what we want for them can become emotionally blurred with what we want for ourselves.

It is also important to remember that regardless of how talented your child is in a given sport, his or her decision to continue to play or not, should not be yours alone to make. Sometimes even the most gifted child may want to stop playing a sport; and if they're stopping for a good reason, then it is best to be supportive.

I am a huge fan of competitive youth sports, but I also know that balance for children is essential for happiness and success. If a child or teen's functioning across the most important areas of his or her life is good – their emotional, academic, and home life – then adding a competitive sport into the mix is fine. In my experience, working with competitive athletic youth, the children that have natural talent, passion, and good social skills, most often do best.

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.

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HOUSTON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

mud. The Board endorses an Emerald Ribbons trail system. Tony Buffington gets an easement assistance program enacted.

February: Greenway tolls are criminal. March: In allegorical fashion, I place three Planning Commissioners in the lowest level of Dante's Hell, put there for their assault on the Transition Area.

April: The draft Comprehensive Plan calls for 72,000 new houses countywide, which would cost the taxpayers billions for new schools, libraries, etc.

OPINION

May: In a fantasy piece, famed military genius Sun Tzu says the "Unmet Housing Needs" study was biased and bogus. [Note: This was simply the number of people who wanted to move to Loudoun, not any true need by our citizens. Unfortunately, it's become dogma.]

June: At a Board of Supervisors meeting, the stacked Stakeholders' group, since-fired planning director

Ricky Barker, the Chamber of Commerce, Ford's Fish Shack and a young girl in a blue dress were vocal proponents for more sprawl.

July: It was a mistake to pass a new Comprehensive Plan without knowing exactly what new housing it would bring, and where. "By-Right" zoning brings unsustainable growth.

August: I use an allegory to say that voting is an important duty.

September: Commercial development is not without problems since it can bring in new employees who want new houses and expensive schools for their children.

October: I explain how developers think and operate and I emphasize that rezoning, creates huge profits.

November: Conservationists need a Big Idea and must be confrontational.

December: Clusters usually look like generic subdivision streets with cookie-cutter houses while they really should look like small, traditional Loudoun villages such as Waterford.

2020

January: I welcome four new supervisors and say that thousands of by-right new houses would be a disaster.

February: New development can threaten people's water supply.

March: I always fear the subtle seductions of "growth," "business" and "prosperity."

April: The new Comp Plan seems too oriented towards accommodating growth. It should have been based on just how big the citizens want Loudoun to be. Growth ain't great - it usually brings a high cost of living, congestion, high housing prices and high taxes, not to mention a destruction of farmland and open space.

May: This fantasy piece features a fictional Sigmund Freud IV. He loves Morven Park but scorns McMansions.

June: I rail against clusters, high-density residential in the west, and the loss of 12,000 acres of farmland in the past few years.

July: What a horrible year 2020 was, for all sorts of reasons. In Latin, it was an "annus horribilis."

August: Fictional character Byne

Rood is irked at proposed developments around Middleburg and the lack of leadership in fighting them.

September: The miserable year continues with COVID, Antifa riots, and pre-election discord.

October: Government must be transparent. The school system is the poster child for wasteful spending shielded by opacity.

November: The Blue Ridge Mountains, from Georgia to Loudoun County, are special and must be protected. Kudos to Friends of the Blue Ridge for their work.

December: My late uncle Bubba is somehow resurrected and transported here. He is gob smacked at 21st century life, but is awed by Loudoun's countryside. He remonstrates me to help protect it.

This year is still a work in progress, so I've just listed the points I made through last year. So, how did I do?

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

PLANNING COMMISSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

work to better reflect what I perceive the Planning Commission interest to be ... and ... I would make an attempt to rewrite the entire document, to get it into a more logical and usable format."

Neham pointed out that the draft was not well organized, and was not tied to the project plan. In addition, the Statement of Work - key to the intent of the RFP - were "too much focused on administrative tasks."

Commissioner Nan Forbes pointed out inconsistencies, such as the draft's stating in one place that the Town would not receive proposals electronically, then on another page saying that all applications have to be received electronically.

Town Manager David Mekarski said it was a good idea to bring the goals and objectives up front, and include whether the Town is looking for a fixed price, or a time-and-materials price.

Council Member and Council Liaison Stan Milan said after he read Neham's draft comments, and noticed a "big disconnect from what we had stated early on ... the Planning Commission desires to rewrite the ordinances. We emphasized that we wanted to be an integral part of the process of writing the ordinances along the way throughout." Milan said the draft RFP "gives no inclusion to the Planning Commission."

"Waiting until the document is completed," said Milan, "and then presenting it to the Planning Commission, is going to be a long arduous process - to

have to start from the beginning to get things in line with how we wanted to get it done ..." He said it would be easier to participate along the way.

"A lot of the things we are bringing up now, could have been incorporated, if we had been involved in the beginning. Our gap analysis was done in February, and if we had been a part of the process, then we would not be where we are now, trying to rewrite the whole thing ... I suggest we work hand in hand with the new RFP; get it in line with the project plan," said Milan.

Citizen professionals vs. planners vs. consultants

Commissioner Boo Bennett said the words that jumped out at her were "complete over hall, major update." She said, "It doesn't have to be that complicated; I feel like it's getting complicated and expensive, and it will take a lot of time ..."

"We can do a lot of this work. We have a vested interest; we live here," said Bennett. She didn't want someone else to write the Zoning Ordinance, and then ask the Planning Commission to just look it over.

Mekarski, who just seemed to want the RFP to go forward, said, "Every single element that the consultant will produce will be reviewed by the professional staff, and then reviewed by a subcommittee on a regular basis ... when the draft document is completed, we will advance it to the Planning Commission ... I am asking you for a leap of faith ..."

Milan said, "... We are here to talk

about the RFP, to get the right elements to give to the consultant, so they will know exactly what to do, and that was not clear in this RFP format."

Promoting togetherness, then compromise, then a call to just get it out

Neham again promoted Planning Commission input. "The Planning Commission should have an oar in this boat that is basically pulling the RFP together ... The Planning Commission needs to be a part of this ..."

Mekarski reiterated that the ZO would go through a committee, then the Commission as a whole, and they then would have an opportunity to review - hold a public hearing and pass it to the Town Council.

Milan said, "We have to tighten this RFP to get ... what we want accomplished." At this point, however, Milan was interrupted by the Town Manager who spoke over him.

Town Attorney Sally Hankins said, "There is value to getting this out on the street; I think the RFP is good ... My recommendation would be to issue the RFP, and commence that negotiation process."

Commissioner Forbes said, "I understand that staff has acknowledged that there are some inconsistencies and errors that exist ... I am feeling a lot of push-back from staff in regard to making edits ..."

Hankins said, "I would suggest just get it out ..."

Chair Nedim Ogelman said, "This is

a product that staff has produced, and staff wants to get out on the street. We are a planning commission made up of citizens, and we need the opportunity to make sure it aligns to our Comprehensive Plan, and what we think our job is as a planning commission advising the Town Council.

"This thing that Sally said, that things will get done a lot faster with a consultant on board right away. When we were doing the Comprehensive Plan and that's what took five years with [a] consultant ... It feels to me that staff has dropped a unilateral proposal. They didn't really consult with us before providing it, and now we are deliberating on it as a planning commission."

Bennett said that her "leap of faith" was in the expertise of the "citizens that make up the Planning Commission ... I am listening to this ... You hire a contractor to come to your house and ask them, 'What would you like to do?' And let them decide? ... Let the Planning Commission have a real say in this ... We want to do the work ... We are citizens of this Town and we know what the citizens want ..."

Ogelman said he would be happy to "put in the work to get alignment to make sure that our citizens, our input from the Planning Commission is incorporated."

As of press time the Planning Commission has turned in their suggested rewrite of the RFP, and it is now in the hands of Town staff.

TEARS NEVER STOP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

was. "It was a good shoot," the officer had told his Sergeant at the time. A civil jury found otherwise; and found Timothy Hood guilty of battery.

It's been a hard and painful road for the Sierra family.

The family's heartbreak continues.

Now, according to Sierra's mom, the

family is trying to move on. She is focused on getting her daughter into college, where she will earn a degree in engineering. Sandra hoped Christian might have done something like that, too.

From her voice as we spoke to her, we understood, there is, frankly, no way to move on from this, without caring part of her son with her – every day. Christian would be in his early 20s now.

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THE SOLAR DILEMMA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

extreme damage to the future of western Loudoun County,” Buffington added. “Nobody is going to go to a brewery or a winery like Dirt Farm Brewery and want to see nothing but glare from solar parks.”

Supervisor Matt Letourneau (R-Dulles) replied, “I would think if you were concerned about solar energy showing up in some of these places in western Loudoun that you would actually want this [study] to happen because it gives you a mechanism for the County to actually take a stand on.”

Saines said his initiative calls for an examination of the effects on property value, tax revenues, and economic effects, current and future land use and permit procedures, sight and sound, wildlife, agriculture, the protection of prime soils, and location criteria.

The Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, which has already done yeoman’s work in those areas, applauded Saines’ solar initiative and offered help. Gem Bingol and Mitch Diamond, co-leaders of the group’s Solar Ordinance Committee, wrote to the Board, “We support the creation of a siting criteria policy document to guide staff and consultants in their zoning ordinance rewrite work and to provide a useful aid to solar firms and landowners considering large-scale solar projects for future review and approval.” They pledged to continue analyzing the wealth of information on effective solar siting, including examples from other communities in Virginia and across the country.

The LCPC solar advisers also made two major recommendations to the Board: that large-scale solar projects continue not to be allowed in Loudoun, until the zoning ordinance rewrite is completed; and that Loudoun develop a policy statement on large-scale solar, to guide the writing of the zoning ordinance.

Location. Location. Location.

“We can’t plop an expanse of solar panels just anywhere and expect it to be right,” Robert Whitescarver said. “Solar panels require special conditions to function at their best, and every locality planning to welcome solar panels needs to develop a strategy for optimal placement.”

Whitescarver is a farmer, retired district conservationist for the USDA, National Association of Conservation Districts Soil Health Champion, and adjunct professor of natural resources management at James Madison University. He pointed out in The Virginia Mercury that we will need utility-scale solar projects to get to 100 percent carbon free by 2050.

“Solar photovoltaic panels require a lot of space—experts say between 5 and 10 acres per megawatt they produce. The best place for solar panels is on rooftops, industrial lands, brownfields, degraded land, and marginal farmland. Clearing forests for solar panels is not a good choice, nor is the use of prime farmland,” wrote Whitescarver.

The landmark Virginia Clean Economy Act calls for the decarbonization of the state’s power grid by 2050, thus creating pressure on Loudoun farmers.

Maura Walsh-Copeland, who heads the zoning committee of the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, told the Board of Supervisors that she and her husband had just received a proposal from a Boston-based solar firm eager to lease their 130 acres, now in barley, for the next 20 years.

Leases of this kind call for long-term land rentals, with four-or-five-year rollover options at approximately \$1,350 per acre yearly. The land must be cleared by the owner. The company takes all the tax credits, benefits, and electricity.

When the lease expires, the solar firm will either sign a new lease with the property owner or remove the solar array.

Time is of the essence.

With final approval of Loudoun County’s revised zoning ordinances about a year away, the faster the County can produce a sound interim solar policy, the better. The LCPC solar committee advises looking at other jurisdictions and how they handle solar.

The \$615 million, 6,350-acre Spotsylvania Solar Energy Center would be worth a visit. Those who know their Civil War history and anything about the battles of The Wilderness, Chancellorsville, and Spotsylvania Courthouse understand why this center has met with the vociferous opposition of the region’s residents and preservationists everywhere.

Touted as the largest solar installation east of the Rockies, the Spotsylvania facility occupies land sold to Utah-based sPower mostly by area farmers. Once completed, it will yield 500 megawatts for Microsoft.

Neighbors and nearby towns, such as Fredericksburg, will not benefit from the energy produced here.

The outlook for Loudoun

At last count, Loudoun had 1,259 farms covering 121,932 acres.

That land and its owners are tempting targets for solar facility developers. It’s easy for them to put a proposal in a farmer’s mailbox and have a new major solar array up and running in no time.

Loudoun could meet its own goals and those of Virginia’s Clean Economy Act with that approach. But as Supervisor Saines and the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Council observe, Loudoun would be best served by a more vigorous strategy.

If, for example, the County were to require every sector of Loudoun’s economy to explore solar development solutions and create a portfolio of diverse facility sites—from industrial plants to data center rooftops, brownfields to marginal farm land—it might be possible to leave prime agricultural soils for their highest and best use: farming, and feeding a hungry planet.

RICCI, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

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MOORE-SOBEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

by sharing her personal life with her employees. “Occasionally I write very personal letters to the employee base as a whole,” she said. “I want them to know me as a person rather than just an executive.”

Somewhat counterintuitively, being a great leader is not so much about what you do, but about the people you choose to join you. “You don’t dictate to people,” Dr. Anthony Fauci said.

“But if you let them know what your vision is, hire the best people, and then don’t get in their way, those are the qualities of a good leader.” This is a sentiment I’ve tried to espouse with

my own team. Knowing when to listen is just as important as knowing when to speak. “When you are in a room with really talented people, you don’t make many suggestions...you lead by example,” Lorne Michaels of SNL fame said.

I once had a mentor tell me that to be a great man, it is important to remain humble. I believe the same applies to being a leader. No one is drawn to arrogance. “Most importantly, I think great leaders have a sense of humility about what they can achieve,” former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. Which leads to the importance of preparing for a smooth transition.

All good leaders know that no mat-

ter the field, they will not be in the job forever. The important part is ensuring that the organization can go on, no matter who holds the top job. It would serve leaders well to espouse a similar attitude to that of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who told Rubinstein, in reference to how the Supreme Court justices interact, “All of us revere the institution for which we work, and we want to leave it in as good shape as we found it.”

Samuel Moore-Sobel is the author of “Can You See My Scars?” His book is available on Amazon. To find out more, visit www.samuelmoore-sobel.com

TIM JON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ubiquity; if not, space – truly – is a vacuum. If the Creator cared enough to inspire the Bible, surely he cares enough to influence other writings, paintings, architectural designs, and more simply, the human heart. If He isn’t ‘here’ – on this page, in these fingers, these eyes – there is no need to go look for Him. But – if you’re searching – many of the local congregation may urge you to start your spiritual journey at the New Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Lovettsville.



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