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MARCH 2023



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False claims are key to lawsuit by Council Members Rayner and Williams

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Feb. 14 Purcellville Town Council Meeting, Mayor Stan Milan commented on a petition to the Circuit Court asking for a Writ of Mandamus, filed on Feb. 6 by Council Members Erin Rayner and Mary Jane Williams. The two Council Members directed the “issuance of a Writ of Mandamus to the Town Council.”

The heart of the matter is whether the Town must hold a special election in November 2023, or wait until the remainder of Milan’s two-year term for his vacated seat terminates in November 2024. Typically, the appointment continues until the end of the Council Member’s term, consistent with the Town’s charter.

Throughout this time there have been conflicting verbal legal opinions on the matter from the Town Attorney and

the Director of the Virginia Municipal League.

Background

At the Jan. 3 Special Town Council meeting, the council voted 4-2 to fill the Council seat vacated by Mayor Stan Milan when he took his position as mayor on Jan. 1, 2023. The two opposing votes were made by Rayner and Williams. The Council chose Ron Rise Jr., who received the fourth highest number of votes in the Town’s November election.

The motion made by Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut stated, “I move that the Purcellville Town Council appoint Ronald Rise Jr. for the term commencing Jan. 3, 2023, and expiring on a date consistent with relevant state law.”

Williams then proposed a “friendly” amendment to add “that the Town

Council has decided or there was a vote that there would be no special election so that they know that the Town Council is looking into the Special Election.” The Town Council did not accept this amendment.

Feb. 14 Town Council Meeting

In the Council comment portion of the Feb. 14 meeting, Rayner defended her petitioning for the Writ of Mandamus to the court, saying she did it to uphold the law and it wasn’t about politics. She said, “The citizens deserve a trusted and transparent government.”

Aspects of the challenge, however, are not transparent. There is no mention of the lawyer who filed the petition. The Blue Ridge Leader has reached out to Council Member Rayner numerous times, asking who was representing her,

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but to date has received no response.

We later found out that her lawyer, Mary Gayle Holden, is a campaign donor and colleague of Rayner’s on the Purcellville Business Association Board. Rayner is the president of the association.

Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut questioned whether certain Council Members were “working for the benefit of the entire Town.”

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Real Estate and car tax relief seminars set for March

Loudoun County Commissioner of the Revenue Robert S. Wertz Jr. has scheduled free information sessions to familiarize residents with the eligibility criteria for the County’s generous real estate tax and car tax relief program.

Loudoun County homeowners 65 or older or with disabilities who are below established income and wealth limits may benefit from a reduction in the amount of property taxes they pay on their homes and cars.

Qualified applicants for real estate relief must have a gross combined income less than \$77,000 and net worth less than \$920,000. Up to \$10,000 in income of a spouse or relative

residing in the home is excluded from the income calculation for real estate relief. Program participants saved over \$8.4 million in real estate and vehicle property taxes in tax year 2022.

Find out about the County’s tax relief program and have your questions answered at the upcoming sessions. No appointment or RSVP is required to attend. All sessions begin at 10:30 a.m. The schedule is as follows:

- **Wednesday, March 8, 2023** - Cascades Library, 21030 Whitfield Place, Potomac Falls
- **Monday, March 13, 2023** - Purcellville Library, 220 East Main Street, Purcellville

- **Friday, March 24, 2023** - Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn
 - **Monday, March 27, 2023** - Rust Library, 380 Old Waterford Road NW, Leesburg
- Applications have been available online since Feb. 27, at loudoun.gov/taxrelief. Residents may also call 703-737-8557 to have a form mailed to them, or they may pick one up at the offices of the Commissioner of the Revenue in the Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE in Leesburg, or 46000 Center Oak Plaza in Sterling.
- Additional information about the program is available online at loudoun.gov/taxrelief.

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“So very happy we switched to Hunt Country. My only regret is that we didn’t do it sooner. How much money we would have saved...However, we finally made the right choice about our propane. For years I have been receiving offers from other companies offering low rates, only to find out you have to enter a contract with them. It never made sense to me that you could drive around town and shop for fuel for your car, but not for your home. It’s nice to see that a business owner understands this and caters to the customer. We received our first delivery this past Saturday and the owner himself brought it out. The service was excellent. Of course, I’m not surprised, as the initial account set-up was easy and the lady in the office was so pleasant!” —Caroline T.

“I have been buying propane from Hunt Country for about a year now. My previous propane provider was much higher priced. The staff was rude and didn’t seem to care if you gave them business or not. When I was shopping around for a new company, thankfully I found Hunt Country. The staff is friendly, professional, knowledgeable and genuinely cared that you gave them your business. Hunt Country prices are consistently lower than their competitors. I highly recommend that you call Hunt Country Propane. If you don’t, you’re making a BIG(\$) mistake. Thanks Hunt Country!” —Ed, Leesburg

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"SHE SAVED MY LIFE"

Loudoun county resident Dawn R. had been experiencing the painful side effects of Peripheral Neuropathy, "my feet and legs were extremely painful and my doctor told me there was nothing they could do. That I would have to take Gabapentin for the rest of my life."

Then she met Ashburn's very own Rachal Lohr, L.Ac.

Peripheral Neuropathy is the pain, discomfort, and numbness caused by nerve damage to the peripheral nervous system. Dawn explained that daily tasks like opening doors and using the bathroom were overwhelmingly painful.

"How can you live for the next 30 years when you don't even want to get out of bed to do simple things?"

She was experiencing the burning, numbness, tingling, and sharp pains that those suffering from neuropathy often describe. "The way that I would describe it, it's equivalent to walking on glass." Dawn hadn't worn socks in five years and was wearing shoes two sizes too big so that nothing would 'touch' her feet.

Unfortunately, Dawn's story is all too familiar for the over 3 million people in the U.S. suffering from Peripheral Neuropathy.

If you're unfortunate enough to be facing the same disheartening prognosis you're not sleeping at night because of the burning in your feet. You have difficulty walking, shopping or doing any activity for more than 30 minutes because of the pain. You're struggling with balance and living in fear that you might fall. Your doctor told you to 'just live with the pain' and you're taking medications that aren't working or have uncomfortable side effects.

Fortunately, two months ago Dawn read an article about Rachal and the work she was doing to treat those suffering from Peripheral Neuropathy, without invasive surgeries or medications.

Rachal Lohr, founder of Firefly Acupuncture and Wellness, in Ashburn, is using the time tested science of Acupuncture and a technology originally developed by NASA that assists in increasing blood flow and expediting recovery and healing to treat this debilitating disease.

"Now when I go to bed at night I don't have those shooting pains. I don't have that burning sensation. I don't have pain coming up my legs," Dawn enthusiastically describes life after receiving Rachal Lohr's treatments. "I can wear socks and shoes!"

Dawn and her sister now operate a successful dog walking business, sometimes covering up to 5 miles a day.

"It's life altering. As far as I'm concerned Rachal saved my life!"

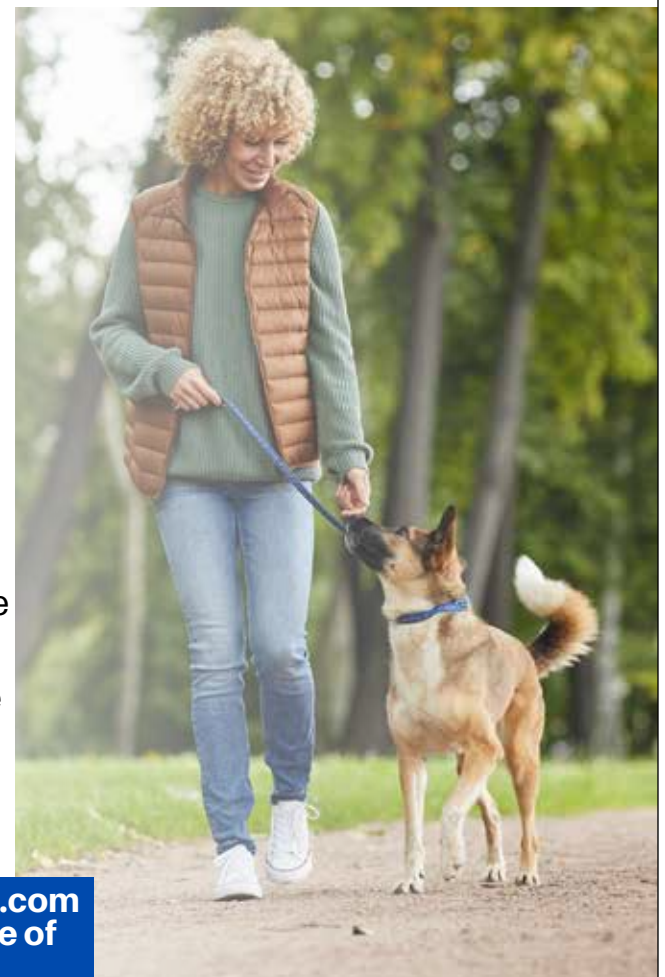
Rachal has been helping the senior community for over 15 years using the most cutting edge and innovative integrative medicine. Specializing in chronic pain cases, specifically those that have been deemed 'hopeless' or 'untreatable', she consistently generates unparalleled results.

What was once a missing link in senior healthcare is now easily accessible to the residents of Northern Virginia.

If you've missed too many tee times because of pain or you've passed on walking through the town centers with friends because you're afraid of falling, it's time to call Rachal and the staff at Firefly.

It's time you let your golden years BE GOLDEN!

Rachal Lohr, L.Ac. is once again accepting new patients. And for a limited time will be offering \$40 Consultations so call (703)263-2142 before April 1st to schedule a consultation.



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Math in Motion at BRMS as students create scaled models

Students taking Geometry with Ms. Pritz at Blue Ridge Middle school learn to use scale factors to create unique and personalized scaled models. A scale model is a physical model which is geometrically similar to a prototype. Students learn about engineers and designers that use scale models in design and testing, promotion, and sales, filmmaking special effects, military strategy, art, and hobbies.

This type of lesson is an example of Project Based Learning. Project Based Learning is a research-based, best-practice teaching and learning strategy where students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. Within Loudoun County Public Schools, teachers have had extensive professional development opportunities for integrating PBLs into their classrooms.

This project requires much more time

and mathematical computation than it appears. In order to properly rescale a 3D object, every aspect of the object must be measured, scaled up or down by the same factor, and then constructed. This means if there is writing or a logo on it, the font and size have to be scaled as well.

Brion Bell, the Principal of Blue Ridge Middle School said, "This type of hands-on mathematics lesson creates a significant impact on student learning."

Students who participate in this PBL experience a thrill when they are able to proudly carry their projects into school and showcase the product in the library. Students, teachers, and visitors are able to enjoy the display of scaled objects in the library. Examples of the current objects on display include a Rubik's Cube, a basketball, a Jolly Rancher, and dice. After the library display ends, some students may donate their projects to

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LPF receives 2023 Commonwealth History Fund Grant

The Lincoln Preservation Foundation is one of the eleven recipients to receive a grant from the Virginia Museum History and Culture's Commonwealth History Fund. Lincoln Preservation Foundation has been awarded \$40,000.00.

The VMHC, in partnership with Virginia's Department of Historic Resources, awards grants to history organizations and projects throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia through its Commonwealth History Fund.

There are several key selection criteria to be considered for the grants, including the significance of the project or resource, its impact on its community and the Commonwealth, the focus on



historically underrepresented topics and communities, and the need for funding and urgency of the project.

One of the largest initiatives of its kind, the Commonwealth History Fund is expected to award up to \$2,000,000 over its first five years. In 2022, the

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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Loudoun County Milling

BY TIM JON

I was a boy long enough ago – and far enough away – that one of my most haunting memories (in a very pleasantly evocative manner) is the sound of the freight trains as they came in to fill up with grain at our local downtown elevator. The familiar, “Chug-chug-chug-chug” was evidently the precise number



TIM JON

of propulsions to move the next car into place for filling; this would go on – seemingly for hours – as the little town of four thousand or so enjoyed their repose.

I haven't heard that sound in many, many years except on my memory's sounding board; funny, though, how

that persistent rhythm – and the peace I associated with it – came back after I'd paid a visit to Loudoun County Milling on the north side of Hamilton.

I imagine the long-time local business had distributed feed, back in the day, in a manner similar to my hometown version – in the years of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad. Rail lines and grain elevators have had a long relationship in the timeline of our country – especially in the Midwest where I spent my formative years; you (at least, I) just don't see as many of these eye-catching structures closer to this part of the east coast, at any rate.

Now, I've driven by the site of Loudoun County Milling quite literally thousands of times, mostly as the four-lanes of



Route Seven pass by at don't-blink-or-you-miss-it velocity. It's been a familiar, comforting landmark in my life for over a quarter century; somehow despite the madness we witness in everyday life, I gain a sense of the calm and rational in a friendly emotional and physical anchor like this big, old grain mill.

Its impassivity to some of today's current events seems to set an example: “Don't fluster yourself; take a breath and all will pass.” At least that's what I hear in my mind's ear. Kind of the same feeling I used to get lying in bed with the windows open – listening to those train cars lining up for grain and moving on for the next – somehow seeming part of an eternal pattern: stable, predictable,

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— Ask Dr. Mike —

By Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D.

Dr. Mike,

My husband is very strict and hard on our three boys, and he is a big believer in “Commando Parenting.” Sometimes it's too much on our kids. The other day I found my oldest who's 14 years old crying alone in his bedroom during the day after his dad removed his mattress, bedding, clothes, and devices for not getting straight A's.

Our son had to do his chores and homework to earn his things back – one at a time. To earn back his mattress, sheets and blanket, our son had to do everything my husband said just right that day.



Dr. Mike

Our son could be trying harder with academics, but he gets A's and B's, so why go “Commando” on him? I'm very worried about our two younger children who have already told me over and over that their dad is “mean” and that they're scared of him.

I've tried to talk to my husband, but his go-to responses are, “It's good for kids to

fear their parents a little” and “It's my job to get them ready for life. That's why I'm hard on them.”

He also accuses me of being “too soft” with our boys, and I can be, but I also know that what my husband does is a million times worse. It's beginning to ruin our marriage. Help!

— Distressed Mom

Dear Distressed Mom:

As you likely know, Commando Parenting is a controversial and extreme behavioral parenting approach that was first introduced in the early 2000's. It involves taking control of a child's behavior with the strict enforcement of expectations and rules.

When the child manages parental expectations and follows rules well enough, the child is allowed to keep their things, however, when the child doesn't, they lose all the important things that matter to them and then must earn them back – one item at a time.

While it's important for our children

to manage our parental expectations and follow our rules, and while punishments and consequences are sometimes necessary in the service of good parenting, Commando Parenting lacks the parent-child emotional and relational engagement, warmth and nurturing that is vital for healthy development.

Commando Parenting is very much an offshoot of what developmental psychologists have termed Authoritarian Parenting. Authoritarian Parenting is rule bound parenting where the parents make up all the rules, which the child is expected to follow without any input, discussion or questioning.

These parents are considered to be strict and demanding with their children, and they rely on punishment or the firm hand approach when their children disobey. These parents are typically not emotionally responsive, and when a child questions a parent with this style, “Because I told you so” or “Just do what I say” are the sort of responses heard.

Generally, children from authoritarian

homes tend to get in trouble less than children who are raised by permissive or uninvolved parents. However, inasmuch as obedience and respect are taught to be much more important than independence and autonomy, children from these homes tend to grow up with challenges.

Research studies have shown that children raised by authoritarian parents have higher rates of low self-esteem and can be negatively influenced by antisocial peer pressure during the teen years. These children can be more passive and can struggle more academically and socially later in life.

As a child psychologist, I have seen firsthand the damaging impact of Commando Parenting or Authoritarian Parenting on children. There are times when a parent needs to be firm and may need to take control of a situation with a child, but repeatedly and harshly shutting down a child's behavior without emotional warmth, engagement and positive reinforcement will ultimately do more harm

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“When I was in school D was not a good grade.”

– Planning Commission Chair Nan Forbes

BY VALERIE CURY

Loudoun County officials advocating for the Town of Purcellville to accept their \$40 million dollar plan for an intersection designed to accommodate County goals northwest of the town continue to struggle to show how their proposal will benefit Purcellville's residents.

GOVERNMENT

On Feb. 16 Loudoun County's Assistant Director of Transportation, Jim Zeller, and Jerry Mercalo, representing the County's traffic engineering consulting company Dewberry, attended the Purcellville Planning Commission meeting. Zeller and Mercalo presented their review of Planning Commissioner Ron Rise Sr.'s analysis of the town-wide traffic impact of the proposed Rt.7/690 Interchange. Mercalo said that Commissioner Rise Sr., who is both an aerospace engineer and a consulting executive, did accurately represent the Interchange Justification Report in his analysis.

Mercalo said the County's proposed Level of Service (LOS) outlook generally shows that five out of nine intersections will experience reduced delays. Validating Commissioner Rise Sr.'s analysis, Mercalo said, “There are these slighter changes in there, but there are not changes sufficient enough to change the letter grade, as you described.”

Mercalo was referring to the LOS, measured in seconds, as letter grades at some intersections. For example, a LOS of B indicates a delay between 10 and 20 seconds per vehicle, and a LOS of D indicates a 35 to 55 second delay, with an F revealing delays exceeding 80 seconds. Commissioner Rise Sr. said, “I actually show everything you are saying – it improves by three tenths of a second. You are saying I may have done this a little different than you have done it.”

Mercalo said that out of the intersections that improve, 2.5 out of nine change from an F to a D following the build completion. “Some did worsen from a B to a C but we still characterize

them as acceptable ... with a build condition ... while in the no build condition, there are some D's and F's that are resolved with the build condition.”

Planning Commission Chair Nan Forbes said they are seeing that most of the intersections LOS' remain unchanged from what would be the build year and post-completion. She said that 1.5 of 9 intersections worsen and 2.5 of 9 intersections improve.

“We're talking about an expenditure of millions of dollars to do this. Why? What's the point if nothing is changing? Why are we going through all of this if we are not getting any particular level of improvement?” Chair Forbes continued, “One of these intersections improves. The rest of them remain unchanged or they worsen. If that's what the data shows, tell me why this is something positive for the Town.”

Zeller said to Chair Forbes that he did not know “how you got here today, to live in Town.” Chair Forbes responded, “I went to nursery school here in 1952; I have been here awhile.” Zeller said that when he came to town “this evening the queue at Rt. 7/287 was backed up several 100 ft. into the main line of Rt. 7.”

“That intersection needs improvement,” said Forbes, “no question.”

Zeller said it came down to providing “another means to access the Town.”

Chair Forbes responded, “All of which would make perfect sense, if the data suggests it would make a difference. But the data suggests that it isn't going to make any at all.” She noted that “either the intersections remain unchanged or one intersection improves, some.”

Mercalo added that “it is anticipated that the volumes will be 10 percent lower with the construction of the interchange versus not having the interchange, because of the redistribution of traffic.” “There are intersections – particularly at 287 – that are anticipated to fail with very, very high delays if the 7/690 Interchange is not constructed,” he said.

Chair Forbes said that the new

interchange would put more traffic up toward the west end of Town and on west Main Street. Mercalo replied, “What's important, too, with the ones that worsen – that even though they worsen - there's one that goes from a B to a C, so they are still operating at acceptable levels.” He added, “No intersections of the ones that get worse, none of them drop below a level D threshold at which you would be concerned with operations.”

Commissioner Nedim Ogelman said, “What I hear you say here is you are taking a whole ton of cars out, and the LOS is still just as bad ... my understanding from reading the reports, the objective of this project is not to alleviate the traffic problems of the Town of Purcellville. It's to do things related to traffic going to the north of the rest of western Loudoun or Woodgrove High School. That's the objective of this and I think the point of the question, to me, is what the Chair is asking: how is this helping the Town of Purcellville?”

Commissioner Ogelman said the Interchange Justification Report indicates that the goal of the Rt.7/690 intersection is not to resolve traffic problems in the Town of Purcellville. “The project does what it said it's going to do. It's trying to maintain at most ‘do no harm,’ but I'm working for the Town of Purcellville as a volunteer, and I want to know how it helps the Town of Purcellville.”

Zeller said the project both distributes commuter traffic, and the people living in the western part of Town will have “a more direct route to their destination.”

Chair Forbes pointed out that there is also the Round Hill exit for people who live in the western part of Town.

Commissioner Rise Sr. said there is a misconception that the interchange fixes things in Town but that it does not do so. Mercalo said, “There's trade offs when you redistribute traffic. Where some intersections will operate with higher volumes – worse than they were before – but overall, when you sum it up

volumes are reduced by 10 percent and 5 percent on 287.”

Commissioner Ogelman said the LOS overall “in our intersections in Town is not really improving ... and the LOS at Kingsbridge won't improve ... There are three intersections that stay at an F with the build and no build.”

Mercalo said that some unsignalized intersections will still be in the F range.

Commissioner Ogelman said that the citizens who live in the Kingsbridge neighborhood are dealing with “a couple of those F's. They're wanting this to make their lives better. These are unsignalized, but they don't improve. If we are talking about spending \$40 million of our County's money ... it would be nice to make the lives of those citizens in Town better.”

Dale Lehnig, head of Engineering Planning and Development for the Town of Purcellville said the LOS with the Kingsbridge neighborhood will improve with the 7/287 improvements.

According to Mercalo with the Rt. 7/690 Interchange, the Kingsbridge neighborhood will still remain at an F, the delay in seconds will improve from 274 to 196. Speaking about the Rt. 7/690 Interchange, he said, “It is anticipated to improve the Rt. 7/287 westbound ramp signal from a LOS F to a LOS D.”

Said Chair Forbes, “What would it take to make it better than a D? When I was in school D was not a good grade. F was the worst grade. What would it take to have an actual satisfactory grade?”

Mercalo replied that “From a traffic perspective, it's the number of vehicles that are there and the number of lanes. You can either reduce volumes, or add travel lanes.”

“Even if you add travel lanes,” said Chair Forbes, “they will all narrow because you can't have a seven-lane highway running down Purcellville.”

Zeller concluded, “That's why you need solutions on both ends of Town.”

“But,” concluded Forbes, “it only gets you to a D for \$40 million dollars.”

Oikos

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

First Some Yogurt

You've probably seen the yogurt brands Yoplait, Siggis and Chobani. French, Icelandic and Icelandic, right? Wrong. These labels were just invented as marketing constructs and the words mean nothing.

Not so with my favorite yogurt, Oikos. Give credit to its producer, a huge French food products company, for using an actual and appropriate Greek word: *Oikos*, which means "home."

OPINION

Yogurt has no special relevance for rural Loudoun, but *oikos* is the reason so many of us work hard to protect what we have here. The countryside, the mountains and forests, the villages and country roads and farms are collectively our home. Our *oikos*.

I never knew that word until I was given a buried treasure.

The Granite Slab

Last August we visited family in my

hometown of Augusta, Georgia. While there, we passed my boyhood home and ran into the current owners, Greg and Susan. They took us on a tour of the house, many decades after I'd last seen it. Wow! It had been totally renovated and transformed to a fare-thee-well, yet it still brought pangs of memory.

As we walked around a terrace, Greg stopped, "Wait, I found something you might want." He had been working in a flower bed and unearthed an engraved granite slab. On it were Greek letters that roughly read, "EN TOYTU OIKOS ATAPHTO." Below that phrase were dates marking my parents' 20th year in the house, followed by each Houston's carved initials.

Greg had had the Greek translated: "Our Beloved Home."

A House is not a Home

I lived in my first house in Atlanta for two or three years. It was never home. My second house didn't quite rise to "home" status, though I lived there fifteen years. Later, I was stuck in Arlington for four years and I was generally unhappy there. Obviously, it was never my "home."

Then I moved here. Our place was first a small and scruffy farm to use on the weekends, but eventually I built a large addition and the place quickly became my permanent residence. It soon began to feel that it was my home.

How Did That Happen?

What conscious and unconscious factors made the place rise to *oikos* status? It brought peace and quiet, things foreign to me in Atlanta and Arlington. The unpaved road, the pastures and the view

of the mountains were visually delightful. Passers-by would often just drop in and chat, and that was something new to me.

I also took much pleasure with the house itself, which I had renovated and constructed to my precise taste. It was and has always been comfortable and attractive, and for the past 20 or so years has been full of good memories.

Thus, a pleasant location helps make a home. It helps if the house functions well and is aesthetically pleasing. A good family life is a big part of it. (I wonder if people in unhappy families ever consider their residence to be their homes. I also wonder if military children ever feel they have a true home, or even a hometown. An aside: A recent poll reports that only 22 percent of respondents consider their current abode to be their home.)

Location, Location, Location

That real estate bromide brings a focus to western Loudoun. Imagine a place that's quaint as well as quiet, where there are more horses than people, where history runs deep, where neighborliness abounds and which is beautiful.

This is also a place where one might know many blue-collar workers and many PhDs and many others in between. Imagine a place where you are welcomed and invited to participate in all manner of activities ... to become part of a community. Many of us, even those originally from cities, also sense a deep-seated connection to an agrarian past that seems to be in our psyches.

We don't have to imagine such a place; we live in one.

A Community of Complainers

Some Supervisors comment that western Loudouners make the great majority of complaints about land use issues and zoning. How could they be puzzled? Western Loudoun has vastly more undeveloped land than the rest of the county, so it is the biggest target for sprawl and commercialization.

A more fundamental reason we complain is that for most of us, particularly those who've lived here a while, this is our home, and our sense of *oikos* is deep-rooted.

There are also statistical factors. Western Loudoun has an older and well-educated population. Many of us are retired from professional lives and have the time to weigh in on issues.

Almost all of us have specifically chosen to move here for its history, ambience and community. This is not a transient place, from which we'd move back to Chicago or Boston or Augusta when children had finished school, but a place with permanence.

Our Oikos

Psychologists, architects, philosophers and others have theorized endlessly about the true meaning of "home." It's a great concept to ponder, but it's better simply to appreciate the beloved home that is western Loudoun and to defend it if we must.

In developing six million square feet of corporate office buildings around the south, Charles Houston dealt with a multitude of planners and politicians and their zoning codes. He lives in Paeonian Springs.

Blue Ridge LEADER & LOUDOUN Today

Publisher & Editor
Valerie Cury

Creative Department
Pam Owens, Layout/Design

Advertising
Boo Bennett
BRLBooBennett@gmail.com
571-508-9895

Sabine Bibb Tonya Harding
SabineBibb@gmail.com THarding455@gmail.com
571-437-9953 703-314-5200

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Editor:
(letters to the editor & press releases)
editor@BlueRidgeLeader.com

Special Editorial:
Laura Longley – editor@BlueRidgeLeader.com

Hot News Tips:
Valerie Cury, 703-943-8806
tipline@BlueRidgeLeader.com

Webmaster:
webmaster@BlueRidgeLeader.com


Mailing Address:
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Loudoun County School Board Fails Again

Dear Editor:

Just when parents in Loudoun thought the school board couldn't get any worse, they succeeded in reaching a new low. On Feb. 14, the school board voted 6-3 to NOT release the Blankingship & Keith report that was championed by the now disgraced and fired former superintendent, Scott Zeigler.

LETTER

The Leesburg rep, Ms. Ogedegbe, stated that if the report is redacted the remaining information would not be useful and also that releasing the report could infringe on student privacy rights.

Mind you, she campaigned on a platform to be transparent and stated publicly at a prior board meeting she wanted the report to be released. She could have

walked away a hero but instead fumbled miserably, crashed, and burned.

Atoosa Reaser, who is seeking higher political office, agreed with Ogedegbe and then incredulously went on to imply the report was insignificant because it was compiled under a corrupt superintendent. Convenient political statement to blame the former superintendent to save face in her future political career.

Ian Serotkin, consistently being the unethical and immoral person he is, hid behind attorney-client privilege and despite being an elected public official beholden to the voters, he chose to go down the path of self-preservation and protecting the institution rather than heal a very divided community. He is the institutional cancer in LCPS.

Mr. Beatty, Ms. Polifko, and Ms. Corbo

all gave compelling statements as to why releasing the report was the ethical thing to do and Ms. Corbo reminded the board that they have a responsibility to the voters because they were elected to represent them.

In the end many of the board members that were complicit with the coverups and the scandals remained silent, looking dumbfounded and voted to keep the report secret.

The tension in the room was palpable and attendees were clearly disgusted with the outcome, myself included. In the last two plus years, I have come to realize that this school board and administration have no desire to serve the parents/guardians, and children of Loudoun, and are only in it for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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Remembering Reeva Joan Clark

Reeva Joan Clark of Purcellville, formerly of St. Louis, MO and Moore, OK, passed away peacefully on February 3rd, 2023, at the age of 75.

She was the daughter of the late Fred and Thelma Williams. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date in Oklahoma. Her memory will be cherished forever by her loving family and friends.

Reeva is survived by her son, Jeffery Clark and his wife Lydia, her two grandsons, Matthew and Thomas, all of Purcellville; her brothers Phillip Williams; Darrell Williams, his wife and her best friend, Carolyn, their children Darrell Jr. and dear niece Rhonda and their families, all of Moore, OK; Fred Williams of Pensacola, FL; brother-in-law Basil Williams of Alton, IL; special niece Debbie Cooley and her husband Jerry of Orlando, FL.

Reeva was predeceased by two infant sisters, Berta and Lorretta, and an older brother, Gerald. She also leaves behind her sweet partner Ray, who provided endless companionship and helped make her last several years happy and joyful. She also cherished her friendships with Denise and Claudia.

Reeva was born on July 18th, 1947, in Peach



Orchard, MO and moved to St. Louis at a young age. She was employed by Tenneco and International Paper Company. Reeva moved to Moore, OK in the Fall of 1998 to be closer to her family. She spent several years in Columbia, TN before moving to Loudoun County, VA and making Purcellville her home with her son and his family.

Reeva doted on Jeff and always made sure he was well taken care of and surrounded by the love of his aunts, uncles, and cousins. As a fierce cook, she made sure no one ever left the table hungry and that every meal was prepared with love.

She enjoyed having dogs and was extremely proud to have her son join the U.S. Navy. She took pleasure in spending time at the Carver Center and making new friends. Watching her grandsons grow up was her greatest joy.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.loudounfuneralchapel.com. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made at Loudoun County Toys for Tots as she loved watching her grandchildren's faces as they opened presents at Christmas time.

Open Letter to Catoctin Meadows homeowners

By Tip Stinnette

I am writing this note to you as a friend, neighbor, and fellow CMHOA member. Over the past couple of weeks, the County has made some significant announcements we should

be aware of from both a neighborhood as well as Town perspective.

In short, the County has withdrawn their applications for development of the Fields Farm Park on the North side of Route 7, has purchased 142 acres of property to the West of 33rd Street and behind the West end Country Club Road properties, and remains committed to moving forward on the Rt 7/690 interchange as being "important to the regional transportation network."

To be clear, these announcements signal a County strategy to expand metropolitan Eastern Loudoun County development

into rural Western Loudoun County. Moreover, the strategy puts CMHOA right smack in the middle with an interchange to our North and a Rec Center to our South creating an untenable cut-through traffic challenge for our neighborhood and creating a significant traffic volume impact to the Town on the West end of Main Street.

"Stopping one would not stop the other" is what the County staff said when asked what would be the impact to the interchange if the County moved the Fields Farm development to recently purchased land to the West end of Town directly behind the West end County Club properties.

It should be noted the County's commitment to expanding the "regional transportation network" is such that they would eliminate the Rt7 Eastbound exit on to 690 to avoid having to

LETTER

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »



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BOS vote to purchase land for the Western Loudoun Recreational Center

In the last remaining minutes of the six and a half hour Feb. 7 Board of Supervisors Business Meeting, the Supervisors came out of executive session and Supervisor Tony Buffington (R-Blue Ridge) made a motion to authorize the County Administrator to execute a purchase agreement to purchase 142.71 acres for a Western Loudoun Recreational Center.

GOVERNMENT

The County voted to buy the property, comprised of Purcellville West LLC at 58 acres and Harry Byrd Hwy, LLC totaling 142.71 acres from Chuck Kuhn for \$6,859,902. It is contingent on a feasibility analysis for the intended use of the property.

Said Buffington, "I am extremely happy to announce that if this deal goes through successfully, we will have successfully identified the site for the Western Loudoun Recreational Center. This is a huge deal for western Loudoun County.

"I can't tell you how many times I have been asked about the site." He said it is centrally located and not far from Franklin Park.

In an email after the meeting Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) wrote, "Should I be elected to represent the newly drawn Catoctin District, I will be extremely honored to represent the citizens in Purcellville and look forward

to continue to work on the Western Loudoun Recreation Center. Because we expedited this project in the FY2022 budget we will have \$14 million in FY2024 to begin project design. We need to be ready to go so the residents can start enjoying the benefits of this facility.

"The Recreation Center will bring amazing amenities to Western Loudoun including the Aquatics Center with a competition pool, diving pool, leisure pool, spa and spectator seating areas. A number of other amenities can also be included like a rock-climbing wall, outdoor fitness area, running track and sports courts.

"Our priority right now is land acquisition. We are not at the juncture of deciding what happens on the rest of the property at the moment.

"Preservation of our open space and agriculture in Western Loudoun is critical to me so that is always in the back of my mind. However, in my opinion it is too early to make those decisions."

The property is located west of the Town of Purcellville and borders Catoctin Meadows and Country Club Estates on one side. The property has a floodplain, wetlands, and the South Fork of the Catoctin Creek traversing the northeast quadrant of the property. The property is across from the Loudoun Golf

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Shoppes at Main and Maple seek SUP for a drive-thru

BY VALERIE CURY

The owners of the Shoppes at Main and Maple Avenue shopping center, located at 745 East Main Street in Purcellville, are planning to build a 5,000 sq. ft. restaurant in the location behind Walgreens.

At the Feb. 16 Planning Commission meeting, the applicants, White Star Investments, asked for a Special Use Permit to allow for drive-thru use for the restaurant. The restaurant space is permitted in this area, which is zoned Mixed Commercial. The Special Use Permit requires a public hearing at the Planning Commission level and a recommendation to the Town Council, who will vote either to accept or deny the drive-thru addition.

GOVERNMENT

The drive-thru proposal would consist of two order boards with speakers and two lanes with a queue of 14 vehicles. As the applicant does not have a tenant for the space yet, the hours of operation are not yet known.

The shopping center currently has three drive-thru operations, which include a financial institution, a pharmacy, and a car wash.

The shopping center has four entrances located along North Maple Avenue and on East Main Street.

The applicant is also proposing to build a permitted Medical Office building of up to 24,220 sq. ft., projected to be completed by 2024. The location would be in the back of the current shopping center.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

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\$100K Preliminary Report delayed for future meeting

VALERIE CURY

A proposed budget amendment for a Preliminary Engineering Report and Assessment of the existing water plant was recommended by the Director of Public Works, Jason Didawick, at the Feb. 14 Purcellville Town Council Meeting.

The cost of the report is \$100,000 – with \$75,000 coming from Water Reserves and \$25,000 from the Water Operating Budget. Vice-Mayor Chris Bertaut asked to delay the motion to approve the preliminary study pending more detailed information.

GOVERNMENT

Council Member Erin Rayner, without commenting on the proposal said she was ready to vote and made a motion to move forward with the study. The motion failed 5-2 with Mayor Stan Milan, Vice-Mayor Chris Bertaut and Council members Carol Luke, Ron Rise Jr. and Boo Bennett voting no. The issue will come back to Council with staff providing more details regarding the study.

Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut asked why senior management wasn't putting the proposal out to bid. Dale Lehnig, Director of Engineering Planning and Development explained that the Town is allowed to go up to \$250,000 without going out to bid. They are proposing to have an on-contract consultant perform the work. "It takes a lot of staff time" to go out to bid noted staff.

She said that it was more efficient to "use our on-call

contractors to do this kind of work."

Bertaut asked, "More efficient from the standpoint of staff time, not necessarily from the standpoint of total cost to complete?"

Lehnig responded, "Staff time is money."

Bertaut asked if it would be suggested to the consultant for them to structure the report to address the grant requirements "block by block this is how we get it to match up with a particular type or quality of the grant? Or is it incumbent upon the staff to then adjust the report and then turn it into a grant application?"

The purpose of the study said Lehnig, "is to meet Virginia Department of Health requirements for a Preliminary Engineering Report, which is necessary to go after the grants for the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill]."

Council Member Carol Luke said since this is a company who regularly does this for the Town, "Why would it be so difficult for them to repeat it?"

Bertaut asked if the grant had a ceiling associated with it. Staff responded that they would look into it.

Council Member Ron Rise Jr. asked, "How was the \$100,000 determined? How did you come up with that number? Would the \$75,000 in reserves get it done?"

Lehnig said that the company, CHA sent a proposal – then they put down their estimated hours, and as they use those hours up we get billed.

Rise Jr. asked if there was an incentive to come in under the bid amount.

Bertaut asked if Council could get a cost estimate before "we vote on this?" He also suggested getting a cost estimate for a Request for Proposal, "that way we know what that means in terms of staff time."

Lehnig reiterated that it takes a lot less staff time doing it the way it is proposed, "It's a lot less time; RFP's take a lot of time."

The report would entail a comprehensive evaluation of inventory from the Water Treatment Plant and the time left on equipment and what needs to be replaced and when. The last engineering evaluation was done in 2007 and has a shelf life of 20 years. With four years to go before the end of the 20-year period, which found the Town's WTP to be in "good to very good condition, staff is ready for another report with recommendations for improvements for the next 30-year service life.

The grant application from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill is due in April 2024.

Town Council votes to terminate Mekariski's employment contract

At the Feb. 14 Purcellville Town Council meeting, a clarification was made to the Feb. 10 meeting concerning the resignation of Town Manager David Mekariski.

GOVERNMENT

Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut said that since the last meeting where the Town Council voted to accept Mekariski's resignation, both the Town and Mekariski had failed to reach an agreement regarding the terms.

"It has come to our attention that the parties did not have a mutual understanding of the terms," Bertaut stated. "Therefore, further action is required because the Town Council does not wish to accept the conditions that were attached to the Town Manager's proffered resignation."

"The Town Council instead will terminate the Town Manager's employment contract in accordance with its terms dated March 13, 2018."

Mekariski received a 60-day written notice period commencing Feb. 14 and extending through April 15, 2023, with paid administrative leave.

According to his contract, Mekariski will receive a lump sum payment paid by the Town after the administrative leave ends. This will include severance pay equal to six months of the Town Manager's current annual base salary, plus a payout of 157 hours of accumulated annual leave to be paid at the Town Manager's current base salary.

He will get dual coverage health insurance from Feb. 14 to April 30, 2023. The Town will pay COBRA continuation coverage from May 1 to Oct. 31, 2023.

The motion to terminate Mekariski's contract passed 7-0.

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Public invited to comment on fair housing plan for Loudoun

The Loudoun County Department of Housing and Community Development invites residents to provide comment on the draft regional fair housing plan for Loudoun County. The public comment period will last until March 31. Residents are also encouraged to attend a public hearing on March 8, to learn more about the plan and provide feedback in person.

Loudoun County is one of eight participating jurisdictions that is working collaboratively to develop a regional fair housing plan, also known as the Regional Analysis of Impediments, to Fair Housing Choice. The process is being coordinated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Employers invited to participate in Leesburg Career Expo 2023

The Town of Leesburg's Department of Economic Development will host a Career Expo for students and recent graduates on Sunday, March 26. The event will take place at Tuscarora High School, 801 N King Street, in Leesburg, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Local businesses are invited to participate by submitting a request form at www.leesburgva.gov/careerexpo.

There is no cost to participate. Please note that submitting a request to participate is not a guarantee of acceptance. Priority for participation will be given to businesses located within Leesburg Town limits and business sectors that offer diverse employment opportunities. Notification of acceptance will be sent no later than Friday, March 10.

The expo is a great opportunity to hire local students and recent graduates to fill part-time, full-time, seasonal and intern positions.

For more information about the expo, please contact Business Development and Retention Manager Melanie Scoggins at mescoggins@leesburgva.gov or 571-271-1206.

Under the U.S. Fair Housing Act, people are protected from discrimination when they are renting or buying a home, applying for a mortgage, seeking housing assistance or engaging in other housing-related activities.

Loudoun County is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to "affirmatively further fair housing." The regional analysis will fulfill this HUD requirement and aims to increase collaboration, innovation, and effectiveness of strategies to further fair housing throughout the region. The plan will become final in 2023.

Public Comment Period

The public comment period will gather

input from Loudoun County residents on the draft fair housing plan. The public comment period is open until March 31. To submit comments:

Email: fairhousing@mwkog.org

Phone/Voicemail: 202-962-3794 or TDD to 202-962-3213

Mail: MWCOG, 777 N. Capitol St, Washington, D.C. 20002, Attn: Fair Housing

Public Hearing

Loudoun County will host a public hearing on March 8, at 6 p.m. at the Department of Housing and Community Development office located at 106 Catoctin Circle SE in Leesburg. The meeting will be held in the Olmstead Room on

the first floor. The program will include an overview of the Loudoun County sections of the fair housing plan including goals, past achievements, and data on affordable housing and barriers to fair housing in the County.

Anyone interested in speaking during the public hearing is encouraged to sign up in advance by contacting the Department of Housing and Community Development at 703-737-8323 or housing@loudoun.gov.

To request language interpretation or accommodations for those with disabilities, contact the Department of Housing and Community Development at 703-737-8323 or housing@loudoun.gov. Five days advance notice is requested.

Hemstreet presents FY24 proposed budget

In mid-February, County Administrator Tim Hemstreet presented a proposed budget for the Loudoun County government to the Board of Supervisors for Fiscal Year 2024, which begins

July 1, 2023. The budget totals \$4.2 billion in appropriations for the County government and Loudoun County Public Schools.

The proposed budget has been prepared at a real property tax rate of \$0.87 per \$100 of assessed value, which is 2 cents below the current real property tax rate of \$0.89 per \$100 of assessed value.

While the proposed tax rate for FY 2024 is lower than the current tax rate, the proposed rate is 6.5 cents above the overall equalized rate of \$0.805, which is the rate at which the average real property owner's tax bill would remain flat year over year.

The homeowner's equalized tax rate is \$0.83. This means that while the proposed tax rate is lower than the current tax rate, the average homeowner's tax bill would increase if the proposed tax rate is adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

The proposed budget executes the planned reduction in the general personal property tax rate from \$4.20 per \$100 of assessed value to \$4.15 per assessed value for tax year 2023. This reduction is part of a strategic effort to ensure a diverse revenue base.

As vehicles are assessed at the general rate, vehicle owners in the County can expect some relief on their vehicle tax bills.

"In accordance with the Board's

guidance, the proposed budget provides for the opening of new facilities, base budget adjustments, supports the county's Capital Improvement Program and compensates employees at a market rate," Hemstreet said.

The FY 2024 proposed budget includes:

- \$14.3 million in base budget adjustments to continue to provide core services.
- An increase of \$27 million for employee compensation, which consists of:
 - \$14.5 million to provide a 6 percent merit increase for the general county workforce.
 - \$4.6 million for a one step-increase and a 3 percent adjustment for uniformed Fire and Rescue personnel, for an average pay increase of 6 percent.
 - \$6.4 million for a one-step increase and a 6 percent adjustment for uniformed Sheriff's deputies, for an average pay increase of 9 percent.
 - \$1.5 million for a hiring and retention bonus program.
 - The addition of 40 positions to open new facilities and support the County's CIP.
 - \$6.5 million for affordable housing, which continues the dedication of the equivalent of one-half cent of the real property tax rate to affordable housing needs.

At the direction of the Board of Supervisors, Hemstreet also prepared

two "increase options" for consideration. Both options include a real property tax rate that is one-and-a-half cents higher than the proposed budget, which would be \$0.885 per \$100 of assessed value.

This tax rate, if adopted, would generate an additional \$19.4 million for the Board's consideration. These options are intended to help identify which resource needs by the County and Loudoun County Public Schools could be funded, if adopted.

- **Increase Option 1:** Under this option, the county government would split the net new local tax funding with LCPS at a 60/40 rate.
- **Increase Option 2:** Under this option, the county government would retain the additional revenues generated by the higher real property tax rate.

School Board Budget Request

The Loudoun County Public Schools requested a total of more than \$1.1 billion dollars in local tax funding for FY 2024. Hemstreet's proposed budget includes an increase of \$69.1 million in local tax funding over last year but leaves a gap of \$6.2 million from the School Board's adopted budget.

In addition, due to an error in the Commonwealth of Virginia's revenue calculations, the resulting revenue shortfall of up to \$7.4 million could prompt the School Board to ask for additional funding.

The proposed FY 2024 budget was developed in a challenging economic climate. Significant factors influencing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Adult drug treatment court graduation

Loudoun County celebrated an Adult Drug Treatment Court graduation on Wednesday, Feb. 22, in a ceremony hosted at the Loudoun County Courthouse. Drug treatment courts are specialized court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system offering judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and strict supervision of substance-abusing defendants in drug and drug-related cases.

The primary goal of drug treatment courts is to reduce recidivism rates. The

program is documented to reduce costs to Virginia taxpayers when compared to traditional case processing.

Drug treatment courts represent the coordinated efforts of a variety of government agencies and community partners to break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction and crime.

The drug treatment court participant undergoes an intense regimen of substance abuse and mental health treatment, case management, drug testing and probation supervision while reporting to regularly scheduled status

hearings before a judge.

Participation in drug treatment court is voluntary and available to a limited number of non-violent offenders who have substance use disorders. Candidates are carefully assessed through an established application process. Participants are required to fulfill the terms and conditions of the drug treatment court.

The Loudoun County Adult Drug Treatment Court is an intensive supervision program that provides support and services from a collaborative team of county agencies and partners, including:

- Department of Community Corrections
- Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services
- Loudoun County Circuit Court
- Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit Court
- Loudoun County Sheriff's Office
- Loudoun Office of the Public Defender
- Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney

Applications open for the 2023 Loudoun Spring Farm Tour

The Loudoun Spring Farm Tour is back this year, offering farms and rural businesses in Loudoun County the opportunity to connect directly with the public and showcase local products.

Loudoun's Farm Tour is a signature event in the County that draws thousands of visitors from the D.C. region throughout the weekend and generates buzz for participating farms.

There is no cost to participate, and Loudoun Economic Development will promote all participating farms across its marketing channels.

If you are interested in having your farm or rural business appear on this year's tour, which is on May 20 and 21,

fill out an application at biz.loudoun.gov/farmtourapp. Applications are due March 6.

Joining the in-person tour requires that farms be open and available to the public between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on May 20 and 21 and provide an educational activity for visitors who stop by throughout the weekend.

"Any Loudoun farm selling local products would benefit from joining the Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Marketplace, which is designed to advertise your products that are available to shoppers," says Buddy Rizer, Executive Director of Loudoun Economic Development. "Our team offers no-cost help to onboard your listing, market your

products, and drive sales for your business. Pairing the Marketplace with the Farm Tour is a great way to build your customer base today."

About Loudoun Farm Tour

The Loudoun Farm Tour began in 1993 when it was called the "Loudoun Colors Tour," intended to showcase the leaf change in Loudoun. Since then, it has grown into a business-centric event, annually drawing thousands of residents and visitors from all over the D.C. region that showcases Loudoun's farm diversity.

Farms offering in-person experiences, such as animal meet-and-greets, farm

demonstrations, property tours, food, and other seasonal activities, tend to do well on the tour.

All Loudoun farms who sell local products, whether Farm Tour participants or not, are encouraged to join the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace. The Marketplace is an online directory that links consumers directly with Loudoun farms and the products they sell.

Loudoun Economic Development is finalizing a Marketplace 2.0 to be in place prior to the Spring Farm Tour. This will include upgrades to informational and visual representations of farm partners and improves the user experience for consumers.



Deadline for 2023 Governor's Fellows Program March 5

Applications are now being accepted until March 5 for the 2023 Governor's Fellows Program. The Governor's Fellows Program is an opportunity for rising seniors and recent graduates to get a firsthand look at the executive branch in action.

Since 1982, fellows have worked alongside the Governor's Cabinet and staff, learning about state government and assisting in essential work for the Commonwealth.

"We are excited to welcome the next generation of leaders to kick off their careers with our administration," said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. "The Governor's Fellows Program is a unique opportunity for Virginia students to experience public service first-hand and gain essential work skills for their future."

During their time in service to the Commonwealth, Governor's fellows have the opportunity to learn from special guest speakers who are leaders in state government and beyond. Fellows also experience state government on the road, visiting state government agencies and historic sites that have shaped our past and are improving our future.

"I can't say enough good things about the Governor's Fellow Program. It was transformative for both my personal development and professional career post-graduation," said Ciara Rascona, 2022 Governor's Fellow. "I would highly recommend it to anyone looking for the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and grow. I gained lifelong friends while having the opportunity to work across various secretariats that gave me valuable insights into Virginia's government."

"It was the best thing I did after graduation. I worked with Cabinet members to hone in on my academic skills and apply them in an arena that had real implications, connecting theory to practice. I felt valued as a learner and I'm grateful for everyone involved for teaching me about the nuances of Virginia's government, turning me into a leader and policy expert who is now in the administration full time," said Calvin Hogg, 2022 Governor's Fellow.

Qualified applicants must be rising college seniors, graduating seniors, or graduate students. All Virginia college and university students are eligible to apply. Virginia residents who attend out-of-state colleges and universities are also eligible. Both public and private college and university students are encouraged to apply.

The selection of fellows is based solely on merit. The Fellows Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran status.

The deadline to apply for the Governor's Fellows Program is Sunday, March 5. Interviews will begin on March 13. Applicants will be advised on decisions beginning on April 14. The program runs from June 1, through July 28.

To apply, visit the Governor's Fellows Program website <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/fellows/>, and send the required recommendation letters to the address:

Governor's Fellows Program
Post Office Box 2454
Richmond, Virginia 23219

If you have any questions, email govfellows@governor.virginia.gov.

Istrefi announces candidacy for Loudoun County School Board

Arben Istrefi has announced his candidacy for the Loudoun County School Board for Sterling District. Istrefi said, "As a parent, educator, and social entrepreneur, I am deeply committed to public education and I believe that every student deserves an outstanding education, regardless of their background or circumstances."

COMMUNITY

"I am running to strengthen the Loudoun County Public Schools, to represent the unique needs and voice of the Sterling District, and help LCPS push the boundaries of what we thought was possible for our children's education," Istrefi said.

Istrefi believes Loudoun County educators need to be supported and empowered as they help students become confident thinkers, resilient young adults, and lifelong learners. "I believe that we are unconditionally responsible for the educational journey and success of all students in our public schools," Istrefi said.

Raising academic achievement, championing educators, and supporting



all students equitably and inclusively are critically important to him.

Istrefi said he is also deeply concerned about the fragmentation in the community and

its effects on student achievement. He believes that "how we lead is just as important as the issues we care about." Istrefi intends to listen and engage, support educators, and keep his focus on students.

As a first-generation American, Istrefi's parents immigrated to the United States when they were in their late teens. He was born in the United States but struggled as an English language learner in his early years. He believes that his experiences as a first-generation American in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith family informed his values and helped shape who he is today.

Istrefi serves as the Chief Operating Officer at CYDEO, a tech education company that focuses on creating

tomorrow's tech workforce by re-skilling individuals, specifically those coming from disadvantaged, underrepresented, or historically marginalized communities.

Before joining CYDEO, he spent nearly fifteen years as an IT and management consultant and community organizer. He also co-founded and served in leadership positions in a number of non-profits. His passions lie in educating, uplifting, and mentoring youth across culturally diverse communities.

Istrefi obtained his Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Seton Hall University's John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and is an alumnus of Harvard Business School.

Istrefi was recently included among the 2023 NOVA 40Under40 Honorees, a recognition of 40 regional leaders under 40 who are making a difference in their communities through their work, volunteerism, and service.

For more information, go to www.arben4sterling.com.

53rd Annual Bluemont Fair seeks poster/t-shirt design

Organizers of the 53rd Annual Bluemont Fair, Sept. 16 and 17 in historic Western Loudoun County, invite artists of all ages and abilities to submit designs for consideration for this year's unique Poster and T-shirt.

Artwork should be mailed to: Bluemont Fair Poster Design Competition, P.O. Box 217, Bluemont, Virginia, 20135 and must be received by April 21. To arrange to hand-deliver art please contact chair@bluemontfair.org.

The theme for 2023 is The Blue Ridge Mountains and Bluemont's Pastoral Views. Artists are urged to be inspired by details that relate to the scenery around the village such as fields, streams, stone walls, grazing cattle, as well as the Blue Ridge Mountains, which are currently threatened by unchecked commercial and residential development permitted by zoning ordinances last updated in 1993.

Zoning changes in 2023 are imperative to protect this vital natural

resource and the life it supports.

Artists' interpretations can be as broad or narrow as they choose, however design and colors should be suitable for replication on Bluemont Fair's distinctive poster (14"x22"), T-shirt, and merchandise. The request is for design only, as an illustration or graphic. Details will be added after the winning design is selected. Past designs can be viewed at www.bluemontfair.org.

Artists' name should be on the back of the art. Please also include contact information and a brief biography for inclusion in publicity. The selected artist's name will be printed on the poster and their work acknowledged in Fair publicity. Multiple entries per artist permitted.

Individuals requesting return of their submission should also include a self-addressed, stamped mailing receptacle. For further information call 540-554-2367, or email chair@bluemontfair.org. See www.bluemontfair.org for more info.





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7th Grade students encouraged to enter “If I Were Mayor” essay contest

The Town of Leesburg invites local 7th grade students to enter the Virginia Municipal League’s “If I Were Mayor” essay contest.

Students are asked to identify a problem within their community, gather feedback from community members, and offer a proposed solution. Essays should be typed and between 300 and 500 words.

“This is a great opportunity for our local 7th grade students to imagine themselves as mayor, identify an issue, and problem solve for their community,” said Leesburg Mayor Kelly Burk. “I can’t wait to read the great ideas that will come from the essays. If there is a really

good idea maybe we can work together.”

Students must live in the Town of Leesburg, which is considered a VML municipality. All entries must be received by end of day on Friday, March 3. Visit <https://www.vml.org/education/essay-contest> for full details.

Regional winners selected from around the state will each receive a \$150 gift card and a plaque. One statewide winner chosen from the regional winners will receive a \$250 gift card and a plaque. The runner-up from the region that receives the statewide award will become that region’s winner.

Winning essays will be featured in the May issue of VML’s magazine *Virginia Town & City*.

Ida Lee to host 26th Annual Spring Bling

Handcrafted items will be on display from more than 60 local and regional artisans. Shop for one-of-a-kind items from unique art and home décor, bath and body items, jewelry, wood crafts, florals, gourmet foods, and other miscellaneous products.

The crafts show offers a great opportunity to find the perfect gift for upcoming occasions, such as Easter, Mother’s Day, graduations and end-of-school teacher appreciation.

Admission to the show and parking is free. For more information, call Ida Lee Park Recreation Center at 703-777-1368 or visit www.idalee.org.

Leesburg’s Department of Parks and Recreation will host the 26th annual Spring Bling, A Hometown Fine Arts and Crafts Show, on Saturday, March 4 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The indoor event will be held at Ida Lee Park Recreation Center in the main hallway, basketball courts, and aerobics room.

Registration is open for the 2023 Cloud Run

In honor of International Data Center Day, the 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter invites residents of all ages, businesses, and schools to join the data center industry on Saturday, March 25 from 8 a.m. to 1 pm in Sterling, for a fun, interactive, and exciting community affair.

The 2023 Cloud Run is an event that invites the community to run with the people that build and support the IT backbone of the cloud. Visit www.7x24dc.org/2023-cloud-run to learn more.

Start the day with a 1-mile Fun Run and 4.99999k run/walk around Data Center Alley and stay for the full experience. Once the race is finished, there will be a post-race awards ceremony and celebration with food trucks, a vendor expo, and

live music.


If exercising is not on the table, bring the family to experience the Data Center Discovery Zone hosted by the Data Center Coalition. The Discovery Zone will be open from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will have hands-on activities and interactive opportunities to learn from experts about career opportunities in data centers, including scholarships, internships, trade programs, and other pathways into the data center industry.

The race requires a paid registration, but the Discovery Zone is free to the public.

To register for the race, visit www.7x24dc.org/2023-cloud-run.

Online registration closes on Thursday, March 23 at 8 p.m., however late

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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Down On Main Street

BY LIZ TENNEY JARVIS

For fifty-plus years, Jerry Walsh has watched the world go past the large window of his shop, Purcellville Shell on Main Street. The Town of Purcellville has gone from a bustling agricultural hub with family-owned businesses and residences sprinkled across the land to a town now that would be almost unrecognizable by those living here a century ago.

At the Walsh family-owned station, for example, a house once stood where the gas pumps are currently placed. The home's owner passed away and the land was sold. Jerry's father, James, then opened Purcellville Esso on June 1, 1959 originally as a service station and Standard Oil distributor. When Jerry got out of the air force in 1970, his father said it was time for him to take over the business from Jerry's cousin, ultimately running it by 1972.

Soon after Jerry took over, and as the station was expanding, there was a house that became available located directly behind the service bays. Jerry had plans to buy the building. However, when it came to bid on the property, Jerry soon discovered that Ed Nichols, Jr. was determined to buy the property and create a parking lot for the town, a lot which is still utilized today.

"We all called it 'Nichols-ville' as they owned everything and ran everything. I will say that things got done and they were tight with their money so items for use by the town were usually purchased used ... like a truck, not a new truck but a used one that was just as good. Nowadays, new people move here and they usually want all new," Jerry muses.

Having been in the area for his entire life, Jerry has seen the difference between the "then and now."

Jerry Walsh was born in Winchester, VA but grew up in Loudoun County. His wife Nancy was from Midlothian, VA before deciding in 1973 to move to Loudoun County to be a teacher. She taught biology at Loudoun Valley High School. Nancy and Jerry laugh about their initial meeting spot, The Huddle, a fairly happening place located where Tari Orthodontics now stands on East



Main Street. Nancy insists that it was a restaurant while Jerry indicates that it was bar.

They were married in 1975 and had two children, Laura and Ken, both of whom grew up in and worked at the station. As Nancy and Jerry head into "semi-retirement," much of their repair and service station work is being referred to Walsh's son who also has his own shop – somewhat carrying on the family tradition of passing down the business to the next generation.

Over the years, Standard Oil became Esso, then Exxon, Mobil and finally the

Walsh station opted for Shell. What began as only two service bays, grew to include more gas pumps and a barn-like structure where State inspections could be conducted.

There were many mechanics who came and went, especially as cars and trucks evolved, their engines becoming more complicated and computer enhanced. The children of several Purcellville families had their first jobs at the station. David Wiley, son of the late Jim "Doc" and Betty Wiley, worked there, for example. While there was no shortage of gas stations and dealerships in town with their own pumps and service bays, Walsh did well. "Everyone had an account here, all of the businesses, we serviced most all of them," Jerry adds.

Jerry likes to say that the large picture window looking out to West Main Street is his "TV set." The view is the same and yet the changes do come with the seasons and the years. He says that Main Street was more narrow decades ago and once up the hill, trees grew along the edge of the road creating almost a canopy.

Jerry recalls the Greyhound Bus stopping across the street. Out in front of

Jerry's big window is a well-worn bench that is a gathering place for a chat or a spot to wait for your vehicle. It's actually one of the two Greyhound benches that passengers used while waiting on a bus. Bus riders could purchase a ticket a couple of doors down at Edwards drug store right at the intersection of 21st and Main (where Purcellville Family Restaurant is currently located).

Across from that location, Jerry says, "There was a fire sometime in the late 1960's, maybe 1970 and every single copy of the Blue Ridge Herald was lost in that fire. Walter Kemp lost so much."

Fires in a small town necessitated that everyone help out. Purcellville lost much of its downtown in two devastating fires in the early 1900's.

Watching the small Town of Purcellville grow, Jerry states that there were no shopping centers until 1968 when the first one was built at the site of where The Shoppes at Main and Maple (formerly the Loudoun Valley Shopping Center) is now. As many of the businesses have changed hands, Nancy and Jerry reminisce as to what used to be ... referring to residences and farms as to "the old – place" or often pointing out that where one shop is now in operation, there used to be something else.

Their view outside of their large window also included helping/watching many customers over the years. Actor Robert Duvall would get gas for his car there as he lived in nearby Philomont for a time. Nancy says, "People would ask, 'Are you looking at Robert Duvall?' and I would say no, that I was actually marveling at how clean his car was, given all of the spring rains and the mud!"

When asked about "the good old days," Jerry replies, "These are the good old days! We are living in them now. Ten years from now, this will either be a town that has forgotten itself and won't preserve any of what people like about living here. Or it will be a historic town that has been worth saving."

But everyone is going to have to work at that." Nancy adds that it would be a shame for it to become Anywhere USA. As they both look out from behind their desk, the same location for the past five decades, they realize that they are the oldest business in town second only to 109-year-old Nichols Hardware. They also know that this is one of the few places left where the local history is shared. Whether seated inside on their waiting chairs, while customers come in and out, or sitting outside on the old Greyhound bus bench, local Purcellville legends and lore can be learned.

Local schools invited to submit designs for art project

The Town of Leesburg Commission on Public Art and the Friends of Leesburg Public Arts invite local schools to be a part of the Town of Leesburg's "Paint the Plow" art project. This year's theme is "Around the Town".

Three designs will be chosen and painted onto Town of Leesburg snow plow blades, which measure 12' wide by 3' high. The artwork will be featured in the 2023 Leesburg Kiwanis Halloween Parade and the Town's Christmas and

Holiday parade, in addition to being visible while plowing Town streets during snow events.

Artwork must be an original student design and students must paint the plow. School staff may help direct the selection of students and designs but students must implement the project. Up to three designs may be submitted from each school however, only one design per school will be chosen. Submissions are due no later than Thursday, June 15.

All submissions will be reviewed by

COPA during their July 2023 meeting. Winning artist(s) will be notified as soon as their design has been selected. Winning designs will be presented to the Leesburg Town Council in July.

Following Council approval, plow blades will be delivered to the selected schools and must be painted no later than Friday, Oct. 14. Each winning school will receive \$125 towards painting supplies.

The Town of Leesburg will schedule a pick-up date and will store them

for exhibition. Online voting will take place prior to the Halloween parade. The school that receives the most votes will win \$500 for their school program. Second place will receive \$250 and third place will win \$100.

Artwork should be submitted in .pdf or .jpg format and sent to COPA Liaison Leah Kosin at lkosin@leesburgva.gov no later than 5 p.m. on Thursday, June 15. Submission guidelines and details are available at www.leesburgva.gov/publicartnews.

HEMSTREET PRESENTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

development of the budget include:

- **Forecasted Economic Conditions:** The forecasted rates of growth in employment for Loudoun County as well as the nation, state and region are positive, but expected to be lower than 2022. This weaker forecasted growth reflects the downside risk associated with a potential recession.
- **Population Growth:** Although the number of residents added annually has slowed, the County's population continues to grow and is expected to increase by nearly 120,000 new residents through 2050, which will continue to bring new and increased demands on county programs and services.
- **Real Property Portfolio:** The forecast for higher interest rates is anticipated to lead to slowdowns in residential construction and a flattening of residential assessment values, as well as potential decline in commercial assessment values and changes in assessment methodologies enacted by the Virginia General Assembly.

The FY 2024 proposed budget's revenue outlook is based on this potential commercial property decline in value to best manage the risk to revenue collection in the second half of FY 2024.

- **Evolving Local Tax Revenue Composition:** The proposed FY 2024 budget makes progress toward the tax revenue policy recommendations from County staff that the Board of Supervisors bring balance to the General Fund's tax revenue composition. Under the policy, real property tax revenue should approach 60 percent of total General Fund local taxes in the coming years. For FY 2024, the proposed budget calls for nearly 53 percent of General Fund local tax revenue to come from real property tax revenue. A decade ago, more than two thirds of General Fund tax revenue was generated by real property tax. For the past several years, taxes from personal property, especially computer equipment, have been the largest funding mechanism to support the County's expenditure growth.

LPF RECEIVES GRANT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

VMHC awarded \$402,500 to fellow history organizations.

Funds can be used for a variety of purposes including preservation, publications, artifact acquisition, research, conservation of artifacts and educational programming. Eligible recipients include Virginia non-profits, educational institutions, and state recognized Virginia Indian tribes. The Fund was made possible through the generosity of Dominion Energy and others.

"The Commonwealth History Fund has quickly become one of the best tools we have as your state history museum to support history education and preservation efforts taking place in your local community," said VMHC President and CEO Jamie Bosket. "We are so very thankful for this opportunity to invest in the work of our fellow history organizations, now and for years to come."

We are incredibly honored to be one of the eleven compelling projects chosen to receive funding from the Commonwealth History Fund. Through this amazing opportunity, we will be able to give back to our communities by implementing a project that will help us to continue telling the story of Virginia and have a lasting impact on future generations.

The Lincoln Preservation Foundation

plans to use this funding to replace the original 138-year-old roof of an endangered African American church site, addressing its urgent structural issues and safety concerns. The roof reconstruction project is a critical step forward in completing the bricks-and-mortar restoration of the historic structure and will allow interior work to begin.

The Grace Heritage Site, originally known as Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, is in the small Quaker village of Lincoln, in western Loudoun County. Lincoln lies within the Goose Creek Historic District, a mostly rural landscape that consists of almost 10,000 acres.

In 1982, the Goose Creek Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The area was first settled by Quakers who opposed slavery. It had strong Underground Railroad activity and a large Black population. Lincoln Preservation Foundation, working along with the descendant community, is dedicated to saving this important landmark and cultural resource. The Grace Heritage Site is a Loudoun County treasure that, despite the test of time, still has much to teach us about the African American story.

More information on The Commonwealth History Fund can be found at VirginiaHistory.org/HistoryFund.

SHOPPES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Town resident Darleen Mowry said she opposed the proposed drive-thru part of the restaurant. "I believe we already have a traffic problem on Main Street. There's just too much traffic on Main Street to even think of having a drive-thru restaurant where it is being proposed."

Eric Mowry said, "They have not taken into consideration the traffic either on Main Street or in the parking lot itself." He noted that with the hours of operation of a drive-thru taken into consideration, "it's not a good idea." He also said it wasn't a good idea to bring "another mess with a drive-thru to Town" with housing around it.

Purcellville developer Casey Chapman weighed in, saying he thought "the application should be considered." He didn't think the drive-thru would have any "traffic significance."

"The restaurant is already permitted – so some may not want to come in and get their food due to COVID," he said.

Pat Nevin asked the Planning Commission "to be in charge. Do not leave it up to people who are building." She encouraged the commissioners to consider "the widths of the roads," as well as "the width of the parking spaces ... so that we do not end up with another area that looks like it does within the Harris Teeter Shopping Center."

She reiterated that the shopping center has narrow roads and small parking spaces.

"Don't leave it up to the developer," Nevin said.

Chair Nan Forbes asked how many cars are expected to come through with the drive-thru as opposed to a stand-alone restaurant? The project engineer replied, "We actually didn't study that option, because it is not part of the proposal."

Commissioner Ron Rise Sr. pointed out that with the configuration of the drive-thru, a car would have to make a 180-degree turn to get aligned into the stack line. "It won't be a good stack," he said. It also would take multiple movements to get aligned into the drive-thru.

The queuing study used by the firm was done in 1995.

Commissioner Nedim Ogelman said, "I hear you mostly saying the case here is [the traffic] is not going to get worse [than the Chick-fil-A] ... but we are driven by this notion that we are trying to improve the health, safety, and welfare of our community."

Ogelman then asked how a drive-thru would improve "the health, safety, and welfare of our community?"

Matt Leslie, a land use planner with Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh, said, "The conclusion here is that adding a drive-thru to this restaurant has a very minimal impact in the overall picture ... Having this pad site in the shopping center increases commercial tax revenue ... and having a new place to eat."

BOS VOTE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

and Country Club on business Rt. 7 where west Main Street ends, just outside of the Town's boundaries.

According to Kraig Troxell Communications Manager for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services the Western Loudoun Recreational Center was part of the New Park/Facility Visionary Projects in the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services Master Plan released in 2021.

The project was accelerated by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors during the FY2022 Capital Improvement Program development process.

Funding for the Western Loudoun Recreation Center is slated for FY 2026 (July 2025). The bidding, procurement, and pre-construction phases will occur in late 2025 with the estimated construction to start following the pre-construction phases.

For more information on the phases of construction visit the Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure Phases and Milestones page.

For construction of a recreation center, it is estimated to take 30-36

months for the center to open to the public. The design of the building and the site of the building will dictate the schedule. The entire project's schedule from planning to completion is several years.

The County standard for recreation centers is an 83,000 Square Foot facility (per the FY2021-2030 Adopted Capital Needs Assessment), but the final size of the Western Loudoun Recreation Center will be determined during the design process.

The major difference between the proposed Western Loudoun Recreation Center as opposed to the existing facilities is that it will not have preschool classrooms as there is already a preschool program serving the Purcellville area at Loudoun Valley Community Center. Claude Moore, Dulles South and Ashburn are a combined Recreation Center and Community Center.

The size and features of the Western Loudoun facility will be developed through a series of public input sessions with community stakeholders. Otherwise, the features and amenities present will be similar to other PRCS recreation centers.

As public outreach efforts begin, a project page will be launched at loudoun.gov/capitalprojects.

Tree of Life's Still Waters program offers so many activities

Still Waters, which is one of the many services offered through the non-profit Tree of Life Ministry, provides various social activities for people with intellectual differences. The mission is to prevent isolation and allow partners to simply enjoy time together while building life, social skills, and independence.

COMMUNITY

Partnering with Still Waters offers opportunities for kids to have fun while enjoying the sense of freedom and independence that come with these types of group activities.

There is truly something for every interest, from Pickleball with Western Loudoun Pickleball, to spending time with friends at the Altitude Trampoline Park in Leesburg, to Zumba, bowling at the Branch in Leesburg, art activities, a puppet ministry, hiking, and various holiday dances with DJ's and non-stop fun.

Begun approximately 12 years ago, Still Waters has grown tremendously and has become a critically important part of the western Loudoun community. As the program continues to grow and serve more partners, the offerings become more diverse as the community becomes more involved.



Digital Difference DJ services, PRCS Adaptive Recreation, Loudoun Libraries, Purcellville Police Department, Donkey Meadows, Dominion Tea, and Woodgrove High School are just some of the organizations supporting the Still Waters partners.

Additionally, various local churches have been instrumental in providing facilities and volunteers to help make some of these activities possible. Purcellville Baptist, Hamilton Baptist, St. Andrew Presbyterian, and St. Peters Episcopal all actively support Still Waters.

Sonya Haynes, whose son Chance has been participating in Still Waters programs for two years, said, "Chance wakes up every morning and asks what Still Waters Program will he be going to tonight?"

"Can we do this again tomorrow?" "I love this so much and it helps me so much I love having friends to do things with." These

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

LCPS hosting opioid and fentanyl awareness sessions

Loudoun County Public Schools is hosting opioid and fentanyl awareness sessions to inform parents and community members about the dangers of fentanyl, a powerful opioid that has significantly contributed to overdoses – both fatal and nonfatal – in the U.S. and northern Virginia.

LCPS' information sessions will feature LCPS staff and community partners who are substance use or mental health specialists:

- LCPS' Student Assistance Services will explain their role in supporting parents and students, review the signs of drug use and how to reach out for help.
- Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and the Leesburg Police Department will outline the scope of the opioid problem in Loudoun County, share relevant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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NOVA Parks celebrates first Black Combatant for the Union Army

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and the Loudoun Branch of the NAACP celebrated Lewis A. Bell, believed to be the first Black American to fire a gun in support of the Union Army during the

COMMUNITY

American Civil War at the Battle of Ball's Bluff, despite laws forbidding it.

On Saturday, Feb. 18, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis Randall, Loudoun NAACP President Pastor Michelle Thomas, and other local leaders participated in a Black History Month Commemoration at Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park, to unveil a sign about this key historical figure.

"It's inspiring to learn that Lewis A. Bell took up arms in support of the Union right here in Loudoun County," said Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair Randall. "This is just one story of our many Black American leaders who created our American history."

The Battle of Ball's Bluff was fought on October 21, 1861, after Union troops moved on Leesburg, Virginia. In the violent battle, the Union Army lost nearly half their troops, including many who were captured. Lewis A. Bell, a free African American camp worker, was one of the men taken as prisoner.



Library of Congress, and interpretive sign, NOVA Parks.



Pastor Michelle Thomas

Founded in 1959 as a conservation organization, NOVA Parks (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority) represents three counties and three cities — Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Falls Church, and the City of Fairfax. The regional agency manages 35 parks with 12,380 acres of parkland.

Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park, managed by NOVA Parks, is the site of one of the largest Civil War engagements in Loudoun County.

Located in Leesburg, Virginia, the 223-acre park features a United States National Military cemetery established in 1865 to honor 54 Union soldiers who fought in the battle. Both the battlefield and cemetery are designated as National Historic Landmarks. Ball's Bluff National Cemetery is also a part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. The park offers signs about the Battle of Ball's Bluff, an interpretive trail, and a captivating view of the Potomac River.

Richmond newspapers describe a man named Lewis A. Bell as one of the captives from the battle. Before his capture, Bell is thought to have taken part in the battle; the 1870 edition of the *History of Worcester in the War of the Rebellion* says Bell "supplied himself with arms and loaded and fired with great spirit."

"NOVA Parks is telling the comprehensive, holistic history that makes all of us Americans. Featuring these important stories in our regional parks unites all Northern Virginians by creating a space that welcomes and engages our entire community," said Loudoun County NAACP President Pastor Michelle

Thomas.

The interpretive sign being unveiled is part of a park history series focused on telling a more inclusive and complete history of Northern Virginia. It ties in with NOVA Parks' new 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, including a pillar to foster Belonging by developing programs to engage the various cultures and communities represented in Northern Virginia.

"I am so very honored to dedicate this historical plaque in memory of the inconceivable courage and tenacity of Mr. Lewis A. Bell," said Cate Magennis Wyatt, Chair of the NOVA Parks Board.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 >

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Middleburg Humane Foundation Names Price as Executive Director

The Middleburg Humane Foundation announced that Sally Brecht Price has been named executive director. MHF, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, is devoted to the rescue and rehabilitation of abused animals and conquering the cycle of abuse through humane education.

COMMUNITY

Price has more than 30 years of experience assisting multiple nonprofit organizations as executive director and/or development director. She was director of development and executive director of an animal shelter in Charleston, South Carolina for two years.

While there, she developed relationships with key donors that resulted in major gifts; improved policies and procedures and established a board committee structure. She was also instrumental in leading the organization through a difficult transition.

Most recently, she was executive director of Land Trust of Virginia for six years where she tripled the staff and the amount of funds raised. She also increased the number of conservation easements each year. LTV now holds more easements than any other private land trust in Virginia. While at The Ocean Conservancy, Price was instrumental in bringing in millions of dollars—far exceeding fundraising goals.



“We are very excited to welcome Sally as executive director,” said Josh Muss, chairman of the board of the Middleburg Humane Foundation. “Her experience, accomplishments and skillset will be a huge asset to our organization.”

Middleburg Humane Foundation has a new state-of-the-art facility in the western part of Marshall that has become a model for other rescues across the U.S. It is one of the region’s largest diverse animal shelters housing cats, dogs, equines, livestock, and small mammals.

The foundation recently implemented a plan of strategic growth in grant-funded programs, development and outreach. This plan

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 >

Viking Theatre presents *The Lightning Thief*



Three main characters are, pictured left to right, Bridget McNally, Ben Demase, and Roguen Pricer.

Loudoun Valley High School’s Viking Theatre presents *The Lightning Thief*: The Percy Jackson Musical. Based on the best-selling novel by Rick Riordan, the musical features an original rock score and stunning action scenes (book by Joe Tracz and music and lyrics by Rob Rokicki).

The Lightning Thief tells the electrifying tale of Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon, who must find Zeus’ lightning bolt to prevent a war between the Greek gods. With uncontrollable powers and

monsters in hot pursuit, Percy’s thrilling adventures are brought to the stage, March 9, 10, and 11 at 7 p.m. and March 11 and 12 at 2 p.m.

Tickets are free for LCPS students and \$10 for all others. Tickets are available on-line through BookTix, and there is a link on the LVHS Viking Theatre page (<https://loudounvhs.booktix.com/>). Loudoun Valley High School is located at 340 N. Maple Avenue, Purcellville.

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FALSE CLAIMS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Are we promoting transparent and open government that reflects clearly communicated goals and aspirations that are communicated to us by our fellow town residents? Or are we advancing goals we do not care to publicly discuss?” Bertaut asked. “Are we staging stunts for the press and social media? Just food for thought.”

Milan said the past month and a half have been filled with “drama, conflict, and secret meetings befitting an epic movie.”

“When I first came on Council in 2020, I asked staff what kept them up at night? They eloquently expressed those concerns,” he said.

“I didn’t ask myself this question until this year after I took office as Mayor of Purcellville ... I believed that addressing staff concerns – all would be fine. Little did I know that merely addressing staff concerns would not be enough ... I had to address the hidden agendas of those on Council which made no sense to me,” Milan continued.

“I have said it before, there are two councils – the formal one that you see before you now – and the other that works in the shadows manipulating staff to do their bidding.”

Milan said there was an election and it did not turn out the way they wanted. The council seat did not become vacant until Jan. 1, and at the first meeting on Jan. 3, the majority on council appointed Ron Rise Jr. to fill the vacancy.

“I am disappointed in the action of Town Council Members Rayner and Williams, but not surprised,” said Milan. “They have launched a media campaign claiming the majority of this Town Council has made a decision not to have a special election, when no such motion was made.

“We notified the courts of what we had done, and the length of time would be according to the law. There was a supposedly “friendly” amendment made by Council Member Williams saying that the Town has decided to vote that there would be no special election.”

This “friendly” amendment was “denied as it would have made the motion illegal.” Yet Williams and Rayner supported it.

“The Town Attorney failed to say anything about this “friendly” amendment, Milan continued, saying there was no willful intent to implement any illegal action by the members of the Town Council mentioned in the court filing.

Milan explained that the Virginia Municipal League and the Town Attorney indicated the language

referred to in the state code is vague and subject to interpretation.

“In fact, our Town Attorney – after meeting with Council Member Carol Luke and myself – stated she could argue the point either way. We asked her to do so. She did not.”

He said Council also asked her to call the Virginia Municipal League to verify that what Bertaut, Milan and others present with them were advised during the VML’s Local Government Day, was correct—no special election needed.

“The Town Attorney did call them, but she stated to us that the person she spoke with said ‘Yes she told us to send the letter to the courts.’”

After further review, however, the VML came back in writing and said it was an error.

“This idea that the Town Council is doing something illegal is erroneous,” said Milan.

Town Attorney Sally Hankins said she has given the Town Council consistent advice at least three times in writing regarding the special election.

“So what you are saying,” said Milan, “is that you were misquoted and what you told us verbally didn’t happen. So only anything you present that is accurate is what you put in writing. What you told Council Member Luke – and that’s why I took someone with me, to validate what was said – didn’t happen?”

Luke later confirmed that the Town Attorney said she could argue the case either way. “She just needed to know what we wanted her to do, as she represented us,” she wrote.

Milan concluded that he would like everything in writing from now on.

As of press time, Council Members Rayner and Williams have filed a motion for nonsuit.

Letter to the Court from the Town of Purcellville Jan. 30, 2023

“Please take notice that a vacancy on the Purcellville Town Council arose on January 1, 2023, upon the resignation of Council Member Milan, who resigned his seat to take the position of Purcellville’s Mayor. On January 3, 2023, the Town Council voted to appoint Ron Rise Jr. to fill the vacancy for a term commensurate with the term allowed by law for such an appointee. Council Member Rise was sworn-in and took his seat on January 10, 2023.”

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

than good.

In my opinion, Authoritative Parenting is most often the best parenting style and approach, and this is also supported by the research on child development. Authoritative Parenting is egalitarian or democratic parenting where there are rules, but the parents are more responsive and engaged when their children ask questions.

Parents with this style take a more nurturing approach to their children over a punitive one when expectations are not met. Authoritative parents foster a supportive and relational climate that encourages their children to problem solve and think for themselves.

In these homes, rules can be discussed for the child’s increased understanding, and not just for the child’s adherence to the parents’ demands. Several research studies have shown that the authoritative parenting style is the superior parenting style.

Children from these homes tend to be well adjusted and are poised to do the best in life academically, socially and career wise. Between the main parenting approaches, these children have the highest self-esteem and the greatest confidence. They also tend to be more independent, self-assured, competent and socially responsible.

I think the first thing you should do is discuss your concerns with your husband in an

open, respectful and non-judgmental way. You could start by praising your husband for the things you like about his parenting, and then lovingly move to the topic of what you don’t like.

You could also let him know that his parenting approach is driving a wedge between you, him, and his boys. I encourage you to be open to what your husband shares with you. You write that you can be a softie with your sons. Perhaps there are some changes you could make, which he would find helpful and supportive.

Parenting is difficult at times, and it can become especially difficult when we aren’t in sync with our partner. There is no reason that being firm or being loving need to be mutually exclusive ideas in parenting.

With patience, respect, and improved communication, I’m hopeful that you and your husband will get to a better place in the co-parenting of your children. If things don’t improve or worsen with your efforts over time, I recommend that you and your husband meet with a therapist who has the expertise in parenting education and guidance.

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.

REGISTRATION OPEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

registrations will be available during packet pickup and on race morning.

Proceeds of this race will benefit Dulles South Soup Kitchen and the 7×24 Exchange DC Chapter Scholarship Fund. Dulles South Soup Kitchen provides freshly made meals to those who need to feed their families, provide opportunities to volunteer for those who need to serve and provide an environment of food security in the community. The 7×24 Scholarship Fund assists students in pursuing their education goals while on track to a rewarding career in the data center industry.

LETTER: SCHOOL BOARD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

themselves. I hope that these actions wake people up to the depth of immorality and absence of ethics in the school board and that voters choose anyone (Democrat, Republican, Independent) but the current board who may seek reelection.

NOTE: Rumor has it that Ian Serotkin will be running for reelection in the at-large seat and Mahedavi will also seek reelection. Last night’s vote was a nail in their coffins symbolizing the end of their political careers and that of Ms. Ogedegbe as well.

*Michael Rivera
Leesburg*

LCPS HOSTING OPIOID, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

statistics and provide pertinent information about fentanyl and opioids.

- The Williams Center for Wellness and Recovery will address effective treatment programs for teens and adults.
- The Prevention Alliance of Loudoun will share information about Rapid REVIVE!, an opioid overdose program that teaches the signs of an opioid overdose and how to respond with naloxone (more commonly known as NARCAN).

The first information session was held at Park View High School on Feb. 11. Additional sessions will be held in March at the following locations:

- Woodgrove High School, 36811 Allder School Rd, Purcellville, VA
Tuesday, March 7, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Broad Run High School, 21670 Ashburn Rd., Ashburn, VA
Thursday, March 23, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

LCPS is prepared for the risk of potential overdoses by stocking NARCAN at each middle and high school and training staff at each school to administer the treatment. All School Resource Officers for Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office and Leesburg Police Department carry it as well. LCPS is also increasing training opportunities for school administrators, directors of school counseling and athletic directors and to learn how to administer NARCAN.

“It is imperative that our community educate parents, provide strategies on how they can talk with their children, and let them know of the available school-based support and community resources,” said Jennifer Evans, LCPS Director of Student Mental Health Services.

TIM JON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

and regular as a heartbeat. I cannot help but imagine what these experiences would have done for a young Will Shakespeare – but then he was born with his own interior rhythm.

So, I sat – that morning – in the parking lot at Loudoun County Milling for just a matter of minutes, actually – yet something about that experience was able to transport at least a part of me across a thousand miles and more years than I care to mention. Who knows how long my soul enjoyed a visit to that far-off world? I guess a portion of my spirit is still there, in a way.

Now – I don’t know if they still even have freight trains that stop at my old hometown mill, or if it’s still in operation; and, yes – I could find out easily enough – but for me, the satisfaction is being able to hear those familiar “Chug-chug-chug-chug’s as if I were still in my childhood bedroom on a quiet summer evening, not with everything all right with the world, but at least a lot more things not wrong with that world – at least to my finding.

So, what is the essence of that change

in all the intervening years in our existence? A matter involving relativity and personal point of view, among countless other details.

And no – the answer to universal equanimity is obviously not to simply install more grain elevators across our nation, for examples of more stability in our lives; but, here’s a thought: the 20th century mythologist, Joseph Campbell repeatedly – and cryptically – advised: “Follow your bliss.” My interpretation of this brief command is, “What would fulfill our lives, individually and collectively, as living human beings in these times on planet Earth?” Yeah, that one takes a bit of chewing.

But I’ll offer my own well-distilled advice, gleaned from years of experience, some very hard: simply, “Look inside.” Or, as another great 20th Century mythologist, Bob Dylan wrote, “I’ll let you be in my dreams if I can be in yours.” So – we look inside – but not just within ourselves. As Shakespeare’s Oberon cryptically quipped to his (temporarily) estranged love, Titania in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “It lies in you.” Chug-chug-chug-chug.

NOVA PARKS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

“Let us all take a moment and remember the very conscientious, intentional choices this man was making. At this early stage in the war, the question of slavery was still undecided. The South had succeeded because of their interest in continuing the slave economy, but the North had not yet made the choice of full emancipation for

all. Lewis A. Bell understood what was at stake and showed us all the way.” Wyatt continued. “Let us all remember that this man’s right to fight with the Union Army for his freedom was not officially permitted until the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.”

Visit novaparks.com/ParkHistory for more stories uncovered in NOVA Parks.

OPEN LETTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

deal with our HOA on the 14-acre parcel while they construct the rest of the interchange. While this strategy would avoid creating a direct impact to our property it would not avoid causing a flood plain impact to our HOA and Town.

The facts above point to the need to consolidate a Town position as it is now apparent an HOA vote is not needed to proceed with the interchange without the Rt 7 Eastbound exit, which would eliminate having to negotiate with the HOA on its 14-acre parcel.

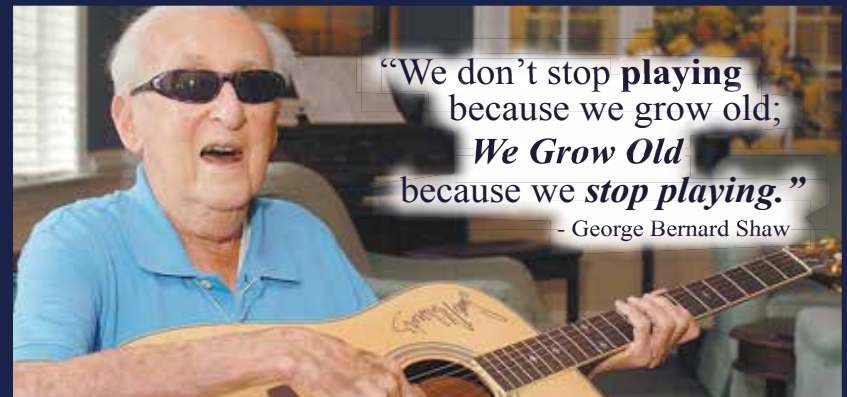
To this point your HOA Board has attempted to stake out a neutral position on the interchange while advocating for the preservation of our 14-acre parcel. Given the County intent to construct the interchange and develop the 142 acres behind the West end of Country Club Road, creating untenable cut-through traffic for our neighborhood while significantly increasing the traffic on Main Street, I am hard pressed to see a middle ground for us or the Town.

We should stake a position as a Town that says “No” to Eastern Loudoun County metropolitan encroachment into rural Western Loudoun County. We should leverage the FEMA process on the interchange flood plain impacts to delay the interchange and put Federal SMART SCALE funding at risk. We should not offer to connect the 142-acre development to our Town water and sewer system making the proposed development more expensive and untenable. And we should vote for Town and County representatives that see things the same way we do.

I know this is a strident position proposal but I do believe it is one we should discuss. The future of our neighborhood, Town, and rural Western Loudoun County are at stake.

To that end I am recommending we hold an HOA Board Meeting with an invitation to our HOA members to discuss on March 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Train Station, mark your calendars and details to follow. My hope is the Board will agree and you will attend.

It might be cold outside but we sure are having fun inside!



“We don’t stop playing because we grow old; *We Grow Old* because we *stop playing.*”
- George Bernard Shaw

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MATH IN MOTION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the classroom to be used as decorative inspirations and examples for next year's group of geometry students.

Ms. Pritz is a 9th-year veteran teacher at Blue Ridge Middle School. She uses project-based learning to make the many geometry concepts come to life. She said, "I started doing projects like this the second year I was here. Each year, I revisit project lessons to make them more authentic, educational, meaningful, and fun."

Geometry students had positive comments about the project. Kieran Rhoton said, "My family helped me, it was fun, and I got to show them what I learned." Bryna Sheehan followed with, "It's fun to make objects you like while learning how to apply proportions." Waylee Hyett added, "Once you realize how complicated simple objects are you learn a lot."

TREE OF LIFE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

are just some of the comments repeatedly heard from the participants in the Still Waters Program

The program also provides an outlet for parents to connect and help foster friendships for their children outside of Still Waters. Everyone is welcome.

If you know someone who would like to participate in Still Waters, either as a partner, volunteer or community supporter, contact Cindy Welsh at cwelsh@tolministries.org or call 540-454-2863.

Follow local news and information 24/7 on our website: blueridgeleader.com

MIDDLEBURG HUMANE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

builds on the successes of MHF's fundraising events expanding in Loudoun, Prince William, and Fauquier Counties in addition to the annual gala.

"My career focus has been to help non-profits to grow and evolve into the best organizations possible," said Price. "I look forward to working with the Middleburg Humane Foundation team to bring the foundation to the next level, making a positive difference for even more animals and people living in our area."

Price resides in Linden, Virginia. She holds a bachelor of arts degree from The State College of New Jersey. She has been an animal rescuer her entire life and spends her spare time with family and her myriad of rescued cats and dogs.

For more information about the Middleburg Humane Foundation go to www.middleburghumane.org.

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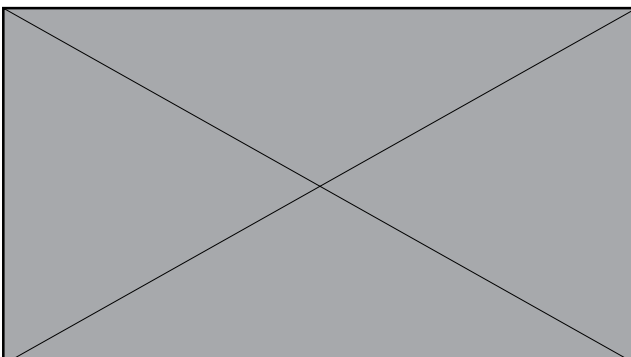
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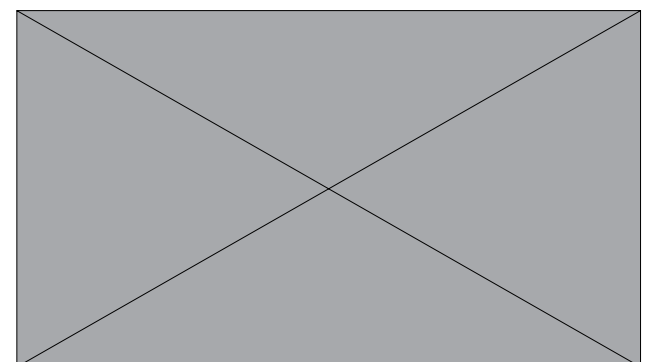


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