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MARCH 2025

BOS narrowly give green light to Greenlin Park data center proposal

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

After an intense discussion during the Board of Supervisors Business meeting on Feb. 19, Loudoun County Supervisors voted 5-4 to narrowly pass a motion approving the application for proposed data center Greenlin Park.

The new application for the Greenlin Park data center project—located south of Leesburg along the Dulles Greenway, on the west side of Sycolin Road—ignited debate among county officials at Wednesday’s meeting.

The proposal by JK Land Holdings seeks to rezone 83 acres of land, currently classified as Transitional Residential-10 and Joint Land Management Area-20, to an Industrial Park designation. This change would permit up to 1.4 million square feet of data center and utility substation use, reduced from the original proposal’s 2.1 million square feet.

That 1.4 million equates to roughly 16,867 square feet per acre and reflects a significant industrial investment as the county moves to require board review for every data center proposal—a policy shift that effectively doubles oversight compared to past practices.

The application covers three distinct concept plans: a four-building option averaging 350,000 square feet per building, a three-building option around 466,667 square feet per building, and a two building option at roughly 700,000 square feet per building.

Despite differences in building count and layout, all options maintain the same overall floor-area ratio, ensuring consistency in density and design. In addition, the project now features a 10% reduction in the initially proposed square footage and a cap on building height at 55 feet, down from the original

proposal’s height of 60 feet.

During the Feb. 19 board meeting, county staff expressed newfound support for the Greenlin Park application after a series of modifications to the original proposal have introduced several technical upgrades aimed at minimizing environmental impact and ensuring energy efficiency. The staff report for the Greenlin Park agenda item detailed these new amendments for the Board’s review.

The revised plans mandate the installation of advanced generators, with comprehensive analyses of natural gas options to improve efficiency. “The applicant has proffered Tier 4 generators, or Tier 2 generators with selective catalytic reduction systems, ensuring that generator emissions meet or fall below EPA standards.”

New measures target a reduction of



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ambient noise by at least 5 decibels in sensitive areas. “Noise from data center and associated mechanical equipment is to be limited to 55 dB(A) at the lot line of any adjacent single-family dwelling, with both pre- and post-construction noise studies required.”

These noise measures are coupled with enhanced physical screening to buffer the development. ” The applicant has proposed additional landscaping measures, using existing trees and native shrubs to

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Planning Commission Chair unfairly criticized amid agenda issues and interruptions

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Feb. 13 Purcellville Town Council meeting, three Council Members expressed disapproval of how Planning & Community Development/Zoning Administrator Director Summer Wilkes was treated at the Feb. 6 Planning Commission meeting. Council Member Kevin Wright criticized the behavior he

witnessed, describing it as a mix of arrogance and ignorance. The controversy arose from Wilkes unilaterally adding a vote for Chair and Vice Chair to the agenda, despite Planning Commission bylaws specifying that the vote shall take place at the second meeting in March. The agenda was created without the Chair’s input, and it also ignored items

he had requested to be put on the agenda. Additionally, Wilkes’ repeated interruptions during the Planning Commission’s discussion created a tense and unprofessional atmosphere. Council Member Carol Luke, who was the only Council Member in attendance watching the Feb. 6 meeting, disagreed with the interpretation of some of her colleagues.

Council Member Erin Rayner agreed with Wright, and she told Wilkes she supports her and “it was not appropriate what happened to you.”

Council Member Caleb Stought said the code of conduct was not upheld at the meeting. He said he watched a point of order used by Wilkes, “a very standard Roberts Rules go ignored.” He said what happened was “outrageous.”

So what happened?

Town staff did not follow the proper agenda development process for adding the Chair’s request to add items to the

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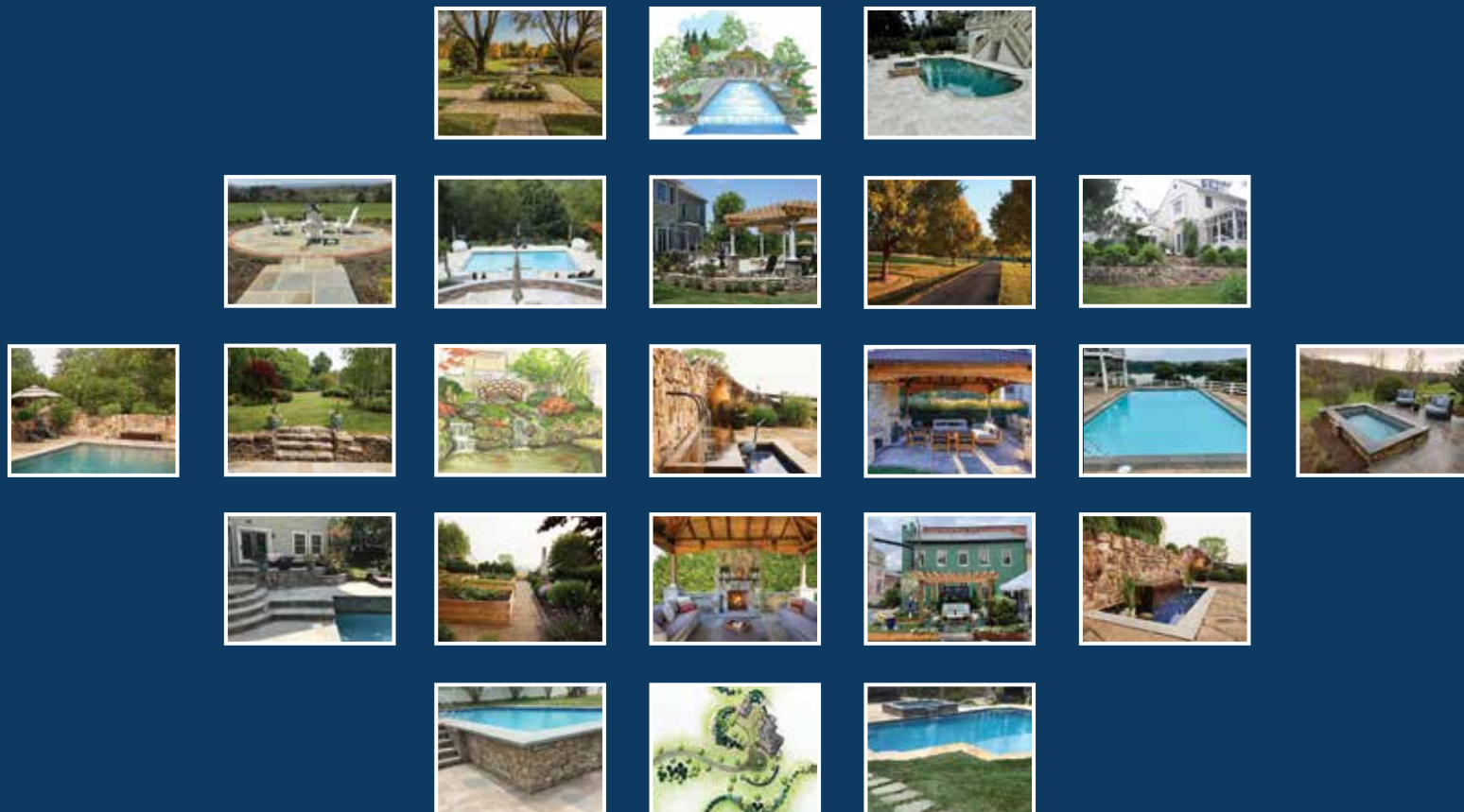
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Virginia Valley Vipers tip off in Purcellville as basketball action begins March 1



Virginia Valley Vipers get ready for their season. Pictured here with Mayor Chris Bertaut and Council Member Carol Luke.

Get ready sports lovers for the Virginia Valley Viper basketball season which begins on Saturday, March 1. Game times are 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with Sunday games starting at 3 p.m. The home games will be played at Patrick Henry College located at 10 Patrick Henry Circle in Purcellville.

The Virginia Valley Vipers relocated from Winchester to Purcellville last fall and will start their inaugural season March 1. The season continues through May.

The professional basketball team is part of a league which consists of 38 teams and is owned by Tina and Rodney Culbreath along with their son, Rze.

The home games, which are played

at Patrick Henry College start Saturday March 1 at 7 p.m. The next game is Sunday, March 2, at 3 p.m., Saturday, March 15, at 7 p.m., Friday, March 21, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, March 30, at 3 p.m.

The home games for April are as follows: Saturday April 5 at 7 p.m., Sunday April 6, at 3 p.m., Saturday April 12, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 27, at 3 p.m.

The May home games are Sunday, May 11, at 3 p.m., Thursday, May 22, at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 24, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, May 25, at 3 p.m. For more information go to VirginiaValleyVipers.com.

The Virginia Valley Vipers conducted a training camp on Saturday, Feb. 8 at the Purcellville Baptist Church where

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A Bunch of Stuff

The Missing Billions

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

How much does the Board plan to spend? It's hard to know. There's an adopted budget of \$6.9 billion on the County website, but Supervisors now bandy about a much lower budget, \$4.7 billion. The \$2.2 billion difference needs to be explained. I'll try.

Is the \$2.2 billion difference merely an apple-and-oranges comparison? Perhaps the \$4.7 billion number excludes schools. You've probably seen the County's spending illustrated as a dollar bill divided into vertical tranches, one for operations, another for public safety, and so on. The largest slice—54% for schools.

But where did the \$4.7 billion figure come from? Board and Staff could be using the lower number to obscure their fiscal profligacy from voters. Loudoun County spends \$15,700 per citizen, shockingly more than the \$9,100 per citizen spent by Fairfax and Prince William counties. (According to Google, that was an apples-to-apples comparison, and school system costs were always included.) Perhaps

that hit home with our politicians, who hoped to avoid voter backlash.

Thus, subtract \$2.2 billion from the \$6.9 billion budget and—Presto!—Loudoun would seem to spend exactly what those other two counties do.

The School Budget

The replacement Park View high school is budgeted at \$221,000,000. Wearing my former commercial developer hat, I find that number to be absurd. Each year LCPS presents its ideal budget to the Board of Supervisors. Negotiations ensue, but in the end LCPS is always given boatloads of money. Many believe that largesse is squandered.

Years ago, I asked my father to double my allowance. He replied, "No." Supervisors should say that to LCPS.

Out of Power—Soon

As data centers shift to power-hungry AI chips, we'll face a shocking power crisis (Pun.) This is getting much attention at the state level but it will be a miracle for meaningful reforms to survive data center lobbying in Richmond.

Local measures might not be available, given this from our 2019 General Plan:

"Electrical and communication services are provided under the purview of state and federal agencies. This limits the County's ability to mitigate certain impacts."

This language is probably correct since the Zoning Ordinance doesn't cite power requirements as an impact to be considered when evaluating land use proposals.

Bummer.

Senate Bill 1449 might be a baby step in the right direction by requiring applicants to submit expansive evaluations of impacts the data center may create, but the bill does not grant counties a full range of items—especially power needs—it can use in evaluating data centers proposals. Thus, the Dillon Rule kicks in: Counties have only those powers specifically granted to them by the Commonwealth.

Real bummer.

Our Water Resources are Drying up

(Pun, again.)

A respected hydrologist reports that our groundwater is now some fifty feet lower than in the past, due to unchecked development of every kind. Conservationists have long proclaimed, "No more, no more!" But nobody listened. An agriculture working group is studying the water problem and may release its

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From Hong Kong to Upperville – A USPS Journey

Dear Editor:

Employees are the foundation of the Postal Service's success. We differentiate from competitors thanks to a deep understanding of the communities we serve. Those same communities are as diverse as our workforce which make us one of the most trusted federal agencies in the nation.

LETTER



As the new Postmaster of Upperville I am proud to work for the United States Postal Service and an example of the many opportunities this organization offers.

I moved from Hong Kong in 1989 and began my career in 2003 as a rural carrier associate in Nokesville, VA. For the next 12 years I expanded my experiences and took advantages of details in leadership and was awarded the position of supervisor, customer services in Tri-City Gainesville.

From 2017 until 2023, more opportunities and experiences presented themselves which provided me the knowledge for a Postmaster position.

The Delivering for America plan was introduced 2021, to transform the Postal Service from an organization in financial and operational crisis to one that is self-sustaining and high performing.

Focusing on employees is a major initiative to retain, develop and empower front-line supervisors with better tools, more resources and a training program tailored to our needs.

Annually career conferences are scheduled in each of the 50 districts nationwide and over the past three years, more than 33,000 postal employees have attended those events. I have attended several and it helped me advance into new roles by meeting leaders who inspired and engaged in my career.

For more information you can visit our hiring website at www.usps.com/careers. On behalf of the entire Upperville Post Office team, thank you for your continued support as we look forward to Delivering for Upperville and America in 2025 and beyond.

Savina Feng
Postmaster, Upperville

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Doing right by eliminating Loudoun's \$25 vehicle license fee and doing right by Loudoun's Towns

BY LOUDOUN COUNTY CATOCTIN DISTRICT SUPERVISOR, CALEB A. KERSHNER

It's budget season in Loudoun County so you may have heard that the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted to remove the annoying \$25 Vehicle License Fee (VLF) on motor vehicles, motorcycles and any trucks located in the County outside of a Town. Eliminating the county VLF

OPINION

results in approximately \$7.8 million in foregone revenue to Loudoun County that will be absorbed in the FY2026 budget.

But what about the impact on Loudoun's Towns? Six of Loudoun's seven towns currently implement a VLF on town vehicles. If county residents benefit from this fee elimination shouldn't town residents also receive this relief? My answer is yes,

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Perhaps America can learn from Martin Luther King's teacher

BY FLOYD NELSON

Shortly after 6 p.m., a single bullet fired from a high-powered, big-game hunting rifle split the early evening air in Memphis, Tennessee and found its intended mark. But it wasn't a deer, elk or bear that lay mortally wounded on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel on April 4, 1968, it was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and in less than hour after the bullet struck, the man who has become

OPINION

one of the most celebrated ministers in American history was dead.

King's death rocked the entire nation. There were numerous arrests, injuries and even, deaths as more than 100 cities erupted into violence.

President Lyndon Johnson declared a National Day of Mourning. The nation was angry and severely grief-stricken, but few were more grief-stricken than the man known as King's "mentor,"

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Purcellville gets a break: no vehicle license fee for 2025

At the Feb. 13 Purcellville Town Council meeting, the Council voted 7-0 to accept a one year grant from the County which would allow the Town to eliminate the \$25 vehicle license fee for 2025. The Council will reassess options next year.

For the 2025 vehicle license fee, council was presented information at the Jan. 14 meeting regarding the County's position to eliminate the license fee for 2025, with the County offering a one-time grant program to the towns to offset the current FY25 budget impact.

The Council discussed either adopting the \$25 vehicle fee as budgeted, or adopt a vehicle license fee of zero—with the County paying the Town \$181,000 in a grant to offset the impact of eliminating the revenue loss for FY25.

Staff said it was important to note that it would be better to make a decision at the meeting because it had to be adopted or declined prior to the Feb. 28 deadline.

Council Member Carol Luke made a motion to adopt the zero-dollar rate and she was interrupted by Council Member

Kevin Wright who said the council rules would have to be suspended.

Mayor Chris Bertaut said a suspension of the rules was not necessary because it was not a public hearing and the Council was only having a discussion with a possible action.

Wright then said, "We don't vote on the item the first time we see it. It's a discussion, correct?"

Bertaut reminded him that "staff is mentioning that they are recommending that we vote on it tonight."

Speaking over Bertaut who was

finishing his sentence, Wright said, "I'm not saying we don't vote on it. I'm just saying we do it correctly—and first of all this is a discussion, and we can decide if we want to vote on it tonight."

Luke said the grant was a revenue offset to the town of \$181,000. At this point Luke's motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Ben Nett.

Council Member Erin Rayner asked Assistant Director of Finance Connie LeMarr, "If we get rid of \$181,000 of revenue to the Town, we get one year

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Ask Dr. Mike

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

Dr. Mike,

My 49-year-old wife and I have been married for 24 years, and we have three great kids and a great relationship. She was beautiful when I met her, and I think she's even more beautiful today. The problem is, she doesn't seem to think so.



DR. MIKE

Over the past 7 years, she's become obsessed with her appearance. She's done cosmetic surgery on her neck because she said her "jowls hung," and the area around her eyes and forehead because she said she "frowned and looked angry all the time."

She also sees someone else for fillers and Botox every month. At one point, she was taking laxatives to lose weight when she wasn't even overweight. She got on Ozempic last summer because she said her body was "fat" and "felt gross," and she was a size 8 then. She's a size 4 now, and she told me that she'll stop Ozempic when she's a size 2 and is back to her high school weight and can fit into her high school jeans.

Now she wants to get breast augmentation to feel "empowered as a woman," and I guess I should be happy about that as her husband, but when is enough going to be enough? She's also done many diets, cleanses, and has memberships to two gyms and exercises all the time, but she's never is happy with how she looks.

I'm worried that this will never end. Can a midlife crisis go on for 7 or more

years, or is this mental illness? I love my wife and family very much, but I don't know what to do. Anyone who sees her would think she's attractive, so none of this makes sense. Even our teenager daughter thinks her mom is "obsessed" with her appearance. You help is appreciated.

Concerned Husband

Dear Concerned Husband,

It's clear to me that you love your wife deeply, and your concerns are certainly valid. However, it's important to approach your concerns with your wife with empathy and understanding. The goal isn't to point out all the ways she is wrong or "obsessed" or all of the ways she's gone too far. The point is to let her know why you are concerned, to then listen closely to what she has to say, and to then hopefully get to a better place together.

Keep in mind that many men and women go through phases where their self-perception becomes more critical, and those beliefs can be amplified by societal pressures and personal insecurities.

At 49, it's possible that your wife is going through a midlife crisis, and yes, a midlife crisis can become protracted. As many as 10 to 20% women experience a midlife crisis, and they occur most often between ages 40 and 60.

It's also possible that her motivations and incessant need for bodily and facial improvements have more to do with underlying mental health struggles like depression, anxiety or Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

I recommend that you start by

opening up dialogue with your wife where you engage with her in a loving and non-judgmental way about your concerns. Share as much as you can about how much you adore her for who she is, and how much she matters to you, your children and others.

Listen closely to what she shares with you, and hopefully you can have a productive conversation that gets you to a place of shared understanding and greater togetherness.

You could also suggest that both of you visit a mental health professional. A couple's therapist could provide a safe space to explore underlying issues, offer strategies and help your wife and you find more agreement on the topic.

Positive change is more of a process than a moment, so don't expect things to improve overnight. You'll need to be patient and supportive with your wife as she navigates through her feelings with you. I'm hopeful that with your love and support, and professional help if needed, your wife can get to more of a balanced perspective.

Dr. Mike,

Our 27-year-old son is still living at home with no motivation to do anything but play video games and to have us leave him alone. He started at NOVA after high school and dropped out, and then returned to NOVA last year and dropped out again. He told us that he didn't like the teachers, but we saw that he didn't do the work or make it to most classes.

He's had a few jobs, but those have only been for seasonal help in the winter or for short stints, and then he quits or gets fired. He's now on some sort of social justice warrior campaign against Trump and capitalism. It's funny that he seems to have no problem driving

my Mercedes or spending our money as a self-proclaimed socialist.

He also went through a phase where he was convinced that he was transgender but that passed. We've tried to help him in so many ways, but he doesn't want our help. My husband says we should throw him out, but I'm afraid he's too immature to manage himself, and I think he's depressed.

He's told us that he's not happy but says he doesn't know what would make him happy. Thankfully he doesn't drink or do drugs. The last couple of times we tried to talk to him about getting a job, going back to school or just getting on a normal sleep schedule, he yelled at us and then put a few holes in his bedroom wall. How do we help him?

Concerned Parents

Dear Concerned Parents,

Based on what you're written, it seems your son has what is now termed, Failure to Launch Syndrome. Failure to Launch Syndrome refers to a situation where young adults face significant challenges in achieving independence and transitioning into adulthood.

Failure to Launch Syndrome can manifest in various ways: having a lack of motivation or ambition, having social anxiety and/or social avoidance, having a reversed or off sleep schedule, having difficulty maintaining employment or staying in school, withdrawing from family, friends or social activities, just to name a few.

While there is no single cause to Failure to Launch Syndrome, research in this area has revealed that the following factors can lead to significant problems in developing appropriate independence, autonomy and agency in young adulthood: psychiatric or

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Submitted by Joshua Wolinski, Edward Jones Financial Advisor



JOSHUA WOLINSKI

For years, people save and invest in 401(k) plans, IRAs and other financial accounts. They wouldn't lose track of this money, would they?

You might be surprised. About 1 in 7 people has unclaimed cash or property, totaling billions of dollars, according to the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators.

People lose track of their money for a variety of reasons: They change jobs and forget about their retirement accounts; they move and leave no forwarding address; they change names and don't notify former employers; or their employers go out of business or merge with another company.

Whatever the reason, losing tabs on accounts that could be worth thousands of dollars is never a good thing. What can you do to avoid suffering this type of loss?

Here are a few suggestions:

- *Maintain good records.* Keep records

of all your financial, investment and retirement accounts — and let a family member know where these records are kept.

- *Keep a manageable number of financial accounts.* The fewer bank and brokerage accounts you have, the easier it will be to keep track of everything. You might even want to consolidate accounts when possible.

- *Report your change of address.* Whenever you move, contact your financial services providers and any former employers with whom you may have retirement accounts.

- *Report name changes.* If you change your name, notify new and old 401(k) plan administrators, banks, brokerages and any other institution connected to your money.

- *Manage retirement accounts when you change jobs.* If you leave your job, you might be able to leave your 401(k) behind with your old employer. But if you do, keep track of it. On the other hand, you could roll your old plan into your new employer's plan or into an IRA.

- *Inform your financial professional*

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Saturday Night Tries to Capture SNL's Magic—But Misses the Mark

BY: NAOMI FRASER



NAOMI FRASER

“The show doesn't go on because it's ready; it goes on because it's 11:30.” — Lorne Michaels, Creator of *Saturday Night Live*

Rating: 2/5

These famous words capture the frenzied, make-it-work energy the film *Saturday Night* aims to capture. Set on October 11, 1975—just ninety minutes before *SNL* goes live for the first time—the film dives into the chaos behind the scenes, where a young and unproven Lorne Michaels (Gabriel LaBelle) scrambles to hold everything together amid cast conflicts, last-minute rewrites, and network executives itching to pull the plug. As *SNL* celebrates its 50th anniversary, *Saturday Night* serves as both a tribute and a time capsule, offering a look at the artistry, ambition, and creativity that laid the foundation for one of television's most iconic shows.

However, for a film centered on the making of a comedy show, *Saturday Night*

is surprisingly dry, wavering between comedy and drama, but never fully hitting the mark on either side. The jokes often fall flat, and the humor behind the endless string of mishaps quickly loses its charm.

While the dramatic moments land slightly better, they also feel underwhelming and underdeveloped. I could recognize the moments when I was supposed to feel stressed, anxious, or moved, but the film continually failed to evoke those emotions in a meaningful way. Ultimately, *Saturday Night* struggles with an identity crisis, stuck between genres and never fully committing to what it wants to be.

A major conflict in *Saturday Night* is Lorne Michaels' unwillingness to trim down his vision for the show. Though NBC has allotted him 90 minutes, his script contains three hours' worth of content. Determined to keep every idea, he attempts to squeeze every sketch into the show, sacrificing quality for quantity.

Ironically, the writers of *Saturday Night* seem to have fallen into the same trap. The film crams in too many plotlines

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Kaine meets with the Loudoun farming community to discuss tariffs and grants

BY VALERIE CURY

On Feb. 14, U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine hosted a roundtable with Loudoun County farmers at the Hillsboro Old Stone School. He listened to concerns about the uncertainty and challenges facing the farming community during the early weeks of the Trump administration, including spending freezes, potential tariffs, and the unclear future of immigration policies that could impact farm labor.

Kaine heard from Catoctin Creek Distillery owners Scott and Becky Harris, who founded their company in Purcellville in 2009. They explained that the threat of new tariffs is making their distributors in Mexico and Canada hesitant to import their products.

Scott Harris also shared that during the previous Trump administration, the tariffs imposed to American whisky halted their planned expansion into Europe. Prior to that, they had built a good business in Europe, which bought in 11% of

their revenue. When the U.S. put a tariff on European aluminum imports, the Europeans retaliated by imposing a 25% tariff on whiskey—bringing the cost of their product from 50 euros to 75 euros.

Harris said that to this day they continue to feel repercussions, and there is a negative outlook in Europe toward American products there. “So, it killed our business to zero—and it’s stayed to zero in Europe.”

Sara Brown, a ninth-generation farmer and owner of Oakland Green Farm in Lincoln, said she is unsure whether she

will receive her approved federal grant for a “demo farm,” one of only two awarded in Virginia. She has an agroforestry project planned but doesn’t know if she can proceed, such as installing \$60,000 worth of fencing. She is collaborating with the Savanna Institute to implement a farming practice that combines trees, forage, and grazing animals in one system.

Eliza Greenman of the Savanna Institute explained that integrating livestock and trees in pastures provides not only shade but feed from persimmons, mulberries, and chestnuts. She noted that this practice was once a common practice on farms and “we are bringing that back.”

Mom’s Apple Pie owner Avis Renshaw said if tariffs are placed on Canada, she anticipates pie tins she uses for her business to increase. She said when tariffs were

placed on Canadian aluminum the pie tin cost increased from \$72 to \$173 per case. Renshaw said once the price increases, it never really goes down.

Renshaw said, “Butter is very important to me,” and it is a major cost for her bakery. She said that farmers have to prepare so far in advance, and seed is hard to get. She said that she is concerned about the spread of disease like what is impacting the availability of eggs. This is happening when programs at the National Institutes for Health could be shut down.

Kaine said that farming and forestry is the biggest part of Virginia’s economy. Agriculture and forestry are still number one. He said the uncertainty is really

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Conklin Community Park

BY TIM JON

After decades of unexpected upheavals in my life, I've actually come to appreciate the surprising travails that keep popping up as long as I've been above ground; many times, my little forays into our natural world serve as a microcosm of these larger dips and peaks. My first reaction on pulling into view of the



TIM JON

Conklin Community Park in South Riding was a bit of a letdown: I saw only well-groomed fields for organized team sports—all well and good in themselves, but generally less stimulating than, say, a

path through the woods.

I hadn't even parked my vehicle on the eastern portion of the preserve, when I noticed—with childlike, impatient anticipation—a placard with a map of the facility and the usual rules and regulations; again, my shoulders probably slumped a bit as I read that pedestrian use of the dedicated bike paths, through the very inviting forested areas, was strictly prohibited.

I know some would have taken a chance on walking the course anyway, but I'm in the age and medical condition category that would make me a sitting duck to be

an accident victim along a twisting bicycle trail through the woods, with lots of blind corners. So, I took a breath or two and surveyed the remaining acreage before me; as I've said, the sporting fields appeared less attractive, but I crossed the road and mounted the low rise to the plain of soccer and whatnot.

Having taken just a shot or two of the sun's reflection on the opposite tree-line, I noticed a red fox trotting along the perimeter, probably looking for breakfast. Now, while being far too distant for impressive photography, I nevertheless like to capture any notable experience of one of my exploratory walks, so I clicked off several images of the interesting creature. I guessed that it was a female with cubs in a nearby den, on a mission to feed the family.

I always count wildlife sightings as good fortune (possible generational inheritance?), so I struck off for the opposing corner of the series of fields on this side of Donegal Drive, which more or less bisects Conklin Community Park in South Riding. Telling myself that the camera shots I was taking were of great interest, I skirted the north border of the field and made my way back to the road.

The allure of the fox sighting was wearing off, and I knew I'd covered a fair percentage of the acreage encompassed by the Park.

Just as I crossed the road, I noticed the familiar sheen of standing water in the



low-lying section beyond the neighborhood sidewalk; being on my usual very-early-in-the-morning schedule, the mist rose from the liquid surface in—to me—a most striking manner. Now this, I felt, was just what the photographer ordered; the sun was barely visible in the East, 'shore birds' were just starting to come to life and start moving, and even in a sizeable locality like South Riding on a Saturday morning, pretty much all else

was still.

Those are the magic times. You never know just what may occur; creatures of all sorts may wander into view, birds, fish, mammals, amphibians, insects, you name it, every instant creates just a slightly different choice of lighting—given the rapidly-changing angle of the sun combined with mist, surrounding greenery and water—and then there's the bit that I add to the mix (I believe each individual will approach a situation like this in a unique manner—and I've always been nothing, if not at least a bit unusual.

So, the chemical experiment in nature between myself and my surroundings played itself out: I continued as far in each direction around the small body of water (in my native Minnesota, I would say, 'swamp' or 'slough' but in this neighborhood, I would guess, 'stormwater retention pond.') In any case, I swallowed hook, line and sinker of the given circumstances and walked until the grass-covered portion of the path ended at a man-made, cement channel that I figured brought excess rainwater from other low-lying areas.

It was the kind of walk which I take one slow step at a time, trying to notice any

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Supervisors vote to move forward with data center zoning changes

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors continued discussions about data center re-zoning at a public hearing on Feb. 12.

The Board of Supervisors began discussions about changing data center zoning ordinances in the spring of 2022. At its Feb. 6, 2024, business meeting, the Board approved the project plan for a joint Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM) and Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOAM). The project plan split the project into two phases. The Data Center Standards and Locations CPAM and ZOAM are part of phase one. On Dec. 12, 2024, the Loudoun County Planning Commission recommended denial of these amendments.

The amendments would make it more difficult for developers to obtain approval for new data centers. Data centers would be designated as a conditional use in three place types where they are currently a core use

and as a special exception use in three place types where they are currently a permitted use by-right.

“I don’t think this is what the supervisors wanted. We told them, but they’re going to do it the way they want to do it,” said Commissioner Ad Barnes (Leesburg) at the Dec. 12 meeting.

You can read more about the Planning Commission meeting here: [Planning Commission recommends denial of zoning changes - Blue Ridge Leader](#)

At the Feb. 12 Board of Supervisors public hearing, public comments on the data center rezoning opened with statements from six of the seven mayors in Loudoun County. All six mayors spoke in favor of the amendments though Round Hill Mayor Scott Ramsey cautioned the Board that it has proceeded too quickly.

“While I definitely agree with the outcome the Board is seeking on this initiative, I have observed, yet again, that the Board has been favoring a very specific outcome on a very tight deadline,” Ramsey said. “And this

is really before a full public process and really before engagement with the Planning Commission.”

Public comments continued for about an hour after the mayors finished speaking and featured mixed sentiments from the Loudoun County community. Some residents discouraged the Board from passing the amendments, emphasizing the job opportunities and economic gain that the data center industry has brought to Loudoun County. These residents were concerned that the amendments would drive data center developers away from Loudoun County. Other residents encouraged the Board to pass the amendments to address concerns about impacts on residential neighborhoods.

Vice Chair Michael Turner (D-Ashburn) made a motion to forward the amendments to the Board’s Mar. 18 business meeting and made a motion to direct staff to present a draft of a grandfathering resolution at the Board’s Mar. 4 business meeting. Turner said that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Public invited to comment on housing and community development needs

The Loudoun County Department of Housing and Community Development invites residents to provide comments on a Substantial Amendment to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan for the county’s Community Development Block Grant. The public comment period is open through March 12. Residents are also encouraged to attend or view the Board of Supervisors public hearing on March 12, to learn more about the amendment and provide feedback to the Board.

The Annual Action Plan outlines Loudoun County’s housing and community development needs, priorities and objectives and proposed uses of federal funds for the upcoming program year.

Loudoun County is required to submit the Substantial Amendment to the FY 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by May 15.

The Substantial Amendment to the FY 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan is available online at loudoun.gov/CDBG. Copies are also available for review at the

following locations during normal business hours:

- Loudoun County Government Center, Information Desk, First Floor, 1 Harrison St. SE, Leesburg
- Loudoun County Department of Housing and Community Development, 106 Catocin Circle SE, Leesburg
- Information Desks at all branches of the Loudoun County Public Library. To find a branch, visit library.loudoun.gov.

The public comment period is open through March 12, 2025. Comments may be submitted:

- Online: Complete the online form at loudoun.gov/CDBG.
- By Mail: Loudoun County Department of Housing and Community Development, P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg, Virginia 20177, Attn: CDBG Program Manager

For information on how to provide comments at the Board of Supervisors’ March 12, public hearing, visit loudoun.gov/SignUpToSpeak.

Renewal forms for Tax Relief Program for older or disabled residents available

Loudoun County Commissioner of the Revenue Robert S. Wertz Jr. announces that participants in the county’s tax relief program for residents who are 65 or older or who are permanently and totally disabled should soon begin receiving their renewal forms. Applications and certifications for tax year 2025 were recently mailed to applicants who are already in the program and to residents who have requested an application for the Loudoun County Tax Relief program for Older or Disabled Adults.

The filing deadline for participants already in the program is April 1. The filing deadline for first-time applicants for vehicle tax relief is Sept. 2. The filing deadline for first-time applicants for real estate tax relief is Dec. 31.

Applicants should mail their forms in the pre-addressed envelope included with their renewal forms.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Hemstreet presents proposed budget for FY 2026

County Administrator Tim Hemstreet has presented a proposed budget for the Loudoun County government to the Board of Supervisors for Fiscal Year 2026, which begins July 1. The proposed budget totals \$4.7 billion and includes a county operating budget of \$1.1 billion and a Loudoun County Public Schools operating budget of \$2.0 billion.

The proposed budget has been prepared at a real property tax rate of \$0.805 per \$100 of assessed value, which is six cents less than the current real property tax rate and one cent below the homeowner’s equalized tax rate of \$0.815, which is the rate at which the average homeowner’s tax bill would remain the

same as last year. Because the proposed budget is balanced with a tax rate lower than the homeowner’s equalized rate, the average homeowner tax bill would decrease slightly from \$6,337 in tax year 2024 to \$6,280 in tax year 2025 for existing homes.

The proposed budget includes a personal property tax rate on vehicles of \$3.48—a 67-cent reduction—for tax year 2026 and a general personal property tax rate of \$4.15 per \$100 of assessed value for tax years 2025 and 2026.

“While this budget’s rate of growth is higher than the county’s average, it is affordable even within a budget that proposes the most significant tax rate decreases in at least the past decade,

said Hemstreet. “We can accommodate this largely because of increased revenues associated with the data center industry, which now generates 38% of all general fund revenues.”

During a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 12, Hemstreet said the proposed budget meets the Board’s guidance and includes resources for employee pay, base budget adjustments, opening of new facilities, Board priorities and department priorities, as well as a sufficient year-over-year increase to Loudoun County Public Schools.

The FY 2026 proposed budget includes:

- \$22 million in base budget adjustments to continue to provide

current services.

- An increase of \$24.7 million in total for employee compensation to keep Loudoun competitive as an employer, which consists of a:
 - 4% merit increase for the general workforce.
 - 2.5% salary scale adjustment and a step increase for Fire and Rescue, for an average pay increase of 5.5%.
 - 5% salary scale adjustment and a step increase for Sheriff’s deputies, for an average pay increase of 8%.
- The addition of 240 positions in 30 departments, including a substantial number of positions associated with opening new

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

Development vs preservation—majority council advances zoning ordinance

BY VALERIE CURY

On Feb. 13, the Purcellville Town Council voted 4-3 to advance the Zoning Ordinance to a public hearing scheduled for March 11. Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought voted against the motion, while Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and

Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted in favor. If passed, the ordinance will align with the Town's 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Mayor Ben Nett noted that following a legal review and given that no substantial changes had been made to the version discussed by the council on Jan. 28, it was time to move forward with the hearing.

Council Member Erin Rayner, however, disagreed, stating she still believes the ordinance isn't ready. "I think we still need Summer [Director of Planning/Community Development & Zoning Administrator] to present the differences and her side of it—not just the one [side]. She is the expert," Rayner said.

At the Nov. 12, 2024, Purcellville Town Council meeting, Wilkes presented some of her proposed changes to the Planning Commission's Draft Zoning Ordinance. Her changes, however, do not align with Purcellville's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, and she had not been directed by the Town Council in a public meeting to work on sweeping revisions to the ordinance.

At that time, Wilkes summarized her vision for Purcellville by claiming, "The more you develop, the more charm you get." She advocated for more relaxed zoning requirements, reducing setbacks, and increasing density in areas residents wanted to preserve and sustain.

For example, she proposed adding higher density to the Agricultural Commercial Tourism District, which borders the traffic circle at Main Street and Colonial Hwy. She also suggested eliminating the limit on the number of apartments in the Historic Downtown area, removing the cap of two apartments and instead letting the market decide the density.

Additionally, she recommended

reinstating the Planned Development Housing designation, which was moved to a Legacy District—calling it a potential tool in the zoning toolbox. Wilkes also proposed eliminating certain Special Use Permits, which currently give citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions on development proposals before a Council vote.

The full article from December can be viewed at blueridgeleader.com/purcellvilles-zoning-overhaul-developers-dollars-and-the-battle-for-the-towns-future/.

Council Member Kevin Wright said that a vote to approve the public hearing on the zoning ordinance "is disrespectful to the citizens," and he wouldn't support it.

Council Member Susan Khalil said, "I feel the work has been done. Opportunities obviously presented themselves over a long period of time and we need to move forward."

Council Member Caleb Stought said he felt that council was considering only the recommendations of the planning

commission and not the expert recommendations of the staff. "It's premature to move forward on it," he said.

Former Planning Commissioner and Council Member Carol Luke said she had the highest regard for all the work and the research the planning commissioners put into the zoning ordinance rewrite.

"The Planning Commission answers to the Town Council and that is the way it is set up. Our administrator answers to the Planning Commission." Luke said there will always be the opportunity to bring up zoning issues and address changes when somebody wants to, or when it becomes necessary. "It would behoove us to get it finished and move forward," she said.

Vice Mayor Ben Nett said the Planning Commission has been working on the draft zoning ordinance for four years, with three different zoning administrators, and several iterations with staff. "The Planning Commission has had multiple opportunities for input from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

GREENLIN PARK, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

provide screening between the development and adjacent roadways, particularly along the Dulles Greenway."

Additional changes proposed in the updated application include stormwater management and electric vehicle charging—mitigation systems capable of handling a 50-year storm event and upgraded infrastructure expected to support a 20% increase in local EV adoption. Furthermore, the project introduces water consumption limits aimed at reducing usage by approximately 15%.

During the Board's meeting, energy management was the biggest focal point of the updated application. "The applicant has proffered to restrict power demand on the facility to no more than 300 megawatts for a period of five years, with annual monitoring and reporting of grid energy usage for three years following full power demand." The power demand cap of no more than 300 MW over the first five years is roughly comparable to the continuous consumption of a small industrial community, or nearly 50,000 average households.

At the Feb. 19 board meeting, Supervisor Caleb A. Kershner (R-Catoctin) praised the level of detail provided in the updated application—three distinct concept plans allowing the board to weigh different development scenarios.

Noting the application's innovative

and detailed approach, Kershner remarked, "This is as good as a data center project can get."

"This is kind of highly unusual for an application like this to bring actual concept plans to the detail that they have brought them. Is that a fair statement?" Kershner asked Project Manager Marchant Schneider.

Schneider agreed that it was.

County Chair Phyllis J. Randall (D-At Large) also expressed high regard for the proposal's quality. Although the Planning Commission had recommended the project in July, county planning staff initially opposed it. The subsequent revisions—especially regarding energy efficiency and environmental safeguards—shifted staff support in favor of the application. She acknowledged that while the improvements are impressive, the board faces a challenging decision given the broader community impact.

"I am getting to a place where I don't know what to do with these applications, because Mr. Kershner is not wrong," Randall said. "As far as data centers go, and all that we're doing, this is one of the best applications we've seen. But, I also feel put in a corner sometimes."

As the meeting continued, supervisors continued to debate their preferred development option. While a majority favored the first two concepts—which offered more extensive buffering and screening—Supervisor Koran T. Saines (D-Sterling) voiced his preference for

the leaner, two-building design, arguing that fewer structures would better mitigate potential impacts.

"I can't get with having four buildings or three buildings," Saines said. "I'd rather have two buildings."

Supervisor Laura A. TeKrony (D-Little River) highlighted the commitment to monitor energy usage and restrict power demand. However, she questioned whether the 300 MW cap would be reached within five years, prompting further discussion among the Board about long-term energy planning.

"Do you think they will be at the point in five years of actually needing the 300 MW?" TeKrony asked. "I'm just wondering if the timing was at all discussed."

County Attorney Leo Rogers cautioned that endorsing one concept over another would require deferring the decision to reconsider an amended application at a later date.

Chair Randall adamantly reminded supervisors that they are legally not allowed to decide on applications based on energy supply or usage considerations.

Towards the end of the meeting, a motion by Supervisor Kristen C. Umstatted (D-Leesburg), whose district includes the project site, ultimately passed on a narrow 5-4 vote to approve the application with all three concept options permitted. "There are a number of strong positives to this application," Umstatted said.

Supervisors in favor of the proposal,

including Umstatted, cited multiple positives—including numerous revisions, close collaboration with county staff, generous buffering zones, and the absence of nearby residential areas—while supervisors opposed expressed their concerns over rezoning residential land and potential future impacts on nearby communities such as the Academies of Loudoun.

In the 5-4 vote, supervisors Saines, TeKrony, Michael R. Turner (D-Ashburn) and Juli E. Briskman (D-Algonkian) opposed. Supervisor TeKrony cited concerns over long-term energy demands and the potential cumulative impact on community resources, saying "The vast majority of Loudoun residents don't want more data centers." Supervisors Briskman and Turner opposed the plan on the grounds of preserving residential character. Briskman stated that she could not in good conscience vote to re-zone land that was meant for residential use in this area.

Supervisor Matthew F. Letourneau (R-Dulles) summed up the debate by emphasizing the strategic nature of the project's location within an established industrial corridor, saying it is "the definition of an industrial area surrounded with an industrial."

"To me this comes down to whether we essentially don't support any more data centers ever, or whether we support ones in appropriate places," Letourneau said.

Bill introduced to designate G.C. Marshall House as NPS affiliated area

U.S. Senators Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA) and U.S. Representative Suhas Subramanyam (D-VA-10) have introduced legislation to designate the General George C. Marshall House in Leesburg, known as Dodona Manor, as an affiliated area under the National Park Service. Warner and Kaine advocated for years alongside then-U.S. Representative Jennifer Wexton

GOVERNMENT

for an official designation, which would provide new resources to preserve and celebrate General Marshall's legacy at the site, including technical assistance to support restoration efforts, accessibility improvements, and new programming.

"Dodona Manor has an immense historic value to our nation and is worth celebrating," said the lawmakers. "Turning it into an affiliated area under the National Park Service is a fitting way to preserve this property, honor General Marshall's legacy and help future generations learn about his life. We are glad to introduce this legislation together and will keep working to get it across the finish line."

"The Marshall Center and the Leesburg community are deeply grateful to Congressman Subramanyam and Senators Kaine and Warner for their leadership in introducing legislation to designate George C. Marshall's Dodona Manor as an affiliated area of the National Park System. This significant

step recognizes General Marshall's enduring legacy and will ensure the preservation of his historic home for future generations," said Marshall Center Chairman Tom Greenspon. "We are honored to continue our work in safeguarding this national treasure and look forward to collaborating with our legislative champions to achieve full affiliation."

General Marshall led a lifetime of public service, serving as Chief of Staff to the Army during America's entry into World War II, as Secretary of State where he orchestrated the historic Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe following the war—work for which he received a Nobel Peace Prize—and as Secretary of Defense after the onset of the Korean War.

Dodona Manor is currently registered as a National Historic Landmark by the Department of the Interior and has been designated by the Commonwealth of Virginia as a Virginia Landmark.

The Marshall House has been an integral part of the Leesburg community for over two centuries. General Marshall and his wife Katherine purchased the property in 1941 as a weekend retreat house, and regularly spent time at the property throughout General Marshall's tenure as Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. While residing there, he received world dignitaries including President Truman and Madam Chiang Kai-shek.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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OPINION: A BUNCH OF STUFF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

findings in the near future. Rain water can recharge an aquifer, but we are withdrawing more water than is being recharged.

We can make more electricity, but conjuring more water is unlikely. Ironically and helpfully, this could be grounds to deny unwanted development proposals. The Board could simply say “no” and cite declining water availability as justification. Sadly, the Board seems gun-shy about being sued. Frankly, if a county is not getting sued from time to time, it’s probably not doing its job.

Grandfathering

The County is contemplating major zoning provisions to manage data centers’ impact on communities. Data center promoters are energetically fighting this. Their negotiating position is, “Give us plenty of grandfathering and we’ll agree to those new rules.”

The principle of grandfathering allows projects that are actually under development to move ahead under prior, more permissive zoning provisions. If a project is under construction, I get it. Unfortunately, the bad guys have always gamed the system.

Legally, grandfathering requires real development activity, perhaps

engineering design, then followed by SAGA. (“Significant Act of Governmental Authority”) from the County. Given the cozy relationship between developers and the County, a rough site plan sketched on a napkin usually suffices as being “under development,” and when that napkin is handed over to Staff, a SAGA is magically declared and the developer gets grandfathering.

This must change.

The 1999 General Plan Needs Updating

State Code requires plan updates every five years. The last General Plan was birthed by a botched process of “civic engagement,” dominated by business interests. This bled into a new zoning ordinance rife with problems.

Businesses should focus on results, not process. Ironically, in updating the Plan we need a better *process*, centered on regular citizens, with confidence that meaningful *results* would follow in an updated zoning ordinance.

Vision

Vision is the foundation of any comprehensive plan. Vision should also be a key part of Board decisions on individual development applications. A case in point is a proposed 300-megawatt data center with the odd name “Greenlin

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

PLANNING COMMISSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Feb. 6 Planning Commission meeting agenda. The Chair of the Planning Commission, Ron Rise, opened the meeting by introducing four agenda amendments after staff failed to include his requests on the agenda.

These agenda amendments were necessary because the planning staff submitted the draft agenda to the Chair Rise and Vice Chair Brian Green two and a half days past the required deadline as outlined in the Planning Commission bylaws, which were amended on July 9, 2024. The draft agenda was sent past the normal deadline to Rise and Green near close of business, with Wilkes giving Rise only 15 minutes to respond with any agenda additions. He missed her deadline by approximately five minutes, so his additions were not included in the Feb. 6 Planning Commission agenda.

As a result, the staff did not include the items Rise had requested but instead placed the election of the Chair and Vice Chair on the agenda. During the meeting, Rise referenced the Planning Commission amended bylaws, which stipulate that the commission must elect a Chair and Vice Chair at the second regular meeting in March. Consequently, the commission voted to extend Rise’s term as Chair and Brian Green’s term as Vice Chair until March 20, when the annual election shall occur.

At that point, Wilkes raised her hand to interrupt the commissioner’s discussion. She began, “Mr. Rise,” but the commission was already in the middle of discussing the date change to align with the bylaws. Rise responded, “No,” signaling she could not interrupt the commission’s discussion. Anticipating that his verbal response wouldn’t be enough, he then used the gavel.

Wilkes persisted, saying, “Point of order, Sir.” However, in public meetings a point of order is typically raised by elected or appointed officials.

Rise then stated, “Point of order,” using the gavel, and the commission continued discussing the importance of aligning the election of Chair and Vice Chair with the bylaws. “It makes sense to do that, otherwise we are going to be out of cycle continually,” said Rise.

“I think it’s good to do it. So, with that”—at this point Wilkes lowered her head and shook it. “I am sorry Chair Rise, could I introduce”—

“No, you cannot,” Rise said and used the gavel to restore order. “Point of order, point of order, please,” he said. Despite this, Wilkes continued interrupting the Planning Commission discussion by trying to speak over him.

The rest of the Feb. 13 Council Member’s comments

Council Member Susan Khalil used her comment period to address the proposed long-term Capital Improvement

Program budget.

“I understand there are some CIP projects for which the Engineering Department has zero confidence in their cost information. It is not responsible nor strategic to endorse any debt obligation to our community without a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of projections.”

She also expressed interest in specific details regarding the proposed wastewater treatment plant improvements. “What was the quote from Lakeside Manufacturing for the existing course and fine screens?” She said she needed an explanation for the suggested shift to a different manufacturer, which would incur additional design costs.

Khalil emphasized the importance of transparency and making informed decisions, recommending that the documents be made publicly available. She further stated that she would request a spreadsheet listing all the projects in the proposed CIP budget, ranked by priority. She requested dates when each component was brought into service, the manufacturer of each, the original cost, and the expected lifecycle of each component.

Khalil also asked for names of three manufacturers that could be solicited for pricing along with two potential grant opportunities. She requested a list of all chargebacks for 2024, including dates, the individuals who submitted them, and the associated costs.

“I think we need to get away from throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks. We do have experts in these departments.” She suggested compiling this information into a spread sheet. “I am not going to approve any kind of loan for any CIP project where we don’t have a handle on where things stand right now.

Vice Mayor Ben Nett addressing a council member who called the behavior at the Feb. 6 Planning Commission meeting “outrageous” said, “I wonder what the Council Man’s opinion is of the conduct exhibited at this meeting on January 8 and 14 including a public outburst by a newly promoted and then acting Lieutenant Mike Holman.”

Nett pointed out that Purcellville is a Town of 9,000 residents, with about 3,000 homes, and a daily population, of about 20,000, including visitors. He noted that approximately 60% of the town is tax-exempt, with 46% occupied by schools, which brings in students and staff members.

“Annexation, in my opinion, is not the answer because we have a fragile utility system. Water is a finite resource. So what do we do? I see us as having a handful of options,” said Nett.

“We can go back on our campaign promises and serve as rubber stamps, jacking up everyone’s utility rates even higher—maintaining a bloated staff and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »



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Loudoun County Transit offers variety of transportation options

Loudoun County reminds commuters that Loudoun County Transit and the Metrorail Silver line service are cost-effective alternatives to driving alone to work and connecting to worksites that are located east of the county, particularly to points in and around Washington, DC, including Rosslyn, Crystal City and the Pentagon.

Loudoun County Transit services include a variety of bus service

COMMUNITY

options throughout the county and the region, including options that connect to Loudoun's Silver Line Metrorail stations. The county also offers information about alternative commuting options, such as carpooling and vanpooling.

Two Metrorail stations serve Loudoun County commuters and provide connections to the Washington Metropolitan Region:

- Ashburn Metrorail Station
- Loudoun Gateway Metrorail Station

Commuters can access the Silver Line Metrorail stations by using a Loudoun County Transit's fare free local bus routes or by driving to a station. Commuter parking is available at the Loudoun Gateway Metrorail Station and the Ashburn Station Metrorail Station parking

garages. More information about parking at Metrorail Parking Garages in Loudoun County is available on the county's website.

Loudoun County Transit bus service also connects to the Innovation Center and Reston Metrorail stations in Fairfax County. More information about Loudoun's local bus service routes that connect to the Silver Line Metrorail in Fairfax is on the county's website.

Commuter Bus Service Options

Loudoun County Transit also provides morning and evening rush hour direct commuter bus service from Loudoun County park and ride lots to various sites in Rosslyn, Crystal City, the Pentagon, and Washington, DC.

Commuter buses are equipped with reclining seats, a restroom, reading lights, overhead bins and fare boxes. One-way fares are \$11.00 with a SmarTrip® card and \$12.00 with cash payment. Loudoun County Transit buses are equipped to accept WMATA's SmarTrip® cards that can be used to pay for fares at all Metrorail stations in D.C., Maryland and Virginia, Metro parking garages and lots, Metrobus routes, MTA, and for regional bus providers.

- For Commuter Bus schedules, visit loudoun.gov/CommuterBus.
- Use the interactive map to find a

park and ride lot near you.

- To learn more about the SmarTrip® card, visit Metro's Q&A.

Commuters can plan their trip on Loudoun County Transit bus services using Google Maps by selecting the "transit" icon and inputting your travel destination. Commuters also may download the free Transit app on their mobile devices, which includes notifications, real-time vehicle locations and trip planning. After downloading the app, set your favorite routes to begin receiving notifications for the buses you ride.

- For more information about the app, visit loudoun.gov/TransitApp
- To talk with transit specialists to assist riders with trip planning, email at transit@loudoun.gov and by phone at 703-771-5665.
- View all Loudoun County Transit Bus Schedules at loudoun.gov/BusSchedules.

Commuters can also take advantage of the region's ridematching system managed by Commuter Connections that helps individuals match with others with similar commutes who are interested in carpooling or vanpooling to travel to work.

Carpools and vanpools are simple and effective alternatives to driving alone. Another benefit to commuters is the Guaranteed Ride Home program, which provides up to six free emergency rides home a year for those who carpool, vanpool or ride transit to work at least two times per week.

For more information about sharing rides, visit loudoun.gov/commute.

New or returning bus riders are encouraged to visit loudoun.gov/RiderInformation to learn more about bus service, planning a trip, service alerts, and how to ride safely.

Bus riders may also subscribe to bus rider alerts at loudoun.gov/BusBiz to receive updates on transit service. For more information about the full range of Loudoun County's transit and commuter services, visit loudoun.gov/transit. Riders may contact Loudoun County Transit by email at transit@loudoun.gov and by phone at 703-771-5665.

Loudoun County encourages bus riders to stay informed about any changes to the county's bus services—particularly on days when inclement weather or special events may impact service—by visiting loudoun.gov/BusChanges.

Everything Loudoun County commuters need to know about using Loudoun County Transit is posted on the county's website at loudoun.gov/transit.

OPINION: PERHAPS AMERICA, CON'T. FROM PAGE 4

teacher and advisor" —Dr. Benjamin E. Mays.

"It was my desire that if I predeceased Dr. King, he would pay tribute to me on my final day," said Mays, who gave the official eulogy at King's funeral. "It was his wish that if he predeceased me, I would deliver the homily at his funeral. Fate has decreed that I eulogize him. I wish it might have been otherwise ..."

An insatiable desire

Born in 1895 in a small town in South Carolina, Benjamin Elijah Mays had what was termed "an insatiable desire to get an education." Mays' parents had been born into slavery and freed at the end of the Civil War. Being just a stone's throw from the unfathomable realities of enslaved people, Mays' drive for more education and more learning was essential.

Mays graduated from the high school at Orangeburg's State College and began college at Virginia Union in Richmond, Virginia. Later he left the segregated South and began studying at Bates

College in Lewiston, Maine in 1917. Later, he was ordained as a Baptist minister.

About four years later, Mays entered Divinity School at the University of Chicago for graduate study. Mays often interrupted his education to accept teaching jobs. Mays earned his master's degree in 1925 and his doctorate in 1935.

Mays became dean of the Howard University School of Religion, and in 1940 he became president of the prestigious all-men's institution of higher learning, Morehouse College, an historically Black College and University.

A 15-year-old Martin Luther King begins college

There is no doubt, Mays, was a great influence on all who knew him and an outstanding model of educational success for young Black men attending Morehouse, particularly Martin Luther King Jr. who in 1944, graduated from high school and entered Morehouse College. A "gifted student," King had skipped two complete grades.

Mays and King connected right away. Mays spoke regularly about social change thru non-violent means and

bringing people together for the good of all. King absorbed these messages well and would even seek out Mays regularly for more discussion. King said Mays was his "spiritual mentor and intellectual father." This unique father-son relationship continued for the duration of both men's lives.

Long after his graduation from Morehouse, King continued to seek out Mays for advice and guidance. King asked Mays to deliver the benediction at the famous 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Mays also supported King's decision to speak out in 1967 against the Vietnam War. Throughout King's life, Mays made himself always available and always supportive.

Mays keeps a sad promise

When Mays learned King had been assassinated, he knew there was one more promise he had to keep. Mays had to deliver King's eulogy.

It was an old farm wagon, pulled by two mules, that brought King's body to Morehouse College on April 9, 1968. Mays, King's faithful and beloved teacher was waiting.

"To be honored by being requested to give the eulogy at the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," Mays said, "is like asking one to eulogize his deceased son—so close and so precious was he to me."

Today in America, people in our country are filled with emotions that run the gamut— everything from fear and doubt to joy and certainty. At every level, relationships are either strained to new breaking points or cemented better than ever. Regardless of this myriad of feelings, I am confident this great nation, with its great people, can find a way to come together, connect with one another and work for the good of all.

Mays taught King the value of this. Perhaps America can learn from this great teacher. Now, may be the best time ever.

About 16 years after eulogizing King, his student, Mays died from pneumonia in an Atlanta hospital on March 28, 1984. He was 89. When King died, he was 39. Floyd Nelson is a consultant, advisor and teacher who lives in Maryland.

SUPERVISORS VOTE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

requiring data center developers to obtain a special exception from the Board would allow the supervisors to approve data center development on a case-by-case basis.

"We don't want to disapprove all data centers. We don't want to approve all data centers," Turner said. "We want to be able to see all data center applications to make our own determination whether or not we think that data center, under those circumstances, in that location, is the right choice for the county."

Most of the supervisors agreed with Turner. However, Supervisors Kristen Umstatted (D-Leesburg) and Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) raised objections. Umstatted echoed Ramsey's concerns and expressed concerns that these amendments would negatively impact business in Loudoun County.

"I have been increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that we are singling out one industry and targeting that industry to put limits on it in a way that we don't do with any other industry or any residential development," Umstatted said. "The fact that the Planning Commission clearly felt that they were being forced to make

a decision that they felt they needed more time to fully investigate makes me uncomfortable with the direction that this motion is taking this board."

Addressing the public, Kershner expressed concerns that the Board could be sued if it took power concerns into consideration.

"You're basically asking us to break the law when you come and you talk about power. We can't take that into consideration," Kershner said. "Quite frankly, I'm concerned we, as a board, are going to get sued."

Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) said that she was unconcerned about the Board being sued. Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) accused his colleagues of fear mongering in regard to comments warning of possible loss of business in Loudoun County.

The supervisors passed the motion to move the amendments forward for action at the Board's Mar. 18 business meeting with a vote of 6-2-1. Kershner and Umstatted opposed the motion, and Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) was absent from the dais.

After the amendments were forwarded, discussion turned to whether the Board should consider a grandfathering resolution. The resolution

would allow developers that had already gotten data centers approved to continue building the data centers without going back to obtain a special exception. Staff reported that at least 36 pipeline data centers would be significantly affected if the Board did not pass a grandfathering resolution.

The supervisors balked at the idea of passing a resolution, but Umstatted pointed out that the resolution was not being passed in this motion.

"We are not passing a grandfathering resolution tonight. We are simply sending this to the Mar. 4 date with parameters," Umstatted said. "If we don't indicate support for some form of grandfathering, we're leaving people who've been hanging with significant investments and a great deal of uncertainty, now."

Randall encouraged the supervisors to pass the motion so that they could learn more about grandfathering at the Mar. 4 meeting.

The supervisors passed a motion requiring staff to present options for a draft of a grandfathering resolution with a vote of 7-1-1. Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) opposed the motion, and Supervisor Letourneau was absent.

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

psychological disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, overprotective or enmeshed family relationships, the rise of screen culture and the gig economy, personal traits, past trauma where an unresolved traumatic experience disrupted normal development, parental divorce or frequent relocations as a family.

Based on what you've shared, what's causing your son to struggle as much as he is in life isn't clear to me. Given how long this has been going on and given that your efforts with him for several years haven't led to improvements, I recommend that your son meet with a mental health professional.

If he refuses to see someone, then I recommend that you and your husband start therapy as parents for support and guidance.

Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D. 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.

PLANNING COMMISSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

approving massive infrastructure spending as presented—with no independent analysis.

"We can surrender our democracy to bureaucracy, or we can try the path we have embarked on which is a diversion of meals tax revenue to the utility fund which we did effective on July 1, 2025."

Nett said, "Council can cut town government by improving efficiency of government. I am confident of that and with that, we can meet the County Board of Supervisors and make it clear that our expectation is a greater return on our tax dollars that are flowing out of the community."

"I will not support continuing utility rate increases on our residents and I believe there exists amongst some people a rather callous disregard for the struggles of working people and the mistaken belief that everyone who lives in town is wealthy and can readily afford whatever rate increases town council approves," he said.

Mayor Chris Bertaut said, "I am going to guide this town council to examine this budget as closely as we can. We are bound by the council code of ethics to zealously guard against unjustified public expenditures.

"When I looked at the presentation of the CIP items, I found a number of issues in there that bear digging into. There was a claim made that the CIP budget has grown [because of] town council deferring projects. Well, which projects were deferred by the town council? What projects were deferred by management and which projects weren't deferred at all?"

Bertaut noted that the Town has 74 vehicles for 90 staff members. He also pointed out that the Town's meals tax has been steadily rising. "It's time to put some of it to use in order to make a difference in people's water rates," he concluded.

DEVELOPMENT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Town staff. I am comfortable with voting and advancing the zoning ordinance," he said.

Mayor Chris Bertaut, who is also a Planning Commissioner explained, "There were 15 appointed citizen volunteers over this period of time. They conducted a gap analysis, they collected and analyzed County GIS data and other relevant information. Most of all [they] investigated the State Code requirements to ensure compliance."

Bertaut stated that while the Planning Commission answers to the Town Council, their primary responsibility is to the Virginia legislature, and they've followed Virginia Code "to the letter on this matter.

"This zoning ordinance that is before us today has been reviewed by the town attorney, subjected to scrutiny by the town staff. Many, many of their recommendations for

changes have already been incorporated into this document."

Bertaut explained that the entire zoning ordinance rewrite effort began after the adoption of Purcellville's Comprehensive Plan. The rewrite of the zoning ordinance was done to bring the entire body of the town's zoning into alignment with the Comprehensive Plan, current Virginia and federal laws, and local, state and county regulations.

"I feel the effort has been made and it's time to move forward on this matter," he concluded.

Developer Casey Chapman, speaking during the citizen comment portion of the meeting said, "The rush for the zoning ordinance is the public isn't being shown what staff's perspective is on what the Planning Commission has produced." He said he wanted to hear staff's input. "It's ludicrous not to listen to staff—the zoning ordinance is burdensome," he concluded.

RENEWAL FORMS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Applications for first-time applicants will be available online by March 1, at loudoun.gov/TaxRelief. First-time applicants may also call 703-737-8557 to have a form mailed to them. Additional information about the program is available online at loudoun.gov/TaxRelief.

Anyone who requires a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability or needs language assistance to participate in the program may contact the Division of Tax Exemptions & Deferrals at trcor@loudoun.gov or 703-737-8557/TTY-711. Three business days' notice is requested.

A BUNCH OF STUFF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Park," by Loudoun's biggest land speculator. Supervisors gushed over his fancy presentation, mentioning slick architectural renderings, detailed site plans and so forth.

That's a developer's trick I used many times: Gussy up a pictorial presentation that leads the audience to say, "Wow," rather than ask, "Do we really want this?"

In truth, the guy's proposal included a few good things such as an increased buffer or two and as Supervisor Letourneau said, Greenlin's 83 acres are surrounded by data centers. True, but that should not have been determinative.

The collective Board should have said, "We have a duty to provide for the community's health, safety and welfare, so we vote nay" but being careful not even to whisper, "300 megawatts! They're crazy! That's enough to power up to 50,000 homes! These people are nuts." They can think that, but not verbalize it. Pity.

Charles Houston and his wife live on a restored horse farm dating from 1760. He had a stellar career developing large corporate office buildings and knows many developer's tricks.

Purcellville Panera Bread is open



Panera Bread opened on Wednesday, Feb. 5, in Purcellville. The new bakery-cafe opened its doors at 1210 Wolf Rock Drive, and the hours are 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Sunday. The new location will employ 55-60 people.

While the new location marks the first Panera in Purcellville, it joins 5 other locations in Loudoun County, and marks the 83rd Panera in the Washington D.C. area.

The new bakery-cafe features digital ordering, drive thru and mobile pick-up lane convenience, ideal for order-ahead, as well as indoor and outdoor seating for guests.

To celebrate the new location for

a limited time (beginning opening day through Feb. 5, 2026), local non-profit organizations, including schools, sports teams, scout groups and more can host a fundraising event at the new Purcellville location and Panera will donate 30% of the net sales from the event back to the organization. Restrictions may apply and for more information on how fundraising events work, go to fundraising.panerabread.com/faq.

Area Operating Partner, Dean Turner said, "We are thrilled to be opening our second Panera bakery-cafe in Purcellville. We are proud to be a part of this wonderful community and look forward to delivering the great tasting food and impeccable service our local guests have come to expect from Panera."

COMMUNITY

"If I Were Mayor" essay contest open for Leesburg's 7th & 8th grade students

The Town of Leesburg invites local 7th and 8th grade students to enter the Virginia Municipal League's "If I Were Mayor" essay contest. Deadline is Monday, March 17.

Students are asked to identify a problem within their community, gather feedback from community members, and offer a proposed solution, which must be presented in a typed essay between 300 and 500 words.

Students must live in the Town of Leesburg, which is considered a VML member locality. All entries must

be received by Monday, March 17. Visit <https://www.vml.org/Oportunities/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. In 2024, Leia Hatem of J.L. Simpson Middle School, won Region 6.

"This is a great opportunity for our local 7th and 8th 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."

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

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PURCELLVILLE GETS A BREAK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

bridge that next year we are out almost \$200 grand on top of everything else they [the council majority] have moved out of the general fund?

"It's gone, so we have to fill that void. Okay, so we realize the next year 'Oh, we realize we should have not gotten rid of that—we need that \$181,000 back.' What is the process to go through to reinstate that \$25 tax?"

LeMarr said the Town is not actually eliminating the fee, "that's why we are setting the rate at zero. We are not removing the fee entirely." LeMarr said, "Next year we would present you the option to reinstate the fee at \$25."

"Or," said Rayner, "we would have to raise our taxes again to make up for that hole, correct?" "Correct," said LeMarr.

Wright said that time is "not on our side with this."

Council Member Caleb Stought said he was torn on this, "I really am." He said he was encouraged that staff said "it's fairly benign to bring it back. I think I could go either way here."

Council Member Susan Khalil said, "I am not exactly sure why we are mountain climbing this little mole hill. I think we should graciously accept this money from the County and let our residents

know that we are graciously accepting this money from the County—that it may not last—be very clear with our residents.

"To not accept this money would really be looking a gift horse in the mouth. It would be my hope that we would not have to reinstate it—that we could find other sources of income to make up for it."

Khalil concluded, "I don't know what would preclude us from going back to the County," and hopefully they will continue to have this excess cash.

Nett said it sounded like the Council had a consensus and he supported the elimination of the \$25 vehicle license fee.

Luke said, "It's like a gift. We could say this year you won't have to pay the \$25, there are no promises for next year. Hopefully we won't have to reinstate it."

Bertaut said he agreed that "we should have a break this year. I'd also like to point out that this is not an either-or proposition—this year we are going to set it at zero dollars." He said if the County can't be convinced to continue "their largess—we may none the less have some savings and be able to set it at a smaller rate." "There's really no downside to this," said Bertaut.

FINANCIAL FOCUS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

about all your accounts. If you work with a financial professional, they can help you track your accounts, so inform them of all past and present IRAs and 401(k)s or similar employer-sponsored plans.

So far, we've looked at ways you can prevent losing track of financial accounts. But can you do anything if you suspect you've already left some money behind?

If you think you've lost tabs on an IRA, you can check old tax returns and bank statements to help you track your contributions and find the name of the financial provider that held your account. If it's a 401(k), you can contact your old employer's plan administrator.

You can get some help from other sources, too. The Department of Labor recently launched a retirement savings lost-and-found database (lostandfound.dol.gov) that can help you find pension or 401(k) plans connected to your Social Security number. For a stray IRA, you can check unclaimed.org, the website of the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators. And for various other sources of money — including uncashed checks from corporations and

financial institutions, inactive brokerage accounts and unclaimed safe deposit boxes — you can check MissingMoney.com, the unclaimed property website of the National Association of State Treasurers.

These sites offer no guarantees of finding your lost or missing accounts or other sources of money, so you still may have to do your own sleuthing. But as the old saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" — which, in this case, means you'll help yourself greatly by tracking your accounts from beginning to end.

Remember, your individual financial goals and questions deserve individual attention. If you think you might need specific financial advice, please reach out to a local financial advisor.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC.

Joshua Wolinski | (540) 338-2291
| joshua.wolinski@edwardjones.com

"Aligning your financial future with your personal goals, wants, and wishes."

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55th Annual Bluemont Fair seeks poster/T-shirt design

Organizers of the 55th Annual Bluemont Fair, Sept. 20 and 21, 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. The theme for 2025 is the 200th anniversary of the Snickersville Academy. Built in 1825 the charming log structure, which sits on the banks Butchers Branch, served as the village's first one-room school and church.

COMMUNITY

"This little log cabin was the heart of our community at one point," said Bluemont Fair co-chair Cynthia Morris. "It is now owned by the village of Bluemont, and part of our Fair proceeds go towards maintaining it. So it feels appropriate to honor the 200th anniversary of this former schoolhouse by using it as the theme of our 2025 Bluemont Fair. Follow the footprints on the Turnpike to visit its peaceful creekside setting when you come to the Bluemont Fair this September!"

Restored in 2010 with a community-maintained walking lane, bridge, and garden, the Snickersville

Academy serves as a focal point of Bluemont's early history. More information with a photo of the Academy is available at <https://bluemontheritage.org/places/>. Visitors are also welcome to visit the Academy and one can see historical

marker on Snickersville Turnpike in the heart of the village.

Artists' interpretations can be as broad or narrow as they choose and utilize any medium, 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 about the fair will be added after the winning design is selected. Artists' name should be on the back of the art. Also include your contact information and a brief biography.

The selected artist's name will be printed on the poster and their work acknowledged in Fair publicity. Multiple entries per artist permitted. Past designs can be viewed at www.bluemont-fair.org.

Artwork should be mailed to: Bluemont Fair Poster Design Competition, P.O. Box 217, Bluemont, Virginia,

20135 or emailed to: chair@bluemontfair.org Artwork must be received by April 25. To arrange to hand-

deliver art please contact chair@bluemont-fair.org Individuals requesting return of their submission should also include a self-addressed, stamped mailer. For further information call 540-554-2367, or email chair@bluemontfair.org.

See www.bluemontfair.org for more info about the fair.

Middleburg Humane Foundation hires Matthew Galati



The Middleburg Humane Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit animal rescue organization, has hired Matthew Galati, DVM as full-time veterinarian. Galati brings more than 14 years of experience as a full-time practitioner, skilled surgeon and manager with extensive emergency experience. He has also trained numerous interns in high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter techniques and has provided handling, care and medicine for exotic companion animals.

COMMUNITY

In addition to Galati's wide array of experience in veterinary medicine, he has provided training, cultivated effective communication and leadership skills in a team environment and established professional relationships with local emergency clinics and other area shelters.

"We are delighted that Matt has joined the Middleburg Humane Foundation team," said chairman of the board, Joshua Muss. "His skills and proficiency in veterinary medicine are a huge asset to MHF and the community."

Prior to working at MHF, Galati served as associate veterinarian at Anicura Veterinary Center in Manassas for two years and, prior to that, he was veterinary director of the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.

He moved to Virginia in 2013 to complete a yearlong rotating emergency/specialty internship with VCA Southpaws Veterinary Specialists

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

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Youngkin unveils “Virginia Has Jobs” initiative

On Feb. 24, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced the launch of “Virginia Has Jobs”, an effort designed to further unleash the Commonwealth’s economic strength by connecting Virginia’s job opportunities with a robust and talented workforce. As part of his commitment to job growth and economic vitality, Youngkin reaffirmed that Virginia is open for business and competing to win even more business investment to drive further job growth. In addition, he announced details of the Federal Worker Support Resource Package to support Virginians affected by federal workforce changes.

“From Day One, I declared that Virginia was open for business, and we’ve worked tirelessly to deliver on that promise,” said Youngkin. “Today, Virginia stands as the top state for business, with tremendous job opportunities across the Commonwealth. “Virginia Has Jobs” is an opportunity for every Virginian — and every business — to capitalize on the thriving economy, with more than 250,000 open jobs waiting to be filled.”

“Under Governor Youngkin, we cleared the appeals backlog at the Virginia Employment Commission and transformed workforce development in Virginia by creating a dedicated *Virginia Works* agency. Our focus on workforce has led to the highest labor force participation rate among any of our competitor states of NC, SC, GA, TN, FL, or TX,” said Secretary of Labor G. Bryan Slater. “Whether you’re looking for your first job, facing job disruptions and searching for that next career or seeking to expand your business, the Commonwealth is the place to be. We’ve added over 265,000 jobs in the last three years and have over 250,000 open positions with an additional 65,000 in the pipeline.”

“We want job seekers across the nation to know what companies like LEGO, Micron, Amazon, Capital One, Liebherr Mining Equipment, and Electro-Mechanical know, opportunity abounds in Virginia! We have reduced the cost of living, invested in business ready sites and infrastructure, and

fostered the growth of more than 10,000 startups. Virginia is soaring,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick. “Your next great job is here in Virginia!”

“Virginia Has Jobs” is designed to connect job seekers with the wealth of opportunity available in the Commonwealth. With industries spanning technology, healthcare, manufacturing, and more, Virginia’s economic climate is flourishing, and businesses are actively looking for qualified candidates to join their teams in both private and public sector jobs in every region of the Commonwealth.

Virginia’s economy has seen significant investments in innovation, job creation, and workforce development, making it an ideal environment for people to thrive.

With more than a quarter of a million job openings, the Commonwealth is committed to putting Virginians first and helping them connect with opportunities that will improve their lives and their futures.

Many Virginians are concerned about the impact of the federal workforce realignment on their careers. In addition to VirginiaHasJobs.com, the Commonwealth is well-equipped with the *Federal Worker Support Resource Package* to aid Virginians as they navigate any potential job disruptions, matching each person’s skills and experience with great open positions. **Federal Worker Support Resources:** All state resources are detailed below and are available at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/>

federalworkersupport. Virginians can email federalworkersupport@virginia-works.gov for additional assistance.

- **Virginia Works:** Job seekers can access Virginia Works’ suite of services as well as other partner services in person through American Job Centers in Northern Virginia and across the Commonwealth. Dedicated resource hubs are also available at the Northern and Arlington/Alexandria regions of *Virginia Career Works*.
- **Virtual Job Fairs:** Virginia Works will host a virtual job fair on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »

KAINE MEETS, CON’T. FROM PAGE 9

hard and farmers are dependent on a healthy economy. He said a lot of the farmers at the meeting have applied for grants and at the moment things are on hold.

Kaine said with spring just around the corner, farmers are preparing their plans, though they remain uncertain about their next steps. However, approved funding and grants should become available as the courts address ongoing legal issues.

“In my view,” said Kaine, “it’s unlawful to halt a grant or a program if Congress has already passed an appropriation.” He noted that the next challenge will be meeting the March 14 deadline for agreeing on a budget. Kaine said the budget must include essential programs that the farming and forestry sectors rely on.

Kaine asked why the administration is doing unilateral cuts— “they don’t think they can convince the leadership. We have to push on the court side.”

Stacey Carlberg with Fireside Farm said she and Casey Gustowarow are in the growth stage of their farm and “we are fearful of the upheaval so far. She



said she is deeply concerned about the workforce.

Stephen Bradford Rose with Potomac Vegetable Farms said the problem is the uncertainty—you don’t know. “People just pull back.” It’s a setback to implement more sustainable farming.

Sage Devlin with Far Bungalow Farm



said she grows cut flowers and “tariffs are going to affect everything.”

Tia Erman with the Piedmont Environmental Council said everything is on hold due to funding and this might delay the expansion for their community garden and other programs.

Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance said, “This is where the rubber meets the road. The uncertainty is palpable and the anxiety is palpable.”

Renshaw said that farmers have a bad rap and grants are well used. The profit margin for farmers is so low, she said. “Dammit, we feed America,” and farmers need support.

After the roundtable ended Kaine summed up the situation, “The uncertainty is very difficult for people around the table. You have folks whose businesses depend upon a healthy economy and big layoffs of federal employees threaten their customers, threaten their businesses. You have a lot of people around the table who have applied for or received grants and the dollars aren’t flowing on the grants. That’s impacting their businesses.”

SATURDAY NIGHT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

and characters, making it difficult to fully invest in any of them. Rather than deep-diving into a handful of conflicts and relationships, the film stays at the surface level of many. While viewers familiar with the original *SNL* cast and crew may take away more from the scattered storylines, those less acquainted with the show’s history leave underwhelmed and confused.

With that being said, one of the most interesting aspects of *Saturday Night* is witnessing how *SNL* came to be. It’s fascinating to see how a show many expected to flop became a sensation. Despite overwhelming skepticism, Lorne Michaels

somehow made audiences care about a group of unknown comedians performing random skits late at night—a feat that, 50 years later, remains impressive. My biggest takeaway after watching *Saturday Night* was the urge to go back and watch *SNL*’s first episode (which I plan to do as soon as I finish writing this article).

Another highlight is Gabriel LaBelle’s performance as Lorne Michaels. He convincingly portrays an awkward yet determined artist, struggling to articulate his grand vision to people who lack faith. His portrayal captures Michaels’ quiet frustration, exhaustion, and flashes of inspiration, making him a compelling lead even

when the film around him falters. Cory Michael Smith also stands out as Chevy Chase, striking a perfect balance between charm and arrogance to create a character you can both admire and resent.

Unfortunately, these performances aren’t enough to save the film. *Saturday Night* ultimately feels like a missed opportunity—an interesting premise weighed down by poor execution. While it offers insight into *SNL*’s chaotic beginnings, it lacks the energy, humor, and depth needed to meet the film’s great potential. Fans of *SNL* may appreciate the historical perspective, but as a film, it never quite finds its footing.

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CON’T. FROM PAGE 10

crucial views of the sunrise, or maybe some sleepy waterfowl close to the shore, or an alluring set of flowers amidst the swamper vegetation.

I even relaxed enough to go back some ... well, almost 60 years, now ... to the old, long-gone swimming hole my brothers and I had used growing up in a small, midwestern farming community. And that’s something I could never have planned, as I’d headed out of Leesburg just before dawn, that morning.

You see? Surprises can be a good thing.

Inova Loudoun Hospital hosting Stop the Bleed™ workshops

As part of the national Stop the Bleed® campaign, the Inova Virts Miller Family Emergency and Trauma Center at Inova Loudoun Hospital is hosting a free, in-person workshop on Tuesday, March 4, and Tuesday, April 8 from 5 to 7 p.m. This free course is designed for community members who may find themselves at the scene of an emergency.

During an emergency, no matter how quickly emergency professionals respond, the individuals on-scene are best positioned to assist and potentially stop life-threatening blood loss. This is critical because a person who is bleeding profusely

can die from blood loss within five minutes.

Workshop attendees will enhance their emergency preparedness by learning the difference between bleeding and life-threatening blood loss, and how to react to both. Participants will practice with tourniquets and wound packing.

All workshops will be held at Inova Loudoun Hospital, 44045 Riverside Pkwy., The Ladies Board Education Center, Suite 160, Leesburg. Follow signs for the South Hospital Entrance. Free on-site parking is available.

Participation is free but space is limited. To register visit inova.org/stopthebleed.

The Community Foundation invites scholarship applications

The Community Foundation for Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties is now accepting applications for its 2025 scholarship cycle. The Community Foundation serves as stewards for multiple scholarships funds, each with unique requirements and focus. Last year, the Community Foundation awarded \$28,000 in scholarships.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

YOUNGKIN UNVEILS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 from 10 am to 3 pm. More information coming to www.viriniaworks.gov.

- **Commonwealth of Virginia Jobs:** Talented individuals seeking to continue their careers in public service are encouraged to seek opportunities with the Commonwealth of Virginia at <https://www.jobs.virginia.gov/>.
- **Unemployment Insurance:** Many federal employees separating from their employer may be eligible for unemployment benefits, and dedicated information resources can be found at <http://vec.virginia.gov>. Applicants can apply for benefits easily online using ID.me, an identity verification tool, through Customer Self-Service, using only a driver's license or another form of government ID. Those who need further help can

also call our Customer Contact Center at **1-866-832-2363** or visit one of our American Job Centers where Virginia Works staff is available to assist with initial claims filing and job search services.

- **Health Care Coverage:** Individuals who need to update their healthcare coverage options outside of open enrollment due to a change in employment status can visit <http://www.enrollva.org>.
- **Earn a High-Demand Credential:** The Virginia Community College System offers a variety of credentials along with programs for which Virginians may be eligible that can provide financial assistance, such as G3 and FastForward, which provide taxpayer funded degrees and credentials in high-demand fields. Go to <http://vccs.edu>.



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**VIPERS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

members of the community came out to meet and watch the team practice.

Head coach Darien Almond said, "We are excited to be in such a supportive sports community, and can't wait to give the fans a great product. The guys are already miles ahead in terms of being on the same page, can't wait for opening day."

Returning player Quentin Scott said, "This is a season of revival for the Vipers organization. We are in a new era where the expectation for our team is to bring a TBL Championship trophy to Loudoun County, VA."

The league's mission includes partnering with local nonprofits, youth programs, and the community.

**BILL INTRODUCED**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

In 2005, Dodona Manor opened as a historic house museum and hosts international exchanges, historical exhibits, community events, and educational programming about the life and legacy of the Marshall family.

The legislation was passed by the U.S. Senate in December 2024, but did not pass the U.S. House before the end of the 118th Congress and therefore must be reintroduced.



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**HEMSTREET PRESENTS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

facilities over the next two years.

- \$17.3 million for affordable housing, which comes from the dedication of the equivalent of a full penny of the real property tax rate to affordable housing needs.
- \$47.7 million for the Revenue Stabilization Fund, created by the Board of Supervisors in 2023 to protect the county from potential fluctuations in tax revenue from data centers.

The Loudoun County Public Schools' budget request is fully funded in the proposed budget, with a year-over-year increase in the local tax funding transfer of \$123.4 million.

The development of the proposed FY 2026 budget was influenced by the economic environment, including these significant factors:

Forecasted Economic Conditions: The economy is currently experiencing growth, indicated by Loudoun County's rate of job growth that continues to outperform the state, region and nation. The county's jobs base is expected to grow by 2% in FY 2026.

Population Growth: While the number of residents added annually has slowed, ongoing shifts in the population's needs continue to drive the types of resources needed to adequately serve the community.

Real Property Portfolio: The 2025 assessment summary compiled by the Commissioner of the Revenue shows that the value of taxable real property in the county increased by 20 percent during 2024, compared to a 12 percent increase in the prior year.



This reflects the slowing growth in the residential market and a growing data center market. The proposed budget's revenue outlook anticipates continued growth in the real estate market but at a slower pace in 2026. The value of commercial properties increased by an unprecedented 50%, driven mostly by data centers, which added \$16 billion in value to the real property portfolio last year for a total of \$41 billion.

Revenue Stabilization Fund: To address risk associated with data center tax revenue, the Board of Supervisors created a Revenue Stabilization Fund in 2023, with a goal of having in reserve the equivalent of 10 percent of the annual real estate and business personal property tax revenues attributable to data centers. The current funding level of the Revenue

Stabilization Fund through FY 25 is \$80 million. The FY 2026 proposed budget includes another \$47.7 million contribution. If the Board adopts this level of funding in FY 2026, the revenue stabilization fund will be considered fully funded, with slightly more than its 10% target, which is intended to protect the county as the data center industry continues to evolve.

The FY 2025-2030 Amended Capital Improvement Program, which includes both county and school projects, totals approximately \$3.8 billion for the six-year planning period. The category with the largest expenditure percentage is transportation projects at 40% (\$1.5 billion), followed by county projects at 33% (\$1.3 billion) and school projects at 27% (\$1 billion).

A limited number of new projects have been added to the CIP in the categories of Pedestrian, Bridge, and Bicycle Facilities; Major Transportation Corridors; and Space Strategy and Facility Renovations.

The proposed budget is based on a real property tax rate of \$0.805 per \$100 of assessed value and a general personal property tax rate of \$4.15 and a vehicle personal property tax of \$3.48 for tax year 2026. Under the proposed budget, the average homeowner, including all housing types in Loudoun County, would see an average real property tax bill decrease of about \$57.

The BOS will determine the final tax rates and related budget policy decisions during budget work sessions in March with final adoption of the FY 2026 budget expected at the Board's business meeting on April 1.

OPINION: DOING RIGHT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

and my colleagues agreed with me.

It turns out that the VLF is a critical revenue stream to our towns. If removed the lost revenue will have negative impacts on the General Fund budgets of Loudoun's towns that don't have the same options as the county in terms of revenue replacement. Oftentimes, the only additional revenue streams for our towns are obtained by taxing town residents.

The Coalition of Loudoun Towns wrote to the Board supporting relief from all or part of the VLF and requested that county

funds be made available to each member town to offset the elimination of the VLF during any budget year that the County decides to provide VLF fee relief.

Hamilton is looking at a loss of \$14.2k, Round Hill \$16k, Middleburg \$17k, Lovettsville \$53k, Purcellville \$181k, and Leesburg \$934k. Hillsboro directly collects \$2k per year. Collectively, that equals a \$1.2 million deficit to our Towns.

I am pleased to report that with a lot of work at the Finance Committee and a lot of discussion at the Board, I was able to work with my colleagues to secure the \$1.2 million from Loudoun's General Fund Balance

to establish the Town Vehicle License Fee Revenue Replacement Grant Program for Tax Year 2025.

This program will provide revenue relief to the towns right away should they choose to eliminate the VLF for town residents for Tax Year 2025. Towns are not mandated to accept the funding, but I am hopeful the funding will provide an incentive for the Towns to provide town residents the same relief that non-town residents will receive.

Loudoun's seven towns are critical county partners. They are autonomous/independent governments, but they don't exist in isolation. They are the quaint and

historic locations that make Loudoun County unique, and I will be there to support our towns every step of the way.

In the end, the Board did right by Loudoun's towns.

Supervisor Caleb A. Kershner was elected to represent the Catoctin District on the Board of Supervisors in November 2019 and reelected in 2023. Caleb grew up on a farm and now lives in Hamilton with his wife, Whitney, and their six boys. He is a partner in the law firm of Simms Showers, LLP in Leesburg and can be reached at Caleb.Kershner@loudoun.gov.

SCHOLARSHIPS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

Established by community donors, each scholarship fund has a specific area of focus and criteria, which may include area of study and the graduating student's current high school. Opportunities available include scholarships for two-and-four-year college education as well as vocational and career training.

The deadline to apply is April 1, using the Community Foundation's universal application form available at <https://communityfoundationlf.org/students/>. Interested applicants can download the application form as well as a listing of all available scholarships and the unique requirements and criteria of each fund.

For more information email scholarships@communityfoundationlf.org.

The Community Foundation for Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties was founded in 1999 by local volunteers and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designed to accelerate community giving for common good in Loudoun and northern Fauquier counties, surrounding areas and across the nation.

Since its inception, the Community Foundation has granted more than \$18 million. Donors who include the Community Foundation in their philanthropic vision benefit from low fees, knowledgeable staff, and personal assurance that legal and accounting issues are managed under one cost-effective banner: the Community Foundation for Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties. To learn more go to www.communityfoundation.org.

MIDDLEBURG HUMANE, CON'T. FROM PAGE 21

and Emergency Center in Fairfax. Galati holds a B.S. in animal science with a minor in biological sciences from Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Cornell University, College of Veterinary Medicine where he was a Phi Zeta Honor Society Member.

Galati's short-term plan is to expand staffing at MHF. He's already hired a licensed veterinary technician and plans are to get MHF animals cared for and to expand adoptions. The goal is to be able to take in 500

kittens and get them adopted out this year.

Now, MHF is also able to take in more challenging medical cases requiring surgery and/or veterinary care. As the medical team at MHF gets up and running, the plan is to expand the clinic with offerings to rescues and shelters in the area. Over the next 2-3 years, plans are to expand wellness services such as exams and vaccines for animals that have been adopted from MHF.

Galati and his wife reside in Fairfax with their "almost two-year-old" daughter. For more information, visit www.middleburghumane.org.

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Wheatland Farm is a landmark property offering unparalleled beauty, history, and equestrian excellence in the heart of Virginia's wine country. The 43-acre masterpiece stands as a beacon of equestrian luxury and historic prestige. Recognized as a USEF Center of Excellence, this property was the proud host of the 2018 Para Dressage Selection Trials for the World Equestrian Games. The state-of-the-art facilities include both indoor and outdoor arenas, a cross-country field, and an enclosed perimeter trail. Wheatland Farm's infrastructure provides two barns with twenty-six European-style stalls and all the luxury's one expects from a world-class equestrian experience. Overlooking a pristine 9-acre lake, the six-bedroom manor home (circa 1741) exudes timeless elegance. Discover a heated saltwater pool with spa, two charming guest homes, and a Carriage House, serving as an executive office. The historic Great Barn, seats 300 guests and offers an unrivaled venue for spectacular events. The Daniel Boone Cabin adds unique charm to the property. Thoughtfully designed, the farm is equipped with ramps and other features to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Only 30 minutes from Dulles International Airport and an hour from Washington, D.C.

15158 Berlin Turnpike, Purcellville, VA (Loudoun County)

Buyer registration is required prior to a showing appointment.

Price Improvement \$9,999,000

Property Video
Wheatland Farm



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