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JANUARY 2026

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## Dog kennel sparks debate over scale in residential neighborhood

BY VALERIE CURY

On Dec. 18, the County Planning Commission held a public hearing for Happy Paws K9, LLC, a dog kennel that has been operating in a Leesburg residential neighborhood, zoned Agricultural Rural-1 (AR-1), without the required zoning approvals.

The applicants, Marcel and Beatriz Uttembergue, who live on a three-acre property on Oatlands Chase Place, previously housed up to 40 dogs without permits and are now seeking a Special Exception to legally operate a kennel with up to 35 dogs, in addition to four personal pets.

County staff said they could not support approval at this time, citing scale and intensity and requesting that the application be deferred to a future work session.

As part of the application, the applicant is requesting approval to reduce the number of dogs from 40 to 35. However, when combined with the four personal dogs permitted on the property, the total number would still approach 40 animals.

The request also includes a Minor Special Exception to significantly reduce required setbacks for the kennel facility—from 100 feet to 20 feet along the northern and eastern property boundaries and to 35 feet along the southern boundary.

The Loudoun County 2019 General Plan states that businesses within the Rural Policy Area must be compatible in scale, use, and intensity with surrounding uses.

County staff noted that the residence is in close proximity to neighboring homes and that the proposed number of dogs,

combined with reduced setbacks, raises significant compatibility concerns. As a result, staff recommended a further reduction in the number of dogs.

The kennel owners are utilizing up to 3,166 square feet of the existing residence for kennel operations, along with a 33,839-square-foot outdoor dog play area.

County staff recommended a three-foot interior fence, while a six-foot-tall wooden perimeter fence already exists on portions of the property.

According to the application, the kennel operates seven days a week from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and offers both daytime care and overnight boarding services. A traffic study by Gorove Slade projects approximately 80 daily trips.

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## Loudoun County writers called to create for Annual Library Contest

Sponsored by the Loudoun County Public Library, the Loudoun County Public Library Short Story Contest invites teens and adults to curl up with their imaginations this winter and share an original, unpublished short story.

Submissions will be accepted online through Sunday, Feb. 15, with winners celebrated at awards ceremonies on Saturday, May 9. Along the way, aspiring writers can hone their craft and find inspiration through

library-hosted writing workshops led by experts and community members.

The contest is open to middle school, high school, and adult writers who live in Loudoun County or neighboring jurisdictions, and there is no theme—just a wide-open invitation to be creative.

The area neighbors who are included are: the Cities of Falls Church, Alexandria, Winchester and Washington, D.C. Also, Arlington,

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## Tuscarora Mill Restaurant turns 40

On Dec. 22, as winter light settled along Catoctin Creek and downtown Leesburg moved gently through the holiday season, community members gathered at Tuscarora

**COMMUNITY** Mill Restaurant for a ribbon cutting that marked a meaningful milestone.

Forty years earlier, on Dec. 22 1985, Kevin Malone opened the doors of what would become one of Loudoun County's most cherished restaurants.

From the beginning, Tuscarora Mill Restaurant—known affectionately as Tuskie's—was more than a place to dine. Set inside a restored nineteenth-century grain mill, it felt instantly grounded in history, offering warmth, comfort, and a sense of welcome that made guests feel at home from their very first visit. It was a place designed for gathering, conversation, and connection.

That spirit came directly from its founder. Kevin Malone, born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Annandale, discovered early that hospitality was not simply a profession but a calling. After graduating from Annandale High School, he attended the Professional Bartending School in Arlington, where he found his passion for working with people. Behind the bar, he learned to listen closely, read a room, and make each guest feel seen—skills that would define his approach to hospitality throughout his life.

Kevin and his brother Shawn were mentored by renowned restaurateur Jim Wordsworth at J.R.'s Steak House in Fairfax. There, Kevin learned the fundamentals of

running a successful restaurant—consistency, leadership, accountability, and care for both guests and staff. Those lessons became cornerstones of Tuscarora Mill Restaurant and helped establish a culture that endures four decades later.

Malone's connection to Loudoun County predated the restaurant itself. In the late 1970s, he spent time in the region while traveling with his father and cousin, who raced thoroughbreds at Charles Town Races. Those early experiences fostered an

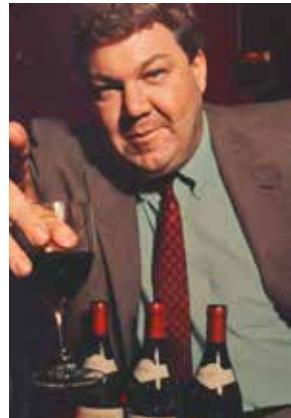
appreciation for the area's landscape, people, and character. When the opportunity arose to restore the historic mill property, Malone already felt deeply connected to the community he hoped to serve.

Working with developer Bruce N. Brownell and architect Beckham W. Dickerson, Malone helped ensure that the transformation of the mill honored its past while creating a space that felt warm, welcoming, and alive.

The result was a restaurant that blended history with hospitality in a way that felt effortless and enduring.

From its earliest days, Tuscarora Mill Restaurant was shaped by a dedicated team. Legendary bartender Gerry Waldron was present from the beginning, setting a standard of warmth and professionalism that became part of the restaurant's identity. Early team members and those who joined in the years that followed helped build a culture rooted in respect, pride, and genuine care—values that guests continue to feel today.

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# Purcellville Public Works Director resigns amid internal department dynamics

BY VALERIE CURY

In the first week of December, the Town of Purcellville's Public Works Director, Jason Didawick, abruptly resigned. Didawick had served the town for 15 years and was widely regarded as a model employee. In 2024, he was named Employee of the Year by Town Manager Kwasi Fraser.

During his tenure with the Town of Purcellville, Didawick worked closely with the town manager and staff to prioritize critical Capital Improvement Projects while guiding the water and wastewater departments through an evolving regulatory and technological landscape. His leadership emphasized long-term planning, investment in modern systems, and the adoption of up-to-date technologies to ensure reliable service. Throughout his service, maintaining the town's drinking water at the highest standards remained a central focus, with Purcellville consistently recognized for the quality and safety of its water supply.

Two months ago, when the town experienced a water main break that led to a three-day boil water notice, Didawick and his team worked around the clock to repair the break overnight. They coordinated closely with multiple agencies to ensure thorough testing, allowing the boil water notice to be lifted quickly and safely for residents.

As reported in *Loudoun Now*, Didawick was called into a meeting with Assistant Town Manager Diana Hays and Human Resources Director LaDonna Snellbaker to discuss restructuring within the Public Works Department. During the meeting, he was told there were perceived shortfalls on certain projects and areas where he could have demonstrated more accountability, particularly regarding workload distribution with the engineering team.

As reported by *Loudoun Now*, Didawick was informed by Hays and Snellbaker that the town wanted to go in a different direction. But according to town sources, this "impromptu personnel evaluation" occurred without the knowledge of the Interim Town Manager or the Mayor. Didawick's performance was always exemplary, and town officials were reportedly very satisfied with his work.

Two months ago, when the town experienced a water main break that led to a three-day boil water notice, Didawick and his team worked around the clock to repair the break overnight.

The discussions coincided with the town's review of the October water line break, which prompted consideration of a senior director position to oversee water, wastewater, facilities, and engineering. The proposed restructure was designed to improve communication with the public while allowing department heads to focus on their operational responsibilities, rather than reflecting any concern about Didawick's performance.

Interim Town Manager Tony Sabio told the *Blue Ridge Leader*, "During our after-action review of the October water line break, we identified opportunities to improve the flow of communication. As a result, I proposed bringing our water, wastewater, maintenance and facilities, and engineering functions under a single Public Works umbrella led by a senior director to strengthen coordination and collaboration.

"This approach was not about eliminating departments or department heads, but about improving communication while allowing existing leaders the freedom to focus on what they do best without unnecessary bureaucracy."

Sabio concluded, "The meeting with Jason Didawick was intended to inform him of the organizational structure we were planning to move toward and to discuss how that framework would support improved communication and coordination across Public Works."

Mayor Chris Bertaut told the *Blue Ridge Leader*, "Jason Didawick provided outstanding service to the town and his decision to resign was prompted by unauthorized and unsubstantiated statements made to him by members of staff. Neither the Town Manager, nor I had any desire to see him leave. I am hopeful that Jason will come back to finish several projects that he wanted to see to fruition."

# Kaine & Banks introduce bill to eliminate tax on student loans

On Dec. 17, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, (D-VA)

**GOVERNMENT** and U.S. Senator Jim Banks (R-IN) introduced the Student Loan Tax Elimination Act, legislation to remove “origination fees” for federal student loans.

“Student loan debt is holding Virginia families and the overall economy back,” said Kaine. “It should be easier, not harder, for American students to afford to go to college if that is the right path for them. That’s why I’m introducing this bipartisan, commonsense legislation to finally get rid of an antiquated tax on student loan borrowers.”

“Students deserve a fair deal when paying for college,” said Banks. “My bill ends a hidden tax on student loans and ensures our next generation has a greater opportunity to receive a more affordable education.”

Origination fees were historically intended to offset costs incurred by the private-sector partners that serviced

federal student loans. Direct Subsidized and Direct Unsubsidized loans are charged a fee of 1.057 percent, with PLUS loans receiving a fee of 4 percent.

In 2010, Congress shifted responsibility for all federal student loans from private-sector partners to the U.S. Department of Education—but these fees remained in place and have been burdening borrowers since. The Student Loan Tax Elimination Act would remove these fees, eliminating what has been a needless tax on student loan borrowers.

In April 2025, Kaine and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced legislation to expand federal student loan repayment options. In February 2025, Kaine introduced the Jumpstarting Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act, legislation to allow students to use federal Pell Grants for shorter-term job training programs; parts of this legislation became law in July 2025.

U.S. Representatives Lloyd Smucker (R-PA-11) and Sharice Davids (D-KS-03) have introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

## Managing erosion and stormwater: who's responsible?

BY GRACE BENNETT

The work involved with state-required maintenance for erosion, sediment, and stormwater has the potential to shift almost entirely onto the County's shoulders in the coming years, according to a decision made on Dec. 2.

Back on July 14, 2014, the County adopted the Virginia Stormwater Management Program, which added to their responsibilities the reviewing of plans

**GOVERNMENT** and permits. They had already been administering all state-required elements of the Erosion and Sediment Control Program within Town limits, but now they are relieving even more of the burden.

The past Dec. 2 Board of Supervisors meeting passed consent to officially change the Virginia Erosion and Stormwater Management Program's (VESMP) language.

Now, the County will be allowed to perform the inspection and maintenance

aspects of the program within Town boundaries. Any Town operating a separate storm sewer system is expected to maintain the facilities within its own jurisdiction. Staff anticipates bringing other amendments forward as befits the needs of maintenance and enforcement.

The question remains about precisely who is responsible for precisely what.

Current agreements explain that the County is administering the VESMP in Hamilton, Hillsboro, Lovettsville, Middleburg, Purcellville, and Round Hill, with the exception of Leesburg since it is operating a separate storm sewer system.

The VESMP is tasked with enforcing erosion and stormwater management and violations, reviewing and approving future plans, processing grading permits, inspecting land-disturbing activities, and ensuring long-term maintenance of related infrastructure.

Staff has been designing a template

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# A Few Thoughts

## The Ratchet and the Economy

BY CHARLIE HUSTON

Old fashioned car jacks are ratchets: They allow continued upward movement, but downward movement will be one slow notch at a time. That tool lends its name to an economics concept called, naturally, the ratchet effect: Prices can rise quickly in inflationary times, but fall slowly.

That's the situation we find ourselves

## OPINION

in right now. But don't panic.

The rate of inflation is slowing but people still feel the high prices. I certainly do. One quick fix is deflation, but that's worse. Prices fall but so does the overall economy. That's a recession, and bad.

There are two types of inflation: Cost-push and demand-pull. The former is easy to understand: The cost of ingredients or parts increase, so the

final product has to cost more in order to compensate. Whether omelets or automobiles, the concept is the same.

Demand-pull inflation is a bit harder to understand, but I have confidence in readers' intelligence. When more money flows into the economy and everything else remains constant, prices rise. A kid's lemonade stand in a poor neighborhood might get a quarter a cup. Put the same stand somewhere with money to burn—like Loudoun—and that cup of lemonade might cost a dollar. That's monetary policy.

Since 2017 more than \$12 trillion was added to the economy. I believe that the supply of goods and services did not

increase dramatically, so you had boat loads of new money chasing the old market basket of goods and services. Prices had nowhere to go but up. That's the essence of monetary policy.

Occasionally prices do fall: Egg prices recently. Gas prices. Beef prices a decade or two ago. However, these were anomalies. Egg and beef prices had a temporary imbalance between supply and demand that was soon corrected. For example, cattle producers quickly expanded their herds and the added supply caused prices to fall. We're extracting more oil, so gas prices have fallen.

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## Something unusual is happening in the Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney's Office

BY LLOYD HARTING

In July of 2025 Purcellville Town Manager Kwasi Fraser and Purcellville Vice Mayor Carl "Ben" Nett were arrested and each was criminally charged by the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney with one felony charge of violating Code of Virginia Section 59.1-

68.1 (Combinations to Rig Bids) and one felony charge of violating Code of Virginia Section 18.2-498.3 (Misrepresentations Prohibited)

## OPINION

constituting commercial fraud against government.

The criminal charges pertain to a meeting that Fraser and Nett attended earlier in January of 2025 when they met with Michael Jones, President of Major Security Consulting and Design LLC, regarding the town's possible intention to conduct an organizational assessment of the Purcellville Police Department.

At the time of that meeting, no

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## Overbuilt utilities, oversized consequences

Dear Editor,

I notice that the issues behind the catastrophe in Purcellville and the coming debacle in Paeonian Springs and Waterford arise from the same terrible policy.

## LETTER

That is, to overbuild a major utility service in anticipation of substantial future growth. Which, in turn, actually creates that growth by raising costs hugely for current users, pressuring them to allow more growth to absorb those higher costs.

KILJOY

BY CHIP BECK

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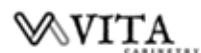
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## OPINION

# The Battle of Purcellville

BY VICE MAYOR CARL "BEN" NETT

After a two decade career in national security positions with the Secret Service, the CIA, and the Department of Defense, holding an active TS//SCI security clearance throughout, followed by a second career as a small town cop with the Purcellville Police Department—graduating first in class from the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy in December 2022, receiving the Sheriff's Meritorious Action Award in 2023, and being named Officer of the Year in 2024—I appreciate this opportunity to explain, after so much negative publicity, why I, after winning election to the Purcellville Town Council, was framed with eight sustained administrative charges, Brady listed, fired, indicted, and now decertified.

Did I wake up one morning, take a crazy pill and suddenly decide to betray my own core values and lifetime of public service, or could it be that I am the victim of a weaponized police department working in conjunction with corrupt prosecutors, coordinating closely with opposition Town Council members, to violate my civil rights under color of law in retaliation for my political votes?

I firmly assert the latter, which is why I initiated a meeting with the FBI and why I am urging the Department of Justice to initiate a civil rights investigation into the Purcellville Police Department and the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

In September 2024, Sara Lombrana was hired as Purcellville Deputy Chief of Police—a position I was already campaigning to eliminate as part of a broader plan to restructure the Town of Purcellville government, in general, and the Police Department in particular.

The Deputy Chief of Police position was created in 2017, in response to then Chief Cindy McAlister suing the Town and two of her sergeants. With that lawsuit settled, and all parties having moved on, there was no longer a need

for that position.

I likewise noted that the Purcellville Police Department, for years, has failed to provide consistent 24/7 service to residents and businesses, despite public claims to the contrary. I diagnosed the department as being top-heavy, with four command staff being paid six-figure salaries and contributing little to the patrol, investigative, or traffic enforcement missions.

Concurrent with that, an underpaid Officer corps resulted in unsustainable attrition levels. In my view, we were either going to have a fully functioning police department or transfer full-time policing services to the Sheriff's Office.

Since announcing my candidacy for Town Council, as a police officer, exercising my rights under Virginia law, I became the immediate target of workplace harassment and intimidation efforts, to include the opposing candidates' political signs being placed within the landscaping of the Purcellville Police Department headquarters, where I reported for duty each workday.

Police department leadership made no effort to have those political signs removed, despite complaints from numerous citizens—some of whom, ironically, thought the police department was publicly endorsing the police officer running for Town Council, me. They weren't.

To the contrary, I was victim of workplace targeting to include a series of personnel actions, in rapid succession, based solely on my lawful political activity. These included sustained Internal Affairs charges by Deputy Chief Lombrana, her subjecting me to a "random" drug test on election eve, and even threatening me with termination for passing out "Junior Purcellville Police Officer" stickers to children while campaigning for office off duty—stickers provided to me, unsolicited, by a Purcellville Police Sergeant for handout as part of ongoing community engagement efforts.

On November 19, 2024, two weeks after my election victory, Human

Resources Director LaDonna Snellbaker sent me an email demanding my resignation from either the Purcellville Town Council or the Purcellville Police Department, citing Section 10.3.B.1 of the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook, which states: "No employee shall continue in their position with the Town after election to any public office in the Town."

This change, unbeknownst to me, had been made to the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook during a July 2024 revision. The previous version of the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook was dated 19 years before, in 2005, and it did not contain any such provision.

The timing of this unannounced change to the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook, only 4 months before election day in November of 2024, and the unexplained reason for the change, are inherently suspicious.

On November 25th, 2024, the Executive Director of the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council, Stewart Petoe, affirmed that I could exercise my legal right to hold elected office under Virginia state law, specifically referencing Virginia Code §2.2-3107 (B) (1) (ii), noting, "It is quite clear, and applies to your situation. It is permissible for you, under COIA, to remain a member of the town police department and take your seat on the town council."

The offending provision of the employee handbook, contrary to state law, was subsequently removed.

The political targeting that I experienced as both a candidate for Town Council and Councilman-elect, continued after my taking office in January 2025. Based on two events—my participation in a brief agenda work session at Town Hall at the direction of the Town Manager, while on duty and remaining in service and responsive to calls, and my attendance at a conference in Richmond while on sick leave due in part to an injured knee that prevented me from driving an automobile.

Ms. Lombrana initiated two more Internal Affairs investigations resulting in eight sustained charges and my being placed on the Loudoun County Brady/Giglio List by Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson. Mr. Anderson placed me on the Brady list for non-Brady offenses—minor, disputed alleged administrative violations, and he did so two days prior to the deadline for me to contest the charges (which I did) pursuant to the Law Enforcement Officer's Procedural Guarantee Act, effectively denying me due process.

Mr. Anderson's premature decision was timed for maximum political effect—publicly released in advance of the February 25, 2025 Town Council meeting, so that I could be publicly mocked for being Brady listed.

Concurrent with this, the details from my confidential Purcellville Police Department Internal Affairs investigation were leaked to the media in violation of Virginia Code §2.2-3706. Attorney General Jason Miyares has been asked to investigate this criminal violation, thus far with no response.

I appealed my unlawful termination pursuant to the Town's Grievance Policy and, on June 25, 2025, I attended a hearing alongside my attorney. The Town was represented by an HR attorney contracted to defend my termination, Robert Sproul, who is now the Town Attorney.

Per the Town's grievance policy, devised and executed by Mr. Sproul and monitored by then Town Attorney John Cafferky, I, as the grievant, chose one of the panel members. I did not choose a campaign donor, or a family member, or a personal friend. I chose an attorney, a member of my neighborhood HOA, who I knew would be fair and impartial and who I knew would act ethically, and who I knew had the intellectual substance to discern fact from fiction.

The Town chose one of the panel members. The Town's choice of panel member was approved by the attorney

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Dear Senator Perry,

Thank you for taking an active interest in our Town. I was grateful that you traveled from Richmond to speak at our recent Town Council meeting. I am writing to strongly encourage you to follow through on your commitment to help Purcellville.

My wife Becky and I have lived in Purcellville since 1998. Becky is a retired Loudoun County elementary school

**LETTER** teacher, and I am a retired aerospace engineer and business owner with experience managing multimillion-dollar NASA, Orbital Sciences, and Stratolaunch launch and test facilities. Both of our sons graduated from Valley High School, worked at Nichols Hardware, and built their lives here. I currently serve as Chairman of the Planning Commission.

As of the 2020 Census, Purcellville had 8,929 residents—a small community now carrying large-scale financial and infrastructure burdens.

In your letter to the Mayor, I believe you noted that your office has a duty to evaluate whether intervention is warranted. Under the Dillon Rule, you are correct—and Purcellville's condition urgently requires that evaluation.

The Town's situation is concerning:

1. **Debt burden:** The Town reported **\$49.2 million in outstanding debt** as of July 1, 2024—an extraordinary load for a community of fewer than 9,000 residents and a very limited tax base.
2. **Deferred utility infrastructure:** Town department heads reported in the **FY 2026–2030 CIP (Jan. 23, 2025)** that **\$34 million in utility projects** are needed and can no longer be deferred.
3. **Aging core systems:** Key water and sewer infrastructure is past its reliable service life, including the Town's **one-million-gallon fresh water storage tank**, now approaching 100 years of service.
4. **Unresolved floodplain hazards:** 100-year floodplain risks remain unresolved. At the **November 2022 Town Council meeting**, the Town Vice Mayor and the Chair of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors publicly committed to mitigation along the South Fork of Catoctin Creek in the Catoctin Meadows subdivision; **no project has yet been delivered.**
5. **Transportation delays:** Town transportation needs remain

unmet. Safety and congestion issues at **Route 7/287** persist, and the **Route 7/690** interchange project has been delayed by VDOT until at least 2026—despite Town roads serving **five schools inside Town limits** and **two County schools only two-tenths of a mile** outside Town limits, exacerbating traffic.

6. **Severely constrained tax base:** Purcellville's tax base is **highly constrained and limited**. Of the Town's 2,159 acres, 41%—roughly **890 acres** across **63 properties**—pay **no real estate taxes**. That leaves only **1,203 taxable acres**, **two-thirds of which are residential**, to support all Town operations, utilities, debt service, and capital obligations.

Politically, the Town Council—neither the majority nor the minority factions—**has been unable** to govern effectively. Both have contributed to strain within the governance process, too often diverting from common sense and engaging in conflict with one another rather than keeping the needs of all citizens at the forefront.

Furthermore, the County has provided limited support and, in several instances, has contributed to delays or further erosion in the Town's ability to govern itself.

Given the circumstances outlined above, I have little confidence that the Town can, on its own, promote—consistent with present and future needs—the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the citizens of Purcellville without assistance and guidance from the Commonwealth.

I respectfully request your help in initiating a comprehensive, fact-based evaluation of Purcellville's fiscal and infrastructure condition—**independent of local political conflict**—to determine whether state oversight or intervention is warranted.

Purcellville's residents deserve safe infrastructure, sound governance, and a sustainable path forward. Without outside evaluation and support from the Commonwealth, our community's quality of life will continue to deteriorate.

As taxpayers and citizens of Purcellville, we simply ask for the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare that our elected and appointed officials are expected to safeguard. I am confident this is something you would agree with.

Ronald B. Riss

Purcellville, Dec. 12, 2025



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# Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Paris, Virginia

BY TIM JON

I went to Paris, and it took my breath away; actually, what this means is: I visited an historic village along the Blue Ridge Mountains, and I relaxed enough to be able to feel the air being pulled into my lungs. Doesn't sound quite as romantic that way, does it? Life can be like that: sometimes we feel like we may be settling for less, yet we feel that undeniable uplift of exhilaration. That's more like it.

Now, I had to drive outside the boundaries of Loudoun County for this one—finally easing off Route Seven as the western heights started looming near, a few miles west of the horse-country community of Upperville. And I didn't find much. But, as we often discover in the best of human experience—less is sometimes a little more.

At least that's how I felt as I stretched my legs at the dead-end of a very unimproved lane (one of only a couple of actual streets in Paris, Virginia), scanned the horizons, and took a look at the cows. Though they were a good distance away (yes, one can actually see for several hundred yards in some directions in these parts), I figured they were most likely beef cattle.

Having been raised by parents who both grew up on working Midwest farms, I learned quite early that this is an important distinction. Namely, they turn out better steaks and burgers, and the attending farmer doesn't need to perform the milking ritual twice a day, as would be necessary on a dairy herd. So, I got that settled.

Took a few more breaths. Walked to the other side of my car to check on the sights over there. Things looked good from that angle, too.



Now, I'd driven for some 40 minutes or thereabouts to arrive at this fairly non-descript destination, taking Route 15—James Monroe Highway—down to Route 50 at the Southern end of the County, then west through Middleburg and Upperville, all the way to the Blue Ridge at the lower-right-hand-corner of my virtual map—but it had done the trick. I hadn't gotten lost, and I'd found something. All was good.

Now, I know—as a proper 21st Century tourist in my own home town—I should have stopped at a local winery and exchanged a wad of cash for some memorabilia, and scheduled my trip to visit some roadside produce stands, or maybe even a farmers' market to snare some homegrown vegetables—and I may have even taken in some living history events or seen some real, live, local theatre—after all, I used to do that stuff for like, 30 years. And all those activities and experiences are fine, and, some day I will return and probably partake in all of the above.

But for today, my trip was delightfully worthwhile just for the chance to step around my vehicle on a bed of unmown grass, watch the herd of bovines on the hill and the mist rolling along the Blue Ridge, and to stand and fill my breathing apparatus with fresh air. I had no idea, leaving my home just before sunrise that morning, that I'd find this particular experience—or any particular experience, for that matter. Each time I set out, it's kind of a gamble: I may return home with no engaging images captured on my camera, no memorable moments to savor at a later time, sitting at my computer.

Now, not wanting to leave you with a story about not much at all, I encourage those visiting Paris—Virginia, that is—to check out the historic Ashby Inn, and just a couple doors down—Trinity United Methodist Church—both on Federal Street, just off Gap Run Road. Not that I'm the imaginative type, but I surmise that these establishments offer food to the soul as well as the body.

And, as I write this story of minimal physical commodities, I'm reminded of what is now nearly ancient history in these parts—an outdated tourist slogan from some two decades back: I remember the unveiling of this rebranding, image change for the local industry—“Catch Your Breath.”

At the time, I found it rather ironic and even humorous that this bustling Northern Virginia community (with Dulles Airport, Data centers, global internet connections, and information technology muscle to boast one of the highest annual per-capita income levels in the known universe) could be referred to as a place to come to relax, much less to enjoy the air.

Funny—it took me 20 years to figure this one out. You have to go to Paris for that one.

## FINANCIAL FOCUS®

### New Year's financial resolutions: Making them stick

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI, EDWARD JONES  
FINANCIAL ADVISOR

As the calendar flips to a new year, millions of Americans pledge to improve their financial lives. But without a concrete plan, those well-intentioned resolutions often fade quickly.

Financial goals consistently top the list of New Year's resolutions. A 2025 CFP Board study shows that financial resolutions are prominent, with saving more money (45%) and reducing debt (32%) ranking among the top three goals.

Unfortunately, most resolutions don't last. A 2023 Forbes Health poll found that over half of people give up on resolutions by the four-month mark and only 1% make it the full year.



JOSHUA  
WOLINSKI

The challenge isn't a lack of desire for change. People may set the same resolution year after year, revealing a disconnect between intentions and action. Or it may be that they try to tackle too many goals at once, or aim higher than is realistic, setting themselves up for disappointment.

**Set smart financial goals.** Before crafting your action plan, consider which financial priorities matter most to you. If you need ideas, here are some areas where you may want focus in 2026:

- Regularly review your financial goals and track progress toward meeting them
- Increase your 401(k) contributions or max out your IRA and/or HSA contributions
- Pay down debt strategically and negotiate lower interest payments
- Build an emergency savings fund of six to 12 months

#### • Save more consistently

**Be specific.** Vague resolutions like “save more money” rarely succeed. Instead, it can help to make goals specific and measurable. For example, rather than making a resolution to “start an emergency fund,” commit to a specific goal, such as, “I will put \$100 a month into an emergency fund.”

This shift from general to specific transforms wishful thinking into actionable steps. When goals are attainable, it's easier to track progress and stay motivated.

**Find an accountability partner.** Don't go it alone. Having someone to check in with can help you stay on track. This could be a spouse, friend or family member who shares similar goals.

Consider working with a financial advisor who can help you create a realistic plan, monitor your progress and adjust strategies as needed. A professional can provide

expertise and accountability, making it easier to stay on track throughout the year.

**Start small and build momentum.** Rather than overhauling your entire financial life all at once, focus on one or two priority areas. Identify where the largest gap exists between your current situation and where you want to be, then concentrate your energy there.

Breaking larger goals into smaller, manageable actions makes them less overwhelming and more achievable. Each small win builds confidence and momentum for tackling the next challenge.

The new year offers a fresh start and renewed motivation to improve your financial health. With specific goals, a solid action plan and the right support system, this could be the year your financial resolutions finally stick. Remember, your

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

# TLUC to revisit rural land use rules in January meeting

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

Loudoun County officials are continuing a months-long review of how rural land is used in the western part of the county, with the next discussion scheduled for late January. The Board of Supervisors' Transportation and Land Use Committee will meet in January to focus on updates to zoning rules that affect farms, rural businesses, and residents in the county's

GOVERNMENT

Rural Policy Area west of Rt. 15.

The January meeting is part of a broader effort to revisit Rural Uses and Standards—the rules that determine what activities are allowed on rural land, and under what conditions. County planners say the goal is to better align those rules with modern farming and agritourism practices, while still protecting the rural character that defines western Loudoun.

This upcoming work session follows a lengthy TLUC discussion in early November, when committee members, staff, and stakeholders examined rural zoning rules related to food trucks, farm food service, and winery and brewery events. That meeting underscored how quickly rural business models have evolved, and how existing regulations sometimes struggle to keep pace.

During that earlier conversation, farmers and rural business owners raised concerns about outdated standards, while nearby residents emphasized the importance of limiting impacts like traffic, noise, and crowd size. Committee members made clear that no single

meeting would resolve all of those tensions—instead, they committed to a series of focused discussions, each tackling a different slice of rural land use.

The January meeting will pick up where that conversation left off, shifting from food service and events to other foundational pieces of the rural economy, including agricultural processing, farmworker housing, and rural lodging.

Rural Uses and Standards shape how Loudoun's countryside functions day to day. They influence whether a farm can host overnight guests, process crops into finished products, or provide housing for seasonal workers. They also set expectations for neighbors about what kinds of activities may take place nearby.

County officials say these standards are being reviewed now because many were written years ago, before agritourism, farm-based businesses, and local food production became as widespread as they are today. Similar to concerns raised during the November TLUC meeting, planners have heard repeatedly that the rules can be unclear, overly restrictive, or mismatched with real-world conditions on rural properties.

The county's long-term planning documents emphasize preserving farmland, supporting agriculture, and encouraging rural economic activity that complements, rather than replaces, farming. TLUC's ongoing work sessions are intended to translate those broad goals into practical zoning language.

At the January meeting, TLUC will tackle a number of specific topics. County staff have identified several key questions, and they'll be asking the committee and stakeholders for input. The main topics will include agricultural processing, tenant housing and agritourism.

Agricultural processing and food production refers to farm-based production of goods like cider, juice, cheese, jellies, wine, beer and other value-added products. Currently Loudoun requires that at least half of the ingredients (fruit, grain, etc.) used by a farm processor be grown on that same property. Some farmers say this 51% on-site rule is too strict, because often equipment is shared and ingredients come from nearby farms.

The county will consider allowing more flexibility—for example, permitting a farm cidery to process apples from any Loudoun orchard, or letting neighboring farmers share a common processing facility. TLUC will discuss whether to relax the requirement so products can come from elsewhere in the county or from the farmer's own land, making it easier to run a farm winery or brewery.

The topic echoes earlier conversations about food service and value-added uses, where stakeholders asked for rules that support local agriculture without opening the door to large-scale commercial operations.

Seasonal farm labor and tenant housing covers the homes and dormitories where farmworkers live.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 »

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## Ask Dr. Mike

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

Dr. Mike,

Our son is 7 years old. His teacher contacted us to discuss the school doing an evaluation on him since he is having attention problems, hyperactivity and behavior problems, and language learning problems in the classroom. She also said that

he seems to get anxious socially with the other kids often. She suggested that he may be dyslexic given his struggles with reading and writing, and she said the evaluation they do would identify that if he is.

My husband and I are hesitant to have our son evaluated because we don't want to label him in the school system. We also recognize that if he does have real learning difficulties they should be addressed. Our neighbor had their son evaluated privately a while back and got a lot out of that, so we know that's an alternative to having it done at the school. We'd appreciate your thoughts.

—Concerned Parents in Loudoun

Dear Concerned Parents in Loudoun,

**Ask Dr. Mike**



DR. MIKE

Thank you for reaching out and sharing your concerns about your son. It's always difficult for parents to hear that their child is struggling in school, but your openness to understanding what's happening is the most important first step toward helping him.

From what you've described, his teacher has noticed a combination of concerns—difficulty learning new language-based material, staying focused, and managing his behavior in class, along with signs of anxiety in social situations. She's also raised the possibility of dyslexia because he's mixing things up when reading and writing, and she's recommended testing. These observations are valuable because teachers often see children in structured settings where academic and social demands can highlight patterns that might not appear as clearly at home.

It's understandable that you're hesitant to have your son labeled at such a young age. Many parents share that concern. Labels can feel limiting, but early evaluation doesn't have to define him—it simply helps you understand how he learns, where he struggles, and what supports might make school a better fit. The goal is not to

place him in a box but to uncover information that can guide more personalized strategies for his growth.

There are a few possible reasons behind the challenges his teacher observed. Dyslexia is one, particularly if he's reversing letters, struggling to sound out words, or finding reading unusually difficult for his age.

Another possibility is ADHD, which often shows up as inattention, hyperactivity, or impulsivity, all of which can affect academic performance and behavior. Anxiety can also play a role, especially if he seems nervous in social situations or reluctant to engage with peers. Sometimes, these challenges overlap—children may have a combination of learning, attention, and emotional factors that interact with one another in the classroom.

The best next step is to gather more information rather than making quick assumptions. Begin by discussing your concerns with the school. Most school systems have procedures for educational evaluations, and teachers, counselors, or school psychologists can help you understand what supports are available.

You may also wish to talk with your

pediatrician, who can rule out any medical factors and provide referrals for specialists if needed. A private neuropsychological evaluation is often the most comprehensive way to understand what's going on. This type of assessment looks at a child's intellectual abilities, language and processing skills, attention, memory, academic achievement, and emotional functioning. It provides a clear picture of your son's unique strengths and challenges, along with concrete recommendations for home and school.

In the meantime, keep providing structure and reassurance at home. Children are especially sensitive to how adults respond to their struggles. Knowing that you believe in him will help reduce anxiety and boost his confidence. Stay in close communication with his teacher so you can monitor progress and adjust support if needed.

If anxiety or attention issues seem to be significant, therapy can also be helpful. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), in particular, is effective for children who experience worry, difficulty focusing, or frustration related to school. It teaches coping and problem-solving skills that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

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## Remembering Donna Truslow Rogers

Donna Truslow Rogers, 85, died on Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at Hillbrook Farm in Hamilton, Virginia, following a stroke. Donna was born in Charleston, West Virginia, graduated from the Blue Ridge School, became a psychiatric nurse after graduating from the Washington Hospital Center and worked at



### OBITUARY

St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. She went on to earn a BSN in Nursing from Bowie State University.

Donna T. Rogers was a respected Loudoun County farmer, equestrian, conservationist and member of the Master of Foxhounds Association of North America. Donna helped found the Scenic Loudoun Legal Defense and the Museum of Hounds and Hunting North America.

She also played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg. Donna was one of the first women to serve on the Blue Ridge Cattlemen's Association and was one of the founders of the Virginia Horsemen's Association.

Donna was an active member of the Virginia Steeplechase Assoc. and National Steeplechase Association and was an accomplished rider, trainer and racehorse owner. She was commended by the Commonwealth of Virginia General Assembly by House Joint Resolution No. 724 in February of 2025 for her exceptional contributions to the Commonwealth, the equine community and her commitment to preserving open spaces and historical sites.

Donna was a member of the Loudoun Hunt—Loudoun Hunt West member for 60 years, Master for 20 years and Loudoun Hunt Race Chair for over 20 years.

She is survived by her daughter, Alice Ann Shapiro, brother William H. Truslow, grandchildren Hannah M. Rogers-Tucker, Dr. L. Bailey Lindenmaier, and Ellysa R. Lindenmaier, niece Rebecca Truslow, nephew William S. Truslow and 4 great grandchildren, William, Gabrielle, Joseph and Lane.

Service will be held on Friday, January 9, 2026 at Hall Funeral Home in Purcellville at 10 am. Burial will be in Union Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Land Trust of Virginia, Morven Park and Museum of Hounds and Hunting North America.

## Loudoun offers parent support program *Parenting Wisely*

Loudoun County families with youth who are experiencing challenging peer and family relationships and life crises can get support. Loudoun offers a parent support program to help parents learn strategies and techniques to better support their children and manage difficult situations in the home.

### COMMUNITY

Parents will learn constructive skills proven to decrease problem behaviors, reduce family conflict and improve the family dynamic. The program is based on the evidence-based curriculum *Parenting Wisely*. All programs are free, but seats are limited, and registration is required. The schedule of upcoming sessions is as follows:

#### **Parenting Wisely – Teen Edition**

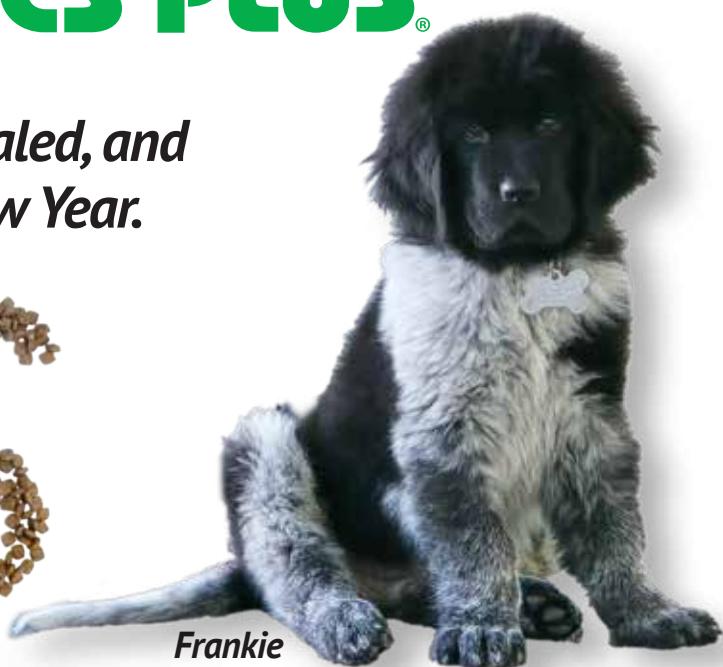
The *Parenting Wisely – Teen Edition* program is available to Loudoun County families with a youth between the ages of 11-17 who has had one of more of the following problems: running away, failing grades, truancy and poor school attendance/avoidance, drug and alcohol experimentation, or concerning behaviors, including aggression at home, school and/or in the community.

Families may participate in individual sessions or multi-family group sessions. The program works to: help families to understand the barriers and behaviors that may be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »

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## Have a question about Loudoun County Government?

Loudoun County is launching a new online tool designed to enhance the county's engagement with the community. "Ask Loudoun County" leverages artificial intelligence and the existing expertise of the county's professional staff to efficiently respond to the public's need for information 24 hours a day.

Anyone seeking information from the county government may click on the Ask Loudoun County icon that is located in the lower left corner of [loudoun.gov](http://loudoun.gov) and submit an inquiry, such as "How do I get a marriage license?" The AI capability within the system quickly provides a response, typically linking the requester to additional information on the county's website. The system also has the capability to quickly and efficiently produce video responses to constituents' questions from the county's own subject matter experts.

"The implementation of this technology demonstrates our commitment to continually improving Loudoun County government's engagement with members of the community in our ongoing effort to keep the public informed about county programs and services and the business of

the Board of Supervisors," said Loudoun County Administrator Tim Hemstreet. "Our goal is to be responsive and transparent and to answer questions from residents as quickly as possible."

Ask Loudoun County provides the public with a new option for engaging the county but does not replace existing communication channels with the county. In addition to submitting inquiries through Ask Loudoun County, members of the public may submit inquiries through the Loudoun Express Request (LEX) system, engage with the county through Loudoun's official social media accounts, and send emails to and call county departments. Email addresses and phone numbers of county departments are available online at [loudoun.gov/ContactUs](http://loudoun.gov/ContactUs).

Loudoun County residents are encouraged to stay informed by following the county's social media and by subscribing to email and text message notifications at [loudoun.gov/NotifyMe](http://loudoun.gov/NotifyMe) and [loudoun.gov/alert](http://loudoun.gov/alert).

Residents may subscribe to Board of Supervisors newsletters; sign-up links are available on each Board member's webpage, which are linked from [loudoun.gov/BOS](http://loudoun.gov/BOS).

### TLUC, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Under current rules, a "seasonal labor dormitory" must provide 200 square feet per worker (up to 2,500 square feet total) and the workers must be employed on the farm. Some small farms say the 200 sq.ft.-per-worker minimum is hard to meet.

County planners are proposing to lower that minimum to around 100 sq.ft. per person to allow cozier bunkhouse setups or modern tiny homes. They're also considering more creative options: for example, allowing collaborative housing where two farms share a group of cabins or bunk rooms, or permitting manufactured homes and farm-based housing structures as long as they meet safety rules. The discussion will be about how Loudoun can help farms provide affordable, on-site housing for their workforce without being overly burdensome.

As with the November meeting, the challenge will be finding a balance between flexibility and predictability—allowing farms to function effectively without dramatically changing the rural landscape.

Many Loudoun farms offer lodging and events—think

bed-and-breakfasts, farm stays, weddings or educational farm tours. One older zoning use called "Guest Farm or Ranch" described a farm that provides overnight rooms, meals and a hands-on farm experience for visitors.

That use was removed from the ordinance when it was rewritten, but now planners wonder if it should come back. Restoring this "guest farm" category could simplify rules for agritourism lodgings. For example, some farms might operate a small bed-and-breakfast or several guest cabins tied to farm work.

The committee will discuss whether to formally "reinstate the Guest Farm or Ranch use" so farmers can host paying visitors on-site. In addition, the staff is asking if new standards are needed to ensure lodging is properly set up before big farm events (like weddings) are held—for instance, requiring proof of a valid occupancy permit or dedicated bathroom facilities when a farm also hosts large gatherings.

Supporters say clearer rules for farm-based lodging could help farms diversify their income, especially as agritourism continues to grow. Others caution that

## County ordinances amended related to tax requirements and exemptions

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors recently approved several amendments to the Codified Ordinances of

### GOVERNMENT

Loudoun County regarding certain tax requirements and exemptions related to the transient occupancy tax, surviving spouses of armed forces members killed in the line of duty and solar equipment.

During the Board's Dec. 10, public hearing, the Board approved the following two items:

- **Amending Chapter 878 – Transient Occupancy Tax**

The Board amended Chapter 878 - Transient Occupancy Tax to exempt business owners who offer overnight stays only through online platforms from filing with the county monthly if they file an annual affidavit by Jan. 20 with the Commissioner of the Revenue. A change in state law by the General Assembly in 2025 permits this change. The update also clarifies that hotel points, when redeemed, are not included in the calculation for TOT collection. These changes are effective beginning Jan. 1, 2026.

- **Repealing Chapter 888 – Real Estate Tax Classification of Property Owned by Surviving Spouses of Certain Persons Killed in the Line of Duty**

The repeal of Chapter 888 aligns with amendments the General Assembly has made to the Code of Virginia, effective Jan. 1, 2025. The change by the legislature eliminates the need for the local ordinance because the exemption is now a state law, § 58.1-3219.9. Exemption from taxes on property of surviving spouses of members of the armed forces who died in the line of duty.

During the Board's November 12, 2025, public hearing, the Board approved the following item:

- **Amending Chapter 868 – Solar Equipment Tax Exemptions**

The Board approved changes to Chapter 868 of the county ordinance to align with changes to the Virginia Code by the General Assembly. The amendment will permit a tax exemption of 100% of the value of the equipment for solar projects of 25 kilowatts or less for their useful life. Detailed information about the exemption is available in the staff report prepared for the public hearing (PDF).

More information about Loudoun County's programs for tax relief, exemptions and deferrals is online at [loudoun.gov/TaxRelief](http://loudoun.gov/TaxRelief).

lodging and events need to be carefully regulated to avoid turning rural properties into de facto commercial venues—a concern that also surfaced during discussions of winery events and food trucks.

Each of these topics is being driven by feedback from the community. Rather than voting on specific zoning changes, TLUC's January meeting is intended to gather direction and identify areas of agreement or concern. County staff will use that feedback to draft potential ordinance changes, which will return for public review later in the process.

Additional TLUC sessions on rural uses are planned throughout the year, each building on the previous one. For residents who followed the November discussion, January's meeting represents another step in an evolving conversation about how Loudoun's rural areas can adapt while staying true to their roots.

As the process moves forward, county leaders say public input will continue to play a key role—not just in shaping individual rules, but in defining what Loudoun's rural future should look like.

## Local artists take center stage in Middleburg exhibit

A new exhibition opening in Middleburg this winter invites visitors to slow down, look closely and reconnect with art as a physical experience.

**COMMUNITY** *Artists & Artisans*, a collection of 15 environmental portraits by noted Loudoun County photographer Philip Ulanowsky, will be on view Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 24 and 25, from noon to 5 p.m. at the Artists in Middleburg Gallery, 102 W. Washington St. The exhibit features local fine artists and crafts experts photographed in settings that reflect their creative lives and working philosophies.

Ulanowsky will be present at the gallery both days, and at 3 p.m. he will offer a brief presentation about the project, followed by a question-and-answer session.

The artists included in the exhibit were selected for the exceptional quality of their work, and the portraits were created collaboratively over the course of 2025. The project marks a new direction in Ulanowsky's portraiture, focusing on representational artists rather than abstract ones, and artisans whose practices are rooted in tradition. Each portrait aims to suggest something of the subject's outlook on their own work, creating a visual dialogue between the artist and the environment in which

they create.

To deepen that connection, website addresses for each artist accompany the portraits, allowing visitors to explore the subjects' work and better understand the relationship between the finished art and the person behind it. The range of subjects is broad, spanning disciplines from ballet instruction and painting to music, woodworking, piano tuning and sculpture.

Technically, the project is equally rooted in tradition. Ulanowsky used a view camera—an instrument known for its precision as well as its constraints—and photographed exclusively in black and white. A film photographer for decades, he produces each silver-gelatin print by hand in the darkroom, emphasizing craftsmanship at every stage of the process.

"You truly can't appreciate the quality of any traditional art images on a screen," says Ulanowsky. "The quality of the material, the way it is affected by light, the way it appears under ambient light, the relation of detail to the overall composition—you simply need to be there. Fine photographic prints are no exception."

Visitors will have another reason to linger. A membership exhibit by Artists in Middleburg will be on view at the gallery at the same time, offering an opportunity to experience a variety of artistic media in person.

Together, the exhibitions underscore a central theme of *Artists & Artisans*—art is not just something to scroll past, but something to stand in front of, absorb and experience—up close and in real time.

businesses that are central to the town's character.

Participating businesses will be marked by blue and white balloons displayed outside their storefronts, making it easy for shoppers to identify sale locations as they stroll through downtown. The event spans Middleburg's primary shopping areas, including Washington Street, Pendleton Street, Madison Street, and Federal Street.

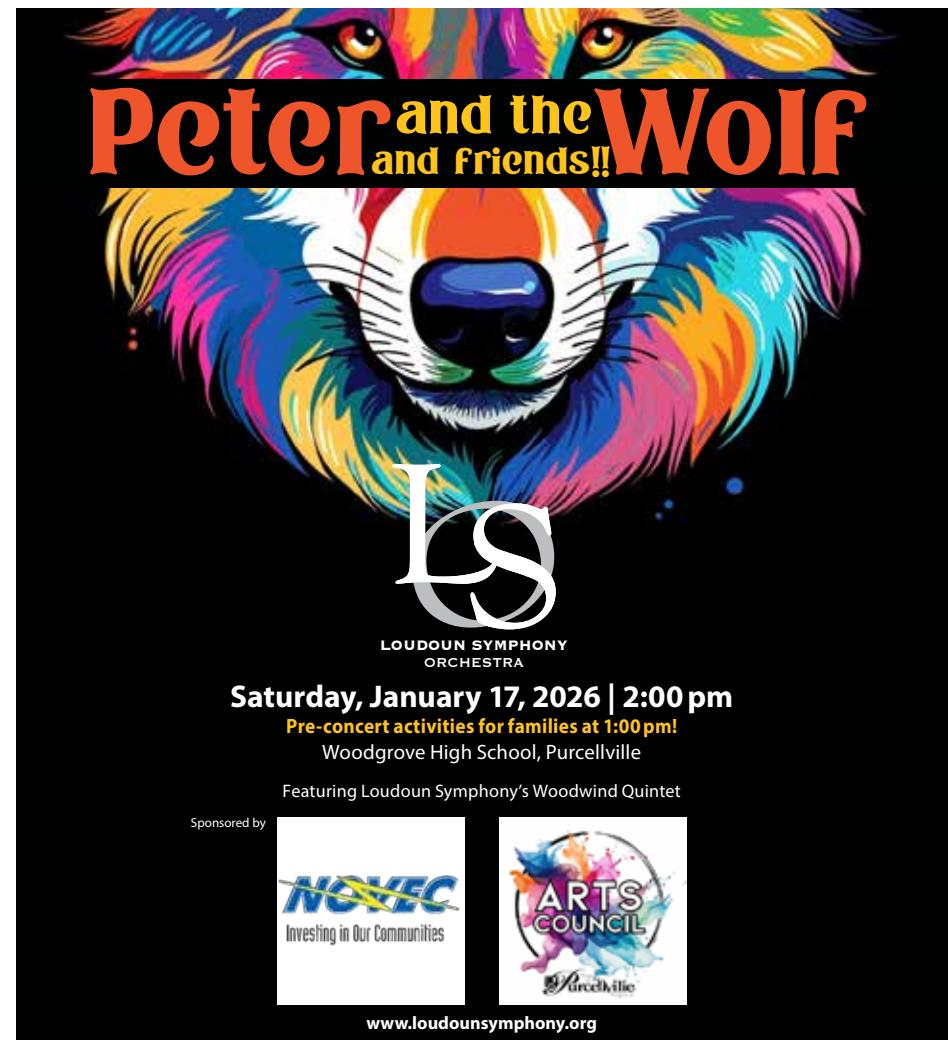
## Middleburg to host 15th Annual Winter Weekend Sale

The Town of Middleburg will host its 15th Annual Winter Weekend Sale from Friday, Feb. 13 through Monday, Feb. 16,

**COMMUNITY** 2026, inviting residents and visitors to enjoy seasonal shopping, dining, and the charm of the historic village.

The four-day event highlights Middleburg's locally owned shops and restaurants, many of which will offer special promotions throughout the weekend. Visitors can browse for gifts, update their winter wardrobes, or discover unique items while supporting small

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »



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## OPINION

**OPINION: THE BATTLE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**

representing the Town to ensure impartiality. Those two panel members then chose the third and final member. Two of the three panel members were complete strangers to me and are not Town of Purcellville residents.

As you will read in the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel, dated June 28, 2025, my termination from the Purcellville Police Department was not rooted in any lawful misconduct or policy violation. Instead, the evidence strongly suggests a coordinated political hit job—one, I believe, led by Councilwoman Erin Rayner—to eliminate a political rival and ultimately reclaim a voting majority on the Town Council.

“No allegation made by the Town in writing or otherwise is supported by the evidence,” wrote the Panel. To the contrary, the Panel concluded that Interim Chief Sara Lombrana and Lieutenant Mike Holman committed “serious violations” of both the Employee Handbook and the police department’s General Orders.

In sworn testimony, Interim Chief Lombrana admitted that politics were involved in my termination and, stunningly, failed to produce any report from the Prince William County Police Department regarding the investigation they were asked to jointly lead, while further admitting that she first approached the Fairfax Police Chief, who declined to conduct the investigation into me “because of its clear political nature.”

Based on a flawed, targeted, and underdeveloped internal investigation report, Chief Lombrana testified that she informed Bob Anderson’s office of the allegations against me “before any adjudicatory body had an opportunity to determine the veracity of the allegations. The Panel finds that there would be no reason for Ms. Lombrana to inform Mr. Anderson’s office about the allegations at this time except that she wanted Mr. Nett to be on the Brady List.”

Despite alleged truthfulness violations on my part, Acting Chief Lombrana was unable to cite specific instances in which I allegedly lied. “I don’t have any,” she admitted, under oath. The Town’s counsel stipulated during the Hearing that Councilwoman

Erin Rayner was the sole source for the Prince William IA investigation’s determination that I was not sick while in Richmond.

Councilwoman Erin Rayner corroborated that she had been the former campaign manager for Nicole Wittmann, the current Deputy Commonwealth’s Attorney in Bob Anderson’s office, further underscoring the political entanglements surrounding the investigation.

The Panel continued: “Mr. Nett was terminated and placed on the Brady List for minor, disputed alleged violations. The actions taken against Mr. Nett have serious, life-long implications for him and his family. At the same time, supervisors in the Purcellville Police Department display insubordination to superiors and ignore important disciplinary regulations ... Interim Chief Lombrana displayed the worst type of leadership—one set of rules for rank and file officers and a different set of rules for higher ranking supervisors ...

“The Panel has determined that Mr. Nett was truthful and justified in taking all of the actions alleged in Mr. Anderson’s February 24, 2025 Brady List letter ... it is clear to this Panel that Mr. Nett was not guilty of any malfeasance in connection with the events listed in Mr. Anderson’s Brady List letter.”

The Panel ordered that I be reinstated to the Purcellville Police Department with full back pay and benefits and payment of attorney fees. On July 10, 2025, pursuant to the Town’s Grievance policy, and owing to Town Manager Fraser’s conflict due to his being called as a witness in the case, the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel was forwarded to the Chief Judge of Loudoun Circuit Court for implementation.

On Monday, October 27, 2025, four months after the Grievance Panel Decision, the Chief Judge of Loudoun Circuit Court, Judge Fleming, issued an order stating that he didn’t have jurisdiction in the matter and punted it back to the Town.

I make no judgment on that. I’m not an attorney. What I can assert is that on October 24, 2025, while this matter was being heard, I observed the courtroom presence of Mike Cox, Bob Anderson’s investigator, staring down the judge from the back of the courtroom.

Following the Judge’s dismissal of the petition for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, the Grievance Panel Decision was placed in the hands of Purcellville’s Acting Town Manager, Diana Hays, whose commentary and actions since January 2025 clearly indicate she is a political adversary.

Her sole authority and responsibility was to determine whether the relief ordered by the panel—reinstatement with back pay and benefits and payment of reasonable attorney fees—is consistent with written policy. It clearly is. Her function in this matter is purely ministerial.

Diana Hays was advised by the Town’s Attorney of record and the incoming Town Attorney, who, by the way, was approved by unanimous vote of the Town Council, to confirm that the relief ordered by the Panel is consistent with the Town’s Grievance Policy and formally implement the order. She was reportedly told the same thing by an attorney with VRSA, the Town’s insurance carrier. Yet, she continued to take no action—even beyond week two.

At the November 12, 2025, Town Council meeting, the Council majority appointed a new Interim Town Manager, Mr. Tony Sabio—an individual recommended by several current and former federal law enforcement Agents, and who I know from the Secret Service Academy. The political opposition focused on the Grievance Panel Decision—claiming we installed a friend of mine to give me back my job. That is demonstrably false for two reasons.

First, there is nothing to give me. The unanimous Decision of the Grievance Panel is a final order that no Town Manager, whether friend or foe, no judge, no elected official can overturn by substituting his or her judgment for that of the Grievance Panel.

Second, if we wanted Mr. Sabio to be the one to implement the Grievance Panel Decision, then we would have appointed him as Interim Town Manager effective that night, immediately stripping Diana Hays of all authority. We very deliberately did not do that. Instead, we appointed Mr. Sabio as Interim Town Manager effective Friday, November 14, 2025—two days later.

Then, in a vote I recused myself from, a motion was made to have the Town

Council direct still Acting Town Manager Diana Hays to either implement the Decision of the Grievance Panel or notify Town Council of her refusal to do so by Thursday, November 13, 2025.

That motion failed 3-3, as I predicted it would, because Councilmembers Caleb Stought, Erin Rayner, and Kevin Wright voted against the motion to direct Diana Hays to take some action, after sitting on this for now 2 1/2 weeks, reportedly ignoring advice from three attorneys who don’t represent my interests, but rather those of the Town.

The very next day, as I also predicted would happen, still Acting Town Manager Diana Hays—after sitting on the Grievance Panel Decision for 2 1/2 weeks, refusing to perform her ministerial duties contrary to advice and counsel reportedly given her by numerous attorneys, decided to recuse herself from the matter, transmitting notice of same to Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson, via email at 1:39 p.m. on November 13, 2025, putting this matter before his office.

This, despite the Town Attorney asserting that Ms. Hays, in his judgment, did not have a conflict of interest and despite Ms. Hays previously asserting to the Town Attorney that she did not have a conflict of interest and could decide the matter fairly.

Bob Anderson, however, has a direct personal involvement in the matters giving rise to the grievance. On November 17, 2025, he referred the matter to Eric Olsen, his buddy, the individual prosecuting me in retaliation for having been fully exonerated by that same Grievance Panel Decision (The subpoenas for the Grand Jury were signed the very next business day following the issuance of the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel).

On November 24, 2025, Mr. Olsen, ignoring his own conflict of interest, provided an analysis that consisted entirely of issues not within the scope of his assigned review, finding fault with the Town’s Grievance Process—a grievance process that was devised and overseen by the HR Attorney, now the Town Attorney.

Bob Anderson, in recusing himself, should have referred the Grievance Panel Decision to a neutral and

CONTINUED PAGE 22 »

**OPINION: A FEW THOUGHTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6**

Don't count on serendipity. Help can come from a different direction. Instead of only attacking costs, focus on increasing incomes. That's happening now. Unfortunately, disgruntled perceptions about high costs will linger.

**The Waterford – Paeonian Springs Interconnected Project**

Fret about high prices if you must, but there's a huge problem and you should be worried. I've written about the odious proposed Waterford – Paeonian Springs project before, and have some wonderful bits of very ironic news.

County Staff told me about a survey it had done in Waterford. "We had 77 responses and 82% support!" Later I dug into County documents and found interesting things. First, while the introduction to the poll noted that connection to the Loudoun Water system would be at a homeowner's expense, it did not mention the possible costs of \$8,000 to \$15,000. If those costs had been disclosed, much of the 82% "support" would likely have evaporated.

Next, I scrutinized the County's poll results and found this gem: Only 26% of respondents said they would connect to a new utility system. That alone should be enough to kill the project.

Lastly, I dug into the Dewberry Engineers' Waterford report, commissioned by the County, and found even worse news for the Board. (Snicker, snicker.) Only one respondent reported daily water problems, while one other person said they had monthly difficulties.

The County survey was also skewed—intentionally, I believe. Instead of surveying residents or homes, it surveyed parcels. That gave the Waterford Foundation nine times as many votes as any homeowner.

**Faw-Yuh**

That's verbal shorthand for FOIA—the Freedom of Information Act, which was designed to make government transparent. The County has a link for submitting FOIA requests, so I requested copies of communication between the County and the Waterford Foundation, hoping to find more nuggets.

The response staggered me: I'd have to pay \$8,868 to get that material! Egad! It turns out that someone else had FOIA'ed County documents regarding the same project, and was

told that their cost would be about the same as they quoted me.

Clearly the County is not eager to give citizens a peek at its records. Is it trying to hide material about the Waterford – Paeonian Springs project, or does it just generally want to keep us in the dark? Neither motive is acceptable.

**Populism**

I've written about this before, bemoaning the fact that County government, indeed most governments, too often side with business promoters. That's backwards.

Populism reflects citizens' collective concern for the common good while businesses pursue private gain. Governments exist to serve the people but while elected officials claim to be "public servants," all too often they are lackeys for businesses. We often see that with at least one Supervisor and two loud members of the Planning Commission.

I'm doctrinaire about populism, but I have read a middle ground that makes sense. Citizens' wishes define our goals, and businesses provide much of the means to get there. When the two clash—as they often do here—government must respect citizens' democratic will while ensuring that doing so will not cause hidden harm.

Business is a tool, not a master. It should not dictate our future. That moral hierarchy is clear but the Board of Supervisors seems blind. On one major topic, they are also deaf.

**Density**

Loudoun's citizens want to stop sprawl, meaning less residential growth. That's populism at work and it has the answer. Simply require more acres per house. Base zoning north of Snickersville Turnpike is one house per twenty acres, but using cluster zoning, homebuilders can construct houses on four-acre lots. That exemplifies sprawl.

Yet the topic of density has been off the table. The Board's made it clear that they are tired of hearing about density, so conservation groups are holding their fire. Personally, I could care less if the Board's tired of the topic. Aren't they our public servants?

*Charlie and Emily Houston live on a restored horse farm, dating to 1760. When its original log cabin was built, density was not an issue.*



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**LOUDOUN COUNTY WRITERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Fairfax, Fauquier, Prince William, Clarke and Frederick Counties are eligible. Jefferson County in West Virginia and Montgomery, Washington Prince George's, Frederick and Charles Counties in Maryland may enter as well.

In years past, stories have ranged from heartfelt slices of real life to fantasy, mystery, adventure, and even a little horror, too. Entries must be fiction, including stories-in-verse, and must be entirely original and unpublished. Poetry, nonfiction, and fanfiction are

not accepted, and the use of artificial intelligence tools to create or modify submissions is strictly prohibited.

Writers may submit one story each, up to 3,000 words, formatted in double-spaced, 12-point Arial font with one-inch margins. Submissions must be uploaded as a Microsoft Word-readable document or PDF, with the file named by category—middle, high, or adult—followed by the story title.

To keep judging fair, author names, and co-author if they qualify, should not appear in the file name. Complete

guidelines and the submission link are available on the library's website. Questions may be sent to [writingcontest@library.loudoun.gov](mailto:writingcontest@library.loudoun.gov).

Judging will take place in three categories: middle school, high school, and adult. Teen Services librarians will select finalists for the middle and high school divisions, while Adult Services librarians will do the same for adult entries. Finalist stories will then be judged by Nathan Leslie, an English professor, writer and editor for numerous magazines and books.

Awards ceremonies featuring guest author Meg Medina will be held at Eagle Ridge Middle School in Ashburn on Saturday, May 9, with the adult ceremony beginning at 3 p.m. and the middle and high school ceremony at 4:30 p.m. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finalists in each category, with \$200 for first place, \$100 for second, and \$50 for third.

Whether you are a teen discovering your voice or an adult finally writing that story you've been thinking about

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »**

**DOG KENNEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Due to the size of the property and the intensity of the proposed use, staff said there are limited options to mitigate noise impacts and the effects of housing nearly 40 dogs on the site. As a result, staff recommended reducing the number of permitted dogs.

Staff also noted that similar applications approved in the past were located on significantly larger properties; for example, a 10.58-acre parcel was approved for 28 animals.

In the past, staff received 112 comments on the application, including 89 from current clients in support of the business. Of 21 neighbors who weighed in, 14 opposed the application over noise, odor, traffic, and health concerns, while seven supported it—four of whom were also clients.

Commissioner Dale Polen Myers (At Large) said the scale is concerning. "This is supposed to be an accessory use. The zoning is not for a commercial use. In this one it seems like commercial is going to become the primary use—then the living in the house is going to become the accessory use. So to me it looks like the scale that's being used is also out of scale with the zoning..."

Myers pointed out that it seemed like 75% of the property is used as commercial and 25% residential. Myers asked why Animal Control wasn't involved if there was an overcrowding issue.

She also challenged the assumption that "there wasn't a lot of unhappiness or a lot of concern with what was going on" because other complaints were not added to the file. Myers held up a stack of more than 100 email complaints.

Commissioner Ad Barnes (Leesburg) said, "I don't know how they can have 35-40 dogs so close to the homes." He asked how many dogs are on the property, and the applicant's representative replied, "Up to 40," noting the number fluctuates. Barnes then asked, "Do you have a permit to do that?" The representative answered, "No, that's why we are here."

Commissioner Madhava Madireddy (Dulles) said he would also like to see what Animal Control says.

Commissioner Robin-Eve Jasper (Little River) asked if the density was safe for the animals, humans and neighbors. "It's important to me to understand what kind of criteria you looked at to determine what facilities you needed to manage this number of dogs in your home in a safe manner for the dogs—for the people."

Uttembergue said that "people treat dogs like family

members and that's what we are trying to replicate."

Jasper said, "From what I've seen, there are challenges with indoor quality and the transmission of mostly airborne diseases." She expressed concern with the land use issues of the application.

Commissioner Mark Miller (Catoctin) asked whether the HVAC system in the home was commercial. The applicant's representative said it was not, but that air filtration systems are installed in each room. They added that the applicant would be open to upgrading the system.

When asked by Myers if the applicant had conducted a noise study, Anna Ritter, Land Use Planner with Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh PC, responded, "We haven't done a noise study at this time. We are hoping to do one."

Myers said the recordings of barking from across the street were loud, and she expressed concern that the kennel may already be exceeding the limits set by the county's noise ordinance.

**Community speaks**

There were approximately 41 people who signed up to speak. Benjamin Kota, a client of Happy Paws, spoke in favor of the business saying that "Happy Paws is part of our home ... if it's two dogs or 30 dogs—we haven't noticed a difference."

Patti Collins-Bliss said Happy Paws is an asset to firefighters who sometimes have unpredictable schedules. "This is the facility that makes us feel like it's a second home."

"Happy Paws treats our dog like family," said Jackie Mauro. "It's not a traditional kennel—It's a home-based kennel." Jennifer Brinn said the impact of the kennel is minimal and she hasn't heard dogs barking.

Georgia Nuckolls said her community has been turned "upside down by this operation." She said there is reckless speeding, illegal passing, near misses with children on bikes, pedestrians forced off the road—these are daily realities.

"Over a three-day period, the Sheriff's Office issued 20 citations and dozens of warnings ... 90% of those were directly related to Happy Paws K9." Nuckolls said the traffic study is deceptive and pointed out that the drop offs and pickups coincide with school bus schedules.

"It isn't compatible with our rural residential zoning. It's a commercial takeover that increases risks, breaks rules and endangers lives"—all for profit, said Nuckolls.

Wendy Canzanese said the kennel has ongoing zoning

violations and it is significantly incompatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood. She reminded the Commissioners that the scale and intensity, setback reductions, noise impacts, odor and waste management are all concerns.

Tiffany Hargest said she didn't approve of the commercial use in "this residential neighborhood."

Bryce Armstrong said his three children go to the bus stop near Happy Paws and he supports the kennel. He said the traffic on the road is due cars cutting through the neighborhood.

Charles Givans said that his border collie loves Happy Paws—and said they send him pictures throughout the day.

William Nelson said the application has "to be a reasonable scale." He said the traffic study is inaccurate and he pointed out that there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood. He suggested a 12-dog limit and said that would be reasonable.

Dylan Arthur, who lives near Happy Paws, said the Special Exception of 30-40 dogs was unreasonable. He said he had been run off the road by customers, and noted there had been 20 citations given out to kennel customers.

Duane Gassman said the discussion didn't have anything to do with the care the owner gives his clients. "It really has to do with the location. We didn't move to a rural location to be surrounded by commercial businesses. The ability to handle 30 to 40 dogs regardless is incompatible with the amount of land that is currently under Happy Paws."

This was echoed by another neighbor who said the application is a land use issue. "Do we operate something illegally so we get it approved later?" she asked. She pointed out that she is only allowed to have no more than two horses and four dogs. She had to move her bedroom from the front of her house to the rear because the car lights shine in her windows at 6 a.m. when clients are dropping off their dogs.

**Application goes to work session**

Commissioner Jasper made a motion to deny the application based on scale, the intensity of the kennel use, and the incompatibility with the surrounding residential uses. She moved to send the matter to the Board of Supervisors.

Myers recommended sending the application to a future work session and the motion passed unanimously.

# Houston releases romantic thriller Bad Horsey—set in the heart of Western Loudoun

BY VALERIE CURY

Acclaimed writer Charles Houston unveils his newest novel, *Bad Horsey*, a romantic thriller set against the rolling countryside and foxhunting culture of western Loudoun County. Since its recent publication, the book has already garnered outstanding early ratings and enthusiastic reader praise.

*Bad Horsey* follows Robert Rood, a 36-year-old Atlanta real estate success who decides to trade skyscrapers for open fields, horses, and a quieter life in Middleburg. Eager for a fresh start, Rood envisions a new existence filled with art, conservation, and rural charm. Instead, he steps into a world where passion collides with peril.

Upon arriving in Virginia, Rood meets real estate agent Anne Fisher, whose stunning sister Patricia "Tissie"

Tanning accompanies them on a property tour. That afternoon, Rood not only discovers the farm that will become his home—but also meets the woman whose influence would lead him down a dark and unexpected path.

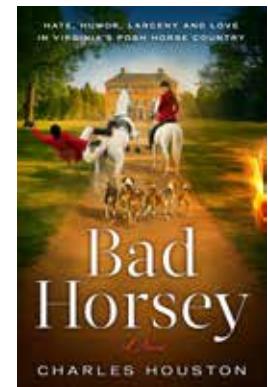
Everything changes when he encounters Byne Broyaal, a beautiful and enigmatic rider whose presence ignites a romance that becomes the beating heart of the story. Their relationship unfolds amid a tapestry of exhilarating foxhunts, rural personalities, deepening friendships, and unexpected betrayals. Readers will be swept along through literal explosions, sharp twists, and the unraveling of a massive financial fraud as Rood's journey hurtles toward a dramatic and unforgettable climax.

"With *Bad Horsey*, I wanted to capture the unique spirit of western Loudoun—the beauty, the community, and the undercurrents of intrigue that make it

such a compelling place," said author Charles Houston. "It's a story about reinvention, obsession, and how far people will go when love turns dangerous."

*Bad Horsey* is now available in paperback and Kindle formats on Amazon. Simply search "Bad Horsey book" in the Amazon search bar to order your copy—you won't want to put it down.

Charles Houston is a writer with a deep appreciation for the culture, landscape, and characters of Virginia's horse country. His work blends romance, suspense, and the rich texture of rural life, earning him a devoted readership and strong critical reception.



## Atlantic Union Bank offers 60 paid internship grants

Applications open today for Atlantic Union Bank's 2026 Future Community Impact Maker Grant program. Sixty grants of \$4,000 each will be awarded across the bank's service area for a total community investment of \$240,000. This year, an additional 10 grants were added to the program. The deadline to apply is Jan. 30, 2026.

"Summer internships play a vital role in helping students build essential skills

and begin shaping their professional paths," said Nathalia Artus, Head of Community Impact at Atlantic Union Bank. "Through our grant program, we're committed to supporting our local communities and expanding access to meaningful work experience for students who may face financial barriers, ensuring those challenges do not limit their potential."

Atlantic Union Bank will award up to 60 organizations with \$4,000 in grant

funds to support an intern. The majority of the funding—\$3,600—is intended to go directly to intern wages. Of the remaining \$400, \$150 is designated for associate management/recruitment costs and \$250 will be used for direct professional development costs, such as conference attendance or association membership. Additionally, organizations will receive professional development and resources

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »

## L-Lab launches Loudoun County's first after-school language program

L-Lab is launching Loudoun County's first language-based after-school enrichment program, designed to introduce children ages 5-9 to the joy of multilingual learning through interactive, play-based activities.

Beginning Jan. 5, 2026, the program will offer young learners the opportunity to build early proficiency in their choice of Arabic or Spanish, while developing cognitive, social, and cultural awareness skills proven to support long-term academic success. All activities are intentionally designed using STEAM-based, Montessori-inspired approaches.

"Studies have shown, time and time again, that high-quality after-school programs have long-term benefits that extend well into adulthood," explains Yomna Sarhan, L-Lab's Founder. "Children are more engaged in school, experience improved wellbeing, and are better positioned for higher earning potential and career success as adults. It's critical that we have high-quality after school options in

Loudoun County."

### Program Highlights

- Designed for Ages 5-9:** Purposeful activities during a critical window for brain development and foundational learning.
- Immersive & Play-Based:** Children learn naturally through music, storytelling, crafts, movement, and games.
- Cultural Exploration:** Students discover global traditions, foods, holidays, and geography to deepen their understanding of the world.
- Small Class Sizes and Small Student to Teacher Ratio:** Personalized attention ensures every child can participate, engage, and thrive.
- Equity and Accessibility:** Every child—no matter their background—deserves purposeful enrichment. This

is why financial assistance is offered for eligible families.

- Flexible Schedule:** Open for full-day camps when Loudoun County Public Schools are closed, and extended pickup option allows families to pickup their kids until 7pm.

L-Lab was founded by Yomna Sarhan, a single mother who was determined to provide her five-year-old child with a high-quality, enriching learning experience. While searching for after school programs, she found that children were spending 10-15 hours a week in after care but usually not benefitting in a meaningful way. Children were simply passing the time until their families could pick them up.

In response, Sarhan teamed up with early childhood and language learning experts to create a research-backed program enriched by the real-world experience of educators and multilingual community members.

"Children at the elementary age soak up learning like sponges," said Sarhan. "That's why learning shouldn't stop when the school day ends—especially for languages. By making language learning fun and play-based, we create experiences kids actually look forward to."

L-Lab has developed a unique, dynamic curriculum focused on language learning through STEAM activities and Montessori-style approaches. There are associated learning goals for each student to track their progress throughout the program and support their journey.

L-Lab currently offers Arabic and Spanish classes, and plans to expand to other languages as the program grows. Classes will be held Monday through Friday from 3 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. at Pearls Academy in Sterling, and enrollment is currently open for the January - June term.

Families can register online at <https://www.learnwithllab.com/current-programs> or contact [info@learnwithllab.com](mailto:info@learnwithllab.com) for more information.

## ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

strengthen emotional regulation and self-esteem.

You're right to want to approach this thoughtfully and at a pace that feels right for your family. Whether you choose to begin evaluations now or wait a bit while continuing to observe, remain open to information as it comes. Understanding the "why" behind your son's challenges will empower you to advocate effectively and ensure he receives the right support—both academically and emotionally. Early insight often leads to the most positive outcomes, and your care and attentiveness are already laying that foundation for him.

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

## FINANCIAL FOCUS®, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

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](mailto:joshua.wolinski@edwardjones.com).*

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

## LOUDOUN COUNTY WRITERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

writing, this January is the perfect time to put pen to paper and join a community of local storytellers—one short story at a time—and don't forget the hot chocolate for inspiration.

Can I submit a story with multiple authors?

Yes, you may co-author your short story as long as all authors qualify to enter the competition. Include a final page for each individual author's information. If a story with multiple authors wins, prize money will be split evenly among the authors.

The Blue Ridge Leader is pledged to the letter and spirit of Virginia's and HUD's Equal Opportunity Housing Policies. Virginia's Fair Housing Law makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status and handicap. This newspaper will not knowingly accept advertising for real estate that violates the Fair Housing Law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in the paper are available on an equal housing opportunity basis. For more information about Virginia's Fair Housing Law, or to file a Fair Housing complaint, call the Virginia Fair Housing Office at 804.376.8530; toll-free 888.551.3247; for the hearing impaired: 804.527.4290; email – fair housing@dpor.virginia.gov; web: [www.fairhousing.vipnet.org](http://www.fairhousing.vipnet.org).



## OPINION

## OPINION: THE BATTLE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

detached third-party. But, as the Panel's decision is devastating to him personally, he tried to put the fix in—by giving it to his good buddy, Eric Olsen.

Mr. Olsen, given his own conflict of interest, could have and should have recused himself from the matter, but he didn't. And then, because he has no authority to overturn the finding of the Grievance Panel, and because the Grievance Panel decision is, again, devastating to his friend, Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson, and because the Grievance Panel decision and the irrefutable evidence upon which that decision is based is further devastating to the credibility of many of the witnesses Eric Olsen relied on for the Grand Jury, and because the only answer to the only question before Eric Olsen—the question of whether the relief granted by the Grievance Panel is consistent with the Town's written policy—is "yes," Eric Olsen avoided the question entirely and redefined his role, claiming that the Town's Grievance Policy was flawed. His unsolicited and unpermitted attack on the Panel decision itself was invalid.

Eric Olsen's invalid legal opinion placed the Grievance Panel Decision back before the Town. Under Virginia law, "the decision of the Panel or hearing officer shall be final and binding" and the only point at issue is whether the Panel ordered the proper relief.

Mr. Olsen did not answer that question, because the answer is "yes." He doesn't want to say yes because he is not a neutral and detached third

party. He is a party to the conspiracy to deprive me of my civil rights under color of law.

So, as part of the ongoing attempt to pre-empt official implementation of that Grievance Panel Order, Sara Lombrana lobbied to have me decertified as a law enforcement officer. In a letter dated December 2, 2025, the Department of Criminal Justice Services informed me of my decertification, based solely on the issues surrounding my termination and Brady listing—all of which were determined to be unfounded by the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel, following a full day evidentiary hearing.

That decertification is being appealed, with DCJS now being fully apprised of Ms. Lombrana's history.

Sara Lombrana, feigning innocence and surprise, provided this two-page decertification letter from DCJS to the Interim Town Manager. What she didn't provide him was the accompanying DCJS file, which includes months of correspondence between Lombrana and her DCJS point of contact.

In her email of July 24, 2025, to Jonathan D. Banberger, the law Enforcement Decertification Coordinator/Division of Law Enforcement, Ms. Lombrana writes: "Jon. The decision was submitted to the Court for its consideration on July 9th, and we have not yet received a ruling."

Regardless, we will not have a Brady officer in our ranks. And the decision is as it stands and will not be reversed. I hope this helps. Sara."

Thus, Ms. Lombrana asserted, in

writing, that her word is final—due process being of no consequence.

More recently, on November 25, 2025, Ms. Lombrana wrote to Mr. Banberger: "Jonathan, I have attached the court's decision for Carl Nett's case. Mr. Nett will not be reinstated. Thank you."

What Ms. Lombrana was actually referencing, in that November 25 email, was the Letter of Opinion from Eric Olsen, issued the previous day, November 24, and which is just that—a letter of opinion that, as noted, is a nullity as Mr. Olsen exceeded the scope of his review, and the Grievance Panel Decision does in fact stand.

Acting Chief Lombrana never included the Purcellville Town Manager or Town Attorney in any of her correspondence with DCJS, because her communications include outright falsehoods, gross misrepresentations, and serious omissions.

Ms. Lombrana's actions with regard to communications with DCJS are a repeat of her unauthorized out-sourcing of Internal Affairs investigations into me back in February 2025 and her premature and unilateral communications with Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Anderson—all demonstrating a disregard for her chain-of-command and her defiance of lawful authority. As Yogi Berra said, "It's Déjà vu all over again."

Amidst all the political nastiness, I ask my fellow citizens to please understand and never lose sight of this underlying truth: Had I not been elected to public office, exercising my rights under Virginia Law to participate

in local governance, as a first responder, campaigning on a public pledge to reduce utility rates, oppose annexations into the town for commercial and industrial development, and streamline local government, to include the Police Department, then I would not have been framed and fired by the Police Department.

Had I not contested my unlawful termination from the Purcellville Police Department, and prevailed, and had Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Anderson's efforts to violate my civil rights not been exposed and subsequently rebuked by the unanimous finding of an independent panel, then I would not have been criminally indicted and subjected to this ongoing legal dispute over implementation of the Grievance Panel Decision and Order—which, again, is personally and professionally devastating to individuals in the Purcellville Police Department, the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and beyond.

For these reasons, I again appeal to the U.S. Department of Justice to initiate a formal civil rights investigation into the Purcellville Police Department, the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and the Purcellville Town Government as a whole, to include petitioning a federal court for access to the Grand Jury transcripts which, I believe, indicate a lack of probable cause to support any of the charges against me—further indicating a weaponization of the criminal justice apparatus for purely political purposes.

**ATLANTIC UNION BANK,  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21**

for internship best practices.

Organizations must be community-based (e.g., non-profits, government entities, community foundations, etc.), located in an Atlantic Union Bank service area, and commit to hosting an undergraduate or graduate-level student in an eight-week, direct-permanent hire, paid internship program. The grant recipients will have full discretion over the intern's job description and hiring decision. Atlantic Union Bank will provide resources and guidance as needed.

Grant applications are due by 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 30. Awards will be announced by email in mid-February. Interested organizations can find more information and apply at [AUBCares.com](http://AUBCares.com).

**MIDDLEBURG SALE,  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17**

supporting local merchants.

The Winter Weekend Sale will take place during regular business hours, with shops open Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday and Monday hours will vary by business, and visitors are encouraged to check directly with individual shops.

In addition to shopping, visitors can enjoy Middleburg's restaurants, historic streetscapes, and walkable downtown, making the Winter Weekend Sale an ideal opportunity for a day trip or extended weekend visit.

For additional information, residents and visitors may contact the Middleburg Town Office at 540-687-5152. Updates and event details will also be available through Visit Middleburg on Facebook and Twitter.

**PARENTING WISELY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

impacting the family dynamic, share information on parenting styles and adolescent development, and teach coping strategies to help improve communication and create mutual respect. In addition, families that follow the curriculum can develop their own family contracts and safety plans, as needed.

The Parenting Wisely – Teen Edition is offered in English and Spanish. The English language program is offered virtually for 5 weeks on Wednesdays, 6 - 7:30 p.m. The dates of the next sessions are: Jan. 7 - Feb. 4, March 4 - April 1, April 29 - May 27, and June 24 - July 22.

The Spanish language program is offered in person for 10 weeks on Tuesdays, 5:30 - 7 p.m. at the Loudoun County Department of Family Services - Family Engagement and Preservation Services office, 45201 Research Place, Suite 110, Ashburn. The dates of the next sessions are: Jan. 6 - March 10, and March 31 - June 2.

For details about the program and to register, visit [loudoun.gov/ParentingWisely](http://loudoun.gov/ParentingWisely).

**Parenting Wisely – Young Child Edition**

The Parenting Wisely – Young Child Edition is available to Loudoun County families with a child between the ages of 3 - 11 who has had one or more of the following problems with: interrupting on the

phone, getting up and out the door on time, acting out in public, homework and poor grades, conflict with other children/siblings, and/or getting ready for school.

Families may participate in multi-family group sessions. The program works with families to help parents improve communication skills, use strategies such as planned ignoring and self-talk, set realistic and consistent expectations, use assertive discipline and prompts/commands, and use non-directive play and mindfulness techniques.

*Parenting Wisely – Young Child Edition* is offered in English and Spanish.

The English language program is offered virtually at two different times on Thursdays. The dates for the next 4-week virtual program on Thursdays from 6 - 7:30 p.m. are: January 15 - February 5, March 19 - April 9, and May 21 - June 11.

The dates for the new 5-week virtual program on Thursdays from 12 - 1 p.m. are: Jan. 15 - Feb. 12.

The Spanish language program is offered virtually for 6 weeks on Thursdays from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. The dates for the next session are Jan. 8 - Feb. 12.

For more information on the youth and family support services offered by the Loudoun County Department of Family Services, visit [loudoun.gov/FamilyServices](http://loudoun.gov/FamilyServices) or send an email to [dfs@loudoun.gov](mailto:dfs@loudoun.gov).

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## County opens youth & parents survey to help young people thrive

The Loudoun County Advisory Commission on Youth has opened the annual Survey of Youth and Parents to gather information that will help county leaders make informed decisions about programs and services designed to support young people in our community.

The survey is intended for middle-and high-school-aged students and their parents or guardians. It takes approximately ten minutes to complete and includes questions across four topic areas:

- Activities and interests
- Drug and alcohol use
- Mental health and stress management
- Online access and activity

All responses are anonymous. Participants will not be asked to provide identifying information such as name, home address, birth date, IP address, or similar data.

### Survey Links:

- Take the Youth Survey – [loudoun.jotform.com/253155507964059](http://loudoun.jotform.com/253155507964059).
- Take the Parent/Guardian Survey – [loudoun.jotform.com/253165190301043](http://loudoun.jotform.com/253165190301043).

The survey is open through Friday, Feb. 27, at 5 p.m. Survey results will help inform ACOY's State of Loudoun Youth annual report to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors.

First launched in 2019 as part of the Board of Supervisors' youth initiatives, the survey serves as an ongoing feedback tool to help county leaders stay current on trends in youth behaviors, interests, and needs, ensuring programs remain effective and responsive.

More information about the youth survey is available at [loudoun.gov/YouthSurvey](http://loudoun.gov/YouthSurvey)

Information about ACOY, including a link to the most recent State of Loudoun Youth report, is available at [loudoun.gov/ACOY](http://loudoun.gov/ACOY).

and moving easily through the dining room. He knew that hospitality lived in the small moments, and he treated every interaction as an opportunity to make someone feel welcome.

At the center of it all was family. Kevin and his wife Kathleen built Tuscarora Mill Restaurant together, with their children growing up alongside the rhythms of restaurant life. That family commitment continues through the Tuskie's Hospitality Group, which includes restaurants in Leesburg, Purcellville, and Great Falls, all guided by Kevin's principles of warmth, quality, and community.

Kevin Malone passed away in 2023, but his presence remains deeply felt. As the ribbon was cut on Dec. 22, forty years after that first opening, the moment felt less like a milestone and more like a continuation. Tuscarora Mill Restaurant remains what it has always been—a place where history, family, and community meet—right in the heart of downtown Leesburg. Oh, and the cuisine remains exceptional.

### TUSCARORA MILL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Malone was also ahead of his time in championing local agriculture. Long before "farm-to-table" became commonplace, he sought out relationships with Loudoun County farmers, believing that great food began with strong local partnerships. By hosting dinners that showcased regional products and connecting farmers directly with chefs and diners, he helped strengthen ties that influenced menus across the county. His commitment to local sourcing remains a defining feature of the restaurant.

Wine was another of Malone's great passions. He cultivated lasting relationships with Virginia wineries and curated a wine program that was widely respected throughout the Mid-Atlantic. For Malone, wine was never just about what was in the glass—it was about the conversation and connection it encouraged around the table.

For decades, Malone was a familiar presence at Tuskie's. Guests recall seeing him greeting regulars, welcoming newcomers,

### OPINION: SOMETHING UNUSUAL, CON'T. FROM PAGE 6

formal procurement process was underway, no contracting opportunity had been publicly advertised, and no vendor had been selected for contract award. In fact, no decision had yet been made to move forward with a police department organizational review.

It was only a market research fact-finding discussion about a possible organizational assessment of the Purcellville Police Department. Such

meetings are common in public procurements and help public officials gather information before deciding whether to pursue a contract.

On February 14, 2025 Request for Quotes #TC-2025-0 was publicly posted soliciting responses with a submission deadline of February 25, 2025. A subsequent addendum also publicly posted specified that \$12,000 was available for contract award.

On March 18, 2025 the Town of Purcellville awarded contract #TC-2025-07 valued at \$12,000 to Major Consulting and Design, LLC to conduct the organizational assessment of the Purcellville Police Department. Around April 18, 2025, Micheal Jones delivered the organizational assessment report to the Town of Purcellville.

Assuming that the criminal charges against Fraser and Nett were justified, then there is an aspect of this case that compels an explanation. The fact that they were charged with the same alleged crimes involving the same event implies that they were involved in a conspiracy and therefore should have also been charged with the criminal offense of Conspiracy to Commit Felony (Code of Virginia section 18.2-22).

Yet neither was indicted, arrested and charged with the additional criminal conspiracy offense in addition to the alleged bid-rigging and commercial fraud charges. Also, of the three persons who attended the meeting, neither Fraser nor

Nett received any benefit from allegedly engaging in bid-rigging and commercial fraud.

In fact, the only person who attended the meeting and who received any benefit was Michael Jones, who was paid \$12,000 by the Town of Purcellville. Therefore, it stands to reason that all three should have also been arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit a felony if any illegal bid-rigging or commercial fraud took place.

So why were only Fraser and Nett indicted, arrested and charged with two identical criminal charges, but not also indicted, arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit a felony; and why was Jones not indicted, arrested and criminally charged with bid-rigging, commercial fraud, and conspiracy to commit a felony since he also participated in the meeting?

Every person who collaborates to commit a crime is a criminal co-conspirator, so every co-conspirator should be criminally charged, and not just certain selected individuals. So, why were all three not indicted, arrested and charged for conspiring to commit a felony?

Is it because no conspiracy to commit a felony took place, or is it because the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney does not want to prosecute Michael Jones for bid-rigging, commercial fraud, and conspiracy to commit a felony, as part of its prosecution strategy?

Is Michael Jones possibly an unindicted co-conspirator?

These are questions that the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney must answer in the interest of fairness and justice to Fraser and Nett. Until an explanation is provided, serious questions remain about the integrity of this prosecution and about the judgment of the office that brought it.

*Lloyd Harting is a former federal and local law enforcement officer and lives in Purcellville.*

### EROSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with any Town interested in allowing the County to act as the authority in erosion and stormwater management within its boundaries.

Under the MOA, the County will assume a few more responsibilities. These involve securing and holding financial guarantees that will smooth over permissions processes and holding performance bonds for the construction of stormwater infrastructure. Existing infrastructure will be evaluated on a case-by-case

basis to determine its maintenance needs.

What tasks, then, are left to the Towns? The VESMP makes matters simple:

"The majority of the Towns' responsibilities involve supporting the County in administering and enforcing Chapter 1096 within their boundaries," says staff documentation.

In other words, the Towns will be expected to assist in the initial inventorying of stormwater infrastructure, the reporting of potential violations, and supplying related documentation. The County will handle

the rest.

The estimated cost to supply a work plan complete with inventorying, inspections, supporting compliance needs, and the like is \$100,000, but since that amount is available within the Fiscal Year 2026 operating budget, no additional funding is required at this time.

The amendment process that was passed Dec. 2 will take at least six months to complete. A more thorough work plan will be presented by staff in the summer of 2026.

# PRCS hosts *Get to know the Arts in Loudoun* exhibition

The Loudoun County Art Advisory Committee and Parks, Recreation and Community Services will present *Get to Know the Arts in Loudoun County*, a special exhibition showcasing over thirty arts organizations and groups from across the county.

The exhibition highlights the diverse arts community in Loudoun County and celebrates the successes and contributions of local organizations working to create a more vibrant and creative environment. Groups from a variety of artistic disciplines are featured in this show, including performing arts, literary arts, visual arts,

and arts education. Each piece reflects the unique vision and mission of the organization it represents.

*Get to Know the Arts in Loudoun County* are on display through Jan. 30 at Gallery One, located in the lobby of the Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE in Leesburg. The public is invited to view the work Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

There will be a reception and community event for this exhibition on Thursday, Jan. 15, from 6 to 8 p.m. The event will be

an opportunity for arts groups to meet one another, get the latest updates on the Comprehensive Arts Plan, enjoy music and light refreshments, and provide feedback on the arts in Loudoun County. Members of the public are invited to attend this free event to stay connected to the arts community.

Those unable to attend can learn more about the Comprehensive Arts Plan by visiting [loudoun.gov/arts](http://loudoun.gov/arts) or by emailing PRCS at [arts@loudoun.gov](mailto:arts@loudoun.gov) to join the arts mailing list.

The Loudoun County Art Advisory

Committee, appointed by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, is dedicated to promoting local artists and preserving the County's art collection. Exhibits like *Get to Know the Arts in Loudoun County* help the committee continue to foster a vibrant arts community in Loudoun County.

For more information about the committee and its initiatives, please visit the Loudoun County Art Advisory Committee website. Any questions about the show or reception, please contact 703-777-0343.

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## GOT A MINUTE?

Hi! I'm the long hand, I tell the minutes to you. Running circles around this guy is what I love to do!

Well, I'm the short hand, And I may be a little guy, But I have the BIGGEST job — Counting hours rolling by.

Standards Link: Math: Measurement: Students know relationships of time (minutes in an hour).

### What can you do in a minute?

Can you do each of these for one minute? Find someone to time you and see!

Balance on one foot.

Jump up and down 100 times.

Find 20 flying clocks on this page.

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

### Time Line

Some clocks are 12-hour clocks. Other clocks are 24-hour clocks. On a 24-hour clock, you start counting the hours from **midnight**. From **midnight** to **noon**, the hours are numbered 1 to 12. After noon, they are numbered 13 to 24. If you don't use a 24-hour clock, how do you know if it is morning or afternoon? You can use the letters **a.m.** after the time to show it is morning and the letters **p.m.** after the time to show that it's after noon.

MIDNIGHT 01:00 02:00 03:00 04:00 05:00 06:00 07:00 08:00 09:00 10:00 11:00 NOON 12:00 13:00 14:00 15:00 16:00 17:00 18:00 19:00 20:00 21:00 22:00 23:00 MIDNIGHT 24:00

Wake up. Eat breakfast. School begins. Eat lunch. School ends. Do homework. Eat dinner. Go to bed.

What time do you do each of these things? Draw a line from each box to the time line to make a "Day in My Life" timeline.

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

### Time Match

What time do the clocks and watches on the left show? Can you find the clocks that show the same time on the right?

Standards Link: Math: Measurement: Tell time to the nearest quarter hour, half hour and hour.

1:20

9:35

5:55

3:00

Extra! Extra!

### One-Minute Dashes

In one minute, how many:

- words can you circle that start with the letter M?
- paragraphs can you read?
- numbers can you circle?

Standards Link: Measurement: Solve problems using time to the nearest minute.

### Write On!

## Free to Learn

Freedom of the press is one of America's most vital freedoms. Tell why you think it is important to have a free press.

## Kid Scoop® Puzzler

### TOCK ELEMENTARY TIME 2:34

**Tick Tock, Long Walk**

Tony has a long walk home from school. The school clock tells what time Tony left for home.

Follow the maze to Tony's house. The clock at his house tells what time Tony got home. How long did it take for Tony to get home?

Standards Link: Math: Measurement: Determine the duration of intervals of time in minutes.

It took Tony \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to get home from school.

Standards Link: Math: Measurement: Determine the duration of intervals of time in minutes.

## Double Double Word Search

Find the words in the puzzle. How many of them can you find on this page?

W	E	C	N	A	L	A	B	E
T	D	N	O	C	E	S	G	M
S	E	E	C	L	E	N	L	I
D	T	K	H	L	I	R	D	T
N	U	A	C	N	O	N	U	T
E	N	R	R	O	I	C	H	O
D	I	O	T	G	T	I	K	M
C	M	E	H	C	T	A	W	S
O	S	T	A	R	T	I	N	G

Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognize identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

## FROM THE Kid Scoop® LESSON LIBRARY

### Watch the Clock

Select a movie advertised in the newspaper. Determine the approximate running time of the movie by subtracting the starting time of the first performance from the starting time of the second performance.

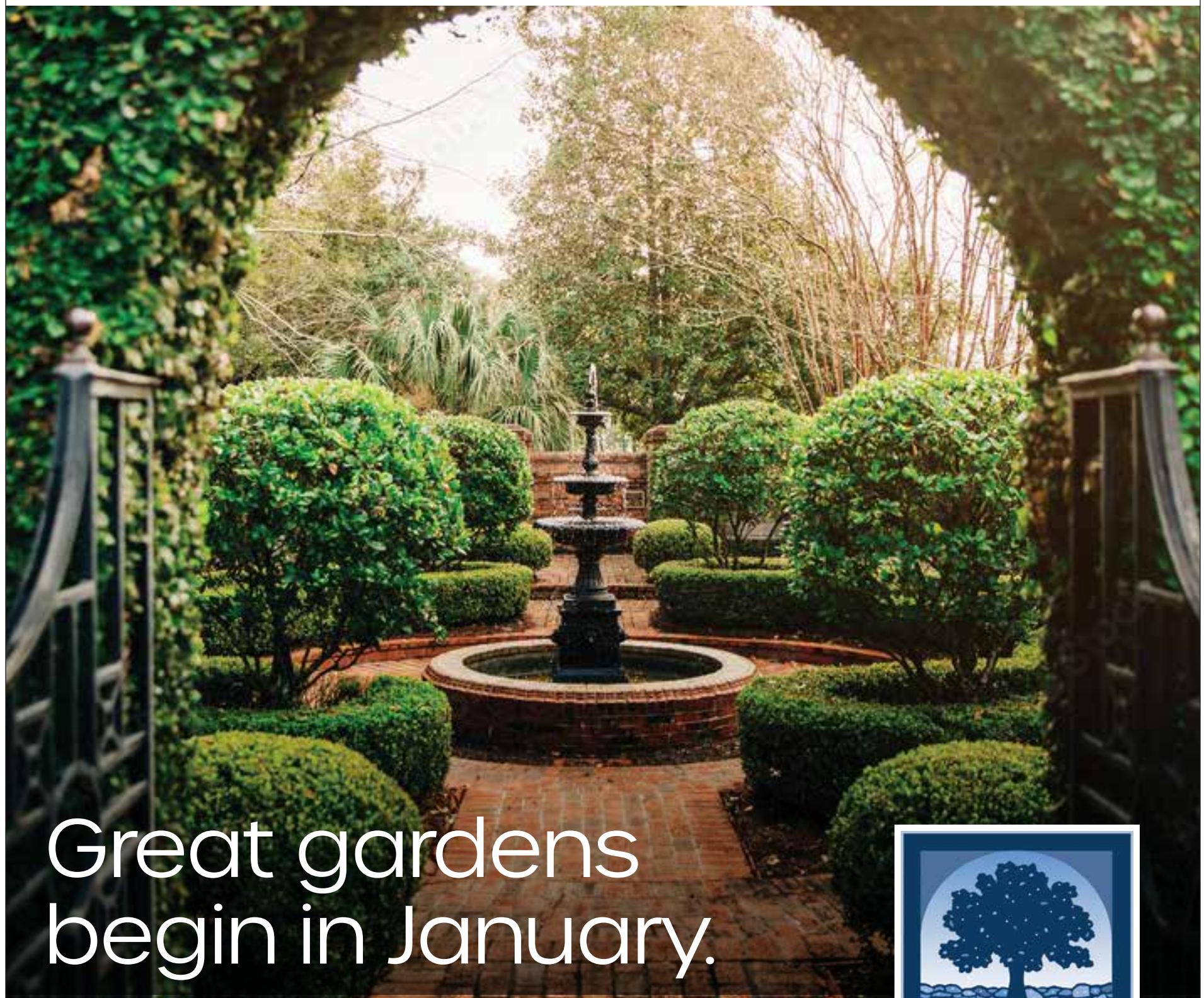
Standards Link: Measurement: Solve problems using time to the nearest minute.

## Write On!

### Free to Learn

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# On The Market... with Sam



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Realtor®  
Round Hill Resident  
Schabercurt@yahoo.com



“

The process to sell our current home was quick and easy because of Sam and Curt. They provided wisdom, encouragement, professionalism, and expertise.

”



“

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