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Today

FERC Commissioner urges reform of federal transmission planning and financial incentives

BY AUDREY CARPENTER

At its monthly meeting Dec. 19, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Commissioner Mark Christie supported reform of FERC's planning and cost management rules, and its incentives policy related to electrical transmission projects. FERC is composed of five commissioners who vote on regulatory matters in the electric, oil, gas and hydropower industries. Before joining FERC in 2021, Christie was the chairman of the Virginia State Corporation Commission for nearly 17 years.

The SCC regulates utilities in Virginia. Construction and operation



Mark C. Christie

of transmission lines and/or facilities above 115 kV in Virginia usually require the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from the State Corporation Commission.

The controversial electrical transmission Project 853, known as MidAtlantic Resiliency Link (MARL), was approved by PJM Interconnection on Dec. 11 to be built. It is a 130-mile transmission project that would build 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission towers and lines from Southwestern Pennsylvania, through West Virginia and Maryland, to Virginia. The project, which has received

See accompanying article on page 8.


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VOTED BEST OF LOUDOUN

wide scale criticism from homeowners, farmers and conservationists, must now get approval from the SCC before construction can begin.

However, NextEra, one of three contractors selected to build Project 853, has already been approved by FERC for reimbursement of its pre-construction costs. In a Nov. 22 letter sent to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 »

Forget 7/690; Milan does a 180

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Nov. 14 Purcellville Town Council meeting, during a vote to approve an easement for the Mayfair community, council members expressed a sense of urgency to amend both the Town's Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Plan. This amendment would eliminate the Northern Collector Road and the extension of O Street from both plans, to ensure that the extension of Mayfair Crown Drive to Fields Farm Road

does not happen.

However, just two weeks later at the Nov. 28 Purcellville Town Council Work Session, this same sense of urgency all but disappeared.

Vice-Mayor Chris Bertaut began the Nov. 28 work session by requesting an agenda amendment regarding suggested changes to the Town Wide Transportation Plan. During the Nov. 14 town council meeting, council members decided immediate action was needed to eliminate all references to the Northern

Collector Road in both the Town Wide Transportation Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

Addressing the proposed amendment to the agenda, Mayor Stan Milan said, "That's not new business. That's continued from previous meetings."

"Point of order, Mr. Mayor," said Bertaut. "One can introduce new business at any time under Robert's Rules of Order, and it's not a continuation because we did not schedule it for this meeting."

Milan snapped back, "We covered it in

the previous meetings, so therefore it's not the first time we've heard it."

Town attorney John Cafferky weighed in saying, "The Vice Mayor is making a motion to amend the agenda as presented. That would need to be seconded and then voted on by town council."

The motion to add the discussion of the Northern Collector Road – as well as the review of a town letter to VDOT regarding the Rt. 7/690 Interchange – failed with Mayor Stan Milan and Council Members Caleb Stought, Mary Jane Williams and Erin Rayner voting no. Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut and Council Members Carol Luke and Boo Bennett voted in favor of the discussion items.

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Climb baby, climb!

BY LIZ TENNEY JARVIS

Steph Littenberg is the female tree climbing champion in the Mid-Atlantic for three years running, is currently ranked second in the nation (missed being number one by one point) and she is number six in the world. Appropriately, Littenberg's day job is with Treelife arborists where she has worked for the past seven years.

Littenberg was born and raised outside of Lincoln, VA and says that as a child, she was "climbing everything – bed frames, countertops." However, her climb to the top had a totally different start. She was studying to be a paleontologist and happened to be doing a little tree work in between classes. When a full time position opened up at Treelife, Littenberg said she could definitely see herself pursuing her career as an arborist.

There is a big difference between the tree work that is the "hack and whack," as Littenberg calls it, and that of professionals who are promoting the care and sustainability of trees. She has no interest in and is not someone who works in the take-down of a tree (though co-workers can do that when necessary).



ivy are all a part of the challenge. Littenberg indicates that Treelife goes above and beyond when it comes to safety, so the aforementioned elements and the condition of the tree are well assessed before work commences.

Littenberg does not have a fear of heights and in fact when it comes to climbing, the higher the better. She has only experienced vertigo once, in the extremely steep ice canyons approaching the largest frozen waterfall in Iceland.

"It's easy not to have a fear of heights at the trunk of a tree but that is not where most of the work is done – so in limb walking, for example, imagine a balance beam but 100 feet up," she says. Again, the trust in the gear, skills, knowledge and "your brain" are what Littenberg says comes into play on the job and when tree climbing on the competitive level.

Through the unwavering support from her boyfriend and the encouragement of Treelife owner/fellow champion climber, Flint Anderson, Littenberg has channeled that love of a challenge and her natural agility to become the tops in competition. A peek into the world of tree climbing competitions reveals a series of incredibly physical and mentally demanding tasks. Littenberg describes these as follows:

"Speed belay: It's like rock climbing but on a tree. The goal is to get the fastest time.

"Work climb: Designed to emulate a typical work day. There are five different stations throughout a tree. You have five minutes to complete the climb and points are given based on skills, grace, and time among other technical things.

"Typical: If for some weird reason there were only five things needed to be done in a tree, lol.

"Ascent: Literally get up a rope as fast



Littenberg says that she specializes in high value, high stress prunes and what brings her joy is to restore what has been forgotten or neglected. "Restoration and helping a tree be the best it can be is what drives me," she said. As Littenberg describes it, the thrill of working in a large tree for example, is that one must have total trust in one's gear and call upon all of the available skills and knowledge in tree work.

Then there are the occasional unexpected aspects of working in the trees. Encountering a nest of baby squirrels, raccoons "who don't want you to be there," bugs, wasps, hornets and poison

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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What is collaborative divorce and is it right for me?

BY MICHAEL OBSCHNEIDER, PSY. D.

Divorce is an inherently tumultuous life event that significantly impacts the emotional well-being of all those involved. And, the approach to divorce can greatly influence the outcome, with collaborative divorce offering a less adversarial alternative to traditional litigation. This method, focusing on negotiation and mutual agreement outside of court, holds the potential to mitigate the emotional strain typically associated with divorce. But what is collaborative divorce, and does it really work?

Simply put, collaborative divorce is a process where divorcing couples agree to negotiate a settlement without going to court. This method involves structured negotiations and meetings between the spouses and their lawyers and is team-centric in that it is often supplemented by other professionals like child custody specialists and financial advisors.

The collaborative divorce process begins with both parties signing an agreement to avoid court, followed

by the transparent exchange of all necessary documents. Meetings are then held to facilitate dialogue and find mutually agreeable solutions, sometimes with the help of third-party specialists. The ultimate goal is to reach a settlement that respects both parties' interests, formalized in an agreement and, if necessary, approved by the court.

Collaborative divorce offers various advantages, such as being less stressful and confrontational than traditional divorce, offering more control over the outcome, ensuring confidentiality, and focusing on cooperative

problem-solving.

The approach is particularly beneficial for children, often resulting in less involvement, turmoil and upset. When collaborative divorce is successful, it can also be considerably less expensive because the parties do not spend as much money on attorneys and going court.

Choosing collaborative divorce can be beneficial for couples seeking an amicable resolution; it is a method that supports the divorcing parties' dignity, fosters

mutual respect, and is less traumatic for children.

In my opinion, the main disadvantage with the method is that many (if not most) divorcing couples are not in an agreeable place to work respectfully and with trust toward an amicable resolution or divorce settlement.

Thus, the method may not be suitable for couples who have an emotionally painful history together, or for couples who are experiencing ongoing significant disagreement and emotional conflict and/or distrust. The collaborative divorce process also has a high fail rate when serious mental health problems, substance use problems, abuse or a severe power imbalance exists within the marriage.

Unfortunately, I have seen firsthand, dozens upon dozens of couples who tried collaborative divorce but then end up having to start over with new attorneys utilizing the traditional divorce approach. These couples can often end up in a more contentious and beaten down space after unsuccessful upsetting meetings and after spending a lot of money.

A new client of mine whose collaborative divorce

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Ask Dr. Mike

By Michael
Oberschneider, Psy.D.

Just like nothing (else) on earth: Burial Ground for the Enslaved at Belmont

BY TIM JON

Next time I stop in, I want to hear the birds sing, as I took an early morning stroll around the land set aside as the Burial Ground for the Enslaved at Belmont. I found the silence broken



only by the nearby traffic on Route Seven – with the motorists – understandably – oblivious to the spiritual tenor of the tree-covered hill just off the highway.

I'd also like, when I return, to enjoy the greenery of the Loudoun County summer in full swing. The somber colors of late winter easing into early spring did little to lift the mood as I navigated through a trail that led in and among the (as far as I could tell) unmarked gravestones (essentially flattened rocks that seemed convenient to the purpose).

It took little to imagine the brevity of the proceedings involved in the interment of an indentured worker on a

Virginia plantation some two hundred years ago; no neatly separated plots with carefully managed, grass-covered graves marked by clearly-noted inscribing. Professional ceremonies? Hard to tell. I thought of my own family members, passed on, and tried to draw a connection between these two lines of humanity (or did I try NOT to?).

I allowed my emotions range freely during the tour – finding solace in the fact that the small cemetery had existed at all, back in that day, and that sufficient care (in recent times) led to its re-discovery and preservation until today.

I gravitated toward a small wetland area, lying adjacent to the walkway through the plots, and I couldn't help thinking, "I'll bet a little later on, in spring, the nesting birds will really bring this place to life." Some may think this sentiment in bad taste; I prefer to feel as much in common with the spirits of those here laid to final rest; I would like to think I'd have



such natural music keeping such a place company – if the situation were reversed. I also wondered which varieties of forest wildflowers – if any – would be coming into bloom in and around the graves and the well-marked trail that guided visitors

through the shrine.

My morning's visit covered the entire – roughly – circular walkway through the cemetery, and I noted signs of recent offerings of memorial: piles of coins, hand-written notes, even an unopened bottle of wine lying amid some artificial flowers, left in a thoughtful (to my finding) basket arrangement. If I took comfort in these gestures of respect, I also hoped they provided the same for those who had come before – living and otherwise.

As I neared the end of the trail, I came upon an obviously recent gravesite; the professional work done on the gravestone revealed the identity of the interred individual: a 16-year-old boy who lost his life by drowning a mere three years prior to my visit. The remains of Fitz Alexander Campbell Thomas found a resting place adjacent to a miniature football gridiron – a token of love and respect from a community that took enjoyment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »



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Three cheers for the new zoning ordinance

Dear Editor:

Congratulations! Loudoun County has a new zoning ordinance – adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 13. Everyone involved should be proud – the County Planning Staff, the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors and the hundreds of organizations, businesses and individual citizens that invested the time and energy to follow, understand and comment on the intricacies of an exceedingly complex ordinance.

LETTER

It is not a perfect document, and many organizations, businesses and citizens feel that their interests are not adequately reflected, but almost all agree it is a significant improvement over the previous ordinance adopted in 1993.

As with any ordinance of this complexity and scope there will be many attempts to amend it in the coming years. Undoubtedly, the new County Board of Supervisors will authorize several Zoning Ordinance Amendment studies.

In 2024 and beyond Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains will be joining with

many other organizations to strengthen the zoning protections against over-development in the Mountain Overlay District. Specifically, we will be concentrating on three objectives:

1. Prohibits new commercial development in the Mountain Overlay District. While zoning ordinance imposes many welcome restrictions on commercial development in the MOD, the ordinance will still permit new commercial development such as sit-down and fast-food restaurants, rural retreats, amphitheaters. These types of new commercial development are inappropriate for the steep slopes, thin soils, and heavily forested areas of the MOD.
2. Strengthen zoning enforcement. Require that zoning violations resulting in substantial environmental damage must be corrected by returning the land to its condition before the violation. It is not sufficient to stop the violation. In addition, the county must accept direct responsibility for identifying zoning violations. It is not sufficient to leave identifying violations solely as responsibility of citizens and neighbors.
3. Incorporate consideration of the impact of development on greenhouse gases. CO2 is a major component of greenhouse gases which contribute significantly to climate

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Continue doing the right thing for western Loudoun Villages

Dear Editor:

It took time, but those of us who represent the vast majority of residents in the Village of Philomont were given the opportunity to speak, field questions, and have an overall productive discussion with County staff on the true feasibility of a design concept that gives

LETTER

Loudoun County Fire Rescue all the health, safety and comfort requirements on two levels vs one – like so many firehouses in Loudoun and around the country.

The modernization of the Philomont Firehouse with a well thought out village-friendly addition/renovation will meet our new zoning section, 'Adaptive Reuse', while saving our historic Horse Show Grounds, which is consistent with preserving open space under the County's Heritage Plan.

It was a good discussion. I invited Supervisor Caleb Kershner to see for himself that this is the right choice for Philomont. I invite all Supervisors (Chair Randall and Supervisor-elect Laura TeKrony have already visited) to meet with Bill Ridge et al and see that this will fully meet the 2019 Comprehensive Plan's policies and new zoning language while respecting our recent designation of National Register of Historic Places.

Previous examples have proven that determination and strong support by

those most impacted can result in the best outcome. Look at the number of years spent on correct placement of a firehouse in Aldie, and ultimately doing the right thing at Mickie Gordon Park.

The final outcome was achieved by listening and working together. Why do we have a Comprehensive Plan, Updated Zoning, or Advisory Commissions, if projects that clearly go against all that is written are allowed to seek a Special Exception?

This ability to undermine the power and authority of an established process is what will put the final nail in the coffin of western Loudoun.

We saw how the stakeholders' process worked in the final stage of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite; well done. We hope this continues on scheduled work on Western CPAMs/ZOAMs in 2024.

Residents of Loudoun County let's kick off the new year on a hopeful note and prior to the Public Hearing on January 10th, email your Supervisor to support a motion that directs County staff to fully develop the in-place design for the Village of Philomont as discussed at our December 21st meeting.

It is the right thing to do for Loudoun and its community.

*Madeline Skinner
Philomont*

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Deadline for print edition is the third week of each month, or, online any time.

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The 7/690 Interchange is a waste of taxpayers' money

Dear Editor:

In early January, the Purcellville Town Council will be reviewing again the proposed interchange at the junction of Route 7 and Route 690 (Hillsboro Road). The Council should reject this project.

LETTER

Citizens have been led to believe that the interchange would significantly reduce traffic congestion. That is a fable invented by County staff to justify a project they want to impose on the Town for completely different reasons.

Figures 1-4 and 2-4 of the "Value Engineering Study" conducted by VDOT in 2018 clearly show that, even if this project were completed, traffic congestion would actually worsen on Route 7 between Purcellville and Leesburg and at the intersections of Rte. 690 and Alder School Road and 21st Street and 23rd Street. And it would have no effect whatever on the severe congestion expected in 2040 at the following intersections:

- Hirst Road and 21st Street (F)
- Hirst Road and Maple Avenue (F)
- Route 7 and the Route 287 (Berlin Turnpike) east-bound ramp (F)
- Route 287 and Eastgate Drive (F)
- Main Street and 23rd Street (F)
- Main Street and Maple Avenue (D)

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The case for supporting Ukraine

Dear Editor:

Vladimir Putin last week said that Russia will not end its war against Ukraine until his country achieves "denazification," "demilitarization," and neutrality in Ukraine; i.e., no peace until Russia controls all of Ukraine and purges its perceived enemies. It is also clear that Russia's ambitions include control over Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic states, and Poland, in effect reinstating Russian control over eastern Europe as during the Soviet Union.

LETTER

A victory in Ukraine will embolden Putin to press ahead with this ambition and that would likely drag the United States into conflict, not merely with weapons, but with lives. In that sense, Ukraine becomes a test of the West's resolve to keep Russia within its boundaries, and Putin is sensing weakness. The United States support is hobbled in Congress and Europe's support is hobbled by Hungary's Orban.

Americans are understandably weary. The war is nearing two years, and people want to deal with priorities closer to home – the border, for example. The border is important and it is a here and now problem, while Russia's threat to Europe is a potential and future problem.

But consider that a wider war in Europe almost certainly involves NATO and the possibility that nuclear weapons

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Company to build transmission lines in Loudoun has history of legal problems

Second company under investigation

BY AUDREY CARPENTER

Sam Randazzo turned himself into authorities last month. He is the former chair of Ohio's Public Utilities Commission which regulates utility service providers, including companies that supply electricity to consumers.

Randazzo, 74, of Columbus, self-surrendered in the U.S. District Court in Cincinnati Dec. 4 to the FBI, which has been investigating a \$60 million bribery scheme involving FirstEnergy related to a legislative bailout for two Ohio nuclear power plants. The investigation resulted in a 20-year prison sentence for former Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder, a five-year prison sentence for Republican Party Chair Matt Borges, the firing of FirstEnergy's CEO Chuck Jones and Vice President Michael Dowling, and a \$230 million government fine assessed against FirstEnergy.

Most recently, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted received

subpoenas for a civil lawsuit on Nov. 17 seeking any communications the politicians may have had with FirstEnergy, executives named in the lawsuit or Randazzo. Husted is scheduled to be deposed in that case between Feb. 28 and March 19, 2024.

Gov. DeWine appointed Randazzo to head the Public Utilities Commission on Feb. 4, 2019. Randazzo resigned in November 2020 after FBI agents searched his condominium and FirstEnergy publicly acknowledged as part of a settlement agreement to avoid prosecution that it had made a bribery payment of \$4.3 million to Randazzo in December 2018.

The FirstEnergy scandal has been dubbed "the largest corruption scandal in Ohio history" and resulted in one individual charged in the case committing suicide.

FirstEnergy, headquartered in Akron, is comprised of 10 affiliate companies involved in the distribution, transmission, and generation of electricity, as well

as energy management and other energy-related services affecting six million customers within Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York.

See FirstEnergy's agreement to resolve the Justice Department's investigation here: https://firstenergy-corp.com/newsroom/news_articles/firstenergy-reaches-agreement-to-resolve-department-of-justice-investigation#:~:text=Under%20the%20three%2Dyear%20deferred,all%20terms%20of%20the%20agreement.

See Randazzo's indictment here: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdoh/pr-grand-jury-indicts-former-state-public-utilities-chairman-federal-bribery-embezzlement#:~:text=CINCINNATI%20%E2%80%93%20A%20federal%20grand%20jury,Court%20in%20Cincinnati%20this%20morning>.

How is this connected to Loudoun County?

The Ohio scandal and fallout is cause for concern in Loudoun County. FirstEnergy is one of two companies that was

approved Dec. 11 by the PJM Interconnection Board of Managers, a regional transmission organization, to build the MidAtlantic Resiliency Link (MARL), referred to as Project 853.

MARL is a controversial electrical transmission project that would build 130-miles of 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission towers and lines from Southwestern Pennsylvania, through West Virginia and Maryland to Virginia, along with a new 500/138-kV substation.

MARL must get final approval from Virginia's State Corporation Commission, as well as other involved states, before construction can begin. If the SCC gives the green light, it's anticipated the project would begin emitting electricity by 2027 to satisfy increased regional demand.

The project has received wide scale criticism from homeowners, farmers and conservationists many of whom spoke at a December meeting of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors intended to receive public comment on the zoning ordinance. However, the Board received feedback about the proposed

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Transmission line contractor already surveying path; asks for reimbursement costs ahead of project approval

BY AUDREY CARPENTER

Wasting no time after the controversial Project 853 transmission line project was approved by the PJM Interconnection Board of Managers on Dec. 11, contractors were already busy scouting the proposed route in Loudoun County by helicopter in December.



Residents from Lovettsville to Harpers Ferry, W.Va. took photographs and videos of the same tan helicopter flying and hovering at several points along the planned 130-mile route, which would run through three states – West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland.

PJM is a regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia. It gave approval to build new power lines to increase electricity throughout the region – largely driven by data center electricity consumption.

Due to the number on the aircraft's tail, the Blue Ridge Leader was able to determine through flight data and corporate records that the helicopter is a contractor of FirstEnergy, one of three contractors selected to build Project 853 transmission lines. The other two are NextEra and American Electric Power.

The helicopter is owned by Gillespie Flying Services. A 2015 article details how the company uses its helicopters to cut trees and vegetation along transmission

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Power lines seen from Tylee Ulmer's yard. Additional power lines would be added, taller and wider, made of metal.



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Kathy Godfrey
Public Relations Manager

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Midas

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

Eons ago in Asa Minor, King Midas was in his rose garden when he came across the wise satyr Silenus, badly hungover and still somewhat drunk. Midas helped Silenus clear his head, fed him and returned him to the Greek god Dionysos, the satyr's master. (Satyrs had the body of a man, the ears and tail of a horse, and notable priapism.)

OPINION

The grateful god gave Midas a single wish. The pleonectic Midas asked for the ability to turn anything he touched into gold. As the myth goes, Midas got his comeuppance when a grape turned to gold as he tried to eat it. His horse became the gilt metal when Midas tried to mount it. Even water turned into gold before Midas could drink. Ultimately Midas had to beg Dionysos to reverse the spell.

Relevance

The message is obvious: Be careful what you wish for. A corollary is beware of unforeseen consequences. Both are at play in Loudoun's raging debate about data centers.

In the Beginning ...

Many years ago my firm sent me on a scouting mission to northern Virginia to see if we wanted to develop office buildings here. Two experienced realtors showed me around. One said something I well remember, "You ought to look at Loudoun County. It's headed by a really dumb woman who'll approve anything." That was intriguing, but it was clear that developing large office buildings in Loudoun would be foolish.

In some ways that Chairwoman was clever. Times were tough and places like Loudoun needed all the economic activity they could generate. The problem was that nobody ever turned off the spigot of more growth, more growth, more growth. The Midas touch indeed.

The Internet Arrives

Sorry, AL Gore, you did not create the Internet. It evolved from academic and military sources, dating back to the 1950s. The Internet as we know it took form in 1983. Loudoun became the locus of the Internet with the founding here of AOL and other companies such as UUNET and WorldCom. They spawned a great network of wires, connections and such. As the Internet grew, more and more data infrastructure was added to the major hub that Loudoun had become.

The Internet Thrives

I think of it as a connection for communication and for transmittal of data, and data needs to be stored. Thus, data centers were built to house innumerable servers holding incomprehensible amounts of data. They quickly took the form of giant, multi-story warehouses and they multiplied. They don't pollute. With few employees they don't aggravate rush hour. They pay a boatload of taxes. What could go wrong? Plenty. Just ask Midas.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 »



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To the Citizens of Purcellville – Rt. 7/690 Interchange

BY KWASI FRASER
FORMER MAYOR, TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE

It's crucial to address the concerns raised regarding the allocation of taxpayers' funds towards the proposed floodplain mitigation project tied to the construction of the Rt. 7/690 Interchange.

OPINION

The decision-making process regarding this initiative demands precision and a broader perspective on both the immediate and long-term implications to the citizens of Purcellville at large.

The proposal highlights an investment of \$6.2 million into culverts and a floodplain study, claiming to alleviate flooding risks to citizens now threatened by flooding along the South Fork Catoc-tin Creek in Purcellville.

This alone will not enable the construction of the interchange's fourth ramp.

While these infrastructural improvements are being advanced with political and emotional expediency, the fundamental question arises: Is this initiative a comprehensive solution for the Town

and County in terms of protecting all its citizens from the threat of violent flooding seen yearly unannounced and unpredicted?

Any reluctance to conduct a comprehensive floodplain study immediately knowing residents' lives and property are at risk is negligent at best and at worst, criminal.

Prioritizing the overdue protection of lives and properties in Western Loudoun County from flooding, rather than proceeding with the construction of the

interchange, raises valid concerns about why any delay in safeguarding citizens' lives would be justified.

The leadership of both the County and Town insists otherwise, but the potential worsening of flood risks due to the interchange's need for substantial fill material within the Town's flood reserve areas is unacceptable.

Federal and State authorities like FEMA, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and concerned

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 »

“Other People’s Money”

BY TIM STINETTE

There is a saying about other people's money and it goes like this: “Three groups spend other people's money: children, thieves, and politicians. All three need supervision.”

“OPM” is the shorthand for “other people's money” and when it comes to OPM it is the decisions of those who manage OPM that drive the decisions for those who use OPM.

OPINION

In the public domain, most government staffs will aggressively pursue OPM over using direct taxpayer revenues. This is called exercising good stewardship. So, if the County wants to build an interchange, the County politicians and County staff are going to aggressively pursue State and Federal

OPM. OPM always comes with strings and conditions ... some go to timelines and others go to how the project is constructed. The point with OPM is other people make the decisions.

If we consider the oft debated Route 7/690 Interchange project, it would appear other people's decisions are the driving force for the project rather than us people. And if the project were entirely outside the Town of Purcellville (it's not) one might be able to understand other people driving the decisions. The fact is the interchange encroaches on green space and wetlands within the Town of Purcellville and will impact the flow of the South Fork Catoc-tin Creek.

So, why is it the managers of OPM choose to hold the Town of Purcellville hostage with flooding abatement

measures in exchange for encroaching on the Town's green space, wetlands, and the water course of the South Fork Catoc-tin Creek?

It is largely due to the strings and conditions (timelines and construction) associated with using OPM. If those strings and conditions are not satisfied the project will lose its OPM funding.

One should ask, why does the interchange need roundabouts when it was initially designed without. One should also ask, if the interchange is not the cause of a change to the Town's floodplain, then why are we being held hostage to flooding mitigations in exchange for the interchange east bound ramp when ensuring public safety should not require an exchange or negotiation.

Here's the deal, the upcoming public hearing on whether the Town should vacate its agreement to maintain its

green space, wetlands, and the South Fork Catoc-tin Creek in exchange for the interchange eastbound ramp and flooding mitigations is where we exercise “supervision” over those who spend other people's money.

We should all attend the public hearing and ask the basic question: why would we exchange our green space, wetlands, and the South Fork Catoc-tin Creek for a flooding mitigation no one has evaluated and “down-town revitalization” based on a traffic projection for 2040 that VDOT says does not warrant the eastbound ramp?

You gotta love other people's money. I for one would be interested in hearing the answer to that question and I expect you might be as well. I hope to see you there.

Tip Stinnette lives in Catoc-tin Meadows.

The pleasures of Loudoun’s gravel roads

BY ADAM STEVENSON

I imagine that every place has its own comparative advantages and pleasures, both subtle and obvious, that let it grow up in a person's affections until one's identity is inseparable from the beauty and bounty of the place one knows best. This is both simple and complicated.

OPINION

It's simple in how natural and intuitive the process of coming to belong to a place is, but complicated in that such a process is difficult to explain in a way that does justice to the strength of the affection one has for the place one has come to belong to.

One of the comparative advantages and pleasures of growing up in Purcellville for me was the constellation of gravel roads within striking distance of town.

America's Routes, a group organized by local preservationists to document the local gravel network's “status as an authentic and unique historic asset,

potentially worthy of recognition by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Register of Historic Places,” describes these roads as a living museum that tells the triumphs and tragedies of the American story in its inimitable Loudoun context.

I began to fall in love with these gravel roads in earnest while running cross country at Loudoun Valley High School. Many of our running loops depended on gravel roads with low and slow traffic including Sands Road between Lincoln and Hamilton, Piggott Bottom Road between Rt 287 and Ivandale Road, and Allder School Road between Rt 287 and Purcellville Road.

This mixture of memories—of high school cross country practices, running with friends on college breaks, summer bike rides around Western Loudoun, and even vicarious memories inspired by local history read in word and stone—is material for me in these roads. My own life is given meaning through contact with

these still relevant relics.

However, Western Loudoun's nearly 300 miles of gravel roads don't only provide a living connection with our history or provide a beautiful site for memories past and present—there are also strong economic reasons for maintaining this network.

Road budgets have largely remained stagnant in the past two decades as gasoline tax revenues, which typically fund transportation projects, have declined due to increased vehicle fuel efficiency and electrification—while labor, materials, and equipment costs have all increased.

Because of this, there is generally less money to fund the up-front capital costs of converting roads from gravel to pavement. Although gravel roads generally require more yearly maintenance than paved roads, some analysis has found that paved roads' per-mile cost, calculated over their 40-year lifespan, is nearly three times that of gravel roads' per-mile

cost in the same time frame.

In 2003, smart growth advocates coined the term “complete street” to describe a road that enables safe access for all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. In many urban contexts a complete street includes many important, though costly, infrastructural elements including bicycle lanes, raised crosswalks, and signalized intersections.

I believe that the economic benefits of gravel roads become even clearer when comparing gravel roads and pedestrian-friendly paved roads in terms of construction and lifetime maintenance costs.

Loudoun's gravel roads essentially function as complete streets that enable bicyclists, horse riders, pedestrians, and motorists to share the roads during daylight hours. This is at least partly due to the fact that Loudoun's gravel roads are typically narrower and have sharper turns than most paved roads designed for car travel.

Risk homeostasis theory “predicts that, as safety features are added to vehicles and roads, drivers tend to increase their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

Dulles Town Center sold

Future plans call for mixed-use development

AUDREY CARPENTER

Dulles Town Center Mall in Sterling sold Dec. 19 to Virginia Investment Properties (VIP), a commercial real estate company based in Chantilly, for \$46 million. The company had already previously purchased Sears, Lord & Taylor and JCPenney before acquiring the mall.

Once valued at \$300 million in 2008, Dulles Town Center's assessed value had dropped to \$183.6 million by 2018, according to County tax assessment records. In 2020, health insurer Cigna and Lerner Enterprises, Cigna's local operator which managed the mall for two decades, turned the keys over to New York Life Insurance to avoid foreclosure. The property's value at that time had plummeted to \$55 million.

BUSINESS

In an interview with the *Blue Ridge Leader*, Srinivas Chavali, VIP's president and CEO, said this is the second mall he has purchased. His company also acquired Iversen Mall in Hillcrest Heights, Md. in March 2022 and sold it in January 2023. "I acquired the non-performing note from the bank and conducted a foreclosure auction," he said. That sale garnered \$20 million.

VIP's commercial portfolio and focus includes hospitality, industrial, office, retail, flex, and multi-family housing. Chavali said he has big plans for the ailing Dulles Town Center, which has lost several anchor stores, tenants and perimeter restaurants since COVID-19 and

a consumer shift to online shopping.

Across the U.S., department stores are shrinking or shuttering altogether. In 2011, U.S. department stores employed 1.2 million employees across 8,600 stores. But in 2020, there were fewer than 700,000 employees in the sector, working across just over 6,000 locations," according to the research firm IBISWorld.

Since the Great Recession began in late 2007, discount chains like TJ Maxx, Ross, and Dollar General have become more popular than full-price department stores like Macy's and JCPenney designed to cater to the middle class, IBISWorld stated.

Online shopping has put a hurt on brick and mortar stores. Since 2017, Amazon reported it has captured 53% of all online sales. As a result of the overall decline in retail sales, both shopping malls and department stores are experiencing high rates of closure. According to *Business Insider*, around 15% of U.S. malls are expected to fail or convert to non-retail space by 2024.

Despite all this, Chavali has jumped in with both feet, and says he has a plan to bring Dulles Town Center back to life.

\$100, a plane ticket, and a dream

Srinivas Chavali comes from humble beginnings. After growing up in India and attaining his master's degree in computer science, he came to the U.S. in 1999, at the age

of 26 to be a software engineer in IT. He worked for the Virginia state government for seven years and the State Department for eight years before leaving the IT sector altogether and switching full to commercial real estate.

"I had no family in the U.S., but I had a couple of my classmates over here. I came to the U.S. with two bags and \$100 in my pocket, but I had a job offer from a company that paid around \$60,000 salary," Chavali told the *Blue Ridge Leader*.

"Once I got my green card, I started working two IT jobs and selling houses on weekends. Once I had some savings, I started buying foreclosure houses at the courthouse steps in Loudoun and Fairfax during the financial crisis in 2007 & 2008. I did residential flips until 2013 and sold more than 200 houses. After that I switched to commercial real estate and started buying distressed commercial assets from foreclosures, bankruptcy sales and auctions," he said.

"I heard America is a land of opportunities so I came here to explore it and, after that, I never looked back. I always have the burning desire to succeed in life and do something spectacular," he recalled.

Chavali said he emulated and followed in the footsteps of the most successful people in real estate like Ted Lerner, Gary Rappaport, and Milt Peterson, the founder of Peterson Companies. "All of them started with a couple of thousand dollars and became legends," he said.

Meeting Ted Lerner

"I came to this country in 1999 and that's when the Dulles Town Center mall was opened," Chavali said. "I went with my friends to the grand opening and was truly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 »

Anderson takes reins as Loudoun Commonwealth's Attorney

BY AUDREY CARPENTER

On the eve before his swearing-in ceremony on Dec. 4 at the old Leesburg Courthouse, Bob Anderson talked with the *Blue Ridge Leader* about his excitement and the seriousness with which he undertakes the role of the Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County for a second time.

GOVERNMENT

Anderson, a 75-year-old Purcellville resident, formerly held the office from 1996 to 2003. He has been the managing partner with the Law Office of Robert D. Anderson PLLC, specializing in criminal law since 1978. His legal office is located one block from the courthouse where he will now lead again as the Commonwealth's Attorney after leaving the office 20 years ago.

As Anderson says, 20 years has changed the landscape quite a bit. The population of Loudoun County has doubled in that time, which means more cases to prosecute. Anderson will oversee a 63-member staff with 33 assistant prosecutors and a seven-person victim/witness advocacy program. The Office's budget is \$7.5 million.

He said two other factors that are relatively new since he was last in office, but which he plans to address within the first 60 days in his new role, are the increase in

fentanyl and human trafficking. "I will be asking the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to fund three investigator positions so those investigators can work with task forces to investigate and aid prosecutors in preparing for successful felony trials," he said.

During his former time in office, he said he hired an investigator that was able to revive the cold case of Melvin Irving Shifflett, a serial killer who killed a woman and dumped her body near Leesburg in 1978. He was able to get a life sentence in the Shifflett case.

"I hired Gary Clemens as that investigator," Anderson said. Clemens would go on to become Clerk of the Circuit Court in Loudoun County, a position he has held for 24 years. It is Clemens who will swear-in Anderson at the courthouse ceremony.



Finding the right fit

Anderson has already been interviewing candidates. Although he could not comment on personnel issues, he said he has met with a number of candidates that could align and be comfortable with the way he wants to run the Commonwealth's Attorney office.

Anderson, a Republican, brings a quite different view of how to run the office from his predecessor, Democrat Buta Biberaj, who lost by a slim 300 vote margin to

Anderson in the November election. Anderson's fundamental philosophy is to fairly prosecute as many cases as possible that come into his office.

This is a major difference from the prior administration which openly praised keeping the number of defendants sent to jail low, dismissing a number of cases, and being the champion for what was seen as the disadvantaged and maligned within the criminal justice system.

According to statistics kept by Loudoun County's Circuit Court, criminal indictments in Loudoun County decreased dramatically by 67% after Biberaj was elected. In 2019, there were 681 indictments compared to 225 in 2021.

On the contrary, Anderson believes in the practice of holding criminals accountable no matter the crime, regardless of political or public pressure or ideology. He is an avid supporter of law enforcement and said his office must have good relationships and trust with nine different law enforcement agencies that it works with.

"The bulk of our cases come from the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, followed by the Leesburg Police Department, the State Police, the Metropolitan Police and several smaller town police departments across Loudoun," Anderson said. He said transparency, trust and open communication with law enforcement and the public is vital to the success of his office.

Mentoring staff

One area he said he has been talking to many people about is the need for mentoring to take place with younger attorneys. "They should be paired with experienced prosecutors and be a second chair on trials," he said, "not just trying low level cases."

He said professional growth of his staff and high morale are major goals, and for his employees to love

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 »

CATOCTIN CREEK AND THE PROPOSED ROUTE 7/690 INTERCHANGE FACTS, NOT SPIN

The eleven facts below create inconvenient questions that should be addressed by the Purcellville Town Council during the January 9 th Public Hearing and before voting on whether or not to vacate the agreement to maintain the green space and wetlands associated with the South Fork Catoctin Creek.

FACTS:

1. Vacation of Agreement Does Not Equal an Interchange Eastbound Ramp “Green Light”
2. Vacation of Agreement Does Not Solve Town Floodplain Issue
3. Construction Will Require Greater Access to South Fork Catoctin Creek Wetlands
4. FEMA and DEQ Notifications for the Project Have Not Been Initiated
5. Eastbound Ramp Will Encroach on South Fork Catoctin Creek and Associated Wetlands
6. Interchange Traffic Study Indicates Low Use of Eastbound Ramp
7. Interchange Eastbound Ramp Will Not Revitalize Downtown Commerce
8. Floodplain Issue Pre-Dates the Interchange and Has Not Been Addressed
9. No One Knows if the Offer of Box Culverts Will Address Flooding Over 21st Street
10. Neither the Town or County Has Initiated the Required Floodplain Notifications
11. The County Has Not Expressed the Extent of Environmental Impact to Catoctin Creek

NARRATIVE:

The public hearing on whether or not the Town should vacate its agreement to maintain the wetlands over-simplifies the path to constructing the Route 7/690 Interchange.

Vacation of the agreement does not represent the full extent of property access and impact required to construct the interchange.

Altering the South Fork Catoctin Creek water course with infill requires notification to FEMA and a subsequent permit from DEQ.

A 2018 VDOT Study states the Eastbound Ramp does not warrant the first year or future year traffic projections.

Both the Town and County must provide the facts of the potential for flooding regardless of the construction of the interchange.

Both the Town and County must assume the liability for notification of the potential for flooding in accordance with local ordinances and the Code of Federal Regulations.

Both the Town and County must accept all liability for potential environmental damage to Catoctin Creek and the associated wetlands.

We should all ask, why would we exchange our green space, wetlands, and the South Fork Catoctin Creek for a flooding mitigation no one has evaluated and “down-town revitalization” based on a traffic projection for 2040 that VDOT says does not warrant the eastbound ramp?

TO THE CITIZENS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

citizens must demand an immediate halt to construction until all necessary mitigations are clearly identified and enacted.

It's evident that essential Federal and State permits, notably from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, are currently absent, despite their jurisdiction over the wetlands within the interchange project's construction zones in Purcellville.

Delaying a crucial floodplain analysis beyond an urgent timeframe will undoubtedly result in unforeseen and severe consequences. This delay puts the lives, properties, safety and well-being of Purcellville citizens at risk of overtopping along critical routes such as Hirst Road, Hatcher Ave., N 21st Street, and both EB and WB Rt/ 7 Bypass Main

Lines, as explicitly depicted on the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Flood Risk Information System mapping service.

Furthermore, the proposed allocation of substantial funds does not assure the complete mitigation of flood risks to citizens residing along the floodplain or using major town roads during a 100-year flood event. This assertion aligns with the statements made by the Town's engineer, as documented.

During the Nov. 28, 2023, Town Council Meeting, Council Member Erin Rayner, lacking an engineering background, vocally declared that installing box culverts under N 21st would resolve the town's flooding issues without presenting any expert data to substantiate such audacious claims. Notably, these assertions directly contradict the findings

outlined in the Town's Director of Engineering's report dated Feb. 16, 2023.

"The county would pay for box culverts to be built that would improve the water flow of the creek and prevent flooding or over topping of N 21st Street at the tune of six million dollars" and "the building of culverts would also take away the risk of flooding for certain residents of the Catoctin Meadows Neighborhood," said Rayner at the Nov. 28, 2023 meeting.


Further flood mitigation and engineering methodology contradictions are found within the April 11, 2023, Board of Supervisor's Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee Information Item report on p. 3. This report suggests the County's Floodplain consultant (Dewberry) believes the Town's approach is not technically sound and will place the

consultant in an undesired liability position if they agree to the Town's methodology and culverts.

"In a December 28, 2022, meeting between County staff, the County's consultant, Town staff, and the Town's floodplain consultant, Town staff and their floodplain consultant outlined the alternative floodplain analysis method that differs from the methodology used throughout the County by B&D [Building & Development]. Additionally, Town staff requested the County to consider improvements to the floodplain grading and a downstream culvert to lower modeled floodplain water surface elevations. In a follow-up meeting on January 3, 2023, between County staff and the County's consultant (engineer of record), the County's consultant declined to utilize

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 »

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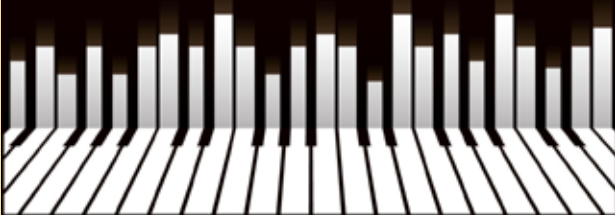


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DULLES TOWN CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

amazed to see a brand new, 1.5 million-square-foot mall. I came from India and had never seen such a huge mall until then."

After learning Ted Lerner founded Lerner Enterprises in 1952 by borrowing \$250 from his wife, Chavali knew he could also build his company into something successful. Lerner developed his company into the largest private real estate developer in the Washington region, building and managing Dulles Town Center.

Mr. Lerner's first shopping center, the open-air Wheaton Plaza, now Westfield Wheaton in suburban Maryland, was dedicated in 1960. He opened Tysons Corner Center, a national model for enclosed, climate-controlled malls, in the late 1960s, followed by the Galleria at Tysons II in the late 1980s.

Lerner would go on to acquire the Nationals baseball team in 2006 and turn it into a championship team. In February 2023, at the age of 95, Lerner died. By then, Chavali was a success in his own right.

Future of Dulles Town Center

Chavali said he immediately plans to fill the vacant stores in Dulles Town Center, but not necessarily with traditional retail stores. He envisions attracting entertainment-style venues such as a

bowling alley, pickleball or go carting. He wants the feel to be "a destination experience for families."

For the several vacant restaurant pads on the perimeter of the mall, he said, "I am planning to give it to wineries or breweries or restaurants for a short term lease of three to five years."

He also would like to get some of the 132 acres rezoned to build townhouses and apartments around the mall. That will help the mall and generate more foot traffic, he said.

"Dulles Town Center lacks housing at this time and we believe that by leveraging amenities already in place we can create a more vibrant community and be a win-win for the retailers, residents and the property owners," Chavali said.

"Adding these additional property uses with urban and outward elements while bringing additional experiential retail services will increase the daytime and night-time populations, which will drive more shopping visits. Restaurants, bars, food hall, upscale bowling/dining/bar concept, live music, yoga, fitness centers, hair salons etc. are experiential features that can't be replicated on the internet," he said.

"I live 15 minutes from the mall and I know the area well. I believe I know what consumers want in a mall experience, and I hope to deliver that to them."



Ketocin Baptist Church, founded in 1751, offers a quaint and tranquil setting just outside Purcellville for those who seek God's truth for their lives. We are a welcoming and inclusive congregation led by Pastor David Sweet to study the Word of God each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. We look forward to having you gather with us to experience the fullness of God.

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COMPANY TO BUILD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

transmission line construction in Western Loudoun and ongoing data center development throughout the county.

FirstEnergy was also an owner of the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) project, a proposed 290 mile 765 kilovolt electric power transmission line designed to supply power from the Amos Substation in Putnam County, W.Va. to a proposed electrical substation to be constructed in Frederick County, Md.

PATH was ultimately defeated in 2011 and never built, but the companies involved in the planning of the project were reimbursed a total of \$250 million by consumers for pre-construction costs, land and easement purchases, legal fees, lobbying efforts, public relations, accumulated interest and the like, fees allowed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, but vehemently criticized in a Dec. 19 meeting by one of its own Commissioners as being “ridiculously generous” to utility companies with a call for revision of its “incentive policy” that accommodates energy contractors.

TRANSMISSION LINE CONTRACTOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

line corridors with the aid of an aerial saw: https://www.cnhinews.com/news/article_fbd7d17a-ffdb-11e4-aae1-1b6b-4bcae02e.html.

Several citizens saw the helicopter and captured photos and videos of it as it flew above their properties. Tylee Ulmer has lived in Lovettsville for more than 20 years at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where transmission lines are visible from her property.

In 2008, she, along with her neighbors and other concerned citizens, coalesced to fight a similar transmission line project called PATH (Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline), a proposed 290-mile, 765 kilovolt transmission line designed to supply power from the Amos Substation in Putnam County, W.Va. to a proposed substation in Frederick County, Md.

They won after three years.

On Feb. 28, 2011 PJM requested that FirstEnergy and American Electric Power suspend efforts on PATH. Additional information on that project can be found here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20091115035255/http://>

Second company under investigation

As if all that weren't enough, the second company involved in the MARL project, NextEra Energy, headquartered in Juno Beach, Fla., is now being sued.

On Nov. 8, the law firm of Bragar, Eigel & Squire P.C., based in New York City, said it is investigating potential claims against NextEra Energy on behalf of long-term stockholders following a class-action complaint that was filed against NextEra.

The lawsuit, filed by a group of investors who purchased securities in NextEra Energy, focuses on NextEra's subsidiary, Florida Power & Light Company. Former Florida Power & Light Company CEO Eric Silagy is alleged to have sold 62,480 shares of the utility's stock in December 2021 under suspicious circumstances, the largest number of shares he had bought or sold since becoming an officer for the company in 2012. Silagy made a profit of \$5.4 million on the sale of his stock.

According to the suit filed in the federal Southern District of Florida, “The company made false and misleading statements to the market. NextEra's

subsidiary, Florida Power & Light Company, engaged in misconduct aimed at politicians and journalists that opposed it. The company denied this misconduct despite the fact that the actions of its subsidiary put it at risk of legal and reputational damage. Based on these facts, the company's public statements were false and materially misleading throughout the class period. When the market learned the truth about NextEra, investors suffered damages.”

The suit names NextEra Energy, former Florida Power & Light CEO Silagy, former NextEra Energy CEO James Robo and Chief Communications Officer David Reuter, as defendants.

The law firm is seeking long-term stockholders of NextEra Energy to come forward, share information and sign on as plaintiffs to the lawsuit. More information about the investigation/lawsuit can be read here: <https://www.bespc.com/cases/NEE>.

On Jan. 5, 2023 NextEra announced Silagy would retire with Armando Pimentel replacing him. Silagy's last day was May 15. The same day that NextEra

Energy announced Silagy's departure, the company acknowledged political scandals in a notice sent to its investors which revealed alleged violations of federal campaign laws as the basis of a complaint filed against NextEra with the Federal Elections Commission.

NextEra Energy Transmission MidAtlantic, LLC, a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Transmission, LLC, will finance, develop, construct, own, operate and maintain the MidAtlantic Resiliency Link.

“It's scary to know the companies selected to move forward with the MARL project in Virginia are the same companies that have had serious bribery convictions, lawsuits and questionable political influence associated with them. The fact that PJM would continue to do business with FirstEnergy and NextEra by awarding them approval for transmission construction projects is a huge cause for concern. This is not good for Virginia and the Virginia State Corporation Commission needs to evaluate the MARL project through this lens while reviewing any projects in our state,” said a source who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

pathtransmission.com/default.asp.

Ulmer and her neighbors are in the direct path of Project 853. “They [PJM] want more of a right-of-way. The poles will go right through our front fields and are taller and uglier than the wooden transmission lines that are already there. At least the wooden ones somewhat blend in with the surrounding fields and trees. But now we will have taller, wider metal transmission poles,” she said.

“If they're going to do it, I'd like them to do it underground. But I think the horse is already out of the barn,” she added.

NextEra asks for compensation ahead of project approval

In a Nov. 22 letter from NextEra to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), NextEra asked to be granted certain transmission rate incentives for Project 853 and the ability to recoup costs it expends on the project if the project gets shut down.

However, the PJM Board of Managers didn't approve Project 853 until Dec. 11.

Why would a contractor be asking FERC for potential monetary compensation

and incentives in advance of even being selected for the transmission line project? We posed that question to NextEra and will update if we receive a response back from the company.

“Somehow NextEra was so certain it would receive the assignment that it felt free to apply for incentives for its proposed project ahead of time,” said Keryn Newman, a W.Va. resident and activist who writes a blog about energy issues.

NextEra's application filing to FERC is 67 pages long. It can be viewed here: <https://www.pjm.com/directory/etariff/Ferc-Dockets/7748/20231122-er24-472-000.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2dDVoLV4cOrKyq3L-9bYKwPdVp4Xf0FCcBZwoKk7vGw-GU1oIWyESG-yaHE>.

In 2005, Congress decided not enough electric transmission was being built so it passed Sec. 219 of the Energy Policy Act directing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to establish incentive-based rate treatments to promote capital investment in electric transmission infrastructure.

Over the course of several proceedings, FERC developed a number of incentives to financially reward and protect utilities who undertook new transmission

projects, Newman explained.

In its filing, NextEra asks for “recovery of 100% of prudently-incurred transmission-related costs of the project if it is abandoned or canceled for reasons beyond the control of [NextEra],” including all pre-commercial costs to include construction work and debt.

Consumers would pay for all these costs.

“A very simple explanation for how ratepayers pay for transmission is to liken it to the home mortgage that we're all familiar with. The utility pays to construct the project (like the bank pays for your home) and then we pay the utility back over time, plus interest, just like we pay our home mortgage,” Newman said.

Because NextEra filed its application to FERC before it was even selected as a contractor for Project 853, the window to intervene and file comments on its request for incentives has already closed. The public cannot act on it.

“Are incentives really necessary in a competitive planning process?” Newman asked. “The transmission industry is incredibly profitable even without incentives.”

TO THE CITIZENS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

the floodplain analysis method suggested by the Town for technical and liability reasons.”

The uncertainties surrounding the effectiveness of culverts in managing flooding, coupled with the reliance on speculative outcomes from the floodplain study, add layers of doubt to Rayner's proposed solution. This situation

poses an increased threat of further flooding to downstream communities and businesses should these culverts be implemented.

It's crucial to deeply consider the long-term sustainability and efficacy of the proposed measures. Are culverts alone sufficiently equipped to prevent flooding? Can a reactive floodplain study comprehensively identify and address

the risks posed by the interchange?

These valid concerns emphasize the necessity for a meticulous and proactive approach to protect Purcellville citizens from potential loss of life and property during a 100-year flooding event in our town. Conducting an expedited and comprehensive floodplain analysis before initiating interchange construction ensures a more informed,

sustainable, and resilient solution for everyone involved.

The judicious allocation of funds and a comprehensive understanding of risks are imperative not only to safeguard taxpayers' investments but, more importantly, to prevent the loss of life and property within the broader Purcellville and western Loudoun County community.

“Straight to the heart of Mayfair” — Vice Mayor Bertaut expresses concern as NCR removal is delayed again by council majority

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Purcellville Town Council Meeting on Dec. 12, Vice Mayor Chris Bertaut tried to move forward again with the proposal to remove the Northern Collector Road (NCR) from the Purcellville Town Wide Transportation Plan. During the

GOVERNMENT

Nov. 14 Town Council Meeting vote to approve an easement on Mayfair Crown Drive, the mayor and council members expressed a sense of urgency to remove the NCR when voting to approve the easement. Removing the mention of the NCR from the transportation plan would make it more difficult to extend Mayfair Crown Drive to Fields Farm Road — also known as the NCR — at a future date.

While attempting to clarify that amending the 2009 plan would not be a big lift, Bertaut differentiated between amending and revising the Town Wide 2009 Transportation Plan. “Amending the Town Transportation Plan means making corrections or changes necessitated by conflict with countervailing documents — in this case the Comprehensive Plan.”

From page 98 of the Town’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan: “The Town does not support the proposed Northern Collector Road in the JLMA and 2019 County Plan.”

“A revision means a full transportation study is required. The planning commission agrees that a revised version of the transportation plan is long overdue, but the time frame” for doing so would be at least 18 months, Bertaut said.

“So based on recommendations from county staff, town staff and from a number of town council members, the planning commission compiled” a list of amendments to the transportation plan.

Bertaut explained that in some instances, these amendments are as simple as removing the mention of the NCR. In other cases, some sentences “needed to be heavily revised.”

The key distinction between a comprehensive plan and a transportation plan is that the latter “seeks to optimize traffic flow without regard to the safety of the surrounding neighborhoods,” Bertaut said.

“A comprehensive plan has a lot of other objectives, but one of those is the health, safety, and welfare of residents.

When those two come into conflict, the comprehensive plan needs to prevail.”

Bertaut said the most recent county revisions regarding the Northern Collector Road show a path for the NCR ... “straight to the heart of Mayfair.”

“So back to my earlier point, the idea of a transportation plan is to maximize the flow of traffic and not necessarily for the purpose of anything other than just moving the cars through as fast as possible. We have to ask ourselves ‘What is the greater goal here?’

“Comprehensive plans, transportation plans are put together holistically with a view of a variety of factors,” he said, adding that the council must look at the second and third order of effects as well as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

FORGET 7/690, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

All members of the town council ran on not supporting the NCR.

Regarding the Rt. 7/690 Interchange Ordinance of Vacation, Bertaut said in his council comments that he would like to hear how vacating the easement, “particularly the floodplain easement”, would be possible as “the easement is within the Historic Corridor Overlay District.

“Most people are most familiar with the downtown Historic Corridor Overlay District, but there are several others located about town. One of the issues of course is there’s a lot of language in that Article 14a that regards placement of structures including anything manmade — which would include an off-ramp.”

Bertaut said, “This is not intended to detract from the county’s efforts to move forward with the Rt. 7/690 Interchange. There’s only a tiny part of this that’s within the control of the Town of Purcellville — that is the off ramp east-bound that runs through the Catoctin Meadows subdivision.

“I would also note that the land in question is also part of the common area property of the local Homeowners Association and can’t be released without the consent of the HOA. And if it’s not enough cause for concern the town would need a sign off from our floodplain administrator.”

Bertaut noted that currently the floodplain has changed, but the plan has not yet been updated to reflect the change.

At the Nov. 14 town council meeting, during a vote to approve easements for Mayfair Crown Drive and Fields Farm Road — which staff said were necessary to get to the new planned water tower — Council Member Ron Rise Jr. said, “We

should make the intention clear that there’s no intention to connect this road [Mayfair Crown Drive and Fields Farm Road, which could become the Northern Collector Road]. We should take immediate action after [the easement] is approved to amend the Comprehensive Plan and update the Transportation Plan to reflect those intentions.”

Council Member Erin Rayner, a resident of the Mayfair community, agreed. “If we vote to approve this [we need] immediate action to update the amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to say that road will not go through. We’ll put it to an end — that argument. So, I think it’s a good idea.”

Milan also agreed, “I would like to echo the comments of Council Member Rise. It’s imperative that we do make known that the intent is not to connect to the Mayfair Crown Drive.”

Summing up the situation, Council Member Boo Bennett said she would not vote for the easement. “These easements are the very same that existed for the [proposed] ball fields.

“These easements are the very same that were put in place to extend Mayfair Crown Drive to Fields Farm Road, known as the Northern Collector Road. These easements, if approved, lay the infrastructure for Mayfair Crown Drive becoming a thoroughfare, with estimates of 2,000 cars or more a day. This is a great concern for the residents of Mayfair,” said Bennett.

“The world judges us by our actions, not our intentions,” she concluded.

Bertaut said, “We as a town council need to commit to amending the comprehensive plan forthwith as well as the transportation plan.”

Foreshadowing what would happen just 14 days later, Bertaut warned, “If

you, the residents, are looking in on a meeting a few weeks hence when we vote on this ... we have to have a public hearing ... when it’s up for a vote — if you see a town council member vote against those amendments — well then you know that their commitment is not to the health, safety and welfare of this town’s residents. But it lies somewhere else.”

Acting on the urgency expressed just two days earlier by the Mayor and Town Council members, at the Nov. 16 Planning Commission Meeting, Bertaut said he reviewed the 2009 Town Wide Transportation Plan “specifically to find all references to the Northern Collector Road and to the O Street extension, which is an extension of O Street from 21st Street to Hatcher Avenue.

“What I am looking for is a motion from the planning commission to strike all recommendations to support the NCR and the O Street extension, which is also unnecessary.”

Bertaut said, “This transportation plan was developed through the services of a professional engineering firm and the primary purpose of their recommendations ... was to improve the flow through the transportation network.”

He said at that time the Mayfair Community did not exist. If the Northern Collector Road were to be built today, “it would be traversing a fairly large population center in our town — with young children.” He reiterated that the residents do not want the extension — if Mayfair Crown Drive is extended to Fields Farm Road, it would become a thoroughfare.

He suggested that the planning commission hold a public hearing to amend the transportation plan. “We don’t want traffic to freely flow through Mayfair.”

Addressing the Planning Commission’s

Nov. 16 discussion to amend the Town’s Transportation Plan, Milan said on Nov. 28 that he was “made aware through the newspaper” about the planning commission moving forward with “the process to remove the Northern Collector Road from the Transportation Plan.”

“I want to emphasize that the Committees, Commissions and Boards are an advisory body and not a legislative body. In order for these things to be moved forward, it needs to be brought to the town council to be discussed and voted on ... The CCB’s are not to task our legal department nor staff to conduct any business outside of approval by the town council,” warned Milan.

The Town Council voted 6-1 to hold a public hearing on Jan. 9 to vacate the floodplain easement on the 14.2-acre Catoctin Meadows wetland/floodplain/forested parcel. Council Member Boo Bennett voted against, while Milan changed his previous “no” vote.

The county has agreed to put in three box culverts at a cost of \$6 million. The current culverts are undersized, and the new culverts will “allow the water to flow more freely” through 21st Street instead of overtopping the road, according to Dale Lehnig, director of Engineering, Planning and Development.

“It could lessen the amount of flooding because that road sort of acts like a dam right now ... So, if it goes through the culvert, it goes downstream a little bit faster,” said Lehnig.

The county will also pay for a floodplain study at an estimated cost of \$233,000.

Milan concluded, “I am not perverse [sic] in the floodplains, but I know when it happens it’s not good. Any assistance monetarily and study-wise would be, to me, a benefit to the town.”

ANDERSON TAKES REIGNS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

what they do and come in with eagerness each day ready to do their job with a sense of pride and happiness.

Even during his campaign, Anderson stressed high morale as imperative to a successful, high functioning office and pointed to Loudoun County Human Resources Office data which showed an 84% turnover rate under his predecessor. He finds that number unacceptable.

He said he is proud that during his first time in office four assistant attorneys went onto higher offices. Jennifer Wexton became a U.S. Congresswoman and three others became judges. Anderson believes the right mix of encouragement and hands-on training will give his staff the experience they need to follow similar career paths.

Jumping right in

Anderson said he will be jumping right in and wasting no time after he is sworn in. The major upcoming trial of Peter James Lollobrigido, who is charged with beating his wife, Regina Elizabeth Redman-Lollobrigido, to death with a hammer in September 2021 is set to stand trial Jan. 29.

Lollobrigido is accused of badly beating his wife in July 2021. After the assault, Lollobrigido was not kept in jail after his arrest. Rather than hold him without bond, Loudoun Juvenile &

Domestic Court Judge Avelina S. Jacob released Lollobrigido on bond with an ankle monitor.

He then went on to allegedly kill his wife two months later.

Anderson said prosecutors should have sought to hold Lollobrigido without bond given the serious injuries Redman-Lollobrigido suffered and a standing protective order. The highly publicized case brought shame on the Commonwealth Attorney's Office as one of many instances where serious felony cases were not prosecuted equal to the seriousness of the crime.

Anderson also said not choosing to not prosecute non-violent crimes affects the quality of life in Loudoun. He said his office will seek more indictments for low-level drug offenses, DWI and driving violations, and property crimes.

If those charged with crimes like petty larceny aren't indicted, they're more likely to become repeat offenders. He states that shoplifting has become a serious threat for retailers, many of whom have taken matters into their own hands by confronting shoplifters or reducing the number of entrance and exit access points.

Anderson is confident his approach to criminal justice reform will be a welcome change from the last four years and will inject the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney with a new level of integrity.



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FERC COMMISSIONER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FERC, NextEra asked to be granted certain additional transmission rate incentives for Project 853, including the ability to collect interest on its project costs during construction and the ability to recoup costs it expends on the project if the project gets shut down.

Christie objects to many of the incentives as overly generous, and he has a long-running dispute with other commissioners about how transmission planning rules should be revised in order not to create long-term projects that are paid for by ratepayers, but later become unnecessary and are canceled before construction.

“First, the Commission’s incentives policies for years have been ridiculously generous to transmission developers while inflicting an ongoing victimization of consumers. I have repeatedly criticized these incentives – particularly the CWIP Incentive, Abandoned Plant Incentive, and RTO participation adder – in numerous cases since I joined the Commission,” Christie said.

“Second, the Commission’s formula rate structure – which confers a *presumption of prudence* to transmission developers when they file for cost recovery – facilitated this assault on consumers, as it does regularly. As

I have done with incentives, I have frequently spoken out on the need to reform and revise those formula rate processes,” Christie added.

\$250 million of electricity consumer money spent without any construction on PATH

FERC has opened several proceedings to investigate and update its transmission planning and incentive rules since 2020, but has not completed any of them or issued final orders. And while Christie spoke of the need for reform at the Dec. 19 meeting, none of the other Commissioners added comments in support of reform.

The meeting approved a settlement that brought to a close the 15-year Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) case, issuing a \$9.5 million refund to electric consumers for costs associated with the project which never was built.

Christie used PATH as an example of bad planning and financial incentives run amok to burden electric consumers with costs of nearly a quarter billion dollars for a project that never put a single ounce of steel in the ground.

The PATH project was approved and added to PJM’s transmission plan in 2007. Although PATH was never vetted by the states involved, and never received permits to construct in any state, its inclusion in PJM’s plan and

the granting of financial incentives by FERC allowed the developer to begin collecting its costs to advance the project starting in 2008.

PATH subsequently created a firestorm of citizen opposition in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland and was eventually canceled by PJM in 2012, citing changing projections. However the collection of costs continued via PATH’s Commission-approved formula rate until it was finally closed on Dec. 19.

“Attention must be paid to the PATH example because of the major lessons – and warnings – it holds for long-term regional transmission planning driven by policy goals, the substantial costs that go with such projects, and how FERC’s policies inflate those costs to consumers,” Christie said.

Christie urged more involvement for states in regional transmission planning processes, stating, “it is absolutely essential that state regulators have the authority to approve – or disapprove – the construction of these lines and how they are selected for regional cost allocation and what that cost allocation formula is, if their consumers are going to be hit with the costs.”

Western Loudoun citizens who participated in PJM’s recent planning meetings were dismayed to see that

attempts by states to weigh in on or influence PJM’s planning process were ignored. They also noted that Virginia abstained from a letter to PJM from the Organization of PJM States asking that the projects be further examined before approval. <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/about-pjm/who-we-are/public-disclosures/20231128-op-si-letter-re-grid-reliability.ashx>.

The Commission expects to complete its new transmission planning rules next year. New rules will not apply to projects currently in PJM’s plan, such as the MARL project planned to run from the Ohio Valley to Loudoun’s “Data Center Alley.”

The MARL has created a growing storm of opposition in Western Loudoun and although many concerned citizens sent comments and objections to PJM, and even attended one of its meetings in person, PJM moved ahead with approval of the project on Dec. 11.

MARL recently launched a project website, which contains a form to submit comments at: <https://www.nexteraenergytransmission.com/midatlantic-resiliency-link.html>.

MARL has said that it will begin consulting with the community early next year.

See companion article on page 8.




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OPINION: MIDAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Perhaps they do pollute in some way. Perhaps they loom over neighborhoods, even shutting off sunlight to some homes. Perhaps their generators are noisy and their lights are too bright. For those and other reasons, citizens are up in arms. I've never seen such widespread community rage.

Buddy Arrives

The County established a Department of Economic Development and selected super-salesman Buddy Rizer to head it. Buddy and his team were excellent at their job of bringing businesses to Loudoun, and it was easy to focus on data centers since no other location could match Loudoun's robust infrastructure.

Data centers were – are – low-hanging fruit for Buddy and his boys. We have 27 million square feet of them now, in 115 buildings, and at least 4 million square feet more in the pipeline. The existing centers pay some \$600 million in taxes.

"Where does all that money go?" leads to long discussions on spending policy by the Board of Supervisors. That's a topic for another time and place. Similarly, are we becoming too dependent on one industry?

Our Goal

I think it's simple: We want more

data centers until they become a problem, and some are already problematic. That's a clear statement of the issue, but what does it mean in real terms? I cannot think of a quantitative measure of what constitutes a problem, but that doesn't matter. I see a way forward.

Change zoning to require that any new data center, wherever it may be, require a Special Exception by the Board of Supervisors. In addition to complying with the prescriptive zoning requirements, the Board can look at a proposed project in context and begin by deciding whether the location is appropriate. The Board can also consider the architecture, landscaping, generator placement and so on as part of its evaluation.

If the data center promoters fight this, then up the ante: Simply change zoning to ban any new ones. The Supervisors hold the high cards and just have to use them.

It also goes without saying that the new zoning ordinance should be full of prescriptive and proscribed measures to mitigate data center impacts. The new zoning ordinance is a step in that direction, but more controls are needed.

A New (but unfinished) Zoning Ordinance

On December 13 the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed the new zoning ordinance, many hundreds of

pages long. The process seemed endless but plaudits to the Supervisors for their vote.

But ... the most contentious issues were deferred until 2024. Battles will erupt over many topics important to western Loudoun, from protecting prime agricultural soils to fixing the problems with cluster subdivisions, to dealing with the metastasis of breweries and their ilk. The countywide problem with data centers and transmission lines will be explosive.

Scores of citizens spoke during the Board's meeting on December 13. They were supposed to stay on point, commenting only about the zoning ordinance. Instead, probably 90% of the speakers railed against data centers and the huge transmission lines they require.

As the Board faces this anger next year, it should remember Article 1, section 2 of Virginia's constitution: "That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people, that magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them."

Charles Houston developed office buildings for an Atlanta-based firm. Its portfolio included data centers for Gulf Oil, AT&T and Norfolk & Western. They were primitive by today's standards.

'Music for Dessert' at Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center

The Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center, located at 36441 Blueridge View Lane in Purcellville, will present an eight-week music series in January and February to introduce musical performers to Loudoun County audiences.

The music series, "Music for Dessert," will feature regional talent and a variety of music genres with live music for both in-person and virtual audiences. The schedule of performances includes jazz, bluegrass, singer-songwriters, Italian classical, Brazilian guitar and indie/jazz fusion. Concerts will be held at 7 p.m. every Wednesday beginning Jan. 10, through Feb. 28.

Single tickets are available for \$15/person or purchase a \$75 pass to attend all eight performances. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit franklinparkartscenter.org.

Musical performers for the "Music for Dessert" mid-week series are:

- Jan. 10, The Rigatoni Quartet: Italian folk/classical

COMMUNITY

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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LETTER: THREE CHEERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

change. Trees are a CO2 sink and there is considerable data regarding the ability of different tree species of various sizes and age to capture CO2 gases. Applications for tree clearing should be required to specifically include data regarding the impact on CO2 gases.

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains recognizes and applauds the tremendous work that has gone into the new zoning ordinance. Over the next several years we will be working with many other citizens' groups to make it even better.

*Peter Weeks
President, Friends of the
Blue Ridge Mountains*

LETTER: THE 7/690 INTERCHANGE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

It would also make our roads more dangerous. VDOT projects that the risk of fatalities would increase tenfold on the new interchange alone, posing a particular threat to parents and children driving to and from Mountain View ES and Woodgrove HS.

While the project would have no major benefit for Purcellville residents, it would have severe consequences for the Town of Hillsboro and the rural countryside north of Purcellville. It would increase the volume of heavy truck traffic through historic Hillsboro, promote more subdivision and development along Hillsboro Road and Alder School Road, and further fragment and degrade western Loudoun's farmland, open spaces, and rural scenery.

According to a March 2023 County staff memorandum, the justification

for the interchange is that it is "... of regional importance and a critical part of the planned transportation network in western Loudoun County."

The County's real intention is to accommodate increasing interstate traffic through western Loudoun, particularly on Route 7 between Purcellville and Leesburg. That is based on the premise that the areas around Purcellville will continue to suburbanize and that the current small town and rural quality of life our citizens enjoy will not be preserved.

Five years ago, the cost of the 7/690 project was estimated at \$29 million. It is likely to be much higher now. This is an unreasonable price to pay for no gain and more pain. The project should be permanently cancelled.

*John Ellis
Hillsboro*

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LETTER: THE CASE FOR SUPPORTING UKRAINE,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

would be used. And even if a European war remained conventional, the cost in money, lives, and destruction of economies would be enormous.

Abandoning support to Ukraine will also lead other adversaries to see the United States as weak and abandoning its leadership in the world. That opens the door to China's ambitions for Taiwan; North Korea's ambitions for South Korea; and Iran, whose proxies are already attacking U.S. forces, may escalate. And in South America Venezuela has begun threatening its neighbor,

Guyana. All of these risks are heightened when the United States is perceived to be weak and isolationist.

I support Ukraine because Russia's war is illegal and the suffering of the Ukrainian people is horrific. But even more horrific is the potential for a wider war or other dictators seizing an opportunity to emulate Putin's attack on his neighbor.

For these reasons, the United States and Europe must provide the weapons and other support that Ukraine needs to win its war against Russia.

*Oscar N. McNeil
Waterford*

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

in watching him play the game.

A further irony in the tragedy comes in the family link to this site: Fitz's mother, the Reverend Michelle Thomas of the Loudoun Chapter of the NAACP – spearheaded the rediscovery and preservation of the very site we're examining today.

Michelle also serves on the Virginia Commission on African American History Education in the Commonwealth. Family ties, indeed. Something tells me that the spirit of her son will help see to it that people in Virginia continue to learn about the past, present and future experiences, beliefs and dreams

of those involved in that ongoing timeline. And the stories of those interred in the Burial Ground for the Enslaved at Belmont? The saga of their lives may remain hidden for now, but the past has a remarkable way of coming to light in the most unexpected ways, at the most surprising times.

Belmont (located in what's now Ashburn, Virginia – some six miles east of Leesburg –) wasn't the only plantation in Virginia, or even in Loudoun County; I'll bet there are some riveting stories in all those individual timelines.

I can almost hear the birds singing, and see the trees and flowers in full swing. I'll bet you can too.

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ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

recently failed shared with me, “I just spend tens of thousands of dollars to sit in a room with a bunch of experts who just watched my ex-husband and me fight it out for nothing. That was a great use of my time and money!”

Other clients I have worked with over the years have benefited from the collaborative divorce method, but again, that is a much smaller group.

In summary, collaborative divorce represents a progressive approach to ending a marriage, emphasizing communication, respect, and mutual problem-solving. This can be significantly beneficial in so many ways, especially during the stressful transition of divorce.

However, collaborative divorce is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and there needs to be sufficient trust, respect, agreement, and cool-headedness for the method to work. While I have seen collaborative divorce work, more often, I have seen it fail. If the couple’s history, needs and dynamic is too complex – which is often the case for those divorcing – the method could end up failing and also doing more harm than good.

Divorcing couples considering collaborative divorce should do their research and be mindfully aware of themselves as a couple; understanding the challenges and various needs and nuances is crucial for individuals to make informed decisions about their divorce.

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.

OPINION: THE PLEASURES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

exposure to collision risk because they feel better protected.” Within reasonable limits such a theory indicates that roads, like Loudoun’s gravel roads, that are less accommodating to high vehicular speeds and driver inattention induce slower and more careful driving.

Such a theory has been corroborated by various studies including a recent John Hopkins report that found that “slightly narrower lane widths, are, in many cases, safer than wider ones.” In effect, slower speeds and safer driving behavior makes such routes safer for other road users.

Such an effect is borne out by my own experience on gravel roads. Like many others, I feel much more comfortable walking, biking, and running on gravel roads than paved roads, and although I will often see cyclists on two-laned paved roads, I see many more pedestrians

CLIMB BABY, CLIMB, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

as possible. There are two judged portions. Getting your system on as fast as possible and ascending as fast as possible. I am currently the second fastest woman in the world.

“Throw Line: The goal is to set your throw line in the highest marked location and pull your rope in for max points. You can score up to two times and have a max of five minutes to complete. Sounds way easier than it is.

“Aerial Rescue: There is a scenario

“STRAIGHT TO THE HEART...”, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

their ramifications.

Council Member Erin Rayner responded, “Alright, so I have numerous comments on this. I mean, I echo Councilman [Caleb] Stought’s comments of absolutely looking at this holistically long term. I mean we’ve gone over and over the Northern Collector Road since ad nauseum for the last 10 years ... I’ve said on the record multiple times ... I don’t want thru traffic. I wanted an emergency egress. People spoke; they didn’t want the exits. The supervisors said they will move it off their comprehensive plan and vote.”

Rayner said she does not favor taking the language referring to the NCR off the Town of Purcellville’s Transportation Plan until the county goes through the process and until the Town of Purcellville completes a new transportation plan.

This would delay the process of a simple amendment to remove mention of the Northern Collector Road in the town’s transportation plan.

Agreeing with Rayner, Mayor Stan Milan – who ran on taking the NCR off the transportation plan – said, “I would prefer to recommend the county do a county wide transportation plan

walking and running along gravel roads than paved roads without sidewalks.

Although the fight to preserve Loudoun’s unparalleled network of gravel roads dating from the early 19th century (and earlier), cannot be simply reduced to an economic cost-benefit analysis, the real and practical benefits of these gravel roads—along with the less easily quantifiable, though no less important, historical, cultural, and social benefits of such preservation—are substantial and should be emphasized.

America’s Routes is doing a wonderful job documenting the immense value of these roads and advocating their continued preservation. I highly recommend visiting their website americasroutes.com

in which an accident has occurred and the person (simulated by a life size and weight dummy) must be rescued by the competitor. You have five minutes to complete the task. You are judged on many things but primarily victim assessment, handling, and emergency response/preparedness.

“Finally, there is the master’s challenge. This is used to delineate between 1st through 3rd place. It is the culmination of all of the events in one single event. All climbers are sequestered and

may not watch the other climbs until they have completed theirs. There are typically four stations in the tree and the time limits range from 25-30 minutes depending on the difficulty of the climb/size of the tree.”

As it turns out, Loudoun County and the surrounding area is home to many competitive tree climbers. Littenberg says that it is a supportive community of not only certified arborists such as herself and Anderson but others who love the thrill and challenge of the climb.

and also the town do a transportation plan. Because a single isolation removal over one point of road does not cover or explain the whole totality of the traffic situation in Purcellville.”

Milan said that the town needs a traffic study first. He also said that Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) described the NCR as “obsolete.”

But according to a Sept. 8, 2023, email from the Department of Building and Development, Land Development Division – in reviewing an application from Chuck Kuhn for Valley Commerce Center, county staff commented the following:

“Staff notes the proposed right-of-way dedication for future north collector road. Staff questions if a temporary turnaround will be provided until such time that the future collector road is completed as a through road.

“FSM 4.310.E requires that roads containing commercial, retail, industrial, or office uses shall be no longer than 1,500 feet in length. As proposed, the right-of-way dedication for the proposed collector road [the NCR] is approximately 4,028 feet in length. Please demonstrate compliance with FSM 4.310.E.”

The applicant is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone 117.07

acres, located on Purcellville Road. The property, which is across from the Mayfair community, is currently zoned Joint Land Management Area-3 (JLMA-3) and can currently be developed at one house per 3 acres. This is equivalent to 39 homes. Kuhn is applying to change the zoning to Planned Development – Industrial Park (PD-IP) – with total build out at 1,274,892 sq. ft. of industrial.

According to a VDOT memo dated Aug. 24, 2023, there is an estimated 4,297 weekday vehicle trips for the proposed site.

Staff comments also mention, “The ZMAP plan set includes a depiction of a 70-foot-wide proposed right of way dedication for the future North Collector Road included in the Countywide Transportation Plan.”

An archeological study has revealed the potential of a grave site on the property.

In a county memo dated Sept. 6, 2023, “Staff recommends that the applicant undertake an archaeological delineation to determine whether human graves are present at 44LD2044 and, if so, the full areal extent of the burial area” is needed.

to learn more about these roads and what is being done to preserve them.

Loudoun’s gravel roads are our collective inheritance and it is up to us to bequeath them to future generations as they tell stories that imbue our lives with meaning, provide safe pedestrian and bike access, and, when calculated over a road’s typical 40-year lifespan, are often cheaper than pedestrian-friendly paved roads.

Adam Stevenson grew up in Purcellville and is currently completing a master’s degree in urban and environmental planning with a concentration in land use, transportation, and the built environment.

“MUSIC FOR DESSERT”, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

- Jan. 17, Josh Tigges: folk/pop on piano & guitar
- Jan. 24, Kati Sol Trio
- Jan. 31, Insert Title Policy: indie/jazz fusion
- Feb. 7, Peter Griggs: Brazilian music for guitar/contemporary guitar
- Feb. 14, Pictrola; bluegrass band
- Feb. 21, Damon Buxton: American acoustic guitar
- Feb. 28, Robbie Limon: “Singers and Songwriters”

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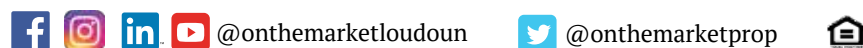


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