

# Blue Ridge LEADER & LOUDOUN Today

APRIL 2024

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## Milan and Rayner pass resolution pushing false narrative re planning commission

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Feb. 27 Purcellville Town Council Work Session, Vice Mayor Erin Rayner made a resolution to direct the planning commission to send any potential bylaw changes to the town council for approval.

Rayner indicated that this resolution was important and necessary, even though the drafted bylaw revisions had already been sent for review to the town attorney and then town council.

Creating a false narrative, Rayner implied that updating and reviewing the planning commission's bylaws had been done in an underhanded and secretive way, even though updating the bylaws had been on the planning commission's

agenda for two years.

Explaining why she added a resolution to the Feb. 27 council agenda, Rayner said, "Alright, this was put on the agenda because it came to the attention of myself and the mayor and a few others that if you looked at the planning commission's agenda, that they were planning to adopt a major rewrite of their bylaws that have significant changes that will affect the town budgets and staff."

Rayner said the council should be able to approve the changes before they are adopted. "And so, we spoke with legal and drafted a resolution that would require the planning commission to submit their rewrite to town council for consideration and approval before they can adopt it."

**Postering, Purcellville Mayor Stan Milan asked,** "Does anyone know what the proposed rewrite by the planning commission is? I didn't think so." He said the commission hadn't notified council of their draft bylaw revisions – and the "revelation of the planning commission" revision of the bylaws "smacks in the face of being transparent."

Addressing the subject, Council Member and Planning Commission liaison Chris Bertaut said, "Contrary to what you just stated, this is mentioned both in brief and in detail from the latest report from the planning commission."

Additionally, this is the exact protocol the planning commission had already followed. On Feb. 15, after finishing work



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**VOTED BEST OF LOUDOUN**

on their draft proposed changes to their bylaws, the planning commission sent a draft of their bylaw revisions to the town attorney and town council for review.

The suggested changes to the commission's bylaws were something on their horizon for a few years. It was delayed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 »

## Reduced Belmont Innovation Gateway proposal up for reconsideration

BY REED CARVER

Belmont Innovation Gateway, one of the biggest data centers ever proposed, was heard at the March 13 Board of Supervisors Public Hearing, as the last item discussed that night. Approximately 39 people were wearing red, showing their opposition against this proposal, and as many had stop sign stickers on their shirts. Activists were also outside the board room.

The Supervisors narrowly denied the proposal, 5-4 with Phyllis Randall (D-At Large), Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian), Mike Turner (D-Ashburn), Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run), and Laura TeKrony (D-Little River)

voting against. However, on March 19, supervisors decided to reconsider a smaller center at their April 10 meeting.

Zoning for the project would require a change on one of the parcels from, General Industry and Agricultural Residential, to the Industrial Park District, which is the zoning that data centers require. The proposed project in Ashburn is made up of two parcels totaling 110 acres. The proposed data center space had been reduced from 3.8 million, to 2.91 million sq. ft., while 1.3 million sq. ft. is allowed by-right, on one of the parcels.

The developers included open space, buffers, and easements to decrease stormwater runoff. A 19-acre

park on the property was being proffered. The design showed planned wraps around generators to mitigate the noise. Solar panels were suggested to cover the roof, nevertheless, staff along with the BOS were in agreement that the power produced by solar panels could not approach a significant amount of power for the proposal.

Chair Randall asked if building this station will impact the entire grid. Mr. Richardson, the Director of Communications for Dominion Energy said, by law, they must power whatever is approved and built. High-voltage lines currently power existing data centers, separate lower voltage lines power homes, he said.

The public weighs in  
"It's irresponsible to not look at the power demands," John Lovegrove said during public comments. "We will need 3-4 times the power by 2030. If you allow it to be built, you're asking for another 600 megawatts of

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**“It started out as a normal outing. My wife and I had to run to the grocery store. We were driving down the road casually going over our shopping list when the car ahead of me started to slow down anticipating the yellow light.**

**I started to move my foot from the gas to the brake as any normal person would do when they see brake lights in front of them but I couldn't. I couldn't feel my foot.**

**The car kept moving forward and I just couldn't get my foot on the brake. And CRUNCH! I finally came to a stop when I hit the car in front of me.”**

This tragic story was shared with us by Dan S., an Ashburn resident, who has peripheral neuropathy. And while no one was hurt in this accident, Dan S. had suffered almost every day of his life with tingling and burning in his feet until numbness set in and he could no longer feel even the brake pedal beneath his foot.

“The first stage is pain.” shares Rachal Lohr, Acupuncturist of FIREFLY Acupuncture & Wellness. “You feel burning, tingling, sharp pains, or you feel like you're walking on tacks or marbles. This pain eventually subsides and the numbness sets in. Unfortunately the numbness brings with it a whole other host of problems.”

This was the case with Dan. “I said I wasn't going to drive again. What if that had been a pedestrian?”

It is terribly common that peripheral neuropathy and its debilitating symptoms interfere with a person's ability to live their life. Dan was now reliant on his wife to drive him around, even the simple pleasure of cruising down to play golf or taking her out to dinner was outside his capabilities. And even more common, Dan's general practitioner and several specialists told him there was nothing they could do other than prescribe him pills that would ease the pain of his neuropathy.

**That's where Rachal Lohr and her staff at FIREFLY come in. “About 75% of our current patients come to us suffering from the same condition as Mr. Dan,” tells Rachal.**

“They're in constant pain from neuropathy and it prevents them from not only living their lives but more importantly, it prevents them from enjoying it.

Depending on the severity of their nerve damage, we typically see tremendous progress in 3-4 months of treatment. I like to say we're in the business of making your golden years golden.”

**“I can't lie,” confides Dan.**

**“I was skeptical at first. The folks down at my pain center told me there was nothing that could be done and then there's a doctor right here in Loudoun who tells me she can help. Turns out she was right! About three months after treatment I was able to confidently drive myself to my appointments!**

**My wife and I celebrated by buying ourselves a new car! It's hard to put into words how incredible this is, quite frankly [Rachal] gave me my life back.”**

While FIREFLY specializes in acupuncture and it's definitely part of their protocols in treating neuropathy, the real secret is in a more modern medical solution called ATP Resonance BioTherapy™. “This technology was originally developed by NASA to expedite healing and recovery” shares Ann, a Senior Patient Care Coordinator at the clinic. “It's like watering a plant. ATP Resonance BioTherapy™ stimulates the blood vessels to grow back around the peripheral nerve and provide them the proper nutrients to heal and repair.”

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# The Lovettsville Co-op Market – locally grown, community owned

BY LIZ TENNEY JARVIS

Since opening its doors on Nov. 1, 2023, the Lovettsville Co-op Market has filled the need for a grocery store in the town. It is not the average corporate grocery chain as a large portion of their goods are locally sourced and it is community owned. To date, over 100 local businesses provide products to the Co-op and they have around 1,600 member-owners – and counting.

In the five months since opening their doors to the public (members and non-members are welcome), the Co-op



grass-roots outreach in order to gather membership. Thousands of hours were spent by the resident-based committee (board) going over architectural plans, location and site planning, attending local and county government meetings and sourcing the aforementioned financial support.

Lovettsville resident, artist, and now Front-End Manager of the Co-op, Jill Evans-Kavaldjian gives detail to the Co-op's story saying, "The idea of the Lovettsville Co-op came about in mid-2011 when the grocery store nearest to Lovettsville – the Super Fresh in Brunswick, MD – announced that it would close permanently. "Pamela Baldwin was instrumental in organizing, hosted



initial meetings at WeatherLea Farm, and was in fact the first official member of the Co-op. She cut the ribbon at the "official" Grand Opening on Dec. 2, 2023.

Evans-Kavaldjian states that the original Co-op board included Pamela Baldwin, Michelle McIntyre, Tiffany Carder, Warren Howell, Katrina Clayton, and Dan Virgilio. "Julie Hatner, the current Volunteer Chair of the Board has been on the Board a very long time, along with Karen Hignite.

Molly Kroiz and Kellie Capritta were some of the first vendors involved, and along with Potomac Vegetable Farms and others launched the Co-op's summer Farmers Market for many years. Originally, the Farmers Market was located near the Squirkle, Lovettsville's name for their center-of-town square-circle, but then it relocated to the Firehouse. In fact, originally, the Co-op was planning to take over the old firehouse once the new one was built," says Evans-Kavaldjian.

However, it was significant delays that led to a change in plans, as the

has established itself as not only the local grocery store with competitive prices, but as an active part of the community with its programs and fundraisers.

The Co-op also engages in community service such as the upcoming Adopt-a-Highway cleanup of local sections of Rt. 287 on April 14. To date, the Co-op has collected 321 bags of litter and recyclables along their sponsored stretch.

How the Lovettsville Co-op Market came into existence as a brick-and-mortar establishment can be traced back more than eleven years. A small group of Lovettsville-area residents and local farmers met regularly to share the bounty of the area and to come together as a community. The idea to expand beyond informal gatherings and small farmers market events would require a Herculean effort.

The funding would come from grants, community support, fundraisers and a

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# Raising utility rates by the high teens is not the answer – neither is annexation

KWASI FRASER, FORMER MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE

The proposed double-digit water and sewer rate increase, by 16 and 18 percent respectively, is unjustified and misrepresents the true issues facing our town. Rather than addressing operational inefficiencies and exploring innovative solutions – per the campaign promises made to voters by both Mayor Stan Milan and Council Member Mary Jane Williams – the majority of the current Town Council is opting for a narrative of blame-shifting, annexation schemes and fear as an excuse to go into the pockets of our residents.

The Town of Purcellville's financial challenge lies not in revenue, but in better management of town operations. During my tenure, we significantly reduced overall debt while responsibly managing funds. However, Milan and Williams together with Vice Mayor Erin Rayner,

and Council Members Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought, persist in promoting misleading claims about past decisions.

They ignore the fact that we restructured and refinanced at a lower rate inherited debt to benefit our residents and businesses, which came to us in the form of interest only balloon payments, and that the only significant debt challenge lies within the Wastewater Treatment Fund. We did this while incurring no new debt and fulfilling our campaign promises to preserve Purcellville's small-town character and to avoid annexation of additional land. We also lowered the Town's \$61 million inherited debt by \$10 million.

It's crucial to understand that the debt we're facing stems from a pro-development philosophy that predated my tenure as mayor. Despite this, we took proactive steps, restructuring and refinancing debt to directly benefit our residents.

We have viable solutions on the table. We need to address the \$1 million in chargebacks (the practice of paying General Fund staff members with Utility Fund dollars for support they claim to provide to the Utility Enterprise Fund).

We need to utilize a percentage of our meals tax revenue, which doubled under my leadership, to support the Wastewater Treatment Fund. Contrary to the majority on councils' assertions, the use of meals tax revenue for utilities is permissible and beneficial if we establish a policy to do so. This was a fact Mayor Milan was aware of and supported during his tenure on Town Council. Davenport & Company, LLC's Senior Vice President and Manager of Public Finance Office David Rose confirmed this during our budget meetings. He said the rating agencies like to see consistency, and having a policy accomplishes this.

Furthermore, the refusal to explore

cost-saving measures, such as contracting with reputable third-party water and waste water management companies, is a disservice to taxpayers. Despite Mayor Milan's support for this approach while on town council and during his campaign, he has now joined his four colleagues and proposes exorbitant rate hikes rather than fulfilling their commitment to investigate alternatives and make cuts to the proposed budget.

Their failure to define what constitutes "artificially low" rates and acknowledge the concept of pricing elasticity, demonstrates a lack of understanding of economic principles. Blaming revenue decline solely on lack of growth overlooks the prudent conservation efforts of residents, evident in the widespread use of rain barrels. In addition, growth does not pay for itself in one time hookup fees due in part to the large increases in utility costs for materials and town services.

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## Some Supervisors May Hate This

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

Abridged conversation:

Citizens: "We must reduce housing density in the county."

Big easement donor and a developer: "That's downzoning and is illegal. If you enact it, we won't do anything more in Loudoun."

This person is wrong, and selfish.

Abridged conversation:

Citizens: "We must reduce housing density in western Loudoun."

Department of Planning and Zoning, "That's downzoning and is illegal."

The Department is wrong.

Abridged conversation:

Citizens: "We must reduce housing density in western Loudoun. Every house in the west costs the County \$106,600 of upfront costs!"

Supervisor: "Big landowners will tell you that reducing density would be downzoning. That's illegal and the County Attorney's office tells me so."

That Supervisor is mistaken.

**Our Foes are Consistent. Consistently Wrong**

A recently retired attorney-friend offered to research the issue of downzoning vs. property rights. I took him up on his offer.

He has no skin in the conservation game; he's truly neutral. He's also bright and diligent, and very credible. Lawyers

in general can argue either side of a coin, so perhaps another attorney might find some counter-arguments to my friend's findings. Those casuists are probably bought and paid for, so ignore them.

Here's what my attorney-friend reports:

Local authorities have broad authority to change zoning. This includes zoning that may reduce, limit or prohibit a landowner's intended use of the property. (*Supreme Court of Virginia, Board of Supervisors v. Carper, 1959*)

Landowners aren't forever entitled to their current zoning status. The county is not obligated to grandfather a property. If someone who buys a property for a certain use under current zoning, the county may change zoning to restrict that use, even if it diminishes the property's value. (*Snow v. Board of Zoning Appeals, 1994*)

**An Acronym That Sounds Like a Video Game**

A landowner may have a vested right

when there is a "Significant Affirmative Governmental Act," with the acronym "SAGA;" he relies on that SAGA in good faith; and he has incurred substantial expenses. All three criteria must be met. The County's acceptance of a zoning application is insufficient. (*Board of Supervisors v. Crucible, 2009.*)

State code gives Zoning Administrators the authority to make determinations on vesting. (*Code section 15.2-2286*) However, I have heard anecdotes that Loudoun's bureaucrats will accept almost anything and deem the applicant vested. I really hope this is untrue. But...

There are some actions – SAGAs – that lead to vesting: Approval of a rezoning for a certain use or density. Granting of a Special Exception. Approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals. Formal approval of a valid subdivision plat. Unambiguous and express approval by a locality. Approval of proffers. There is some imprecision as to what these mean in practice. Note that Virginia's Supreme Court has held that letters confirming a use do not count as SAGAs. In 2014 that court ruled that a "zoning compliance letter" by itself did not qualify. (*Board of Supervisors v. McQueen, 2014.*)

Our new Zoning Ordinance includes a section that makes grandfathering

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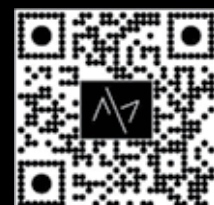
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## How much are you willing to pay for “by right” development?

BY JOHN ELLIS

Loudoun citizens' frustrations continue to rise as breakneck growth and development overwhelm our roads, schools, neighborhoods, and countryside. And that's even before we start to consider how much it costs us as taxpayers; which is a lot.

### OPINION

Congested roads and crowded schools have direct impacts on County spending. The County needs to build more roads and more schools and has to pay more teachers, administrators, sheriff's officers, first responders, and other staff. These public facilities and services are not cheap.

The County's current combined capital

and operating budget is now \$3.9 billion, or about \$27,000 for each of our 140,000 existing households. This is the amount the County can expect to spend every year to provide the required public facilities and services to the average new household. And, since the average tax revenue the County receives per household is about \$6,400, the net cost to County taxpayers when a developer builds another house is well over \$20,000 per year.

In the coming years, County staff expect most new residential growth to take place in western Loudoun. In our rural areas alone (not including Purcellville and the other small towns west of Route 15), they calculate that the current “by right”

zoning allows for more than 10,000 new houses.

To provide the public facilities and services those 10,000 new households would need, the County would need to spend about \$65 million in one-off capital costs and over \$2 billion in annual operating costs, cumulatively, over the next 20 years.

And “by right” development isn't the end of it. On April 10, the Board of Supervisors will be considering a series of proposed “zoning modifications” and “special exceptions” that would allow the developers of the “Clear Springs” subdivision on Evergreen Mills Road to increase the size of their project from the 50 houses that are currently permitted “by right” to

more than 1,000 houses.

If the supervisors approve these proposals, they will be voting to add to County taxpayers' bills another \$6.2 million in one-time capital costs and about \$350 million in operating costs over the next 20 years.

Until recently, we might have thought these kinds of increases in County spending weren't a big problem because data centers' tax contributions have covered most of the County's spending growth over the past decade. But now we know that the power grid doesn't have enough capacity to supply the data centers currently under construction, much less the

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## FY25 Budget – Bad Timing for More Debt

BY PURCELLVILLE COUNCIL MEMBER CHRIS BERTAUT

Purcellville is in budget season and the outlook is not good for the town's residents. For the first time since 2012, millions in new debt is being proposed that will reverse progress made, with \$12 million of our inherited town debt having been eliminated since 2012. The FY25 budget is being pushed through with a lack of transparency and regard for the citizens who Council Members are supposed to serve.

For FY25 and onward, the enormous rate increases of 16 percent for water and 18 percent for sewer assume that virtually all the Capital Projects will be needed and funded by Purcellville's residents and businesses. The proposed utility rate increases also assume that there is

no room for improvements to operating costs.

With the impending balloon payments, a 5 percent annual rate increase proposed three years ago by our utility rate consultants would generate water and wastewater revenue approximately 585 percent and 180 percent greater than our annual debt payments, respectively, in FY25. Changes from these ratios would continue with little change until the utility debts are retired in 2040. We must address rising costs for operating expenses and the chargebacks before we continue down the path of fleecing the residents.

Chargebacks are still contributing a million dollars a year to the cost of water and sewer services. The chargebacks are for work done by General Fund

employees on behalf of the Utility Fund teams. There appears to be no accurate accounting of the work done by General Fund employees for the Utility Fund team since the most recently released budget report showed that the Utility Fund was charged two-thirds of the amount budgeted for Chargebacks at two-thirds of the way through FY24. This appears to be the result of charging the budgeted amount instead of tracking actual staff hours in the payroll system.

Funding for capital projects need not come from the ratepayers since there are multiple Federal and State funding initiatives for municipal infrastructure that can be tapped, with new programs announced every year.

The amount of additional debt service in the utility funds is about \$1.61 million

dollars in FY25. New debt is being proposed for the Water Fund to pay for a new water treatment plant that appears to be unnecessary given the current population of the town.

There is also \$2.5 million in new debt proposed for treating Purcellville's water for PFAS, which are chemicals that Federal and State regulators want to regulate. However, they have not decided when to mandate treatment and how much treatment will be needed. Why should we push debt onto utility customers before we know when it must be incurred?

What's missing from Purcellville's 468-page \$30.5 million budget? There's no mention of the cost to provide the water demanded by Chuck Kuhn in his Valley Commerce Center annexation application, which will require an almost 50 percent increase in the amount of well water that must be treated. Purcellville

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## Future development in Loudoun must align with our values

Dear Editor:

Loudoun's Future PAC is thrilled that the Board of Supervisors rejected the proposed Belmont Innovation Campus data center project this month. This decision represents a triumph for residents who have long voiced concerns about the unchecked expansion of data centers in our area and the associated strain on our electrical infrastructure and

LETTER

environment.

We set out to stop the proposed 4.8M sq ft. data center because the developer was seeking approval for 4.8 million square feet, far exceeding the permitted by-right size of around 1.3 million square feet. Loudoun's Future worked diligently to review the development applications, and when we found problems or errors, we met with individual supervisors to explain those

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## Let us play baseball at Mickey Gordon Park

Dear Editor:

American Legion Post # 295, here in Middleburg is getting a baseball team of 17- and 18-year-olds, to play in

LETTER

looking for coaches and players to join with us in this exciting new venture.

We were hopeful to start playing this summer, which is a great time for interested high school players, that are wanting to tune up their skills, for when they go to play for college teams. It is also open to anyone who just likes to play ball, and it

The American Legion League, which will include games against Leesburg, Winchester, Arlington, Warrenton, and several other teams in northern Virginia. Currently we are

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# Just like nothing (else) on earth: Old Waterford Road

BY TIM JON

By the time I arrived, they were all resting – at peace – sleeping the approximate six feet underground; I’d driven up to the Village of Waterford from the south, with a journey through fog and dense greenery – not to mention some incredibly rough roads – and – quite unexpectedly came upon the Fairfax Friends Meeting and Cemetery, as if appearing from the imagination. I had the thought that those remaining here (for most of eternity, at any rate) may have numbered among the lost travelers who failed to negotiate the tight turns, rugged surfaces and innumerable distractions along the way I’d come – along Route 698 – Old Waterford Road.

This paved, albeit uneven, corridor actually starts in the County Seat of Leesburg only some 10 miles away, yet, to my finding, the distance seemed far greater, in light of the density of vegetation on every side (except – usually – under my vehicle) the persistent, early-morning fog and tricks of light and shadow adding to the mystery.

The potholes and washboard character of the road, once I left Town, were



such that I slowed down to a literal crawling pace to avoid the worst patches and minimize the rodeo-like sensations of the ride. This was the opposite end of the spectrum from your mile-a-minute commute on Route Seven, or most any other highway in the region. In some places I could have walked faster than I was driving, since I’m very familiar with the cost of tires, rims and local towing services.

Another interesting feature of this rural thoroughfare is just the sheer narrowness of the roadway in selected spots; you’d be doing some serious

negotiations with yourself, your vehicle and other motorists along these stretches – should you come upon a school bus, large farm equipment, or a member of the equine community pulling a large horse trailer. Heck, I was concerned about sharing the confined spaces with the local rabbit population, much less anything more substantial.

Speaking of four-footed critters, you’re no doubt aware of a very healthy cattle industry in Loudoun County, and we’re all familiar with scenes of fenced-in green fields dotted with

Angus and other – mostly beef cattle; pulling to the side of the roadway at a particularly tight section, I almost had to duck back into my canopy, as an especially friendly member of the bovine tribe appeared about to try to rub nuzzles. He and his chums seemed happy to welcome me to their morning cud-chewing session, perhaps made all the more peaceful by the music of Van Morrison on my car stereo. Maybe one of these beasts was named Gloria.

By the time I made it over the hills and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »



TIM JON



## Ask Dr. Mike

By Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D.

Dr. Mike,

I recently reentered the dating world after a painful divorce last year, and I met a great guy who I’ll refer to here as “Jack.” We have been on several wonderful dates, and I think there could be something special for us together. We’re compatible in so many ways – we’re in similar professions, we both have adult children, and we have many of the same interests and values.

I recently had dinner at Jack’s house, and when we were cooking, I saw a prescription in his name for Lithium on the countertop. I’m assuming he has Bipolar, which raises lots of red flags for me, given my divorce from a man who was emotionally unstable.

While Jack seems to be a great guy in so many ways, I don’t want to be in another serious and complicated relationship that ends up hurting me and my kids. I think Bipolar is a deal breaker, but maybe I’m overreacting. Your advice is appreciated.

– Dating Worries in Loudoun

Dear Dating Worries in Loudoun,

You write that you met a great guy but are then questioning how great he is because he’s taking a medication prescribed to people who have Bipolar Affective Disorder. Certainly, Bipolar Disorder is a serious mental health condition, however, with proper treatment and management, people with the condition can have very fulfilling and healthy relationships.

In my opinion, you have three options. First, you could let Jack know that you noticed the medication while cooking and then the two of you could talk openly about the topic. Second, you could continue to go on more dates and eventually address serious life topics with him as you get closer. Third, you could leave the budding relationship abruptly, but you may regret the move later since things are going so well.

If you learn that Jack indeed does have Bipolar Disorder, I recommend that you listen closely to what he says

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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# Economic Development Advisor position created to support annexations and more

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Feb. 27 Purcellville Town Council Work Session, the town council voted 5-2 for a part time Economic Development Advisor position. Mayor Stan Milan, Vice Mayor Erin Rayner and Council Members Kevin Wright, Mary Jane Williams and Caleb Stought voted for the position. Council Members Carol Luke and Chris Bertaut voted against.

## GOVERNMENT

The position would include identifying key goals, objectives and performance metrics to measure success, according to the town agenda. The economic development advisor would “identify and engage potential businesses, industries, and investors to attract new enterprises” to the town. They will work with “local and other government officials and agencies” as well as “businesses, professional and industrial representatives to support sustainable economic progress.”

They would develop initiatives and programs to retain and support the growth of existing businesses. Identifying locations for businesses to put their companies in town and identifying “infrastructure needs” is part of the job description.

**The job would also entail supporting the annexation process** for new development of potential companies who want to build on properties which are currently outside the town limits.

The economic director would develop and

administer “financial incentive programs, grants and tax incentives to stimulate business development and expansion.”

**The new position would enable infrastructure enhancements** like advocating for projects “related to infrastructure development and improvements that support economic growth, such as transportation, utilities, and technology.”

One example that the new person who would fill this position could recommend vis a vis transportation would be to extend O Street from 21<sup>st</sup> Street to Hatcher Avenue. This is something the owners of the Vineyard Square project had been advocating for, as they need O Street (currently a dead-end street behind Magnolias at the Mill) extended, to dump the traffic from their development onto Hatcher Avenue.

They would also develop marketing campaigns to attract businesses to the town in addition to managing tourism programs and activities. Preparing a budget for economic development initiatives and “ensuring resources are allocated effectively and efficiently” are other essential functions of this job.

Milan said he has been advocating for an economic development advisor for the past 3 years. “I think it’s important that we pursue this because it’s been stated previously that we have a spending problem. No, we have a revenue problem.”

This is a direct turnaround from what Milan said and

ran on just a year ago, which was that the town has a spending problem.

He said the town hasn’t generated any additional revenue “in any large shape form or fashion.” Milan said the position would benefit the town for the business community and surrounding communities of the town. “We have been designated as being the hub of western Loudoun; so let’s be that hub.”

Rayner, who is the council liaison to the Economic Development Advisory Committee, said that her passion is economic development. She said she has been “hustling talking to people to bring in business.” She said part of the new position is “meeting with anybody who would like to invest in our town.”

**“We can show them that process, like reignite our business** process stuff, but we’re the elected and it needs to be turned over to our team to actually do the paper work to do the process because there’s a fine line – where we can only take them so far. And that is why we need that position because we only have so much manpower.”

Council Member Carol Luke said, “We’ve had 20-25 years to create a process for new businesses when they come in town. The whole process of coming in and starting a business, getting a building [permit] or whatever you need to have done in an orderly and speedy process” is what is needed.

Council Member Chris Bertaut said he was “all in favor of improving the town’s processes. I don’t think this is the way to go about it. A number of these functions are performed for free by commercial realtors – specifically site selection and development.”

**Bertaut said, “I am also uncomfortable with the**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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# Milan and Rayner's vision of 21st Street – California Dreamin'

BY VALERIE CURY

Welcome to Purcellville Mayor Stan Milan and Vice Mayor Erin Rayner's vision for Purcellville's Historic Downtown area: a historic district containing 21st Street, divided into downtown north and south, named Purcellville's Gaslamp District. They took this idea from the city of San Diego, California, where the historic district is called San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter.

In Milan's State of the Town Address on March 11, Rayner said they would "liken" Purcellville's Gaslamp District to "the one in San Diego," a city of 1.4 million residents and a typical urban area. She showed pictures of the entrance to San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter – an archway to a large two-lane, two-way street with parking on both sides of the street. The lamps in San Diego's district are much larger than the single bulb historic lights currently on 21st Street – a narrow one-way street with angled parking.

Rayner proudly declared 21st Street as

Loudoun County's only certified tourism zone in the State of Virginia. This zone was instituted nearly 12 years ago by the Town Council under Mayor Robert W. Lazaro, and it identified only the Chapman properties on 21st Street as incorporated into Purcellville's newly created tourism zone.

At the time, it was discussed that this zone would entitle the owners of the Vineyard Square project to have the potential not to pay in full for a choice of either hookup fees, and/or a reduction in permit or user fees, and/or meals tax or gross receipts for a period of up to approximately 10 years – if council so chooses.

The town would then be reimbursed for the revenue lost by applying for grants. There would also be certain regulatory flexibility for the owners of Vineyard Square.

Rayner said she has a vision "to ensure that Purcellville maintains the hub of western Loudoun."



iStock.com/Photo Beto

friendly retail and different entertainment uses. She said the area needs a strategic plan with "resource allocation and infrastructure improvements."

Rayner said that economic development would go through the town council's recent majority vote approved Economic Development Advisor. That person would then also reach out to Loudoun County Economic Development Department.

Rayner said the Loudoun County Economic Development Department plays a crucial role "in fostering a vibrant and diverse economy in the county by supporting businesses, workforce development and economic initiatives."

They would also continue to partner with Visit Loudoun, which the town has done for years. "Visit Loudoun promotes the county and towns within, as desirable destinations for leisure travel, business travel, conferences and events, and contributes to the economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy of the county and the towns," said Rayner.

Rayner said the town's Economic Development Advisory Committee will host a meeting of the historic corridor at the American Legion located at 112 N 21st Street in Purcellville from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on May 22.

"The success of a small town, a town like ours, should be measured how we embrace community visioning and collaboration, enhance economic development, diversification, initiatives, promote local culture and businesses, and ensure sustainable development."

Said Rayner, "This is a shared vision not only of mine or the mayor's but that of our community."

"We need to focus on that and use it to promote, revitalize, benefit economically." Rayner said the town needs to identify and facilitate more parking in the district, "preferably behind buildings where we cannot see it."

"We need to promote street connectivity and sidewalks," said Rayner. She said 1 to 3 stories were preferred, with a mix of family

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## Here we go again, another try to annex 117-acres into the Town of Purcellville

BY VALERIE CURY

On Feb. 21, Purcellville Mayor Stan Milan, and Vice Mayor Erin Rayner, held a private meeting with Chuck Kuhn to discuss annexation of his 117.07-acre property. The meeting also included the town manager, the assistant town manager, the engineering department and the head of public works. Nine days later, Kuhn filed an annexation proposal with the town. Council Members Caleb Stought and Kevin Wright have also had a private meeting to hear about the annexation request. The reason two council members at a time met with Kuhn is because if there are more than two members of an elected body meeting at one time together, it would be considered a public meeting.

In October 2018, then Mayor Kwasi Fraser, along with a majority on town council, voted against a similar proposal (The Warner Brook Annexation proposal,

under different ownership) to annex this property. In November 2020, Kuhn came before council with his presentation for possible annexation. At the time Fraser said that the proposal would be dead on arrival, as no one wanted it; therefore, Kuhn did not file an annexation request.

The property is on Purcellville Road across from the Mayfair Subdivision and is currently zoned Joint Land Management Area 3 (JLMA-3), which is one house per three acres. This currently permits 39 homes.

Kuhn is asking to change the zoning to M-I Limited Industrial with 1,274,892 sq.ft of industrial. The uses allowed in this zoning district would be any use permitted by-right and any uses permitted by special exception or special use permit, under the M-I zoning district. Building height is 45 ft. however a building

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 »

## Process begins to reassess western Loudoun rural uses and standards

BY REED CARVER

The recent Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, which was adopted in December 2023, took four years to create.

Nevertheless, the 2019 Comprehensive Plan provided the vision that the ordinance was based on, but it was not updated on rural policy. The policy that was in place underneath the Plan was a hands-off approach that was established around 2001. So, during the Rewrite, planners didn't spend a lot of time creating rural policies.

In the public hearing on Dec. 13, when the new ordinance was discussed, many public speakers said it was incomplete and lacking in specific areas, such as an inadequate definition of "farm."

The plans for the western ordinances will be pulled out and addressed separately. That process began to roll into motion on March 5 of this year. Planners are going to build from public input, through the means of stakeholder groups which are comprised of people who will represent certain interests, like wineries, breweries, and tourism.

Staff's short timeline for the process is one and a half years.

Exactly what interests will be represented is an open question. Supervisors believe approximately 13 total groups is optimal. Six public input sessions will be held. Each of the meetings will be

held at both a rural area, and the county government center.

County planners said this is concurrent with the five-year review of rural area policies, which is a legal requirement. "It's essentially a tune up, to ensure the Plan is current," staff said.

The Planning Commission will be a key asset to building these policies.

In their comments, Supervisors said they want a broad spectrum of representation in the stakeholder meetings, and they want to reach compromise.

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) said it was about trying to have a strong rural economy, while balancing a high quality of life for residents.

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) said he was concerned about the project. In the General Plan, they left policy alone, he said. So, during the ZOR, [Zoning Ordinance Rewrite] no significant changes were made.

Kershner said, in 2019 the Comprehensive Plan was reviewed, and it was determined to leave the western policies alone. So, he believed it may not be a good use of staff's time. He would rather find the specific problems, and address those directly.

"The breakthrough in the ZOR process occurred when stakeholder groups, county staff, and the supervisor

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 »

## Ben Nett enters race for Purcellville Town Council in the Nov. 5 General Election

Purcellville resident Carl “Ben” Nett joined the Purcellville Police Department in 2022 and subsequently graduated first in his class from the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy in Ashburn, Virginia. More recently, Nett received the Sheriff’s Meritorious Action Award for spearheading an investigation into a stolen firearm, arresting an illegal alien MS-13-affiliated middle school student who was on his way to school with the loaded weapon.



No stranger to adventure, Nett embarked on a second career with local law enforcement after more than 20 years in national security positions. Nett is a former member of the Presidential Protective Division of the U.S. Secret Service, a former contract Intelligence Officer with the CIA, and the former Director of the Military Commissions Privilege Team at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Nett has received a conditional offer of appointment from the FBI as a Special Agent and written a book on American history endorsed by the late Hershel “Woody” Williams, the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Nett’s candidacy for Town Council has been

approved by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council, which cites VA Code 15.2-1512.2, outlining the rights of First Responders to engage in political activity. “Purcellville is my home,” says Nett. “It’s where I live, where I work, and where my wife and I have chosen to raise our children.”

Nett lists his priorities as reducing the town’s debt, funding public safety, revitalizing the town’s many dilapidated structures, improving the flow of traffic, investing in infrastructure, and streamlining license and permit practices for the benefit of new small-business development.

“Above all,” says Nett, “I intend to preserve Purcellville as a small-town community of neighbors. I oppose the construction of data centers, industrial parks, high-rise office buildings, subsidized housing, and other hallmarks of mass urbanization that invariably lead to an increasingly transient population and, with that, higher taxes, higher utility rates, more drugs and more crime.”

Nett adds: “I’m a pragmatic person. As such, I fully understand that growth is inevitable. It’s our responsibility, and our right, to make sure the growth that occurs is desirable.”

Nett’s campaign slogan is “Mayberry Not Metropolis” – an ode to the iconic small town in the classic television series *The Andy Griffith Show*. More information on Nett, and his candidacy, is available at <https://nettfortowncouncil.com>.

## Youngkin signs 107 bills, vetoes sale of drugs and wage mandates

Acting on 107 bills on March 28, Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed 100 bills, including bills that strengthen law enforcement’s ability to prosecute child predators and expand Department of Corrections inmate access to quality health services. The Governor vetoed seven bills that would legalize the sale of drugs, weaken public safety, and arbitrarily set labor prices.

“The proposed legalization of retail marijuana in the Commonwealth endangers Virginians’ health and safety. States following this path have seen adverse effects on children’s and adolescent’s health and safety, increased gang activity and violent crime, significant deterioration in mental health, decreased road safety, and significant costs associated with retail marijuana that far exceed tax revenue.

“It also does not eliminate the illegal black-market sale of cannabis, nor guarantee product safety. Addressing the inconsistencies in enforcement and regulation in Virginia’s current laws does not justify expanding access to cannabis, following the failed paths of other states and endangering Virginians’ health and safety,” said Youngkin in his veto statement for HB 698 and SB 448.

“Today I am also vetoing bills that would implement drastic wage mandates, raise costs on families and small businesses, jeopardize jobs, and fail to recognize regional economic differences across Virginia,” said Youngkin.

Youngkin signed 100 bills which included:

HB 14 HB 55 HB 59 HB 69 HB 90 HB 105 HB 121 HB 128 HB

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# Warner visits Loudoun to support development of mental health center

BY VALERIE CURY

On March 25, U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) held a day of meetings in Northern Virginia. His day started in McLean at the grand opening of MITRE's AI Assurance & Discovery Lab. Among other things, the lab will help mitigate risks to AI-enabled systems. It will provide state-of-the-art capabilities to support teams as they implement AI-enabled systems in high-stakes environments.

In the early afternoon, Warner, along with Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton (D-VA), delivered a check for \$4,116,000 to go toward the development of a 24/7 Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Center in Leesburg on Meadowview Court. This center will provide a safe place for urgent treatment for members of the community who are experiencing mental health crises. The facility will provide urgent psychiatric care, 16 recliners with up to 23 hours of treatment, and 10 short-term stays with up to 14 days of treatment.

The \$4 million federal funding received for Loudoun's Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Center was secured by Warner as part of the partial government funding legislation for Fiscal Year 2024 which passed in early March. There is a 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline that is currently in operation in Northern Virginia and this has led to a broader need for crisis treatment.

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large), a substance abuse therapist, was



in attendance along with other mental health professionals and health care leaders: Dr. Christopher Chiantella, Chief Medical Officer, Inova Loudoun Hospital; Jamie Rice LPC, NCC Aram Wellness Group; Dr. Ramina Gupta, Medical Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorders; Dr Carol Currier, Medical Director, The Williams Center; Rebecca Kiessling, Executive Director, NAMI Northern Virginia; Dr Bridgett Whitehead, Program Director, The Williams Center; Dr. Anthony Crowley, Medical Director, Loudoun Medical Group; Dr Linda Lang, President, Behavioral Health Services Inova.

Dr. Linda Lang, President of Behavioral Health Services



New Middleburg Town Hall

for Inova, said that telehealth is vital and "we are worrying that it might go away." She said it has been a key element, and that they use telehealth to serve "11 emergency departments for all five of our hospitals."

Lang said her department is working on a residency for psychiatry in a year or so. Being able to offer training for learners will open up the pipeline for young new psychiatrists. She said more medical students are interested in psychiatry now than ever. They are getting medical students coming from UVA in this field, she said.

She said her department is removing the barriers for stigmatizing language for health care workers, and they are removing barriers in the application process for credentialing. When a physician or nurse has questions on forms asking "have you ever received care for a mental health disorder" – when they apply to work in a hospital, this prevents people from receiving care and is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 »

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**WARNER VISITS LOUDOUN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14**

stigmatizing, said Lang.

Dr. Ramia Gupta, medical director for Loudoun County's Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse & Developmental Services, said the Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Center is going to be a viable and alternative solution for patients requiring mental health crisis treatment which will include "substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, psychosis, and the whole gamut." Gupta said, "The crisis receiving center will address the needs of our patients and their families." It will include walk ins, ambulances, patient and police drop offs. All operations and psychiatric care will be under one roof, she said.

Dr. Carol Currier with the Williams Center for Wellness and Recovery said that when some students feel depressed, they are offered drugs and think they are safe – and it can quickly upend their future. Some students can have a psychotic break using marijuana as it is a lot stronger, she said.

Chair Randall said, "We don't talk about the disease of abuse dependence. Imagine that we're talking about an eating disorder, and we talked about the cake,



Sen. Mark Warner



L to R: In Middleburg; Mayor Roger Vance, Mayor Kelly Burk, Sen. Mark Warner, Mayor Bridge Littleton, and Mayor Chris Hornbaker.

or a pie. Well wouldn't that be ridiculous in substance abuse? But we do that and substance abuse – we don't talk about substance abuse disorder. So, these discussions will start making us – one, destigmatize things, two, start talking about things in a holistic view and three, realize that mental health is health, emotional health physical health, and spiritual health. It's all just health."

Warner said, "I don't know any family pre and post COVID that doesn't have some mental health issues in their family, so this is something that touches all of us."

Warner's next stop that day was a visit to Middleburg's new town hall. This was a project supported in part by federal funding secured by Warner. He met with elected leaders and answered questions from community members. Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River), Leesburg Mayor Kelly Burk, Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance and Lovettsville Mayor Chris Hornbaker were all in attendance.

## LVHS presents *Once Upon a Mattress*

Loudoun Valley High School, located at 340 N Maple Avenue, presents the musical *Once Upon a Mattress*, based on the classic fairy tale *The Princess and The Pea*. What distinguishes this musical is its comedic energy.

The childish Prince Dauntless brings a warm and whimsical air to the show. Dauntless faces the "daunting" challenge of finding a bride. Only, this task wouldn't be so formidable if it weren't for the obtrusive Queen Aggravain.

The Queen is fixated on finding a bonafide princess for her son to marry. Every princess that's asked for the prince's hand in marriage though, has been deemed unworthy by the queen, regardless of Dauntless' opinion.

Adding mischief to the mix, the Minstrel, the Jester, and the King, act as comedic reliefs, employing physical comedy and exaggerated characterizations to play out humorous tropes throughout the musical. Dauntless thinks he finally has found his perfect match in the fearless and unflappable Princess Winnifred – but will the Queen approve?

There are four show dates for *Once Upon a Mattress*: April 12 at 7 p.m., April 13 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m., and April 14 at 1 p.m. *Once Upon a Mattress* is a one-of-a-kind show with large dance numbers and plenty of comedy throughout. Don't sleep on *Once Upon a Mattress*, it's a dream come true. Tickets available at <https://loudounvhs.booktix.com/>. LCPS Students are free.

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# Remembering Penelope Joan Duhring

Penelope Joan Duhring passed away February 29, 2024, at home in Round Hill, VA. She was 90 years old. She was affectionately known as "Penny" and "Granny" to her family and friends. Penny was born on January 28, 1934, in Bermuda. She was one of two children born to Thomas Christopher Smith and Joan Isabel (Martin) Smith.

Penny was well-traveled at a young age flying alone to attend Upper Chine boarding school in England and to visit the United States as a teenager. She attended McGill University in Montreal, Canada where she earned a degree in Sociology and History.

After college, she worked as a typist for the Bermuda News Bureau and the University of Pennsylvania News Bureau. She married John Lewis (Jack) Duhring in 1956. They raised three children while living in Kentucky and briefly in Hawaii while Jack served as a physician in the US Army.

Penny and Jack also lived in Toledo, OH and Melbourne, FL. Her husband Jack passed away in 1995. She moved to Virginia in 2002 to remain close to her family.



Penny was admired throughout her long life for being highly intuitive, kind, and well-intentioned with a relentless desire to help others. She served in numerous volunteer roles wherever she lived.

She helped her physician husband deliver care to underserved communities in remote locations of Hawaii and Appalachia.

She volunteered as a swim team parent, Boy and Girl scout assistant leader, school library assistant, hospital gift shop and patient services volunteer, and she delivered Meals on Wheels in Florida and Virginia. She also served in many volunteer church roles.

Her most recent volunteer positions included the Purcellville Public Library and the Blue Ridge Hospice Thrift Shop where she helped manage the original

Book Nook and helped transition the book collection to a new location. Her knowledge of history and passion for reading served her well as she sorted and organized an endless stream of used books to put them back on the shelf for readers of all ages.

She was recognized as the 2013 Blue Ridge Hospice Thrift Shop Volunteer of the Year for her contributions to the community.

Penny also enjoyed being outdoors, gardening, feeding backyard birds, knitting, and spending time surrounded by her family who admired and loved her dearly.

She is survived by her children Christopher Duhring (Terry), Susan Duhring, and Karen Duhring (Dan Sennett), her four grandchildren William Duhring (Meghan O'Donoghue), John Duhring (Laura), Elizabeth Rein (Kevin), and Catherine Boatright (Max), five great-grandchildren, her brother Christopher Smith (Alison Rice) of Toronto, Canada, plus two nephews and two nieces.

A celebration of her life was held at Hall Funeral Home, Purcellville, VA on March 13, 2024. Memorial donations may be made to Blue Ridge Hospice or a library of your choice.

Please visit [www.hallfh.com](http://www.hallfh.com) to express online condolences to the family.

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**LCSO and LCPS to conduct training exercise in Ashburn on April 5**

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and Loudoun County Public Schools will conduct a cooperative Reunification Training Exercise on the morning of April 5, at two school campuses as part of their ongoing commitment to protect the county's students, schools and those who work there.

The participating schools are Newton-Lee Elementary School and Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn. April 5 is a student holiday, and no students will be involved in the exercise.

The reunification training exercise is the first of its kind in the Northern Virginia region and is being planned in conjunction with the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System.

The half-day training exercise simulates the aftermath of a school shooting. It encompasses the safe extraction of students from the incident location and the transport of those students to a nearby school for reunification with their parents or guardians. The training exercise is being planned by the LCSO's

School Resource Officer Unit, Criminal Investigation Division, High Threat Team, and Ashburn Station Command; LCPS Safety & Security and Transportation teams; and with LC-CFRS support.

"No school in our nation is immune from violence, and we must do everything possible to protect our children and those who work to educate and support them," said Sheriff Mike Chapman. "The LCSO has been at the forefront of active shooter incident training, and part of that is the extraction and reunification of those impacted with their loved ones. I am proud that Loudoun is leading the way on reunification training as part of the essential partnership of law enforcement, fire and rescue, and public schools," he added.

"We are proud for LCPS to be at the forefront of efforts such as these. We take the safety and security of our students and staff very seriously. This training is an invaluable opportunity to engage in and learn from a scenario we hope we never have to face," said Superintendent Aaron Spence.

The training exercise, which is closed to the public and news media, will impact both Newton-Lee Elementary and Stone Bridge High Schools beginning early in the morning and concluding after noon. Principals

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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# Northern Virginia KidWind Challenge held at Shenandoah University

Over hundred elementary through high school youth on twenty-four elementary, middle school and high school KidWind teams throughout northern and central counties in Virginia competed in the Northern Virginia KidWind Challenge at Shenandoah University on March 14.

**COMMUNITY**

The entire event was hosted by Dr. Diane Painter from the Division of Education and Leadership at Shenandoah University in partnership with Remy Pangle, Director of Education and Outreach at the Center for the Advancement of Sustainable Energy at James Madison University.

At the event, the teams displayed their wind turbine projects or solar run structures and explained to judges from solar and wind energy industries the processes they took to create their projects.

Team members also took a Kahoot quiz to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of renewable energy initiatives. The teams were scored on their innovation and creativity, their projects' performance generating energy, their performance on the knowledge quiz, and their delivery of their projects to the

judges.

All first and second place winners automatically qualify to compete in the Virginia State KidWind Challenge on April 6, 2024 at James Madison University.

All three teams sponsored by Makersmiths, Inc., a nonprofit maker space organization in Loudoun County, were recognized for their projects. La Wai, a high school solar team, won first place in the high school solar division for its water distillation project.

Vivacious Voltages, a middle school wind turbine team, won second place in the middle school wind division. Solar Flares, a middle school solar team, won third place in the middle school solar division for their rocket launch pad project.

During the day, some parents, KidWind coaches and their team members took a solar roof tour of the Athletic and Events Center, led by Barry Schnoor, Director of



L to R: Ella Pangle, Charlene Mukhambe, Audrey Magill, Natalie Johnson Quinchia, Liam Jo and Nick Burrus on the Vivacious Voltages team, sponsored by Makersmiths, Inc.



Kwasi Fraser

Environmental Protection Agency's Small Communities Advisory Subcommittee as an appointee of EPA Administrator Michael Regan.

After the event, Fraser posted the following on LinkedIn:

"It was a privilege to deliver the keynote address at the Northern Virginia renewable energy challenge, hosted by Shenandoah University. Witnessing the remarkable solar and wind projects presented by our youth, left me inspired and optimistic about the future of sustainable energy.

As we confront today's energy complexities, this emerging generation exemplifies, dedication and ingenuity and crafting viable solutions. I called them Solution Gen and they are the architects of our sustainable future."

Physical Plant at Shenandoah University. He explained that the university now boasts the largest rooftop solar power system of any Virginia college or university. Learn more at [www.su.edu/green/rooftop-solar-power-system/](http://www.su.edu/green/rooftop-solar-power-system/).

The keynote speaker for this KidWind event was the former Mayor of Purcellville, Kwasi Fraser, who currently serves on The Virginia Clean Energy Advisory Board as an appointee of Governor Youngkin, and formerly served on the U.S.

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## Tree of Life Ministries premier documentary *Unafraid* by Ethan Weitz

On March 22, Tree of Life Ministries premiered a short documentary film entitled "Unafraid" by the creator of Hero & Heart Films, Ethan Weitz. The film highlights the profound impact Tree of Life's ministries have had on the lives of individuals with disabilities in Loudoun County through the story of one such young man, Sam Mason.

Sam joined Tree of Life's Still Waters Ministry when it first began as a respite program for families of children with special need. The program provides parents with a safe and nurturing place to drop off their children twice a month free of charge, and soon transformed into one that included the whole family, as parents sought advice and support from fellow caregivers.

As many of the original Still Waters partners reached adulthood, Tree of Life became aware of the serious need for work opportunities for individuals with disabilities following high school.

In response, Tree of Life's Gospel Enterprise, SimpyBe Coffee, was launched in 2020. With the specific purpose of providing work opportunities for this community, both paid and volunteer, Sam Mason became one of its first employees. SimplyBe has been able to provide 30 individuals with work experience in its short

4 years, including many who have worked at the shop since the beginning.

In 2021, the Still Waters program began to grow exponentially under the leadership of Cindy Welsh. The twice a month events became multiple weekly activities ranging from sports and fitness, crafts, cooking, and games to popular seasonal dances.

Tree of Life's Work Heartily Ministry was launched to provide support for families in placing their adult children with employment at other businesses, as well as schools, non-profits, and county facilities. The program has been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »



L to R: Sam Mason and Ethan Weitz

## HERE WE GO AGAIN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

height of 60 ft. can be built as long as it is located at least 100 ft. from any lot line. The annexation proposal is called Valley Commerce Center.

There would be an estimated 4,297 weekday vehicle trips for the proposed industrial park, according to a VDOT memo dated Aug. 24, 2023.

Kuhn had also applied for a change of zoning, on this property, in the county to Planned Development Industrial Park (PD-IP).

On Sept. 21, 2023 in a first referral memorandum from Loudoun County Planning and Zoning "Community Planning finds the proposed rezoning and development of a business/industrial park on the subject property is inconsistent with types of rural business, land development pattern, and design characteristics anticipated for the Purcellville JLMA Rural Neighborhood Place Type.

"The proposed business/industrial park is not in keeping with the types of low intensity rural business uses identified within the Purcellville JLMA Rural Neighborhood Place Type, nor does the use contribute to the rural character of the area.

"Community Planning finds the proposed rezoning request to allow the development of a business/industrial park on the subject property is not supported by the land use policies or design

characteristics for the Purcellville JLMA Rural Neighborhood Place Type.

"Community Planning cannot support the rezoning request due to fundamental conflicts with the land use and land development policies of the 2019 GP for the Purcellville JLMA Rural Neighborhood Place Type."

County planners recommended the applicant discuss a possible annexation or boundary line adjustment with the Town of Purcellville if Kuhn wants to continue to pursue "commercial and industrial uses."

At the Feb. 27 Purcellville Town Council Work Session, Council Member Chris Bertaut said that the town has a 14-step process for annexation and the first step is a community briefing by the developer. "No part of the process involves the developer lobbying members of the governing body."

"There's no need for private meetings in advance of a presentation before the public of a proposed annexation unless we have a town council member majority who are openly disrespectful of citizens' desires as expressed in our comprehensive plan.

"Our comprehensive plan is not a wish list; it is what the citizens have said they want and do not want for our town.

"One thing that has come through loud and clear from that document is the Purcellville citizens do not want annexation," concluded Bertaut.

# Learn more about native plants at Morven Park



Do you want to learn more about gardening with native plants? Or just get ideas about new natives to add to your garden? Then come on

**COMMUNITY** April 13, at 11 a.m. to Morven Park in Leesburg. There will

be plants on hand to show you—and even some plants to give away.

Our area's native plants are meant to be here, so they're easier to grow and more beneficial to wildlife. There will be a brief introduction, followed by plant suggestions for a variety of growing conditions: sun/shade and wet/dry. There will be plants on display to look at, along with pictures of mature plants in native garden settings.

The first 10 people who attend the talk will be offered a free copy of Native Plants for Northern Virginia, a great introductory guide published by Plant NOVA Natives.

Then after the presentation, you can look around at what's available at Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Spring Native Plant Sale. Four native plant nurseries will be on hand. Browse among the plants, and you can ask questions of knowledgeable volunteers and nursery staff.

For more info about the Native Plant Sale, please visit the Loudoun Wildlife Center website: <https://loudounwildlife.org/event/spring-native-plant-sale/>.

# Enter the 2024 Loudoun Arbor Day photo contest

The annual Loudoun County Arbor Day tree photo contest is underway and Loudoun County wants to see your favorite tree. Photos will be accepted through Monday, April 15. Winning photos and honorable mentions will

**COMMUNITY** be announced at the in-person Loudoun County Arbor Day Celebration scheduled for Saturday, April 27, at 11 a.m. at the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 5527 Sullivans Mill Road in Middleburg.

Entries must be:

- A photo of a single tree or group of trees located in Loudoun County
- Original photos taken by the entrant.
- Digital and submitted by going to [www.loudoun.gov/FormCenter/Building-Development-26/2024-Arbor-Day-Photo-Contest-My-Favorite-403](http://www.loudoun.gov/FormCenter/Building-Development-26/2024-Arbor-Day-Photo-Contest-My-Favorite-403). High resolution photos are encouraged. Only two entries allowed per person or group.

Entrants are asked to provide a brief explanation of why the tree is a favorite.

Awards will be distributed to the top three photos. Only the winning and honorable mention entrants will be notified. Any of the top three photo entrants who are unable to attend the Arbor Day Celebration will be notified and awards will be provided via mail.

The photos will not be returned and will



Photo of tree in Leesburg by Kari Bennett, Winner of the 2023 Loudoun County Arbor Day photo contest.

become the property of the Loudoun County Arbor Day Committee.

For more information about the photo contest or the in-person Arbor Day Celebration, visit [loudoun.gov/trees](http://loudoun.gov/trees).

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OPINION: FY25 BUDGET, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

will need to incur millions in new debt to bring on new water treatment capacity for wells if this annexation is approved. I would argue that this should be factored into the proposed budget.

Is the cost to Purcellville's citizens in even higher utility rates and increased traffic next to many residences being considered? Why is the Town Council majority complacent when massive giveaways are in the works for developers with the costs of expansion dropped onto our citizens and the business community? Where is the Fireman's Field revenue from advertising, which is guaranteed in the contract with Loudoun County?

Are the needs of our citizens and businesses for efficient delivery of government services outweighed by the allure of a quick fix through one-time utility connection fees and a desire to grow our way out of debt? Using even a small portion of Meals Tax revenue could offset utility rate increases, but that would require the Town Council to enact a policy, and the town's management team to find ways to make their own processes more efficient to offset loss of revenue to the General Fund.

The Town Manager has proposed a 9 percent increase in General Fund expenditures. The overall budget is less than last year. However this is largely due to a

temporary dip in expenditures for Capital Projects, which will resume their upward climb in FY26 and FY27, especially if the majority on Council push through annexation plans that are out of compliance with both the Purcellville and Loudoun County Comprehensive Plans.

The process thus far this year has been marked by a lack of the very sort of governmental transparency that residents have been demanding for years. The proposed FY25 budget as a "lean budget," echoes similar statements made by previous town managers. The budget before the Town Council is certainly not lean for our pockets.

There are only two scheduled working sessions for the Town Council to propose changes to this year's budget. In addition, the detailed department-by-department presentation of the budget was eliminated, adding to the lack of transparency.

Rather than review the budget on a line-by-line basis as was done last year, the Town Manager, with the silent assent of the majority of the Town Council decided to make the budget approval process, in the words of the Mayor - "more efficient." This cursory review of the budget leaves almost no time for public input, or debate by the Town Council. Why the rush? Speed is not efficient if it lacks a clearly stated purpose and direction.

The proposed budget was published on March 13, with final Town Council

approval scheduled to take place on April 23. The real deadline to approve the budget is at the end of May. That leaves less than six weeks for the public and the Town Council to review 468 pages to find ways to improve the budget. The Town Manager has demanded that every cut proposed by a council member be accompanied by an offset. This, however, is not the job of the town council.

There are better ways to find efficiency in town government. For example, the FY25 budget adds another full-time procurement employee to the 11-member Finance department, when there is already one part-time employee doing the same job. Instead of continuing to outsource custodial services, the FY25 budget is adding a part-time staff member to do building cleaning.

Purcellville often seems to pay far too much for the goods and services it purchases with taxpayer money. Recent examples include a cost of nearly \$300,000 for an outdoor stage in Dil-lons Woods, and \$50,000 for a building air-conditioning system comparable in size to a unit that would serve a typical residence in town.

This is not the time for Purcellville to take on more debt and budget for things we are not certain we need. Without enhanced transparency and fiscal prudence in the FY25 budget, I will not support it.

YOUNGKIN SIGNS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

131 HB 133 HB 155 HB 163 HB 205 HB 220 HB 223 HB 227 HB 238 HB 255 HB 269 HB 279 HB 281 HB 288 HB 299 HB 380 HB 425 HB 435 HB 441 HB 460 HB 479 HB 501 HB 566 HB 583 HB 595 HB 596 HB 601 HB 652 HB 679 HB 690 HB 712 HB 713 HB 715 HB 730 HB 763 HB 832 HB 870 HB 898 HB 908 HB 1015 HB 1058 HB 1067 HB 1103 HB 1112 HB 1133 HB 1135 HB 1210 HB 1357 HB 1362 HB 1389 HB 1399 HB 1466 HB 1488 HB 1513 HB 1526.

SB 13 SB 109 SB 111 SB 112 SB 131

SB 154 SB 261 SB 297 SB 298 SB 342 SB 381 SB 386 SB 399 SB 401 SB 402 SB 412 SB 413 SB 424 SB 425 SB 450 SB 464 SB 521 SB 530 SB 537 SB 545 SB 581 SB 585 SB 630 SB 646 SB 657 SB 658 SB 676 SB 692 SB 702 SB 706 SB 728 SB 731.

The full list of signed bills is available at LIS > Bill Tracking > Bills and Resolutions > 2024 session (virginia.gov).

Vetoed seven bills included: HB 698 & SB 448, HB 1 & SB 1, SB 696, HB 157, HB 974.

Youngkin's full veto statements are available at Veto.pdf (virginia.gov).

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# Beauty and the Beast Jr. is coming to Harmony Middle School

This year over 150 students auditioned to be a part of the cast and crew of this year's musical production, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* The final cast and crew made up of 70 talented 6th and 8th graders have been learning their lines, songs, blocking, and how to work the curtains, lights and sound

system since early December.

The production is truly a collaboration of Harmony students, their families and staff. Meghann Donohue, a Loudoun County Native, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher at Harmony serves as director.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »



Back row: Reece Lesko, Mrs. Lisa Washington, Manny Schwatz-Spain, Gianna Mwombeki, Cole Miller, Hayden Speer, Addy Rose Peter, Daniel Rechel, Cooper Wood, Slawhudeen Uslum, Miles Nickerson, Jackson McIntosh, Will Young, James Cook, Theo Frandsen, Shaun Hornbaker, Damien Titus, Atticus Pacheco, Peyton Thomas, Ella Holgate, Megan Hillebrand, Sophia Porter, Mrs. Meghann Donohue

Middle row: Emma Swank, Nathalie Lima, Faith Hartley, Teegan Bauder, Julia McIntosh, Emma Washam, Cooper Gaeckle, Teegan Tucker, Tess Hendrickson, Arabella Horton, Jordan Smith, Sean Cook, Charlie Pouy,

Alexis House, Molly Den Herder, Elia Paukstys, Penny Seemiller, Sophia Saucedo, Hailey Barton, Caroline Osantowske

Front row: Mrs. Jodi Hillebrand, Evelyn Osantowske, Avery Pugh, Hailey PayCheck, Jackie Shaw, Rebekah Lilienkamp, Cayden Vannoy, Will Porta, Blake Deputy, Juliette Mayo, Catherine Mathews, Iris Olden, Ana Brown

Ari Galves, Tristan Gessner, Teddy Retherford, Emilia Quaranta, Melany Diaz Argueta.

Not pictured: Henrietta Thompson

Photo: Isaac Pacheco

# Leesburg native supports U.S. Navy Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron

BY ASHLEY CRAIG, NAVY OFFICE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Petty Officer 2nd Class Johnne Jones, a native of Leesburg and a graduate from Loudoun County High School in 2013, Virginia, serves the U.S. Navy assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 35. She joined the Navy seven years ago.

"Growing up, I learned that you can't be afraid to go outside of what you know," said Jones. "Leesburg is a small-town community and it wasn't until I got to community college that I realized how diverse the world is. The military is diverse. We're all from different backgrounds and cultures. Learning that really helped me and gave me a better perspective."

"I joined the Navy to travel and to give myself a better life," said Jones. "I worked in retail for four years while I was going to community college and I didn't take school as seriously as I should have. I saw the military as a way to travel, have



Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jordan Jennings, Navy Office of Community Outreach.

a career and continue my education. I also wanted a better life for myself and my future family."

Members of HSM 35 fly and maintain the MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter, the Navy's most advanced rotary wing maritime strike platform. The Navy MH-60R is able to perform many different

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »



## Franklin Park Arts Center

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### Superstar: The Carpenters Reimagined April 13 7:30pm

*Superstar: The Carpenters Reimagined is an original docu-musical created with Richard Carpenter's blessing! This full stage show features the vocal talents of Helen Welch. A critically acclaimed vocalist and entertainer. In Superstar, Ms. Welch does not offer imitations or impersonations of the originals. She has taken their music and reproduced them in a style all her own. Revisit the 70's and your own memories of the classic Carpenters song library!*

**Tickets: \$25 for rear section,  
\$30 for side sections,  
\$40 for center section and accessible seating**



### FILM: Matisse: From Tate Modern and MOMA April 11 Tickets \$8 plus fee

*This captivating film explores the final chapter of Matisse's career when he began 'carving into colour,' creating his signature cutouts.*

*Audiences are invited to enjoy an intimate, behind-the-scenes documentary about this blockbuster exhibition with contributions from curators, historians and those who knew Matisse personally.*

*Directed by Phil Grabsky, run time is 97 minutes. An Exhibition On Screen production.*



### In Our Gallery: The Art of Paper Exhibit

April 11-May 5 Admission is FREE  
 Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:30pm

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST JR.,** CON'T. FROM PAGE 23

Lisa Washington, the Harmony chorus teacher serves as music director, and leads the students through such well-known songs as "Belle", and "Be Our Guest. 7<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher, Jodi Hillebrand helps the 15-member technical crew learn how to work the light and sound boards, spotlights, and runs the backstage crew, making sure that sets and props, are functional and properly placed.

Rounding out the team is gym teacher Anastasia Kim as choreographer teaching students to waltz, perform acrobatics and for a kick line.

The production includes the favorite songs from the original animated movie, as well as songs from the stage show like "Human Again". Many of the talented cast members have received high ranks in choral evaluations.

While the scenery will be familiar,

you will still be surprised at how you are transported to a village far away. The dance numbers will make you want to join along as flatware comes to life and dishes form a kick-line.

The students, their teachers and parent volunteers have all worked to make household objects and the castle come to life. "We have so many talented kids and they have worked so hard. We really hope the audience enjoys the show as much as we have enjoyed working with them to put together", said Mrs. Donohue. So, "Be our guest. Be our guest. Please be our guest!" at Harmony Middle School, 38174 W Colonial Hwy, Hamilton, VA 20158, Friday, April 12, Sunday, April 14 with shows at 7 p.m. and matinees at 2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are available for purchase at <https://harmonyms.booktix.net/index.php>.

**LCSSO AND LCPS,** CON'T. FROM PAGE 18

of these and nearby schools will be advising their school communities about how the training exercise will impact access to or use of their campuses. Additional information will be shared by LCSSO and LCPS prior to April 5. Role players are

being provided by LCPS staff and School Security Officer personnel.

The LCSSO will place variable message boards in the immediate area in advance of the training exercise to help inform residents and others. Additional messages will be issued on social media and other platforms.

**OPINION: HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

many more that are being planned.

We can no longer count on data centers to bail us out from rapidly increasing County spending. If fewer data centers are approved and the tax revenues they pay fail to keep up with County spending, the difference will have to be made up with our real estate taxes.

Loudoun's foot has been heavy on the pro-development pedal for decades and the bills are starting to pile up. The County's operating budget increased by one third in the previous four years and another 11% this year. This is reckless. It's long past time for citizens and our elected representatives to chart a more prudent and fiscally conservative path.

Before April 10, please let your supervisors know what you think about the tax burdens we will be assuming if they approve the proposed zoning amendments and special exceptions for the "Clear Springs" subdivision, and any others like it.

The Board of Supervisors recently decided to review the County's rural zoning regulations. This provides a last-chance opportunity to reduce the number of new houses that can be built "by right" in rural areas, which would save County taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Please let them know how much more taxes you are willing to pay for future "by right" rural development.

Of course, Loudoun citizens have other concerns with too much development. We're concerned when traffic congestion makes our roads unsafe, when our children have to be bussed long distances or because the nearest schools are over-crowded.

We're also affected when our wells run dry because over developments tapped out our aquifers, when we're flooded out because someone denuded a property upstream, when we're kept awake at night by the rock concerts over the hill, when our tourism business loses customers who aren't as attracted by changes in the character of the area, or when gigantic power lines destroy the neighborhood or the scenery we spent our life's savings on.

But even if we're only concerned about our tax bills, all of us clearly have an interest in how much "by right" or "special exception" development the Board of Supervisors decides to approve.

County supervisors respond when they hear from their constituents. They hear from deep-pocketed developers every day. Please make sure they hear your side of the story too!

*John Ellis lives near Hillsboro. He is the President and co-founder of Save Rural Loudoun and serves on the Board of the Between the Hills Conservancy, the official community friends organization for Sweet Run State Park.*

**LOUDOUN COUNTY ADULT DAY CENTERS**

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Video online at: [www.loudoun.gov/adultday](http://www.loudoun.gov/adultday)

Administered by Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging, Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Services

**LEESBURG NATIVE,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

missions. Some of the most common operations include strikes on maritime targets, submarine hunting and attack, electronic warfare, search and rescue, medical evacuations and supply support.

"We will earn and reinforce the trust and confidence of the American people every day," said Adm. Lisa Franchetti, Chief of Naval Operations. "Together we will deliver the Navy the nation needs."

"My proudest accomplishment is recently getting selected for officer," said Jones. "In school, I was seen as delicate and there were people who didn't think I could make it through boot camp. By finishing my degree and being selected for officer, I'm showing my daughter that she can achieve anything she puts her mind to. It doesn't matter where you come from as long as you have that determination,

you can achieve it."

"Serving in the Navy is understanding that we all have a responsibility in the world," said Jones. "Those of us who choose who put on a uniform, we know it doesn't stop when you take that uniform off. I'm a sailor 24/7. It means being ready at all times, just in case I'm called upon. It never stops. It's something I'm very proud of."

Jones is grateful to others for helping make a Navy career possible.

"I want to thank my mom because, without her, I don't think I would have viewed the military as an option," added Jones. "Everyone, good and bad, has impacted me in some way in my time in the Navy. Bad people have shown me what not to do and the good people have taught me what I want to pass on to my future sailors."

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**LETTER: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

mistakes and suggest ways to correct them.

We've maintained throughout our campaign that while we were opposed to the Belmont Campus, we weren't opposed to well-planned data centers in our County. Loudoun's Future sees the benefits data centers bring to our County such as increased tax revenue and job creation.

What we have consistently opposed is the haphazard approach to data center development, the overwhelming size of hyperscale centers and the rubberstamping of requests for Special Exceptions that enable developers to build far larger projects that zoning and the General Plan envision. That has gotten us into the overdevelopment we're experiencing today.

While data centers bring benefits, they also come with many potential problems: increased noise, environmental impacts, rezoning, strains to our electrical grids, and new transmission lines.

The Board's disapproval of the Belmont scheme not only represents a crucial win for our community's well-being, it

also signifies a commitment to preserving our landscape and heritage.

Those in the eastern part of the county have taken the brunt of new data center development. We see them popping up within a few hundred feet of residential neighborhoods, taking away forests, greenery, and parks for our children. Loudoun's Future's goal is county-wide, opposing objectionable data centers in the east, and helping fight sprawl in the west.

We believe that Supervisors heard the objections to Belmont and were impressed that they represented a countywide unity. In fact, the number of citizens at the Belmont hearing is what flipped the decisive vote.

Let us all work together – along with the Board of Supervisors – to ensure that development across our county is well planned with the future in mind.

As we celebrate the rejection of the Belmont proposal, we must remain vigilant in ensuring that future development in Loudoun County aligns with our values and respects the needs of our community.

*John Lovegrove, Loudoun's  
Future Chairman*

## LC-CFRS kicking off Annual Smoke Alarm Program

The Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System's annual smoke alarm program kicks off Saturday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in neighborhoods across Loudoun County.

"During a house fire, you have an average of three minutes to escape your home," said Fire Chief Keith Johnson. "Smoke Alarms provide you precious time to escape and reduce the risk of dying in a fire by half!"

As part of the annual smoke alarm program, firefighters from stations across Loudoun

County are taking a hands-on approach to fire safety by canvassing neighborhoods at least one weekend a month from April to October. First responders will go door to door between 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. offering free smoke alarm assessments and valuable information about fire safety and home escape planning. During the assessment, firefighters will test existing smoke alarms, assist with battery replacement, and replace the smoke alarms at no cost, if they are not working properly or exceed the ten-year recommended lifespan.

In addition to the scheduled smoke alarm canvasses through October, Loudoun residents can request a free smoke alarm assessment at any time by completing the online form at [loudoun.gov/smokealarms](http://loudoun.gov/smokealarms), or by calling the smoke alarm program hotline at 703-737-8093.

**TREE OF LIFE,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

hugely successful, placing another 44 individuals with disabilities in employment in 2023. Alongside Work Heartily, additional advocacy was developed to help school-aged individuals receive the support they need from the county so that when they graduated, they were equipped to reach their full potential.

Tree of Life hit a milestone by providing independent housing for individuals with disabilities in 2023. Sam and his roommate, Mitchell, moved into a two-bedroom home in Purcellville in the fall of last year achieving a dream that both their families weren't sure

would ever be possible. The new housing has instilled hope and confidence in both young men and will serve as a model as Tree of Life continues to expand its housing opportunities.

The documentary shows the personal side of this ministry by focusing on Sam's journey. It includes challenges that this community faces daily and the impact that support, encouragement, and opportunity can have in facing those challenges.

To view the full documentary, go to: [www.tolministries.org/unafraid](http://www.tolministries.org/unafraid), and support and celebrate these very special men and women.

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Hope's Garden Grand Opening—Noon  
Historic Hillsboro Walking Tours/Native Plant & Spring Garden/Crafts Market—10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Free Appalachian Spring Concert 5 p.m.-8:30 p.m.  
*The Furnace Mountain Trio*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 21—TOURS & TEA**  
Garden Club of Virginia Historic Garden Week Tours—1 p.m.-5 p.m.  
Gardens in The Gap High Teas—11:30 a.m. & 2 p.m.  
Historic Hillsboro Walking Tours/Native Plant & Spring Garden/Crafts Market—10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 22—CELEBRATE EARTH DAY IN THE GAP

Garden Club of Virginia Historic Garden Week  
Tours—10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Historic Hillsboro Walking Tours/Native Plant & Spring Garden/Crafts Market—10 a.m. - 5 p.m.



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**HILLSBORO EVENTS  
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**REDUCED BELMONT INNOVATION, CON'T. FROM PAGE 1**

power, which Dominion is obligated to provide. We don't have enough power, so we're going to have to bring in more from dirty coal plants."

Jean Wright said, "Dominion has shared that they are unable to meet green goals because of data center demand." Loudoun must know more about the impacts of data, and wait to be more informed, she concluded.

Chris Tandy re-emphasized the concerns about the fossil fuels being burned for power.

Cheryl Harper was concerned about, "more power consumption, more pressure on the already stressed grid ... and it's asking Loudoun residents to be on the hook for paying for it. Loudoun has been the global leader on data development, it must also be the leader on understanding the impacts."

Julie Bolthouse, Director of Land use with PEC said, "This application is asking for the equivalent of eight Walmart supercenters, with diesel storage, with 200 generators, ... and two substations."

Morris Meyer, who works in the power industry said their position was, "we don't have any backup in case the load expands beyond what we have."

The Supervisors' decision

Koran Saines (D-Sterling) stated that in reality, no options existed but getting a data center, whether the Supervisors voted yes or no. If the application was denied, it will fall to a by-right use, without all the proffered benefits.

"The problem is national," Kristen

Umstatted (D-Leesburg) said. "If we don't change the way we live, data centers are going to be a part of our lives." Locally, she said this data center does not require the building of an additional transmission line.

Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) said, "Getting rid of data centers is just going to make taxes go through the roof. This application has zero to do with the western power lines, zero. Approving or denying is not going to make any difference in the power grid."

Construction of data centers will continue anyway, he argued. "This application is the gold standard." If we send them away, "the message we are sending is we want by-right, ugly buildings, and quite frankly, no environmental, no aesthetic, and no protective measures."

"Now we're faced with 1.3 million square feet of by-right data, versus, this roughly 2.8," said Matthew Letourneau. (R-Dulles) "We have to look at what's in the proffer package, and what happens if we deny it, and that's really where I struggle, because of the uniqueness of the site. This is not the place for a by-right data center. It's already got its power commitments."

Laura TeKrony said, "There has been a resounding request to deny, and I am listening to the residents. I believe we have reached a tipping point. This data center will create greater stress on the grid. All the transmission lines feed into the same grid. To say that this data center won't impact the grid is ridiculous. The scale will contribute to the need for additional high voltage lines."

Sylvia Glass agreed. "The people of Loudoun are asking us to take closer looks at the impacts of data centers to our county."

Juli Briskman said, "I have for many years been concerned about the unintended impacts, the unmeasured impacts ... of the plethora of data centers on Loudoun County. ... many years ago, when I was knocking on the doors of my constituency, residents said please stop building data centers in Loudoun. I'll be voting no."

Randall said this is the best application, they have ever heard. But, "at some point," she said, "when do we stop voting for the single best application?" She said others they approved were the best up until that point. "If that's the standard, then we will always vote for this. I would like to really try to discuss diversifying our economy."

"It does adversely affect surrounding properties," she continued. "None of these applications are ever in a silo. I don't know how we keep doing this ... ignoring 80 percent of our public who are making very good points ... So, I'm going to be a no."

Mike Turner responding to Kershner's claims about the center's relation to the powerlines said, "The name is The Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Line - they are driving that line - PJM has specifically stated, 'because of the constrained power situation in eastern Loudoun County,' is why they're building that line. That's to power 31 million sq. ft., and we've already permitted 41 million. More lines are coming. This adds to that

burden."

A 600-megawatt data center like this one, he said, would represent 23 percent or so of the 3.1 gigawatts that Loudoun is already using. Turner made the motion to deny the application.

Turner said the critical reason was that, "the proposed scale of the development would contribute to the need for additional high voltage transmission lines, which will have adverse impacts on surrounding properties ... In this case the surrounding neighborhood is eastern Loudoun County."

The motion to deny passed with four against.

In a March 19 Board Business Meeting, Turner said he was contacted by the developer of the Belmont Innovation Gateway, who offered to build the by-right portion of the data center which is 1.3 million sq. ft. They said, "If you reconsider, we will still include the whole environmental package."

"That's a no brainer," Turner said. "The choice is not ... whether or not you're going to get a data center, the question is do you want a world class environmental package or not."

"The reason this is in play, is if they go through by-right, they essentially have to go through a six-month permitting process ... if this is approved, they can begin construction right away," Turner said.

The decision was made to consider the by-right sized center with their proposed environmental package at the next public hearing on April 10.

**OPINION: SOME SUPERVISORS, CON'T. FROM PAGE 4**

easier. That was a special favor to business interests and is another sad story.

**The Courts Speak**

Virginia courts may assess whether a downzoning is based on "legitimate and rational reasons." These include social and economic policy reasons, including quality of life, environmental concerns, and inadequate infrastructure.

Since County Staff has just calculated that each new house in Western Loudoun has an immediate negative impact to the County of \$106,600, so the economic policy test is easily met.

Piecemeal zoning may be capricious

and even illegal. This is what started the FBI investigation of a terribly controversial Board in the late 1990s.

Virginia courts may deem downzoning to be a taking, but only if it deprives the owner of *all* economically viable uses of the property, not merely that it might diminish a property's potential value.

**Loudoun Has Downzoned Before**

I really appreciate my friend's work; it bathes the downzoning question in proper light. I'm not going to impose on him further, but there is concrete local precedence that downzoning can be legal. Western Loudoun was downzoned in 2003. Multiple lawsuits ensued

- no surprise there. The court eventually held that the 2003 downzoning was illegal because the County did not follow proper procedures as to public notice and hearings. It did not suggest that the downzoning was somehow impermissible. The County then repeated the process, following all procedures, and the downzoning was approved in 2006. That downzoning still stands.

Any new downzoning will surely become a political hot potato. It's easy for the politicians to avoid conflict by saying that the County's Attorney's office warns of the inevitable lawsuits that would follow.

The Supervisors should not fear

lawsuits over modernizing zoning. Defending County policy, in court when necessary, is just part of the administrative process of government. After all, the County has a \$5.2 billion annual budget which can easily absorb some legal fees. The County would prevail and the citizens would benefit.

*Charles Houston lives on a small horse farm outside Paeonian Springs. His career was developing large office buildings throughout the South. His firm used two law firms of national prominence, whom they directed "Don't tell us what we can't do. Find a way that lets us do it."*

**LETTER: LET US PLAY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**

will be very competitive and fun.

Initially our aim was to begin play at Mickey Gordon Park just east of Middleburg as our home field. There is an excellent baseball field, with the exact dimensions of a Major League Baseball field.

This past fall, the community around Middleburg voiced displeasure with the County's plans of establishing 3 large

cricket fields, subsequently convincing the Board of Supervisors to squash those plans.

Not only was the field historically a baseball field, going back to 1920 for the Negro League place to play, but had been an area identified by the Loudoun County African American Heritage Association as a place that meant a great deal for their community.

However, due to delays in deciding

what will encompass the entire park, the County has decided to continue allowing cricket for this year. We are hopeful that this delay to bring baseball back to the park, will be reconsidered, so we can start playing baseball there in the summer.

The community is extremely interested in getting this resolved. If it can't be done for this summer, we are still getting a team together, and will find other areas

to play. The general consensus is, that the Middleburg community and The American Legion Post, are committed to making this work, and are strongly in support of playing baseball at Mickey Gordon Park as soon as possible.

If you are interested in participating in our baseball team, please call me, Mike Merritt, at 703-728-6925.

*Mike Merritt  
Middleburg*

**THE LOVETTSVILLE CO-OP**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

new firehouse is still under construction. “Over the years, fundraising Barn dances and membership drives were held at the WeatherLea barn and other Lovettsville locations. John DeSaix and Caroline Ahern led the capital campaign to ask members to provide loans to the Co-op so construction could begin,” according to Evans-Kavaldjian.

Longtime Co-op board member, Karen Hignite says that she was asked to join the board in 2011 specifically to plan a farmer’s market for the next year. She said, “The farmer’s market was a way to introduce the co-op to the residents of Lovettsville and meet the local producers who we hoped one day would supply a store. And, of course, to grow our membership. And so many people are responsible for holding on to the vision and making the co-op a reality.

“We had a vision, and we were smart enough to coerce John DeSaix, our Chair, to bring his financial talent to the table and make our dream a reality!”

As part of the original Co-op Board, Michelle McIntyre said, “I am extremely proud to have been a part of the effort to bring a community owned grocery store to Loudoun County and the Town of Lovettsville. The process was long and there were many obstacles but we prevailed.”

McIntyre’s husband, Jim, was a two-term Town Councilman and Vice Mayor for much of the time the Co-op was organizing.

The Lovettsville Co-op now highlights a wide range of produce, meats and cheeses, grocery items, Dairy/non-dairy, gluten-free products, over 70 bulk items, wellness, wine and beer. The Co-op also offers a hot bar with daily soup specials and main/side dishes for take-away. There is a deli where one can get sandwiches, salads and sushi. Everything is fresh, delicious and there is something for everyone. No time to cook? Their rotisserie chickens smell so good.

“Locally-grown. Community owned.” is the Co-op’s slogan. The fully stocked shelves of over 7,000 items speaks to the vibrant community of local farmers, producers and vendors. The wall of names in the store’s entryway is testimony to those who made the Lovettsville Market Co-op come to fruition. “The last 12 years have been a rollercoaster ride, to say the least. I still have to pinch myself whenever I walk into the store. It’s so much more than I envisioned and hoped for,” said Hignite.

For more information on store hours, specials, membership benefits go to <https://lovettsvillemarket.coop>.

**MILAN AND RAYNER**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

until January after the zoning rewrite was completed.

What pushed back the review and update to the bylaws was that the zoning ordinance rewrite required a complete revision when the planning commission received it from a company who was tasked with rewriting the document. The company had not aligned the zoning ordinance with the town’s comprehensive plan.

One of the commission’s proposed changes to their bylaws is to move the expiring terms of planning commissioners from the end of August 2024 to March of 2025 – to get them more in line with town elections, which were moved from May to November to coincide with the general election.

The commission suggested ending commissioner terms in March 2025 to give a newly elected town council – which would be seated on Jan. 1, 2025 – time to settle in before making commission appointments.

At the end of August, three of the most senior planning commissioners’ terms will be up for reappointment. The protocol has been to reappoint commissioners who have been serving if they so wish to continue to serve.

Aligning himself with a now majority of other council members who favor growing the town, Milan does not like what the planning commission is doing with the rewrite of the zoning ordinance, and is trying to scuttle a slow growth planning commission – even though Milan fought and won all his elections on slow growth promises, including promises to have a strong zoning ordinance which would protect Purcellville’s small-town feel.

**At the March 7 Planning Commission Meeting Chair Nan Forbes** addressed council comments regarding the draft revision of the bylaws and other commission work that was mentioned at the Feb. 27 town council meeting.

Regarding transparency Forbes said, “This is absolutely inaccurate.” She said the commission has been “completely transparent in documenting our intent to revise our bylaws in our periodic

reports to council,” along with the planning commission priorities and goals.

“Reviewing and updating the commission’s bylaws has been on our list of priorities and goals to address since 2022.” She noted that “this topic was on our meeting agenda as a discussion item, but in April 2023, we tabled it until we finished our highest priority work on the zoning ordinance rewrite.”

Forbes indicated that on Feb. 15 the bylaws update was “back for discussion as an informational item” and their agenda packet led off with “a suggested motion that the planning commission forward the attached draft of the revised planning commission bylaws to the town council for their review and subsequently forward them to the town attorney for their review.”

**Forbes said this “should have been sufficient to allay** any concerns town council may have had regarding our procedures.”

Instead of council members reviewing the agenda, the council majority passed a resolution “that accomplished nothing other than what the planning commission’s original motion set out to do,” Forbes said.

“An unsubstantiated allegation that the revised bylaws have significant changes that will affect the town budget and that staff thinks it would be prudent for the town council to have a look of its effects on the town budget? Please identify any budgetary impact. We are aware of none.”

Forbes said that Rayner’s comment of speaking with legal to draft the aforementioned resolution was an unnecessary legal expense to the town. She said that town council members “can apparently have conversations with the town attorney whenever they wish and for whatever reason they wish; while the mayor and staff have asserted that the planning commission cannot.”

Forbes said that the statement by Rayner that the town council “has not been apprised of any work done by the planning commission regarding the draft bylaws update, “is absolutely untrue.”

Forbes responded to Rayner and Milan’s statement that the council gets

data dumps, and the mention of the proposed revisions to the commission’s bylaws are buried in “that data dump.”

“The planning commission’s annual report of 2022 contained two bullets,” Forbes said. “One, we will be reviewing our bylaws which are influenced by our new election cycle and by the COVID epidemic. Second, the 2023 priorities and goals mentioned conducting a review of the commission’s bylaws.”

Forbes added that the four quarterly reports also mentioned the commission would be revising their bylaws – to include the April 20, 2023 commission’s agenda number eight which mentioned this revision as well. “So, this has been a regular part of our report to town council.”

Also, Forbes addressed the comment that the town council has not been kept abreast of the zoning rewrite. “We believe this is absolutely inaccurate. The record shows that the planning commission has been reporting on these issues since 2022. We stand ready to answer any and all of council’s questions.”

Forbes said the commission’s meetings are public and are streamed online and recorded “thus available for any member of council to review and listen to.” That goes for agendas, attachments and minutes as well as quarterly and monthly reviews.

“Our reports are usually four pages which is hardly a data dump,” said Forbes.

**In a carefully rehearsed move in February, Milan** used copies of two state bills 544 and 304 as props and put them on the front of the dais, griping that the planning commission is responsible for reviewing the bills and claiming it is their duty to do so.

“The response to that is, no it’s not,” said Forbes. It’s the responsibility of the zoning administrator and others on staff to maintain awareness of the goings on in Richmond that may affect zoning in Purcellville.”

Forbes pointed out that the senate bill mentioned by Milan “is not yet signed by the Governor by the way, and has an effective date of July 1, 2025.”

**OPINION: RAISING UTILITY RATES**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Moreover, the suggestion of annexation as a revenue solution contradicts the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and raises concerns about their motives. Annexation, which Mayor Milan and Councilmember Williams ran against and now support, will change our small town forever, and increase costs to run the town.

I urge voters to hold Mayor

Milan and Council Members Rayner, Wright, Stought, and Williams accountable for their disregard of fiscal responsibility and commitment to transparent governance.

Mayor Milan ran on the fact that the town has a spending problem; he now says we do not have a spending problem, but a revenue problem. Out of control spending always leads to a revenue problem.

**OPINION: PROCESS BEGINS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

representation, were all in the same room and could talk through in real time, that’s my desire; I want to replicate that process,” said Mike Turner. (D-Ashburn)

The western economy is booming, Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) said, and they do not want to do anything to damage that. But, there are still issues in the west around land use, so it needs the update. The goal is “to try to have balance with as little regulation as possible,” she said.

The plan is going to the Transportation and Land Use Committee (TLUC) meeting in May.

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**JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9**

through the woods and fog and past the animals and 10 miles of rough road, my senses had long past exceeded the overload stage; I guess this was the warm-up I required to enter the realm of those long passed.

The Fairfax Friends Meeting House and Cemetery – not surprisingly – appeared like an oasis of permanence after passing through the previous ever-changing landscapes; the worn headstones told a story of much more history than I could recount, the stone walls around the ‘churchyard’ simply marked a clear barrier between the temporal (the immediate, day-to-day concerns of folks like us) and the permanent (the eternal repose of those who could enjoy the peace beyond understanding).

No wonder: the stone structure of the Meeting House actually pre-dates the American Revolution; I may be getting old, but that’s well out of my league. Some

of the founding Quakers of Waterford had initially constructed a log meetinghouse all the way back in 1741.

I felt a sense of great humility in walking these grounds, as the property had enjoyed such watchful proprietorship for so long. I couldn’t help but wish for another couple hundred years of relative peace within these walls – as well as the rest of the nation in which they lie – with my own lifetime sort of nestled in the middle of that timeline. If I can imagine it, so it can be. We can learn from the past, as well as the present.

I used the logic from that lesson later that morning, and returned home by a much more well-traveled, if somewhat less entrancing, route. But I’ll remember the way to the Friends Meeting House and Cemetery, and the importance of passing through the gauntlet of experience to arrive there. So will you, once you’ve taken the journey.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR, CONT. FROM PAGE 10**

**idea** of developing incentives, it sounds like an idea of shifting costs from the businesses to the residents. I don’t like that at all. I have already heard it proposed to lower the water rates for businesses to keep them in the town.

“Furthermore, the idea of business attraction and retention – that’s just not a town function. Businesses will stay here if they can afford to stay here. If they are making money, if they are not making money – it’s not the town’s responsibility.”

Bertaut said that businesses are attracted to the town “based on the strength and engagement of our own

processes, which we already know have failed for 25 years to document in any coherent fashion and adding this function does not fix that.”

Out of the blue Milan asked Bertaut, “If I remember, weren’t you the liaison on EDAC for 2 years?” Bertaut answered, “Why, yes, I was. In that function I brought forward to the town the nutrient credits and helped push those through; and that offset residents water bills by almost \$1 million in the course of several years.”

Milan, who it appears is running against Bertaut for Mayor in the Nov. 5, 2024 town elections, retorted “And that was the only thing?” Bertaut said that was the major thing that “comes immediately to mind.”

**ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9**

and ask good follow-up questions. When was he diagnosed with the condition? How has it impacted his relationships and life in the past? How well and how consistently does he manage the condition?

If additional red flags go up for you or you worry that you may be entering into an unhealthy relationship, perhaps it’s best to stop things. Or, maybe you leave the conversation more confident to continue to date.

Ultimately, the decision to continue to date Jack or to break up with him is entirely yours to make. How you feel about him, how things are going, what you learn about his mental health, are the main factors you will need to consider in determining next steps.

Given that you divorced someone with emotional struggles, it’s understandable that you’re struggling with what to do next. Trusting your instincts, communicating openly, and prioritizing your well-being, and your children’s, are good things to consider.

Dr. Mike,

Our 8-year-old son was diagnosed with ADHD last year by a child psychiatrist, and while medications were recommended at the time, we declined. We’re not big on psych medication, so we tried everything first. We tried ADHD coaching, exercise options, better diet and nutrition and yoga but nothing has worked.

My husband and I (and my son’s teacher) all agree that it’s time to try medications. His teacher recently told us that our son is so hyper, impulsive, and inattentive at school, and it’s hurting him socially. Other kids at school often avoid him.

The problem is that our son is refusing to take medication, and we don’t know what to do. We returned to the child psychiatrist and have a new prescription, but our son isn’t budging. We’ve had lots of fights and meltdowns. How do you get an 8-year-old to take medication he needs?

– *Upset Parents in Loudoun*

Dear Upset Parents in Loudoun,

It’s not uncommon for children to resist taking medication; some children are afraid of swallowing pills, while others worry about the stigma, or the effect the medication will have on them and their loss of control. It’s not entirely clear to me why your son is so against medication. My guess is

that he is confused, scared and/or anxious.

To get your son to cooperate, he needs to understand how important medication is at this juncture. I recommend you sit down and talk to him about all the reasons why you and your husband think he should be on ADHD medication and how that medication could help him to do better. Approach the conversation with sensitivity to his feelings, rather than from a place of position that he must take the medications.

At 8, breaking your ideas down and using examples would likely be helpful. You could point out to him that everyone’s brain is wired differently and that we all have strengths and challenges. Regarding his hyperactivity, you could mention that he has trouble sitting still and all the ways that this impacts him negatively.

You could explain to him that his brain is like an engine that goes too fast sometimes with brakes that aren’t able to stop him. Let him know that the medication will help his brakes work better, which will in turn help him to behave better and to feel and do better. You could use age-appropriate examples for his inattention and impulsivity, with the end goal of getting him to understand the importance of medications.

Helping your son to feel a sense of agency with the medication is also advised. You could ask him to track and journal how he does academically, socially and behaviorally each day while on the medication. Having him write things down and then reviewing his week and progress could serve to give him a greater sense of legitimate control and empowerment.

If your son remains unwilling to take medication with your efforts and guidance, I recommend you schedule a meeting with your son’s teacher and other involved school staff, so that they can review their concerns with you altogether.

Having your son see a child psychologist may also be helpful. Keep in mind that ADHD is a very treatable condition, and while your son is resistant to help now, my hope is that he will get on board with the right kind of care and support.

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



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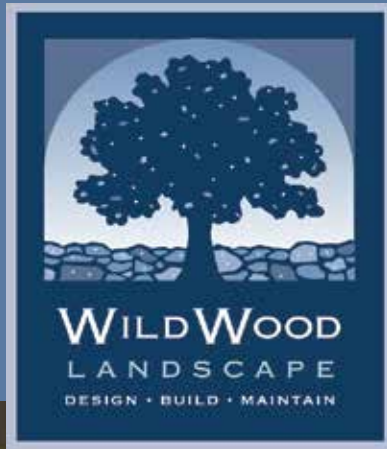
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