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LONG COVID

Local clinic has a modern, medical solution to treat your Long-Haul Covid symptoms and is seeing incredible results!

“I have two words for Long Covid: The Worst,” shares Dave A. of Ashburn.

While the initial alarm of the Covid-19 outbreak has subsided, the fallout from the pandemic is ongoing. Many continue to feel long-term impacts from their infection. In fact, nearly 23 million Americans (and 100 million people globally) have learned that regardless of the severity of their initial infection, they may continue to experience debilitating symptoms for weeks, months, or even years. In a number of these cases, symptoms worsen with time, even turning deadly.

“I got Covid early last year and it was pretty bad,” shares Dave.

“I was hospitalized for 9 days and there was a point where I wasn’t sure I was going to make it. I’m still here so I guess God had other plans but months passed and I was still gasping for air. I couldn’t do everyday tasks like cutting the grass or working in the yard, much less enjoy a quick bike ride.

And then there was what my doctor called, ‘brain fog’. I’d lose my train of thought mid-sentence or forget words for stupid things like plates and toilet paper. It felt like I’d had a stroke more than it did a virus.”

Officially dubbed Long Covid, the aftermath of the original virus has taken on a life of its own. Dozens of symptoms have been reported and include everything from shortness of breath and cognitive issues to a sudden onset of diabetes and cardiothoracic conditions. These symptoms are so well-documented and common that those suffering now qualify for disability assistance.

Unfortunately for Dave and so many others, the treatment options thus far have been limited.

“I started with my primary care doctor and saw specialist after specialist. A pulmonologist finally told me, ‘This is the best we can do for you, it’s time you start thinking about how you’re going to live with Long Covid.’ Apparently, their best was letting me live what felt like half a life.”

Dave wasn’t satisfied with that and decided to do his own research, which is how he ended up at FAW, Firefly Acupuncture and Wellness in Ashburn, VA.

“I fully believe the human body has the ability to heal itself, but sometimes it needs a little push. I’ve used acupuncture in the past to help me through a bout of sciatica and just knew if anyone could help me with this Long Covid business, it was going to be Rachal Lohr.”

You might think that a novel virus needs a novel solution, but if so, you’d only be half right.

While the staff at Firefly Acupuncture does use innovative solutions like ATP Resonance BioTherapy™ to combat Long Covid, because it aids in the healing and repair of specific cells and tissues, it’s a much more time-tested science that’s getting patients back to living their lives.

“Our O3 ReBoot Therapy™ has all-encompassing and powerful healing capabilities,” shares Taylor, a Senior Patient Care Coordinator.

“Ozone therapy has been used since the 1800s and was actually a popular tool for Doctors during the First World War because of its antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-inflammatory properties. We use it today to inactivate any residual Covid virus, stimulate oxygen metabolism, and activate the immune system. The whole treatment takes about 15 minutes and is completely noninvasive.”

As with FAW’s other services, O3 ReBoot Therapy™ requires consistent and repeated treatment to achieve measurable and long-lasting results.

“I’m in my second month of treatment and back to riding my bike and breathing better than before I even had Covid. Everyone [at FAW] has been amazing! I really feel taken care of every time I walk in the door.”

Rachal Lohr, L.Ac., FAW’s founder and Director has been successfully treating chronic pain and complicated conditions for almost two decades. She has pioneered effective protocols to treat seemingly hopeless conditions like peripheral neuropathy, fibromyalgia, and postherpetic neuralgia. When COVID-19 emerged over four years ago, she and her team got right to work researching and developing therapies that would effectively address that complex virus. Based on the testimony of patients like Dave, it seems their efforts have been a smashing success.

For more information, visit FireflyAcuAndWellness.com. In an effort to do their part in helping people through this difficult time, they are waiving the \$40 new patient consultation fee for Long Covid patients. Call (703) 263-2142 to schedule.

Visit FIREFLYAcuAndWellness.com to learn more and to take advantage of their New Patient Offer!

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A Metamorphosis for Lincoln's Abernethy & Spencer

BY LIZ TENNEY JARVIS

While this winter brings bitter cold along with copious amounts of snow and ice, there is a beehive of activity going on in Lincoln. The much beloved local nursery, Abernethy & Spencer, is in the process of not only preparing for spring but for an entire transformation. The nursery/garden center is under new ownership, but faithful patrons should fear not. This is a project on a massive scale as wonderfully historic buildings are being restored,



The original greenhouse whose steel canopy has historic ties to Loudoun. The cashier was once located inside - now the building will be a conservatory with tall indoor plants, seating and a place to relax with a refreshment.

greenhouses refurbished, and the land reconfigured to bring new and exciting features to highlight nature.

There are now three primary partners: Jim and Autumn Knowles, Jacob Baker and Hillary Pennington, and Matt Lamberski. Walking the property, the new owners explain how their vision is coming to fruition. This is immediately apparent as there are many employees spread out across several acres busily working to finish a variety of projects. To appreciate the scale of this endeavor, one must look at the history of Abernethy & Spencer.

The very beginnings are traced back to Hill Top Plant Gardens owned by the Gregg family. They grew from a small start in the form of a vegetable stand in the early 1900s. The cover

of the curved-eave greenhouse, that most recently housed Abernethy & Spencer's cashier's desk, plants and a variety of exotic birds in cages, was from a residence in the area. In the early part of the 20th century, greenhouses were moved from the USDA's Arlington Experimental Farms. These three greenhouses came to be known as the Poinsettia House, the Carnation House and the Snapdragon House.

By the late 1940s, the Greggs had added a large greenhouse and packing house to keep up with the demand as they had grown into a full-service florist. Pansies, which were previously not as popular, were their specialty at the time—sometimes cranking out a million plants in a season. The Gregg family's pansies were so favored that they appeared in the garden beds at the White House and were shipped to big cities as well as out to many states. As the nursery's reputation grew, even such high profile visitors as Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. George Marshall and Mrs. Harry S. Truman toured Hill Top Gardens.

In late 1974, the Greggs sold the nursery to Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Drabkin. The business then changed hands a few years later and thereafter it went through a series of owners before David Lohman purchased the site in 1996. Lohman and his staff so endeared themselves to the community that the news of his pending sale to the current owners had many concerned about the future of Abernethy & Spencer. However, such consternation was unwarranted as the new owners quickly expressed their intentions and committed themselves to preserving the nursery's history and future improvements.

The history of the nursery is further preserved in the multitude of information that new co-owner Hillary Pennington has assembled. Scanning through over a century's worth of newspaper clippings and interviews, one can see that the many flowers, trees and landscaping services were deeply intertwined with the gardens, personal celebrations, holidays and the very structure of the community. It is this

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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Two Places, Two Problems

By Charles Houston

The vet and I were chatting as she gave our horses their spring shots. I mentioned that my wife and I were shortly leaving for a vacation in Austria. When the vet heard that, she exclaimed, “You have to see Hallstatt! You absolutely must!”

I believed her and marked it boldly on my Michelin map.

Overtourism—Hallstatt

The vet was right. Hallstatt may well be the prettiest village on earth. I’ve seen many lists from travel magazines that deem it so. I updated our travel map accordingly.

I’ll try to describe the place, but please, please Google “Hallstatt” and hit “Images.” You’ll see many views of the fairytale village, all of them enchanting. You will see tall alps surrounding a pretty mountain lake, the Halstattersee, and the village clinging to a ledge where the towering Dachstein massif meets the lake. Elegant swans glide gracefully near the shore, waiting for someone to toss them a treat.

The village has a number of primitive log houses, ancients amongst its

centuries-old Alpine houses. Window flower boxes flush with red geraniums are everywhere. Hallstatt’s origins go back to the Iron Age and salt mining. (Salt was important in preserving meats.)

It has prospered from a robust tourism economy, but that’s finally gotten way out of hand, especially due to mass tour groups from China. A few years ago, the town reduced the number of buses by about a third. That was not enough and today the 800-person village still sees ten thousand visitors daily. The village has just banned any buses after five but it’s still crowded in tourist season.

Here’s a measure of Hallstatt’s appeal: In its Guangdong Province, China just built a full-scale replica of the Austrian village; it’s shockingly accurate.

Venice

The city of canals has been overrun: St. Mark’s Square can be so crowded that one could walk across it on the shoulders of tourists. The city first reacted to one aesthetic nightmare: Gigantic cruise ships moored in Venice’s eponymous harbor, dwarfing the Ducal palace and the Campanile tower.

Venice now limits the number of cruise ships.

Barcelona

This fabled Spanish city has increased its tax on tourists by about one Euro a day. The new tax revenue is supposed to increase the aggregate revenue from tourism while lessening the visitor onslaught.

Locals don’t seem convinced. They still protest and enjoy using their water hoses to douse tourists.

Amsterdam

The home of Rembrandt and weed has faced up to its overtourism with a comprehensive approach: Increasing the tourist tax. Reducing cruise ship annual arrivals from 190 to 100. Reducing and then prohibiting new hotel rooms. Banning new tourist shops. Using other measures to reduce the number of problematic tourists, which I suspect relates to group tourism or to rowdy young people.

Sintra

This is a fantasyland of over-the-top palaces, about 30 km from Lisbon. It was

a country getaway for royalty and the wealthy, all of whom built with extravagance and grandiosity. Most notable is the candy-cake Pena Palace, which I suggest Googling.

Locals are protesting. A welcoming graffito in Sintra proclaims, “Tourism is Terrorism.”

Data Centers—Commonalities

Those places need some tourist dollars, but they are also trying to avoid the deterioration of their culture. One thrust is fiscal—increase the costs to tourists. Another technique is legally banning or mandating various aspects of overtourism, like the number of permitted cruise ships.

All want some level of tourism to remain but the citizenry appears to demand more relief.

One Meaningful Indicum

Can overtourism be quantified? One metric could be the number of visitors divided by the number of residents, but I don’t think it would work: little Hallstatt sees 4,500 visitors per citizen, while that

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Publisher & Editor
Valerie Cury

Creative Department
Pam Owens, Layout/Design

Advertising

Sabine Bibb SabineBibb@gmail.com 571-437-9953	Tonya Harding THarding455@gmail.com 703-314-5200
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Editor:
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Hot News Tips:
Valerie Cury, 703-943-8806
editor@BlueRidgeLeader.com

Mailing Address:
PO Box 325, Purcellville, VA 20134-0325

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Rural development: a reminder of the difference between words and actions

BY JOHN ELLIS

Citizens living on a narrow gravel road on the east side of Short Hill Mountain recently learned that a developer is planning to build a 20-unit “cluster subdivision” on an adjacent property. The development will increase the daily traffic on that road from about 60 to over 250 vehicle trips per day.

In addition to worries about too many cars on roads that weren’t designed

for that much traffic, they also wonder whether drilling so many new wells in such a small area will affect the water pressure in their own homes and whether the concentration of so many private drain fields will pollute local sources of fresh water.

They aren’t alone. Similar cluster subdivisions are also planned or already under development on the Berlin Turnpike, Harpers Ferry Road, Sawmill Lane (a one-lane tributary of Harpers Ferry

Road), Hesketh Lane (another gravel road on Short Hill Mountain), and Short Hill Mountain Road.

Collectively, these developments will add about 1,600 vehicle trips per day to the existing traffic in northwestern rural Loudoun. Much of that traffic will funnel into the congested intersections on the north side of Purcellville.

Those who are affected by this random, unplanned rural development frequently ask: “how can this be happening, since it doesn’t seem to make much sense?”

The short answer is that cluster subdivision development is permitted

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Are non-profit funds being used for political social events?

Dear Editor:

As a long-time supporter of Blue Ridge Hospice—a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to which I have dedicated both time and financial resources—I was deeply disheartened to learn that the organization sponsored a political social event, on October 4 in Winchester. The event was entirely unrelated to its mission.

This organization is a truly amazing end of life caring facility, whose mission statement is, “committed to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Fighting for commuter rail to Loudoun

Dear Editor:

A year ago, I wrote a letter to the editor proposing to bring back the W&OD as a commuter rail line. I received a wave of public support, getting emails from people across the region who loved the project. I worked alongside them to build NOVA-TRAC, a group that would be a voice for improving public transit. Together, we worked tirelessly to build the group that would advocate for bringing back the W&OD.

After months of hard work and preparation, we launched on Jan. 13, with over a dozen local business and nonprofit supporters.

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Council rescinds December appointment to Planning Commission and more

BY VALERIE CURY

On Jan. 8, the new Purcellville Town Council voted 4-3 to rescind the Dec. 10 decision regarding Committees, Commissions, and Boards. In December, then Vice Mayor Erin Rayner, and Council Members Kevin Wright, Mary Jane Williams, and Caleb Stought had voted to appoint then-Mayor Stan Milan—who had just lost his reelection

bid—to the Planning Commission. The issue, however, was that the Planning Commission seat at the time was not vacant; it was occupied by then-Council Member Chris Bertaut. Mayor Chris Bertaut, along with Vice Mayor Ben Nett, who had been appointed as Vice Mayor, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted to rescind Milan’s appointment, citing legal concerns. Council

Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright and Caleb Stought voted against the motion. The controversy surrounding the December appointment traces back to earlier decisions made by the previous Town Council. In August 2024, the majority of the council voted not to renew the terms of three long-serving Planning Commissioners who were known for their commitment to slow growth and adherence

to the Town’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan. As a result, the December vote to appoint Milan was seen as an attempt to align the Planning Commission with a more pro-growth agenda—before the newly elected council could make its own appointments. Mayor Bertaut addressed the legal implications, stating, “It is not lawful for a town council to appoint an individual to a Committee, Commission or Board in advance of a vacancy in that Committee, Commission or Board.” Town Attorney John Cafferky further clarified that there are three court cases and an Attorney General opinion from

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Urge Surfing: A mindful approach to managing cravings and impulses

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

Urge surfing is a mindfulness-based technique designed to help individuals navigate the discomfort of cravings or impulses without succumbing to them. This powerful tool, first introduced by Dr. Alan Marlatt, a pioneer in addiction research, provides a practical and effective way to manage urges associated with bad habits that are difficult to control. Whether you're trying to quit smoking, or you're struggling to manage your drinking or emotional eating or other impulsive actions, urge surfing offers a pathway to greater self-awareness, emotional balance and positive behavioral change.



DR. MIKE

What Is Urge Surfing?

Urge surfing is a practice rooted in mindfulness and acceptance-based therapies, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention. The technique involves observing the physical and emotional sensations of an urge without acting on it, allowing it to rise and fall naturally, much like a wave in the ocean.

The concept is straightforward but profoundly impactful: just as ocean waves crest and eventually break, so too do urges follow a predictable cycle of rising intensity before subsiding. By visualizing urges as waves and learning to “surf” them, you can move through the discomfort without engaging in the habitual behaviors that previously followed.

Rather than viewing urges as enemies to be fought or suppressed, urge surfing encourages you to adopt a curious, non-judgmental attitude. This shift in perspective fosters resilience, and a greater sense of control over your actions.

The Science Behind Urge Surfing

Urge surfing works because it leverages key principles of mindfulness and neuroplasticity. Let's explore the science behind its effectiveness:

- **Urges Are Temporary:** Research shows that cravings and impulses typically last no longer than 20-30 minutes if left unmet. While they may feel overwhelming in the moment, their intensity naturally diminishes over time. By resisting the urge to act, you give your brain the opportunity to rewire its response to these triggers.
- **Breaking the Habit Loop:** Many habits, including those involving addictive substances or emotional eating, operate on a cycle of trigger, behavior, and reward. Urge surfing interrupts this loop by introducing a mindful pause between the trigger and the behavior. Over time, this reduces the brain's association between the trigger and the habitual response.
- **Reduces Emotional Reactivity:** When we experience an intense urge, it's common to feel anxious, frustrated, or even ashamed. These emotions can amplify the craving, making it harder to resist.

Urge surfing helps you approach urges with a sense of calm and detachment, which diminishes their emotional impact.

- **Strengthens Self-Control:** Practicing urge surfing builds mental and emotional resilience. Each time you successfully ride out an urge, you reinforce your ability to manage discomfort and exert self-control.

How to Practice Urge Surfing

Step 1: Become Aware of the Urge: The first step is to recognize when an urge arises. This might involve physical sensations, such as a tightness in your chest, a fluttering in your stomach, or a rapid heartbeat. You may also notice specific thoughts or emotions tied to the urge, like “I need this now” or a sense of restlessness. Awareness is key because it creates the opportunity to pause and observe rather than react.

Step 2: Name and Acknowledge the Urge: Once you've identified the urge, take a moment to name it. You might say to yourself, “Here's the urge to eat when I'm not hungry” or “I'm noticing the urge to check my phone during a meeting.” Acknowledging the urge helps you create distance between yourself and the craving, reinforcing the idea that you are not your urge—it's simply a passing experience.

Step 3: Observe Without Judgment: Instead of labeling the urge as “bad” or something to be fought against, approach it with curiosity and neutrality. Ask

yourself, “What does this urge feel like in my body? Where do I notice the sensation most strongly?” Focus on observing the physical sensations and the ebb and flow of the craving without attaching any judgment.

Step 4: Visualize the Wave: Picture the urge as a wave in the ocean. Notice how it starts small, gradually builds in intensity, and eventually peaks before breaking and receding. This visualization can help you stay grounded and remind you that the discomfort is temporary.

Step 5: Breathe Through the Discomfort: While riding the wave, practice deep, steady breathing. Inhale slowly for a count of four, hold for a moment, and exhale for a count of six. This not only helps calm your nervous system but also provides a focal point to anchor your attention.

Step 6: Wait It Out: Commit to staying with the urge until it naturally fades. This might take a few minutes but remember that urges are like waves—they always subside. As you notice the intensity beginning to decrease, take a moment to reflect on your success. You've just strengthened your ability to manage future urges.

Real-Life Applications of Urge Surfing

Here are a few scenarios where this technique can be particularly helpful:

Addiction Recovery: For individuals recovering from substance use disorders, urge surfing is an invaluable tool for managing cravings without relapse. By learning to ride out the intense waves of desire for drugs or alcohol, individuals can maintain sobriety and build long-term resilience.

Emotional Eating: Many people turn to food to cope with stress, boredom, or emotional pain. Urge surfing offers an

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Council majority takes the reigns, rejects Valley Commerce Center annexation

BY VALERIE CURY

Wasting no time, the new Purcellville Town Council majority voted 4-3 to reject the Valley Commerce Center annexation request. At their Jan. 8 Special Meeting Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, who had just been appointed Vice Mayor, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted to deny the annexation request, with Council Member Erin Rayner saying "I decline to vote on this matter," Council Member Caleb Stought said, "I won't vote on this issue" and Council Member Kevin Wright voted present.

The 118.81-acre Valley Commerce Center annexation application request to the Town of Purcellville is for 1,274,982-square feet of industrial and is located along the eastern side of Purcellville Road north of Rt. 7. The parcel is zoned Joint Land Management Area-3 and is in the County. If built at its allowed use it can be developed for 39 homes.

On Sept. 1, 2023, the County Planning Department weighed in on the owner's County application request because

the owner has two requests for the same rezoning, one at the Town level and one at the County level.

According to the County Planning Department's memo, "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."

The department further encouraged the applicant to have "further discussions with the Town of Purcellville pertaining to" annexation. They concluded, "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."

At the Jan. 8 Special Meeting, Council

Member Carol Luke said the residents "do not want industrial there." She said residents want the current zoning of one house per 3-acres. "I think we got a large response when we talked about it in many of the meetings we have had on this proposal."

Mayor Chris Bertaut said the annexation request by Chuck Kuhn came before Town Council at the second quarter of last year. "That application does not meet specific requirements set forth in Plan Purcellville 2030 which is our Comprehensive Plan for land uses in the area where the proposed annexation would have occurred.

"And in addition, public opinion as measured by a survey by the residents of Mayfair and some of the surrounding communities were strongly against this annexation application," said Bertaut.

He later explained in a 2024 meeting the then Town Council majority directed the Town Manager and planning staff to gather additional information regarding the proposed annexation by means of a Memorandum of Understanding between the town and the applicant.

At that same meeting, then Mayor Stan Milan, justifying his position to continue

with the annexation application said to a room full of citizens opposed to the project, "I'm just trying to find out more information, people."

Bertaut said, "To this date no MOU has been completed between those parties. The information sought would not have altered the clear direction given by both the nearby residents and our town residents." Bertaut reiterated the application did not comply with the 2030 Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Council Member Erin Rayner complained that the annexation discussion lacked both a staff report and supporting information. She pointed to a previous council majority, including herself, who had voted to proceed with the annexation by gathering more information.

Vice Mayor Ben Nett said he "listened to and heard the residents of the town especially those in Mayfair," and he was ready to take a vote.

Council Member Susan Khalil said "there is a lot of attention needed to the current infrastructure of our town, and to bring in additional property into our town is putting the cart before the horse.

"In my campaign the residents that I spoke with do not want the annexation; this annexation will not be good for our town." Khalil said it will bring more traffic [approximately 3,527 weekday trips] and she didn't believe that the water can

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Public comment debate over war in Gaza continues into the new year

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

Since April, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors meetings have become increasingly flooded with comments about the war in Gaza.

A statement posted by Vice Chair Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) on April 4, 2024 catalyzed the debate. Briskman posted a statement titled “Statement on Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza” on X supporting an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The statement was printed on Board of Supervisors letterhead and was posted from Briskman’s supervisor account, @SupBriskman.

Briskman’s statement was not unique. According to NPR, over 100 U.S. cities and towns have passed ceasefire resolutions over the war in Gaza, including Atlanta, Detroit, and St. Louis. On Feb. 27, 2024 the Harrisonburg City Council became the first city government in Virginia to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The resolution also called for humanitarian aid to be sent to Gaza and

for negotiation to secure the release of hostages.

These municipal demands for a ceasefire come as the United States remains one of the nine United Nations member nations opposed to the UN’s resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza. According to an article posted to the UN’s website on Dec. 11, the United States opposes to the resolution because it “risks sending a dangerous message” to Hamas that “there is no need to negotiate or release the hostages.”

At the Loudoun board’s April 16 business meeting, the first business meeting following Briskman’s post, thirteen Loudoun residents spoke at the public input sessions about Briskman’s actions. The speakers expressed concerns about the divisiveness of Briskman’s statements, adding that international conflicts are not within the board’s purview as a county-level governing body.

“Throughout the county, many people were hurt and affected by what was said

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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Sweet Run State Park

BY TIM JON

"It has a new name," I thought, "so I'll take another look." See, ever since I'd moved to Loudoun County in the late 1990's, this place had been called the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship; a mouthful, I know, but the actual site was even bigger. Much bigger. Weighing in at around nine hun-



Tim Jon

drecent acres, this local open space behemoth spends most of its days quietly resting along the Mountains in its former name, up near Harpers Ferry, close to the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. I'd tramped around the place a time or two, and even considered staging some outdoor Shakespeare on the grounds, back when we all were somewhat richer in youth. One of my first stories in this series (dating back to the fall of 2010) came about after an invigorating autumn hike across some of the meadows and into the deep woods of the lower trails in the southern portion of the facility.

But today's foray of verbal adventure follows our intrepid traveler on one of the hottest days of a recent summer, exploring new territory and placing a new name on the title: "Sweet Run State

Park." It was just as hard as ever to spot the turn-off from Harpers Ferry Road, and the gravel entrance and approach to the parking area was as primitive as on my first visit, so I felt like rekindling an old friendship.

Now, if you're familiar with the Blue Ridge Mountains, you understand that they're not the Swiss Alps, but they do involve some elevation. Inclement weather visitors will remember that a cold rain in the valley can mean dangerous, icy conditions up on 'the mountain.'

I was also reminded, on this latest visit to one of my favorite local places, of just how much work is involved in tramping up and down those slopes, which can feature rocks, roots, mud, leaves and other, unexpected impediments to one's travels.

I mentioned that this was a hot day, and I gave myself no mercy in choosing a walking route about the acreage. I took a general circular pattern, much indented with zigs and zags which followed—usually—the path of least resistance.

But, between the heat, the heights, the rocks, the roots, the fallen trees, the twists and turns and to me, at least—a

confusing array of trail markers (some for hikers, some for horseback riders, and all for the consternation of a weary [and rapidly aging] storyteller), I was dripping perspiration and exercising my breathing apparatus like a city boy



behind a hay-baler.

I kept telling myself it was good therapy to work my body at this level; then I repeated this lecture to myself, again ... and again: after about the 'dozenth' time I'd delivered this message, I started hearing a few cat-calls from the 'back row of seats' in whatever classroom I was imagining. These voices grew louder with each step, and louder with each hundred yards, and louder, still, with

each mile I was logging on this sweltering afternoon in the deep woods (I was, however, very grateful for the effects of the nearly complete shade from all the mature hardwoods among these acres); I finally came to the realization that, yes, indeed, it would be nice after a couple of hours of repeatedly climbing and descending, to reach my vehicle, and to actually sit down. And do nothing.

And, yes, I wearily trudged my way back to my car and enjoyed the re-discovery of the comforts of civilization: a seated position, a refreshing drink, a 21st Century music system, and a cessation of the plodding, sweating, confusing miles I'd left behind.

Oh! But I had images of my travails: in my mind's eye, I saw the moving canopy of green, and the winding, uneven and unending trail system I'd been trying to follow; I also had (I hoped, anyway!) a digitally-recorded series of photographs to jog my personal memory bank, and to prove to the rest of the universe that I was, indeed, here on this day. And this was all good.

So—I can look back on at least two very distinct visits to this expansive public resource—a pleasant autumn, blue-bird day stroll, and a sweltering summer

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Purcellville Council clears path for removal of Northern Collector Road

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Jan. 14 Purcellville Town Council meeting, the council voted 4-3 to approve a motion to remove the Northern Collector Road from the Townwide Transportation Plan. It will now proceed to the Purcellville Planning Commission for a public hearing, followed by a recommendation to the Town Council, which will also hold a public hearing and vote on whether or not to remove the Northern Collector Road.

GOVERNMENT

Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted in favor of the motion, while Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought voted against it.

Bertaut explained, “The purpose of this motion is to remove referenced to the Northern Collector Road from our Town Transportation Plan in order to pave the way, so to speak, for the County to remove it from their Transportation Plan.” It first has to go to the Planning Commission so it can be instituted as a Comprehensive Plan amendment, said Bertaut.

He said therefore it will make it “a completely dead issue. It’s not dead until it’s gone from the County Transportation Plan.”

The process would first be to remove all references to the Northern Collector Road from Purcellville’s Plan, then transmit a letter to the County to do the same.

If this road were to be built it would go right through the Mayfair Community

turning it into a Thorofare.

Rayner said, “I want to make clear that the Northern Collector Road is not going through. That project is dead in the water. Just removing it without a traffic study is illogical.”

The Northern Collector Road was put on the Town Wide Transportation Plan and the County Plan without any studies, however.

Stought said, “The road is not going through. By that statement—it’s not going through. I don’t see what the benefit of removing the road without a study. Let’s leave it where it is and do a new transportation study, when the time comes.”

Nett then asked Stought, “Do I misunderstand you? It seems like you are

against the road.” To which Stought replied, “I am against extending the road through Mayfair Crown Drive.”

Khalil then said, “If what you are saying is true, there shouldn’t be any objection to having it removed. This way it’s memorialized. There’s no question going forward and anybody who comes in after us who is not aware of what the last council decided—we won’t be open to somebody trying to resurrect that.”

The motion passed 4-3 with Bertaut, Nett, Luke and Khalil voting to send it to the Planning Commission to start the process for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to remove the Northern Collector Road from the Townwide Transportation Plan.

Supervisors vote in favor of art center

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

At the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors’ Jan. 22 business meeting, the supervisors took a step towards building an art center in eastern Loudoun, designating \$500,000 for its design.

A group of citizens began reaching out to the Board asking for a second arts center in eastern Loudoun County in 2022. The citizens expressed that some community groups’ performances have outgrown school auditoriums and the Franklin Park Arts Center. The Board heard more public input about the community desire for a second facility at board meetings.

GOVERNMENT

“Our dream is to have a place for patrons to experience various forms of performing and visual arts,” Bobbie Christman, a member of Citizens for the Arts, said at the Jan. 22 meeting. “Our dream is for a place to give our youth an opportunity to develop their art

participation, for families to have shared experiences, for adults, young and old, to have a date night, and for seniors to enjoy and support the arts. Our dream is for our talented artists to have a dedicated center to call home and expand their audiences.”

The discussion eventually moved to a committee level. Then, the Board added an Eastern Loudoun art center to the Fiscal Year 2024 budget at the April 4, 2023, board business meeting. Since then, a study has been conducted to determine what kind of art center best suits the community out of four options.

The community as well as the supervisors’ staff expressed that a multi-use facility best suits the community. This type of facility would accommodate 650-700 people during performances with additional area to support community/visual arts program.

At the Jan. 22 meeting, the supervisors voted to approve the design of the multi-use facility. Since the community and staff supported this type of facility, the

supervisors did not offer much push back on the type of facility. However, Vice Chair Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) and Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) indicated that they would support building a larger facility to encourage and facilitate growth.

Supervisor Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg) referenced the Board’s previous distinction between “life-enhancing” nonprofits and “lifesaving” nonprofits. She said that art center is clearly a life-enhancing project. She did not support the arts center because she thought that funds should be prioritized toward the lifesaving projects before the Board.

“Clearly, this is a life-enhancing project, but it is not as critical as a number of other responsibilities we have towards the community,” she said. “I’m very concerned that a project of this size and vision is going to take up a vast number of tax dollars that I think if we were going to spend, should be spent on lifesaving services, including mental health, including family services, food security.”

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WAR IN GAZA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

and the statement that came out,” Rabbi Chaim Cohen said at the April 16 meeting. “As a rabbi, I ask that whatever follow up statement needs to happen to correct inaccurate information should be done.”

Cohen thanked the board members for having a private meeting with him and other rabbis prior to the meeting.

At the April 16 meeting, Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) said that the supervisors were not planning to pass or even consider a ceasefire resolution.

“I set the agenda. No supervisor has asked me one time to put a resolution on the agenda and as the person that sets the agenda, were I asked, I would not do that,” Randall said.

Supervisors Laura TeKrony (D-Little River), Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg), Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin), and Matthew Letourneau (D-Dulles) commented that they would not support a ceasefire resolution and thought the board should focus on local issues.

Prior to Briskman’s comment, some public speakers had asked the Board of Supervisors to pass a ceasefire resolution, but the comments received little attention. This changed at the board’s May 7 business meeting when Loudoun resident James Russell appeared in a keffiyeh, a scarf that has become a symbol of the American pro-Palestinian movement.

“We, in the district, collectively compelled our supervisor to make a statement critical of the military campaign in Gaza. Our supervisor, Juli E. Briskman, made that statement, and we appreciate you very much for it. In fact, we wish she’d used even stronger language,” Russell said. “Unfortunately, her statement was met with lacking support from her colleagues on this board.”

Russell said that saying the war in Gaza is not a local issue is a “cretinous position.” He said that Loudoun residents have family members in Gaza and that the United States government is resourcing the war. He asked the board to pass a

resolution calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, a total cessation of arms shipments to Israel, and withholding endorsements for President Biden and for all federal representatives who have voted to support the war.

When Russell walked down the middle aisle of the boardroom to return to his seat after his public comment, another Loudoun resident, Mark Winn, spat at his feet. Randall reprimanded Winn at the meeting and later apologized to Russell at the board’s June 4 business meeting, saying Winn had received a ticket.

“[Briskman] has divided a county between the Jewish community and the Muslim community with no benefit at all to its residents,” Loudoun resident Donna Widawski said at the May 7 meeting.

Throughout the months of June, July, September, and October, a steadily increasing number of pro-Palestinian Loudoun residents joined Russell to comment in support of a ceasefire resolution. Their demands began to include

divestment from any companies that support Israel. They named Raytheon, BAE Systems, and Grumman as such companies.

Members in support of Loudoun’s Jewish community and Israel also appeared at the meetings to oppose a ceasefire resolution. Randall expressed frustration, asking one pro-Israel commenter if he thought the board was considering passing a ceasefire resolution since she had clearly stated multiple times that no resolution would be proposed.

Former candidate for Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Gary Katz explained why he thought people were commenting in opposition to a nonexistent resolution at the board’s Nov. 7 meeting.

“Why are you seeing the Jewish community and allies come out? It’s because you’ve been seeing this board room being used as a platform to amplify antisemitism within the broader county and also to attempt to institutionalize it into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Submitted by Joshua Wolinski, Edward Jones Financial Advisor

At different times, inflation may be high or low, but, except in those rare periods of deflation, it's always with us. During your working years, when you may receive boosts in your salary, you at least have the potential to keep up with inflation—but what happens when you retire? As a retiree, what can you do to cope with the rising cost of living?



JOSHUA WOLINSKI

Here are a few suggestions:

- *Keep some growth potential in your investment portfolio.* During your retirement years, you may want to move your portfolio toward a somewhat more conservative approach by owning investments that offer significant protection of principal. However, these same investments offer little in the way of growth, which means they are susceptible to inflation. Consequently, you'll also need to own a reasonable amount in growth-oriented investments, such as stocks and stock-based securities. Of course, these

investments will fluctuate in value as the financial markets move up and down, but by owning some more conservative investments, you can reduce the overall impact of market volatility on your portfolio.

- *Consider inflation-adjusted bonds.* You might want to consider Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS), which are indexed to the Consumer Price Index, so the principal increases with inflation (and decreases with deflation). Another inflation-adjusted Treasury security is the I bond, which differs from TIPS in that the principal doesn't change but the interest rate does, every six months, based on a combination of a fixed interest rate and the inflation rate. Like all investments, though, TIPS and I bonds have various features and risks of which you should be aware before investing.

- *Delay taking Social Security.* You can start collecting Social Security benefits at 62, but your monthly checks will be much bigger if

you wait until your full retirement age, likely between 66 and 67. You would receive the maximum amount if you waited until 70 before collecting. Of course, if you need the money to help support your retirement, you may not be able to afford to wait, but if you can, your bigger checks can be a big help against inflation.

- *Don't hold too much cash.* During your working years, it's a good idea to have an emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses in liquid, low-risk accounts. And when you're retired, you might want to have up to a year's worth of expenses in such a fund. But be careful about holding too much cash, as it will lose purchasing power each year due to inflation. Instead, when keeping cash, seek the "Goldilocks" solution—not too little, not too much, but just the right amount.

- *Think about extending your employment.* If you like what you do, you might want to

consider working a few years longer than you had originally intended. Not only will you be bringing in more income, but you could also continue to contribute to retirement accounts, including your IRA and 401(k). Even if you don't want to continue working full time, you could do some part-time work or consulting. Any earned income you bring in can help in your fight against inflation.

You can't control the cost of living, but by making some of the moves described above, you can help yourself mount a defense against the effects of inflation during your retirement years. Remember, your individual financial goals and questions deserve individual attention. If you think you might need specific financial advice, please reach out to a local financial

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

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The Cost of Perfection: A Review of *The Substance*

BY NAOMI FRASER

Profound, frightening, and darkly comedic, *The Substance* is a body-horror film centered on fading Hollywood star, Elisabeth Sparkle (Demi Moore). On Elisabeth's 50th birthday, her producer Harvey (Dennis Quaid) fires her under the pretext that she is no longer beautiful enough for TV.

Left humiliated and insecure, Elisabeth stumbles upon a miracle drug called "the substance," which promises to create an enhanced version of herself she can embody every other week. Desperate to regain her beauty and youth, Elisabeth injects herself with the drug, starting down a dangerous path with horrific consequences.

Winner of Best Screenplay at the



NAOMI FRASER

Rating: 5/5

Cannes Film Festival, *The Substance* offers an insightful critique of societal beauty standards and their harmful effects. Though I tend to avoid horror, *The Substance* reeled me in and delivered an enjoyable, thought-provoking experience.

Demi Moore does a phenomenal job portraying Elisabeth. Capturing the role's nuances, Moore creates a complex character who elicits just as much sympathy as frustration. While the audience knows taking *the substance* is a bad decision, Moore's performance allows us to understand Elisabeth's desperation and pain.

She genuinely believes she is worthless as is and will do anything to relive her glory days. Moore's portrayal of this mindset gives Elisabeth depth and highlights how societal pressures can push people into making choices they will later regret.

The Substance makes excellent use of the body-horror genre, creatively condemning the unattainable beauty standards women constantly face. Halfway through the film, Elisabeth decides to extend her time as "Sue" (Margaret Qualley), the younger, enhanced version of herself, beyond the drug's weeklong limit. When she reverts to her normal self, Elisabeth discovers parts of her body deteriorating. As it turns out, any extra time in her new body will cause

irreversible damage to the original.

Nevertheless, Elisabeth continues to overspend her time in Sue, effectively destroying her body in pursuit of perfection. The horrific depiction of Elisabeth's physical decay heightens awareness of the real-world consequences of chasing beauty ideals. Though we've yet to create "the substance," our society does promote an array of drugs, trends, and procedures that promise to produce a "better you." But, as in Elisabeth's case, the negative effects may not become clear until it's too late.

Moving beyond Elisabeth, *The Substance* also delves into the systemic forces in Hollywood, namely, the male

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Governor Youngkin delivers an optimistic State of the Commonwealth address

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

Gov. Glenn Youngkin delivered his 2025 State of the Commonwealth address on Jan. 13, offering a glowing review of Virginia’s growth over the past year.

This address is Youngkin’s final address of his term. He delivered the address later than planned because of weather concerns. He highlighted Virginia’s growing population as a sign that the commonwealth is doing something right. He addressed topics such as education, business, immigration, and taxation.

“Virginia is growing. Virginia is competing. Virginia is winning,” he said.

Government

Education

Youngkin pointed to improvements in Virginia’s education system, expressing excitement over the Virginia Literacy Act and ALL in Virginia. The Virginia Literacy Act is part of an effort to improve literacy outcomes for Virginia’s young learners. The act initiated support to school divisions through tools, resources, technical assistance, and funding. ALL in Virginia increased state funding to school divisions by \$418.3 million in fiscal year 2024.

“Our investments in education have been transformational,” he said. “We have increased investment in K-12 education more than any other General Assembly or Governor has ever.”

Youngkin recently submitted budget amendments to continue Virginia’s investment in education. An

incremental \$517 million will bring Virginia to \$22.1 billion for the biennium, and an additional \$290 million for school construction means that Virginia will have invested a total of nearly \$2 billion in education over the past three years.

Additionally, he plans to continue supporting lab schools (public schools that partner with a college or university to allow students to graduate with a degree at no cost to them). Youngkin is proposing \$50 million for Virginia Opportunity Scholarships. These scholarships will give low-income families \$5,000 scholarships to go toward a high-quality education for their children. Youngkin observed that Maryland, North Carolina, and Washington DC offer similar opportunity scholarships.

“Let’s work together to provide Opportunity Scholarships, expand lab schools, and further career and technical education so parents and students have multiple pathways to a great education,” he said.

Youngkin plans to implement a new School Performance and Support Framework to identify high-performing schools to serve as models for other schools. The Roadmap to Readiness is available to support schools that need intensive help to get back on track.

Though he is optimistic about the trajectory of Virginia’s education system, Youngkin recognized the use of cell phones and social media in schools as an existential crisis. He noted that on average, teens spend seven hours on their phones every day. He connected phone use to rising rates of suicide and depression among teens.

“The cold hard truth is cell phones are damaging the developing minds of young people,” he said.

In July, Youngkin issued Executive Order 33, which provided guidelines for schools to implement cell phone free policies. Schools following those guidelines since the school year started in August should be cell phone free bell-to-bell as they go back to school this January.

“We know local leadership is critical,” he said. “At Middlesex High School, the principal is tracking a dramatic decrease in disciplinary referrals ... and reports that lunch in the cafeteria is loud once again ... because students are talking to each other instead of buried in their phones.”

Economy

Youngkin said that 257,000 more Virginians are working now than in January 2022 when he took office. He expects 65,000 future jobs to come to Virginia thanks to investment and expansion commitments from companies like LEGO, LS Cable, Micron, and Microporous.

“And these are great jobs—jobs that are rocket fuel for our economy, lifting up all Virginians,” Youngkin said.

Youngkin sees tax relief as the pathway to providing more jobs for Virginians. He believes this should start with what he calls “the most hated tax in America”: Virginia’s car tax.

“The Car Tax Credit for Working Class Families will provide a permanent, refundable income tax credit up to \$150 for individuals earning under \$100,000 a year,” he said. “We can fund the first three years with \$1.1 billion of the state’s projected surplus.”

Additionally, Youngkin plans to remove taxes on tips.

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Loudoun Board reduces motor vehicle licensing fee to zero

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted on Jan. 22, to reduce from \$25 to zero the annual licensing fee for motor vehicles, motorcycles and trucks located in the county. The change follows a recommendation the Loudoun County Treasurer's office made in October.

The Board approved the amendment to Chapter 852 of the Codified Ordinances of Loudoun County effective Jan. 1, 2025, which reduces the license fee on vehicles garaged within the county, including within any incorporated town that does not impose its own vehicle license fee.

The change does not apply to vehicles garaged within any incorporated town that

levies its own vehicle license fee.

The Loudoun County Treasurer's office currently collects the licensing fee on behalf of incorporated towns and will continue to do so for towns that continue to levy this fee.

During its Jan. 7, fund balance discussion, the Board did, however, create a grant-in-aid program for incorporated towns that also vote to reduce their vehicle license fee for the 2025 tax year to zero.

For Fiscal Year 2025, the anticipated impact is a loss of \$7.8 million in budgeted county revenue.

View the Jan. 15, Amendment to Chapter 852 of the Codified Ordinance of Loudoun County – Motor Vehicle License Fee staff report.

Public input meeting on Rt. 50 Safety and Operational Study Feb. 3

Loudoun County is hosting a meeting Feb. 3, to gain input from the public on the Route 50 corridor as part of the Route 50 Safety and Operational Study. The study corridor is approximately 14 miles of Route 50 from Northstar Boulevard to the Fauquier County line. The study will identify safety and operational issues and present recommended solutions.

The Route 50 Safety and Operational Study public information meeting is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 3, from 6 to 7:30 p.m., at the Willard Middle School cafeteria, 40915 Braddock Road, Aldie.

At this meeting, the public will receive an update on the study progress and review preliminary concepts to address specific corridor challenges. Following the meeting, a survey will be available at loudoun.gov/Route-50Study to gather more input. The survey will be open until Feb. 18.

More information about the Route 50 Safety and Operational Study,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

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VCE Loudoun Horticulturist helps Senegalese facilitators and farmers

On Dec. 12-26, 2024, Virginia Cooperative Extension Loudoun Commercial Horticulturist Beth Sastre visited Senegal along with Katie Trozzo and A. Ozzie Abaye from Virginia Tech to provide agricultural outreach training for local facilitators and farmers.



Photo by Virginia Cooperative Extension

Training sessions were conducted in two regions of Senegal, Kolda and Sedhiou, to address critical challenges faced by farmers, focusing on soil health, insect life cycles, pest identification, and integrated pest management.

Given the limited resources in Senegal, the program emphasized practical and cost-effective IPM strategies and focused on cultural, mechanical, and biological practices. The program also trained local facilitators who could further share knowledge with farmers.

Two cooking demonstrations in different localities in Sedhiou and one visit to a local farm were also supported. Cooking demonstration activities provided engagement with producers, women, and school principals about incorporating mung beans in school meals to provide higher nutritional intake for students.

A total of 21 facilitators and 20 farmers were trained. Facilitators were awarded Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension certificates of training for successful completion of the program.



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Child care fee reduction program offered for providers

Loudoun County is launching a new Child Care Fee Reduction program intended to extend child care assistance to a wider range of Loudoun families. The American Rescue Plan Act has provided \$1.675 million to fund this program, which will help reduce child care tuition and fees for families. The county is also allocating ARPA funds to directly assist child care providers to enhance the quality of their programs.

The Child Care Fee Reduction program will help fund child care costs for young children up through age 12, providing 50 percent of the cost for qualifying families. The fee reduction is applicable to any licensed child care provider, including in-home providers and daycare centers.

The funds have been granted to Northern Virginia Family Service, which will pay child care tuition for up to two years as long as families qualify. Payments will be made directly to families' child

care providers according to their payment schedule. Funds will be available until October 2026, or until all funds are expended.

To qualify, families must live in Loudoun County, have a child or children from birth through age 12 who need child care, and meet these income guidelines for family size.

The county also has allocated \$286,500 in ARPA funding to assist child care providers in improving the quality of their programs or to use for staff retention. Eligible providers may receive a \$750 grant annually, through December 2026, which may be used for staff bonuses, staff training, environmental quality enhancements or curriculum purchases. To qualify, providers must be based in Loudoun County and licensed to operate in Virginia.

For more information and to apply, visit loudoun.gov/ChildCareAssistance.

Family Size	Maximum Yearly Income (as of April 1, 2024)
2	\$99,050
3	\$111,450
4	\$123,800
5	\$133,750
6	\$143,650
7	\$153,550
8	\$163,540

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\$10 million in federal funding to install electric vehicle charging ports

On Jan. 13, U.S. Senators Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA) announced \$10,797,461 in federal funding for the Virginia Department of Energy to build 392 electric vehicle charging ports at urban and rural tourism destinations across Virginia.

Over half of the 392 chargers will be installed in disadvantaged communities across the Commonwealth to increase EV accessibility for all Virginians. The grant is allocated through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Program, which was made possible by the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*, which both senators helped pass.

"Electric vehicles will help create healthier communities for future generations by reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. However, it's critical that Virginians who choose to purchase EVs have access to charging stations so they can get where they need to go," said the senators. "We're glad the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law we helped pass is bringing this funding to Virginia to install EV charging ports across the Commonwealth, especially in areas that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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Mental health education & substance abuse prevention trainings

Loudoun County offers ongoing mental health education and substance abuse prevention trainings. All trainings are free, but seats are limited and registration is required, with the exception of Rapid REVIVE! The schedule of upcoming classes is as follows:

Adverse Childhood

Experiences training aims to raise awareness of the impact of potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness and substance abuse in adulthood. The training teaches that ACEs prevention is a key to improving a community's well-being.

The next classes will be held: Feb. 10, 12 – 1:30 p.m. and Feb. 24, 12 – 1:30 p.m. For details about the training and to register, visit loudoun.gov/ChildhoodAdversityTraining.

Mental Health First Aid offers training that teaches people how to

identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. The training also teaches the skills that someone needs to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

The next trainings will be held:

- **Adult Mental Health First Aid** (In Person): Feb. 6 & 7, 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. each day. The in-person training will be at the Loudoun County Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services office located at 21641 Ridgetop Circle, Suite 210, Sterling, VA 20166.
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid** (In Person): Feb. 19 & 20, 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. each day. The in-person training will be at the Loudoun County Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse

And the award goes to ...

Purcellville Mayor Chris Bertaut presents the Mayor's Choice Award to Member Mark Shelton and his sister Debralee Beakes of Purcellville for their creation "Black Oak Chili" at the annual American Legion Chili Cookoff Jan. 11 at Post 293 in Purcellville.



and Developmental Services office located at 21641 Ridgetop Circle, Suite 210, Sterling, VA 20166.

For details visit loudoun.gov/MHFirstAid.

REVIVE! is the opioid overdose and naloxone education program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The training is free and anyone who uses opioids or knows someone who is using opioids. Loudoun County offers two versions of the program - Rapid REVIVE! and Virtual REVIVE!

Rapid REVIVE! is a shortened format that allows individuals to complete the training in six minutes.

After watching a short video and then providing their contact information, participants receive free naloxone nasal spray. Visit loudoun.gov/RapidRevive for Rapid REVIVE! in English. Visit loudoun.gov/ReviveEspanol for Rapid REVIVE! in Spanish.

Virtual REVIVE! is a one-hour, scheduled training session that requires registration. Participants who complete the training are also eligible to receive free naloxone nasal spray.

The next scheduled training will be held: Feb. 11, 5 – 6 p.m. For details about the training and to register, visit loudoun.gov/revive.

COUNCIL RESCINDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

1980. "The court has said that you can't make essentially prospective appointments," said Cafferky.

"In this case it was something that wasn't going to start until Jan. 1 and essentially the AG position in these two cases say that's the job of the next council," he said.

Cafferky said Milan wouldn't have started right away on the Planning Commission as the appointment made on Dec. 10 wouldn't have commenced until Jan. 1. "The idea was Milan would have gone into a position that would have become vacant on Jan. 1."

Rayner asked, "You are saying they [the new majority on Town Council] can resend Mr. Milan's appointment to the Planning Commission, correct? Cafferky confirmed, "That's correct."

She also asked if the council had to rescind other appointments they made in December. "No because the other appointments were for vacant seats, and Milan was appointed to a seat which was not vacant," responded Cafferky.

Stought disagreed, arguing that the motion indicated the vacancy "was at the time of the motion—even though the seat didn't become vacant until Jan. 1. Stought noted the motion followed an Oct. 22 2024 majority Town Council decision to replace the council liaison role with a new voting member. "To my mind it would indicate there was a vacancy at the time even though the term didn't start until Jan. 1," he said.

However, Cafferky reiterated that the law prohibits filling a position before it

becomes vacant. The Attorney General's opinion and relevant case law "is saying you can't fill the position prospectively," he said.

Nett subsequently made the motion that the Stan Milan appointment to the Planning Commission be vacated on the grounds that his appointment was made in violation of the AG opinion. The motion was seconded by Khalil.

When asked how he would vote, Stought initially replied, "Get back to me." In the final vote, Stought joined Rayner and Wright in opposing the motion.

In another 4-3 vote, the Town Council restored voting rights to one of its members appointed to the Planning Commission. Mayor Chris Bertaut, who has served on the Planning Commission for the past two years, will continue in his role, as the council voted to retain his position with a 4-3 decision, with Rayner, Wright and Stought voting no.

Bertaut explained that the Town Council has consistently taken an active interest in the Planning Commission, as it has always been a priority for the Council to stay informed about this important committee. He emphasized that a full member of the Town Council has always been knowledgeable about the Planning Commission's activities. He also noted the significant learning curve that new members of the commission often face.

Meals Tax

The majority of the Town Council voted to establish a policy allocating up

to 50 % of the meals tax revenue to the utility fund, as needed. Bertaut, Nett, Luke, and Khalil supported the policy, while Rayner, Wright, and Stought opposed it.

Rayner questioned how the Town Council could make up taking out \$1.6 million out of the General Fund asking, "What are you going to do to replace that?"

Stought said, "Town Staff has recommended against this."

In response Khalil explained, "You all voted on double digit rate increases. This meals tax is not due to go into effect until the next budget. So there's a lot of budget items that are going to be looked at. There's no way we would jeopardize the services of the Town by taking out [over] \$1 million from the General Fund to help our residents with our water bills.

"Our aim is to get rid of these double-digit rate increases and this is a good way to do it. The longer we push this down the road, the more hemorrhaging continues to happen, and we have to stop this hemorrhaging," said Khalil.

Nett said during his campaign he met with the Director of Finance Liz Krens to discuss the issue stating, "I believe our current path of planning double digit utility increases is unsustainable for families and again, I am going to fulfill my promises."

Luke emphasized the need to address the financial burden on residents, saying the decision to raise utility rates was made with little hesitation. "So we can say whatever we want, but what we are trying to do is make this manageable

for the people who live here." Luke said there is left over meals tax and the Town puts it in reserves— "We need to put it to work."

Bertaut said Council needs to take "every opportunity that we can to find these savings opportunities in order to offset up to 50 % of the annual meals tax revenue by the Town. We owe it to the citizens of this Town to make this effort.

Grants

In another 4-3 vote Bertaut, Nett, Luke and Khalil voted to direct the Interim Town Manager to research options for improvement of the grants process. Rayner, Wright and Stought voted present.

Bertaut said the Town process for obtaining and processing grants needs some improvement, and we'd like to see some suggestion from the Interim Town Manager as to how we can better track and process grant applications in order to maximize the flow of money into the Town from non-tax and non-user fee revenue sources."

Khalil said to task the Interim Town Manager to research options for improvements in the grant process "can only help the process right now." She said grants are important to the Town's finances. "To task that person with evaluation and improvement recommendations is not out of line"—and needs to be done immediately to secure those grants, she said.

Luke said that having a Town Manager "right at the beginning to focus on getting grants" would be very positive for the Town.

ANNEXATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

support it. "Overall, it is not a good fit."

Khalil said that there have been threats from council members "that if we don't annex it in, we lose control." She said the property is zoned for one house every 3-acres. "The county is already controlling it, and I would not be in favor at all of annexing that area."

Council Member Caleb Stought said he opposes the project. Before the November election he voted against continuing with the application. But on the Jan. 8 meeting he said the previous Town Council majority voted to continue the discussion and proceed with a MOU. So he wouldn't vote to deny the annexation application.

Stought said there is a parallel application with the County and if the Town Council denies it—the County could approve "a rezoning application for that property." He then said he wouldn't

participate in the vote.

Bertaut pointed out that there are several staff reports on the town website regarding the annexation application. "They are meticulous and full of due diligence in terms of investigation into the merits of this annexation application."

"In terms of the water studies that have been requested, I would counter that they are not needed given that this annexation application does not meet the basic standards set forth in our Comprehensive Plan."

Bertaut said the rezoning in the County is currently on hold because there aren't the utility resources "available at the scale and scope" for a project of this magnitude. So unless he [the owner] resubmits in some other fashion or some other form vastly different than what has been submitted to the County—it's not going forward in that fashion," he concluded.

LETTER: NON-PROFIT FUNDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

making quality end-of-life care available to individuals and families facing serious illness and to support anyone in our community affected by death, dying and loss."

Not knowing why this particular social event appeared in her social media feed, a 17+ year employee of this organization, who does not condone political activism in her personal feed—posted a negative emoji on this event.

Subsequently, she was fired for placing the negative emoji on this event announcement. Upon her firing, she was then told that her employer was the sponsor of the event.

She received no severance, no letter of recommendation, and was fired on the spot.

It is inconceivable to me that a long-time employee would be fired for an innocent expression, not knowing that

the local event was indeed sponsored by her employer—as it was never advertised that her employer was even a sponsor.

There have been several attempts to contact the Board, which initially resulted in a call from their attorney, who informed me that the Board Chair, was fully aware of their sponsorship of the political event.

I am writing seeking full transparency from the entire company Board—not only regarding their knowledge of this political social event sponsorship, but also to raise an important question: how could such a compassionate organization justify firing a long-term employee for innocently placing a single emoji on someone's social media page without knowing this political social event was sponsored by her non-profit employer?

*Becky Hackney
Round Hill*

WAR IN GAZA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

county policy," Katz said. "And some of that has been enabled by this board."

Katz said that Briskman's April 4 post signaled to the Loudoun community that there was an appetite for a ceasefire resolution. He called for the supervisors to rebuke antisemitism in their board comments and to make it clear that there is no appetite for a ceasefire resolution.

During his comment, Katz said that gallery members should be given cough drops as they kept coughing to drown out his words.

Randall followed Katz's comment by saying that she would not stop anyone from speaking but that there would be no resolution coming forward. She also reminded Katz that she had corrected members of the gallery for coughing to drown out his voice while he spoke. She wanted to allow all sides of the issue to be heard.

The tension climaxed at the board's Nov. 19 business meeting, when over 15 public comments were made in support of and in opposition to a ceasefire resolution. One commenter, Maya Bazar, opened her statement by saying, "Good evening board

members; bad evening to the Zionists." Loudoun County resident Carolyn Barrett compared Katz to Adolph Hitler.

"That man condemned my child's cough while aligning with genocide like Adolph, and you have the audacity to call me anti-semitic," Barrett said.

During the meeting, Randall asked commenters to refrain from calling other citizens names.

At their Dec. 3 business meeting, the supervisors used some of their time during board comments to address public comments made on Nov. 19 calling for the board to pass a ceasefire resolution. Supervisors Kershner, Umstattd, and Letourneau said they would consider some of the comments made at the previous meeting antisemitic.

"Many comments were made at the November 19 meeting that were virulently antisemitic," Umstattd said. "Tonight, I would agree with my colleague Mr. Kershner the rhetoric was toned down a bit. Except as one of our Jewish citizens was leaving the board meeting, passing some of the anti-Israeli speakers, they called him a nazi. That is vicious antisemitism."

you'll have to pay the toll to drive to the Metro anyways, and then spend over an hour on the train when the drive only takes 40 minutes.

With the W&OD trail owning a 100-foot-wide strip of land, we can build a rail line that will give commuters a choice for an affordable price, while keeping the trail. A trip from Leesburg to DC would take just 45 minutes on the line. We calculate that building this commuter rail line would cost half as much as the Silver Line, connecting areas that are twice as densely populated.

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acquisition is "very expensive and time consuming." Using the W&OD, the process would be affordable and straightforward as the land belongs to the counties themselves.

So what is NOVA-TRAC doing to make this a reality? Last week, we presented our proposal to the Hamilton town council. We are building support amongst local towns, municipalities, businesses and nonprofits to get a study of the project commissioned.

Want to learn more or get involved? Visit nova-trac.com.

*Ryan Jones
Hamilton*

from the "apartheid state of Israel" and oppose "a slew of overtly oppressive bills" that are currently being considered by the Virginia state legislature.

It was unclear what actions the group believed the board should take to divest from Israel. However, speakers mentioned three bills that they would like the board to oppose: House Bill 2529, House Bill 1650, and Senate Bill 1247.

House Bill 1650 pertains to anti-terrorism. House Bill 2529 prohibits public institutions of higher education from certain divestment practices. Senate Bill 1247 prohibits public institutions of higher education from making agreements with countries of concern to the United States.

Umstattd was the only board member to address the Gaza issue during board comments.

"Israel allows Arab citizens, Muslim citizens, Christian citizens, as well as Jewish citizens to have full voting rights, representation in government, and equal access to public services," she said. "Calling Israel an apartheid state trivializes the suffering of those who actually endured apartheid."

LETTER: COMMUTER RAIL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

So why the W&OD? Wasn't the railway abandoned for a reason? Well, when it was abandoned, Loudoun County had a population of 37,000. Now, Loudoun is home to over 420,000 people and is the fastest growing county in the DC area. Things have changed.

Now, with Loudoun's soaring population, roads are seeing increasing traffic and commuters are left with few options. Want to escape the traffic? You have to pay to take 267. Want to use public transit? If you don't live within walking distance of the Metro,

ROUTE 50 SAFETY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

including a link to sign up for updates, is available at loudoun.gov/Route50Study.

Anyone who requires an accommodation for any type of disability or needs language assistance in order to participate in the meeting may call 703-737-8035 or send an email. Three business days' notice is requested.



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The Birds of Mars exhibition of drawings at 8 Chains North Gallery

The Birds of Mars is an exhibition of limited edition prints by local artists and author George J. Haas at the 8 Chains North Gallery, 38593 Daymont Ln, in Waterford. The hours are Monday-Thurs- day: 12-5. Friday: 12-8. Saturday-Sunday: 11-6, and the phone num- ber is (571) 439-2255. The exhibit runs through Feb. 28 and includes drawings of birds that also appear as geoglyphic formations on the surface of Mars and featured in his book *The Great Architects of Mars* (Bear & CO).

COMMUNITY



Meet the author for a Q&A and a book signing on Feb. 15, from 2-4p.m.

George J. Haas is the founder and pre- mier investigator of the Mars research group *The Cydonia Institute* and a mem- ber of the *Society for Planetary SETI Research*. His research encompasses over 30 years of study and analysis of NASA images of Mars.

Haas is a painter and sculptor and has exhibited extensively throughout the New York area and was the director of the Sculptors' Association of New Jersey. He has studied the art and iconography of North and South American cultures and was a member of both the Pre-Colum- bian Societies at the University of Penn- sylvania and in Washington DC. He has coauthored two books and six science papers, related to anomalous formations on Mars. He has appeared on the History Channels *Ancient Aliens*; *The Proof is out There* and *The UnXplained*.

His current book *The Great Archi- tects of Mars* examines a wide variety of anomalous structures and geoglyphic formations observed on Mars that dis- plays a high degree of geometric and symbolic design.

The book examines Carl Sagan's famous three-side pyramids and fea- tures a keyhole-shaped formation that is identical in design to ancient tombs found in Japan. The book also features a small dove-shaped geoglyph with a large flowing tail and a giant parrot-shaped geoglyph that possesses an astounding 22 points of anatomical correctness with terrestrial parrots.

Haas said, "I find it amazing that NASA has photographed many avian forma- tions on the surface of Mars that highly resemble birds found right here on Earth. I invite art lovers and bird watchers alike to visit the 8 Chains North Gallery, have a glass of wine and explore the Birds of Mars for themselves."

URGE-SURFING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

alternative by helping you sit with those feelings without using food to numb or distract yourself. Over time, this can fos- ter a healthier relationship with eating.

Impulse Control in Everyday Life: Whether it's resisting the urge to scroll through social media, avoiding unnec- essary online purchases, or managing anger in a heated moment, urge surfing helps you respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively.

Stress and Anxiety Management: Urge surfing isn't limited to physical cravings—it can also be used to manage the urge to avoid or escape uncomfort- able emotions. By staying present with the sensations of anxiety or stress, you develop a greater capacity to tolerate emotional discomfort.

Tips for Success

Practice Regularly: Like any skill, urge surfing requires consistent prac- tice. Start with small, manageable urges and gradually work your way up to more intense ones.

Be Patient: It's natural to feel frus- trated if the urge feels overwhelming at first. Remember, each attempt is a step toward building resilience.

Seek Support: If you're struggling with particularly strong cravings or impulses, consider working with a therapist.

Michael Oberschneider, Psy.D. "Dr. Mike" is a clinical psychologist in private practice. He can be reached at 703-723- 2000, and is located at 44095 Pipeline Plaza, Suite 240, Ashburn.

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Middleburg holds winter weekend sale

Join the town of Middleburg Feb. 14-17, for the 14th annual Winter Weekend Sale. During the Winter Weekend Sale, visitors will be able to hunt for some wonderful gifts for themselves and others while experiencing the small-town charm of Middleburg. Many local stores and restaurants will be providing special deals throughout the weekend. Just look for the blue and white balloons outside participating stores!

The 14th annual Winter Weekend Sale is sponsored by the Town of Middleburg and the Middleburg Business &

Professional Association.

The Town of Middleburg sale will include businesses along Washington St., Pendleton St., Madison St. and Federal Street, in Middleburg.

The Winter Weekend Sale will be held Friday, Feb. 14 through Monday, Feb. 17. Business hours for the sale will be Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday and Monday as posted by shops.

For additional information, contact the Middleburg Town Office at 540-687-5152. Follow Visit Middleburg on Facebook and Twitter for updates.

Interactive map presentation to highlight the history of Dulles Airport

Gibran Parvez will showcase Heritage Dulles, an interactive map that highlights the history of the Dulles Airport area across different time periods, on Thursday, Feb. 6, at 10 a.m.

The event will take place at Thomas Balch Library where participants will travel through time using an online interactive map-based museum, which is the culmination of research from a litany of sources, focused on hamlets and historical sites that stood within and around today's Dulles Airport.

Developed with the use of resources at

Thomas Balch Library, Heritage Dulles brings forth never-before-seen research and photography to illustrate what life was like in the age of turnpikes and railroads, all from a web browser to anywhere in the world.

The presentation will be held in-person and virtually. Pre-registration is required. Please call 703-737-7195, email balchlib@leesburgva.gov, or register online.

Gibran Parvez is a graduate of the University of Mary Washington and works in the GIS field in Northern Virginia.



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Presented with support from the Friends of Franklin Park Arts Center.

Calling all brides for a Bridal Bonanza at Nostalgia Boutique

Calling all brides-to-be. Get ready for the ultimate wedding shopping event of the season—**COMMUNITY** “Bridal Bonanza” is here, bringing you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shop for your dream wedding dress at prices you won’t believe. This exclusive event offers up to 90% off retail prices on a stunning selection

of designer wedding gowns.

Join us on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Nostalgia Boutique, located in Purcellville, for an unforgettable shopping experience. Whether you're planning a grand affair or an intimate celebration, "Bridal Bonanza" has a dress for every bride. This event is hosted by Silas Redd, owner of Nostalgia Boutique

and Mister on Main, located at 142 E. Main Street in Purcellville.

“Bridal Bonanza” is a dream come true for budget-savvy brides looking to make their wedding day magical without breaking the bank. With limited quantities available, early arrival is highly recommended to secure the gown of your dreams. All dresses are new with tags or samples from designers that have liquidated their overstocked items.

“We are always looking to add
CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



GOVERNOR YOUNGKIN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Youngkin said that the Virginia Clean Economy Act, which was passed in 2020, is not working because it didn't account for the economic and job growth that occurred under Youngkin. He said the act drives up rates, drives down reliability, and constricts Virginia's economic growth.

He says Virginia is importing too much of its power needs. He wants Virginia to stop decommissioning its baseload generation, build more natural gas generation, build small modular reactors, finish the projects already underway, and pursue innovative technologies.

“This is embracing innovation over regulation,” Youngkin said. “This is delivering affordable reliable, and yes,

increasingly clean energy that will power Virginia's future."

Youngkin supported building more data centers in Virginia, saying that local communities should be able to exercise their rights in regard to land use. He said that different communities would make differing decisions regarding data centers, but that local communities needed to be able to make their own decisions.

“Data centers alone support 74,000 jobs, bringing in \$9.1 billion in Virginia GDP, and generate billions of dollars in local revenue, supporting education, public safety, and critical local services,” Youngkin said. “We should continue to be the data center capitol of the world and make sure Richmond is doing what is necessary to support that goal.”

Community Safety

Youngkin said that Virginia needs to do a better job of supporting pregnant mothers and babies. He said that 80 percent of pregnancy related deaths are preventable. He believes this year's budget will allow for more medical interventions on behalf of mothers and babies.

“To keep Virginia soaring we need to keep Virginia healthy,” he said. “We must continue to support the health and well being of all Virginians. Critically, that includes moms and babies.”

Youngkin said that healthier communities would decrease drug use. He said that 45 days of “the most aggressive drug interdiction campaign in the history of the commonwealth” resulted in the seizure of 16,000 pounds of illicit opioids,

1000 arrests, and the seizure of 275 guns.

“And we are starting to see a decline in overdose deaths from illicit drugs, declining 23% in Virginia,” Youngkin said.

Though Youngkin is optimistic about Virginia's future, he encouraged Virginians to keep pushing forward to keep up with their neighbors.

“As you have heard me say before, our neighbors in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida have been growing rapidly,” he said. “They are going to keep pushing forward, just as we must ... in quality education and healthcare, lowering the cost of living by providing tax relief, building strong economies, and providing safe communities.”



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Leesburg to hold career expo on Tuesday, Feb. 25

The Leesburg Youth Career Expo will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 25, at Loudoun County High School, 415 Dry Mill Road, SW, from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Hosted by the Town of Leesburg's Department of Economic Development, this event provides job seekers with the chance to connect directly with local businesses across various industries, including retail, sales, hospitality, technology, trades, recreation, and more.

Several opportunities will be available including seasonal, part-time, full-time, and entry-level positions, as well as internships. Some employers will be conducting on-the-spot interviews and hiring during the event.

To view the list of participating employers and pre-register, visit <https://chooseleesburg.com/business-community/business-events/>.

Job seekers are encouraged to skip the registration line by pre-registering here. Employers who are interested in participating can also apply online. For more information about the expo, please contact Melanie Scoggins at msscoggins@leesburgva.gov or 571-271-1206.

"IT'S NOT FREE MONEY," CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

stabilization for a parking garage at the Ashburn Metro Station.

During the Jan. 7 meeting, the Board approved the above recommendations from the FGOEDC and voted to also add a sanitary district program and a town vehicle license fee revenue replacement grant program for tax year 2025 to the list of Board-directed uses.

Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) opened the floor by addressing negative press surrounding the particularly large amount of unassigned fund balance left over from FY2024.

"There has been some reporting on the unassigned fund balance that has been, maybe not purposely misleading, but has definitely missed the mark on what a fund balance is and how it should be used ... It's not a slush fund, it's not free money, it's not pet projects—it's really money that is already accounted for because it rolls right into the next year," said Randall.

Staff member Megan Bourke, director at the County Administrator's office, explained to the Board that "an unassigned fund balance is an accumulation of prior years' fund balances that, if it goes unspent in the subsequent process, continues to accumulate."

"The Board has been very purposeful in programming that unassigned fund balance to already articulated priorities of the Board or current capital projects of the Board, as well as adhering to your fiscal policy, which is to cash fund

your capital program in the next year," Bourke continued.

"A significant amount of the unassigned fund balance recommendations that you have tonight are either sending the unassigned fund balance to meet your cash contribution requirement for FY2026, or replenishing contingency accounts in this year's budget to support your capital programs, so that you're not having to issue additional debt in the future."

Randall said, "I never assume that our publications are saying something that is purposely incorrect, but having read all the stories, I have felt that—if you don't know what this is, they can be misleading, and they have resulted in people saying that 'Well, you've got this much money left to spend, you've got \$250 million, I want you to send it back' and that's just not true."

"It's not real money ... That amount of money is not what we actually have to use or spend. Quite frankly, we have been able to lower the tax rate year over year because we do approach these things very conservatively." Randall then asked Supervisor Matthew Letourneau, (R-Dulles) to provide his thoughts.

"One of the confusing pieces is the concept that we should be giving money back because there's a surplus. Effectively, what a significant part of this motion is doing is actually that—but the way that it's doing that is by applying that fund balance to expenditures that would otherwise be in the operating

budget in future years.

"If we weren't addressing some of these items, such as cost overruns on capital projects for LCPS and County ... then we would have to include those in the upcoming budget and that would increase the tax rate," Letourneau explained.

"The other thing is, some citizens have raised the question 'Why wouldn't we simply just rebate the money?' The money has to be rebated proportionally back to those users who aren't spending it. In this case, a significant part of our revenue is coming from the data center industry, so that's where most of the 'rebate' would go to; it wouldn't be to individual citizens."

"This is a better way to approach this," Letourneau continued. "A significant part of this is going into our reserves in order to meet our fiscal policy, in order to have a certain percentage of our funding available for future uses should they be needed in the event of an emergency, as well as a revenue stabilization fund that we created."

"These are good uses of funding, it's not simply that the board is just deciding to spend a lot of this money willy-nilly. This is all very well thought out and a component of our overall budgeting strategy that will allow us hopefully to have a lower tax rate in the future, as well as some of the other things that we're doing, such as lowering the vehicle personal property tax rate," Letourneau concluded.

PURCELLVILLE'S LEADERSHIP SHIFT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The meeting began with Council Member Kevin Wright asking to hold the closed meeting, which according to the agenda, was "to discuss and consider the employment of an existing employee of the public body and to discuss the appointment of an Interim Town Manager" in public "for the purpose of transparency," he said.

"That's impermissible," said Town Attorney John Cafferky. "That's not something that I would recommend given the fact that the substance of the closed meeting has to do with legal matters and legal advice." Cafferky said that personnel matters are always discussed in closed session.

Wright asked, "But if the individual we are discussing is willing to have that, would that be an issue?"

Cafferky explained "it's not just the interest of the individual or individuals. It's the interest of the Town Council. The Town Council is really the one that has the attorney client privilege, so that's why those type of discussions are typically held in closed session."

Pressing, Wright asked, "But not mandated, just typically?" Cafferky responded, "Well the Town Council can I suppose waive the attorney client privilege, but it's not something I can recommend."

Wright said there was no guarantee that there would be a legal issue and the closed session was just "discussing employment of an existing employee."

Cafferky explained that the expectation would be that there would be legal issues and ramifications discussed.

Rayner said the agenda had just come out—even though it came out three days prior to the meeting.

Disregarding the attorney's advice, Council Member Wright called for a vote to hold the meeting in public. His motion failed 3-4 with Mayor Bertaut, and Council Members Nett, Luke and Khalil voting against.

When the Town Council came back into session after one hour in closed session, they voted to remove Bremseth and appointed Kwasi Fraser as Interim Town Manager. The motion passed 4-3 with Bertaut, Nett, Luke and Khalil voting for.

Fraser is a 19-year resident of the Town of Purcellville. He has a Bachelor of Engineering in Engineering Science from Stony Brook University and a Master of Business Administration in Finance from Rutgers University. Additionally, he completed Executive Education from Harvard Business School. As mayor, he reduced the Town's debt by \$10 million, and voted against two annexation requests.

Amid heated opposition from Rayner, Wright and Stought who repeatedly interrupted, questioned the process, and insinuated that the new majority had held a private meeting to discuss Fraser's appointment, Bertaut said, "This was the best path forward to achieve our goals and objectives as stated to the public when we ran for election."

Nett said that the Council just had a robust discussion in closed session, on the advice of the town attorney "so we would not attach civil liability to this body, this town—enough of that has taken place over the course of the last several years."

"We've had numerous informal discussions just like you have had numerous informal discussions on a variety of topics with your running mates, your fellow

council members with whom you have just enjoyed a 5-2 majority over the course of the last couple years, correct?"

"So elections have consequences," said Nett. "We ran on our agenda. We were very open and honest with folks—I was as I held events, as I went door to door. I intend to fulfill my campaign promises."

"Now, naturally many people will not like that, but a majority as evidenced by the most recent election will," said Nett.

Khalil said, "As far as the current town manager, in my campaign, I scoured through a lot of financial information and could not figure out why certain things have happened or weren't happening, and there really could be no explanation for the existence of the things that I was seeing for them to be endorsed by the town manager."

Khalil said during her campaign she had several conversations with Kwasi Fraser and she supports his vision for the town. "He is extremely knowledgeable about how to turn things around, and so when it came to my opinion as to whether or not he could be a good interim—yes, I was all for it."

Concluded Khalil, "I support Mr. Fraser because I support his vision for the town."

Luke said the town has been through this process several times and she agreed with the change of town manager. She said a lot of the things that have happened have not been comfortable to the majority of town residents.

"I think it is appropriate that we do this and move forward for Mr. Bremseth's sake and for the town's sake," said Luke.

THE COST OF PERFECTION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

gaze, that perpetuate societal beauty ideals. Coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey, the male gaze describes the practice of depicting women in media through a masculine, heterosexual lens that reduces them to objects of male desire.

The Substance gives us a glimpse into how this process works. From male judges selecting Elisabeth's replacement based solely on appearance to male directors sexualizing dancers through choreography and camera work, the male gaze dictates every step in creating Harvey's new show.

While these portrayals are exaggerated for comedic effect, they shine a light on the male gaze's power over the media we consume. By exposing these dynamics, *The Substance* invites viewers to question the deeply ingrained standards of beauty and desirability

perpetuated by the entertainment industry.

While there is much to appreciate about *The Substance*, some moments are undeniably disturbing. As a body-horror film, it does not shy away from blood and gore, which may turn away some viewers. Most of the time, the unsettling images enhance the story, but there are instances where the graphic content feels excessive, seemingly included to showcase the filmmakers' special effects skills.

With that being said, I still believe *The Substance* is a fantastic film. It expertly combines horror and satire to produce a thought-provoking exploration of our society's beauty standards and the lengths people will go to achieve them. If you're a horror fan (and don't mind the blood and gore), I recommend giving *The Substance* a watch.

SUPERVISORS IN FAVOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Umstatt said she hopes a private investor with deep pockets will come forward to fund the project. However, she has seen no evidence that this will happen and will vote against the motion.

Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) responded to Umstatt's comment by saying that the arts touch every aspect

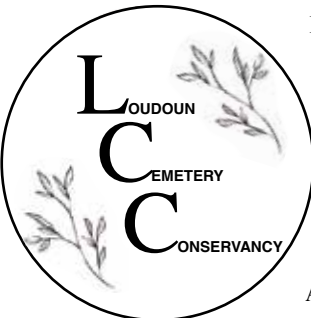
of life. Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (D-Dulles) added that, while he agreed with Umstatt's point about prioritization, those priorities don't mean that the Board can't spend anything on life-enhancing projects.

The supervisors passed the motion 7-1-1 with Umstatt opposed and Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) absent.

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ABERNETHY & SPENCER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

same mindset that has brought the new owners to create plans to integrate so much of what this part of Virginia has to offer.

David Lohman sold the business to the new owners in March of 2024. The name Abernethy & Spencer will be maintained as well as much of the character and history of the place. The renovations began in earnest once the nursery closed for the season in the fall of 2024. The seedlings and plants being readied for spring are housed in the largest greenhouse located in the lower part of the property. This very same greenhouse is the one that replaced the catastrophic collapse of the 45,000 square ft one in January of 2016.

Walking past the rows and rows of plants and out to the back, there are the rigid hoophouses that originally came from Bluemont Nursery. These houses will hold native plants on one side with non-native ones on the other. In between the two groups there is a platform for what will become another glass greenhouse. This will be used as a classroom for educational purposes and other activities.

The owners have leased more acreage beyond these houses, looking to the sweeping view to the west, in order to move the container trees that were previously out front. This will make room

for a large parking area as well as give the trees much more space to grow and “breathe” according to co-owner Jacob Baker.

This extra acreage will also be utilized to develop a nature walk which will highlight native material in “arboretum style.” Baker says, “the roughly half of a mile walk will be where you can bring your dog, grab a cup of coffee, and enjoy the 100 or so variety of trees highlighted plus native perennials.”

Pennington adds that eventually the coffee cart that they have purchased will be joined by perhaps a food truck or two so that customers can come, take a nice little walk, and see what is currently for sale.

“We are bridging this gap between production, greenhouse, seasonal, place-to-get-your-flowers and the agri-tourism business that Western Loudoun is so known for now,” says Baker.

The entrance to the new conservatory will feature a catwalk with a “Juliet” style balcony where one can look into the canopy of what will be tall indoor trees and down to the seating below. Again, the ability to take a refreshment from the cart and bring it to the seating area will provide a nice place to relax.

Co-owner Jim Knowles states that with about two years of grow-out this will be a “really nice tropical conservatory.” A

hedged-in outside courtyard, an area for selling higher-end furniture and further seating areas provide what Lincoln currently does not have.

With Lincoln Elementary just across the street, Knowles envisions a place where parents can meet before or after dropping off their children. Much more parking space will be provided in the area once taken up by potted trees and garden bedding/mulch.

The upper parking lot, which was small with limited spaces, will now be utilized to showcase landscaping possibilities. Knowles indicates that various landscaping companies can rotate in and out such that customers can see examples of their work.

Knowles says that it’s a great partnership that will be “like a year-round Leesburg Garden show” and will create a nice atmosphere. Walking through that section will take visitors to the retail area where there will be garden supplies as well as an opportunity for local artisans to have their work featured.

Each historic greenhouse (those that came from aforementioned USDA’s Arlington Experimental Research) in that part of the property is being meticulously restored. The work includes no less than new vents, new ceilings, cleaned up glass, and other efforts to preserve the historical look while providing functionality to grow the plants.

Plants will be more organized and categorized by house for easier shopping. The greenhouses will be retail as opposed to production as they have such visible historic features to be enjoyed. Even the house which sits a little further up the hill will be used as a location for customers to buy a pot, a plant and pot it onsite. The exotic birds, that Abernethy & Spencer’s previous customers came to know by name, will have their own area to spread their wings.

The owners are committed to working with nature non-profits in their promotion of native plants. There is also an initiative in place to help Mountain View Elementary refresh their courtyard gardens. The idea is to work with other local schools to help improve/restore their natural spaces as well. These efforts are to propagate the sense of community.

Currently, the timeline is for an opening on March 1, for the season with a grand opening to follow. The synergy of incorporating much of the business community while preserving the history of Abernethy & Spencer will make for a truly exciting metamorphosis.

Abernethy & Spencer Greenhouse and Garden Center is located at 18035 Lincoln Road in Purcellville. For more information go to Abernethyspencer.com.

OPINION: RURAL DEVELOPMENT, CON’T. FROM PAGE 4

“by right” under the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance. Not only that, but the Ordinance allows three times more houses to be built in a Loudoun cluster subdivision than is allowed in any neighboring county.

If this latest cluster subdivision was located in Fauquier County, for example, the maximum number of new houses that would be allowed on the same number of acres would be 6 rather than 20, generating 60 new vehicle trips per day rather than 200.

People also ask: “how can this be happening, since the County Board of Supervisors has assured us that they are committed to preserving rural Loudoun from over-development and the County Comprehensive Plan specifically says that we will “limit residential growth to protect the land resource ... minimize traffic impacts; and reduce demand for additional public facilities and services” (p. 2-99)?

County supervisors repeatedly claim that they “have not approved a single new house in rural Loudoun.” The supervisor who represents this district asserts that we are “winning the race” against over-development in rural areas.

Since hundreds of new homes obviously are being built here, one way to square these claims with our reality is to assume that County supervisors have no control over the Zoning Ordinance and its current standards for cluster subdivision development.

But that assumption just doesn’t hold, since the County is currently re-writing other rural zoning standards and, last year, the Board of Supervisors explicitly instructed County staff to exclude potential revisions to the cluster subdivision standards from that process.

Another possibility is that the supervisors simply disagree with the concerns of the citizens who are immediately affected and do not consider more cluster subdivisions to be a problem,

whether from the standpoint of traffic congestion, access to water, water pollution, the taxes required to “improve” historic rural roads, or any other issue. They know what’s best for us, and allowing many more houses in rural areas is part of it.

The final possibility is that supervisors believe there are more important issues than our concerns about traffic, water, or taxes. The current supervisor for the Catoctin District asserts that changing cluster subdivision standards would take away developers’ “property rights.”

He apparently believes that developers who own identical properties in Loudoun and Fauquier have been endowed with a God-given “right” to build three times more houses in our backyards. This is why he strongly opposed the Board of Supervisor’s decision last year to require preservation of prime farming soils on cluster subdivision properties.

It may be just a coincidence, but property speculators and developers

who support these views strongly agree with his positions and have been very generous in supporting his political campaigns.

Actions should speak louder than words. When we hear County supervisors assure us there is no problem with an unknown number of “by right” cluster subdivisions in unknown locations in Loudoun’s remaining rural areas, we need to remind ourselves that the supervisors are actually working hard to pave the way for that to happen.

If we agree with their policy, then everyone should be satisfied and happy. But, if we don’t agree, we should not allow ourselves to be distracted by empty rhetoric and we should not allow supervisors to deny responsibility for the results of their actions.

John Ellis lives in Hillsboro and serves on the boards of Save Rural Loudoun and the Between the Hills Conservancy.

\$10 MILLION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

receive a high volume of visitors.”

Warner and Kaine have long supported Virginia’s clean energy economy. Both senators were key votes in the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, legislation that included tax credits for individuals who

purchase electric vehicles and funding to expand access to EV technology. In 2022, Warner and Kaine announced almost \$16 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding was delivered to install EV charging ports.

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OPINION: TWO PLACES, TWO PROBLEMS,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ratio is closer to ten-to-one in the larger cities. That statistic is out of whack, and not meaningful.

There is one indicator, a very meaningful one, which warns of too many data centers: their power requirements. You'd have to be a troglodyte not to be aware that existing data center power demands have pushed us to the edge of a cliff, and the power demands of additional data centers and AI would give us a quick shove into the abyss.

Can you say "huge transmission lines?" How about "power outages?" Maybe even "blackouts?" How about "ugly," "too big," and "overwhelming?" Regardless of any quantitative measurements, the most important

concern is citizens' perception that data centers lead to the deterioration of Loudoun's culture. Remember that people vote on their perception of things, not by following some statistic or algorithm.

Then What?

First off, the County is swimming in cash from the data centers that are open now (and spending that money willy-nilly.) Next, those European cities are just nibbling at their overtourism problem, and nibbling around the edges will not be enough for Loudoun.

Boldness is required, as is courage in these litigious times. Proclaim "Enough!" and slam the door on any new data centers, grandfathering only those projects with actual

construction underway. Submitting plans to the County or performing sitework shouldn't count as "construction." Land speculators and the data center industry will squawk and certainly sue the County, which should declare an emergency, stand firm and fight.

By The Way...

I've read that the County will take two years to state its preference for locating new transmission lines. That's sclerotic. Times demand action.

Charles Houston developed many corporate office buildings and even the biggest of them, at 1.2 million square feet, took less than two years to build. He believes that two years to plan something is ridiculous.

SWEET RUN STATE PARK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

slog—both etched very starkly upon my wealth of experience.

Now, I will return at some point; I simply need to choose a time of year and a specific weather pattern in which to immerse myself and my environment, to create a match for my earlier, equally memorable additions to my treasure chest.

BRIDAL BONANZA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

unique events to our calendar that not only bring customers to our shop but also to Purcellville as a whole," said Redd, owner of Nostalgia Boutique and Mister on Main.

Admission to "Bridal Bonanza" is free, but registration is required. For more information and to pre-register, visit bridalbonanza.eventbrite.com or contact us at shopatnostalgia@gmail.com.

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

15158 Berlin Turnpike, Purcellville, VA (Loudoun County)

Buyer registration is required prior to a showing appointment. \$11,500,000

Property Video
Wheatland Farm



Sam Fisher

Principal Broker, Owner
REALTOR®

703-408-4261

onthemarketwithsam@gmail.com
onthemarketloudoun.com



Jeremy Dalpiaz

Douglas Elliman Real Estate
Vice President & Associate Broker
Team Lead, The Legato Group
Licensed in VA & DC

OFFICE: 703.552.4180

MOBILE: 703.785.5721

jeremy.dalpiaz@elliman.com



19016 Yellow Schoolhouse Road, Bluemont VA
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