

# Legislative Report presented to BOS; “Great job, great year,” says Chair Randall

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

On June 3, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors received an in-depth briefing on the outcomes of the recently adjourned 2025 Virginia General Assembly Session. County administration staff Jonathan Freeman and Erin McLellan presented the County’s legislative report, detailing how the Board’s adopted priorities fared during the session, along with key budget actions and emerging policy issues for 2025–26.

Freeman opened the presentation with good news. “So starting in section one, the board’s initiatives, I’m happy to report back that all of the bills that the board put

forward were signed by the governor.”

The 2025 General Assembly convened on Jan. 8 and adjourned on Feb. 22. Of the 916 bills that passed both chambers, 599 were signed into law by Governor Youngkin by the March 24 deadline, 159 were amended, and 157 were vetoed.

The governor’s amendments and eight item vetoes to the budget (HB 1600) returned to Richmond on April 2; the General Assembly “passed by” most of those changes, sustaining six of the line-item vetoes and blocking two others related to manufactured home acquisition and mortgage assistance programs. A final round of action on May 2 saw the governor sign an additional 53 bills, veto

38 bills outright, and issue 37 line-item vetoes to the budget.

Freeman reported the status of several flagship measures championed by Loudoun’s Board, starting with Stormwater and Erosion Control (HB 2008/SB 1093). Both companion bills, empowering localities operating MS4 systems to “enter any establishment or upon any property” for inspection purposes, were signed into law (Chapter 723 and Chapter 724, effective July 1, 2025).

“Essentially, in Western Loudon County, our staff had to investigate erroneous claims ... It was an unintended consequence of some language cleanup with the General Assembly, in

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the eroding sediment control part of code as well as the stormwater part of code. So we were able to correct that and by July 1, we will have the authority back,” Freeman said.

Next he turned to Aircraft-Noise Disclosures  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 »

# The Brick Wall Withstands the Quake

Purcellville Council majority holds firm and passes budget

BY VALERIE CURY

After three months of often heated debate, the Purcellville Town Council on June 17 passed a \$33.1 million FY 26 budget in a 4-3 vote, capping a process marked by sharp philosophical divides and public unrest. The meeting erupted with frequent outbursts from the opposition—including shouting, profanity, and repeated interruptions directed at the council majority, which passed a budget aligned with its platform of right-sizing government to fit the Town’s scale.

GOVERNMENT

The minority, who favored expanded services and a broader role for government, offered only one proposed cut over the three-month period: eliminating \$60,000 in council and

committee stipends. At the same time, they claimed that cutting the budget or drawing from the Town’s reserves—which are \$5.8 million above the recommended 30% threshold—would lead the Town toward bankruptcy.

The adopted budget, trimmed from the \$35.9 million March proposal, represents an 8.3% increase over the FY 25 budget, and includes a 9% drop in water rates and an 11% drop for sewer.

Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted to approve the FY 26 budget—with Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright and Caleb Stought voting against.

Town Manager Kwasi Fraser opened the budget discussions by stating that he had been directed to cut an

additional \$800,000 from the FY 26 budget. He said the Town will receive a one-time payment of \$325,000 for forestry management of the 1,200-acre watershed property. In addition, management secured a \$300,000 reduction from the \$600,000 budgeted for Well 6F and froze one position, saving \$175,000, he said. These measures—combined with the \$325,000 in revenue from the timber cut—total the required \$800,000 in budget adjustments.

Fraser said town management will explore cost-saving measures within the General Fund, with a focus on improving and controlling internal processes and systems.

Council Member Erin Rayner downplayed the importance of the  
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## Get ready for the 22nd Annual Purcellville Tag Sale on Oct. 11

**Sign up begins Aug. 18**

Mark your calendars—Purcellville's biggest shopping event is back. The 22nd Annual Purcellville Tag Sale is set for Saturday, Oct. 11, and whether the sun is shining or the rain is falling, the deals will be on. Sign up begins on Aug. 18. The Purcellville Tag Sale will take place rain or shine. Keep an eye on the website [Purcellville-VaTagSale.com](http://Purcellville-VaTagSale.com) for updates.

### COMMUNITY

Get ready to spend the day strolling the streets, treasure hunting, and snagging incredible finds. From 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., the town will transform into a bargain-hunter's paradise filled with vintage gems, antiques, handmade goods, collectibles, and so much more.

"This event is for everyone—the collectors, the pickers, the DIYers, and yes, even the folks who just can't resist a good deal," said event organizer Silas Redd. "You'll find everything from vintage clothing and antiques to handmade jewelry, candles, home décor, and unexpected treasures you didn't know you needed."

If you've got goods to sell, don't miss your chance to be part of this community tradition. Sign up beginning Aug. 18 at [Purcellville-VaTagSale.com](http://Purcellville-VaTagSale.com). The first 40 people to register will be featured on the printed event map.

Don't wait—spaces go on sale Monday, Aug. 18 and they sell out every year. The sign-up deadline is Monday, Sept. 22.

The Tag Sale is organized and sponsored by Silas Redd, owner of Nostalgia Boutique at 142 E. Main Street in Purcellville.

"I love hosting this event each year. It's not just about shopping—it's about bringing our community together," said Redd. "It's a celebration of Purcellville, our local businesses, and the incredible people who make this town feel like home. We also love our neighbors who visit from near and far."

To become a sponsor of the Tag Sale, text Silas at 540-751-8252, or email him at [ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com](mailto:ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com). "Our sponsors are true community partners who help make the Tag Sale possible year after year," Redd said.

"A lot of people think of the Tag Sale as a one-day event," said Redd, "but it actually gives a big boost to our local economy. Visitors discover our shops, our restaurants, and they come back. It's the perfect kickoff to the fall and holiday shopping season."

Whether you're hunting for gifts, seasonal fashion, or the perfect autumn home accent, the Purcellville Tag Sale has it all.

Contact and registration information is as follows: Text Silas at 540-751-8252, Email him at [ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com](mailto:ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com), and Sign Up starting Monday Aug. 18 at [PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com](http://PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com).

Spaces sell out fast—don't miss your chance to join in the fun.

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# Kudos, ear buds and the color brown

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

## Kudos

Phyllis Randall, Chair of the Board of Supervisors, gets kudos for her attentiveness and engagement with a large delegation of citizens protesting the ill-conceived proposal to link Waterford and Paeonian Springs with 2.5 miles of new water and sewer lines along Clarkes Gap Road. (If this is new to you, check out last month's Op-Ed: <https://blueridgeleader.com/a-stupid-project-is-getting-pregnant/>)

Her next step is possibly to get Staff to present alternatives. Kudos also to the Waterford Preservation Group for leading this effort.

## Staff

Loudoun County Staff has all the characteristics of any bureaucracy: A hierarchical structure, a specialization of labor, formal rules and procedures, slow decision making, rigidity and lack of responsiveness to individuals' needs. (Thank you, AI, for this list.) I'd add

foundational directives of any bureaucracy: Self-preservation. Defensiveness. Controlling information flow. Grow in size. Increase its power.

Here's one way our Staff controls information, presumably with the goal of protecting its plans. When citizens, and probably Supervisors, ask for information, they are told, "That won't be possible until the feasibility study is finished." Sounds logical, right? Wrong – by the time a feasibility study is finished, years may have passed and millions have been spent. At that point citizens can only squawk impotently and the Board finds it impossible to pull the project back.

## A Populist Solution

When a project is first ideated, the County first should convene a public hearing to gauge opinion. Is the project wanted? Hated?

Staff doesn't do this and sometimes pays the price: Without any public input, it proposed to convert Mickie Gordon Park, just east of Middleburg,

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# What does "revitalization" mean for Purcellville?

BY JOHN ELLIS

Those who use political buzz words and those who are listening may have widely different interpretations of what the words actually mean.

Take the word "revitalization."

As one of many who hopes Purcellville will maintain its charming small town character, I was taken aback when the Mayor objected to the following proposed goal statement for the Town's Planning Commission:

"[The Planning Commission] Promotes historic preservation, pedestrian accessibility, and design standards that support downtown revitalization."

On the surface, this sounds like something he and other preservationists would enthusiastically endorse. Why would he take issue with it?

My guess is that the objection reflects a fear that the word "revitalization" might be exploited by development interests to justify large-scale residential or commercial developments that could fundamentally change the town's character and appeal.

This fear doesn't seem entirely hypothetical.

During the public input portion of the May 27 Town Council meeting, the President of the Purcellville Business Association, Jason Sengpiehl, criticized the Town Council for "missed opportunities to revitalize our business community through well planned annexation efforts, infill development and infrastructure improvements."

To tease out what the different parties mean by "revitalization," we need to look more closely at the context. There are obviously significant differences.

In the case of the Planning Commission's goal statement, revitalization is achieved with attention to "historic preservation, pedestrian accessibility, and design standards." It suggests that residents' quality of life should be taken into account.

Mr. Sengpiehl's version focuses on the interests of the business community and, even more narrowly, on specific types of business that would benefit from infill development and annexations.

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# Dirty-Coal-Powered Water-Sucking Sprawling Data Centers

BY JOHN P. FLANNERY, II

Multi Gigawatt Data Centers in Loudoun County exist in large numbers, operate at high speeds, full time all the time; they've altered forever the residential, farmland and small business community that defined the Loudoun we once enjoyed.

From 1997 to July 2024, the expansion in square feet for the County's foot print of data centers has grown from over 10 million square feet in 1997, to about 90 million square feet last July, according to "A Holistic Review of Data Center Impacts in Loudoun County, VA," page 4.

The County brags on its Economic Development web site that there has not been a single day without data center construction in Loudoun for 14 years. Is that really something to crow about?

Data Centers treat "us," the people who live here, who were here, as no more than a pliable subdivision of their over-extended over-reaching industrial park; they are busy working around us.

You may have heard words of reassurance from the data center reps, the oleaginous apologists for the Data Centers.

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# Preserving Paxson-Airmont: A Rural Community at Risk

BY LARRY CAMPBELL, VICE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF FRIENDS OF PAXSON-AIRMONT, A 501(C)(3) CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

Western Loudoun County—including the Paxson-Airmont community—is one of Virginia's most valued rural landscapes. It is defined by open pastures, historic farmsteads, stone walls, and a way of life shaped by conservation and responsible land stewardship. That character is now at risk.

JK Land Holdings, LLC in combination with The JK Community Farm, a nonprofit known for donating produce to food-insecure families, is seeking Loudoun County's approval for a Minor Special Exception to build a large banquet/event center on land protected by a conservation easement. The proposed facility would accommodate over 200 guests, include parking for 100 vehicles, and route all traffic through a narrow gravel road serving the surrounding residential and agricultural community.

This is not simply a matter of scale. The proposed development is sited on land protected by a permanent conservation easement held by the Land Trust of Virginia. That easement was created to safeguard agricultural use, preserve open space, and prohibit commercial development inconsistent with rural conservation values.

In its submission to the County, JK Land Holdings offered the following justification:

"The minor special exception use is anticipated to help

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## Are conservation easements truly permanent? Maybe not.

Density – overcrowding – has been a Loudoun problem for years. Some while back, voters rose up and tossed out the entire Board of Supervisors. That brought some help, but not for long. Since then, residential areas in eastern Loudoun have pretty much been built out.

**LETTER**

The Transition Policy Area was to be

an area between the suburban east and the rural west. Now much of it is being lost to new subdivisions. Its days are numbered.

Intense residential development is rampant in western Loudoun. For years we complained against density, with cluster subdivisions as the poster child of bad ideas. We lost battle after battle, while the pro-growth crowd always yammered, “Don’t mess with zoning. What you really want are conservation easements, they’re permanent.”

Or are they?

Land speculator Chuck Kuhn bought property on Airmont Road, placed it in a conservation easement and turned it into

a community farm, using volunteer labor to grow vegetables that were given to the needy. That was certainly laudable.

But skunks can’t change their white stripes and apparently land barons will eventually pursue profits instead of produce. That’s happening now as Kuhn wants to put an events center (a party barn) on that easement property—the community farm. He is pushing the Land Trust of Virginia, which holds the easement deed, to allow him to build that thing. Doing so seems to require LTV to modify the deed or to stretch its interpretation of the many use and development restrictions imposed by the deed of easement.

LTV is a great organization but it is still pondering the plunderer’s demand. Why? “No,” is a complete paragraph. Or perhaps Kuhn is threatening litigation. Who knows?

Things may even get worse. Kuhn’s newest stratagem is some sort of elaborate recreation center. Who knows what that might be. But be sure, he will demand special treatment to modify the conservation easement deed, get new zoning or whatever it takes.

All of this casts a pall over the entire concept of “permanent” conservation easements. The ball is in LTV’s court.

*Charlie Houston  
Paeonian Springs*

## Hiddenwood re-zoning forwarded to business meeting

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

On June 11, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted to forward a proposal to re-zone Hiddenwood Assemblage to its next business meeting after receiving a recommendation to deny the proposal from the Planning Commission and from staff.

For over a year, planning and zoning staff has been working with Hiddenwood Assemblage developers to create a workable proposal. The proposal has received heavy pushback from the community with 48 of 77 public speakers on the issue opposing the proposal at the Board’s public hearing on July 10, 2024. At the June 11 public hearing, Scott Bell

**GOVERNMENT**

and Jackie Clement, residents of Hiddenwood Lane spoke in favor of the proposal.

“As difficult as this process has been for [Hiddenwood residents], we have waited patiently. And we have addressed every concern that has been presented to us,” Bell said. “This application provides a solution for all parties.”

Hiddenwood residents are excited about an opportunity to sell their land to developers, since their land was devalued after the approval of JK Technology Park #2 (JK2). Hiddenwood residents have been living in a construction zone, been subject to noise from planes flying overhead, and watched data centers appear near their property. As a result of the construction, there is now only one entrance to Hiddenwood Lane.

“I don’t think people have

considered all the suffering we have endured these past years.” Bell said.

The opposition is a result of the land’s proximity to Briarfield Estates, a residential area. Residents are concerned about the impact of industrial and commercial buildings like data centers on their health and on the value of their land.

“I’m left moving this forward but having a lot of issues with it because I don’t think it’s sufficiently buffered,” said Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (D-Dulles).

To ease concerns of Briarfield residents, the developers proffered out six industrial uses, including data centers. However, Planning and Zoning staff recommend that the developers proffer out four additional uses before the Board approves the proposal.

Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) said that she plans to vote in favor of the proposal at the Board’s business meeting.

“What matters right now is getting these human beings out of this horrible situation,” Randall said.

Other supervisors think there may be a better solution that better preserves Briarfield property values, such as limiting the proposal to two industrial buildings instead of three.

“There is a better solution out there. It may not be quite as lucrative,” said Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin).

The Board forwarded the proposal for consideration with a 7-0-2 vote. Supervisors Michael Turner (D-Ashburn) and Koran Saines (D-Sterling) were absent.


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# Understanding and addressing bullying: A guide for parents and caregivers

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

For many children, bullying is more than just a difficult rite of passage or a phase. It can be a painful experience that can shape a child's sense of self, influence their relationships, and impact their mental health well into adulthood. As a psychologist who works closely with children and families, I've seen how bullying—whether physical, verbal, or digital—can leave lasting emotional scars.

## Ask Dr. Mike



DR. MIKE

**What is bullying and what are the different ways it can occur?** Physical bullying involves hitting, pushing, or damaging someone's belongings. Verbal bullying includes name-calling, teasing, or threats. Relational bullying, often more covert, may involve excluding someone from a group, spreading rumors, or manipulating social relationships to isolate the victim. There's cyberbullying, which happens through digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and online games. This latter form of bullying can be especially distressing to children because screens are ubiquitous, making

the bullying difficult to escape.

**Why do children bully?** Research has revealed several contributing factors. Some children bully others as a way to assert control or boost their social status, especially in peer groups where dominance is equated with popularity. Others might be acting out due to unresolved anger, frustration, or emotional pain. Children who grow up in environments where aggression is modeled—whether through family dynamics, inappropriate media exposure, or other community influences—may learn to replicate those behaviors.

In some instances, bullying is a misguided attempt at social connection. A child who feels excluded might lash out at others to feel included or noticed. Others may join in bullying behavior to avoid becoming targets themselves. These dynamics can be especially powerful in middle and high school where social hierarchies are constantly shifting.

**What is the impact of bullying on children?** The effects of bullying can be profound and long-lasting. Children who are bullied can experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, post-traumatic distress, suicidality and even aggression. They may begin to dread school, suffer academic decline, become avoidant, self-medicate with substances or develop physical symptoms.

The cumulative effects of bullying can

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## FINANCIAL FOCUS® The importance of setting strong financial goals

Submitted by Joshua Wolinski,  
Edward Jones Financial Advisor

There's a quote about the importance of setting goals that says, "If you don't know where you're going, any path will take you there." You probably have dreams about retirement, vacations, hobbies and more. But if you don't have a strategy with financial goals in place, you may not make the choices that can best set you on the path to achieve those dreams.



JOSHUA  
WOLINSKI

Setting goals helps define and showcase your purpose, passions and priorities. And establishing your own strong financial goals can help you earn and enjoy a wide variety of short- and long-term achievements throughout your life. When you reach your financial goals, you can feel a sense of accomplishment in seeing your efforts literally pay off. But how do you get started?

**Prioritize your needs and wants.**

Think about the things that are most important to you and then outline them as financial "must-haves" and "wish-list" targets. Start with the big-ticket items and work through to ideas that may not cost as much. A must-have for many people is having enough to live comfortably through retirement. Being able to afford the college of your child's choice, without incurring mounds of debt, is another. Your wish list, on the other hand, may include things like saving for vacations, hobbies or entertainment expenses.

**Create detailed short- and long-term goals within your financial strategy.** It's important to be specific about the goals you want to achieve and how much you'll need to achieve them. One way to do this is by making your goals measurable. Assign estimated dates and costs to each goal so you can plan how much to save and how much time you have before you need the money. For example, for your retirement goal, be specific about how

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## Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Hillsboro United Methodist Church

BY TIM JON

Not to start a story off with a double negative, but my advice is: don't enter a graveyard if you don't want to bring home some of the ghosts. Now, while I hesitate to believe I have free-ranging spirits floating around in my house, I will say that I've felt a bit of pressure in contemplating this



TIM JON

little tale (maybe just from myself) to give proper honor and homage to the eternal counterparts of the remains that lie in the Hillsboro United Methodist Cemetery.

So, let's begin: I vividly remember the cold, overcast morning I visited the churchyard, and its adjacent house of worship, just off Route Nine, Charles Town Pike nestled between the hills of Western Loudoun County, Virginia. Did I say cold? I recall taking photos as fast as my fingers would allow, looking for excuses to stand in one place for multiple shots, rather than moving around and allowing any more frigid air between my limbs.

I also remember feeling an unseen atmosphere—like a supreme weight placed on my shoulders—while inside those walls;



maybe that's what made me feel hurried. Now, I'd noticed that the sign on the stone wall of the graveyard listed the Year 1839 as the establishment of this plot; without much investigation, we can infer that the remains of those loyal to each side of the American Civil War lie in these grounds.

The Church also maintains a separate burial site just east of the walled-in acreage (also set up in 1839) designated for "the African American Community." Not knowing exactly how these individual graves were laid out, I just took a few shots from the steps, to avoid stepping on, and dishonoring, any of those passed. I've read since that visit that plans are in the works to conduct more research on the identities of these interments, with, and for, proper respect for their families.

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# Lovettsville Council reviews projects, events, and infrastructure

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

On Thursday, June 26, 2025, the Lovettsville Town Council convened under the leadership of Mayor Christopher Hornbaker to address a broad array of community initiatives, infrastructure projects, and organizational matters. The mayor called the session to order, welcoming an “almost full dais” composed of Vice Mayor Thomas Budnar and Council Members Ann Arena, David Earl, David Smith, and Stuart Stahl. Council Member Brandon Davis was absent for the evening.

Economic Development Coordinator Sarah Moseley reported a flurry of activity aimed at both supporting local entrepreneurs and celebrating Lovettsville’s unique character. She noted that, in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center, “the town ... hosted a business plan boot camp at the Lovettsville Community Center” on June 11.

Moseley also unveiled the finalized tourism trifold, prepared in partnership with Steve Baker of Bakerture Photos and Videos, and approved by the Commerce and Business Development Committee. “We are now ready to send it to the printer,” she said, adding that the printing budget of \$742 had been secured.

Moseley then celebrated a few community milestones: Best of Loudoun 2025 winners and finalists from Lovettsville were spotlighted on Discover Lovettsville following the June 13 announcement. Wrapping up the Mayfest spring celebration, staff “helped acknowledge and thank our volunteers as well as our sponsors,” she said.

Looking ahead, Moseley outlined plans for summer and fall events. The Love Summer Series is already underway, with vendor coordination and sponsorship outreach in full swing. She highlighted a recent partnership with the Purcellville Cannons, securing “swag, tickets, and season passes raffled off at the Sandlot movie this past week.” Vice Mayor Budnar later praised the recent Sandlot movie night and summer concerts as “a tremendous hit.”

Moseley also previewed an August safety program on online and social media awareness, co-hosted with the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office, and a family-friendly kickball tournament set for August 18.

Oktoberfest preparations are well advanced—34 food and craft vendors

have been approved, 20 have paid.

Finally, she announced the installation of three Civil War trail signs on July 7, with a dedication ceremony to follow in September, and celebrated two recent grant awards: the full \$25,000 RTOT tourism grant and the Creative Communities Partnership grants supporting local arts organizations.

Town Manager Jason Cournoyer then provided updates on major infrastructure efforts. The long-awaited East Broadway water main replacement is entering its early construction phase. “They still wait for a lot of the equipment... but right now, what you see them out there doing is pre-cutting the asphalt for the water main,” he said, estimating the project would extend over eight months.

Cournoyer covered storm damage to recent Town Square landscaping next. Heavy rains washed away much of the new plantings, which have since been reinstalled with protective straw. “It looks like the straw held up yesterday, so the seeds should start popping up in 2 to 4 weeks,” he said.

On development, Cournoyer reported a pre-construction meeting with Chestnut Vale (Lenoir Homes) and discussions to share water-main work on Broadway, avoiding future re-cuts. He also outlined plans to replace a 300-foot stretch of aging concrete water main in the Lakeview community through a cost-share agreement.

Staffing challenges persist; despite several candidates, the Utilities Operator position remains open due to competitive salary concerns. However, the Town successfully filled its summer internship with Emory University student Alma Cedillo, who has been “doing fantastic things” during her first week.

Cournoyer detailed the strain on the local utilities system during a flash storm on June 18, which dumped 1.7 inches of rain in under 40 minutes and increased plant flow from 170 to 1,000 gallons per minute—nearly an eight-fold spike.

With typical plant capacity of 150,000 – 170,000 gallons per day suddenly surging beyond 600,000, staff averted sewage discharge but are now looking for engineering solutions to curb future inflow and infiltration. Council Member Smith later acknowledged the utility staff’s resilience amidst extreme weather and voiced interest in touring

# Subramanyam requests 15 projects for government funding

On June 16, Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10) announced 15 projects that he has requested funding for through the congressional appropriations process. This funding will respond to the urgent and critical needs of Virginia's 10th District.

"These vital projects will make our roads safer, make our water cleaner, support public safety, provide affordable housing to families, seniors, and veterans, and train tomorrow's workforce," said Subramanyam. "I have dedicated my first months in Congress to delivering on promises I made to Virginians when I was on the campaign trail. I look forward to advancing these requests through the funding process so we can get to work implementing these investments that will be felt now and for generations to come."

Subramanyam championed the following requests that will directly improve the lives of constituents in Virginia's 10th District. These include:

## Loudoun County

- **\$9,000,000 for Loudoun County** for a Rt. 15/ Braddock Road roundabout to improve road safety.
- **\$5,000,000 for Loudoun County** to construct affordable rental housing.
- **\$1,000,000 for the Boulder Crest Foundation** to develop and implement peer-led mental wellness training programs for law enforcement

officers.

- **\$1,460,000 for the Town of Leesburg** to ensure safer pedestrian access along Plaza Street between low-income housing and nearby schools and shopping/employment areas.
- **\$650,000 for the Town of Hamilton** to develop a new well and water storage facility for the Town.
- **\$1,600,000 for the Town of Lovettsville** to fund the construction of a second elevated water tower.

## Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park

- **\$2,000,000 for Prince William County** to construct a shared use trail on RT. 15 and underpass connection at Catharpin Creek.
- **\$3,000,000 for Manassas Regional Airport** to replace a bridge in the airfield that is close to reaching its useful life.
- **\$1,613,968 for the City of Manassas Park** to improve safety and accessibility to the rapidly developing Park Central downtown for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
- **\$2,500,000 for Northern Virginia Community College** to construct a Center for Building and Construction Trades to develop a skilled construction workforce for Northern Virginia.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 »

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# New control tower coming to the Leesburg Executive Airport

BY GRACE BENNETT

On June 26, an open house meeting was hosted at the Leesburg Executive Airport to publicly share information on the progress of constructing a 102-foot air traffic control tower at the north end of the terminal building. Having undergone an initial planning phase and a Siting Study, staff is preparing a Tiered Environmental Assessment to ensure that the vital tower will have minimal impacts on its surroundings.

### GOVERNMENT

The need for a permanent control tower arose in 2023 after the decommissioning of the site's Remote Tower Pilot Program due to Federal Aviation Administration concerns. In that same year, a temporary control tower was installed—but the substitute is not sustainable in the long term due to its ground-bound position as a trailer.

The job of an air traffic controller is to coordinate with planes and other control centers to maximize



Photo: Grace Bennett

safety and efficiency; the airport and community would suffer from a lack of having a control tower. "They're directing planes within about a 5-mile circle," said Airport Director Scott Coffman. "They ensure that the planes are separated and sequenced to the runway—and we want those services to continue."

Though the remote tower was decommissioned two years prior, it is widely acknowledged that an airport cannot function at its best without

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

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# Street fight

## Shouting, protest signs, and accusations erupt at Purcellville Meeting

BY VALERIE CURY

Shouting, cursing, and protest signs—including a homemade one depicting a pile of excrement aimed at the majority Town Council and at times held by Erica Stought, wife of Council Member Caleb

### GOVERNMENT

Stought—set the tone Tuesday night, June 24, during a Purcellville Town Council work session. Rules of decorum were largely ignored as audience members mocked the Council majority, which voted to end the Town's support for the Purcellville Main Street Program, reversing a decision made by a previous council.

At one point, Erica Stought pointed from the excrement sign to members of the Council majority and then to this reporter, who is also the owner and publisher of The Blue Ridge Leader.

Mayor Chris Bertaut said the heart of the matter is that all members of the Town Council support local businesses and efforts to beautify the downtown area. "This Council, I think, is unanimous in their opinion regarding the necessity for downtown redevelopment." He said the disagreement lies in how redevelopment is defined, what revitalization means, and the best path forward.

The underlying tension, however, stems from community concerns about the Purcellville Main Street Program's ties to a major local developer. One of Council Member Erin Rayner's largest cumulative campaign donors—through affiliates, relatives, and their employees—controls a significant portion of downtown property in need of renovation.

Rayner has publicly advocated for the developer's Vineyard Square project, originally approved more than 15 years ago by the Lazo Town Council. That plan called for a six-story, 40-condo building on a narrow, one-way street—dramatically out of scale with the surrounding district.

The manager of the project is now proposing to reduce the development by four condos, bringing the total to 36 condos. However, current zoning does not permit this level of density. Guidelines limit buildings to two and a half stories and encourage commercial development in the downtown core, with a modest cap of two apartments per structure. The developer's Certificate of Design Approvals are set to expire on July 1, 2025, after which any new proposal should comply with these standards.

Last year, Rayner—a board member of the newly formed Purcellville Main Street nonprofit—expressed support for modeling the area after San Diego's Gaslamp District. She has also advocated for affordable housing on properties managed by Casey Chapman, including Vineyard Square and the Purcellville Business Park at 310 N. 21st Street.

At the June 24 Town Council Work Session, Council Member Susan Khalil said she appreciated

the Purcellville Main Street stated goals in their efforts towards beautifying the downtown. She said included in the program is property "owned by private entities which raises valid questions about the role of the Town in redevelopment."

She said that redevelopment is worth pursuing and it "should occur in full alignment with our Zoning Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, and community planning processes that are already in place."

Khalil said the redevelopment of private property should be owner driven, and nothing precludes an owner from improving their property.

"The Town Council welcomes and encourages business property owners to prioritize improvements on their property. We appreciate the dedicated efforts of so many business owners in Town. This is not a rejection of revitalization—but a reassertion of the role private owners play in beautifying their properties," said Khalil.

Council Member Carol Luke said each business has a responsibility to understand the areas legal requirements, zoning and economic landscape—and they should access whether that location will support their goals.

"The Town can not and should not tailor its resources to meet the unique needs of every individual business especially when those resources come from the taxpayers and are meant to serve the community as a whole," said Luke.

Luke said the Town should focus on broad, community-wide policies rather than making special exceptions, which could lead to inequities.

Council Member Kevin Wright berated Luke saying he found it very comical that she gets free parking for her business from the Town—"at no expense what so ever. That parking lot belongs to the Town of Purcellville and none of it is yours. You don't pay taxes on that piece of property. So, it's interesting that you, as a business owner in Town who does gain something from the Town that helps [your] business by providing [you] free at no cost parking for your employees, and customers, and tenants."

"So, to now go against other business owners and say 'Hey, you don't need the Town support—figure it out yourself'—you are talking out of both sides of your mouth."

However, Wright failed to check his facts. A decade after Luke had opened her business and was already operating in her location, she was required to pay \$22,125 into what the Town called a newly created "parking garage fund." Luke did not respond during the meeting and has generally avoided engaging in public theatrics.

Council Member Caleb Stought said this discussion has "come before Council multiple times over the past three months and said there was a lack of transparency because the motions related to this

item were not in the agenda packet.

Stought used the meeting to make a deliberately false personal accusation in response to this newspaper's reporting. He said, "Valerie Cury [this writer with the Blue Ridge Leader] has been in the back of the room telling residents that she takes issue with meetings between developers, property owners and town staff."

This statement is completely false and a deliberate fabrication. While such personal attacks are disappointing, I remain steadfast in my commitment to hold local leaders accountable and keep the community informed.

Stought again singled me out, saying that if the four council members voted to end the program despite public support, "you are confirming to the entire world that you do not represent the citizens of this town—you represent Valerie Cury."

This repeated inappropriate fixation on me—a journalist doing my job—says more about Stought's discomfort with critical coverage than it does about the matter at hand. His comment deflects attention from the pros and cons of the program—and from the serious debate the issue deserves.

Council Member Erin Rayner accused her colleagues of hating businesses. She asked, "You know how many businesses that don't want to be here anymore? How many businesses are going up for sale because they don't want to be here to deal with us anymore—and that's your fault."

Mayor Chris Bertaut summarized, "Tonight we are deciding whether to continue supporting the Purcellville Main Street program. I do want to be clear—this is a vote for revitalization and for citizen control of the results of same."

"Purcellville has always been for growth, but it has to be on our terms. Our Comprehensive Plan, zoning laws are shaped and guided by this community. They reflect who we are and what we value."

"The Main Street Program brings to the floor both outside influences and special interests—potentially steering us away from the path we have charted together. A letter of support gives weight to that vision that we may not all share. I also note that a large part of the revitalization of this Town is private property."

Bertaut said he believes in the people of Purcellville, the residents, our business owners, our local leaders who have already invested in this Town. "They are already revitalizing it without the additional support and without losing sight of what makes this place special."

"You might ask, 'Why turn down support?' Because support comes with strings and once we hand over the governance to an outside organization, it's very hard to take it back," said Bertaut.

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# Town Council moves forward with RFP for outside attorney

## Citizen criticizes water rate cuts as 'profit' for business owners

BY VALERIE CURY

At the June 24 Purcellville Town Council Work Session, Town Manager Kwasi Fraser announced that the Town has initiated a Request for Proposal process to hire a new Town Attorney. The move comes as current Town Attorney John Cafferky, of the firm Blankingship & Keith, is stepping down due to his increased workload and personal scheduling conflicts.

### GOVERNMENT

The position requires approximately 15 to 20 hours of work per week, or 60 to 65 hours per month. In 2023, the Town transitioned from employing an in-house attorney to contracting with outside legal counsel. Working with a law firm has provided access to a broader pool of attorneys and helped reduce costs, as the Town no longer pays employee benefits and avoids the need to outsource additional legal services when an in-house attorney lacks expertise in a specific area.

Council Member Susan Khalil read a motion to initiate the RFP process for outside legal counsel. Council Member Erin Rayner objected, calling the motion "nonsensical" because she wanted the RFP to include both in-house and contracted attorney options.

Council Member Caleb Stought questioned why the motion read by Khalil was not simply included in the agenda packet. He launched into a hectoring series of hypothetical examples, imagining conversations between Council members: "Are you writing all of this, Mayor, and sending it to everybody? 'Okay, I'm making a late-breaking decision and we're moving Virginia Main Street to an action item. Hey Ben, that's your job. Hey, we're going to tell them that only outside legal counsel is acceptable. Susan, you make that motion.'"

When his imagined scenarios went unanswered, Stought grew more aggressive in his questioning of Khalil. Raising his voice, he asked, "Was this coordinated, and by whom?"

Khalil replied, "Handwritten," showing Stought her paper written in purple ink, she continued, "sitting in that room [a Town Council room]—that's what I wanted to do. We don't need to spend time on an RFP that is so lengthy because it addresses so many things."

Stought pressed further: "So you handwrote that?" When Khalil showed him her pen, replying, "With a purple pen," he continued, "Purple pen in the Council office earlier when you were sitting with the Vice Mayor when I walked in."

Khalil then asked, "So am I done being interrogated?"

Stought said the RFP shouldn't be narrowly written to require that the Town's legal counsel be externally contracted. "We should cast the broadest net possible," he said. He then unexpectedly accused his colleagues of harboring bias against Sally Hankins, the Town's former in-house attorney.

Council Member Kevin Wright said there was no need to make a motion at this time, adding that the Town should "cast the broadest net possible." Vice Mayor Ben Nett responded, "There was a comment about Sally Hankins—I don't know why we're bringing up historic references to past Town Council personnel. That was before my time."

Mayor Chris Bertaut said he was highly satisfied with the services that have been provided with Blankingship & Keith and he would support the motion for a contracted outside law firm.

Khalil said that hiring an outside attorney who is part of a law firm would give the Town access to a broad

range of experienced legal professionals. "Bringing someone in-house might mean that person specializes in only one area," she said. As a result, the Town might still need to contract out for additional legal services, which could drive up overall costs. She added that working with an outside firm maintains "an arm's length" relationship—meaning greater independence and objectivity between the attorney and the Town.

The motion to pass the RFP for outside legal firm passed 4-3 with Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright and Caleb Stought voting against.

### Chapman chastises Council over water rate cuts

In the citizen comment portion of the meeting Developer Casey Chapman commented on the soon to come reduction in the Town's water rates. He said he runs several businesses in Town. "I run multiple,

not just land development and they are service based businesses."

"You know, I want to say thank you to you for the upcoming reduction in my water bill—which I did not ask for. I do not need. It's straight going to be bottom line profit to my business." He said he would have been happy if it would have gone to the Town. He paid it last year and "it did not impact me. I am not out of business."

He said when Council lets a 2-inch water meter like he has "pay a reduced rate, which in my case, for example, is about \$5,000 a month less to you" go into his companies' pocket—"I would say that's a poor decision."

He said his company can afford to pay last year's double-digit increases. "I can afford to pay it and you all don't want to collect it—that's ludicrous, ludicrous. So you know you're missing out on \$60,000 a year from me.



### LEGISLATIVE REPORT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

(HB 1706/SB 1210), legislation requiring sellers to include aircraft-noise disclaimers in property disclosure statements and mandating purchasers to consult FAA noise exposure maps and local ordinances before closing. "All 66 airports in the Commonwealth will be able to upload their maps to this webpage and allow homeowners to see whether their home falls within a noise contour," Freeman explained. "19 airports out of the 66 have already uploaded their maps, including Leesburg Executive Airport. And of course, Dulles International Airport."

Freeman then touched on the Oak Hill project. "The Oak Hill state park measure unfortunately did not make it into the final budget agreement ... I do feel that we are in a really good position to get that measure passed next year... We'll be working with our legislators over the next couple of months to keep this on their radar," he said.

In addition to these headline priorities,

the Board celebrated successes on early education, affordable housing, and public-safety enhancements. For example, HB 1807 created a Kindergarten Readiness Fund, HB 1972 launched a pilot for statewide universal childcare, and HB 1676 expanded virtual FOIA meetings. All passed with Loudoun's endorsement. "The new education funding investments is ... essentially 8 million in new state funding for Loudoun County Public Schools. We were happy to see that," Freeman said.

Beyond formal positions, staff flagged roughly two dozen bills for potential operational impacts. Key among them were measures on reproductive-rights protections, revisions to landlord-tenant law (strengthening tenant remedies and expanding notice periods), and centralized reporting requirements for local governments.

The County's legislative program also guided Loudoun's review of the state budget. While the governor signed the Conference Report, he issued 37 item

vetoed—six of which were sustained by legislators, including cuts to manufactured-home and mortgage-assistance initiatives. However, crucial funding lines for public education, behavioral-health services, and transportation grants remained intact.

Supervisor feedback during the meeting reaffirmed the Board's commitment to a proactive legislative agenda, especially regarding the Oak Hill state park project.

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) asked, "I read that the General Assembly approved an appropriation Act for \$150,000 to do a study for Oak Hill. Do you know if that's going to be completed before the General Assembly?"

Freeman responded, "The full study came out about a week before the end of session, so we're going to utilize that study to continue working the General Assembly. But again, I think we're in a really good posture to get it done."

"Oh yeah, I've already met with Delegate [David] Reid about it, I know he's

on appropriations, so I know he's planning to put together a bill for Oak Hill," TeKrony responded.

Freeman later continued, "I think that there are a few elements of Oak Hill that we were able to successfully lobby for support on, one of which—a huge thank you to the board, of course— is \$22 million put aside for acquisition of Oak Hill. And so the state essentially does not have to put anything up for the acquisition."

At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Phyllis Randall (D, At-Large) thanked Freeman and McLellan for the thorough report, noting Freeman's contributions especially. "Great job, great year. Thank you very much. And I think the way the General Assembly Sessions runs we'll start this again in about three weeks," she said with a laugh. "Well, Madam Chair, I did send an email for the 2026 legislative report," Freeman responded with a smile.

# Western Loudoun Recreation Complex independent of the Town of Purcellville—for now

BY GRACE BENNETT

On June 17, the Board of Supervisors consented to recommendations for the Western Loudoun Recreation Complex's water and wastewater systems. The center will be operating entirely on its own private water so as to avoid pulling from the Town of Purcellville.

## GOVERNMENT

A public connection would have required improvements to Town infrastructure and adjustments to the project's budget, design, and schedule, potentially delaying completion by up to two years and adding between \$20 and \$30 million to costs. Contrarily, the current private water and wastewater system indicates no additional fiscal impact. Staff will be moving forward with the current utility design for maximum efficiency.

"The current direction by the County to proceed with onsite water and septic is a matter of practical timing and project momentum," said Purcellville Town Manager Kwasi Fraser. "It reflects where infrastructure readiness stands today,

not where it may stand tomorrow."

The process of designing the recreation center has involved community input; the project team has facilitated three public information meetings, all of which accepted attendee comments for review. Public feedback has been factored into the center's design.

The Western Loudoun Recreation Complex will occupy 96,000 square feet of space, composed of both a recreation facility and a park complex to the west of Purcellville. It will feature classrooms, a teen center, gymnasium, kitchen, fitness center, multi-purpose rooms, an indoor running track, an aquatics center with pools for both leisure and competition, a spa, a splash play area, and more.

Other site amenities may include sport courts, a rock-climbing wall, outdoor fitness area, and a diving area. The park portion will contain up to ten athletic fields, scorekeeper and umpire areas, athletic field lighting and fencing, public restrooms, concession facilities, picnic pavilions, bleachers, and beyond.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

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# Rt. 15 Lucketts bypass receives skeptical public feedback

BY GRACE BENNETT

On June 4, Supervisor Caleb Kershner hosted a meeting with project staff at Smart's Mill Middle School in order to receive public input on the proposed alternatives for the Route 15 Lucketts bypass. Staff reviewed four alternative road alignments along with a presentation updating attendees on the project's progress, which is currently in the planning phase.

Staff plans to return in October 2025 for a follow-up public hearing with the four alternatives narrowed down to two. A singular recommended bypass alignment will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in early 2026.

The project began with an endorsement by the Board of Supervisors in 2019. Later in 2022, a Comprehensive Plan Amendment was made, and the next step is identifying which road alignments are the most traffic-efficient, the lowest-impact for the Village of Lucketts, and the most supported by residents of Loudoun County.

As it stands, project staff has performed data collection, a traffic analysis, desktop research of local environmental resources, and a refinement of property alignment as relates to the bypass. Staff has concluded that the current conditions of Route 15 surrounding Lucketts need improvement due to severe traffic delays, long queues, poor intersection service, and high travel times at low speeds.

Southbound traffic volumes, for example, number roughly 26,200 vehicles daily. By 2055, staff predicts an increase to 30,600 southbound vehicles daily, along with a correlated increase in crashes and congestion. The intent is for the bypass to divert traffic around Lucketts without creating pileups by funneling vehicles through the Village.

A host of issues will need to be addressed before the project can move forward. The length and cost of the project has yet to be fully explored, as is the case with impacts on property, businesses, the environment, and the character of Lucketts.

These considerations would be made in depth during the project's next phase. A more thorough traffic analysis will soon be under way to avoid issues such as bottlenecks or merely moving the congestion to a different area.

Staff briefly outlined the shapes of the four alignment alternatives during the

presentation. The first—the westernmost road alignment—forms a long bend to create the most efficient flow to dodge Route 15's intersections. The second is similar, but the bypass deviates from the main road at a later point and reconnects earlier. These two alternatives could be mixed and matched in terms of their entry and exit points.



Photo: Grace Bennett

“They’re not exclusive options,” Kershner explained.

The same jigsaw potential is true of alternatives three and four. The third road alignment takes northbound traffic through the Village of Lucketts, but southbound traffic would be diverted nearby. The fourth option similarly takes northbound and southbound vehicles on separate alignments.

Staff has made visuals of each road alignment alternative available to the public. After the presentation, maps were set up in the meeting room to encourage general feedback, and a plethora of questions from attendees were answered by representatives.

Regarding the economy, staff has not yet evaluated ingress/egress for farms and businesses, although that will be happening soon in the next phase of study.

Staff has assured the public that, during construction, traffic control will be taken into consideration. The majority of work will be located outside of traffic patterns by nature of the bypass's placement off the main road.

Attendees questioned the volume of commuter traffic from various sources that channel into the Village of Lucketts. While Maryland contributes between 70-75% of vehicular flow, the numbers between West Virginia and Pennsylvania are unknown, although staff has data from a few years prior on record for reference.

Members of the public also questioned whether the Route 15 bypass would be migrating the problem from one place to another rather than solving it. Rather than creating a new

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

# Senator Warner speaks on domestic drone production inspired by Ukraine

BY GRACE BENNETT

On June 12, drone-producing company RapidFlight hosted a “fireside chat” panel with Senator Mark Warner and Axios Future of Defense Columnist Colin Demarest. Employees of RapidFlight offered an inside look at the 3D Drone plant assembly process after a Q&A with Warner regarding the U.S.’s position in the domestic drone industry.

## GOVERNMENT

Warner opened his discussion with raising awareness over the enormous engineering competition with China and Russia, especially in terms of the military. He warned that there are “a litany of areas in which we are in a race” with opposing countries.

He declared that drones are changing the whole nature of war. “All of those activities,” he said in regard to the country’s defense, “are being completely rethought now ... [we] need to rethink how modern warfare is going to pan out.”

The idea was inspired by a new operation in Ukraine dubbed “Spiderweb.” In this operation, Ukraine has been able to smuggle drones into Siberia to launch against Russia—with impressive success. Teams of engineers are able to assemble fully functional

drones within record times and for as cheap as \$200-300 each. “It’s jaw-dropping,” said Warner.

And the U.S. is taking notes. By using filament to 3D print all of the pieces of a drone, production is already much cheaper and quicker than it was just a few years prior.

Even with this decrease in expenses, though, there is skepticism over the defense budget’s continual rise. Warner reminded attendees that it is not sustainable to support and grow all U.S. departments all the time; certain platforms will need to be selected for retirement to sustain spending in the most urgent areas.

When asked about the role of 3D printing within the military in the near future, Warner responded, “Of course I’m for 3D printing ... we’re going to need a workforce that knows how to build and operate a 3D printer.”

The expansion of education in this particular field will hopefully prove to be a major step in the right direction. Warner expressed that, if community colleges are able to incorporate a program geared towards 3D printing, then the manufacturing industry will improve its efficiency, sustainability, and



employee retention.

Ukraine’s Spiderweb operation has raised more questions than just those regarding drone production. Having seen the successes of Spiderweb in Russia, people are questioning whether the U.S. is equipped to deal with an attack of the same nature.

“No,” was Warner’s immediate answer. Harkening back to an earlier situation, he said, “For 23 days straight, there were swarms of drones flying over Langley.” Warner explained that during that time, it was unclear who was responsible and how the issue should be handled. The U.S. needs improvements in drone defense protocols as well as in production.

The Department of Defense, according to Warner, needs to “invest in innovation.” The Senate needs to take part in driving the country to global leadership in the creative engineering process to maximize the potential of modern defenses.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

## THE BRICK WALL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

\$325,000 in one-time forestry revenue, referring to it as merely a “one-off” savings.

She questioned the pros and cons of the savings to the Well 6F project, asking if the town has the man power to using in house work for the waterline installation instead of using a contractor.

Public Works Director Jason Didawick said, “We have done something similar on Allder School Road.” He explained that staff changed the water line there “in house.” Regarding Well 6F, he noted, “We don’t have to dig up asphalt or sidewalks.” He added that the Town wouldn’t need to implement traffic control measures because the area is an open field. “It’s a straight shot from the Well 6 [F] to the water plant; we have the talent on staff—on our maintenance team to do this.”

Rayner asked if freezing a senior member’s position was a viable decision. Didawick answered, “With the recent retirement of the water superintendent, we believe the best course of action is to temporarily freeze this position and conduct a comprehensive assessment of our water operations—rather than moving immediately to fill the vacancy.”

He said the department wanted to have the opportunity to evaluate their structure, model, and long term needs.

Rayner asked if Didawick was worried that this pause would “overwork your team—is it going to tax them?”

Didawick replied, “We wouldn’t be

thinking about this if we didn’t have a talented team. Staffing levels will be at our current levels”—since a training position is in the process of being filled.

Vice Mayor Ben Nett said that the FY 26 budget is 8.3% higher than last year’s approved budget. “The Town is not going bankrupt. The FY 26 budget is balanced and it substantially increases reserves in the water fund which will help defray costly Capital Improvement Project expenditures for water in the years to come.”

Nett said the council has chosen one of the 12 models presented to them and to the public by the Town’s utility advisor, Stantec.

The Town’s utility reserves are stable, including the planned drawdown of excess General Fund reserves for FY 26, said Nett and this approach can continue for four years before reaching the Town’s 30% General Fund policy limit. This timeline, he said, will give “the Town Council ample time to improve the efficiency of Town operations to reduce future drawdowns on the General Fund services.”

Said Nett, “The budget before us preserves those essential services. The utility rate cuts for FY 26 will help residents and to an even greater extent the businesses—particularly the restaurants in our community.”

Nett said, “Who would not want to see their water rates go down, especially given the Stantec Utility Model G forecast [with] the lower annual water costs for five years.”

The Scenario G in FY 26 is -9% water and -11% sewer, FY 27 is zero % water and +9% sewer, FY 28 is +8% water and +7% sewer, FY 29 and 30 is +25% water and +3% sewer. This is based on building a new water plant starting in FY 29.

Picking up where Rayner left off, Council Member Caleb Stought argued that freezing a position in public works before an assessment is “putting the cart before the horse.”

Fraser responded, “No, it is not. Not if the director tells me that right now that position can be frozen without any detrimental impact to the organization. So, it was done because we looked and assessed the position and we made a determination that right now it’s prudent to freeze that position.”

“No,” Stought answered back, “that defies belief.” Continuing his criticism and referring to the \$325,000 the Town will receive for selling lumber, he said, “We can do that in FY 26, but not in FY 27.”

Fraser responded, “That is correct, but it is \$325,000 net, that we do not currently have.” Stought shot back that it is not sustainable to transfer 83% of the meals tax to the Utility Fund. “This budget is beyond laughable,” said Stought.

Each budget year, employees whose salaries are paid through the General Fund charge back time spent working for the Utility Fund. In FY 25, for example, the finance department charged back approximately \$311,000 to the Utility Fund for accounting services.

The projected chargeback for FY 26—for all General Fund employee support to the Utility Fund—is approximately \$1.2 million.

**Stought also argued that the Council needed more than a simple majority vote to pass the budget.** Stought, along with Rayner and Wright, has raised this issue numerous times during the budget process arguing that more than a simple majority was required to adopt the budget—a position that would have prevented the Council from passing it.

Addressing one of the reasons given by the minority was that each yearly budget represents new taxes—implying that taxes are newly imposed every year. Town Attorney John Cafferky said he didn’t know what else he could say as he has repeated numerous times that he disagreed that taxes are imposed new every year.

Said Cafferky, “I think what I said here within this budget cycle in the last couple months is consistent with what your [previous] town attorney Ms. Hankins said. I gave you an email with a number of citations to the code and different cases. You don’t have to agree with me. You obviously don’t. That was my opinion and it’s consistent with what Ms. Hankins said.”

Council Member Susan Khalil said that Stought, Rayner and Wright have reprimanded the council majority for not acknowledging “the expert advice from our staff—from our experts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

# Input needed on proposed Electrical Infrastructure Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Loudoun County is seeking public comments on draft amendments to the Loudoun County 2019 Comprehensive Plan related to the development and management of high-voltage transmission corridors.

## GOVERNMENT

The Electrical Infrastructure Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM-2024-0005) includes proposed map, text and policy amendments to Chapter 6 of the Loudoun County 2019 General Plan. The proposed changes provide a framework to guide electrical providers, Loudoun County staff, elected officials and other governmental decision-makers when determining where and how high-voltage transmission corridors should be developed and managed within the county.

The draft policies provide guidance on the location, siting, design and aesthetics of high-voltage transmission corridors and electrical infrastructure.

The draft Electrical Infrastructure Map identifies all existing, approved and potential new high voltage transmission corridors designated by the county as a component of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

This CPAM is not associated with

current applications proposed by Dominion Energy for transmission line projects that are being considered by the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

Members of the public can learn more about the CPAM at a public meeting on Wednesday, July 23, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the multipurpose room of the Douglass Community Center, 407 E. Market Street, Leesburg.

Comments regarding the CPAM draft map, text and policy amendments can be submitted via the online comment form available at [loudoun.gov/ElectricalCPAM](http://loudoun.gov/ElectricalCPAM) now through Aug. 8. Residents can also submit comments by calling 703-777-0246.

Public comments received through Aug. 8, will be compiled to identify trends and themes to inform future discussions in preparation for Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors public hearings planned in the fall of 2025.

More information about the proposed CPAM, the upcoming public meeting and a link to the online comment form may be found at [loudoun.gov/ElectricalCPAM](http://loudoun.gov/ElectricalCPAM).

## Loudoun County to adjust fee structure for electric vehicle chargers

Beginning July 1, Loudoun County will implement a new fee structure for the county-operated electric vehicle charging stations.

The flat session fee of \$2.10 will remain the same, which will cover the first 17.5 kilowatt hours of electricity. A new fee of 12 cents per kilowatt hour will be charged for any electric usage beyond the first 17.5 kilowatt hours.

## GOVERNMENT

In addition, members of the public who use the EV charging stations will pay a 10% fee per transaction.

Over the last several years, the county's average electricity rate has increased from about 8 cents per kilowatt hour to 12 cents. In addition, the length of time of charging sessions has increased. The new fee structure will

allow the county to fully recover the cost of delivering electricity to the EV charging station customers.

Currently, the county owns and operates 55 publicly accessible electric vehicle charging stations, which include a total of 106 ports at 11 locations. Customers pay at the charging station through a mobile app that is connected to a credit or debit card.

A map of the locations of the county's EV charging stations and information about plans to increase the number of county-operated charging stations can be found in the Environment & Energy section of the Loudoun GeoHub.

More information about Loudoun County's environmental initiatives may be found at [loudoun.gov/environment](http://loudoun.gov/environment).

## WARNER SPEAKS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

There is a "better investment climate today than it was two or three years ago."

"We are as well positioned as any place in the country to be a leading

site," added Warner regarding Virginia's involvement in the drone industry. "If we don't take [Ukraine's] lessons, shame on us."

## LOVETTSVILLE COUNCIL, CON'T. FROM PAGE 8

the water treatment plant to better understand operational challenges.

During the brief discussion on open space requirements, Council Member Arena sought clarification on whether the revised language might reduce the obligation to deliver active recreational facilities. Zoning Administrator John

Merrithew confirmed that the amendment retained the existing thresholds: "50% of that required open space has to be designed for active recreation or capable of supporting recreational activities."

The next council meeting, scheduled for August 7, will include the revised employee policy and nepotism language.

## FINANCIAL FOCUS®, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

many years before you want to retire. And once you do, how you plan to spend your time—perhaps traveling the world, turning your hobby into a business or taking your grandkids on outings. These can have vastly different price tags.

**Be willing to compromise.** Reaching one, or more, of your goals may mean compromising. If your must-have is building your dream home but it's not looking quite affordable, you may need to make a trade-off—build it a bit smaller, work a year or two longer or trade in some of your wish-list goals so you can stay focused on your must-haves.

**Hold yourself accountable to stay on track.** Once your strategy is in place, it's not a set-and-forget exercise. Actively tracking your progress and managing your decisions and actions can help you be better positioned to reach your goals. Use time-tested principles for making financial decisions, not predictions. Diversify, own quality investments and keep a realistic perspective, especially for your long-term goals. Maintain your focus and don't let

your emotions control your investment decisions. It can be helpful to meet with a financial advisor at least annually to review your full financial strategy, address any changes in your life or your goals, and discuss your progress and new ideas.

As you achieve certain milestones, celebrate them. You may even want to refresh your outlook with new goals. Take pride in your ability to strategize and accomplish a personal financial goal for yourself by following the path you envisioned and created. Remember, your individual financial goals and questions deserve individual attention. If you think you might need specific financial advice, please reach out to a local financial advisor.

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

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## W. LOUDOUN REC COMPLEX, CON'T. FROM PAGE 13

Staff hopes to incorporate a future library on the same site.

When considering water and wastewater provisions for the recreation center, staff organized a slew of studies to ensure that all utilities would be optimal. The Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure (DTCI) completed a Water and Sewer Service Options Study in 2024 to compare the public (Town-connected), private (independent), and hybrid options for water management.

After evaluating infrastructure needs, layout impacts, permitting, life-cycle costs, and a Sanitary Sewer Model Evaluation Memorandum, staff determined that their best recommendation would lie in a private system. This being the case, roughly 40 acres of the property would be allocated to sanitation and will not be otherwise usable for additional facilities.

The site's water demand was estimated at 25 gallons per minute, and an Assessment of Groundwater Supply evaluation confirmed that three wells on the property could provide to the site and meet that requirement. Additional testing will

take place to ensure the potability of wells and the sufficiency of onsite soils as septic drain fields.

Although the water and septic systems will be built for private usage, Fraser stated there is a chance for that to change in years ahead. "The site is being designed intentionally to allow for a future connection to the Town's utility systems, should our infrastructure be ready and able to support it," he said.

The County, according to Fraser, has contributed funding and studies towards such a future connection. The hope is to use a public water and wastewater connection in order to ultimately preserve those 40 acres of property and make use of their potential for the recreation complex rather than allocating them to sanitation. So, while the systems are private at the moment, the Town of Purcellville has ambitions to lend a greater hand to the complex.

"We see this not as a closed door, but as an open invitation to progress," Fraser added. "We continue to view the opportunity to serve the WLRC as a potential benefit, not just for the Town, but for the greater Western Loudoun community."

## BRMS champions young writers' success

At Blue Ridge Middle School, nurturing strong writing skills is a top priority. Through publication opportunities, engaging workshops, and prestigious competitions, students at BRMS are given opportunities to thrive as writers.

One writing program that encourages writers is the Blue Ridge Middle School Literary Magazine. Dr. Angela Hyatt, a sixth-grade English teacher, oversaw students who curated a literary magazine, giving students a platform to publish and share their creative works with the community.

Sixth grade student, Brooke Coleman, commented about the magazine, "The best thing was seeing the creativity of my classmates."

Rebeca Chicas Saenz, also in sixth grade said, "The best thing about working on the Lit Mag was that everyone had a part to do."

Aidan Plunkert, a seventh grade student who has worked on the Lit Mag for

two years said, "My favorite part was getting to work with an amazing team to work with and bringing something from the past back up. I got to ask for ideas and go on the announcements to advertise the Lit Magazine. I will definitely do this next year."

In the eighth grade under the guidance of English teachers Eric Kursman and Susan Keller, students work to submit pieces for the Scholastic Writing Awards, a prestigious competition that has recognized literary icons like Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, and Joyce Carol Oates.

Over the past three years, 33 BRMS students have earned awards. This year's winners include Sophia Bhalla, Krish Nayyar, and Zach Thorn who were Silver Key recipients, and Weston Hamilton and Avalyn Ludden who received Honorable Mentions. These achievements highlight the talent emerging from BRMS.

Additionally, the PTO-sponsored a creative writing club, led by Mary Litton Thornton, provided aspiring writers the chance to develop original short stories. Their efforts culminated in a published book provided to each student, celebrated with a festive book signing and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

### COMMUNITY



Blue Ridge Middle School Creative Writing Club



Scholastic Winners (left to right) Zach Thorn, Sophia Bhalla, Avalyn Ludden, Krish Nayyar, and Weston Hamilton.

## Brooke Rental Center opens in Purcellville

The Town of Purcellville officially welcomed one of its newest businesses, **Brooke Rental Center**, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, June 25. Town officials, community members, and business owners gathered to celebrate the grand opening of this family-owned business, located at **280 Shepherdstown Court** in Purcellville. The buffet dinner was catered by Smokin Willy.

Brooke Rental Center brings a wide range of high-quality rental equipment and supplies to Loudoun and beyond. Whether you're planning a backyard barbecue, a large or small wedding, or a community event, Brooke Rental Center has everything you need

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »



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### OPINION: PAXSON-AIRMONT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

generate revenue to offset the increased cost of farm operations and food production ...The ability to host private events such as corporate functions and weddings will also offer opportunities for those that acknowledge the importance of feeding others to hold their events in a location that respects the rural area and contributes to a life-sustaining cause."

This rationale raises three core concerns:

#### 1. Conflicts with Charitable Principles

Charities should not rely on commercial ventures that negatively impact local communities. The JK Community Farm's mission is commendable, but a fundraising strategy that harms neighbors, increases traffic and noise, and alters the land's intended use undercuts the public good it claims to serve. A charitable mission does not justify imposing costs on others. Public benefit should not be pursued through private harm.

#### 2. Undermines Public Trust and Legal Privileges

Nonprofits receive special tax treatment and public support based on the expectation that they operate in service of the common good. If those privileges are used to pursue commercial activities that disrupt communities or violate land-use restrictions, the result is a loss of public confidence. Charities must be transparent and accountable—not acting as commercial businesses operating under a nonprofit banner.

#### 3. Erodes Local Planning and Community Standards

Local zoning laws and land-use plans

are in place to protect the character, environment, and safety of rural communities. When a nonprofit seeks to bypass these protections, it sets a precedent that charitable intent can override community norms. A good cause cannot excuse harmful actions. A development that violates conservation protections,



disrupts rural life, or strains infrastructure is not justified by its fundraising potential.

As neighbors and stewards of this community, we are concerned that this project violates both the letter and the spirit of the conservation easement. If approved, it will permanently alter the rural character of the Paxson-Airmont community.

We call on the Land Trust of Virginia to uphold the easement and protect the public interest. We also ask Loudoun County officials and fellow residents to recognize the long-term consequences of this proposed development: once rural land is converted to commercial use, it rarely returns to its original purpose.

What we need now is responsible stewardship, thoughtful planning, and the collective will to protect the land for future generations.

Please visit <https://paxsonairmont.org> to learn more and join our effort.

### SUBRAMANYAM REQUESTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

- **\$1,396,631 for George Mason University** for the acquisition of a high-resolution mass spectrometer LC/HRMS instrument with FAIMS Ion Mobility (Field Asymmetric Ion Mobility Spectrometry).

#### Fauquier County

- **\$1,802,069 for Hero's Bridge** to construct affordable housing for aging veterans living in rural Virginia.
- **\$2,437,500 for Reset180** to fund the construction of a two-phase shelter and transitional housing program to serve survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

#### Rappahannock County

- **\$6,000,000 for Rappahannock County** for a new courthouse to replace the County's single courtroom courthouse that no longer meets space or security requirements.

#### Fairfax County

- **\$2,000,000 for the Upper Occoquan Service Authority** to improve wastewater treatment facilities.

More details on the Congressman's Community Project Funding requests for Fiscal Year 2026 can be found at [subramanyam.house.gov/services/fy26-community-project-funding-requests](http://subramanyam.house.gov/services/fy26-community-project-funding-requests).

**JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE),** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

It struck me, though, that morning, how (and why) the two burial grounds were separated; following the 'logic' of this 'segregation,' did the religious leaders at that time believe that the division would continue in the afterlife? And, do any of today's 'spiritual gurus' believe in this kind of set-up for eternity? I'm not about to push my own vision of the hereafter on anyone, but I know when I'm being hood-winked. And, I'm imagining that the 'Big Preacher in the Sky' had a few thoughts about such doings, and other acts much more flagrant. As I intimated earlier, I had seemed to have stumbled upon some weighty subjects that morning, as I strolled around the Churchyard.

And they were most persistent in remaining with me, for days, particularly in the overnight hours prior to jumping into the writing of this story. I had originally meant this piece (prior to stepping into the cemetery) to be a simple, historic perspective on the worship space at Hillsboro United Methodist—an historic facility in its own right—but (after my 'night of souls' experience) I felt a greater spiritual connection with those interred in the burial grounds on the church acreage; as I came to terms with the responsibilities in this task, admitting to myself that 'they' were the story, I actually felt some of that weight from my visit take flight. A bit like

Scrooge on Christmas morning, as it were.

Now, in my story, these twin cemetery plots represent, in microcosm—the opposing sides in the American Civil War, as well as those caught in the middle. Now, their battles are long over; we, the living, often find ourselves amidst seemingly overwhelming struggles, impasses and tribulations.

I think I can safely say that my worst life moments would pale in comparison to those faced by those whose remains lie at Hillsboro United Methodist. Sifting things a bit further, would these souls conduct themselves—if given the chance—in the same manners, having nearly two hundred years' hindsight? Are we collectively learning, or collectively regressing?

When others walk this and other, similar historic burial grounds, do they feel—on behalf of the memory of those whose remains lie beneath their feet—any 'weight of responsibility' to strive for the improvement of life for those still around us?

And, what about me? Have I done enough? I guess I'll obtain at least part of my answer as I face the spirits of those who 'followed me home' from Arnold Grove Cemetery. I'd like them to be at peace with the present as well as the past. And, in reference to my first sentence of this story, I guess that was actually a triple negative. Ya gotta watch those artistic types.

## Noem attends ribbon cutting in Harpers Ferry, W. Va. for CBP's Monarch Hall

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on June 23 to celebrate the opening of Monarch Hall—a 32,300-square-foot advanced training and learning center named in honor of the West Virginia state butterfly. The facility is part of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's 224-acre Advanced Training Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem attended the event, along with U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), U.S. Representative Riley Moore (R-W.Va.), CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott, and many other CBP officials.

Noem said she was looking forward to seeing what the center will bring in advanced training and technologies "to each and every single one of the people that joined to serve the public and the people of the United States."

Noem said that Sen. Shelley Moore

Capito "will go down in history as one of the most effective senators this country has ever seen." Not only did she secure over \$32 million to complete Monarch Hall, but "she tells the story of the men and women that will be here, that will train here—what it means for our country, what it means for our security."



Monarch Hall provides the ability for families to raise their children securely in a country "where they are safe and where they can still pursue the American dream" she said. When you invest and build you are saying that you're "investing in the people that will train here."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

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BRMS CHAMPIONS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

ice cream event for the community to attend.

As a culmination at the end of the year, all eighth grade students compiled a writing portfolio, allowing them to reflect on their progress and present their work and growth to parents and community members.

Eric Kursman, eighth grade English teacher said, "This year's English portfolio presentations were particularly strong because students were invested in explaining their growth and accomplishments to an authentic audience. It's one thing for students to grow as readers and writers, but to clearly, concisely, and eloquently share that growth with parents and community members is at another level. We, as teachers, couldn't ask for more."

Said Blue Ridge Principal Brion Bell, "Middle school is where voices begin to take shape—teaching writing at this stage isn't just about grammar, it's about helping students discover the power of their own words."

From excellent opportunities to competitive recognition, BRMS continues to foster a culture of excellence in writing—ensuring that the next generation of accomplished authors begin their journey at BRMS.

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

contribute to serious mental health concerns, and that's why it's so important for adults to recognize the signs early and respond quickly with empathy and action.

**How can parents and caregivers help their child?** If your child is being bullied, your support will be a powerful protective factor. Start by creating a safe, open environment where the bullied child can feel comfortable enough to talk about their situation. Instead of immediately offering solutions, listen with compassion. Ask open-ended questions like, "Can you tell me more about what happened?" or "How are you feeling about it now?"

Validating your child's emotions and reassuring him or her that they're not to blame is important. It's common for children to internalize bullying and wonder if they've done something to deserve it. Remind them that no one deserves to be mistreated and that they have the right to feel safe and respected.

Parents and caregivers should also take concrete steps to address the problem by contacting the bullied child's school or organization where the bullying is happening. Most schools have anti-bullying policies in place, though enforcement can vary. Requesting a meeting with teachers, or involved others to develop a plan for keeping your child safe is highly recommended. Be direct, be clear and be on top of the situation right away. Help your child build

resilience through regular routines, positive reinforcement, and social moments that affirm their strengths.

**What can your child do if he or she is being bullied?** Empowering your child with practical strategies is important. While children should never be expected to "fix" bullying on their own, they can learn skills to protect themselves.

Help your child to practice calm, confident responses—short phrases like "That's not okay" or "Please stop"—that communicate boundaries without escalating the situation. Teach them the importance of walking away and reporting the incident to a trusted adult, even if they worry about being labeled a "tattletale." Encourage your child to identify safe people and spaces at school or in their community. Children often feel less alone when they know where they can turn for support.

Building social connections is another powerful buffer. If your child has experienced social isolation due to bullying, consider enrolling them in activities where they can make new friends in a supportive environment.

**When should you get professional help?** Not all bullying situations require therapy, but when the emotional toll becomes overwhelming, professional support can make a significant difference. An experienced therapist can help your child process what's happened, rebuild their self-worth, and develop healthy coping skills.

For some families, therapy also provides guidance on how to navigate the school system, set boundaries, or work through the family's collective emotional response.

If your child is expressing signs of depression, anxiety, or thoughts of self-harm, or if your child has become more avoidant and/or negative, I recommend that you schedule a consultation with a therapist or psychologist as soon as possible. Mental health professionals can work alongside your family to ensure safety and create a plan for recovery.

**Moving forward together.** Bullying is most often not just a "phase" or something to gloss over—it's more often than not a serious issue that can affect a child's emotional and psychological well-being. Parents and caregivers play a critical role, not only in advocating for their children, but also in modeling healthy relationships and emotional resilience.

If you're concerned about bullying in your child's life, you don't have to face it alone. Whether through school partnerships, peer support, or therapy, help is available. Here's to fostering a culture where every child feels safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

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



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**OPINION: KUDOS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

into a massive cricket center. Middleburg erupted against losing its old park. Staff finally understood that cricket players mostly live miles away to the east, and so its grandiose scheme was scaled back.

One characteristic of governmental bureaucracies from the Capitol to Richmond to Loudoun is the sense that it is permanent and can outlast the current legislators. That's arrogant, but it's also reality.

**Ear Buds**

At Dulles a few weeks ago, I heard one side of a conversation and turned. It was a middle-aged man in suit and tie, striding forcefully down the concourse, yammering away as if speaking to the air. It made sense when I saw bright white ear buds.

I had four thoughts. First, speaking in a stentorian voice was rude and this was far from the first time I've witnessed it. Second, I would never want strangers to listen in on my half of a conversation. Third, the combination of ear buds and a smartphone are creating a zombie culture. Fourth, ear buds should be available in colors

other than white.

I did buy a pair of ear buds, in black. That's a bit more subtle, but I seldom wear them because I fear that if one falls out, I won't be able to find it against any dark flooring.

Here's a suggestion for ear bud manufacturers: Produce the things in several skin tones, from light to dark.

**Buying Insurance**

What a dreadful task. When I was young it was actually simple: Buy the cheapest. Later, during my career, a development project's insurance needs were complex, but I could hand things off to someone else. Now, owning a farm and getting the right coverage for a potentially risky sport becomes important and there's no one to whom I can toss that duty.

Now it's more important to get insurance right rather than to get it cheaply. That means truly understanding what is covered and what is excluded. Carefully scrutinizing the entire insurance policy document is critical.

There's a problem. Insurance companies will quickly quote a premium and give you a one-page "Declarations,"

which details the amount of coverage and the deductibles. I need more than that, so I ask to see the full policy. "Sure," says the insurance company, "we'll send it to you after you've purchased the policy."

That's akin to walking into a clothing store and asking to see its coats, then being told, "Pay \$500 now and then I can show you the coats we have." My old Marketing professor's adage was "Find out what the customer wants and sell it to him." That's the way buying insurance—or coats—should work.

**The Color Brown**

A century ago, my great aunt and uncle built a small house on a quiet street in Augusta, Georgia, my hometown. It had a grand front porch but its exterior was brown-colored wooden siding. Color popularity comes and goes, and maybe brown was favored at the time. They lived there for perhaps seventy years and if they ever had the house repainted, they kept it dark brown.

My father inherited the house and kept it as a rental. He wanted to spruce it up and I suggested a lighter exterior

color such as cream or pale yellow. He eschewed my advice with this declaration, "It's always been brown and should always be brown."

Later my youngest brother owned the house and he, too, wanted to update it. Once more I suggested a light exterior color and once again I heard, "It's always been brown and should always be brown." Today, brown, yellow and orange are the least-liked colors. Had father and brother followed my advice, I'd bet they could have raised the rents.

Strangely, dark brown now seems to be a popular color for multifamily developers in eastern Loudoun. Look along Route 7 and the Greenway and you'll see such abominations. Taste is subjective and personal, but despite that I'm sure Staff would be all too happy to regulate aesthetics.

*Charlie Houston and his wife live in a farmhouse where one wing is fieldstone and the other is dark red siding. The barns and outbuildings are cream colored. One of their cars is a sage green, the others are shades of gray and bronze. Houston usually wears black polos or turtlenecks.*

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**OPINION: DATA CENTERS.** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

You've seen their brightly colored sunshiny ads. Be happy, don't worry. These Centers are a good thing they say. For who? Not for us folks.

The Centers have a capacious appetite for dirty fossil fuel power from coal sites in West Virginia, they daily inhale enormous volumes of our potable water, our drinking water, to "cool" the heat from their ever-busy servers that define the centers, the thousands upon thousands of square acres of boxes in search of an aesthetic.

We must beware the power guzzlers drawing upon these coal sites and burying these toxic power lines. Burying is not the answer. It's more complicated than that. Bloomberg Intelligence reportedly observed that "its research shows data centers... could be responsible for as much as 17% of all US electricity consumption by 2030." The US Department of Energy has said one data center "can require 50 times the electricity of a typical office building."

These data center developers give lip service to renewables but, at the same time, the industry is considering re-purposing former coal mines, or coal fired power plants, to be home to data centers. See Darrell Proctor, "Power Demand from Data Centers keeping Coal Fired Plants Online," Power Magazine, Oct. 16 2024. There appears we have a pivot away from our County's decarbonization goals and some think nuclear is the viable alternative, in other words, that we may trade the risk of Green House Gasses for radiation.

In Virginia, Data Centers have consumed a staggering 31% of Dominion Energy Virginia's electricity sales in 2022—according to Data Center Impacts, pages 7-8.

We must address the looming disparity, as usage may soon exceed capacity. Our community's sorry profile increasingly is "massive facilities, newly constructed substations, and sprawling transmission lines that now encroach upon green spaces and suburban neighborhoods while residents contend with the constant noise of cooling systems, diesel generators, and ongoing construction." This is found among the Data Center Impacts, p. 8.

Worse, we will be forced to subsidize this

fool fuel infrastructure because the cost will be distributed across all ratepayers, us residents included, to underwrite power lines from West Virginia's coal fields that we oppose.

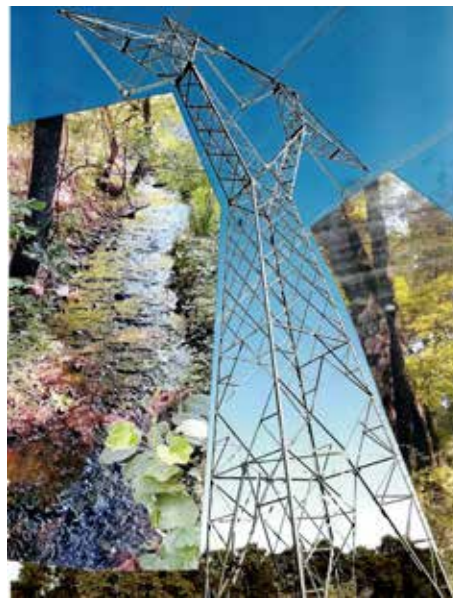
What about our water supply? In the last five years demand for potable water, clean drinking water, has increased dramatically, by 266%. Water cooling is how the data centers mostly cool their servers. There has been a modest increase in reclaimed water. One test of good will would have been that the Data Centers only used reclaimed water.

Consider the fact that "[i]n 2023 alone, Loudoun data centers used 1.6 billion gallons of water, nearly 10% of the County's total water use," found among the impacts at pages 12-13. Financial Correspondent Camilla Hodgson wrote that "US tech groups' water consumption soar[ed] in 'data center alley.'" Silicon Angle's Mike Wheatley wrote, "Virginia's datacenters guzzle water like there's no tomorrow."

We also have water quality concerns—13% of our perennial streams are considered impaired; data center development directly results in increased impervious surface cover, noted among the Data Center Impacts, p. 15. "Impervious surface cover" means liquid can't get through the ground cover, a bar to "getting through" in an area of 21 million square miles of build out in Loudoun County. This increases storm water runoff and poor water quality—Data Center Impacts at pages 15-16. The runoff contains "pollutants, oils, fuel, heavy metals, chemical and sediments [that] ... can enter nearby watersheds during [Data Center] construction." This is an assault on the surrounding watersheds.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality studied the effect of "4,000 diesel generators to support [the] energy demand," of Data Centers, ranging in size "between 600 to 3500 kilowatts." This makes us worry about greenhouse gases. It's the case that "a single 60 MW data center operating continuously emits about 236,520 tons of CO2 annually." The data suggests possible adverse human health effects. This can be found on page 16.

Data Centers "increase habitat loss,



"Usufructus" – a collage by J. Flannery

fragmentation, and deforestation ..." Nor does it stop there: "Loudoun has seen housing development that can't keep up with population growth." The argument has been made that early zoning laws allowed data centers to develop in residential areas, and this limited the land for residential use, and the effects persist to this day (pages 18-20).

In an ironic turn, the homeowners in the Hiddenwood Lane neighborhood, in Arcola, Virginia, sought to change their zoning from suburban to industrial data centers, to sell their property to data center developers.

They wanted to avoid the industrial construction in the area by selling out. But to grant what they wanted meant that the nearby Briarfield Estates neighborhood would then have to suffer the effects of Hiddenwood's data center construction.

It was the approval of several data centers by the County Supervisors that resulted in the community of Hiddenwood being almost entirely surrounded by data centers.

It was insufferable. There was "constant construction, noise, debris, and only one access road in and out of the community, mak[ing] it difficult for residents, delivery drivers and emergency vehicles to access the community," according to page 21.

The saga of Hiddenwood can't be ignored. It can't be dismissed as an

exception. Hiddenwood suggests the data centers don't care a digital bit or byte about the burden they place on our citizens who live and work here, who were here long before these perilous ever-humming machines arrived.

Can you imagine paying the user costs for the coal fire energy that the data centers need to power their centers—after citizens opposed these coal fired power lines? Can you imagine the risk to the supply and quality of drinking water, as their usage closes on county-wide capacity?

These data centers are not sustainable. The developers want too much, care too little to serve our community, and it's high time we had a moratorium on any more data centers in this County, and that means every data center application poised to pass but not yet approved.

We are not a subdivision of the data centers' business plan. We are talking about power, from coal fire to nuclear, for the needs of the data centers, not us. We need to preserve and protect our water, and not use it so recklessly to cool heated servers. If data centers are to continue, they must reclaim the water—they don't get to waste our potable drinking water.

We need a deadline for action—it should reflect our concern for the environment—let's make that date—December 24, 2025—the day "John of the Mountains," John Muir, passed in 1914. We must begin to restore what we've lost, what we got so wrong about these Data Centers.

*John P. Flannery, II, Who's Who in America, an elected director and the treasurer of Loudoun County's Soil and Water Conservation District. This op-ed reflects only his personal view. He is a former NY federal prosecutor, Asst. Bronx DA, Special Counsel to the US Congress' Judiciary and Labor Committees. He appears on tv and social media, discussing law, politics and community affairs. Flannery has undergrad degrees in Physics (Fordham), engineering (Columbia), law (Columbia), and a masters in information science (GW Graduate School). Flannery and his wife Holly have a small farm in Lovettsville.*

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**RT. 15 LUCKETTS BYPASS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16**

roadway, it was suggested to turn problematic intersections into roundabouts.

Staff replied that the roadway is controlled by the Virginia Department of Transportation. As such, it must be able to accommodate trucks of a certain size, and constructing a roundabout large enough for this purpose would involve the removal of buildings. Moreover, to slow down the fast-moving traffic in the area, they would need to add sweeping curves to the road—which would wipe out more infrastructure.

“One of the objectives is to try to maintain the character of the Village of Lucketts, and honestly, if you try to put a roundabout in the center of Lucketts, you’re going to wipe out a lot of Lucketts,” said Design Manager Mark Hoffman.

Attendees raised concerns over impacts to the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. Staff has taken care to factor wildlife into the planning process; all proposed road alignments will travel either north or south of the sanctuary with none cutting through.

Similar questions were raised about preventative measures for animal collisions. Staff has undergone much discussion on that front, and the current design incorporates culverts under Route 15 to allow wildlife to cross safely below the road.

Attendees asked how staff plans to incentivize drivers to use the bypass rather than taking the usual route through the Village of Lucketts. Staff explained that the roads will be altered in favor of the bypass; vehicles will have to make an extra turn to get into Lucketts, whereas the bypass would take them along a direct curve.

Members of the public at the June 4 meeting wanted to be certain that the construction is in good hands. “We want smart work,” said

Alex Isaac, a former candidate for Congress and invested attendee.

Other comments expressed uncertainty regarding the project’s overseers. “Why is the county considered the expert planning consultant in such an important and sensitive transportation issue?” inquired another attendee. The residents are seeking to be more active voices in the developments taking place in the area they call home.

Some communicated their frustration with the county’s presentation and ability to rework traffic in the Village of Lucketts. “Doesn’t this just move the problem?” asked many during the Q&A portion of the meeting.

Others wondered whether staff’s efforts are focused on the right place. “As long as there is one two-lane bridge across the Potomac with a traffic light just across it, will this really address congestion?”

Several of the attendees expressed disappointment at the answers given to their community’s traffic concerns and questioning over which historic buildings and resources will be impacted. “We’ve done a desktop inventory of it,” said Hoffman, “but that’s just to give us an idea as we develop these preliminary alignments.”

Staff assured those present that the public will remain updated on the process. “We’re going to be preparing a full report of proposed alignments that will be presented,” said Hoffman. “We’ll work with the staff on that—that will be presented to the Board of Supervisors, and that’ll be made publicly available after the Board of Supervisors endorses it and a decision’s made.”

Staff intends to keep a record of all comments to improve the outcome of Route 15’s bypass. The public is encouraged to provide further feedback during the October follow-up meeting.

## Above Ground Winery joins Virginia Tech’s Sentinel Vineyard Project

Above Ground Winery located in Middlebrook, Virginia, has announced its inclusion as a research site in Virginia Tech’s Sentinel Vineyard Project. This collaborative effort, led by Dr. Mizuho Nita (Extension Grape Pathologist) has been funded by the Virginia Wine Board since 2019 to provide seasonal updates and valuable insights to grape growers across the state.

Above Ground Winery, the first winery in the Town of Purcellville, relocated its operations to Middlebrook, Virginia in 2014 to expand its vineyard and winemaking operations.

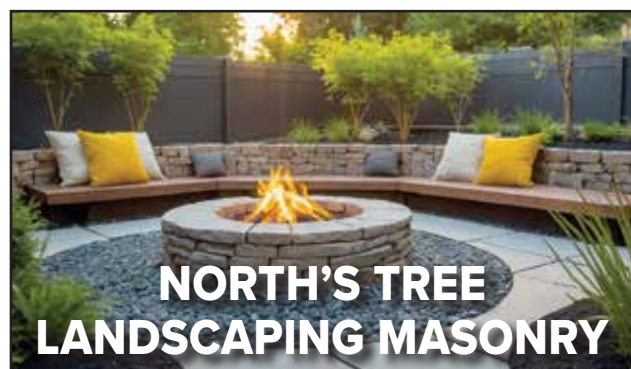
The Sentinel Vineyard Project brings together approximately 20 experienced growers, winemakers, owners, and consultants to share viticulture and enology-related data. Focusing on two widely grown Virginia cultivars, Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc, the group collects monthly data on growth stages, pests, diseases, harvest parameters, and weather factors, including wind, rainfall, and humidity. This approach fosters knowledge-sharing and supports the Virginia wine industry’s growth and resilience.

Data collected for all sites are monitored remotely by both Virginia Tech and participants in the Sentinel Vineyard Project dashboard. The field research specialist, Ian McLellan, placed pheromone insect cards throughout the vineyard to monitor specific insect populations.

Information gathered through the project is disseminated to the wider grape-growing community via Virginia Tech’s Extension outlets, including monthly viticulture meetings, Viticulture Notes, Dr. Nita’s blog, and a newsletter.

For more information contact Dr. Mizuho Nita at (540) 232-6047. Go to [www.agwinery.com](http://www.agwinery.com) for more information about Above Ground Winery.

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**OPINION: REVITALIZATION**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

It isn't clear if the end product would consider historic preservation, pedestrian accessibility, related design standards and citizens' quality of life. We have to guess if it would be satisfied with data centers, box stores, parking lots, strip malls or other out-of-character projects on the west end of town.

Despite the apparent differences, the positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It would be a great community service if the Town's polarized and apparently hostile camps could get together amicably and professionally to try to find some common ground.

The "Yard at O Street," between 21st

Street and Hatcher Avenue, might be a good place to start. The Town's Comprehensive Plan has long called for some kind of revitalization there. The goal is to replace empty or blighted lots with an attractive "mixed use" neighborhood that would include affordable, small unit residences and small scale commercial establishments designed to complement and blend in with the surrounding historic buildings. The neighborhood would have ample green spaces and common areas, and would be easily accessible for pedestrians.

Incidentally, adding more water and sewer system users would also reduce at least some of the pressure on residents'

and businesses' utility bills.

Unfortunately, traffic congestion is a major obstacle to any potential infill development in Purcellville. Additional housing and commercial traffic in the middle of the town would only exacerbate the existing problem. When I've raised this issue with business leaders, the response has been a casual shrug, as if the problem would take care of itself. It won't.

Having identified this obstacle, however, I don't have an easy solution to offer. Improved public transportation that helps residents reduce their dependence on their cars is an obvious suggestion. But that is unpopular with many

people — including, I'm afraid, many of my preservationist friends. I would love to hear other ideas.

In any case, to have a constructive debate over Purcellville's "revitalization," we need a clear, shared vocabulary. And we need practical proposals that address the interests of both citizens and businesses.

Let's start that conversation.

*John Ellis serves on the boards of Save Rural Loudoun and the Between the Hills Conservancy. He lives near Hillsboro and was an independent candidate for Catocin District county supervisor in 2023.*

**LEESBURG AIRPORT**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

a control tower, and the Leesburg Executive Airport has approximately 80,000 annual flights to be organized. The FAA and the Virginia Department of Aviation's grant programs will thus be providing roughly 98% of funding for the project.

Staff has outlined expectations for the control tower's appearance and location and has made visual renderings publicly available. The control tower's floor area will be about 440 square feet, and although it is documented at 102 feet in height, that number is a maximum with consideration for antennae. The tower will more apparently stand at 81 feet. Although its coloration and final size has not yet been determined, it will be a square structure with an 8-sided windowed cab at the top.

Also included in the construction will be a utilities equipment room, a small parking lot, and an access road to the control tower off of the airport's main parking lot.

Having documented the categories for potential environmental impact, staff has concluded that there will be no adverse impacts as a result of

the project. Completing the site will temporarily cause the usual construction emissions, solid waste, energy/water/sewage use, and noise, but there will be no lingering effects after the tower is finished.

While there will be a minor change to the landscape from the tower's presence, the project will result in an overall safety increase and noise reduction for plane arrivals and departures. The project will not allow for the accommodation of larger planes or introduce a new flood of air traffic. The FM waves used for communication—the same harmless signals used in standard radio—will have no negative impacts.

With consideration for the project's many studies, the architectural design process, and the construction phases, staff estimates that the control tower will be completed in 2029.

"That service is helping the community by controlling air traffic, providing a level of safety that the airport didn't have the first 50 years of its life," Coffman concluded. The Leesburg Executive Airport community can look forward to the consistent security and efficiency of flights in their area.

**BROOKE RENTAL CENTER** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

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**NOEM ATTENDS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

And we face new challenges every single day in this country, new challenges that our agents and our individuals will have to be prepared for.

"I believe that they will be prepared for them because of what we're doing here to make sure that

we're resourcing and equipping them the way that we should." Facilities like Monarch Hall provide the necessary training, said Noem.

"We see challenges ahead in this country, new threats emerging everywhere. But we don't complain about them, we fix them," Noem said.

**THE BRICK WALL**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

It's interesting to me to see how fast the tables can turn when our experts no longer say things that are in line with the council minority."

Khalil said that she supports the budget. "When families are struggling, when we have a high cost of living, we can't be tone deaf. Lowering utility rates is not irresponsible, it's empathetic and achievable. We are right sizing our town government and spending, not cutting just to cut—but making intentional thoughtful adjustments to ensure we are operating efficiently and living within our means."

Mayor Chris Bertaut reiterated that the Town currently has \$5.8 million in reserves above the 30% policy limit. He noted that if the Town continues drawing down at the same rate as in FY 26, the above policy level reserves will last for four years. He added that the water reserve fund with this scenario will be 121% above the policy level, and the wastewater reserve will be 83% above policy.

"This will help us to defray costly CIP expenditures in the water—in the years to come." Bertaut noted that in FY 27 Stantec will have better numbers looking outward toward the later part of this decade.

Bertaut said the budget is a "responsible resident and business focused approach. Right now, we are carrying \$46.3 million inherited debt including over \$38 million in water and waste water obligations. We can't continue to solve yesterday's problems by placing burdens solely on the backs of 2,700 households and businesses." He said the budget keeps critical services and addresses infrastructure needs.

Contrary to Council Member Caleb Stought's "order" at the first June meeting—where he said he didn't want to hear any more blaming of former Mayor Bob Lazaro for the Town's utility debt—we covered this issue at the time and stand by our reporting.

Here are the facts regarding utility

debt Lazaro caused the town to incur while serving as mayor. When a \$6 million, grant-funded, state-mandated upgrade to the Town's wastewater plant was undertaken, the then Lazaro-led Council chose not just to comply with the mandate, but to significantly expand the plant, despite it operating at only 40% capacity. That decision significantly increased the Town's long-term utility debt, much of which Purcellville residents and businesses are still paying off today. At the time of the ribbon-cutting, Lazaro said the expansion was done to support "future growth."

Bertaut said, "The utility rate relief that we have asked for is not reckless—it is a result of smart cuts and fiscal discipline. Our Town's reserves remain well above the policy thresholds even after a drawdown of \$1.4 million from the General Fund reserve. This is sustainable governance, not political theatrics."

Rayner said the budget is "irresponsible" and the majority of Council is "selfish." "We are creating a problem that we didn't need to have." Council Member Kevin Wright said, "If you don't like it here, why don't you move." Stought called the majority a "dictatorship."

Nett concluded, "I understand your frustration." He said that he understands the frustration that Council Members Rayner and Stought feel "because these same bullying tactics [were] implemented for years and they were successful with weaker people. You got two people to flip on their positions. You got two members of Town Council to quit and resign. You got one member of Council to move out of Town—but you are up against a brick wall with these individuals."

"The majority of the Town is not represented by this room and they haven't been for any of the meetings—and I do live in this town and I resent you impugning my motives, and my character and my commitment to the town," Nett concluded.

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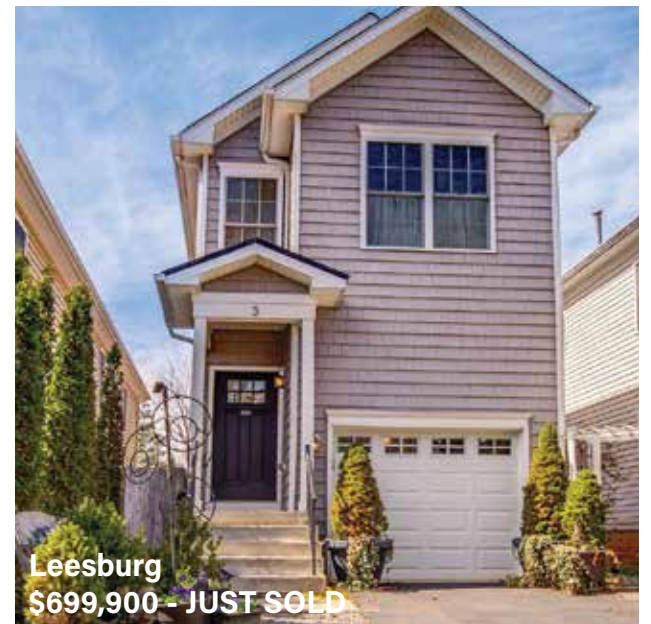
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