

Rayner's attempt to tip the vote—targeted, trapped, and torn down

Nett cleared by Panel, then arrested along with Town Manager

BY VALERIE CURY

In a dramatic rebuke of political interference and procedural injustice, the Town of Purcellville Employee Grievance Panel has unequivocally exonerated Officer Ben Nett, overturning his April 4 termination from the Police Department. What began as a controversial dismissal steeped in allegations now stands exposed as a flawed, politically motivated attack that shattered a career and threatened a man's livelihood and reputation. The Panel's unanimous decision not only orders Nett's reinstatement with full back pay and reimbursement of legal fees but also highlights a deeply dysfunctional system where personal vendettas overshadow justice and fair process.

The Town of Purcellville Employee Grievance Panel found no factual basis for any of the five grounds cited in Nett's termination. Reviewing testimony and documentation, they ruled that not only had Nett not committed misconduct, but that the process used against him was improperly influenced by political rivalries and violated both the Town's Employee Handbook and the Police Department's General Orders.

On June 25, the Town of Purcellville Employee Grievance Panel (hereto referred to as the Panel) convened to review Nett's April 4 termination from the Police Department, in accordance with grievance procedures outlined in the Town's Employee Handbook. The Panel was composed of Dr. David R. Buss

(Chair), Brian K. Wells, and Jonathan R. Wright.

After thoroughly examining the evidence, the Panel unanimously concluded that Nett did not engage in the conduct described in his notice of termination. They found no factual support for any of the Town's allegations and ruled that the termination was unjustified.

The directed patrol allegation: The Panel reviewed five specific grounds for Nett's dismissal. The first concerned his attendance at a Jan. 30, 2025, Town Council Agenda Planning Session, held from 8 to 9 a.m., while he was on duty and marked out for "directed patrol."

Nett attended the meeting in full uniform, seated publicly with his radio on and laptop open—actions the panel viewed as transparent and consistent with remaining ready to respond. The Panel also noted that the Town has no written policy governing the use of directed patrol time. They have no policy specifying when, how, or under what circumstances an officer may utilize directed patrol time. Lt. Holman confirmed there was no such policy, but even if there were, Nett had not received training on its appropriate use.

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Testimony indicated that officers commonly use directed patrol time for lunch or errands, as long as they remain on call and ready to respond.

In the absence of any policy or training on directed patrol, the Panel found it unreasonable to view Nett's attendance at the Jan. 30 meeting as a violation. They also noted that Lt. Holman or Acting Chief Lombrana should have established clear expectations—especially given Nett's dual role as a police officer and Town Council member.

Initial sick leave allegations: The Town alleged that Nett lied about being sick when he took sick leave and attended the Virginia Municipal League conference on Jan. 29-30. However, all of the Town's evidence supporting this allegation came from Council Member Erin Rayner, a known political opponent of Nett.

Rayner testified that she saw Nett in Richmond on the evening of Jan. 29, speaking on the phone and drinking a drink. While she claimed he appeared to be talking, she admitted she could not actually "hear him."

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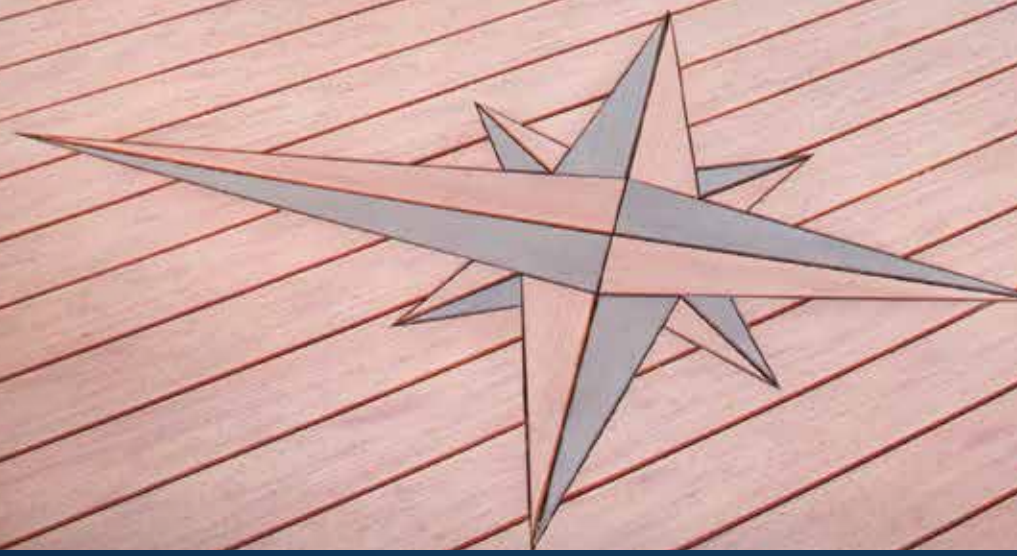
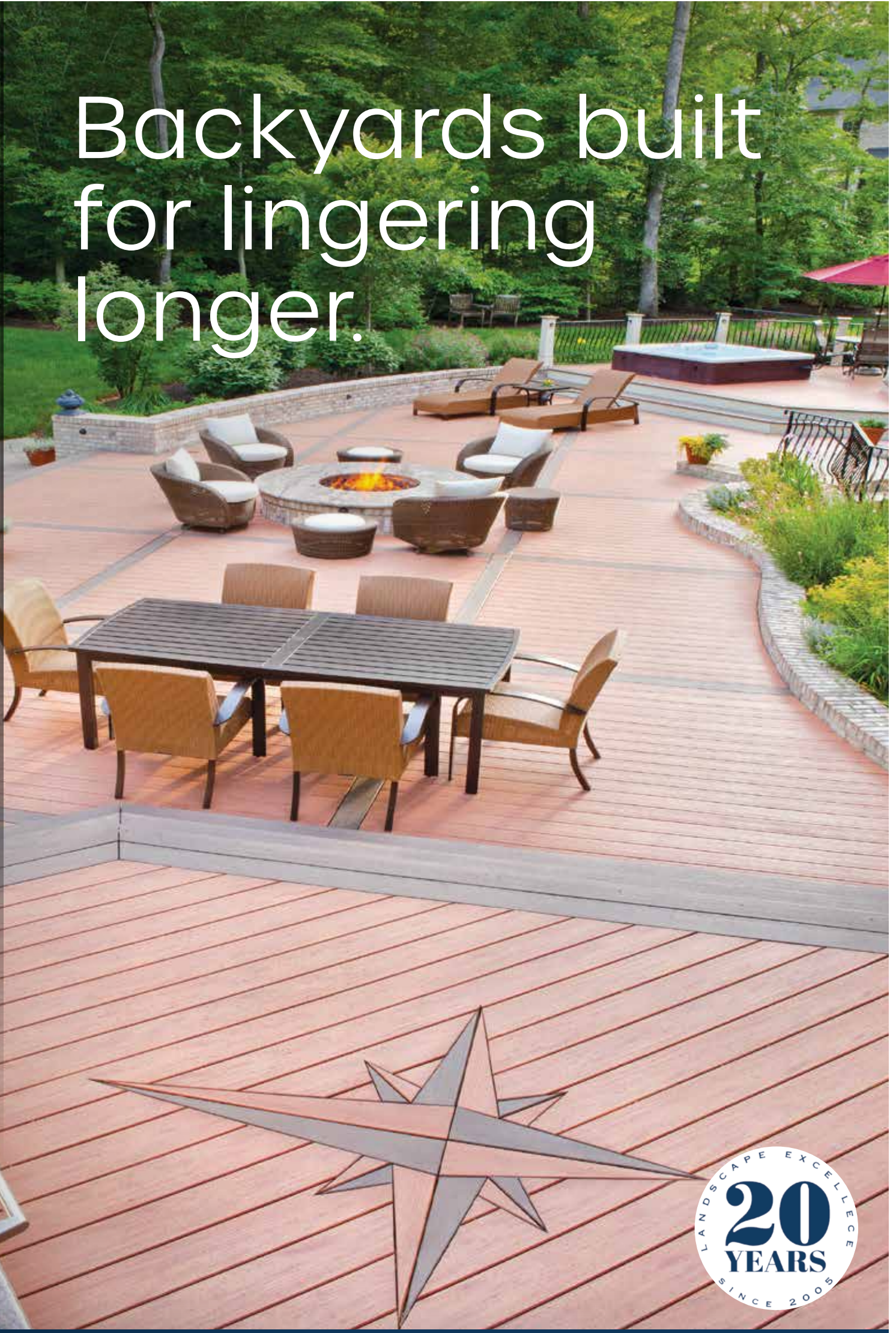
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Local teen's love for rescue pets sparks growing nonprofit: Paws 4 A Cause

At just 17 years old, Allie Guzulaitis, a rising senior at Riverside High School, is already making a big difference in the lives of animals in need—one wagging tail at a time.

After adopting a neglected rescue dog with her family, Allie found herself forever changed by the experience. “After rescuing my dog, I witnessed first-hand how love can truly change everything. It opened my eyes to the love, resilience, and loyalty that every pet deserves to experience. That passion is what inspired me to develop an organization that deeply cares for animals,” she says.

Moved by her dog's transformation from anxious and aggressive to loving and kind, Allie launched her very own nonprofit organization, Paws 4 A Cause. It's a student-run initiative with a heartwarming mission—to support shelter animals by connecting them with caring donors who want to give them a brighter future.

Partnering with Friends of Homeless Animals and Belly Rubs Pet Spa, Allie created a website featuring 10 spotlight animals every month, complete with their personal wish lists. With just one click, visitors can donate supplies and goodies directly to these deserving pets.

“These animals are underprivileged and in need, and we have raised over \$6,000 worth of supplies in the first six months,” said Guzulaitis. And the best part? All of the featured animals are adoptable. Anyone interested in giving one of these sweet pets a forever home can visit FOHA's adoption page or email pawsforacause@gmail.com.

Guzulaitis is currently running a fun summer competition called “The Dog Days of Summer.” The supporter who donates the most supplies by Aug. 25 will receive a giant gift basket as a



thank-you, delivered on Aug. 30.

Teresa Hogge, the founder of Belly Rubs Pet Spa, has been a huge supporter of Guzulaitis' project from day one. “I am really pleased with Paws 4 A Cause. Our pets love their treats and the extra attention,” said Hogge, whose Ashburn-based shop helps supply the items for donation.

Although she runs the nonprofit solo as a student, Guzulaitis' dream is to grow its impact. “The organization has been a hit around my neighborhood, but I have been looking for other ways to get the word out in hopes that even more people can support these animals,” she says. “I believe it would show service in the community and bring attention to pets in need. Also, all of the animals are available, so it would serve as an outlet for adoption.”

To check out the pets featured each month—and maybe even send one a treat or find your future furry best friend—visit the Paws 4 A Cause website <https://sites.google.com/view/thedogdaysofsummer>.

Thanks to this determined and compassionate teen, more pets are getting the second chance they deserve—and a few extra belly rubs, too.

Sign up begins Aug. 18 for the Purcellville Tag Sale

Mark your calendars—Purcellville's biggest shopping event is back. 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 22nd Annual Purcellville Tag Sale is set for Saturday, Oct. 11. Rain or shine, the deals will be on across town.

Sign-ups open Aug. 18, so mark your calendar. For updates and registration details, visit PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com.

Mark Your Calendars for a Day of Discovery at the Purcellville Tag Sale. From 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 11, Purcellville will become a treasure trove for bargain hunters and curious explorers alike. Spend the day strolling through town, uncovering vintage finds, one-of-a-kind antiques, handcrafted goods, collectibles, and delightful surprises around every corner.

“There's something magical about seeing the entire town come together

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Boneheads

BY CHARLIE HOUSTON

Dictionaries define “bonehead” as a dumb or foolish person. My definition is broader and includes people or organizations which have done things that turn out to be glaringly wrong, such as athletes, actors, politicians, governments and others.

OPINION

Athletes

Shaquille O’Neill on visiting the Parthenon in Greece said, “I really can’t remember all the clubs we went to.”

Golfer Greg Noman, “I owe a lot to my parents, especially my mother and father.”

Dennis Rodman, “Chemistry is a class you take in high school or college where you figure that two plus two is ten or something.”

Businesses

Remember New Coke?

How about Bud Light and Dylan Whatever?

Kodak stuck with film cameras.

Former tech powerhouse DEC thought home computers were a silly idea.

In 2007 I had the bright idea of buying some area houses as an investment. The

next year the economy crashed, reducing the value of those investments to zero. Or less.

Wars

Napoleon invaded Russia.

So did Hitler.

Just before WWII broke out British Prime Minister Nevil Chamberlain proclaimed, “Peace in our Time.” He was off by five or six years.

Vietnam was a boneheaded conflict, made worse by our leaders.

Of the many questionable moves LBJ made during that war, one stands out. US pilots attacking North Vietnam could engage enemy fighters in the air, in dog-fights, but could not destroy those same North Vietnamese airplanes when they were simply parked on runways.

George W. Bush’s Iraq War.

Politics

Nixon thought breaking into Democrat’s Watergate headquarters was a clever idea.

“Mr. President,” chirped one of Clinton’s aides, “Meet your new intern, Monica Lewinsky.”

Liberal and elderly Supreme Court

justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg refused to resign while Obama was still in office and could have nominated another liberal to the bench.

President Herbert Hoover, on the eve of the Depression, assured Americans, “We are nearer today to the triumph over poverty.”

Speechwriter to Hillary, “Work ‘deplorables’ into your speech.”

Actors

John Travolta turned down the role of Forrest Gump.

Burt Reynolds declined to play James Bond in one of the eponymous movies.

Tom Selleck refused the role of Indiana Jones.

Governments

With—gasp—a \$1.9 billion headquarters renovation underway, the Federal Reserve is trying to explain away a projected \$700 million cost overrun. Double gasp.

For just that \$700 mil overrun, Loudoun County Public Schools could build three high schools. Its latest extravagance is a \$221 million high school. I once helped develop a 40-story corporate

headquarters for less than half that.

In past years LCPS would present a budget request to the Board of Supervisors. Negotiations would ensue and the schools would settle for a bit less than asked for. I’m not sure such negotiations take place today, as I’ve heard several Supervisors proudly announce, “We’ve been fully able to fund the schools’ request.” The split infinitive is their fault, as is the school system’s unchecked spending, such as a new raise for the superintendent, to \$425,334.

Hoarding Loudoun’s Tax Receipts

The County ended last year with \$290 million of extra revenue thanks to data center taxes. In grand generosity, the County eliminated our \$25 license tag fee. BFD. Its next step was to squirrel away as much of the largesse as possible, hiding tens of millions into odd “contingency” accounts.

I don’t recall these contingencies by name, so here are made-up equivalents: \$10 million to a Parks & Rec Capital Contingency Account” or \$15 Million to a “Transit Contingency Account.”

I used to do something like that in

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Publisher & Editor
Valerie Cury

Creative Department
Pam Owens, Layout/Design

Advertising

Sabine Bibb SabineBibb@gmail.com 571-437-9953	Tonya Harding THarding455@gmail.com 703-314-5200
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Editor:
(letters to the editor & press releases)
editor@BlueRidgeLeader.com

Hot News Tips:
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editor@BlueRidgeLeader.com

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Did Purcellville really pay \$12K for a six-page organizational assessment report?

BY LLOYD HARTING

In March of 2025, the Town of Purcellville awarded a \$12,000 service contract to perform a comprehensive organizational assessment of the Purcellville Police Department. What the town received instead was a six-page report, and one of those pages was the consultant’s biography.

This so-called “organizational assessment” was performed by Major Consulting and Design, LLC, a Virginia-based consulting firm that was competitively awarded the contract. The town’s Request for Quotes sought

an experienced consultant, preferably a former police chief, to evaluate the department’s structure, staffing, operations, and overall efficiency. The town expected to receive a professional, data-driven report that could guide improvements in public safety and resource management.

But what was delivered was far from that.

There was no data analysis. No benchmarking. No methodology explaining how recommendations were developed. No discussion of call volume, officer workload, or community needs. In fact,

there’s no indication the contractor made any serious effort to determine what an “ideal” police department for Purcellville should look like—either in structure, staffing or funding.

Furthermore, it appears that not all Town Council members or police department employees were interviewed. So what input drove this report? And more importantly, what exactly did the town pay for?

One of the most glaring omissions is that the report does not mention the Purcellville Police Department’s long-standing accreditation by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC)—a mark of professionalism the department has maintained since 2009. Any legitimate organizational assessment should have addressed that fact.

Instead, the report reads more like a “climate survey” than a serious analytical review. But that’s not what the contract called for. The Purcellville Town Council did not authorize payment of \$12,000 for anecdotal, subjective impressions and a consultant’s professional resume.

No one disputes the value of reviewing and improving local government

services. Conducting an organizational assessment can be a responsible and forward-thinking move when it’s done well. But this certainly was not a professional product.

The Town of Purcellville paid for a serious, professional evaluation. What it received was a short, superficial report that falls below true professional standards. Six pages—only five with actual content—isn’t an assessment. It’s an embarrassment.

When public money is spent, town residents have every right to expect results that reflect expert analysis, real effort, and clear value. That didn’t happen here. So it’s fair to ask, “Did this report even meet the scope of work that the town paid for?”

The Town of Purcellville deserved to receive a professional assessment, which is not what was delivered. Therefore the Purcellville Town Council should examine whether \$12,000 of the Town of Purcellville taxpayers’ money was properly spent to obtain an organizational assessment report of such dubious quality and usefulness.

Lloyd Harting is a resident of Purcellville and a retired U.S. Government contracting professional.

Justice shouldn't be politized

Dear Editor:

As Mayor, I cannot stay silent in the face of what's unfolding in our town.

Let me be clear, I stand firmly behind the principle that every individual is innocent until proven guilty. What we are witnessing today are serious charges, but they come at a time of deep political division and immediately following the complete exoneration of Vice-Mayor Ben Nett by an independent Grievance Panel.

That panel found the case against Mr. Nett was not only unfounded but rooted

in political motivations. It exposed a troubling pattern—where the rules were bent, procedures ignored, and a dedicated public servant was targeted for daring to serve his community and speak out for reform. The panel unanimously concluded he did nothing wrong and ordered his full reinstatement with back pay.

There are strong parallels running through the events of the past seven months. After losing the majority on the Council, members of the new minority have acted to disrupt public meetings, and behind the scenes to advance

salacious, but unfounded accusations through the criminal justice system. All in furtherance of their desire to regain control of the town government in support of their allies and against the interests of the town as-a-whole. Their actions are political retribution masquerading as public service.

Now, less than a month later, both Mr. Nett and our Town Manager face criminal indictments—before any formal response to the panel's findings has even been addressed. The timing is not lost on me, nor should it be lost on the public.

This Council has worked hard to bring transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership to Town Hall. That work

has not been easy. It has come with resistance, with backlash—and now, I fear, with retaliation.

To the residents of Purcellville, I urge you to look beyond the headlines. Ask hard questions. Demand the full story. And remember that justice is not served by rushing to judgment—it is served by truth, transparency, and due process.

This is a pivotal moment for our town. I believe in the integrity of our community and in the values that brought each of us to public service. We will not be shaken. We will not back down. And we will continue fighting for what is right.

—Christopher Bertaut
Mayor of Purcellville

Loudoun BOS denies Hiddenwood Industrial Rezoning

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

After more than a year of negotiations, public hearings, and revisions, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted on July 15, to deny the Hiddenwood Assemblage's request to rezone their community for industrial use—a decision that leaves 20 families in limbo.

The Hiddenwood Assemblage is made up of 20 parcels totaling nearly 29 acres along Hiddenwood Lane near Arcola. Residents there have watched their once-rural neighborhood become surrounded by massive data center projects, following county approvals that some supervisors have since admitted were mistakes. To the south lies the sprawling JK2 data center complex; to the west, more data center developments are under construction.

Faced with heavy truck traffic, airport overflights, and constant construction noise, residents argued that the character of their neighborhood had been permanently altered. They asked the county to rezone their land to allow compatible uses—first for data centers, and later for light industrial and commercial development—so they could sell their homes and move elsewhere.

During the July 15 board meeting, Scott Bell and Patricia Cave, both Hiddenwood residents, and Chase Stewart, a Loudoun County industrial real estate broker, delivered public comments in support of their latest industrial rezoning application.

"Tonight, I don't just ask that you hear me, I ask that you see me," Hiddenwood resident Scott Bell began. "I ask that you see me and you see us, this Hiddenwood community, not just as applicants. I ask that you see the people who are seated behind me. See us, not as applicants,

but as proud contributing residents of Loudoun County."

Bell continued, "We have approached this process with patience, respect, and a willingness to address every concern raised... We are proud of the way we've conducted ourselves and the lives we lead here in this county. But at times we have felt unseen. At times we have felt that we don't matter. I stand before you again... to represent a community of people who simply want the dignity of peace & stability."

Another Hiddenwood Lane homeowner, Patricia Cave, echoed Bell's sentiments. "Our proposal, while it may not be perfect, is a reasonable solution that corrects numerous wrongs to Hiddenwood and mitigates impacts to Briarfield without causing the same wrongs."

Cave concluded by asking the Board to consider the human element of the application. "We've lost so much of our lives to this process over the last several years that it's difficult to put into words the anguish that we've experienced and continue to experience. With your support, we can finally put this terrible period of uncertainty behind us and we can move on with our lives."

Real estate broker Chase Stewart later asked the Board to consider the economic benefits of the Hiddenwood application: "We're facing a shortage of quality industrial space in this market... This proposed development is exactly the kind of project that can support local business, attract investment, and create long-term tax revenue and job opportunities for the county. I urge you to consider what [this project] brings to Loudoun County's economic future," Stewart concluded.

The Hiddenwood assemblage initially

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Understanding Post-Separation Abuse: The hidden continuation of domestic violence

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

For many survivors of domestic violence, leaving the relationship is just the beginning of a new chapter of fear, manipulation, and control. This phenomenon is known as post-separation abuse, and it can be even more damaging than the abuse that occurred during the relationship.

Ask Dr. Mike



DR. MIKE

What Is Post-Separation Abuse? Post-separation abuse is the continuation of power and control tactics by an abusive partner after the

relationship has ended. While domestic violence during a relationship may involve physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, or sexual, post-separation abuse shifts the venue from the home to the courtroom, the co-parenting dynamic, and the social systems meant to protect victims.

This form of abuse escalates and often surpasses the abuse that occurred during the relationship. The abusive ex-partner uses children, legal channels, financial tools, and social manipulation to continue harming the victim. It's a strategy not of reconciliation or coparenting but of control, retaliation,

and punishment.

What are the Tactics of Post-Separation Abuse? Counter-Parenting: This occurs when an abuser is unable to set aside personal animosity for the well-being of their child, and co-parenting turns into a battlefield. The unhealthy ex-partner may use parenting time not to nurture the child, but to create chaos—disrupting schedules, contradicting rules, or withholding information about the child's activities or health.

Parental Alienation: An abuser may claim "parental alienation" when, it's their own behavior that causes the child

to withdraw. These allegations become a legal tool to reverse the narrative. Claims of alienation are often used to deflect emotionally abusive or neglectful parenting, confusing the courts and harming the child's sense of security.

Neglectful or Abusive Parenting: Post-separation abuse may include exposing children to unsafe environments or emotionally neglectful behavior. The aim is often not just control, but to alarm the healthy parent into a constant state of vigilance. This tactic can involve allowing access to unsafe people, inconsistent caregiving, or verbal abuse of the other parent in front of the child.

Isolation: Post-separation abuse often includes calculated social sabotage. The abuser may attempt to isolate

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FINANCIAL FOCUS® Investing With Heart: Find a Financial Advisor Who Shares Your Values

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI, EDWARD JONES
FINANCIAL ADVISOR

When it comes to managing your money, there's more to consider than just the bottom line. For many people, investing isn't only about building wealth or reaching goals — it's about making sure their dollars support charitable causes and principles that are in line with their closely held values.



JOSHUA
WOLINSKI

Whether your focus is on protecting the planet, aligning with your faith or giving back to your community, a financial advisor who understands your values can help you build a portfolio that reflects what matters to you. Here's how to help find a good fit.

Know What You Stand For

Before you start searching for a financial advisor, take a moment to reflect on your own values. Are you passionate about sustainability? Do you want

your investments to avoid companies that conflict with your faith? Is charitable giving a big part of your life and something you want to incorporate into your financial strategy?

Make a list of your top priorities. Understanding what drives you can help make it easier to find a financial advisor who shares and respects your vision.

Do Your Homework

Once you've clarified your goals, start looking for financial advisors who focus on values-based investing. Terms like "socially responsible investing" (SRI), "faith-based investing," "impact investing" or "ESG" (which stands for environmental, social, and governance) are good keywords to use during your search.

Browse financial advisor websites and check their credentials. Some may highlight their experience with sustainable funds or philanthropic

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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Broad Run Stream Valley Park

BY TIM JON

Funny how despite the fragility of life it seems that Nature can often abide in very close proximity to mankind and our so-called civilization. We see the reverse of this pattern as well with flora and fauna wilting before our progress, so I'm always heartened when I observe any



TIM JON

vital signs of life within the workings of humanity. Now I know that's a lot to chew on, and I had hardly formulated these thoughts in their entirety at their place of inspiration—but I definitely had the basic idea by the time I'd completed my short exploration at the local site known as Broad Run Stream Valley Park.

The whole thing started before I'd parked my car in the adjoining neighborhood—having circumnavigated much of the preserve's acreage, seeking in vain for any designated area for visitors' vehicles.

I mean, this place was smack dab in the middle of American suburbia. I believe at one point I turned around in the driveway of a public school, where I



exchanged a few pleasantries with a couple of whitetail deer—who appeared to be just about as confused as I was. Feeling a bit better after this brief exchange, I only circled my destination once more before settling into a spot near the trail access.

The neighborhood sidewalk led right up to the official walking trail, and entering into the greenery of a mature stand of trees and underbrush, I was on my way along the day's odyssey. It didn't take long for me to notice that the path—although at times felt like it led through the 'deep woods,' actually more or less paralleled and skirted the nearby neighborhood.

At times, the trees and shrubbery obliterated the man-made structures,

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"One Big Beautiful Repeal": Subramanyam calls for support against BBB

BY GRACE BENNETT

Following President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act signed into law on July 4, Congressman Suhas Subramanyam hosted a public information and discussion meeting on July 10 to gather support against the recent legislation.

GOVERNMENT Subramanyam started by explaining the significance of what he nicknamed the "Big Ugly Bill." This bill, he stated, is the largest cut to health benefits and food assistance thus far in American history. Up to 17 million Americans will lose their access to care, and those who are best able to work will struggle most to prove their eligibility for assistance.

Subramanyam stated that, contrary to popular belief, "There are no illegal immigrants on Medicaid ... It's American citizens who are enrolled in Medicaid—who are eligible—that are going to be hurt the most."

And even for those not currently benefiting from Medicaid, Subramanyam warned that "everyone will be impacted." An automatic 4% cut to Medicare will be generated, as well as raised premiums, medical research setbacks, and an 8% increase in most people's utility bills. A \$5 trillion increase to the national debt is being risked.

"Even the good stuff is kind of bad," Subramanyam added. The promises of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act—such as removing the tax on tips and granting financial support to each child of American families—are walled behind deceptive caps, said Subramanyam.

Some of the bill's provisions directly impact attractions in Virginia. "One that we're trying to get more attention about is the space shuttle at the Dulles Air and Space Museum is now being shipped to Houston ... it's going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars to do that," said Subramanyam.

Another result on the local level is the rates on the Dulles toll road—the One Big Beautiful Bill Act is going to result in more frequent lease renewals from airports. According to Subramanyam, this "means that the tolls on the Dulles toll road will continue to be high."

Subramanyam's objective is to mitigate the negative effects of the bill and to eliminate the bill altogether. "I look forward to introducing 'One Big Beautiful Repeal,'" he declared.

A panel of experts spoke briefly on how they have seen negative impacts in

their own departments. Panelist Evan Chapman from Clean Tomorrow warned that U.S. household energy costs are expected to increase per household by \$165 in 2030 and by \$280 in 2035.

Beyond energy production and costs, there will be major impacts in terms of tax cuts. The estimated 10-year cost of cash tax cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act is \$4.5 trillion, according to panelist Matt Gardner, a senior fellow at the Institution on Taxation and Economic Policy. About 75% of that number is predicted to go towards repairing the results of President Trump's first tax cut in 2016. About 20% will be allocated to businesses and corporations, leaving only about 3% to fulfill campaign promises such as tip tax elimination.

"The top 1% of Virginians, a group that has on average \$2.5 million of income, is going to see an average tax cut of \$78,000," said Gardner. "If that sounds bad, it's going to get worse."

April Achter, a panelist and the director of Encompass Community Supports, emphasized the importance of public health services. "What we're facing are potential cuts to these services," she said, "and I can't say strongly enough that the need does not go away if the funding does."

Following the panelists' explanations, Subramanyam opened up the floor to the public to vocalize their concerns, stories, and questions. The majority of attendees reported that they and their family members had recently lost their jobs as a result of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

"My company has lost 50% of their workforce," said one.

Several attendees also shared that they are the parents or caretakers of special needs individuals, and the cuts to Medicaid are going to be disastrous for those people. Subramanyam agreed that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will be devastating for families rather than solving fraud issues. "Most of the fraud on Medicaid is on the provider's side," he said. "I don't want people to get away with lies."

A 17-year-old speaker voiced her experience as a person with type 1 diabetes, the third leading autoimmune disease in the country. She said that Medicaid makes it possible to not rely purely on insulin shots, but the current cuts are risking that support.

Many attendees raised concern over Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Vineyard Square downtown project officially dead—new vision ahead

BY VALERIE CURY

After more than 15 years without progress on a deeply unpopular proposal for a six-story building with first floor commercial space and 40 apartments in the heart of Purcellville's historic downtown, the project's approvals have finally run their course. The developer's

GOVERNMENT

Certificates of Design Approval, previously extended three times, have now officially expired.

The Purcellville Planning Department has confirmed that the site plan for the Vineyard Square project (TP-14-13) expired on July 1, 2025. The extended timeline had been granted under a temporary statewide provision related to

the COVID-19 pandemic, which allowed certain development plans to remain valid longer than usual. However, that grace period has now ended, and in this case, no further extensions are allowed under local regulations.

If the developer intends to move forward with any new version of this project, they will be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

Loudoun to host free educational sessions about Fair Housing Law

The Loudoun County Department of Housing and Community Development will host a series of free “lunch-and-learn” sessions from July through September to raise public awareness about fair housing law and how it protects different population groups from discrimination. Anyone involved in housing as a current or potential renter, buyer, financial adviser, realtor, property manager or builder is encouraged to attend.

Each monthly session will be held virtually on a Wednesday from 12 to 1 p.m. Participants will be able to ask

questions throughout the presentation. The upcoming schedule is as follows:

- Aug. 20—Fair Housing and Assistance Animals: Assistance animals are the subject of many fair housing complaints from people with disabilities. Guest speaker Ayla Hanson, a property manager and experienced service dog handler, will talk about how fair housing law applies to persons who use assistance animals.
- Sept. 24—Fair Housing and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »

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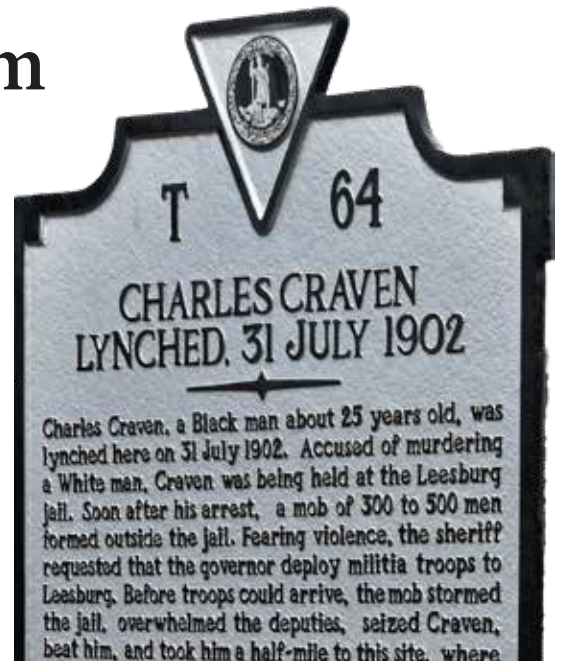


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Historical highway marker for lynching victim Charles Craven dedicated in Leesburg



The first state historical highway marker in Leesburg and Loudoun County memorializing a lynching victim was dedicated Wednesday, July 16.

State and local elected officials joined with members of the NAACP Loudoun Branch and the Loudoun Freedom Center in a ceremony at the site of the former Potter's Field public burying ground, the present-day northeast corner of the intersection of East Market Street and Catoctin Circle.

That is the site where Charles Craven, a 25-year-old Black man, was lynched July 31, 1902. Craven was being held at the county jail on unrelated charges of murder and robbery when a mob of at least 300 armed men broke into the jail. Craven, who declared his innocence, was taken a half-mile away to the Potter's Field, hanged from a tree, and attackers then fired hundreds of rounds of ammunition into his body.

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County supervisors compared to fascists as pro-Palestinian comments heat up

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

During its July 15 business meeting, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors left the dais after a pro-Palestinian public comment speaker compared the supervisors to fascists.

This is the latest in a saga that began in April 2024 when Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) released a statement on Board of Supervisors letterhead asking for a ceasefire from the state of Israel. The statement alarmed Loudoun's Jewish community and seemed to embolden Loudoun residents who were already asking the Board to pass a ceasefire resolution directed at Israel.

Fast forward a year and a half and public comments made to the Board are polarized between comments calling for divestment from Israel and comments concerned about antisemitic rhetoric being allowed in the board room.

"[Briskman] has divided a county between the Jewish community and the Muslim community with no benefit at all to its residents," Loudoun resident Donna Widawski said in May 2024.

This dialogue comes in the context of an entire nation addressing high rates of antisemitism. On June 14, The New York Times published an op-ed titled "Antisemitism Is an Urgent Problem. Too Many People Are Making Excuses." The Times reported that, according to data from the F.B.I., Gallup, Pew Research Center, and U.S. Census Bureau, Jews experience hate crimes at the highest rate in the nation.

"And history offers a grim lesson: An increase in antisemitism often accompanies a rise in other hateful violence and human rights violations. Societies that make excuses for attacks against one minority group rarely stop there," The Times' editorial board said.

As federal lawmakers attempt to address antisemitism through legislation, supervisors have addressed concern about antisemitism in various ways.

Supervisor Kristen Umstaddt (D-Leesburg) consistently identifies antisemitic statements made during public comment. According to Umstaddt, commenters use antisemitic language when they say, "bad evening to the Zionists" and "Free Palestine" or when they call Jews "Zio-Nazis." She also considers accusing Israel of committing genocide and apartheid to be antisemitic.

Supervisors Caleb Kershner (R-Catoclin) and Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) have also expressed concern over antisemitic public comments made in the board room. At times, they have associated

themselves with Umstaddt's statements. Briskman has expressed regret.

"It would be inappropriate for us to do any resolution or speak out on this topic. I made a mistake when I did so and made a mistake about putting it on my county letterhead," she said in November.

On June 1, an anti-Jewish terror attack in Boulder, Co. put further pressure on the supervisors to act. On June 17, speakers during public comment noted similarities between Loudoun and Boulder leading up to the attack.

"Like Loudoun, the Boulder City Council was also flooded with antisemitic rhetoric, which was ignored," Joel Pozmanski said. "A cautionary tale of what happens when antisemitism festers."

In Boulder, Mohamed Sabry Soliman attacked a peaceful gathering that was raising awareness for Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Soliman injured multiple victims. He reportedly shouted "Free Palestine" during the attack.

According to an article from Boulder Reporting Lab titled "Pearl Street attack intensifies tensions over antisemitism at Boulder City Council," a year and a half ago, some Boulder citizens began asking the Boulder City Council to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Over the past year and a half, tensions have escalated. In the months leading up to the attack, the comments have escalated to "personal attacks directed at Jewish councilmembers." One councilmember has repeatedly been called a Nazi.

"No one is saying city council meetings had anything to do with Sunday's attack. But the overlap in rhetoric is expected to heighten tensions, as some councilmembers worry that language used during public comment lays the groundwork for acts of violence," senior reporter John Herrick wrote for Boulder Reporting Lab.

Since Loudoun resident James Russell first came to the Board asking for a ceasefire resolution, the tension in Loudoun County—inside and outside the boardroom—has been escalating.

According to Loudoun County Public Schools Superintendent Aaron Spence, antisemitism has begun trickling into Loudoun's schools from outside sources. On June 3, Aaron Spence released a statement condemning antisemitism and calling Loudoun County residents to foster a compassionate environment.

"I am writing to share our deep concern about a troubling increase in antisemitic language and commentary in our community, particularly on social media, in the wake of targeted attacks on members of the Jewish community across our country," Spence wrote in his

statement. "While much of this activity may occur outside the walls of our schools, its impact reverberates within them—deeply affecting our students, staff and families."

Supervisors face a tough question about how to do their part to address antisemitic rhetoric. They must tread the line between violating residents' first amendment rights and allowing violence-inciting speech.

On June 19, LoudounNow conducted a reader poll titled "Should our local governing bodies place additional limits on public comments at meetings?" Forty-seven percent of voters said, "Yes, limit to agenda topics." Thirty-five percent said, "No, this is the public's time." Thirteen percent said, "Yes, limit to local topics." Four percent said, "Yes, limit the comment period." One percent said, "Stop allowing comments at meetings."

In July, Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) began prioritizing residents who signed up to speak on agenda items. At the July 15 meeting, she warned that she would interrupt speakers and ask them to sit down if they veered off topic. This became a point of conflict when five speakers attempted to tie a proposed data center to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

One speaker, Sarah Husein-Bazar, continued to yell after being asked to sit down.

"This is sounding like fascism to me," she said.

Randall ruled Husein-Bazar out of order, and the supervisors left the dais.

"If you want to speak on any issue, you can. Put it on the agenda that you're going to speak on that issue," Randall said after returning to the dais nine minutes later.

After Randall's comment, two more speakers attempted to tie the data center vote to the Middle Eastern conflict. These speakers, James Russell and Maya Smith, also continued to speak after being asked to sit down.

"I didn't forget. Bad evening to the Zionists," Smith said.

"Thanks for responding to fascism by silencing Arab women," Russell said.

Other pro-Palestinian speakers expressed outrage about how Randall ran the public comment period.

"In this room, we have bigger problems than data centers," Zeina Hutchinson said. "The suppression of speech and the disrespect for the speakers that have abided by the rules day in and day out is absolutely unacceptable."

Umstaddt said Randall "handled herself well in a tough position."

"A chance for Virginia to lead once again"

Youngkin unveils AI education partnership between Google and Virginia Works

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

On July 15, at Google's Reston office, Gov. Glenn Youngkin unveiled VirginiaHasJobs.com/AI, an innovative online hub designed to guide Virginians toward emerging, high-demand careers in artificial intelligence

and related technologies. Built through a partnership between the Commonwealth's new workforce agency, Virginia Works, and Google's Grow with Google program, this one-stop "AI Career Launch Pad" equips learners—regardless of background—with the tools they need to understand, explore, and succeed in the rapidly evolving AI economy.

Youngkin stressed that AI skills are becoming essential across every sector. "All fields, all career movements somewhere along the way, are going to incorporate this next generation of technology," he told attendees.

At the heart of VirginiaHasJobs.com/AI is a curated catalog of no-cost and low-cost learning pathways, thoughtfully organized by skill level and career focus. Beginners can get started with Google AI Essentials Courses—interactive, foundational modules that introduce core AI concepts and demonstrate practical applications in the workplace.

As learners progress, they can enroll in Google Career Certificates, which deliver in-depth, job-ready training in fields like cybersecurity, data analytics, and project management. Thanks to Google's funding, Virginia Works will award 10,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 »

AI EDUCATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Career Certificate scholarships to further broaden access, covering program fees so eligible Virginians can participate without financial barriers.

“AI is increasingly part of every aspect of work, and we’re excited to launch this opportunity for Virginians to take part in this future,” said Youngkin. “Our new AI Career Launch Pad will take Virginia to the next level as a global leader in AI careers and training. We’re nationally ranked as one of the top states for AI job postings, underscoring Virginia’s position as a leading hub for AI innovation and talent.”

Youngkin continued, “Virginia has jobs, and I want to thank the teams at Virginia Works and Google for your shared commitment to making sure every Virginian is prepared and ready to take advantage of the changes and exciting new possibilities AI is bringing to the workforce.”

Beyond coursework, the site guides users through interactive career exploration tools, allowing them to identify growing AI-related roles in sectors ranging from healthcare and finance to manufacturing and public service. Interactive dashboards highlight real-time labor market data—such as the roughly 31,000 AI-related job listings currently available across Virginia—so job seekers can tailor their upskilling journey toward roles in highest demand.

Secretary of Labor Bryan Slater said, “Thousands of Virginians are already working in AI-related roles, reflecting a strong and growing talent base across the Commonwealth. The VirginiaHasJobs.com/AI launch pad will ensure Virginia remains the top state for talent and is essential to fostering continued job growth.”

The AI launch pad also connects learners with regional community colleges and universities offering advanced certificates, bootcamps, and degree programs in AI, ensuring a seamless pathway from short courses to credit-bearing credentials. “Virginia is leading the nation at every level of education—through AI literacy, our rigorous computer science standards, and hosting our first-of-a-kind AI in Higher Education Summit—we are preparing students to be ethical users, innovative designers, and critical thinkers,” said Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera.

Both Youngkin and Slater likened the 10,000 scholarships to library “golden tickets”—Virginians can “check out” a scholarship to complete a course, then “return” or “renew” it to continue their learning journey. “Virginia Works is also an action statement,” Youngkin added. “It is that Virginia works. We have so many open jobs ready for people to find that next career or to take that next step.”

Local employers also see opportunity. Lauren Bacon Smith, Chief People

Officer at Enabled Intelligence in Vienna, explained that her firm recruits workers to build the high-quality training data AI relies on—often drawing on neurodivergent talent skilled in pattern and spatial recognition. “Everyone thinks of AI and the fear of it replacing jobs. We’re here today, though, talking about how many jobs it is creating,” Bacon Smith added. “At its foundation, there has to be humans skilled technically to build the technology.”

Google’s partnership extends beyond course content: Grow with Google will provide live webinars, mentorship opportunities, and periodic Virtual AI Career Fairs, giving Virginians direct access to hiring managers and industry experts.

“Google is committed to championing economic growth and opportunity in Virginia. We’re proud to collaborate with Virginia Works to provide our AI Essentials and Google Career Certificates at no cost to workers across the Commonwealth,” said Bronagh Friel, Head of Partnerships for Grow with Google.

“This will help equip more Virginians with the in-demand skills to secure great jobs, advance their earning potential, and drive a prosperous future for the state. This is the kind of forward-thinking approach that we need to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to succeed in the digital economy,” Friel said.

Any Virginia resident over 18 can visit VirginiaHasJobs.com/AI, create a profile, and immediately begin exploring course offerings. Once enrolled, learners track their progress through personalized dashboards, earn digital badges to showcase new skills, and gain direct access to Virginia’s network of employers eager to hire individuals versed in the latest AI tools and methodologies.

At the event, Google program alum Brandon Lacasse shared his own experience with the Career Certificates. “I really wanted to do programming, but wasn’t sure how to go about that,” he said. “I found out about the Google Career Certificates and took the ‘IT Automation with Python’ one. That was a game changer for me.”

The dedicated AI webpage will list no-cost courses alongside select low-cost learning opportunities “from beginner-friendly courses on AI fundamentals and practical workplace applications of artificial intelligence to bootcamps and degree programs offered by Virginia’s leading-edge community colleges and universities,” according to the governor’s office.

Youngkin described the Google partnership as an opportunity for Virginia to set a national standard in talent development. “This is a chance for Virginia to lead once again in talent development in a way that sets a new standard for how we collaborate together.”

RAYNER’S ATTEMPT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Nett explained that he was recovering from flu-like symptoms and experiencing leg pain, which prevented him from performing his duties as a patrol officer. His account was supported by fellow Council Member Carol Luke, who testified that she drove Nett to Richmond on the evening of Jan. 29 because of the pain in his knee. Luke added that Nett “wasn’t feeling great” and noted that his illness would not have been apparent through casual observation alone. She also testified that they remained mostly stationary during the conference.

Rayner testified that she spoke with Nett for about five minutes on Jan. 30 and observed that he “seemed fine.” She was also interviewed by the Prince William Police Department during its internal affairs investigation.

The Panel noted a “serious factual deficiency” in the Town’s failure to produce the investigation report or to call any witnesses from the department to testify about its findings. This lack of evidence significantly undermined the credibility of the Town’s case.

The Town of Purcellville Grievance Panel highlighted that the Prince William Police Department’s conclusion that Nett was not sick relied exclusively on the uncorroborated sole testimony of

Rayner.

The Panel found that the testimony on March 19 was consistent with earlier affidavits submitted by Nett, Council Member Carol Luke, Mayor Chris Bertaut, and one of Luke’s colleagues.

The Panel did not find the Prince William internal affairs investigation, which took place with at least one officer from the PWPDP—First Sergeant Jessica Tacha—to be credible.

The Town failed to provide the Panel with a copy of the investigation report. Based on the limited information available, the Panel concluded that Council Member Erin Rayner was the sole source for the conclusion that Nett was not sick.

Prince William investigators did not interview any of the other individuals who were with Nett during the Jan. 29–30 conference—Mayor Chris Bertaut, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil. The panel wrote, “This failure to consider evidence other than Ms. Rayner’s (sic) statements shows that the Prince William IA investigation, at best, was not sufficiently thorough to be reliable.”

Alleged failure to cooperate and targeted: The Town alleged that Nett refused to participate in the internal affairs investigation regarding his use of sick leave to attend the VML conference

and his attendance at the Jan. 10 planning conference while on directed patrol. However, the Panel found only one request—on Feb. 7—for Nett to comply with the PWPDP investigation. They concluded that he fulfilled this obligation by meeting with officers on March 19.

His participation was late but on Feb. 8, Nett emailed Lt. Holman to notify him that he would be on sick leave until approximately Feb. 28, and Lt. Holman confirmed receipt of the email during his testimony. Holman demanded a phone call; Nett emailed. The Panel found Holman’s request unreasonable. The Town also has no official policy for notification for sick leave and did not update its General Orders.

The Panel concluded that “the Town failed to provide evidence that Lt. Holman is empowered to change formal Department policy at his whim.”

Further targeting: Beyond the question of compliance, the Panel also considered Nett’s perspective on his treatment by the department. “Nett provided convincing testimony that he felt targeted” by the PD due to his dual role as police officer and Town Council Member.

The department launched an internal affairs investigation after Nett allegedly

failed to activate his body-worn camera while responding to a call about a dog locked in a car. However, when he arrived, the situation had been resolved without incident, and there was no indication that further action—or camera activation—was required.

The situation escalated when Nett’s political opponent, John Mark Gardner, accused him of intimidation. This led Lt. Moskowitz to interview Nett despite “clear political implications.” During the interview, Nett was placed in a witness room, relieved of his service weapon, and videotaped.

He was questioned about whether he intended to remain with the Police Department after his election to Town Council. Additionally the Panel points out that on Nov. 4, the day before the election, Nett was “randomly” chosen for a drug test.

After the election, LaDonna Snellbaker, Director of Human Resources, informed Nett that he could not serve simultaneously as a police officer and a Town Council member and asked him to resign.

In July 2024—well after Nett had announced his candidacy for Town Council—the employee handbook was “amended” to prohibit employees from



Loudoun County Sheriff and Officers with ACRU Exec Dir Lt. Col. Allen West and DHS Senior Counselor Keith Pearson

LCISO honored with Defender Award

The American Constitutional Rights Union recognized Sheriff Michael Chapman and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office as the recipient of ACRU's prestigious Defender Award on July 11 in a ceremony held in Leesburg. This recognition is awarded to law enforcement leaders who honor their constitutional oath to protect and to serve by working cooperatively with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to protect law-abiding citizens from criminal illegal aliens.

COMMUNITY

ACRU Executive Director Lt. Col. Allen West presented the award to Sheriff Chapman and expressed his appreciation for the excellent example they are setting for other sheriffs across the nation in upholding the rule of law and protecting citizens.

"Sheriff Chapman exemplifies what it means to be a true defender of the law," said Lt. Col. Allen West, Executive Director of ACRU. "This award acknowledges the Loudoun County Sheriff's Offices' commitment and dedication to preserving

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BY DANIELLE TURK, CHEMISTRY TEACHER AT WOODGROVE HIGH SCHOOL

What do you get when a chemistry teacher, a biology teacher, and a firefighter travel with a group of students to the Galápagos Islands? A once-in-a-lifetime educational adventure.

This summer, our group of 21 travelers—organized by EF (Education First) Tours and led by a dynamic Tour Director—embarked on an unforgettable journey. The group included 17 high school students, one adult traveler, Chaperone William Turk (Firefighter), Chaperone Amber Bartling (Biology teacher, Woodgrove) and Group Leader Danielle Turk, Chemistry teacher at Woodgrove. Six plane rides, five boat transfers, countless bus rides, four hotels—this is how we explored Ecuador and the enchanting Galapagos Islands for eleven days. It was worth every minute.

Visiting Ecuador was surreal, given the high elevation and standing in both hemispheres at the same time. Our first day was spent in the capitol of Ecuador, Quito, which translates into ‘center of



Our group on the beach of Tortuga Bay, Santa Cruz Island.



A Blue footed booby (iconic animal of the Galapagos).



Group Leader Danielle Turk with sunbathing sea lions on Punta Carola beach.

the Earth.’ It was here that we learned how the Incas calculated the equator. We also discovered what the air feels like at approximately 10,000 feet above sea level.

The pinnacle of the trip was visiting three of the thirteen Galapagos Islands; San Cristobal, Santa Cruz and Isabela. These remote locations are infamous for Darwin’s discovery of natural selection, the mechanism which drives evolution.

The diversity of wildlife we encountered was a testament to Darwin’s discovery. According to Group Leader Danielle Turk, “It was an amazing experience for me as a science teacher to see Darwin’s legacy firsthand and to provide my students with an engaging, authentic experience to connect them to real world science, outside of the classroom.”



Our group at the Intinan Museum, equator line.

Local author has Mars paper published in Science Journal

BY AMBER RAMHORN

Waterford resident and author of *The Great Architects of Mars*, George J. Haas has a new science paper published in current issue of the *Journal of Astrobiology*. The paper “Mars: Geological Formation or Archaeology?

COMMUNITY

Square-shaped Structure within an Arabia Terra Crater?” is authored by Haas and Alberta, Canada geomorphologist; William R. Saunders, and Boston University geologist; Robert M. Schoch, who is known for his discovery of water erosion on the Egyptian Sphinx.

The square-shaped structure on Mars came to the world’s attention earlier this year, after an old NASA image went viral on the internet after being shared on the Reddit social network by Chris Ramsay. The image went viral on the internet and was featured

in numerous online news programs after the number 1 podcast, host Joe Rogan, called it “F-ing wild” and the founder of Space-X, Elon Musk, said, “We should send astronauts to Mars to investigate.” Not to be left out, the well-known astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson joined in by saying. “If you want to go investigate geometric structures ... maybe we can fold that into a mission.”

Haas and Saunders were aware of the formation and remember seeing it when it was originally released back in 2001. They thought it was odd that such an old image was receiving so much attention and never received any scientific assessment.

Their paper shows the square-shaped structure, which is approximately a mile in length, has a set of linear foundational walls that display a high level of geometry and symmetry including

corners containing 90-degree angles.

After an extensive examination of over a half a dozen NASA images of the square-shaped structure they found it could not be explained by the effects of any natural mechanisms and concluded that the only explanation is that its square, foundational walls were intentionally constructed. Haas says “Carl Sagan once proclaimed that the signature of intelligent life is found in geometry, the same geometry we are finding on Mars.”

One of the most interesting observed presented by the authors is that similar square-shaped structures with two opposing corners in a distinct north to south orientation were produced by terrestrial cultures, such the American Indians in Ohio and the Mays in Caracol, Belize.

They also point out that the boundary lines of the District of Columbia, in

Washington D.C. forms a square with two opposing corners in a north to south orientation, just like we seen on Mars. The comparisons are quite compelling and they leave us with questions about the possibility of ancient life on the Red Planet and its implications that we may not be alone in the universe.

If you would like to read the science paper “Mars: Geological Formation or Archaeology? Square-shaped Structure within an Arabia Terra Crater?” you can download a PDF version for free at the *Journal of Astrobiology* website.

Link: <http://journalofastrobiology.com/SaundersMarsSquareShape.pdf>.

Amber Ramhorn is a writer, artists and curator living in Waterford VA.

TRIP TO THE CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

The first island we visited was San Cristobal where we discovered that sea lions are as plentiful as people. We strolled along Punta Carola beach, heavily decorated with sunbathing sea lions, and visited the Interpretation Center to learn about the controversial history of the islands.

We then continued our journey by ferry boat to the next island of Santa Cruz where we spotted blacktip reef sharks from the pier, hiked Tortuga Bay and visited the Charles Darwin Research Center, site of a Giant tortoise breeding program. Also on our itinerary was a visit to El Chato Ranch, an ecological reserve dedicated to roaming wild tortoises as well as lava tunnels.

Our final island to explore was the group’s favorite—Isabela Island. It was here that we walked across Tintoreras, an island covered in lava rock and the site of a marine iguana sanctuary.

We also encountered blue footed boobies with their iconic feet, traipsing across a rock wall overlooking the lagoon. We plunged into the water to snorkel with playful sea lions, slow moving sea turtles and majestic white-tip reef sharks.

The students were delighted to share the swim with a curious Galapagos penguin, who at the end, stood, poised on a rock as we took our photo opportunities. Student Eden Reck said her favorite part of the trip was “getting close to the sea lions and penguin.” Chaperone William Turk recounted his snorkeling experience, “This was hands-down the best snorkeling experience I have had, and last year we snorkeled with students on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia.”

After the snorkel, our group enjoyed some much needed down time, either playing in the waves or playing beach soccer. For

student Lincoln Reck, a highlight of the trip was “walking on the beach that felt like flour” with our Tour Director, David.

After flying back to the mainland of Ecuador, we headed to the highlands to hike the Cloud Forest, a remarkable landscape, reminiscent of a scene from *Avatar*. We also journeyed through the town of Mindo where we enjoyed ethereal encounters with hummingbirds feeding out of the palms of our hands, a waterfall hike and a cultural lesson in traditional wool making. Our experience ended by indulging in an Ecuadorean delicacy—guinea pig.

Unforgettable moments were etched into our hearts and captured through hundreds of pictures, each one a portal to an adventure that defied expectations. According to Chaperone Amber Bartling, “the best part of the trip was getting to share the experience with students who were so engaged and curious about the world around them. They were so willing to dive into the local culture and ecology and made the trip truly once in a lifetime!”

The entire group was captivated by the nation’s fierce commitment to conservation and its trailblazing efforts to protect the treasures of its natural world. In a resounding reflection, student Amelia Zinn offers a brilliant takeaway, “One of the many things I got out of this trip was the sense of care and respect every person in both Ecuador and Galapagos had for the planet, the animals, and even other people.

“They make such great efforts towards limiting waste and being mindful towards wildlife, but what surprised me is how easy it was to adapt to these ways, and it gives me hope for the rest of the world, that everyone is capable of caring for the environment, if we actually try.” It was not just a trip. It was a revelation.

Learn to weave at Graffiti & Silk

Traffic. News reports. Interest rates. Deadlines. Social media. Data centers. Stress. If you have ever wanted to just get away from the hectic world and recharge in a simple and creative way, here’s your chance: Try weaving.

Free weaving lessons are offered on most Saturdays and on one Thursday each month at Graffiti & Silk thrift store at 860 E Main St, Purcellville. It’s even possible to show up at Graffiti & Silk between 1 and 3 p.m. on a Saturday and ask the weaver to have a go. It’s just that simple—and it’s free.

Check out the QR code below. With one click you will be directed to the Sign-Up Genius on the Fiber Guild of the Blue Ridge website. Look for open lesson dates. You will be so glad you tried something new.

These free weaving lessons are part of the Community Weaving Project. The Community Weaving Project is one piece of a partnership between two non-profits, Fiber Guild of the Blue Ridge (FGBR) and Mobile Hope.

Mobile Hope supports local at-risk youth and is housed at Graffiti & Silk, a funky, Bohemian-style thrift shop. Graffiti & Silk houses a 45” Schacht Standard loom on which artistic rugs are woven by the FGBR weavers— hopefully with a student seated right there, too.

Recycle and reuse is Graffiti & Silk’s mantra. They weigh every article sold to track how much they’ve kept out of the landfill. The total in just 2025 is a staggering 10,400 pounds.

When donated blue jeans arrive at the store in conditions unsuitable for sale, Graffiti & Silk passes it forward to FGBR. Guild members cut the jeans into strips, sew the strips together, iron the long band in half, and roll the product into balls. This product, lovingly called “darn” (denim + yarn = darn), is then woven into rugs. Proceeds for these rugs go directly to Mobile Hope, to be used for shelter services and programs that empower young people at risk.

The Community Weaving Project checks every box: Refuse is diverted away from landfills, utilitarian artwork is created and sold, and the public is exposed to—and can even have a chance to try—the

Supreme Court of Virginia upholds SCC decision on Greenway toll hikes

The Supreme Court of Virginia has upheld the State Corporation Commission's September 2024 decision denying the toll rate hike requested by Greenway toll road operator Toll Road Investors Partnership II (TRIP II). The court found that the SCC properly applied the statutory standards to the evidence presented, particularly the SCC decision that the Greenway toll rate hikes were not reasonable in relation to the benefits to users.

"I am pleased that Loudoun County's position on Greenway toll increases has once again been validated," said Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis J. Randall. "First the SCC and now the Supreme Court of Virginia has determined that the proposed toll increases were excessive and unnecessary; these rulings protect Loudoun residents. I'm grateful to the county's legal team and all of the residents who testified for fairness over the past number of months."

"Of particular note, the Supreme Court addressed TRIP II's contention that the 2021 statutory changes and its application by the SCC constituted an unconstitutional taking

of their property," said Loudoun County Attorney Leo P. Rogers. "Consistent with the county's arguments to the General Assembly and the SCC, the Supreme Court rejected TRIP II's assertion."

TRIP II had sought a toll increase for most cars to \$8.10 during peak hours and \$6.40 during off-peak hours. Loudoun County requested to participate in the case before the SCC because the county believes decades of increased tolls on the Greenway prevent drivers from using it, which results in increased congestion on public roads in the county and forces Loudoun County to expand other roads at public expense.

"Today's decision affirms the county's strategy to protect drivers from unreasonable Greenway tolls," said Dulles District Supervisor Matt Letourneau. "The County put together a comprehensive, professional and unassailable case against the Greenway's proposal to raise tolls which persuaded the State Corporation Commission and now the Virginia Supreme Court."

"I sincerely appreciate all the of the residents that weighed in during this process, the outstanding work of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

FAIR HOUSING LAW, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

National Origin: This session will highlight housing protections for people experiencing discrimination based on national origin—the country in which they were born—including harassment, retaliation and denial of rights.

Attendance is free and registration is not required. For more information about upcoming sessions, including

how to join the virtual sessions, visit loudoun.gov/FairHousing.

Anyone who requires reasonable accommodation for any type of disability or needs language assistance to participate may call 703-737-8323/TTY-711. Three business days' notice is required.

For more information about housing programs offered by Loudoun County, visit loudoun.gov/housing or email housing@loudoun.gov.

VINEYARD SQUARE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

required to submit a completely new site plan that complies with all current zoning rules, design standards, and review procedures.

This marks a long-overdue reset and a new opportunity for more thoughtful, community-supported planning in downtown Purcellville.

Mayor Chris Bertaut said, "This is an exciting moment for Purcellville. With the expiration of a project proposal that was never the right fit for our historic downtown—we now have the opportunity to reimagine this

important part of 21st Street.

"I look forward to working closely with the developer and the community to create a project that truly reflects the charm, scale, and values of our town. Ending the era of a proposal that never aligned with Purcellville's Comprehensive Plan or zoning was a key goal for me, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Susan Khalil and Carol Luke. We're eager to see these 2.5 acres become a vibrant hub for retail, commercial, and office space that enhances the character of our town."

SUBRAMANYAM CALLS FOR SUPPORT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

raids. Some cautioned that ICE is going to decrease public opinion of law enforcement as a whole, and one pointed out that the ICE budget is now larger than the entire Israeli military. A suggestion to defund ICE received a round of applause from the meeting's audience.

Two more speakers—young students who introduced themselves as members of an immigrant family—talked on behalf of immigrants seeking citizenship. Given the grievances against ICE, they worry for the security of their families, they said.

Another attendee—a 14-year-old rising high school freshman—asked how Subramanyam plans to assist students. "This bill is putting stricter limits on those eligible for programs and is placing caps on student loans," she said.

FINANCIAL FOCUS®, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

planning. Look for signs that they're comfortable helping clients invest with a conscience.

Ask the Right Questions

After narrowing your list, schedule a few introductory discussions, which can be done in person or remotely, depending on your preference. These chats are your chance to learn more about how the financial advisor works and whether they'll be a good fit.

- Ask about their investment approach:
- Do they offer portfolios with a focus on ESG or faith-based filters?
 - Have they worked with clients who have similar values to yours?
 - How do they assess charitable giving strategies or donor-advised funds?
 - Do they know the complex tax rules associated with charitable giving?

Listen closely to the questions they ask of you. Are they truly interested in what matters to you? Do they understand your values and priorities?

Also, consider their communication style. Will they keep you updated regularly? Are they open to collaboration when you want to adjust your plan?

Trust Your Instincts

Choosing a financial advisor is a personal decision. Beyond their professional qualifications, you want someone who listens well and respects your goals. Don't hesitate to meet with several financial advisors before making your

choice. Subramanyam agreed to say that it will make student loans harder to acquire, but he is determined to ensure that quality education is available to all. "I think college should be affordable for everyone and attainable for everyone."

Another attendee wanted to understand the impacts to veterans' health-care and benefits. April Achter answered that 1 in 10 military and ex-military Americans may face difficulties following the Medicaid cuts.

Subramanyam thanked attendees for letting their voices be heard. Multiple times, he encouraged those present to take charge on the issues they presented during the open floor.

"Leadership comes from everyone," he said. It is his plan to work together—bipartisan and united—to achieve a common goal: countering the "Big Ugly Bill."

The right person will make you feel understood and supported, both financially and personally.

Ideally, you and your financial advisor will forge a long-term relationship that spans the changes and milestones in your life. As the details of your financial strategy may change, you'll still want to hold onto your values in your investments.

Investing With Purpose

Whether you're hoping to reduce your carbon footprint, stay true to your faith or make the world a better place through giving, you don't have to choose between your values and your financial future. Many good financial advisors can help you do both.

Taking the time to find someone who shares your vision can help you feel confident that your investment strategy can align with your personal beliefs.

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.

Joshua Wolinski | (540) 338-2291 | joshua.wolinski@edwardjones.com.

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OBITUARY

Remembering Jefferson D. Broaddus Jr.

Jefferson D. Broaddus Jr. of Leesburg, Va (Jeff as known by his friends) passed away at home peacefully with his family on June 27, 2025.

Jeff was born in Alexandria, VA in 1932 and grew up working for Mr. Stuart Dowdin who owned a dairy and heavy equipment business. After High School, he was drafted into the military and served in the Army as a mechanic during the Korean War.

After being discharged he married Janet Arlene Trout in 1956. They purchased a home in Dunn Loring, VA. Janet was working at the Pentagon and Jeff was employed as a heavy equipment operator for William Herzig in Fairfax.

In 1962 his first child Katherine was born. In 1964 the family moved to McLean where Jeff cleared the land and built the family home. He then went on to start his own excavation business with the help of his wife.

He specialized in riding arenas, equestrian barn pads and tennis

courts. He was responsible for much of the site work and basements for major subdivisions along the Route 7 corridors.

In 1971 his son Randall was born. In 1989 the family moved to Leesburg, VA where he continued to run his excavation business and help his son farm.

He is survived by his wife of 69 years Janet, His daughter Katherine Ann Broaddus D.V.M, his son Randall (Randy) Broaddus, Daughter in law Julie Fahl, Grandson J. Chase Broaddus, and his brother Andrew (Alan) Broaddus and life partner Pat Cusano.

Jeff will be remembered for his unwavering dedication to his family and his belief that hard work was the key to success, both traits his children aspire to emulate.

In Lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made in his honor to Capital Caring. The burial will be held privately.

A Celebration of his life will be held in the future. Date to be determined.

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Three LCPS graduates awarded the Jane Pratt & Jed Shilling Blue Ridge Education Award

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains has chosen three graduates from Loudoun County high schools to receive the Jane Pratt & Jed Shilling Blue Ridge Education Award in 2025. The recipients—Parker Price of Loudoun Valley High School, Graydon Berlik and D.J. Bundick of Woodgrove High School—have earned grants to support their college studies and future roles as environmental stewards.

Parker Price, founder of the Loudoun Valley High School Nature & Environmental Club and a member of the National Honor Society, earned an Honorable Mention at this year's Regional Science Fair. Beyond academics, she volunteers extensively in local community and educational initiatives. Inspired by the Blue Ridge Mountains, Price seeks to major in Ecology and Microbiology at Virginia Tech, with ambitions to study soil bacteria, pollutant-degrading microorganisms, and to bridge scientific research and ecological preservation.

Graydon Berlik has logged over 100 volunteer hours in environmental stewardship, partnering with organizations like Keep Loudoun Beautiful and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. He also contributed to two sustainability-oriented research projects, focusing on renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. He plans to study Environmen-



Sarah Huntington, Board Member, Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains, awarding Jane Pratt and Jed Schilling Education grant to Parker Price, Loudoun Valley High School.

has since become Vice-President of Woodgrove's Environmental Club. As one of two student panelists representing Loudoun County at a state environmental crisis forum, he advocated for stronger sustainable practices. He intends to pursue Environmental Science and Business in college, with goals to champion renewable energy, especially solar and wind—in his future career.

Named for conservation leaders Jane Pratt and the late Jed Shilling, the award recognizes graduating seniors from Loudoun County who demonstrate dedication to environmental stewardship and protection of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Criteria include academic excellence in environmental or biological sciences, tangible volunteer work in regional conservation efforts, and a compelling essay of commitment to the mountains. The honor includes a framed certificate and awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500.

"The beauty of the Blue Ridge is a defining backdrop for our lives in Western Loudoun County," said Larry Malone, Executive Director, Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains. "Our mountains are precious yet increasingly threatened. The future of these landscapes depends on today's youth stepping into the role of caretakers. Through



Peter Weeks, President, Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Dr. Sam Shipp, Principal of Woodgrove High School awarding Jane Pratt Jed Schilling Education Grants to Graydon Berlik, and D. J. Bundick, both from Woodgrove High school.

tal Science at the University of Virginia this fall, crediting his passion to the countless hikes he's taken in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

D.J. Bundick, whose early interest in the environment sparked from a third-grade project on global warming,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 »

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

and at others, the trail led right past the homes—with a more or less ‘backyard’ feel to the experience. Throughout the length I traversed, though, the creatures of the wild seemed perfectly happy with this juxtaposition: I heard, and saw, many varieties of bird life along the entire length of my walk.

The trail also led past a small fishing pond, with multiple participants engaged in their favorite pastime. The community had kept the area around the water mown short, and a storm-water drain emptied into the pond, with rip-rap rock leading to the water for erosion control.

Again, I noted the blending of the natural elements with man-made, or at least man-placed features. At the juncture of the walking trail with the best views of the fishing pond, I passed a thoughtfully-placed park bench for anyone wishing to take it easy, while taking in all the excitement of those with rod & reel, down below at the water’s edge.

Another heartening factor that struck me, walking along the ‘greenest’ portions of the trail, was the mere size and obvious age of some of the more mature specimens of trees. These portions of the forest—despite their close proximity to (and being surrounded by) the nearby

houses—evidently represented old growth timber, counting more years on their inner rings than any of us humans in Loudoun County. I could imagine those two deer I spotted in nearing the Park as being ‘right at home’ in a setting like this. I know I was—at least for the short time I took enjoying my walk.

Now, you may very well wonder why I marvel so at this meeting of Man and Nature at this spot in our locality. Understood and acknowledged. My surprise and delight in the discovery comes after living here for over a quarter-century, and witnessing over and over again the mass creation of dwellings (not necessarily a bad thing in its own right) at the expense of every blade of grass, every tree, every shrub—and each vulnerable specimen of fauna in the wake of the developers’ bulldozers. Again, I’m not against people and houses—I would just like to see a little of the natural world, preserved for enjoyment, education, recreation—and balance.

You know, as a matter of fact, I’d like to live in a world where we all feel as if there’s room for all things, and all beings. Now, how would that be? And, if you’d like to give it a little test drive, park your car in the neighborhoods on the outskirts of Broad Run Stream Valley Park, get out, take the sidewalk to the trail access, and experience it for yourself. See?

HISTORICAL MARKER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Although there were many eyewitnesses and several charges brought against members of the mob, no one was convicted for their role in the lynching.

The NAACP Loudoun Branch and the Loudoun Freedom Center approached the Town to erect a memorial to Craven. With the support of the property owner, Catocin Corner, LLC, and with research assistance from Freedom High School teacher Joan Lewis-Osborne and students of her AP African American Studies class, an application was submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Final approval from the state was given at the September 2024 meeting of DHR.

“This marker is not just a symbol of remembrance but is also a powerful statement of our shared commitment to ensuring that such acts of hatred and violence are never repeated. By confronting our past, we can take the necessary steps to create a future of equity, fairness, and

respect for all people,” Mayor Kelly Burk stated.

Pastor Michelle C. Thomas, president of the NAACP Loudoun Branch, thanked the Town Council and Town staff for the partnership in pursuing the historical highway marker.

“There can be no healing without truth,” Thomas stated. “I’m so grateful to the Town of Leesburg in the way that you allowed the African American community to heal. You let us tell the story guided by facts, which is not always the case.”

While it is the first state historical highway marker in Loudoun County memorializing a lynching victim, it is the second lynching memorial in the Town of Leesburg. An interpretive sign recounting the 1889 lynching of 14-year-old Orion Anderson was dedicated in 2019 near Harrison Street SE and the W&OD Trail. The Town, along with the NAACP Loudoun Branch and the Loudoun Freedom Center, is now pursuing a state historical highway marker for Anderson.

LCPS GRADUATES AWARDED, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

this award, Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains—Loudoun County’s only conservation-focused nonprofit—is empowering students to become tomorrow’s conservation leaders.”

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains




is dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and celebrating the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Loudoun County. Through conservation initiatives, educational outreach, and community engagement, FBRM works to ensure the sustainability of the treasured landscape for future generations.


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TASTE Leesburg returns to downtown Leesburg Aug. 9

TASTE Leesburg, presented by Pella Mid-Atlantic Windows & Doors, will return to downtown Leesburg on Saturday, Aug. 9 from 5 to 10 p.m.

Food vendors, breweries, wineries, businesses, and entertainment will fill five blocks of the historic downtown. Experience the flavor of Leesburg with over 65 booths showcasing a taste of all that the Town has to offer.

Local breweries and wineries will also be on-site offering samples of beer, wine, cider, and mead. Local restaurants, food trucks, and vendors will offer a variety of menu options for purchase or stop into one of the downtown restaurants for a bite to eat.

This year, TASTE will celebrate the historic 200th anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to Leesburg in 1825 with a recreation of the original event on the Center Stage at 6 p.m. featuring fife and drum performances, speeches, and toasts. Attendees can meet Lafayette (portrayed by Mark Schneider) and President James Monroe (portrayed by Jay Harrison) and learn about his crucial role in the American Revolution throughout the evening at the Loudoun VA250 tent near the courthouse.

Drink tickets are available online and cost \$50 through August 8. Ticket prices will increase to \$60 on Aug. 9. All ticket

purchases include a souvenir sampling glass and drink tastings.

Ticket and ID check booths, to verify your ID and have your ticket scanned, will be in the center of Town on the courthouse grounds. A limited number of beverage tickets may be available the day of the event through online purchase only.

Music will begin at 5 p.m. on the Center Stage, located on the Courthouse Grounds. The Sip & Savor Stage will feature a DJ along with more tasting opportunities.

Parking will be available downtown at the Town Hall Parking Garage, the Pennington Parking Garage, and the Loudoun County Parking Garage. Street closures will begin at 10:30 a.m. and are expected to re-open at approximately 1 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 10.

The event is sponsored by Pella Mid-Atlantic Windows & Doors, The American Friends of Lafayette, Kaiser Permanente, M.E. Flow, Sprouts Farmers Market, Power Home Remodeling, Patient First, Prince William Home Improvement, Renewal by Andersen, Atlantic Union Bank, and Wegmans Food Markets Inc.

For more information about the event, visit www.tasteleesburg.com.

BOS adopts AHLP

Loudoun County is expanding the type of attainable housing that may be financed and supported by the county, with the new Attainable Housing Loan Program. Eligible housing developers are encouraged to apply for the program, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors during its June 17, meeting.

The AHLP provides the ability to finance the acquisition, renovation, preservation and development of housing for renters and housing for homebuyers. The attainable housing units financed by the program are restricted to households that meet certain income guidelines:

- Rental Units: For households earning no more than 70% of Area Median Income, currently \$114,750 for a household size of four
- Ownership Housing: For households earning no more than 100% of AMI, currently \$163,900 for a household size of four

The AHLP consolidates and replaces two existing loan programs, the Affordable Multi-Family Housing Loan Program and the Rental Housing Acquisition and Preservation Loan Program. All funding associated

with projects under the Affordable Multi-Family Housing Loan Program will be maintained; no new projects will be considered under the program. There are no outstanding loans under the Rental Housing Acquisition and Preservation Loan Program; however, all certified developers under the program are encouraged to consider the AHLP.

For-profit or nonprofit housing developers eligible to conduct business in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and legally able to enter contracts with the federal Government, Commonwealth of Virginia and the county, are eligible to apply for loans for the acquisition, renovation, preservation and development of affordable rental and ownership housing.

To apply go to www.loudoun.gov/6237Attainable-Housing-Loan-Program. Complete applications must be submitted by 5 p.m., Monday, Sept. 1.

The AHLP enhances the existing programs to more efficiently deploy multiple sources of funding to address the goals of the Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan, adopted by the Board in 2021, and to provide more attainable housing for county residents.

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the healthy parent from their support network—spreading lies to family members, friends, professionals, or community groups. This form of emotional warfare is about eroding the support structures that help the survivor regain independence.

Legal Abuse: Known as “paper abuse” or “litigation abuse,” this tactic involves using the court system to intimidate and financially drain the survivor. The abusive ex-partner may file excessive motions, appeal every decision, or delay proceedings. They may present as charming and cooperative in court, manipulating evaluators and judges while concealing their abusive nature.

Discarding: Some abusive ex-partners wage exhaustive legal battles for custody only to later disregard the children when they are not useful. Once the unhealthy parent has “won” their legal battle, they may ignore the emotional needs of the child or reject them altogether.

Harassment and Stalking: Stalking doesn't always look like shadowy figures lurking in bushes. In the context of post-separation abuse, it is often covert and digital: incessant emails, texts, or voicemails, showing up at children's events uninvited, or driving by the survivor's home or workplace. Many of these behaviors fall below the threshold of criminal prosecution.

Financial Abuse: Abusive ex-partners may withhold child support, manipulate joint finances, or weaponize money to control the survivor's decisions. They may delay reimbursements, avoid employment, or falsely claim poverty while hiding assets.

Red Flags and Early Warning Signs: Recognizing post-separation abuse early can protect survivors from long-term harm. Some red flags include: Harassment through emails, texts, or third parties, sudden increase in legal filings after separation, manipulative use of children to control the other parent, or discrediting the healthy parent in community or court settings.

Real World Examples: Take Sarah, a mother of two, whose ex-husband filed four separate motions over the course of one year—each eventually dismissed by the court. During this time, he withheld financial support, delayed custody exchanges, and sent hundreds of harassing emails.

Take John, a father of three, whose ex-wife reported him to Child Protective Services several times for alleged sexual abuse of their 5-year-old child. When all of the CPS claims were determined to be unfounded, she then falsely reported him to law enforcement for drunk driving with the children in the vehicle.

Sarah and John's stories are not unique. They reflect a pattern many survivors experience where an abusive ex-partner is repeatedly and relentlessly manipulative, and where the healthy parent is often left without validation, protection or recognition by professionals or the courts.

How Post-Separation Abuse Impacts Children: Perhaps the most disturbing element of post-separation abuse is the toll it takes on children. The continuation of conflict and instability can lead to high levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences. These include chronic stress, emotional neglect, and exposure to parental conflict.

Research has shown that ACEs are linked to long-term physical and mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and even chronic diseases in adulthood. Post-separation abuse undermines a child's sense of stability, safety, and attachment.

How to Protect Yourself and Your Child from Post-Separation Abuse:

If you are the victim of post-separation abuse, it's imperative that the professionals you work with have expertise within your area of need. A great lawyer that specializes in high conflict divorces can actively do a number of things to address the problem with the court like file emergency hearings, obtain restraining orders, or argue for supervised visitation.

A highly trained and experienced psychologist will be equipped to address post-separation abuse in both individual and family contexts. By helping a client to recognize the patterns of abuse, by creating safety plans, by supporting co-parenting boundaries, the abused ex-partner will be better able to manage their situation in protecting themselves and their child or children.

Post-separation abuse is one of the most damaging and least understood continuations of domestic violence. It hides in plain sight—in courtrooms, in custody exchanges, and in therapy sessions. Its effects are long-lasting, particularly for children, and it thrives when professionals and/or the court minimizes the problem. The post-separation abuse dynamic is complex, and the calculated and damaging behaviors of an abusive ex-partner, rooted largely in control, most often doesn't correct on its own. If you are the victim of post-separation abuse, be proactive to get the help you need for yourself and for your children.

Michael Oberschneider Psy.D. 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.

LCSSO HONORED, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

American citizens' rights to safety and security through their partnership with the 287(g) program. All law enforcement agencies should take note and follow their lead to fully embrace the authorization afforded to designated officers through these models. Well done," stated Col. West.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Senior Counselor Keith Pearson also participated in the award ceremony held at the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office training facility. Pearson said, "On behalf of President Trump and Secretary Noem, we are excited to know that we have a great partner right here in the great state of Virginia, with Sheriff Chapman and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. It's partnerships like this through our 287(g) program that allows us to send these illegal criminal aliens who have already victimized our citizens back to the country they came from. We want to thank the men and women of Loudoun County Sheriff's Office for all they do to keep our community and country safe."

According to ICE, "The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 added Section 287(g) to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) — authorizing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to delegate to state and local law enforcement officers the authority to perform specified

immigration officer functions under the agency's direction and oversight...The 287(g) Program enhances the safety and security of our nation's communities by allowing ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) to partner with state and local law enforcement."

"I was honored to receive the ACRU Defender Award that recognizes the longstanding collaboration the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office has with ICE and the entire Department of Homeland Security," stated Sheriff Chapman.

"Our deputies are fully committed to safeguarding our community and working with all of our federal, state and local partners to ensure that our residents stay safe each and every day. As law enforcement professionals, it is our core responsibility to uphold the Constitution, our oath of office, and to always protect those we serve," he concluded.

For more information about the Defender Initiative and the American Constitutional Rights Union, visit theacru.org/defenders.

For more information about ICE and the 287g program, go to: Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act | ICE

American Constitutional Rights Union is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization dedicated to defending all Americans constitutionally protected civil rights.

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The Gambler Returns: The Ultimate Kenny Rogers Tribute

Fri., August 22 at 7:30pm
 Tickets: \$25

Kenny Rogers had 24 #1 hits in a career that spanned 6 decades. And while Kenny is no longer with us, get ready to relive these great songs performed by a full band, with a performer who is proud to say Kenny Rogers was not only his idol but also his friend.

This 90-minute show features Alan Turner, the original country artist who plays Kenny. He has been inducted into the European Academy of Country Music's Hall of Fame and the Michigan Country Music Hall of Fame. The professionalism and musicianship of this performance will capture your heart and remind you why you have always been a fan of Kenny Rogers! General Admission seating.



River City Puppets: The Wonders of Wiggly River Wed., August 6 at 10:00am \$5

Join an adventurous fisherman and a chatty wish fish as they dive into a world of enchanting folktales! With a cast of fantastical puppet creatures, they unravel the mysteries of a misunderstood river monster. Together, they discover that true friendship lies just beneath the surface, waiting to be found in the most unexpected places.

Tanabata in the Park Thurs., August 7 at 7:00-8:30pm FREE Admission

Immerse yourself in this traditional celebration that is one of our favorite summer events! Connect with new cultural experiences as you try your hand at origami or kirigami, make a fish print (gyotaku), add tanzaku to the trees and play some games. End the evening with a lantern float on our pond for a serene and reflective end to our celebration. All activities take place outside near the Sculpture Garden and Pond.

Start Lunch with the Arts Wed., August 13, 20, & 27 at 12:00pm FREE Admission

Bring your own lunch to our gallery and get to know one or two exhibiting artists. Learn about their process and inspiration for creating their art. Each artist will speak for about 20 minutes with time for questions and a chance to enjoy the exhibit in the gallery. Different artists will speak each week.

RAYNER'S ATTEMPT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

serving on the Town Council. Meanwhile, signs supporting his opponents were placed in front of the Police Department. The Panel found that these factors, combined with the internal affairs investigations, contributed to Nett's realization that he was actually being targeted.

Delayed participation: The Panel also found Nett's delayed participation in the Prince William County internal affairs investigation was justified. Town Manager Kwasi Fraser advised him not to cooperate, as Fraser had not authorized Acting Chief Lombrana to initiate the investigation. As the Panel noted, this recommendation from Fraser—Lombrana's superior—was significant.

Ultimately, the Panel found that Nett did participate in the Prince William investigation, and that his delayed participation was justified both by his medical leave and the Town Manager's recommendation not to engage in an unauthorized investigation. The Panel also found it reasonable that Nett could attend a Town Council meeting on the evening of Feb. 13 while still being sick and unfit for duty as a police officer.

Where's the doctor's note? On Feb. 8, Nett informed the department that he would be on sick leave until further notice. On Feb. 13, Lt. Holman directed him to provide a physician's statement by Feb. 17. On Feb. 16, Nett advised Holman that his sick leave would likely extend through approximately Feb. 28. Although Nett had not yet submitted the physician's statement, Holman did not dispute the updated leave timeline.

The Employee Handbook requires a doctor's note before an employee may return to work but does not require one during the period of sick leave. It does not define failure to provide a note in advance as insubordination—only that a note is required before resuming duty.

The Panel found that Lt. Holman's demand for a doctor's note by Feb. 17—while Nett was still on sick leave—violated the Employee Handbook. Nett did not ignore the request; he informed Lt. Holman on Feb. 16 that he would remain on leave until approximately Feb. 28.

The Panel also found the timing of the request, issued at 8 p.m. on Feb. 13 and allowing only two working days to comply, to be "patently unreasonable." Nevertheless, on Feb. 18, Holman placed Nett on administrative leave and labeled the situation "insubordination," despite the Handbook only requiring a doctor's note upon return to work. Nett never returned to work, and therefore no note was required.

And then ... Brady/Giglio Listed: On April 4, Acting Chief Lombrana terminated Officer Nett, citing his placement on the Brady/Giglio list and stating that Nett was "no longer suited for employment as a police officer within this

department."

Nett had been placed on the Brady list on Feb. 24 before any adjudicatory body had an opportunity to review the allegations against him. The designation followed a letter from Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Anderson to Acting Chief Lombrana.

The letter cited three reasons: Nett's attendance at the VML conference while allegedly out sick; his failure to provide a doctor's note for Feb. 8–9; and his presence at both a Jan. 10 agenda planning meeting while marked out on directed patrol and a Feb. 13 Town Council meeting while on sick leave.

"In short, Chief Lombrana acted as judge, jury, and executioner."

—The Panel

"I mean, we're here, right? I mean, there's ... no secret that politics are involved."

—Lombrana

"Chief Lombrana's cavalier refusal to follow the orders of the Town Manager constitutes ... insubordination and should be of grave concern to Town residents."

—The Panel

However, the Panel concluded that Nett was truthful and justified in all of the actions cited as grounds for his inclusion on the Brady List. The Panel also found that placement on the Brady List does not require termination, noting that officers can continue to serve in non-testimonial roles and perform valuable duties within the department.

The Panel concluded that Nett's actions did not constitute misconduct and did not violate any laws. They also found that he was subjected to targeting due to his dual roles as a Town Council member and police officer.

The Department's disciplinary actions were neither consistent with law and policy nor reasonable. In fact, the steps taken violated both the Employee Handbook and the Department's General Orders, which require that discipline be "imposed fairly and impartially."

Both the Employee Handbook and General Orders require progressive discipline—starting with oral counseling, then escalating to reprimands, suspension, demotion, and only then dismissal.

The Panel found that both Acting Chief Lombrana and Lt. Holman failed

to follow this process. Holman "jumped immediately to administrative leave" when Nett allegedly failed to provide a doctor's note. Lombrana later testified that a single missed note was sufficient "insubordination" to justify termination—an action the Panel found disproportionate and inconsistent with policy.

The Panel found that the Department's disciplinary actions were inconsistent and driven by improper motives.

Lombrana admitted she "willfully refused to reinstate" Nett, even after being directed to do so by Town Manager Kwasi Fraser—her superior. She stated she did not believe the General Orders required her to follow the Town Manager's instructions. As the report put it: "With this admission, Chief Lombrana's cavalier refusal to follow the orders of the Town Manager constitutes, at least, continued and ongoing insubordination and should be of grave concern to Town residents."

The Panel found that Nett was terminated and placed on the Brady List for minor disputed alleged violations and the actions taken against him have "serious life-long implications for him and his family."

In contrast the supervisors in the Police Department displayed insubordination to superiors. Lombrana's disregard for the Town Manager's order to reinstate Nett was "flagrant and ongoing, and displays the 'worst type of leadership—one set of rules for rank-and-file officers and a different set of rules for higher ranking supervisors.'"

Politically motivated—The road begins, continues and ends with Rayner: The Panel found that the Town's "politics are dysfunctional" and "these political divides motivated the Department to terminate Mr. Nett because of his election to Town Council and campaign promises for reorganization of the Police Department"—to include the "elimination of Chief Lombrana's then Deputy Chief position."

Lombrana's Panel testimony was "evasive, argumentative, contentious, and inconsistent," along with her arrogant and disrespectful demeanor—sometimes even shouting over Panel members. She even admitted "that the process against Mr. Nett involved politics."

"I mean, we're here, right? I mean, there's ... no secret that politics are involved," she said. Lombrana admitted that she relied entirely on the findings of the Prince William IA investigation report, which "used Councilwoman Rayner [Rayner] as its single source for the VML conference issue. Lombrana did not question Bertaut, Luke or Khalil.

The Panel findings stated, "Based on this underdeveloped report, Chief Lombrana testifies that she informed Bob Anderson's office of the allegations

against Mr. Nett before any adjudicatory body had an opportunity to determine the veracity of the allegations.

"In short, Chief Lombrana acted as judge, jury, and executioner for Mr. Nett by prematurely informing Mr. Anderson's office of the allegations against him."

The Panel determined that there should have been no reason for Lombrana to inform Anderson's office about the allegations at this time "except that she wanted Mr. Nett to be on the Brady List."

Even though Lombrana admitted she is not a medical professional and "she could not determine whether an officer can fulfill police duties with an injured leg that prevents an officer from driving," Lombrana was certain he was lying. She could not give any evidence that backed her statement.

Rayner testified that she was formerly the campaign manager for Nicole Witmann, the Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County.

Lombrana said she first contacted Fairfax County Chief of Police to conduct the IA investigation and the Chief turned down the investigation into Nett because of its "clear political nature."

The Panel pointed out that the close proximity of Erin Rayner to "the office of the Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson cannot be ignored."

The Panel ordered the Town to reverse its termination of Nett and reinstate him to his former position in the Police Department with back pay and applicable benefits. The Town is also required to pay Nett reasonable attorneys' fees arising from and related to his termination within 15 days.

While the Grievance Panel has ordered Nett reinstated, the effort to remove him from power—and from the Council seat that would tip the balance—continues. The facts are now on the record. The motive it appears is to strip a man of his badge, silence his vote, and seize political control.

Update: July 23, 2025: Ben Nett and Town Manager Kwasi Fraser were arrested for the following allegations according to Public Relations Coordinator of the Virginia State Police Matthew Demlein, "Following a Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation Fairfax Field Office investigation, a grand jury charged Carl B. Nett, Purcellville Vice-Mayor, with six felony counts: four involving violations regarding the Virginia Criminal Information Network and two related to bid rigging and conspiracy. The grand jury also charged Kwasi Fraser, Purcellville Town Manager, on two felony counts related to bid rigging and conspiracy." Arraignments for Fraser and Nett took place on July 28, motions hearing on Sept. 4.

SPARC honors Sen. Boysko and Del. Reid

SPARC (Specially Adapted Resource Centers), a non-profit that provides day programs in Northern Virginia for adults with severe and multiple disabilities, hosted its 4th Annual Pancake Breakfast on July 12 with a silent auction and food.

COMMUNITY

Held at the American Legion Post 177 in Fairfax, the family-friendly event raised \$10,000 to support SPARC's cost-effective, unique program serving young adults who have aged out of the special education support provided by the K-12 system and are not eligible for other community-based programs that serve individuals with severe disabilities.

During the event, Senator Jennifer Boysko and Delegate David Reid were presented SPARC's Hero Award for their legislative leadership and commitment to disability rights. Attendees also heard from local champions including Fairfax School Board Member-At-Large Ilryong Moon, Delegate Karen Keys - Gamarra, Fairfax County Supervisors



L-R: FCPS Board Member Ilryong Moon, Sup. Walter Acord, Sen. Jennifer Boysko, SPARC CEO Debi Alexander, SPARC Participant Akila Ranuntunga, Del. David Reid, Sup. Rodney Lusk, and Arlington Board Member JD Spain.

James Walkinshaw, Walter Alcorn, and Rodney Lusk, and Arlington County Board Member J.D. Spain

Sr., who spoke about the importance of inclusion and the value SPARC brings to Northern Virginia. Collectively, their support has helped SPARC expand its services and locations to meet the needs of more people across Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria, and now Loudoun.

SPARC hosts centers that operate five days a week at various locations throughout Northern Virginia with staff-led programming based on a curriculum rooted in therapeutic recreation principles that consist of continued education/leisure learning, skill building, exercise, excursions, cooking, music, art, lectures, discussion groups, and more.

SPARC's clients require support with all daily living activities. Without SPARC they are often neglected and forgotten. SPARC's annual cost per participant is \$9,000. If the SPARC participant instead attended a Medicaid provider, the taxpayer cost would average \$39,000 per year.

Sponsors included NOVEC, The Washington Group, SpeedPro Northern Virginia, Silver Beacon Marketing, Blueberry Shoes Productions, Anna Sudha Community Kitchens, and more.

Solarize Virginia extends sign-up deadline to Aug. 15

Solarize Virginia has extended the deadline for Loudoun homeowners to sign up to learn more about solar power options specific to their property. This year's program will run for an extra month—to Aug. 15, to give homeowners more time to take advantage of the 30% federal solar tax credit due to expire at the end of the year.

In addition to connecting participants to

information about financial incentives available for solar systems, the program offers free satellite solar assessments, streamlined installation and discounted pricing on solar systems from vetted installers.

Solarize Virginia is sponsored by the Local Energy Alliance Program in partnership with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and participating municipal governments, including Loudoun County.

More information about the Solarize Virginia program is online at SolarizeVA.org.

Information about obtaining the proper permits for installing either a residential or commercial solar photovoltaic system in Loudoun County is available at loudoun.gov/SolarPermits.

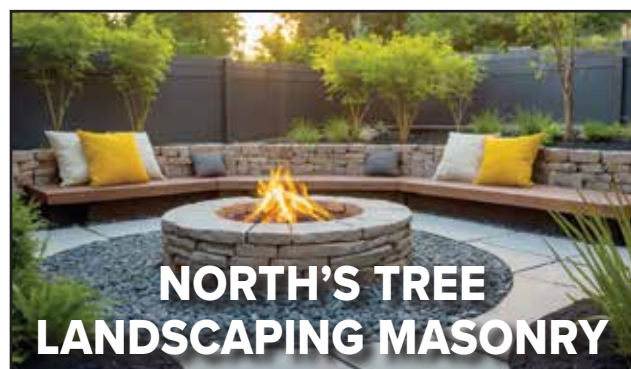
LEARN TO WEAVE,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

age-old craft of weaving.

If weaving isn't your gig, but you still love handmade items, you're in luck. Various locally woven products will be available for sale at the Bluemont Fair, scheduled for Sept. 20-21. Look for the booth with the looms and spinning wheels. Stop by and chat with the artisans to learn more about their art.



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HIDDENWOOD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

proposed a rezoning to allow 756,029 square feet of data center space. But that sparked strong opposition from Briarfield Estates, the residential community just north of Hiddenwood. Briarfield homeowners warned that approving additional data centers would simply push industrial impacts closer to their homes.

In response, Hiddenwood residents revised their application with significant concessions. They agreed to limit building heights, install noise mitigation walls up to 15 feet tall, move generators behind buildings, increase setbacks from Briarfield, and even contribute \$75,000 for new landscaping buffers in the neighboring community.

In May 2024, the Planning Commission narrowly recommended approval of the revised data center plan on a 4-3-1 vote. But the proposal lacked the support of a majority of supervisors. In a last effort to find middle ground, the assemblage submitted a new plan last September—this time removing data centers entirely.

The second application sought

rezoning for 334,000 square feet of light and medium industrial and commercial uses, which residents argued would be far less intensive than data centers. Even so, the Planning Commission again recommended denial in a close 5-4 vote, saying the impacts on Briarfield Estates would still be too great.

On July 15, supervisors echoed those same concerns. District Supervisor Matthew F. Letourneau (R-Dulles), who represents the area, made the motion to deny the rezoning.

“I take no pleasure whatsoever in making that motion, and it’s an unfortunate series of events and circumstances that have led us to this,” Letourneau said. “But in making the motion I am attempting to not further the unfortunate events and circumstances.”

“They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. I do believe if we were to approve this application, we are setting ourselves up for the same situation... with another neighborhood,” Letourneau explained.

He argued that approving any new industrial or commercial uses so close

to existing homes would only worsen the problem. “Ultimately, I am seeking a solution which puts an end to the expansion of industrial development in an area of our county that calls for residential development,” he added.

Supervisor Laura A. TeKrony (D-Little River) agreed with Letourneau. “I really can’t support converting countryside residential to commercial. I’m concerned about the precedent this sets for other existing residential communities that are in a similar situation... it’s a slippery slope.”

But Board Chair Phyllis J. Randall (D-At Large) pushed back. She argued that the situations facing Briarfield and Hiddenwood are not equivalent, and that supervisors share responsibility for the current conditions.

“One community bought their homes many, many years ago before they could have possibly known what was going to be there ... and we made decisions, and those decisions were bad,” Randall said. “Supervisors should correct those decisions.”

Randall voted against the denial, along with Supervisors Kristen C. Umstadd

(D-Leesburg), Caleb A. Kershner (R-Calectin), and Sylvia R. Glass (D-Broad Run). But the motion carried in a narrow 5-4 vote, leaving the assemblage’s future uncertain.

With the denial, the Hiddenwood community remains zoned for residential use, even as their surroundings become increasingly industrial. For residents, it’s a bitter outcome.

“Our families are unable to enjoy quiet residential lives due to airport noise, construction dust, and the intensive development all around us,” the assemblage said in a statement after the vote. “We sought a rezoning to give us the financial ability to relocate.”

Their statement noted that the neighborhood “predates the establishment of Dulles Airport” but is now plagued by noise from both air traffic and nonstop construction. Without a path to sell their homes, Hiddenwood families are effectively trapped. “The Loudoun Board’s 5-4 denial functionally sentences us to continue our residential lives in a place where quiet living is simply not possible anymore.”

OPINION: BONEHEADS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

developing office buildings, and was able to include so much “contingency” money in the budgets that in my entire career, I never had a single cost overrun.

A Double-Boneheaded Idea

The County proposes balancing its revenue sources so that no single sector pays more than 60% of total tax revenues. It sounds like an arbitrary percentage, but the Board is floating the idea of *reducing* data center taxes to hit the 60% target. That’s like telling Santa

to forget this year’s Christmas.

Balancing tax revenue sources would be a risk-avoidance effort, such as reducing the consequences of unknown new technologies that might render data centers obsolete. Risk avoidance is fine but here are two better ways to do it. *Raise* data center taxes and put, say, half of all data center taxes into a “sovereign fund,” as Alaska and Norway do with their windfall oil profits.

I say *half* because the other half should be given to citizens by eliminating the vehicle tax.

An even better way to manage risk is for Loudoun to reduce its spending addiction. Similar counties Fairfax and Prince William spend a bit over \$9,000 per resident. Loudoun spends over \$15,000 per resident. Why?

Look at what would happen if data center taxes were to be reduced. The only way the County could then maintain its usual level of overspending and not run a deficit would be to raise property taxes. I might sense a Boston Tea Party moment in our future.

Supervisors beware. The political

impact of lowering data center taxes while not sharing excess tax revenue with citizens, especially if their reduced taxes led to our increased property taxes, would be catastrophic for you. Reelection in two years would be a false hope.

Charlie Houston and his wife pay Loudoun County taxes on their farm outside Paeonian Springs, on their cars and even a \$10 fee for each of their four dogs. Charlie can be forgetful, but when it’s time to vote, he has a memory like an elephant.

PURCELLVILLE TAG SALE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

like this,” said Silas Redd, event organizer and owner of Nostalgia Boutique and Mister on Main. “Whether you’re a seasoned collector, a DIY enthusiast, or just out for a good time, there’s always something unexpected to discover—and take home.”

Got something to sell? Be part of a beloved Purcellville tradition. Vendor registration opens Monday, Aug. 18 at PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com, and spots fill up fast—every year, they sell out.

The first 40 participants to register will be featured on the printed event map, so don’t miss your chance to stand out. The deadline to sign up is Monday, Sept. 22.

“Hosting the Tag Sale each year is one of my favorite things,” said event organizer Redd. “It’s not just about finding great deals—it’s about the connections. This event brings out the best of Purcellville, our small-town charm, our thriving local businesses, and the amazing people who call this place home. We also love welcoming folks from nearby towns—it’s become a

regional tradition.”

Become a Sponsor of the Tag Sale. Want to support one of Purcellville’s biggest community events? Text Silas at 540-751-8252 or email ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com to learn about sponsorship opportunities.

“Our sponsors are true community partners who help make the Tag Sale possible year after year,” said Redd. “It’s more than just a one-day sale—it’s a real boost to our local economy. Visitors discover our shops and restaurants, and many come back throughout the season. It’s the perfect kickoff to fall and the holidays.”

Whether you’re looking for unique gifts, seasonal fashion, or the perfect autumn home accent, the Purcellville Tag Sale has something for everyone.

Sign-up opens Monday, Aug. 18 at PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com. Spaces go fast—don’t miss your chance to join the fun.

For more information, text Silas at 540-751-8252 or email ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com.

SUPREME COURT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

County Attorney Leo Rogers and outside counsel, Attorney General Miyares, who supported the County’s position, and the members of the General Assembly that have supported us over the years, especially former Delegate David Ramadan who began this fight over a decade ago,” said Letourneau.

The Attorney General of Virginia

published a statement indicating that, “under Virginia law, toll increases must be reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit received. TRIP II’s proposed rate failed on multiple fronts. The Virginia Supreme Court upheld the Commission’s finding that the proposed tolls were unjustified and unreasonably burdensome on the public.”



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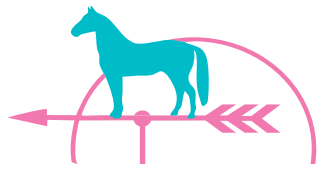


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