

Blue Ridge LEADER & LOUDOUN

www.blueridgeleader.com

RESIDENTIAL
CUSTOMER
ECRWSS

STANDARD PRESORT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1434
MERRIFIELD, VA

MARCH 2026

blueridgeleader

Today

“You nailed it!” Leaders detail momentum behind new Commanders Stadium

BY VALERIE CURY

Momentum around the future home of the Washington Commanders was unmistakable at the RFK Stadium Palooza Bisnow (Bisnow.com/events) event at the Omni Shoreham Hotel on Feb. 25, where city and team leaders offered a detailed and at times candid look at the 70,000-seat stadium rising at the RFK campus.

On stage were Muriel Bowser, Commanders President Mark Clouse, and moderator Mike Drye of HKS, the lead architect designing the new venue.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »



HARTLEY
HOME EXTERIORS
ROOFING • WINDOWS • SIDING
540-441-7649
www.hartleyhomeexteriors.com

VOTED BEST OF LOUDOUN

Columnists	10
Community	3
Government	4
Letters & Opinion	6
Remembering Robert Duvall	11
Shop Local	14

Valley Commerce Center rezoning to industrial advances to Board

BY VALERIE CURY

After two unsuccessful attempts to annex the property into the Town of Purcellville—first by a previous owner and most recently by current applicant Chuck Kuhn, developer of the proposed Valley Commerce Center at 17110 Purcellville Road—the application is now before Loudoun County. The industrial development would total 986,000 square feet, down 288,892 square feet from earlier plans.

Although county planning staff recommended denial, the Planning Commission, at its Feb. 12 work session, voted 6-2-1 to

forward the application to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation for approval, citing anticipated economic benefits, revisions by the applicant, concerns that the 39 homes allowed under current zoning could use more groundwater than the proposed 986,000-square-foot industrial project, and the presence of nearby industrial uses.

Commissioners also noted that residential wells and septic systems would not be subject to centralized oversight, while the industrial project’s water and wastewater service would operate under a regulated utility system.

The measure passed 6-2-1, with Commissioners James Banks Jr. (Algonkian), Eric Combs (Ashburn), Dale Polen Myers (At-Large), Mark Miller (Catocin), Madhava Madireddy (Dulles), and Chair Clifford Keirce (Sterling) in favor. Ad Barnes (Leesburg) and Michelle Frank (Broad Run) opposed, and Robin-Eve Jasper (Little River) was absent.

The proposal seeks to rezone 117.07 acres from Joint Land Management Area-3, which allows up to 39 residential units, to Planned Development–Industrial Park (PD-IP), allowing 986,000 square feet of industrial development. The applicant is

also requesting a Zoning Modification to waive certain road, water, and wastewater requirements.

County planning staff wrote in a Feb. 5 memorandum that they could not support approval, finding the proposal inconsistent with the development pattern and land-use guidance of the Purcellville Joint Land Management Area Rural Neighborhood Place Type outlined in the County’s 2019 General Plan.

“Further, impacts associated with the proposed industrial zoning are not adequately mitigated given the immediate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

PROPANE COSTS TOO MUCH!

This Winter is the Ideal Time to Make the Switch.

“So very happy we switched to Hunt Country. My only regret is that we didn’t do it sooner. How much money we would have saved...However, we finally made the right choice about our propane. For years I have been receiving offers from other companies offering low rates, only to find out you have to enter a contract with them. It never made sense to me that you could drive around town and shop for fuel for your car, but not for your home. It’s nice to see that a business owner understands this and caters to the customer. We received our first delivery this past Saturday and the owner himself brought it out. The service was excellent. Of course, I’m not surprised, as the initial account set-up was easy and the lady in the office was so pleasant!” —Caroline T.

“I have been buying propane from Hunt Country for about a year now. My previous propane provider was much higher priced. The staff was rude and didn’t seem to care if you gave them business or not. When I was shopping around for a new company, thankfully I found Hunt Country. The staff is friendly, professional, knowledgeable and genuinely cared that you gave them your business. Hunt Country prices are consistently lower than their competitors. I highly recommend that you call Hunt Country Propane, if you don’t, you’re making a BIG(\$) mistake. Thanks Hunt Country!” —Ed, Leesburg



540-687-3608
huntcountrypropane.com



Less • Local • Honest

cannabreeze

VIRGINIA HEMP



Senior Wellness, Made Simple Complimentary Full Spectrum CBD

For Seniors & Veterans --- No Purchase Required

Cannabreeze offers a free wellness sample along with clear education so Seniors and Veterans can confidently explore the potential benefits of CBD.

Veteran Owned • Virginia Grown and Crafted • Full Spectrum Hemp Extract • Third-Party Lab Tested
Organically Grown • Clean • Clear • Chemical and Solvent Free



Scan QR Code To Get Our
CBD Guide For Seniors
and Veterans and Receive
Your Complimentary CBD

Hemp-derived products only. THC compliant under federal law. MAY NOT BE SOLD TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 21. Products not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.



Keeping Loudoun running for years—Now Ronnie Fox is passing the torch

BY VALERIE CURY

For decades in Loudoun County, a familiar truck has made its way down winding back roads, through neighborhood streets, and across open farmland. Behind the wheel is Ronnie Fox—the steady hand and friendly face of Sharp Blades—a man whose work ethic, ingenuity, and love of community have defined a lifetime of entrepreneurship.

Now, after years of serving residents across the county and beyond, Fox is selling Sharp Blades and preparing for a new chapter. He and his wife, Kim, are moving to Florida to be closer to family. While a new adventure awaits them, Loudoun will surely feel the absence of a man whose truck has become part of the landscape.

Ronnie and Kim moved to Loudoun from Herndon in 1986. By then, Fox was already a seasoned business owner. For 30 years, he owned and operated The Tortilla Factory, a beloved Mexican restaurant in Herndon. In 2012, he sold the restaurant, closing a remarkable chapter in local



dining history.

But Fox has never been one to slow down.

Back in 1989, while still running the restaurant, he launched another venture: Take Out Taxi. What began as a simple idea grew rapidly, expanding to 90 franchises across the country by 1994. “I’ve been fortunate enough to start a lot of companies,”

Fox says. “I’ve always liked figuring out what people need and finding a way to make it work.”

After selling his restaurant, he spent several years considering what to do next. The answer came unexpectedly.

“A neighbor called me and asked if I could help her with a problem she was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

Are you paying too much for Propane? Call Hunt Country Propane today!



WE'RE LOCAL. WE'RE LESS. WE'RE HONEST.

- We believe all customers should be paying the same low price for propane.
No games. No hidden charges.
- Receive a **FREE** Propane Tank Safety Check.
- A 5-minute call could save you **\$1,000 or more!**
- **We Sell and Install** New 500 & 1,000 Gallon Tanks!



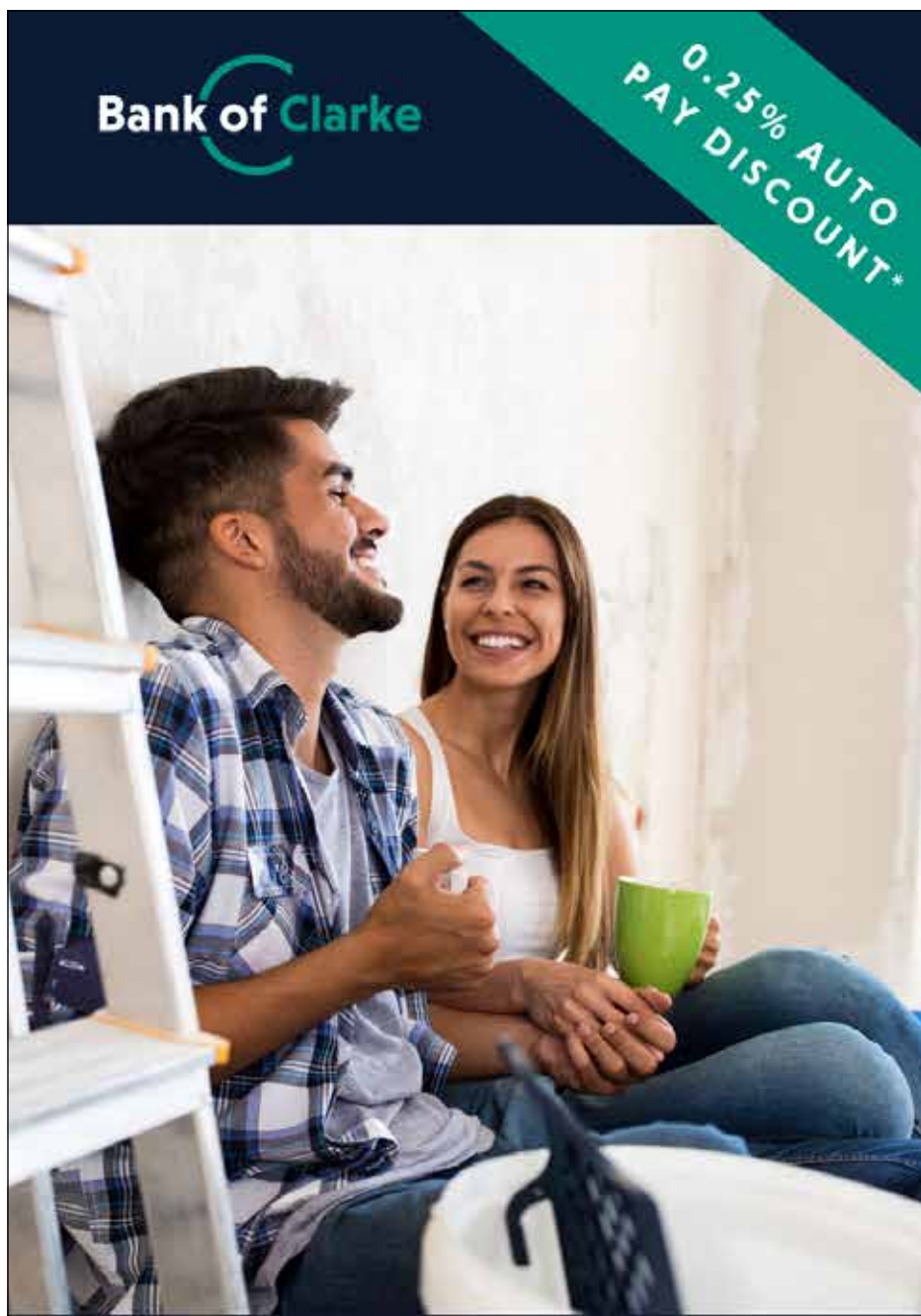
Contact us today at **(540) 687-3608**
or visit us online at huntcountrypropane.com



PO Box 309 Middleburg, VA 20118-0188

LC# MD HVACR 01-2278





SPRING FORWARD WITH THE POWER OF A BOC HELOC

Put your home's equity to work this season. When you apply for a Bank of Clarke HELOC and enroll in Automatic Payments, you'll receive 0.25% off your interest rate—giving you flexible access to funds for home projects, unexpected expenses, or what's next.

*Offer is only available for "NEW" Home Equity Line accounts when automatic payments are set up and maintained from a Bank of Clarke deposit account. The credit line established will be based on the amount of lendable equity in your home. Some restrictions may apply. Refinance of an existing Bank of Clarke Home Equity Line is NOT eligible for this offer. Subject to credit approval, ask for more details.

BANKOFCLARKE.BANK



LCSO holds community meeting to discuss SROs in elementary schools

BY VALERIE CURY

On Feb. 25 at John W. Tolbert Jr. Elementary in Leesburg, parents, students, and community members gathered to discuss the proposed expansion of School Resource Officers into elementary schools. The program already places SROs in middle and high schools, and the discussion highlighted both the promise of increased school safety and concerns from residents about civil rights, student interactions, and trust in law enforcement.

GOVERNMENT

Supervisors Kristen Umstatt (D-Leesburg), Julie Briskman (D-Algonkian), School Board Chair April Chandler (Algonkian), Vice Chair Anne Donohue (At-Large), Deana Griffiths (Ashburn), and Amy Riccardi (Sterling) attended the meeting.

Sheriff Michael Chapman opened by emphasizing the role of SROs in school safety and community protection. He noted that the expansion into elementary schools is not about disciplinary enforcement, but about providing trained law enforcement personnel as part of a broader school security system.

Chapman stressed that SROs receive extensive training, including crisis intervention, de-escalation, and working with students with disabilities, and highlighted the ongoing collaboration with Loudoun County Public Schools to ensure the program complements the schools' behavioral and mental health supports.

"School safety is a system," Chapman said. "It's not just about one component; it's about counselors, SROs, communication, and preparation. We are not here to replace counselors, and we are not here to handle discipline. We are here to respond in a crisis and mitigate harm when every second counts."

Chapman outlined the phased plan to place School Resource Officers in all Loudoun County elementary schools over a four-year period. He noted that each school would have a dedicated officer, ensuring familiarity and consistency for students and staff. The program is estimated at \$7 million in the first year,



with total costs expected to remain under \$20 million when fully implemented.

The meeting quickly turned emotional as parents shared personal stories. One parent recounted decades of trauma from abuse by a trusted member of his community, explaining how the school system he attended offered no protection.

He contrasted his experience with his grandchildren's schooling today, praising LCPS safety measures and training, and expressed support for adding SROs to elementary schools. "I had no voice. I had only terror. I've been dealing with this for 64 years," he said. "I want SROs in my elementary schools because I do not want my grandchildren to suffer what I endured."

School Board Vice Chair Anne Donohue raised questions about potential disparate impacts on students of color, citing national studies showing that SRO programs can unintentionally contribute to inequities if not implemented carefully.

Chapman and his team emphasized that SROs do not participate in school disciplinary actions or policy enforcement, and that the program is structured to support, not penalize, students.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 »



KITCHENS



HOME ADDITIONS / GARAGES



BATHROOMS



Spring Discount
15% OFF
 COMPLETE REMODELING PROJECT
 Call for details. Must present ad at time of estimate.

APR 0% **\$0 DOWN PAYMENT**
FOR 15 MONTHS



SCAN TO LEARN MORE

BOOK YOUR FREE IN-HOME DESIGN & ESTIMATE
 CALL OR TEXT 703.775.1234 | wellcraftkitchens.com | info@wellcraftkitchens.com
 SHOWROOM 23465 ROCK HAVEN WAY, SUITE 125, STERLING, VA 20166 (By Appt. Only)



**Complete Kitchen Remodeling
Free Design Consultation**

**GRANITE
& CABINET
CENTER**
703-956-9470

**QUARTZ & GRANITE
COUNTERTOPS,
FABRICATION & INSTALLATION**

~~\$2500~~
LIMITED TIME ONLY!
\$1,250
INSTALLED PRICE
Minimum Job 35 sq. ft.
NO HIDDEN FEES!

**NEXT DAY
COUNTERTOP INSTALLATION**



Google Reviews 4.9 ★★★★★ 124 Google reviews
Countertop store in Sterling, Virginia

“The professionalism of the team is outstanding. The entire process was very efficient. They handled the entire process with diligence, attentiveness, and great communication. I had a hard time choosing because all of their designs were stunning. I had an amazing experience. I will definitely be doing further house renovation projects with them. I wholeheartedly recommend Granite Center to anyone who is looking for a team that will make a kitchen renovation the most easy and rewarding process!” – Happy Customer

granitecenterva.com

SHOWROOM & WAREHOUSE: 22446 Davis Drive, Ste. 109, Sterling, VA 20164

HOURS: MONDAY - SATURDAY 8AM - 6PM



BOS adopt amendments to Comprehensive Plan

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

At a business meeting on Jan. 21, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved a comprehensive plan amendment.

The CPAM passed as part of the consent agenda with a 6-0-0-3 vote with Vice Chair Michael Turner (D-Ashburn), Supervisor Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg), and Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) absent.

According to the staff report, the purpose of the CPAM was to “address housekeeping and clean-up text amendments to provide clarity to staff, developers, and the community, as well as to integrate Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted policies related to proffer expectations for attainable housing, the Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan (UHNSP), alternative criteria for the Suburban Compact Neighborhood (SCN) Place Type, the 2023 Energy Strategy, and issues that arose during the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance) Rewrite (ZOR) project.”

The amendments concerned General Plan Chapter 1 - Introduction, Chapter 2 - Land Use, Chapter 3 - Natural, Environment, and Heritage Resources, Chapter 4 - Housing, Chapter 6 - Fiscal Management and Public Infrastructure, Chapter 7 - Implementation, the GP Glossary, and the GP Maps.

Most of the revisions to these sections were general

housekeeping items like updates with more current information and clearer definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 was the most heavily revised section with updates to its subsections on Quality Development, Infill and Redevelopment, Urban Policy Area, and Suburban Policy Area. There were additional housekeeping revisions, such as correcting graphics, throughout Chapter 2.

Throughout the revisions, staff added considerations for attainable housing and the Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan.

County staff requested that, in addition to approving the CPAM, the Board add three zoning amendments to the Department of Planning and Zoning Work Plan.

The first ZOAM is aimed at providing more flexibility for infill parcels and addressing the policy changes made to the 2019 General Plan. Infill parcels are vacant or underutilized pieces of land within already developed urban or suburban areas, targeted for new construction or redevelopment.

County staff is aiming to support infill that does not strictly conform to zoning districts but still fits well with existing use. For example, in some circumstances, a small business like a bakery may be allowed in a residential area while a drive-thru restaurant will not be allowed.

“Supporting infill that conforms to the 2019 General

Plan place types will help ensure that the County is utilizing potential infill sites most effectively and providing residential development in appropriate locations,” the staff report said.

The second ZOAM would provide two options for single-family dwelling unit only districts by amending Chapter 9 of the GP. According to the staff report, the two options are as follows:

Option one would allow applicants to donate fully developable lots that are interspersed within a market-rate development for the equivalent number of physical ADUs that would be required. Ownership would convey to a third-party entity equivalent to a community land trust. These units would be developed by a partner and offered to families on the DHCD ADU (attainable dwelling unit) Purchase Program wait list.

Option two would allow applicants to provide land off-site for the development of ADUs as either affordable homeownership or affordable rental housing units. The land would be donated to a third party, either an affordable housing developer approved by the Zoning Administrator or an entity equivalent to a community land trust. Certain criteria would have to be met which may include providing additional units, being within a defined proximity to the market-rate development, time limits for construction, and/or

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »



PET SUPPLIES PLUS®

Happy
St. Patrick's Day!

Pet Supplies Plus of Purcellville
 120 Purcellville Gateway Dr. | Mon-Sat: 9-9 • Sun: 10-6 | 540.299.7959


 Locally Owned and Operated


 Self-Service Pet Wash 5 for \$30


 Full-Service Grooming


 1 Hour Curbside Pickup



 Delivery

BOS presses Richmond for solutions as Session heads toward budget

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

At the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors business meeting on Feb. 18, county leaders and their Richmond lobbyist delivered a detailed progress report on the 2026 General Assembly session and highlighted where important county priorities now sit as the legislature moves into budget negotiations.

Jonathan Freeman, the county's contracted lobbyist, opened his briefing with a blunt status check: "We are officially post crossover; crossover was yesterday," he told the Board, noting how the calendar has compressed around key deadlines.

GOVERNMENT

He added that "budget Sunday is this upcoming Sunday, February 22," and that proposed budget amendments "will be available by noon on Tuesday, February 24," signaling that many of the most consequential decisions are about to shift into the budget process.

That schedule matters because several top Loudoun priorities—including housing grant reforms, the Oak Hill conservation bills, and measures tied to energy and transit funding—are either moving quickly through committees or have been converted into budget fights.

As the county's staff report makes plain, the Board's 2026 Legislative Program "includes legislative priorities and positions that guide staff and the County's contracted lobbyists ... during the session," and staff pledged to use that plan to shape the county's advocacy.

Some items have cleared early hurdles. Freeman reported that the House and Senate versions of the local housing-grant bill "both passed their chambers" and are now in local government committees—a sign staff view as positive because "the language mirrors each other."

The staff report similarly framed housing grants as a priority the Board adopted last year and is now actively advancing.

Other measures are less certain. The Oak Hill Farm package—bills intended to allow the state to accept roughly 1,240 acres for a state park—has split fortunes: One delegate's bill "got out of the House unanimously," Freeman said, while a Senate companion "was left in Senate Finance," effectively turning the matter

"into a budget conversation."

The staff report describes these bills as authorizing the Department of Conservation and Recreation "for the purpose of establishing and operating a state park," language the Board supports.

Energy and data-center legislation dominated much of the exchange. Supervisors pressed Freeman and county staff on bills that would let localities help pay to underground transmission lines through new local financing mechanisms—even authorizing an additional taxing authority tied to a new high-usage customer class known as GS5. As Freeman explained in the meeting, the GS5 category was created by the State Corporation Commission and covers users consuming "25 megawatts or more" of power.

Many supervisors expressed discomfort about shifting costs to county taxpayers or ordinary businesses. "If our constituents learn that we can levy another tax, it's gonna fill our boardroom," Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) said, arguing local residents would come to the Board demanding action—even though, as Freeman and county attorneys stressed, the legislation still requires a multi-step SEC feasibility finding and leaves substantial discretion in how costs are split.

Against that backdrop, some measures aim squarely at reallocating costs away from ordinary ratepayers. Briskman successfully moved the Board to endorse a bill that would require the State Corporation Commission to examine whether Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power are "unfairly burdening non-data center customers with transmission costs," and to determine by January 1, 2028, whether generation and distribution costs have similarly unfair impacts.

Her motion passed 9-0. Her explanation was that the bill "is actually going at where the solution could be found," because counties cannot compel utilities to bury lines or otherwise force actions by the SEC.

Other housing proposals remain contentious. The county's staff packet lists the local anti-rent-gouging authority and broader housing bills the Board is tracking, but Freeman told supervisors that the Senate version of the anti-rent gouging bill "was defeated ... in commerce and

labor," while the House bill was "continued to 2027"—a procedural outcome he called "a soft way of killing a bill."

The staff report recommends continued monitoring and evaluation of fiscal impacts, noting that "Staff will continue to evaluate fiscal impacts to the County of applicable introduced legislation and will

evaluate applicable budget amendments once they are made public."

Transit funding, another priority Loudoun has pursued at the state level, has also run into headwinds. Freeman reported, "All of the transit funding bills have been defeated," meaning matters that would have created dedicated transit revenue sources are now "a budget conversation."

For Loudoun, that places renewed importance on the House and Senate draft budgets that will be unveiled the week of Feb. 24.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 >

571.206.0176
appletoncampbell.com

PLUMBING PROBLEMS?

FREE ESTIMATE
 for new hvac and water heaters.

“Appleton Campbell came out to check my hot water heater and perform a full plumbing inspection. They were pleasant, professional, and incredibly knowledgeable. I felt I could truly trust their recommendations. We're very grateful for their assistance!”

APPLETON CAMPBELL
 PLUMBING • HEATING
 AIR CONDITIONING • ELECTRICAL
 Built on Trust Since 1976

50 YEARS

Ashburn
 THE BEST OF
 ASHBURN
 '25

FINANCIAL FOCUS®

Local business owners: Don't overlook retirement plans

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI,
EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

If you're a local business owner, you're juggling many priorities: growing revenue, managing expenses, supporting your team and planning for your own future. What if one tool could help with all these goals?



JOSHUA
WOLINSKI

A workplace retirement plan might be that solution and can, directly or indirectly, offer benefits that extend beyond simple savings.

Double the tax advantages. Starting a retirement plan can deliver immediate tax advantages. For the business, employer contributions are tax-deductible. And as a participant in your company plan, your pretax salary deferrals are excluded from income taxes; your investments within the plan are tax-deferred until distributed. Many plans now offer Roth options that allow tax-free withdrawals in retirement.

Local businesses may also qualify for federal tax credits that help offset startup costs, employee education

expenses and plan administration fees. Additional credits may be available for auto-enrollment features and employer contributions made during the plan's first five years.

A competitive edge in hiring. In today's labor market, offering a retirement plan can differentiate your business from competitors and help improve employee retention.

Many plans also provide access to financial education tools and resources, helping your employees make informed decisions about saving, investing and planning for retirement. This support can lead to greater employee satisfaction and productivity, contributing to a positive work environment for your business.

More flexible than state-sponsored options. If you live in a state requiring an employee retirement program, you might be considering a state-sponsored plan. While these programs can provide a starting point, they typically offer fewer investment options, lower contribution limits and limited design flexibility.

Establishing your own workplace

retirement plan lets you customize features for your business needs to control administrative costs, set contribution limits and offer employees a wide range of investment options. This added control in plan design can lead to better outcomes for your business and your employees.

Reducing a hidden risk in your own retirement planning. Business owners often have as much as 80% of their net worth tied up in their businesses, according to the Exit Planning Institute. While that demonstrates commitment to success, it also creates significant financial risk to the owner.

Relying solely on a future business sale to fund your retirement can be precarious. Market shifts, timing challenges or limited buyer interest could derail those plans. By building personal assets through your employer-sponsored retirement plan, you can gain financial flexibility and reduce the risk of having your retirement lifestyle depend entirely on one event.

Getting started. With various retirement plan options available, determining which one fits your business best

can feel overwhelming.

A qualified financial advisor can help you navigate these decisions, explaining the trade-offs between different plan types and identifying which option best suits your unique situation. They can also help you understand eligibility requirements and ensure the plan you choose aligns with your business goals and personal financial objectives.

Starting a workplace retirement plan represents an investment in your future, your employees and the long-term success of your business. 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

"Aligning your financial future with your personal goals, wants, and wishes."

Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Great Falls

BY TIM JON

I remember the bright sunshine, tempered (and then some) by a cold, biting wind. I remember a longer drive from my "native soil" than I had expected; most of all



TIM JON

I remember the more-than-rewarding scenery: roaring (or was it "soaring?") water smashing through the rocks, leaving a seemingly eternal spray in the air, with the colors of winter browns, and ever-greenery of tree-lined banks on either side of the fluid panorama.

This was—unbelievably—my first visit to the dramatic series of rapids along the Potomac River (shared, at least in this story, by the Commonwealth of Virginia and, on the opposing side, that of Maryland) known as Great Falls.

I know—you (and I) would think that an outdoorsman from the State of Minnesota (Land of 10,000 Lakes) who represented local radio news for 10 years in Loudoun County, Virginia would have at least paid a visit at some time or another to this hugely popular site, operated by the National Park Service. Nope.

Probably the greatest obstacle—all that while—to my seeing this place in person was a matter of logistics: time, movement and distance. I'd been moving



too fast, covering local events or directing (that may remain a matter of opinion) community theatre for a decade, then I'd been even busier, for a longer period—delivering mail to what would otherwise amount to a small town, also here, in good old Loudoun County.

But, after all this time, I was very happy to break through these confines—nearly 27 years after moving here—and make my way to this striking and invigorating outdoor attraction.

Now, I by no means—on this first visit—covered the extent of the Park's impressive amenities. There was

no rock climbing for Tim Jon that day, no kayaking for our brave explorer, and—no— not even any delightfully domestic picnicking on what certainly would have been an insect-free and chilly noon hour.

No, I had my unshakeable logistics to adhere to. My still-hectic schedule only allowed me to scamper down the trail, past the Visitor Center, and out onto the projecting rocks at the River's edge. And that was enough.

Having endured the medical conditions related to the dizzying effects of vertigo for over a decade, I had all the adventure I wanted—just being in proximity to an inestimable amount of moving water, augmented by the aforementioned, stiff wind—I mean the kind that induces a very satisfying nap upon returning home.

Your aging storyteller may have resembled a poor, inebriated soul, lost at an amusement park, but I persevered. And, I distinctly recall the extra care I employed in negotiating my feet and often my body—through the challenging, rocky terrain that separated the trail from what I figured would be the best photographic vantage points.

Proceeding thusly, I actually made it out onto the rocky outcroppings and back to the safety of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »

Robert (Bobby) Duvall— Loudoun County Remembers a Hollywood Legend

BY CHIP BECK

One day after Valentine's Day, Bobby Duvall, aged 95, passed away at his Brynley farm on The Plains, Virginia.

To movie-goers around the world, Robert Duvall (1931-2026) was the legendary actor who got his film start with a non-speaking role in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. He then went on to utter some of the most iconic lines in cinema history in *Apocalypse Now*, *Lonesome Dove*, *The Godfather*, and *Secondhand Lions*, among many others.

To Loudoun and Fauquier County residents living around Purcellville, Philomont, The Plains, and Middleburg, the famous actor was more commonly known as Bobby Duvall, a cherished neighbor, charitable citizen, and venerable storyteller who was as comfortable spinning tales in a local coffee shop as he was directing movies such as *The Apostle* or *Wild Horses*.

Some Western Loudoun residents recall when Duvall owned a 28-acre, 1820s estate called *Butchers Run* in the Philomont area in the 1980s. The property included a Quaker-built stone manor, an eight-stall courtyard barn, a carriage house, and a secluded log cabin.

Rather than live like some reclusive Lord of the Manor, Duvall often opened his elegant estate for charitable events where friends and local residents were invited.

In the 1990s, Duvall shifted his Virginia residency to a 250-year-old, Georgian-style property called Byrnley Farm, eventually bringing along his fourth and final wife, Luciana Pedraza. The 360-acre farm in Fauquier County, is where Duvall and Pedraza lived together until he passed.

Duvall and Pedraza founded *The Robert Duvall Children's Fund (RDCF)* in 2001, basing it from their Virginia estate where the non-profit focuses on "providing resources for education, health, and housing for underprivileged children and families," particularly in northern Argentina where Duvall's wife Luciana originated.

In Los Angeles, Duvall knew or worked with nearly every A-list actor of the past 75 years, including Marlon Brando, John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman,

Julia Roberts and the rest of Hollywood's Royalty. Yet it was the quiet pubs, restaurants, and shops in The Plains, Middleburg, Leesburg, Purcellville, or Bluemont where Bob Duvall felt comfortable and lived as close to an ordinary life that a man of his renown could have.

One hangout that Duvall often frequented was *The Rail Stop Restaurant* in The Plains, a place that Duvall purchased in 1996 and helped shape alongside



Robert Duvall as "Captain McRae," in *Lonesome Dove* (1989). Pastel portrait (1990) by Navy Combat Artist Chip Beck.

renowned Chef Tom Kee. With Duvall's backing and Kee's skills, the eatery built a reputation as "one of the region's finest dining destinations." It didn't hurt that Duvall dined there and was approachable.

Diana Hilton, who has worked at the Rail Stop for 30 years, knew Duvall since the beginning of the restaurant's run. Her description of Bobby Duvall, the man, was far different from what one expects of Hollywood elites.

"He was just a wonderful human being—humble, low-key, even-keeled, down-to-earth. A regular old guy," she said, laughing as she added, "Just say a regular guy!"

When asked about her favorite Duvall memory, Diana said, "His Tretorn Tennis shoes. He loved them and always wore them. Absolutely no pretenses."

That observation makes sense. Duvall was a fervent conservationist and preservationist who showed up at town councils or County Supervisors meetings to

speak out against the spread of Data Centers and unchecked development. The Swedish Tretorn corporation created its Eco-Essential Initiative using recycled materials and sustainable production methods to create its shoes as an environmentally responsible choice.

Another restaurant that Duvall liked to dine at was at the upscale Girasole Italian Restaurant in The Plains. A fellow artist who lived in the area and was a frequent diner at the restaurant, recalls seeing the actor and his family there several times. "He was always there with family or friends, so other than saying 'hello' as

I walked by, we didn't really speak, but I think he eventually got to recognize me as a regular. I always tried to sit close enough so I could listen to his iconic voice while I was eating my chicken parm."

It's not surprising that actor Robert Duvall chose to spend the latter third of his long life in western Virginia's hunt country. He has ancestral roots in Maryland and Virginia that go back to the 1600s. Duvall grew up in Anne Arundel County, attending Severn School near Annapolis, where his father William Howard Duvall—a career Navy Admiral—was stationed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 >

Now Accepting Estimate Requests for the Loudoun County Invasive Species Grant Program.



Veterans Land Rescue LLC is proud to partner with Loudoun County land owners to protect our local environment. Through the Invasive Species Grant Program, you may qualify for financial reimbursement to remove invasive plants such as Tree of Heaven, Autumn Olive, and many more.

- Contact Veteran's Land Rescue for an on-site visit
- Veterans Land Rescue will complete a detailed report/estimate and will assist in application submission

Take advantage of this limited-time program and improve the health and beauty of your land.

Contact Veterans Land Rescue Today to Schedule Your Estimate!

Veterans Land Rescue
540-900-1888
veteranslandrescue+nov@gmail.com

NEW CUSTOM DECKS, REPAIRS & RENEW

VIRGINIA DECK & PATIO



- Trusted name in Loudoun since 1998
- Small company, attention to details
- Quality materials and craftsmanship
- Fully licensed & insured
- Competitive pricing, one job at a time
- We do HOA and county permits
- Thousands of local references
- Owner operator, no sub crews
- Call Mike today for FREE ESTIMATE



DECKS • PORCHES • GAZEBOS
FREE ESTIMATES

703-723-7676

www.virginiadeckandpatio.com
virginiadeck@yahoo.com



**HALL FUNERAL HOME
OF PURCELLVILLE**

Serving the Community Since 1895

"Providing Memorable Tributes With Compassionate Care"

- Pre Arrangements • Monuments
- Burial & Cremation Services
- Memorial Service & Family Gathering
- Military Funeral Services, For Both Service Members And Their Dependents
- Ship Out

140 SOUTH NURSERY AVENUE • PURCELLVILLE, VIRGINIA

540-338-5561 www.HallFH.com

GENERATORS

Servicing All Brands

Over 80 years combined experience providing complete service that includes engine, generator and transfer switch.

PROPANE – NATURAL GAS – DIESEL

INSTALL OR UPGRADE — REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT



We won't leave you powerless.

KOHLER
IN POWER. SINCE 1920.

GENERAC

WINGO
Quality Generators Since 1927

ASCO Power Technologies®

— Ask Dr. Mike —

**Raising a two-marshmallow kid in Loudoun County—
A community of many stories**

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER, PSY.D.

If you've ever heard of the "marshmallow test," you might remember the classic experiment where children were offered one marshmallow now or two if they waited. The ability to delay gratification—choosing a future reward over an immediate one—has long been tied to persistence, emotional regulation, and long-term success.

Ask Dr. Mike



DR. MIKE

But what does it mean to raise a "two-marshmallow kid" in a place like Loudoun County, where some children rarely have to wait for much of anything, yet others face real and ongoing challenges?

In our community, Uber Eats and Amazon Prime may deliver quickly for some families, but it's important to remember that not all children grow up with these privileges. Loudoun County is diverse—economically, culturally, and socially—and every family's story is unique.

The Blessing and Blind Spot of "Enough" And the Reality of Inequality

Many parents in Loudoun County have worked hard to provide stability and comfort for their children—oftentimes more than they themselves had growing up. It's natural to want to give our kids the best. For families with resources, enough can be a tremendous gift, allowing children to focus on learning, athletics, creativity, and friendships rather than worrying about basic needs.

But it's vital to recognize that not everyone here has enough. For many years now, Loudoun County has been ranked the wealthiest county in the U.S., and it's often portrayed as uniformly affluent with high median family incomes and high median home prices.

While that is all certainly true, many families in our community struggle with housing costs, food insecurity, and limited access to opportunities. Nearly 10% of our children qualify for free or reduced lunch, and many parents work multiple jobs to make ends meet. These realities matter. They shape children's experiences and their understanding of what it

means to work, wait, and appreciate what they have.

Abundance, when present, can come with its own challenges. When every need is met instantly, children may miss chances to develop patience, resilience, and gratitude. But entitlement isn't simply a product of wealth; it can grow from any environment where children aren't taught to wait, work, and consider others—regardless of a family's income.

How Kids Learn to Wait, Work, and Appreciate

Lessons in self-regulation and gratitude aren't delivered through lectures, but rather, they're lived. Here are some ways to nurture these qualities, no matter your family's circumstances:

- **For younger kids**, saving allowance, waiting for a special treat, or learning that "not now" doesn't mean "never" helps build trust in the process of waiting and appreciation for what they receive.
- **For school-age children**, responsibility grows through finishing homework before screen time, helping with chores, or making lunch at home. These moments reinforce that effort comes before reward and that what we earn is often more meaningful than what we're simply given.
- **For adolescents**, the lessons get bigger: waiting for a driver's license, working toward a goal, or handling disappointment. Parents can support growth by empathizing with setbacks, rather than rushing to fix every problem.

Looking Beyond Ourselves: The Power of Service, Volunteering, and Perspective

One of the most powerful ways to raise a two-marshmallow kid—regardless of family income—is by encouraging them to give back. Volunteering or helping others isn't just about charity; it's about building empathy, perspective, and a sense of community.

- **For all families**, volunteering together—whether at a food pantry, community garden, school event, or local park—helps children see life

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

Nett recall trial set amid months of ongoing legal proceedings

BY VALERIE CURY

Purcellville Vice Mayor Ben Nett's recall case has encountered another delay. A hearing originally scheduled for Feb. 26 to consider arguments seeking dismissal was postponed after special prosecutor Eric Olsen reported he had fallen and injured his knee, leaving him unable to walk.

GOVERNMENT

The hearing has been rescheduled for March 19, with the recall trial set for April 20-22.

In his Bill of Particulars, Olsen outlined alleged grounds for recall that differ from the language voters signed in the petition, raising questions about whether the case can proceed as filed.

The recall matter is unfolding in parallel with related criminal proceedings involving Nett and Town Manager Kwasi Fraser, which have also experienced a series of scheduling adjustments since their arrests last July, marking the seventh month since indictments were returned.

Earlier procedural complications contributed to the extended timeline. In late summer 2025, Olsen attended a scheduled hearing by videoconference after issues arose with in-person attendance. In January 2026, he submitted a joinder filing on a form that required correction, further extending the court's schedule.

The indictments allege bid-rigging and commercial fraud stemming from the town's decision to hire a consultant to conduct an independent review of the Purcellville Police Department. The contract, which carried a \$12,000 cap, was publicly posted on the town's bidding website, making it visible to all potential bidders. The prosecutor alleges the defendants manipulated the bidding process for the contract.

A hearing earlier this month to determine whether Nett and Fraser would be tried together was postponed after Olsen filed a motion for joinder only two days before the scheduled hearing—short

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 >

VISIT US
in the Town of Hamilton!

Mattingly's
Amish Lawn Furniture
Premium Quality Polylumber
Everyday Low Prices



Outdoor season starts with the right seating.

Hand Crafted by select Western Pa. Old Order & Eastern Pa. Amish Craftsman families

Family Owned & Operated Since 1973
Dealing in Amish Outdoor Furniture Located in Loudoun County Since 1973.

540-338-2060
55 E. Colonial Highway (Old Rt 7) Hamilton, VA 20158
Parking in rear



Tuscarora Mill
Presents
A WILLAMETTE WINE DINNER

FLANEUR WINES PAIRED WITH A 5 COURSE MEAL

Start At 7Pm

18 MARCH 2026

\$150 per person

203 Harrison Street Leesburg VA 20175

www.tuskies.com

SHOP LOCAL

Email advertise@blueridgeleader.com for advertising information.

Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre

Hopelessly Devoted to You
MURDER

March 14 - May 17 at historic venues, wineries, & restaurants across Loudoun County. Check the website for dates and locations.

Reservations required
www.StageCoachTC.com/Tickets
571-477-9444

Fun and unique experiences all year long!

VIRGINIA IS FOR THEATRE LOVERS

STAGE COACH THEATRE COMPANY



OLD DOMINION KITCHEN DESIGN

(540) 338-6338
194 N 21st St., Purcellville

WOODHARBOR

AFFORDABLE Expert Tree & Stump Removal

- HOA Maintenance
- Tree Planting
- Lot Clearing
- Storm Damage
- Pruning
- Trimming
- Crowning
- Bulk Mulch Delivery

Hes Company LLC
703-203-8853
HesCompanyLLC.com
JohnQueirolo1@gmail.com

Licensed & Insured
Member Angle's List & BBB

C'est Bon
BY SAVOIR FARE

What's for Dinner?

Delicious, chef-prepared dinners available for convenient pickup at C'est Bon by Savoir Fare

Wednesday-Friday 4-7pm

Weekly specials & housemade desserts!
Family meals, gluten-free, nut-free, vegetarian & vegan options available.



"Excellence In Real Estate"

Kathy Stripley
RE/MAX Executives
kathy.stripley@remax.com

703-314-5539 cell
840-822-9124 home office
571-210-7355 office

STRESSING ABOUT MEDICARE?

Well, stress no more. I make Medicare sign-up and annual review EASY. And, my service is FREE. I guide you through the Medicare process:

- Part A Hospital Stays
- Part B Doctor Visits
- Part C Medicare Advantage
- Part D RX Drugs

Call me. I'm here to help make Medicare as easy as possible.

MPGROUP
NAVIGATE MEDICARE TOGETHER
703-930-5705 jeff@mpgroup.org

ST. PATRICK'S DINNER TO GO

TUESDAY, MARCH 17
4-7pm

6 W LOUDOUN ST ROUND HILL, VA

C'est Bon (540) 338-8300
cestbonbysavoirfare.com

2024 WINNER



LEESBURG
DECKS & PORCHES

Scott Pultz
703-727-5442
decksbyjscott@gmail.com
35571 Suffolk Ln, Purcellville

SHOP LOCAL

Email advertise@blueridgeleader.com for advertising information.



On The Market... Properties

See Our Ad on the Back Cover!

On The Market... with Sam

Sam Fisher
Principal Broker, Realtor®
Phone: 703-408-4261
onthemarketwithsam@gmail.com



onthemarketloudoun.com



Patama Thai Kitchen

**Authentic Thai Food
Simply Delicious**

540-338-5859

**101 South Maple Avenue
Unit E, Purcellville**




TUNE-UP AND PRUNE UP

Be ready to go when your grass is ready to grow

GENERATORS SMALL ENGINES  AUTOMOTIVE LAWN CARE

Bice Services LLC

(410) 707-9978
biceservicesllc@gmail.com

20+ Years of Mechanical Experience • Honest, Trustworthy, Fair
Family-Owned • Serving Loudoun & Surrounding Areas

LUCKETTS EXCAVATING INC

Lucketts Excavating, Inc. repaired, revived, and enlarged this picturesque lake and island along with installation of a custom wooden pavilion and dock.



- + Pond Installation & Repair
- + Land Clearing & Grading
- + Gravel Driveways & Roads
- + Equestrian Riding Arenas
- + Basement Excavation
- + Pad Sites & Lot Clean Up

703-443-0039 | LuckettsExcavating.com

“WE WORK WOOD”

- Tree Removal
- Trimming/Pruning
- Stump Grinding
- Bucket Truck Service
- Lot Clearing
- Firewood

MILLING TO YOUR SPECIFICATIONS

- Solar Kiln
- Slabs for Sale & Slabbing
- Your Logs to Lumber

10% off any job
\$300 minimum
Stumps not included
Exp. 3/31/26

FREE ESTIMATES

Curt Hilling 540-287-1970
www.HillingAndSons.com
Licensed & Insured • ISA Certified Arborist #MA-5110-A



Purcellville FLORIST

Wishing All a Blessed Easter



540-338-4161
701 W Main St., Purcellville
purcellvillefloristva.com
Family Owned & Operated



NOW HIRING

Purcellville Electric LLC

Over 40 Years of Experience

RESIDENTIAL



COMMERCIAL


540-338-2424
www.PurcellvilleElectric.com

Erie Insurance

Above all in sERvIcE™

Auto • Home • Business • Life

Call us for a quote today.



Nikki Englund
Purcellville, VA
nikki@englundinsurance.com
540-338-1130

S882 Not all companies are licensed or operate in all states. Not all products are offered in all states. Go to erieinsurance.com for company licensure and territory information.

corcoran

MCENEARNEY
Middleburg Real Estate

Call Marcy for your Real Estate needs

Full-Time, Local Experience since 1993



MARCY CANTATORE

Selling Homes, Farms & Land
Licensed in VA & WV

540-533-7453
www.MarcyC.com • MarcyC@MarcyC.com
[Facebook@MarcyCantatore](https://www.facebook.com/MarcyCantatore) • [Instagram@MarcyCSells](https://www.instagram.com/MarcyCSells)

Atoka Properties 113 N 21st St, Purcellville, VA 20132

SHOP LOCAL



PIANO LESSONS

children & adults
CLASSICAL METHOD

Alan Ogden
Purcellville & Loudoun

cell: (703) 401-7022
ogdenmusic.org

Trombone, Euphonium, Organ & Voice

You don't need luck to get a great burger!

we won **best burger**

Thank You Loudoun for Voting us #1 Burger.

2015 LOUDOUN'S FAVORITE

- in Loudoun County
- in Northern Virginia
- In the State of Virginia!

When You Need A Great Burger... You Need MELT!

525 East Market Street, Leesburg, VA 20176
(703)443-2105

Now Hiring

Purcellville Electric LLC

Over 40 Years of Experience

RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL

540-338-2424
www.PurcellvilleElectric.com

Democrats hold field hearing on federal workforce reductions in Fairfax

BY VALERIE CURY

Democratic members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee held a congressional field hearing Feb. 12 in the Fairfax County Government Center chambers to examine recent federal workforce reductions and their effects on employees and public services.

GOVERNMENT

The hearing was initiated by Rep. Robert Garcia, ranking member of the committee, and included participation from Rep. Suhas Subramanyam, Rep. James Walkinshaw, other Oversight Democrats, and area members of Congress.

The session focused on workforce reductions and agency restructuring under the administration of President Donald Trump and the Department of Government Efficiency, highlighting how those actions have affected federal employees and public services.

The committee listed the following affected federal employees as speakers: Paul Osadebe of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Kelly Jabar, formerly of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Food and Drug Administration; and Jeff Conklin of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Also listed were Kenneth Bledsoe, formerly of the U.S. Agency for International Development; Jacob Cross, formerly of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and Abby McIlraith of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Several of the employees were placed on administrative leave or otherwise affected by workforce reductions. Paul Osadebe, a trial attorney and HUD whistleblower, was placed on administrative leave after raising concerns about agency practices, and Jeff Conklin, chief security officer at CISA, was placed on administrative leave amid an internal review following a polygraph test he organized. Others were identified as having been affected by agency restructuring, staffing cuts, or whistleblower-related issues.

Subject matter experts listed by the committee included Rob Shriver, managing director of the Civil Service Strong and Good Government Initiatives at Democracy Forward; Krista Boyd, general counsel and vice president of strategy at American Oversight and former inspector general at the Office of Personnel Management; Faith Williams, director of the Effective and Accountable Government Program at

the Project on Government Oversight; and Doreen P. Greenwald, president of the National Treasury Employees Union.

Former U.S. Rep. Barbara Comstock of Virginia's 10th District called for a bipartisan advisory commission to review federal workforce issues.

Throughout the hearing, Subramanyam empha-



sized the role of congressional oversight. "We need to have accountability there," Subramanyam said, referring to recent enforcement controversies. He highlighted the importance of hearings and committee actions in responding to agency decisions and ensuring transparency.

"It's a huge problem if we can't attract and retain talented people in our federal government," Subramanyam said.

Subramanyam reaffirmed the importance of protecting federal workers and their ability to raise concerns without fear of retaliation. He noted that whistleblowers play a central role in keeping government accountable by exposing problems that might otherwise go unaddressed.

He also emphasized bipartisan cooperation, citing a recent vote on Affordable Care Act tax credits that drew support from 16 Republicans. "We were able to force that vote. I want to continue to do this," he said.

Subramanyam touched on broader policy issues during the hearing. He described Venezuelan elections as a "sham" and criticized Nicolas Maduro, while cautioning against extended U.S. military involvement. "If we had to go around and try to turn every country and change the regime into one that we liked better, we would be doing that in hundreds of countries," he said.

Ethics and campaign finance reforms were also discussed. Subramanyam called for banning members of Congress from trading individual stocks,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

Western Loudoun Rec Complex expansion, cost updates

During the Feb. 24 Capital Improvement Program work session, supervisors discussed the rising cost of the Western Loudoun Recreation Complex. Plans for the complex, a 96,000-square-foot facility expanded from its original 83,000-square-foot design, are moving forward with an updated budget reflecting new design elements and additional programming.

Located on 142 acres at 36716 Main Street, west of Purcellville, the project will include a recreation facility and a variety of outdoor amenities for county residents.

The recreation center will feature meeting spaces, classrooms, administrative offices, a gymnasium, fitness center, multipurpose rooms, a teen center, and an aquatics center with a 37.5-meter competition pool, leisure pool, spa, and spectator seating.

Additional amenities include an indoor running track, wet classrooms, a splash play area, a kitchen, and associated locker rooms.

The site will host up to ten athletic fields, including a mix of natural and synthetic turf, with lighting, scorekeeper and umpire areas, fencing, public restrooms, concessions, and picnic pavilions.

A diamond field complex with four baseball/softball fields, batting cages, shaded bleachers, and restrooms will support both practice and tournament play. The rectangular field complex offers additional natural and

synthetic turf fields, shaded bleachers, and parking.

A sports court area will include twelve pickleball courts, two tennis courts, and a basketball court with evening lighting, alongside playgrounds, walking trails, picnic shelters, and an off-leash dog area. A central multipurpose lawn provides flexible outdoor space, and the site also includes a location reserved for a future library.

The project has evolved significantly since its inception. At the Board Business Meeting on April 15, 2025, the Board approved the addition of teen center space and expanded recreation facility areas, which contributed to a substantial increase in construction costs.

A construction management contract has been awarded to Gilbane Building Company, and Hill International, Inc. is providing construction support services. Three public meetings were held in 2024 to present designs and gather feedback to shape the final plans.

The complex will incorporate existing natural and historic features, including hedgerows, wetlands, stone farm structures, a pond, and the former Washington & Old Dominion railbed. Boardwalks and low-impact crossings will minimize environmental impacts, while historic features will be preserved for educational and interpretive purposes.

Originally budgeted at \$152,786,000 in the FY 2026 Capital Improvement Plan, the project now carries a



Preliminary rendering of the Western Loudoun Recreation Center; design subject to change.

revised estimated cost of \$261,072,000, leaving a gap of \$108,286,000 to complete construction.

The Recreation Complex was expanded by 13,000 square feet, and along with the addition of a teen center, earthwork, and other amenities—this contributed to the higher costs.

Scott Worrest, Deputy Director of Capital Infrastructure said, “The project wasn’t estimated correctly in the first place.”

Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) asked whether the pricing was comparable to other park sites, such as Hal and Berni Hanson Regional Park, which was completed several years ago.

Staff said that although the cost of the Western Loudoun Recreation Complex is significantly higher, the comparison does not account for inflation, rising construction costs, or the additional amenities

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 »

FREE Spring Roof Checkup = *Peace of Mind All Year Long!*



\$1,000 OFF*

Full Roof or Siding Replacement

*Minimum project \$9900. Promotional offers cannot be combined. Sale ends 3/31/26.



- ★ ROOFING
- ★ SIDING
- ★ WINDOWS

- ★ REPAIRS
- ★ DOORS
- ★ GUTTERS

FREE INSPECTIONS








www.pondroofing.com **703.573.8000**

ROBERT DUVALL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Ironically, Duvall's youth was spent just a few miles from where his ancestor, Mareen Duvall first settled in 1652 as an indentured servant and later died in 1696 as a prominent landowner and community leader. The elder Duvall was

a Huguenot from Brittany who fled religious persecution by the French.

Bobby Duvall also had familial ties to General Robert E. Lee, whom he once played in the movie *Gods and Generals*. His mother, Mildred Virginia Hart was a descendant of the Lee family.

As his favorite character, Texas Ranger Captain Augustus McRae said in the *Lonesome Dove* series, "It don't matter where you die, but it matters where you live."

To that end, Bobby Duvall chose to live in rural Virginia, not the traffic-snarled

enclaves of greater Los Angeles. He appreciated what Western Loudoun and Fauquier Counties offered in tranquility and beauty.

Those are assets Loudoun's *Secondhand Lion* would want residents to maintain.

SROS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, CON'T. FROM PAGE 4

A parent asked about SRO involvement at the secondary level, prompting a detailed response on de-escalation. "Since we already have SROs at middle and high schools, what level of involvement have they actually had in helping students de-escalate?" the parent asked.

Lt. Col. Christopher Sawyer, who oversees the program, explained that while behavioral intervention teams are the first line for students in crisis, SROs provide critical support when a situation escalates to immediate safety concerns.

He described the Loudoun County Crisis Intervention Team program's success, noting over the years, taser deployments to take individuals into custody dropped from 44 incidents to just a few per year, demonstrating the effectiveness of trained law enforcement in managing crises safely. He emphasized

the importance of consistency, as SROs build trust with students over time, which is particularly valuable for those with special needs.

A congressional candidate praised SROs as a deterrent and expressed support for federal funding to enhance school safety.

Other parents expressed skepticism, citing past incidents and potential conflicts of interest related to immigration enforcement programs.

Chapman and Sawyer clarified that SROs do not engage in civil immigration enforcement and focus solely on criminal law matters, keeping their roles separate from Adult Detention Center deputies or any ICE-related detainees.

The proceedings included repeated interruptions from a group of residents, while other attendees adhered to procedural guidelines. The moderator

repeatedly urged decorum; but the requests did little to quell the disruptions.

The meeting concluded with a perspective from a student, Joaquim Zudiaga, who had to speak over the loud interruptions to make his point. "My friends and I have always felt safe with SROs," Zudiaga said. "This is not a partisan issue—it's about safety, and safety is a right for everyone."

"SROs have always done their job quickly and effectively, and we should extend that protection to elementary schools as well." Zudiaga emphasized that both SROs and counselors play complementary roles in keeping students safe, and that no child should feel vulnerable in their own school.

When asked what the protocol is in the event of an emergency for schools that do not have school resource officers, Sawyer said the district maintains

"a very robust notification system."

However, he noted that in the absence of an on-site SRO, response times depend on patrol availability and geography. "If there is not an SRO at the school, the response will come from the closest patrol cars or other SROs," Sawyer said. "If there is a shooter at a school, the department is not going to wait for an SRO to arrive. "The response will come from the nearest units."

Response times can vary, particularly for schools in more remote areas, he said. "Our preference, as we look at it and see this gap, would be to have an SRO on site at every LCPS property during the day," Sawyer said.

At the end of the meeting, Chapman invited attendees to stay and ask questions. "We're always looking to strive to be the best that we can be for the community that we serve," he said.

Come Celebrate Easter With Us!

All Nature Declares Him King Of Kings



The Dogwood tree was used to make Christ's cross ... to this day the dogwood blossom retains the shape of the cross AND the blood stains of the Savior.

Ketocin Baptist Church is a welcoming and inclusive congregation dedicated to the study of the Word of God. Join us for the Easter Season.

Palm Sunday - March 29, 10:00 AM

Maundy Thursday - April 2, 7:00 PM

Easter Sunday - April 5, 10:00 AM

ALL ARE WELCOME!

16595 Ketocin Church Road † Purcellville, VA 20132
www.KetocinChurch.com † 703-209-9138

Worship in the Woods

Join us for **Holy Week** and **Easter** at historic

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

Palm Sunday 11 a.m. Liturgy of the Palms, with prayer, praise, dramatic Passion & communion
(March 29)

Maundy Thursday 6 p.m. Light Mediterranean Supper
(April 2) 7 p.m. Foot Washing & Holy Eucharist

Good Friday 5:30 p.m. Outdoor Stations of the Cross
(April 3) 6:00 p.m. Solemn Liturgy of the Passion

Easter Sunday (April 5 at 11 a.m.)

with the Revs. Martha Clark and Deborah Rutter

For more info and directions, or to join us virtually, via Zoom, scan this QR code:



27 Good Shepherd Road, Bluemont, VA

(Just west of the Appalachian Trail in the Village of Pine Grove, Clarke County)

Come as you are. All are welcome!

The sanctuary is always open for prayer and meditation.

www.goodshepherdbluemont.com | 540-252-5825

McCormick named Presidential Scholar candidate

Norah McCormick, a graduating senior at Loudoun Valley High School and the Loudoun Academy of Science, has been named one of more than 5,000 candidates in the 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. The candidates were selected from nearly 3.6 million students expected to graduate from U.S. high schools in 2026.

Inclusion in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is one of the nation's highest honors for graduating seniors. Established in 1964 by Executive Order of the President, the program recognizes students for outstanding academic achievement, leadership, character, and service to school and community.

It was expanded in 1979 to honor students demonstrating exceptional talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts, and again in 2015 to recognize excellence in career and technical education fields. Each year, up to 161 students are ultimately named U.S. Presidential Scholars.

Candidates are identified based on exceptional performance on the SAT or ACT. From that pool, students are invited to apply and are evaluated on their essays, self-assessments, school recommendations, transcripts, and records of leadership and community involvement.

A panel of educators will review submissions this spring and select

Norah with her Blue Andalusian hen named Aster.



approximately 600 semifinalists. The Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed by the President, will then choose the finalists, with Scholars announced by the U.S. Department of Education this summer.

For McCormick, the recognition reflects years of dedication and perseverance.

“Reaching this point took persistence and resilience while balancing two schools, and I’m especially grateful to my family for their constant support,” McCormick said. “I also want to thank my teachers who inspire me every day, especially Dr. White at the AOS and Coach Sweatte at LVHS. I’m honored to be named a U.S. Presidential Scholar candidate.”

If selected as a Scholar, McCormick would receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion, commemorating her achievement and joining the ranks of more than 8,600 students honored by the program since its founding.

The recognition highlights not only McCormick’s academic excellence, but also her leadership, commitment, and promise as one of the nation’s most distinguished graduating seniors.

Bluemont Fair announces call for artists

Organizers of the 56th Annual Bluemont Fair in historic Western Loudoun County, invite artists to submit designs for consideration for this year’s posters and t-shirts—The Bears of Bluemont. Fair Chairs met recently to vote on a theme near and dear to the hearts of the Bluemont community, and this year the winning theme centers around the region’s favorite large mammal, bears.

Living here long before human settlement and part of our daily lives, Western Loudoun’s bears grace the community with their presence along the rugged hiking trails, verdant forests, rolling pastures

and sometimes even neighbors’ backyards. This year’s fair will take place on Sept. 19-20.

Artists are encouraged to interpret this theme as they wish, keeping in mind that all design elements should be suitable for replication on Bluemont Fair’s distinctive poster (14 x 22), t-shirt and other merchandise.

There are no restrictions on what medium can be used, ink, paint, collage, graphic design, etc., and all aesthetics are welcome—retro, modern, realistic, abstract, etc. Artists may submit multiple works.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 >



HOLTZMAN | HOLTZMAN
OIL CORP. | PROPANE

FIREPLACE STORE

SALES. INSTALLATION. SERVICE. REPAIR.
1201 WOLF ROCK DRIVE | PURCELLVILLE, VA 20132

(540) 751-9292

YOUR LOCAL PROPANE AND NFI CERTIFIED FIREPLACE EXPERTS

Stop by our
Grill Cylinder Fill Station today!
\$3.750* Per Gallon Cylinder Fill

*Prices subject to change without notice.



Heating Oil, Clear and Dyed Kerosene delivered straight to you.



HoltzmanCorp.com

NOTICE ASPHALT PAVING

SPRING SPECIAL

15% Off with ad

We are currently paving in your area.

With our crew and equipment close by, we are offering prompt service and reasonable rates to all area residents for a short time. Please call immediately if you are interested in having any asphalt paving done this year.



WE DO:

HOUSE DRIVEWAYS • PARKING LOTS
FARM LANES • LONG LANES • DRIVEWAYS
PRIVATE ROADS • PATCHWORK
NEW HOMES • GRADEWORK • SEAL COATING
BASEWORK • ASPHALT MILLINGS

Maybe you have a bit area you would love to have blacktopped but you can't afford to pave the whole thing right now. We install partial driveways. We can pave an area by your house just big enough to park your vehicles, or we can install as little as one load for you.

Tired of a Dust Bowl in the Summer and a Mud Hole in the Winter? Don't Fuss ... CALL US!

**Free Estimates • Fast Service • Quality Work
Full-Service Asphalt Paving**

Please call John Donohue for a FREE ESTIMATE
(571) 255-9187

1843218

Licensed and Insured

WESTERN LOUDOUN COMPLEX, CON'T. FROM PAGE 17

included in the project.

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) said western Loudoun does not have a recreation center in the area and most people must travel to Leesburg or beyond for those services.

The increase reflects the added teen center and expanded facility size, site constraints, and refinements in

design, as well as updated cost estimates for earthwork, utilities, and site infrastructure.

Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2027, following final approval of major design elements by the Board's Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee. An action item for the project is proposed for the Committee's March 10 meeting.

OPINION: CONVERSATION WITH MOMUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

their request. And that would be plenty. Now, though, the Supervisors have a different political bent and fully fund every penny of the School Board's request without question—and brag about it! 'We've fully funded the schools!' some Supervisors crow. Yeah, with your money.

"Back to today, Chuck. The schools want to increase spending by 5.3% while enrollment is dropping and inflation is only 2.4%. There's another measure, maybe dealing with unionized teachers, who would get 4.0% - 5% Cost of Living increases when inflation could soon be as low as 2%. On top of that they want something called "Step increases" of another 2.5%. It gets worse."

I believed him.

"I heard something from a while back. One year the School System did not spend all the money the Supervisors had funded; a lot remained unspent and that would never do. So, emails, messages and instructions flew out of the fancy School System building to principals: 'You've gotta buy Promethean boards (*interactive white boards that often failed to work, for \$10,000 each.*) It's imperative that we spend all our money!"

"Here's something recent that will make you gag. In Loudoun only 64% of the budget goes to instruction ... compared to 85% in Fairfax's budget. Where does the rest of Loudoun's money go?"

I had an answer: Bloat. Bureaucracy. Administrative overhead. Organizational Theory tells us that bureaucrats' prime goal is growth and the School System follows that dictum with energetic enthusiasm.

"You're right. If I remember correctly, the goddess Athena educated me on a related problem with bureaucracies, especially their leadership. That's in play here. In the case of the schools, the Superintendent would have several constituencies: Administrators. Staff. Teachers. Supervisors. Unions. Employees. Foremost, though, would be other superintendents. Superintendents' psychology causes them

to try to seem superior to their peers."

I get it. By spending \$200 million or more for a new high school, the Superintendent gets to lord it over his peers. Disgusting!

"I don't think you know Aaron Spence, the Superintendent ... even though your tax dollars pay him almost \$500,000 a year. Oops! I forgot. It's DOCTOR Aaron Spence, PhD."

I don't know him but I dislike honorifics. If you read his glib explanations of why the schools need more money, his PhD is probably in the art of casuistry.

"You're probably right. Here's another driver of his spending. It's the idea that salaries need to be increased to keep up with salaries offered not just by Fairfax, but by Arlington and Alexandria. That becomes an upward death spiral. Those have always been tax-and-spend places and if Loudoun decides to spend more, those systems will just increase what they spend.

"It's fair to say that every bad move by the School System is blessed by Spence, so how about these chestnuts: He wants another \$7.5 million to hire 43 more deans and assistant principals. That's \$174,000 each. No wonder you're angry."

That's an understatement. Here's one for you, Momus. The new budget adds 98 new "school based" personnel while enrollment drops. Note that delicate phrase, "school based," implying instruction. How many of those 98 will actually teach students? The cute "school based" term is casuistry at its best, probably used to disguise bureaucratic bloat, and I see it in every explanation Spence uses to justify the money he wants.

"You're right. Loudoun does have good schools, but it overpays for them. Here's an analogy. You want a Mercedes and are willing to pay a Rolls Royce price for it."

That would be stupid!

"And that's what they think voters are."

Charlie Houston and his wife live on a small horse farm just south of Waterford. Formerly a developer of large corporate office buildings, he's now a struggling novelist. He says you should go on Amazon and buy his book "Bad Horsey."

Loudoun County Board honors local legend Asbury Lloyd, Jr.

BY VALERIE CURY

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors honored local legend Asbury Lloyd, Jr. on Feb. 18, passing a resolution recognizing a remarkable community member whose life has been defined by courage, integrity and a lifelong love of baseball.

Lloyd was a member of the Middleburg Braves and pitched over 200 games at what was then known as Halls Park, now Mickie Gordon Memorial Park.

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River), along with Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large), presented the resolution. They noted that Lloyd stood against injustice, served our nation, and passed down the game we all know and love by coaching generations of players.

Born in Philmont, Virginia, on his father's farm, Lloyd has spent 97 years embodying the values of hard work, hon-



wanted me to play.”

“It was exciting to have dad as my coach and my best friend,” she said. “I’m a daddy’s girl.”

Beyond his athletic achievements, Lloyd is a devoted father, a courageous veteran and a pillar of his community. He instilled in his family the lessons he held most dear—that life’s true value lies in commitment and that honesty defines a person.

Lloyd served in the Korean War, where he lost partial hearing. He received a bronze star and was later honored on Capitol Hill with the Ambassador of Peace medal from the South Korean government.

During the ceremony, Regina Lloyd, along with her family and other community members, received the resolution on his behalf. The recognition celebrated not only his contributions to baseball but also his enduring influence on those around him, including his wife, his four daughters and his nephew William “Tex” Lloyd whom he raised.

Larry Lloyd, Regina Lloyd’s cousin, said he played baseball at the field, and would like the county to name Mickie Gordon Memorial Park—Hall Mercer and Mickie Gordon because “that is part of the history of this field.”

As Supervisor TeKrony said, Asbury Lloyd, Jr. is a living example of how one person’s dedication to family, community and country can leave a legacy that inspires all of us.

“This recognition ensures that the story of Asbury Lloyd, Jr.—a life marked by courage, service, and a love for the game—will continue to be celebrated for generations to come,” said TeKrony.

Chair Randall said when she researched

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »



L to R: Regina Lloyd Banks, Chair Phyllis Randall

esty and dedication. A native of Loudoun County, he became an exceptional baseball player, pitching for the Middleburg Braves and throwing numerous no-hitter games that are still remembered in the local sports community.

His passion for the game extended well beyond the field. Lloyd devoted decades to coaching young players, teaching not only the fundamentals of baseball but also the importance of perseverance, teamwork and character.

During the ceremony, Regina Lloyd Banks thanked the Board of Supervisors and said, “It was very very important to recognize dad for baseball. Baseball was his love. Baseball was his heart.” She shared that she played on one of his teams and that her father made her sit on the bench for a season until “I learned to play how he

Loudoun County Travel Training Program

Discover how to confidently navigate Loudoun County using public transit with our Travel Training Program!

Our Program Teaches You How to:

- Plan your trips effectively
- Pay for transit
- Safely get on and off transit
- Take your bike on transit
- Access & use paratransit
- Navigate the Metrorail system

Transit in Loudoun County

Local Bus	Commuter Bus
Paratransit	Metrorail



Start Your Journey Today!

loudoun.gov/TransitTraining



NETT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

of the court's one-week advance filing requirement.

Defense attorneys told the court the limited notice made it difficult to prepare responses. Olsen apologized for the late filing, explaining that he had been involved in a multi-day jury trial in another district.

VALLEY COMMERCE CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

proximity to residential uses," the memorandum states.

County Senior Legislative Land Use Planner and Project Manager Rachael Iwanczuk said the proposal could affect surrounding neighborhoods and that those impacts are not sufficiently mitigated. She also noted that the requested Zoning Modification could limit offsite residential water availability.

During the Commission's July 29, 2025, public hearing, 22 speakers addressed the application. While the staff report listed 13 in support and nine opposed, the actual count at the hearing was reversed: 13 opposed and nine in favor.

The applicant, JK Land Holdings, has committed 300,000 square feet of the development to warehouse or storage use space to reduce overall water usage. They have also pledged to monitor off-site wells for up to 24 months and implement a mitigation plan if monitoring indicates any adverse effects. Data Center use is professed out.

Commissioner Madireddy asked about potential impacts to an archaeological site. Iwanczuk said the applicant has increased tree conservation in the northeast portion of the site, to protect wildlife—specifically the threatened loggerhead shrike—and avoid the archaeological area in the event graves are discovered.

The applicant is committed to a 60-foot-wide reforestation in that area, and to researching the identities of early property owners should graves be found.

Chair Keirce said that if the property were developed by-right with 39 homes, there would be no oversight of water usage, and residents could remove trees on their property, affecting wildlife habitat.

Michael Romeo, senior land use planner with Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh representing JK Land Holdings, said the developer has reduced building heights to 32 feet in the west and 40 feet in the east, near Wright Farm, with the closest home in the neighborhood set back 358 feet from the project.

He also said the applicant has committed to rural economy uses, establishing a minimum of 5,000 square feet for such

Both men appeared before Chief Circuit Court Judge Douglas L. Fleming Jr. in Loudoun County Circuit Court on Feb. 12 to address the motion. During the hearing, Olsen requested that a trial date be set even if the joinder was not immediately approved, operating under the assumption that the motion would be granted at the next hearing. Fleming denied that

activities.

In addition, the applicant has agreed to add a Mayfair left-turn lane for northbound traffic on Purcellville Road and to contribute \$500,000 toward the Hirst Road, Hatcher Avenue, and Purcellville Road intersection. The primary entrance would be from the southern entrance.

Romeo said the proffers include mitigation measures if off-site wells are impacted, including drilling another well, drilling deeper wells, or reducing production from existing wells.

A letter from Clayton Tock of Urban Ltd. noted mitigation would not be required if impacts were caused by other sources, like residential pumping or drought.

Romeo said effluent will be treated in an on-site wastewater treatment facility that includes a system of treatment tanks designed to allow the effluent to settle and be aerobically treated before being conveyed to drain fields under state regulation.

The Valley Commerce Center would be served by a private waterworks system designed to collect, treat, store, and distribute water for safe drinking and sanitation, he said.

The system would draw from a primary well with a maximum yield of 74,880 gallons per day, or 52 gallons per minute—and a back up well producing 15,000-20,000 gallons per day if needed.

Romeo noted that Wright Farm borders the site and that a distant industrial development on St. Francis Court is visible in winter, citing it as an example of existing industrial activity in the area. He also pointed out that there are three corners near the property that are industrial.

If the Northern Collector Road section were to be omitted, the Valley Commerce Center plan would expand the reforestation area to 60 feet, said Romeo.

Jamie Emery, with Emery & Garrett Groundwater Investigations, said the developer will conduct water-level monitoring for two years, with nearby residents able to track the results. He added that the state will oversee the process and that multiple safeguards would be in place.

Monitoring has shown that the project would not impact nearby Town of

request, leaving the joinder question pending until Feb. 19.

On Feb. 19, Fraser's attorney, John Boneta, argued in court filings that there is insufficient evidence showing Fraser committed any criminal acts. He also noted that the four separate felony charges against Nett are unrelated to Fraser, reinforcing his position that the cases

Purcellville wells, including the Forbes Well and Town Well #1—also confirmed by the Town's hydrologist.

Commissioner Barnes said he is familiar with the area from when he picked up his grandchildren at school and expressed concern about traffic on the two-lane road, near an elementary school and a high school. "I don't think they have mitigated that," he said. The proposal is estimated to generate 3,086 weekly trips.

Charles Yudd, Director of Land Planning and Development for JK Land Holdings, LLC, said, "We don't believe there are any other outstanding transportation issues," citing a protected turn lane into Mayfair on Purcellville Road and a proposed right-in, right-out entrance if the North Collector Road would be connected.

His comments came amid concerns about the traffic that could be generated by the project's 986,000 square feet of industrial space. Yudd also serves on the Board of Loudoun Water and previously held the position of Loudoun County's Deputy County Administrator until his retirement in 2023.

After Commissioner Combs asked about the water usage of 39 by-right homes versus the industrial proposal, Emery said the average homeowner uses 400 to 500 gallons per day. Irrigation systems, he added, "throw that entire equation off the guardrail," noting that one system could use 10 gallons per minute for four or five hours. "If you put two or three people together and you are pumping 30 gallons a minute for five or six hours, the equation is gone," because it is not regulated.

Yudd said water usage can vary widely within the flex category. A bounce house facility or a brewery might use more water, while a contractor's office primarily for storage might use less. "The metric for flex equates to roughly .235 gallons per square foot per day—we would have to be prepared to regulate that and say no to certain tenants," he said.

At the end of the meeting, Yudd said the applicant could remove development from the tree-save area, while seeking flexibility to recoup that density elsewhere.

Commissioner Miller moved to approve the project, saying, "I have long supported

should be tried separately to avoid potential prejudice.

Fleming said the charges "contemplate" joinder.

Both the bid-rigging and fraud cases for Nett and Fraser are currently scheduled for trial Dec. 7. Nett's separate trial on the four felony counts involving alleged improper database access is set for Oct. 26.

this project largely because of its need in the County," and noted that only about one-third of the proposed industrial development would be visible from the road.

Commissioner Frank said, "This property is on the edge of Town in the JLMA and should serve as a transition to lower density." She added it is still not aligned with the 2019 Plan policies or uses, and that the scale isn't appropriate for its location.

Because the property is in the JLMA, even if the County approves a rezoning, the Town of Purcellville must still agree before it could move forward.

Town planners noted in a June 27, 2025, memo that the proposed development "remains fundamentally incompatible with both the Loudoun County General Plan and the Purcellville Comprehensive Plan, an incompatibility that was a central factor in the Town Council's denial of the annexation request."

"The Town's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, 'Plan Purcellville,' supports the JLMA Rural designation as a mix of low-density residential uses and limited agriculture-supportive businesses in a rural setting distinct from the Town's development pattern," the memo states.

"Based on these guidelines, the Town's Planning and Engineering Departments cannot support approval of the Valley Commerce Center."

The County's 2019 General Plan also emphasizes preserving rural character, farmland, and green space, encourages Town-County cooperation, and recommends maintaining greenbelts and view corridors at Purcellville's entrances.

Speaking about the applicant's open house, Chair Keirce said, "There wasn't a huge ground swell [saying], 'We don't want this.'" He said he heard that "some residents were unhappy the Town did not annex the property, while some council members support the project—overall community opinion is mixed."

Public opposition has been extensive over the years, and on Jan. 8, 2025, four Purcellville Town Council members voted against continuing the annexation process.

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

walking trail, without any damage to my camera, my knees—or other significant body parts—or at least most of my manly ego.

And I thoroughly enjoyed the experience—the downstream momentum of such an impressive amount of water was a phenomenon I'd heard described for the past couple of decades by friends—'Oh, you just have to see it.'

Well, they were right. It bears witnessing, at least once in a lifetime. I don't believe with my multiple medical issues that I'll ever partake in any "real" rock climbing, much less kayaking at Great Falls Park or anywhere else, for that matter.

Seeing pictures of these activities is enough to make my head spin. I would like, though, on my next visit—I hope I'm not being too presumptuous—to at least cover whatever other fairly pedestrian (I wanted to say "easy") walking trails they have to offer, and capture those views I'm able to find.

And, now, having reached the summit of our monthly tale to review, as a collective band of humanity (yes, this includes you)—just how far is this wonderful place from my own doorstep?

Yeah, I know. It's like, 20 miles. So, next time you bump into me—maybe at the Lincoln Post Office, or downtown Leesburg, or maybe in some public park a bit closer to home than that of today's story—feel free to encourage me to get back to that spot on the Potomac River, with the dramatic drop in elevation, and massive water flow over those jagged rocks.

I'll take it as very positive feedback. And, I don't normally do this, but since you've been so supportive, maybe you can even come along, and enjoy one of these experiences "in the flesh."

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

neighborhood factors like poverty rate, proximity to transit, parks, community amenities, etc.

The donated land would be assessed and valued at an equivalent amount to the required number of ADUs. If the land is valued at less than the vertical construction cost of ADUs, a cash contribution will be required.

The third ZOAM would amend certain zoning districts to allow residential uses in addition to office and/or commercial uses. Staff recommended reviewing Commercial Center - Neighborhood Center, Commercial Center - Small Regional Center, Commercial Center-Community Center, and Office Park zoning districts to see if multi-family dwellings could be allowed in these areas.

Staff recommended finding a consultant who would identify two to five underutilized buildings that would be the best candidates for conversion from office to residential.

"With an understanding of the location of the building and the potential costs of conversions, staff could research policies/incentives that could potentially help convert those uses from office to residential and bring them back to the Board for consideration," the staff report said.

BOS PRESSES RICHMOND, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

With crossover behind them, county officials must pivot quickly from bill-by-bill advocacy to budget negotiations and conference committee work where language differences are resolved.

Freeman warned supervisors that a number of measures could be handled on a "rocket docket" if their language matches across chambers, but several others, including faith-and-housing and by-right transit-oriented development bills, may head to conference where final text will be negotiated.

Several bills Loudoun supports, child-care expansion, school meal proposals, targeted retirement benefits for local responders, are moving and tracked in the staff packet; several high-impact bills related to energy costs, data centers and housing have either been delayed, converted into budget items, or remain contested; and the season's next act—budget amendments and conference committee deals—will likely determine whether county priorities are funded or further delayed.

The staff report asks the Board to remain engaged and promises follow-up analyses: "Staff will continue to evaluate fiscal impacts ... and will evaluate applicable budget amendments once they are made public."

With both the calendar and stakes compressed, supervisors urged continued vigilance. As Freeman closed his update, he thanked the Board for its attention to a session where "we continue to lobby the conferees both in the House and the Senate."

Loudoun's next window to influence outcomes will be in Richmond's budget negotiations and the conference rooms where final compromises are made.

SHOP AND SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS AND NEIGHBORS

Lydia Clark (M) 732-309-2298 lydiasellsloudoun@gmail.com www.lydiasellsloudoun.com LONG & FOSTER REAL ESTATE Long & Foster Realtors® 100B Purcellville Gateway Dr Purcellville, VA 20132 MRP Military Relocation Professional

Your Virginia Pets R My Pets Daily Dog Walks & In-Home Vacation Pet Care Joe Pillera (703) 867-7158 virginiapets@comcast.net yourvirginiapetsmypets.com Fully Insured, Bonded and Licensed

COMPUTER REPAIR SERVICES PC Installations Network Setups Printer Servicing Virus Removal Data Recovery We come to you! POTTERFIELD IT SOLUTIONS 703-895-9300 potterfieldit.com LOUDOUN'S IT GUY

Tax Resolution Services Tax Season is almost here We Are The Key To Solving Your IRS Debts Individual and Business Tax Returns Offer in Compromise Wage Garnishment Back Levy & IRS Liens Installment Agreement Back Tax Returns Business and Payroll Innocent Spouse Penalty Abatement Seema Nayyar MBA, CPA 540-338-3967 seema@accuratetaxpc.com www.accuratetaxpc.com 170 W. Main St., #101, Purcellville, VA 20132

SPACE AVAILABLE Email for advertising info: advertise@blueridgeleader.com

AQS CONTRACTING AMERICAN QUALITY STEEL 571-505-5565 WWW.AQSCONTRACTING.COM Bathrooms Basements Kitchens Decks Additions Structural Repairs Interior/Exterior Home Repairs Licensed Insured Bonded

The Blue Ridge Leader is pledged to the letter and spirit of Virginia's and HUD's Equal Opportunity Housing Policies. Virginia's Fair Housing Law makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status and handicap. This newspaper will not knowingly accept advertising for real estate that violates the Fair Housing Law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in the paper are available on an equal housing opportunity basis. For more information about Virginia's Fair Housing Law, or to file a Fair Housing complaint, call the Virginia Fair Housing Office at 804.376.8530; toll-free 888.551.3247; for the hearing impaired: 804.527.4290; email - fair housing@dpor.virginia.gov; web: www.fairhousing.vipnet.org.

RONNIE FOX, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

having with her mower,” he recalls. “That got me thinking. I wondered if other people were dealing with the same thing. So I started Sharp Blades—and I come to you.”

That simple but powerful concept—bringing repair services directly to customers—took off immediately. Instead of hauling heavy equipment to a shop, homeowners and farmers could rely on Fox to arrive at their homes, farms, or Homeowners Associations, ready to work. Each evening, he calls customers to confirm appointments and carefully maps out his next day’s route. Whether the homeowner is present or not, the job gets done.

Fox repairs walk-behind lawn mowers, zero-turn mowers, tractors, generators, snow blowers, and small four-cycle gas and diesel engines. He sharpens hand tools, mower blades, and clippers. If it has a small engine and needs attention, chances are Ronnie can fix it.

Over the years, his work has taken him to some unusual places. One memorable job involved repairing a deicer at Leesburg Executive Airport. On another occasion, he worked on a specialized machine used to move small planes around the airport. “That was definitely different from a lawn mower,” he says with a smile.

Homeowners associations often invite him to community gatherings, where residents line up with equipment in tow. One especially busy day brought 65 lawn mowers to his temporary workstation. “That day I had two people helping me,” Fox recalls. “But most of the time, it’s just me.”

Of course, not every surprise involves machinery. “Black snakes seem to love engines,” he says with a laugh. More than once, he has lifted a mower hood only to find

a long, coiled visitor enjoying the warmth. Chipmunks, too, have made homes inside equipment left sitting too long. “You never quite know what you’re going to find,” he says. “That’s part of the adventure.”

There have been frantic calls as well. One spring day, a customer insisted it was an emergency—the mower wouldn’t start. When Fox arrived, he quickly discovered a large hole on the left side of the mower; the engine had blown completely. The owner had no idea. Other times, the solution is far simpler. “Sometimes they just need gas—without even realizing it,” Fox says. “So I carry gas in my truck.”

What he treasures most, however, isn’t the variety of engines or even the independence of setting his own schedule. It’s the people and the countryside. “It’s a job for someone who likes working outdoors, meeting great people, and seeing the beautiful landscape,” he says. “Spring, summer, and fall are especially busy, and farms need help year-round. You build relationships over time.”

As Ronnie and Kim prepare for their move, Loudoun says goodbye not just to a business owner, but to a neighbor and problem-solver who has quietly kept the county running for years.

Sharp Blades is now for sale, offering a unique opportunity for someone who values independence, hard work, and community connection. For the right person, it is more than a business—it is a trusted name and a route already well traveled.

Ronnie Fox can be reached at 540-905-9006 for more information.

He may be heading south, but the engines he revived—and the community he served—will continue humming across Loudoun County for years to come.

OPINION: STOP TEACHING KIDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Here’s a radical idea: the opposite of suicide is not simply the absence of death. It is the presence of a life worth living.

A life with purpose. A life with belonging. A life where struggle is expected, not feared—and where young people are equipped with tools, mentors, and meaning that help them move through pain instead of being defined by it.

Imagine if school programs spent as much time teaching perseverance as they do teaching warning signs. Imagine if students learned how to set goals, serve others, build discipline, repair relationships, and find purpose beyond themselves. Imagine if we told them, over and over, “You are stronger than you think, and you are capable of growing through hard things.”

OPINION

That message doesn’t ignore suffering. It puts suffering in context. Prevention matters. But prevention without aspiration is hollow. Risk awareness without strength-building is incomplete. If all we do is train kids to avoid falling apart, we shouldn’t be surprised when they don’t know how to stand tall.

We need a new balance in how we talk about mental health with young people. One that still makes room for counseling, crisis lines, and clinical care when needed—but that is grounded first in the belief that children are not breakable objects to be protected from life. They are developing adults who must be prepared for life.

Language shapes identity. Identity shapes behavior. Behavior shapes outcomes.

If we constantly tell kids they are at risk, they will live cautiously, anxiously, and unsure of their own capacity. If we tell them they are capable, needed, and able to grow through adversity, they are far more likely to rise to meet the challenges ahead.

Let’s stop teaching kids to see themselves as problems to be managed.

Let’s start teaching them how to build lives so full of meaning, connection, and purpose that despair has less room to take hold.

That isn’t naïve. It’s necessary.

Ken Falke, is a 21-year veteran of the US Navy Special Operations Explosive Ordnance Disposal community. Falke is chairman and founder of Boulder Crest Foundation, an organization focused on the teachings of posttraumatic growth. He is also the author of “Struggle Well: Thriving in the Aftermath of Trauma” and “Lead Well: 10 Steps to Successful and Sustainable Leadership.”

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

from different perspectives. They learn that not everyone’s journey is the same, and that their actions can make a real difference.

- **For teens**, holding a part-time job or mentoring younger kids teaches time management, accountability, and humility. Earning their own spending money or giving back through service also helps them understand that effort has value, and that everyone has something to contribute.

Research shows that young people who volunteer or work part-time in high school are more grounded, resilient, and successful later in life. They develop a sense of gratitude for what they have, and a deeper understanding of the challenges

others face. These experiences help children become more empathetic and less entitled—qualities that matter far more than material wealth.

Perspective Taking and Empathy: The Heart of the Two-Marshmallow Lesson

Helping children see the world through other people’s eyes is one of the greatest gifts we can give. When kids interact with people from different backgrounds, listen to stories unlike their own, and serve others, they learn perspective-taking and empathy skills that support them in every aspect of life. These are the qualities that help children become “two-marshmallow” adults: patient, grateful, and compassionate, able to wait for what matters and to give to others along the way.

Avoiding the Trap of Comparison

In a high-achieving area like Loudoun County, it’s easy to fall into the trap of comparison—who has what, who goes where, who achieves the most. Parents can help by focusing on values, effort, and growth, rather than status or possessions. Asking “What did you learn?” or “What felt meaningful about that experience?” helps children develop a stable sense of self-worth, grounded in who they are, not what they own.

What “Two Marshmallows” Really Means

Raising a two-marshmallow kid isn’t about deprivation or guilt. It’s about helping children—no matter their circumstances—develop inner strength, perspective, and gratitude. When kids

learn to delay gratification, give back, and work toward their goals, they don’t just earn two marshmallows—they become adults who know when one is enough, and who look for ways to share what they have with others.

Whether your family has a lot, a little, or something in between, the lessons of patience, empathy, and service are for everyone. Together, as a community, we can help our children grow into thoughtful, resilient, and generous adults—ready to make a difference in the world.

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

Lawn Mower, Small Tractors & Bushogs
Blade Sharpening & Maintenance
Oil Changes | Greasing | Repairs

Sharp Blades

We Come to You!

Ronnie Fox
540 338-3408
www.sharp-blades.com



Northern Virginia's top landscape material provider

MULCH TOPSOIL STONE

703-450-4758

Pick Up or Delivery

www.vagroundcovers.com
21585 Cascades Pkwy, Sterling



MARY WISKER
REALTOR®, ABR/SFR
Multi-Million Dollar Producer
Licensed in VA & DC
508 E. Market St.
Leesburg VA 20176

Cell: 703-577-6015
Office: 703-777-2900
Mary.Wisker@LNF.com
www.MaryWisker.com

LONG & FOSTER **Forbes**



NORTH'S TREE LANDSCAPING MASONRY

Seasoned Experience for Every Season

Decking • Driveways • Patios
Tree Work • Culvert Pipe Installation



Brian North 540-533-8092
NorthTreeAndMasonry.com
BNorth1883@yahoo.com

Free Estimates – Licensed & Insured – Angie's List Member – Member BBB

LOUDOUN COUNTY MILLING

Feeding Loudoun County Over 100 Years!

HAY • STRAW • FENCING

Bulk Mulch • Top Soil • Sands • Gravels
Landscaping Stone • Erosion Control
Culverts, etc.



540-338-7161 **POULINGRAIN**
www.loudounmillingfeeds.com

House Calls Contracting LLC

From the design stage of remodeling, or room addition, to the finished product all in one company.



If you don't like something we did, **tell us.**
If you do like what we did, **tell your friends.**

Will McCool, Owner/Master Plumber
703-932-2898
www.HouseCallsContracting.com
HCCLLC2@gmail.com
Va. Class A License #2705170117 • Bonded, Insured

SPACE AVAILABLE

Email for advertising info:
advertise@blueridgeleader.com

Business and Residential IT Support and Emergency Services

15 Years of IT Excellence



Call Nigel

571-209-8250
nigel@premiercomputertechnologies.com



Erie Insurance®

Treakle Insurance Agency Inc
Darin Treakle

Auto • Home • Business • Life
8363 W Main St, PO Box 121, Marshall, VA 20116-0000
540-364-1853 • Fax 540-364-4210
darin@treakleinsurance.com

S&S Handyman Services

No Job too Big or too Small, We Handle Them All!

Kitchen and Bath Remodeling • Deck Maintenance
Plumbing • Electrical • Tile • Drywall • Painting • Roofing • Snow Removal

AFTER HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICES
540.683.0470
yourhandymanservice1@gmail.com

FREE ESTIMATES LICENSED & INSURED

LUCKETTS EXCAVATING INC

We specialize in pond/lake installation & repair, equestrian riding arenas, gravel road/driveway installation & repair, land clearing, grading, pad sites, basement dig outs, and more.

703-443-0039 | LuckettsExcavating.com

LOCAL | AWARD-WINNING | LICENSED | INSURED



AESTAR

AGILE EVENING STAR HOME CARE

24/7 Home Care

SENIORS • SPECIAL NEEDS • DISABLED

Personalized Care For Your Needs

571-599-6570 • Info@AestarHomeCare.com
AestarHomeCare.com

Flynn's Lawn Maintenance



"Bret Flynn lawn care is outstanding. This guy is a hard worker and does it right the first time." *Charlie S.*

General Yard Clean-up, Mowing, Mulching, Weedeating, Bush Trimming, Garden Tilling and more

Bret Flynn, Owner
(703) 727-9826

Licensed & Insured

Mark Malan (540) 751-8456



30 Years of Experience
Licensed/Insured
FREE ESTIMATES

Gravel Driveway/Road Installation, Maintenance & Repair - Excavating - Bridges
Erosion Control - Pond Installation & Repairs - Land Clearing & Grading (Tree Removal)
Storm Damage Repair & Clean Up

www.avalancheexcavating.com
avalancheexcavatingllc@gmail.com

Serving Purcellville, Round Hill, Leesburg & Middleburg

Use Our Magic Cleaning Touch!

- Residential/Office
- Move-in/Move-out
- Organizing
- Carpet cleaning



R&D CLEANING SERVICE LLC
(703) 303-1364

Excellent references!
Courteous, reliable, certified, bonded and insured.

DEMOCRATS HOLD HEARING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

saying the “level of corruption is just out of control” and calling for stronger safeguards.

Local affordability issues were raised as well. Subramanyam outlined legislation he introduced to create tax-advantaged savings accounts for first-time homebuyers, noting, “That seems to be one of the biggest barriers” to homeownership for many residents.

He also addressed the regional impact of federal workforce changes, particularly in Northern Virginia, where many constituents rely on stable government employment. Ensuring efficient and transparent government operations, he said, is critical for the region’s economy and for services residents depend on.

The hearing concluded after several hours of testimony and questioning. Members said the session was part of ongoing oversight efforts examining federal workforce changes and their effects on government services, and indicated that additional hearings and inquiries are expected in the weeks ahead.

BLUEMONT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

The main criteria is that the design be eye-catching and unique, capturing both this year’s theme—bears— and evocative of Bluemont and the Western Loudoun region.

Art must be submitted by Saturday, May 9. Submissions can be sent via email to Chair@BluemontFair.org with the subject line: Bluemont Fair Art Submission. Additionally, designs can be sent via mail to Bluemont Fair Poster Competition, P.O. Box 217, Bluemont, Va, 20135.

Individuals requesting return of their submission should also include a self-addressed, stamped mailer. For more information call 540-554-2367 or email Chair@BluemontFair.org.

For more information about the fair, including past designs, please visit www.BluemontFair.org or the fair Instagram account at @bluemontfair.

LOUDOUN HONORS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

the Middleburg Braves and what they called Negro teams back then “it speaks to the spirit of people no matter what you are going through what hardships what trials you are going through—there was joy to be found in the community.

“There was joy to be found in the game. There was joy to be found in one another. And that is something to be said. It keeps people going forward and so many times that the people who tell history don’t always know all the history and so it is important for us to recognize these historic moments and these historic people locally.”

Randall concluded, “It’s a blessing to have your dad still with us.”

YOU NAILED IT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For fans across the region—including many in Loudoun County who regularly travel into Washington for games—the message was clear—this project is no longer theoretical. It is advancing on a defined timeline with visible progress already underway.

Drye, a partner and director of business development for HKS’s sports practice, the architectural firm leading the stadium’s design, has been closely involved in shaping the stadium’s vision. As moderator, he steered the conversation toward design, atmosphere and fan experience, underscoring HKS’s role in creating a venue that feels uniquely Washington while delivering a one-of-a-kind NFL environment.

Mayor Bowser made it clear that before renderings, rooflines or game-day atmosphere, there was one critical first step. “Our number one priority... is to get control of the land, and it’s something that we have been working on for my entire 10 years—180 acres,” she said, referring to the RFK campus. Allowing the site to sit idle, she argued, was not an option. “For that land to continue to be blighted, it would be a disservice to our community.”

Bringing the Commanders back to the site, she explained, fits into a broader push to position Washington as a premier sports city. “People thought I was crazy. Maybe still do,” she said of declaring Washington, D.C. the sports capital. But with championships and major events already hosted—and the NFL Draft and a Super Bowl ahead—she suggested the city has earned that distinction.

When Bowser first viewed the stadium renderings, she said she deliberately kept her reaction measured, asking questions about neighborhood impact, functionality and architectural compatibility. Then she delivered her conclusion: “You nailed it!” She praised the design for balancing legacy and innovation. “It harkened to its past, but it was very forward looking ... It is respectful of the city’s architecture, and it stands on its own.”

For President of the Washington Commanders Mark Clouse, the vision centers squarely on the fan experience. “We wanted the fiercest place to play football in the NFL. We want teams to be afraid to come to the stadium to play the Commanders—the

loudest stadium,” he said. At the same time, the building must reflect the character of the nation’s capital. “We still needed to bring this incredible beauty that is everywhere in the city ... and we needed to fit into that.”



Mayor Muriel Bowser



Mike Clouse, President Washington Commanders.

Clouse emphasized that tangible progress is already visible. “If you were paying attention, you will see that the old RFK is now come down to ground level, and we’re beginning to really prep the site ... staying on a very, very tight timeline.” The organization is operating with a disciplined schedule, he added. “I can show you literally a weekly timeline from now until opening that stadium, and every week there are deliverables.”

One of the most discussed elements of the project is the stadium roof, which will allow year-round use. Clouse acknowledged that while there was early urging from the mayor on that feature, he has come to see its broader impact.

“One of the things I’ve really come to appreciate is what the roof not only enables ... but it also allows us to employ people at the stadium year-round. So we’re actually giving people careers,” said Clouse. Instead of a venue active only on game days and a handful of summer concerts, the

goal is a destination that hosts events throughout the year.

Bowser underscored that urgency and accountability have defined the partnership from the outset. Recalling an early conversation with ownership, she said, “If you throw down with me, I’ll throw down with you. And what that means is, if you’re all in, I’m all in.”



Mike Drye, Partner & Office Director HKS Architecture.

Timelines, she stressed, were not flexible. “If this is the date we have to meet, this is the date we have to meet, because I have an expiration date.” Even with political transitions inevitable, she said the project is being structured to be handed off “in very good shape,” with professionals in place to see it through.

Over the next year, fans can expect to see the structure begin to rise, additional renderings released—including views inside the bowl—and steady progress toward the 2030 opening. The team is also preparing to host the NFL Draft in 2027, another step in reinforcing Washington’s status on the national sports stage.

Still, amid construction schedules and civic strategy, both leaders returned to what ultimately matters most to supporters. “Winning makes everything better,” Bowser said with a smile.

For Loudoun County readers who have followed the Commanders through decades, the takeaway is straightforward—the stadium is moving forward, leadership is aligned, and the ambition is to deliver a home-field advantage worthy of the nation’s capital. As steel begins to rise at RFK, so does anticipation for a new era of Commanders football.

Bisnow hosts local panels on projects and trends shaping commercial real estate.

Naturally Beautiful by Design

Thoughtfully designed landscapes that complement your land and flourish naturally.

Call us at 540.338.7190 for a free design consultation.

Plan to come see our display at the Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival, April 18-19.



540.338.7190

200 East Main Street, Purcellville
wildwoodlandscape.com

DESIGN • BUILD • MAINTAIN

LAWN & LANDSCAPE TIPS FOR MARCH

Direct sow cold-hardy vegetables outdoors

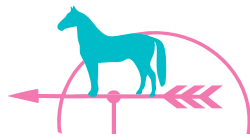
Apply pre-emergent weed control to lawns

Refresh mulch around trees and garden beds





Sam Fisher
Principal Broker, Realtor®
Bluemont Resident
Onthemarketwithsam@gmail.com



On The Market... *with Sam*



Curt Schaber
Realtor®
Round Hill Resident
Schabercurt@yahoo.com



Under Contract – Leesburg



Just Sold – Lovettsville



Recently Sold – Haymarket

“ I cannot imagine a more dedicated team than Sam & Curt. I had the most amazing support from both of them and absolutely love my home. – Jeanette, Purcellville ”



For Sale – Historic Wheatland, Purcellville

“ Curt and Sam are the best—guiding us through two very complicated moves with incredible expertise and dedication. – Cat & Andy, Culpeper, Virginia ”



Just Sold – McLean

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND IS WAITING!
Find your next furry family member with Humane Society of Loudoun County!



Coming Soon – Leesburg

On The Market Properties



KNOW THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE MARKET

On the Market Properties brings a people-first approach shaped by nearly **30 years of experience**. Sam leads each client relationship with clarity and steady guidance, helping clients feel informed, supported, and never rushed. Partnering with her brother, **Curt**, whose knack for country real estate and laser focus on every detail, complements Sam's leadership, guiding clients through every step. Their experience spans **in-town historic homes, large farms, vineyards, distinctive community residences, condos, and townhomes**, supported by their **personal team—including stager, personal organizer, contractors, lenders, title professionals, and movers**. They welcome your whole family, including dogs, horses, and cats!

703-408-4261

www.OnTheMarketLoudoun.com

On The Market Properties – Bluemont, VA

Licensed in the Commonwealth of VA