

“Let’s Keep Purcellville Charming—It’s Called La Dolce Vita”—Pasquale DiBari

BY VALERIE CURY

After two unsuccessful attempts to annex the property into the Town of Purcellville—first by a previous owner and currently by applicant Chuck Kuhn—the proposed Valley Commerce Center is now under Loudoun County review. The 117.07-acre project at 17110 Purcellville Road is within the Purcellville Joint Land Management Area just outside town limits and seeks to rezone the site from JLMA-3 to Planned Development-Industrial Park (PD-IP). The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on April 15.

The applicant has reduced the square footage from earlier plans by 288,892 square feet, bringing the project to 986,000 square feet. Revised plans lower building heights to 32 feet on the western portion of the site and 40 feet on the eastern side. The proposal includes a 358-foot setback from the nearest home and a 60-foot-wide reforestation buffer.

The applicant has designated 300,000

square feet—approximately 30% of the project—for warehouse or storage uses, a change intended to reduce water demand. Plans also call for a private water system producing up to 74,880 gallons per day, although the state will limit approved withdrawals to 43,680 gallons per day. That supply could be supplemented by a secondary well generating 15,000 to 20,000 gallons per day, along with on-site wastewater treatment.

To address concerns about groundwater, the developer has proposed a 24-month monitoring program for

nearby wells, along with mitigation measures if impacts are detected. Additional proffers include a northbound left-turn lane into Mayfair and a \$500,000 contribution toward improvements at the intersection of Hirst Road, Hatcher Avenue, and Purcellville Road. The development is projected to generate 3,086 weekly vehicle trips.

The applicant is also requesting a zoning modification (ZMOD) to eliminate certain road, water and wastewater standards.

The site is bordered by established



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residential communities, including Wright Farm to the east and Chestnut Hills to the northwest. Across Purcellville

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Purcellville Farmers Market Unveils Vibrant 2026 Season on Main Street

The Purcellville Farmers Market is gearing up for an exciting and refreshed 2026 season, kicking off Saturday, May 9. The market will take place every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., bringing a lively and welcoming marketplace experience to the heart of the community.

Shoppers can look forward to a dynamic selection of locally grown fruits and vegetables, premium meats, and freshly baked goods—all sourced from dedicated regional farmers and artisans. The market’s thoughtfully curated lineup ensures a high-quality,

enjoyable experience for every visitor, whether they’re stocking up for the week or simply soaking in the atmosphere.

This season marks a major step forward as the market moves to a new, highly visible location at the Town Lot on the corner of Hatcher Avenue and Main Street. With easier access, and a central presence in town, the new site makes it more convenient than ever to stop by and be part of the Saturday morning tradition.

Adding even more energy to the market, guests will enjoy live music each

week from talented local musicians, creating a festive, family-friendly environment that goes beyond shopping—it’s a full community experience.

Silas Redd, Market Planner and owner of Nostalgia Boutique and Mister on Main, shared his excitement for the season ahead, “This move opens the door for an even more vibrant and connected market experience. We’re creating a space where people can gather, discover incredible local products, and truly enjoy their Saturday mornings. It’s about celebrating our community,

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Vice Mayor Ben Nett Verdict in Recall Effort: VINDICATED. No Removal From Office.



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The photo of the Middle School Solar Team from Makersmiths, Inc. that won first place in the middle school solar division at the Virginia State KidWind Challenge at JMU on April 11, was taken by Brian Jo, father of one of the team members. From left to right: Rowen Artz, Masha Nizheberskaya, Nick Burrus and Liam Jo.

Makersmiths 2026 KidWind Teams Come Home Winners

On April 11, five Makersmiths, Inc. KidWind teams competed in both the wind and solar events at the KidWind Virginia State Challenge at James Madison University. The Middle school solar team (called Error 404: Team Not Found) came in first place in their grade division and will go on to the KidWind Worlds Challenge at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin May 16-20.

Middle School solar team member Masha Nizheberskaya said, "This year we had an idea that, even halfway through our working sessions to the competition date, seemed kind of unfathomable. We wanted to create a solar home, complete with a working shower and electricity, in a landscape that has a lake and is off-the-grid.

"Our objectives were to filter lake water in stages to produce clean drinking water for the family living in the solar home. A solar-powered pump pushes water through a three-stage filtration process: mesh filter, carbon cleansing and UV lighting. After the water moves through the filters, it advances into a water tower container.

"We worked really hard to get this together and working, and we learned so much. I designed, soldered, and wired 3 PCBs and can easily breadboard their circuits. During the awards ceremony, we just wanted to get at least 3rd place, for the sake of knowing we placed, because we worked so hard to make the unfathomable

idea actually happen."

Other Makersmiths winning teams were the high school solar team (called Salamander 6) that tied for second place, the high school wind team (called the Cardinal Directions) came in third place, and the middle school wind team (called Microsoft Wind Support) came in third place.

Although the elementary wind team (called the Hurricanes) did not place at the state level, the team won first place in the Northern Virginia Regional Challenge at George Mason University's Potomac Science Center in Woodbridge on March 17.

While participating in a KidWind initiative, KidWind teams learn about physics, engineering, environmental science and green energy initiatives as they:

- Conduct background research, plan and build an innovative and functional turbine or solar project that will produce power.
- Test their team's turbine or solar project and calculate its power output to improve its design.
- Compete in challenges that include showcasing their projects, completing a knowledge quiz and explaining their projects to judges that are energy experts, science educators and energy industry representatives.

To learn more about this STEM initiative that teaches youth about renewable energies, visit www.kidwind.org.

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BOS Forward Leesburg Compressor Station SPEX to Business Meeting

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

At a public hearing on Wednesday, April 15, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to forward a special excep-

GOVERNMENT tion application from the Leesburg Compressor Station to a business meeting.

Eastern Gas Transmission & Storage, Inc. (EGTS) submitted the application so that the company can upgrade the station's production capacity to meet increasing demand. According to its website, EGTS "provides natural gas transportation and storage services with one of the largest underground natural gas storage systems in the United States. With a main office in Bridgeport, West Virginia, this multi-state pipeline system links to other major pipelines and to markets in the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions."

According to the county staff's report, the upgrades will largely be to existing facilities. EGTS is looking to replace an onsite drum storage facility with a compressor building and build a new drum storage facility. EGTS's proposal also includes an underground gas line and an underground electrical line.

"EGTS really did try to make the most changes it could with minimal impacts to the site," said Sherri Akin, a member of EGTS's legal counsel.

The application came before the Board with a recommendation for approval from the Planning Commission. County staff found no outstanding issues with the application and reported no negative comments from two community meetings held by EGTS. However, one comment opposing the upgrade due to noise concerns was submitted through the online tool.

According to EGTS, community feedback has been positive with the surrounding community confirming that the compressor station is "a good neighbor." The company's legal team reported that a noise study found that the upgrade would not cause the station to produce sound above 55 db(A) that could be heard from the property

line. The team said that the nearest residence is 1,300 feet from the property line.

The company plans to use sound-proofing inside the new facility and blanketing outside the facility to mitigate noise. The project will not affect the heavy tree cover around the station. Another noise study will be conducted after the upgrade is completed.

The company's legal team anticipated minimal construction traffic, saying some gravel would need to be transported and that the only other construction traffic would be the construction crew commuting to work each day. Construction work would be confined to the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday through Saturday.

The company's northeastern neighbor made a comment in favor of the special exception to the Board during the public hearing.

"[Another compressor station] was very noisy. So when C&G came in, they made it a point to confront the community's response and the frustration," EGTS's neighbor said. "[EGTS] helped the other plant get quieter, and [EGTS] was quieter than [the other station]. They've been pretty much a good neighbor."

Leesburg resident Chris Tandy opposed the special exception, citing environmental concerns.

"I would ask you to vote against the expansion because of climate change," Tandy said. "Obviously, natural gas is a significant greenhouse gas. There's plenty of research that suggests that natural gas is as harmful to the planet as coal is when the leak rate is factored in."

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) said she would support the special exception and that she would research renewable energy options before the voting on the application in a business meeting.

The Board voted 8-0-1 to forward the application to a business meeting. Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) was absent.



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AI and I

BY CHARLIE HOUSTON

The Drudgery of Research

Back in the pre-Google and pre-artificial intelligence times, research could be torment. Some questions could be answered through encyclopedias; others required hours in libraries, poring through tome after tome. Either way, information had to be gathered, sorted, edited, and finally shaped into something readable. It was time-consuming, sometimes painfully so, but I usually enjoyed learning random things.

OPINION

Some Research, Pre-AI

In fifth grade I wrote a paper on paranoid schizophrenia. I found the topic fascinating, which apparently showed in the A+ and glowing remarks I received. I'm still not sure what choosing insanity as my topic choice said about me.

Years later, while working at a law firm during graduate school, I was tasked with researching the metallurgy of helicopter tail rotor blades. The firm's client, a major manufacturer, was defending wrongful death cases involving in-flight tail rotor failures.

That assignment meant dense technical reading and careful synthesis—no shortcuts available. I was a budding MBA with a liberal arts background, not a scientist, but was able to present a cogent report.

In my development career, I once had to prepare a paper comparing modern deep-cell parabolic lenses for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 »

Thanks Arthur Godfrey!

Dear Blue Ridge Leader,

I read the interesting article by Tim Jon in the April edition of the Blue Ridge Leader about the Union Cemetery. It caught my eye, because I wonder if he knows that

Arthur Godfrey, famed radio and TV celebrity, is buried in the cemetery?

LETTER

How do I know this? Well, before we moved to Loudoun in 1982, I worked in the

LA film and TV industry. I mostly worked on TV series and commercials, and my very last job before moving the next day was to do an ad for supplemental insurance with Arthur Godfrey as spokesman.

It was about January 31, 1982 or so.

He was in pretty bad shape then, riddled by emphysema from years of smoking. All he had to do was to cut

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KILJOY BY CHIP BECK



What USA Hockey Taught Me About Raising Confident, Competent, Motivated Kids

BY KEN FALKE

When I first became a coach with USA Hockey, I thought I was signing up to teach kids how to skate faster, pass better, and score more goals. What I didn't realize was that I was stepping into a laboratory for life.

Ice rinks are cold, loud, and unforgiving. They are also one of the best classrooms I've ever found for shaping human beings. Over time, I've come to understand that coaching youth hockey isn't primarily about developing elite players. It's about developing confident, competent, and motivated young people. And those three traits—confidence, competence, and motivation—are the foundation of any successful life.

OPINION

Confidence Is Built, Not Bestowed

Confidence doesn't come from trophies. It doesn't come from participation medals. And it certainly

doesn't come from telling a child they're amazing when they haven't yet done anything amazing.

Confidence is earned.

On the ice, the transformation is visible. A child who can barely stand up in October is skating backward by February. A player terrified of the puck is suddenly calling for it in the corner. That confidence isn't a speech. It's a byproduct of effort.

The key lesson I learned is this: confidence grows when kids do hard things and realize they survived.

As a coach, my job isn't to remove struggle. It's to manage it. Too little challenge, and kids get bored. Too much, and they get overwhelmed. But when you calibrate it right—when you push them just beyond what they think they can do—you see something powerful happen. They start believing in themselves because they have evidence.

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Letters to the Editor continued on page 20

Valley Commerce Center Will Use Too Much Groundwater

Dear Editor:

The proposed Valley Commerce Center applicant requests approval to pump 43,680 gallons of groundwater per day (gpd). During the April 15 Public Hearing on this project, the applicant's team suggested that household use of water by the 39 by-right homes that might be built on this property would be higher than the proposed project groundwater pumping rate but presented no data to support this contention.

LETTER

The proposed Valley Commerce Center applicant requests approval to pump 43,680 gallons of groundwater per day (gpd). During the April 15 Public Hearing on this project, the applicant's team suggested that household use of water by the 39 by-right homes that might be built on this property would be higher than the proposed project groundwater pumping rate but presented no data to support this contention.

During this same Public Hearing, it was stated that the County staff estimated that the likely water use by the 39 homes might total 13,650 gpd. This is equivalent to 350 gpd per home. The USEPA estimates that the average US family of 4 uses roughly 400 gpd which is very similar to the County staff estimate of usage.

The pumping rate proposed by the applicant (43,680 gpd) is roughly 3 times the household use for 39 homes based on either of these per-home estimates (350 gpd staff, and 400 gpd USEPA).

It has been argued that the 39 homes would have large lawns and pools, and they would use much more water than average homes. Certainly, an individual

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 »

Support Well-Planned Flex Space—We Need It

Dear Editor:

From a local business owners standpoint, it's becoming increasingly clear that Loudoun County is facing a shortage of flex and light industrial space—and it's starting to impact more than just business owners.

LETTER

From a local business owners standpoint, it's becoming increasingly clear that Loudoun County is facing a shortage of flex and light industrial space—and it's starting to impact more than just business owners.

These types of spaces are where many

of the services residents rely on actually operate. With vacancy rates around 1%, there is almost no room left. That kind of constraint doesn't just slow growth—it limits opportunity. It makes it difficult for new businesses to open and for existing ones to expand. At the same time, rising costs are pricing many of them out altogether.

This is why the conversation around the proposed Valley Commerce Center near Purcellville matters. From the outside, it's hard to understand why there wouldn't be stronger support for adding

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The conflict of interests between Loudoun County residents and businesses

Dear Editor:

On April 15, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors held a public comment session regarding the pending Valley Commerce Center rezoning proposal. A relatively even number of individuals spoke against and for approval of the rezoning proposal.

LETTER

On April 15, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors held a public comment session regarding the pending Valley Commerce Center rezoning proposal. A relatively even number of individuals spoke against and for approval of the rezoning proposal.

The differences between the positions of the groups were obvious. Those who spoke against approval were Purcellville-area residents who stated that construction of the Valley Commerce Center would seriously degrade their quality of life due to adverse impacts on traffic, water availability, public safety, and the area's rural character, and that construction would also be inconsistent with

Loudoun County's 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

Those who spoke in favor were largely business representatives who stated that construction would benefit commercial interests in western Loudoun County, including their own businesses.

It is important to note that while this particular hearing reflected a more balanced response, over the past decade residents of the Town of Purcellville and the surrounding residential communities have consistently voiced strong support for maintaining the currently-planned use of this property.

That use conforms to the existing residential zoning and the character of existing surrounding residential communities.

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Four estate planning myths that could cost your family

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI,
EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Consider this scenario: A teacher of 30 years and mother of three passes away at age 58. She leaves behind a modest home, a retirement account and cherished family heirlooms – but no estate plan. Her children, still grieving, find themselves navigating a confusing probate process, disagreeing about when to sell the house and considering who gets their grandmother's ring.



JOSHUA
WOLINSKI

This mom wasn't wealthy by most measures, but her lack of planning created confusion, conflict and uncertainty at a time when her family needed clarity. Her story reminds us of an important truth: estate planning is about easing conflict and making sure what you have goes where you want it to go.

As you think about your own legacy, consider these myths that can lead to costly mistakes and unintended outcomes.

Myth 1: Estate planning is only for wealthy people. The desire to make things easier for loved ones has nothing to do with net worth. Formally documenting your wishes reduces the burden on family members and gives you control. Without a plan, your state's laws will decide how your estate is handled, and you may not like what those laws say.

Myth 2: Having a will is all you need. While a will is important, it only takes effect after death. That means it offers no protection if you become incapacitated and cannot make decisions for yourself. It does, however, allow you to name legal guardians for dependent children.

The foundation of most estate plans includes a will (which directs asset distribution), a financial power of attorney (for financial decisions), a health care power of attorney (for medical decisions), and a medical directive (to share your end of life wishes). While not everyone needs a trust, there are several that allow you to make special provisions, such as for minor children, a

special needs family member or even a cherished pet. Consulting with a financial advisor and an estate planning attorney can help determine the right combination based on your situation.

Myth 3: Equal distribution is always fair. It's likely that the individuals in your estate plan, especially if they are adult children, have different family and financial situations. You may have one child who's extremely successful financially while another is struggling. Or you may have assets, such as a house or ownership of a family business, that are more suitable for one beneficiary than another. It's important to consider any unique circumstances as you develop your estate plan.

Myth 4: I can set it and forget it. You'll want to review your estate plan every few years or when a major life event occurs. Life is full of changes, such as marriages, divorces, new children and relocations, and they will likely impact your goals. Reviewing your plan helps keep everything aligned with your wishes and serves as a reminder to keep your beneficiaries on all your assets up

to date.

Ultimately, estate planning is about helping ensure your voice is heard and your loved ones cared for, no matter what the future holds. 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.

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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Chestnut Hill Road

BY TIM JON

Maybe it's a good thing I didn't get any pictures from that climb up the first hill; I certainly know it's a good thing that I didn't try. Going up what seemed like a 30-degree gradient, with no shoulders along the roadway, and a guard rail that I wished were a lot sturdier, I inadvertently caught glimpses of the Potomac River off to the right side—and what seemed like at least a mile below me.



TIM JON

I had noticed Route 32—Chestnut Hill Road—as the possibility of an interesting drive among the Blue Ridge Mountains on my last trip up to Harpers Ferry—in the north-western corner of Loudoun County. I have to admit, it held my interest, all right.

Even though the road was paved, I couldn't help hoping that the Good Earth would hold up underneath it, as I carefully made my way skyward; the way the soil was eroding away at the roadside made me wish I had a set of wings and a parachute, just in case.

And I haven't even mentioned the



sights on the opposite side of the road: stout cabling was running along a good portion of the sheer rock cliff, which was hewn out of the Appalachian bedrock, so unceremoniously thrust up to create all this topography. So: fear of falling rock on my left, and the dizzying sensation of concerns of a quick tumble

into the river on my right; piece of cake, I didn't say to myself.

But I kept on climbing and eventually reached a point where the road crested, and then dipped and corkscrewed for what appeared to be the unforeseeable future. I passed hamlets, villages and lone homesteads along the way, but it seemed like a great deal of distance had been covered before I found a partially civilized area to pull off for a quick stretch and a brief camera session.

Everywhere I looked, the world seemed at odds with itself; the terms uphill and downhill had lost all meaning; the terrain was a swirl of cockeyed angles and curving levels.

I fell back into my vehicle (at least that's where I landed) and proceeded along my chosen path. My next stop came in a spiritual form—Silver Grove United Methodist Church; the historic, wooden structure lay nestled amongst the hills and the clouds, and I experienced the feeling that heaven surely must be just a little bit closer at this elevation. I mean, just in case.

What with all these crazy twists and turns, I felt I could fall upward as easily as any other direction. Just another experience of what I call the Loudoun County

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 »

BOS Forward Leesburg Compressor Station SPEX to Business Meeting

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

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"EGTS really did try to make the most changes it could with minimal impacts to the site," said Sherri Akin, a member of EGTS's legal counsel.

The application came before the Board with a recommendation for approval from the Planning Commission. County staff found no outstanding issues with the application and reported no negative comments from two community meetings held by EGTS. However, one comment opposing the upgrade due to noise concerns was submitted through the online tool.

According to EGTS, community feedback has been positive with the surrounding community confirming that the compressor station is "a good neighbor." The company's legal team reported that a noise study found that the upgrade would not cause the station to produce sound above 55 db(A) that could be heard from the property line. The team said that the nearest residence is 1,300 feet from the property line.

The company plans to use sound-proofing inside the new facility and blanketing outside the facility to mitigate noise. The project will not affect the heavy tree cover around the station. Another noise study will be conducted after the upgrade is completed.

The company's legal team anticipated minimal construction traffic, saying some gravel would need to be transported and that the only other construction traffic would be the construction crew commuting to work each day. Construction work would be confined to the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday through Saturday.

The company's northeastern neighbor made a comment in favor of the special exception to the Board during the public hearing.

"[Another compressor station] was very noisy. So when C&G came in, they made it a point to confront the community's response and the frustration,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31 »

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— Ask Dr. Mike —

The Digital Opt-Out: Is Technology Making Adulthood Optional?

BY MICHAEL OBSCHNEIDER PSY.D.

For more than two decades as a psychologist in Northern Virginia, I have helped adolescents navigate the familiar terrain of growing up—motivation, identity, relationships, and purpose. But today, the landscape has fundamentally changed. What I observe is not merely a new variation of adolescence, but a marked departure from it. Increasingly, many young people are not struggling toward adulthood; they are quietly opting out.

Ask Dr. Mike



DR. MIKE

Traditional milestones that once signaled the transition to independence—getting a driver's license, working a first job, dating, and socializing in person—are no longer widely shared goals.

Instead, they are often seen as unnecessary, inconvenient, or even undesirable. Digital alternatives now offer something far more appealing: control, comfort, and a world largely free of risk.

The data underscores this shift. According to the Federal Highway Administration, only 60% of 18-year-olds held a driver's license in 2021, compared to nearly 80% in the 1980s.

The CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that the percentage of high school students who have had sexual intercourse fell from 54% in 1991 to 38% in 2021. Teen employment has also declined sharply where summer job participation dropped from nearly 60% in 1979 to about 35% in 2023.

Social habits have transformed as well. Jean Twenge's research shows that in the late 1970s, 52% of high school seniors met with friends almost daily; by 2017, this had fallen to just 28%. Childhood mobility has also diminished where in 1969 nearly half of children walked or biked to school; today, only about 13% do.

Globally, the World Health Organization reports that rates of adolescent loneliness and social isolation are rising, particularly in developed nations. The Pew Research Center notes that the average American teenager now spends more than seven hours per day on screens—more time than they spend sleeping or in

school.

Rates of depression and anxiety among adolescents have surged by more than 40% over the past decade, with many researchers linking this to increased digital engagement and decreased real-world interaction.

Here in Northern Virginia, where convenience and technology are deeply woven into daily life, I hear a refrain that captures the mood of this generation: "Why bother?" Why get a license when Uber exists? Why risk the vulnerabilities of dating or rejection when digital substitutes are readily available? Why work an entry-level job when nearly everything can be delivered to your door?

From a psychological perspective, what's being lost is something essential: friction.

Friction—the small, ordinary challenges of life—is what many of today's youth tend to avoid. But friction is not a nuisance; it is the mechanism through which young people develop competence, resilience, and identity. Learning to navigate a difficult conversation, managing a first job, getting dumped by someone you like, are all experiences that build psychological strength.

Digital environments, by contrast, are designed to eliminate friction. Social interactions can be curated, paused, or abandoned. Entertainment is endless. Academic work can now be outsourced to artificial intelligence, bypassing the cognitive effort required for genuine learning. When struggle disappears, so does growth.

The result is not always obvious pathology. I observe what I would describe as existential drift—a sense of disconnection from real-world demands and rewards. Many of these young people are bright, capable, and technologically fluent, yet they often feel unmoored, unmotivated, and uncertain about how, or why, to engage fully in life.

This is not simply a cultural shift; it is a developmental one. Adolescence has always been a period of risk-taking, experimentation, and social learning. When those experiences are replaced by digital simulations, the developmental process is altered.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32 >

“It’s Absurd:” Loudoun Supervisors Criticize Quantum Park Data Center Expansion

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors expressed skepticism toward another proposed data center project in eastern Loudoun during an April 15 public hearing on the Quantum Park zoning amendment, with several supervisors openly questioning whether the county has reached a breaking point on continued data center growth.

After a lengthy discussion, the board voted 6-2-1 to move the application to the May 19 Board of Supervisors business meeting for a final decision. Supervisors Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) and Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) voted against advancing the item, while several other supervisors indicated they are likely to oppose the project when it returns for a final vote. Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run), whose district includes the site, was absent.

The proposal would allow two new data center buildings and a GIS substation on roughly 40 acres within the Quantum Park office campus near Loudoun County Parkway and Waxpool Road in Ashburn.

County staff said the project includes transportation improvements, right-of-way dedication for future road connections, shared-use paths along Loudoun County Parkway and Waxpool Road, and enhanced landscaping and screening.

Over the course of the hearing, the discussion became less about the specifics of the proposal and more about Loudoun County’s broader struggle over the future of data center development.

Several supervisors repeatedly pressed staff on whether the project could proceed without board approval because of earlier zoning approvals tied to the site’s original WorldCom-era development plan.

Staff clarified multiple times that although the application is “grandfathered” under the county’s older zoning ordinance, the project still requires approval because the original concept plan tied development to a specific site layout.

“They cannot develop, cannot be done without the board approval,” Loudoun Planning and Zoning staff member Hoa N. Dao told supervisors during the hearing.

Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) repeatedly returned to that point during questioning.

“So regardless if we say yes or no,” Saines said, “if we say no, these are not being built regardless.”

The applicant, represented by real estate attorney Brian Winterhalter of DLA Piper, argued the proposal fits within the long-established technology and telecommunications character of the campus and surrounding area.

“The application before you to add two data center buildings to the campus is not in any way detracting from the office campus that is there,” Winterhalter said.

Winterhalter said the existing office buildings would remain and emphasized that the project had undergone extensive revisions during its review process, including three Planning Commission work sessions before ultimately receiving a recommendation of approval.

“A big part of that effort was reducing the building height ... from 100 feet to 65 feet,” he said.

He also said the applicant redesigned the layout to preserve more visibility into the existing office campus from Loudoun County Parkway.

“The iconic, well known portion of the center of the campus will continue to be visible from Loudoun County Parkway,” Winterhalter said.

But supervisors remained unconvinced.

Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) sharply criticized the proposal, saying the county has reached a point where developers are trying to fit data centers into every square foot of land possible.

“There comes a point where it just becomes egregious,” Letourneau said. “We’re really at the point where we’re gonna take a pond out to put more data centers in, to block an office building? It’s absurd.”

The ponds on the property became one of the hearing’s major discussion points.

The applicant plans to remove one pond entirely and modify another into a stormwater management facility. Winterhalter argued one of the ponds no longer serves any meaningful stormwater function.

“There is absolutely zero storm water

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

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Rayner et al Tax Challenge Dismissed Again Amid Ongoing Court Filings

BY VALERIE CURY

Loudoun County Circuit Court Judge James E. Plowman on April 15 dismissed a revised legal challenge brought by Purcellville Town Council members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought, marking the second time the court has declined to take up the merits of their claims regarding whether a supermajority vote is required to set local tax rates.

Judge Plowman dismissed the case after determining that it did not meet the legal threshold required for judicial review.

The lawsuit sought a judicial determination on whether a two-thirds supermajority vote is required for the Town Council to approve tax rates. However, the court again found that the case did not present an "actual controversy" involving infringed legal rights.

Town Attorney Robert Sproul argued that the dispute did not present a valid legal controversy, but rather reflected a disagreement over a prior council vote. The court agreed, concluding that the matter amounted to an internal dispute among council members and dismissing the case without addressing whether a simple majority or supermajority vote is required under Virginia law.

The ruling is consistent with long-standing legal guidance provided to the town. Both former Town Attorney John Cafferky and his predecessor advised that a supermajority vote is required only to impose a new tax—not to adjust an existing rate or adopt the annual budget.

The legal challenge stems from a 4-3 vote in which the three council members bringing the suit were in the minority. Since losing their governing majority following the 2024 election, the group has turned to the courts to contest procedural and policy outcomes decided by the council majority.

The plaintiffs were represented in court by attorney Sarah Bruns of the Marquis Law Group, a Leesburg-based firm that includes State Sen. Russet Perry among its members. Perry is the sponsor of Senate Bill 648, legislation tailored specifically to municipalities in

her district, with Purcellville being the only locality that matches its size and planning district classification.

SB 648, along with a proposed emergency amendment passed the General Assembly's April 22 reconvened session. The amendment allows for the immediate removal of Vice Mayor Ben Nett. The bill introduces a series of targeted governance and oversight measures, including:

- Requiring the automatic suspension of town officials charged with felony offenses, with courts authorized to appoint temporary replacements
- Mandating a comprehensive, state-directed study of the town's debt, infrastructure, utilities, and long-term liabilities, to be completed by July 1, 2027
- Requiring the town to adopt a remedial plan based on the study's findings
- Restricting Town Council votes to items published at least three days in advance, unless waived by a three-fourths supermajority
- Granting residents expanded legal standing to challenge council decisions, including priority court scheduling and potential reimbursement of attorney's fees
- Including the emergency clause language tied to the amendment adopted at the General Assembly's April 22 reconvened session and signed by the governor. The hearing for Nett's suspension from Town Council is scheduled for May 7.

The legislation is scheduled to sunset on July 1, 2028, approximately one year after the next town election.

The overlap between the ongoing legal challenge, the plaintiffs' representation by a firm connected to the bill's sponsor, and the advancement of legislation directly affecting Purcellville underscores a broader convergence of legal and political efforts surrounding control of the town's governance.

This latest dismissal follows a January ruling in which the court similarly found that the initial complaint failed to justify declaratory relief. Although the plaintiffs were granted an opportunity

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31 »

Resident Demonstrates Disc Golf Noise Ahead of Westpark Vote

BY VALERIE CURY

During its April 21 business meeting, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved key design elements for the Westpark Property Improvements project in Leesburg, advancing plans to convert the 134-acre former golf course into a passive park.

GOVERNMENT

The proposal calls for preserving much of the site's natural landscape while adding amenities such as walking trails, parking areas, restrooms, pavilions, a disc golf course, and water quality improvements.

As part of its approval, the board also directed several modifications to the design, particularly related to the planned disc golf course and its proximity to nearby homes.

These include establishing a minimum 100-foot setback—and in some areas 125 feet—between disc golf baskets and adjacent residential properties.

Additional changes call for adding native plantings near baskets within

125 feet of homes and increasing buffer landscaping between parking areas and neighboring properties.

The board also directed staff to explore alternative basket materials, sometimes referred to as “quiet baskets,” instead of traditional heavy metal chain designs that generate noise.

Landscape buffers along residential property lines at both parking lots will be increased from a Screen 2, Type B buffer to a Screen 3, Type C buffer under the Town of Leesburg's zoning ordinance before final design is completed. Type C buffer is the highest level of screening that the Town ordinance allows.

Supervisor Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg) said, “We have worked hard with staff and staff has done the heavy lifting to try to address the concerns that some of the neighbors have had about these stations being too close to their homes.”

She said the proposal incorporates a 100-foot separation and requires additional screening plantings within 125

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 >

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SPECIAL SECTION

Older Americans Month Highlights Health and Independence

Communities across the country will mark Older Americans Month throughout May, recognizing the contributions of older adults while promoting awareness of issues related to aging.

This year's theme, "Champion Your Health," focuses on the importance of prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility in maintaining quality of life as people age. The observance encourages older adults to stay engaged in their own health by seeking preventive care, making informed choices, and taking steps to support independence.

Health experts often point to the value of staying physically active, managing chronic conditions, and maintaining social connections as key factors in healthy aging. The theme also reflects a growing emphasis on self-management and access to reliable health information.

Beyond individual actions, the month highlights the role communities play in supporting older residents. Local organizations, service providers, and volunteers help connect people with resources, programs, and opportunities to remain active and engaged.

Many communities use the month to host educational programs, wellness activities, and social events designed to reduce isolation and promote overall well-being.

Residents and organizations are also encouraged to share how they are recognizing Older Americans Month and to highlight efforts that support older adults.

The annual observance serves as both a celebration and a call to action—honoring the contributions of older adults while encouraging continued focus on health, independence, and community support.



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Living Loudoun: A Vibrant May for the 50+ Crowd

BY VALERIE CURY

There's something special about May in Loudoun County. The rolling green hills return to life, farmers markets reopen with fresh abundance, and the calendar fills with opportunities to get out, connect, and enjoy everything this beautiful region has to offer. For adults 50 and better, Loudoun isn't just a place to live—it's a place to thrive.

Whether you're looking to stay active, explore new interests, or simply savor the season, there are countless ways to embrace lifestyle and leisure this spring.

Sip, Savor, and Socialize

Loudoun County has earned its reputation as "DC's Wine Country," and spring is prime time to enjoy it. Wineries like Stone Tower Winery and Bluemont Vineyard offer not only award-winning wines but also breathtaking views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Prefer something more casual? Bear Chase Brewing Company pairs scenic outdoor seating with live music and a relaxed, social atmosphere—perfect for gathering with friends on a sunny afternoon.

Get Moving in the Great Outdoors

Staying active in Loudoun often means heading outside. The Washington & Old Dominion Trail remains a favorite for walking, biking, or simply enjoying the scenery at your own pace.

Parks like Algonkian Regional Park offer peaceful river views, shaded paths, and plenty of space to unwind, exercise, or meet up with friends and family.

Community, Connection, and Lifelong Wellness

Across Loudoun, local programs

are making it easier than ever to stay engaged—and the Town of Leesburg is a standout example.

Through the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department, residents have access to a full-service recreation center featuring pickleball, basketball, racquetball, group fitness studios, and a fully equipped wellness facility. An expansive aquatic center—with lap pools, a warm-water pool, and even a seasonal outdoor water park—offers something for every comfort level.

Beyond the facilities, Leesburg's 17 parks—spread across its 12 square miles—provide inviting spaces for



walking, relaxing, and gathering. From scenic trails to tennis courts and open green spaces, it's easy to find ways to stay active while enjoying the outdoors.

Markets, Music, and Moments That Matter

Spring and summer in Loudoun are defined by community events—and there's no shortage of them. The Leesburg Farmers Market is a perennial favorite, offering fresh produce, baked goods, and a chance to connect with neighbors.

Seasonal events bring even more



energy to the area. Signature celebrations like the Leesburg Flower and Garden Show and Taste Leesburg highlight local flavor and creativity, while the Leesburg Airshow delivers excitement for all ages later in the year.

As the weather warms, the Leesburg Summer JAMS Concert Series returns to the Town Green, filling Saturday evenings with music and community spirit. It's the perfect excuse to pack a picnic, invite friends, and enjoy a relaxed night under the stars.

And looking ahead, the Independence Day Celebration promises a full day of

patriotic fun—from a morning parade through downtown to an evening concert and fireworks at Ida Lee Park.

Day Trips & Hidden Gems

Beyond Leesburg, Loudoun offers charming escapes in every direction. Spend an afternoon in Middleburg browsing boutiques and galleries, or take a scenic drive along the Snickersville Turnpike, where rolling countryside and historic charm create a perfect spring backdrop.

Living Well, Living Fully

Today's 50+ generation is redefining what it means to age—and Loudoun County provides the perfect setting to do just that. With its mix of wellness opportunities, cultural events, and natural beauty, it's easy to stay active, connected, and inspired.

This May, take advantage of everything Loudoun has to offer. Whether you're exploring a new trail, enjoying live music, or discovering a local favorite, you'll find that living well here isn't just possible—it's effortless.



Don't Turn Your Backs On Small Businesses

Dear Editor:

As a Loudoun based business owner, I've seen significantly less flex and light industrial space in our county. The short supply is concerning since this is exactly the kind of space that small and mid-sized businesses need to offer their services and grow.

LETTER

Right now, the county has a 1% vacancy rate for this type of space, making it very difficult for startup businesses and others. In addition, the exceptionally tight market for flex space has driven up costs, making it not

only hard to find but hard to afford.

That's one of the reasons I've been watching the proceedings surrounding the Valley Commerce Center. It seems out of touch for our local community to not support having more flex space.

Your neighbors who own businesses have fewer places to hang their shingles so they can provide the services you need to paint your house, fix your plumbing or AC, install your tv, tutor your kids, and clean your home.

Without a place to do business, they will exit the

county—both their business and possibly them as well, leaving all of us with fewer services and a smaller tax base.

I enjoy living and working here and would welcome the Valley Commerce Center outside of Purcellville as well as other local flex space options.

Small businesses have always been the backbone of communities. Turning our backs on them is short-sighted.

*Keith Mainland
Purcellville*

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Loudoun's S.A.I.L. Program Builds Strength, Community and Confidence

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, a room inside the PRCS main building in Leesburg fills with energy, laughter, and determination. From 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., older adults, caregivers, and volunteers gather for a program that is about far more than exercise—it's about independence, resilience, and connection.

The free class, known as S.A.I.L.—Stay Active and Independent for Life—is offered by the Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging. Designed specifically for adults aged 65 and older, S.A.I.L. is an evidence-based fitness program focused on improving strength, balance, and overall mobility—key components in reducing the risk of falls and maintaining quality of life.

A Program Built for Everyone

The 55-minute class is intentionally accessible. Participants move through a low-impact, total-body routine that includes cardio, strength training, balance work, and stretching. For those with limited mobility, seated modifications ensure that everyone can participate safely and comfortably. Weights are provided, and participants are encouraged to move at their own pace.

But the class offers more than physical benefits. Music fills the room, conversations spark easily, and a sense of camaraderie develops naturally among attendees.

Caregivers often join alongside their loved ones, making the experience both supportive and shared.

"It's just fun with results," one participant shared. "SAIL has helped me with strength, flexibility, and avoiding falls. The instructors are wonderful and very understanding."

Another participant echoed the sentiment, "I attend the S.A.I.L. Exercise Program because first of all—it's fun. The instructors are terrific, the students friendly, and the program includes three important components: aerobics, balance, and weight lifting ... Did I mention it's free? It's just the perfect class for me."

Backed by Research, Supported by Partnerships

The S.A.I.L. program is not just a local initiative—it's part of a broader regional effort to address a growing public health concern. The Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging partners with the Northern Virginia Fall Prevention Alliance, which is based at Marymount University. Through federal grants from the Administration for Community Living, the program is offered free of charge to participants.

The impact has been significant. Since 2023, the alliance has reached 1,846 older adults, trained 220 coaches, and delivered 150 workshops across the region.

Addressing a Critical Health Issue

The importance of programs like S.A.I.L. becomes clear when considering the data. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four Americans aged 65 and older experiences a fall each year. Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and non-fatal injuries among older adults, and the financial burden is substantial—projected to exceed \$101 billion annually by 2030.

These statistics highlight why prevention matters. Strength, balance, and awareness are not just fitness goals; they are essential tools for maintaining independence and avoiding life-altering injuries.

More Than Exercise: A Community

While the physical benefits of S.A.I.L. are measurable, many participants say the emotional and social rewards are just as meaningful. The classes foster friendships, reduce isolation, and create a sense of belonging that extends beyond the exercise room.

For caregivers, the program provides a rare opportunity to engage in a shared, positive activity with loved ones. For participants, it offers encouragement, accountability, and joy.

In a world where aging is often framed in terms of limitations, S.A.I.L. offers a different perspective—one rooted in capability, connection, and confidence.

As the music plays and participants move through their routines in Leesburg, the message is clear—staying active isn't just about adding years to life—it's about adding life to those years.

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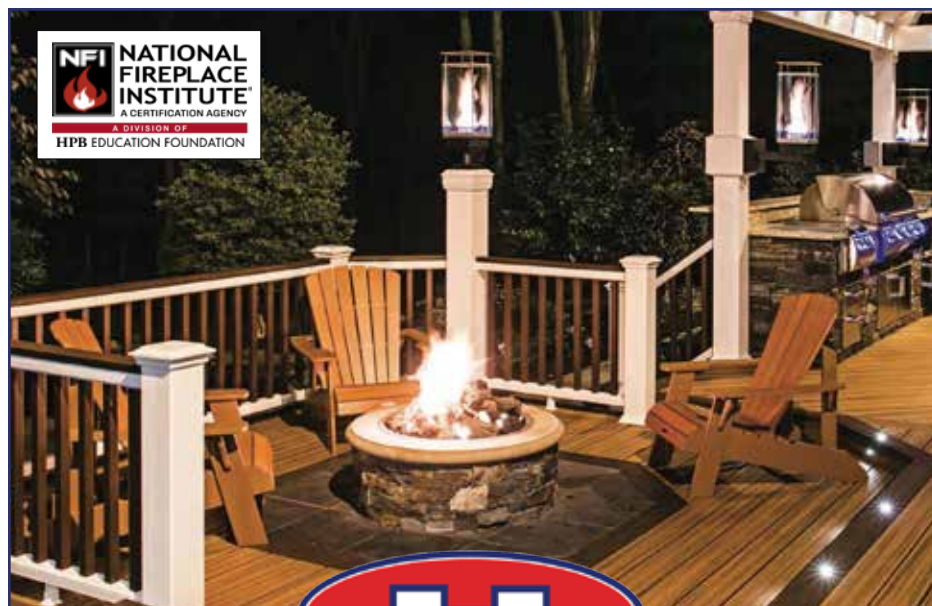


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Remembering Kevin Joseph Keane

Kevin Joseph Keane passed away on April 13 after a long battle with cancer. Kevin died at home surrounded by family. He is survived by his beloved wife, Micaela, their four children, Atticus, Marguerite, Benjamin, and Olivia.

He is also survived by his siblings: Becky (Charlie); Kathy (Marty); Doc (Kathy); Karol/Noonie (Ron) and Marcie in addition to many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his mother, Elizabeth Lacy Keane and his father Thomas Keane.

Kevin was born on September 10, 1965 at Columbia Hospital for Women in the

District of Columbia. Kevin spent most of his professional life restoring and managing historic properties in Loudoun County. He was a gregarious Renaissance man who never met a stranger. He could talk to a brick wall and make it laugh. He also never suffered fools.

He will be remembered for his love for his family, most especially for his wife, Micaela who spent the last four years devoted to Kevin and his care.

A celebration of Kevin's life was held at their family home in Hamilton, Va on Saturday April 25.

Arrangements by Hall Funeral Home, Purcellville, VA.

Hillsboro Tie-Dye Day, Concert to Benefit Loudoun Hunger Relief

The Hillsboro Ruritans and the Town of Hillsboro will host a day-long community event May 23 featuring tie-dye workshops, local food and drink vendors, and a free evening concert, all benefiting Loudoun Hunger Relief.

The event will take place at the Old Stone School and The Gap, offering activities for all ages and a focus on creativity, music and community service.

Organizers say the idea grew out of a partnership aimed at supporting residents facing food insecurity across Loudoun County.

"The Ruritans pledge is to support urban and rural communities in times of stress and need through fellowship, goodwill and community service," said Aaron Gilman, Hillsboro Ruritans vice president and Zone 5 governor. "Today, many people in Loudoun are struggling to put food on the table, so we're supporting Loudoun Hunger Relief's 35 years of work with this family-fun event. Come, learn, take home your own tie-dye masterpiece—and help those among us in need."

Tie-dye sessions begin at 10 a.m. at the Old Stone School and will be offered in 14 scheduled workshops throughout the day. Each session includes instruction on the history of tie-dye, demonstrations of techniques by experienced artists, and materials for participants to create their own shirts. Registration includes instruction, materials, and access to an ink station. Children may attend with adults. Information is available at <https://bit.ly/Hillsborotiedye>.

"I can see parents and—even grand-

parents who were part of the tie-dye culture in the day—bringing their children and grandchildren to share in the creative experience, take home a special keepsake and create positive energy through art," Gilman said.

Throughout the day, visitors can enjoy food trucks, the Ruritans Food Trailer, Moo Thru ice cream, and beverages including local beer and wine at The Gap Bar. Vendors will also be set up at the Fruits of The Gap Market.

The free "Next Wave" concert begins at 5 p.m. on The Gap Stage and will feature five local youth bands from across Loudoun County: Dogs of Puerto Rico, Dukes of London, Valhalla, UV Index and Suncrest.

Concertgoers are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items or make donations to Loudoun Hunger Relief.

"We are very pleased to be working alongside the Hillsboro Ruritans to bring this special event to the community and support Loudoun Hunger Relief," said Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance. "This promises to be fun for all ages and a great way to give to others in need."

Vance also said the event highlights local talent. "We are delighted to encourage and showcase the wealth of young musical talent from across Loudoun with the Next Wave concert and give them a shot to perform on The Gap Stage."

Proceeds and donations will benefit Loudoun Hunger Relief, which has served the community for more than 35 years.

Tickets and registration information are available at <https://bit.ly/Hillsborotiedye>. Additional town events can be found at www.oldstoneschool.org.

Students Take Center Court at Vipers' Moving and Grooving Night

It wasn't just basketball on the court Sunday—it was a full afternoon of school spirit, dancing and hometown pride as the Virginia Valley Vipers hosted "Moving and Grooving Night" during their matchup against the Frederick Flying Cows.

The late-April event brought together students and families from five of Loudoun County's smaller elementary schools—Aldie, Banneker, Lincoln, Hamilton and Waterford—for a game-day experience that extended far beyond the final score.

COMMUNITY

From the stands to the hardwood, students were part of the action. During media timeouts, children took turns participating in on-court games and activities, drawing cheers from classmates and parents alike.

Adding to the excitement, mascots from Lincoln and Hamilton joined the Vipers' own mascot, Venom the Viper, for photos and crowd interaction.

"Our Lincoln Leopards are delighted to join in the fun this Sunday, and we're ready to cheer for our Vipers!" said Lincoln Elementary Parent Teacher Organization representative Jen Hergenroeder ahead of the event. "Lincoln families, and our fellow Loudoun small school communities, are all happy to support our local team."

A key part of the afternoon was the team's "Kids Get in Free" initiative, which was in part sponsored by Al Van Huyck, allowed students from the participating schools to attend the game at no cost, thanks to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 »



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PURCELLVILLE FARMERS MARKET, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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QUANTUM PARK DATA CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

management function to the eastern pond," he said.

Still, several supervisors and county residents argued the ponds remain environmentally and visually valuable.

Tia Earman, speaking on behalf of the Piedmont Environmental Council, described Quantum Park as "one of our last corporate parks" and said the site's ponds are known locally for bird activity.

Earman argued the proposal conflicts with the county's planning goals for suburban employment areas and would continue replacing employment-oriented land with data center infrastructure.

"Additional data centers on this property do not advance county goals for the policy area," she said.

Residents who spoke during the hearing echoed concerns about the cumulative impact of data center growth in eastern Loudoun.

Ashburn resident Jillian Cantor told supervisors the area already feels overwhelmed by industrial development.

"It is already terrible driving past there," she said, referring to the growing concentration of data centers along Wax-pool Road and nearby corridors.

"It makes me so upset. There can be no question at this point that data centers are harmful to people and to the environment," Cantor added.

Chris Tandy, another resident who spoke during the hearing, criticized the continued expansion of data centers near neighborhoods and referenced growing public concern over noise and environmental impacts.

"The phrase 'surrounded by data centers' was mentioned," Tandy said, "and I can't help thinking that it really should be the new county slogan."

Supervisors also questioned the applicant about generators, cooling systems, noise mitigation and setbacks from nearby residential areas.

TeKrony raised concerns about noise from existing nearby data centers and asked whether the applicant would commit to additional noise attenuation measures and Tier 4 generators.

Winterhalter said the applicant would agree to Tier 4 generators and would consider additional noise mitigation measures if needed.

The hearing reflected how dramatically Loudoun County's political conversation around data centers has shifted in recent years.

For decades, county leaders largely embraced the industry because of the tax revenue it generates. Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) acknowledged that reality during the hearing even while signaling opposition to the Quantum Park project itself.

"The truth is, data centers don't raise our taxes," Randall said. "In fact, they lower your taxes by a good little bit."

But Randall also posed and answered a rhetorical question: "Have we gone over a tipping point for data centers themselves? I would say we have."

Supervisor Mike Turner (D-Ashburn) echoed that concern, arguing that the cumulative strain on infrastructure can no longer be ignored.

"Every new data center we approve puts another burden on an already overburdened infrastructure in our county," he said.

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) also expressed concern that some newer applications appear driven more by squeezing additional development into leftover spaces than by thoughtful planning.

"What we're literally trying to do here is put it right up fairly near the road," Kershner said.

Despite the criticism, the board ultimately voted to move the application forward for procedural reasons. Several supervisors noted that applications expected to face denial generally proceed to a business meeting so formal findings for denial can be prepared before a final vote.

"A yes vote to move an application to a business meeting is not a yes vote for the application," Letourneau said.

The board is expected to take final action on the Quantum Park zoning amendment at its May 19 business meeting.

RESIDENT DEMONSTRATES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15
feet of residential property lines to help address community concerns—and the extra protections will protect the residents who live along the course.

Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) made a friendly amendment to direct staff to research having quieter basket options.

Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) said the changes are a nice compromise and that there is demand for disc golf. She emphasized that the park is intended to remain passive.

Randall said she would not want the noise from a disc golf course near her home and noted that residents rely on existing conditions when they choose where to live.

Randall said the project does not reflect what residents expected when they purchased their homes and added that she did not hear support for it from any residents.

The motion passed 8-0-1 with Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) absent.

The April 21 vote follows weeks of debate over the project, with much of the concern focused on the proposed disc golf course and its proximity to nearby homes. Residents have raised

issues about noise, safety, and increased activity, particularly along Clubhouse Drive and surrounding neighborhoods.

At a March committee meeting, county staff said some disc golf baskets could be as close as 75 feet from residential property lines, prompting concerns from residents who described opposition as widespread and well documented.

Supervisors acknowledged receiving more than 140 public comments, many focused on concerns about the location of the course and related amenities, including parking areas, restrooms, and a pavilion.

Those concerns carried into the April 21 meeting, where supervisors said they received more than 140 public comments, many focused on the location of the course and related amenities, including parking areas, restrooms, and a pavilion. Several residents also spoke in opposition during the meeting.

Richard Jackson said, "I am here to express our continued strong opposition to the proposed disc golf and parking lots in Westpark."

He said the proposed location is in the middle of an established neighborhood and it raises significant concerns about

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 »

Danny Davis is New Deputy Loudoun County Administrator

County Administrator Tim Hemstreet announced that Danny Davis has been appointed as a deputy county administrator effective July 2. Davis, who was selected for the position after a nationwide search, has recently served as the town manager of Middleburg.

Davis began his public service career with the Loudoun County government, including as a legislative aide to a member of the Board of Supervisors, and later as senior project manager and chief of staff in the Office of the County Administrator. From 2015 to 2017 he was assistant town manager in Purcellville.

"We had a very competitive pool of highly qualified applicants for this important position within County Administration and Mr. Davis' extensive experience in local government, including his

previous service with Loudoun County, makes him an outstanding candidate to take on this role," said Hemstreet. "I'm confident his experiences in Loudoun along with many stakeholders in our region will be an asset to our organization."

Davis will join members of the Office of the County Administrator in directing and supervising the day-to-day operations of Loudoun County departments and agencies that are under the direct control of the

Board of Supervisors.

Davis has a bachelor's degree in public policy from Patrick Henry College and master's in public administration from George Mason University. He is also an active member of the International City/County Management Association and has earned a Credentialed Manager designation.



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LET'S KEEP PURCELLVILLE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Road to the west lies the Mayfair subdivision, a neighborhood of 262 homes. Additional parcels extend to the west, while two adjoining properties to the east fall within the Hillsboro and Forestal districts. A separate 12-acre parcel, once part of the original property, is located to the south.

While the area is largely residential, industrial uses exist nearby but are not directly adjacent.

Staff estimates that if the property were developed with the allowed 39 homes, baseline water demand would be 13,650 gallons per day.

County staff has identified remaining issues with the application. According to Senior Planner and Project Manager Rachael Iwanczuk, the proposal is inconsistent with the development pattern and land use guidance for the Purcellville JLMA Rural Neighborhood Place Type, as outlined in the Loudoun County 2019 General Plan.

Iwanczuk said the place type supports low-density, large-lot and clustered residential development, along with agricultural and rural economy uses.

Additionally, the impacts of the industrial uses are not adequately mitigated with regard to their proximity to residential uses, with County consultants finding a reasonable potential for offsite effects on water availability.

The owner has offered to monitor offsite wells for up to two years, with on-site mitigation if negative effects are detected. The proposals includes an option to eliminate the Northern Collector Road, and expand tree conservation.

Although the County Planning Commission voted 6-2-1 to approve the project, county planning staff has recommended denial.

In a Feb. 5, 2025, memorandum, staff found the application inconsistent with the County's 2019 General Plan and the Purcellville Joint Land Management Area Rural Neighborhood Place Type, stating that "impacts associated with the proposed industrial zoning are not adequately mitigated given the immediate proximity to residential uses." Staff cited the scale and intensity of the proposal as incompatible with nearby residential properties and rural land-use policies.

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) said she is concerned about the use of on-site wells. "The zoning ordinance requires that industrial projects be served by public utilities." TeKrony added, "We can't conclude that there

won't necessarily be impacts."

She said a third-party consultant reviewed the hydrogeologic study and disagreed with its conclusion that offsite impacts would not occur.

Iwanczuk said, "The County's consultant suggested there's a reasonable potential that there could be offsite effects."

Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) said, "I see my main job when I'm having these discussions is land use. I say all the time—I love land use and zoning. This is land use ... From a land use point of view, this is not an appropriate use."

Randall said the County needs "this product very much." She said, "It is not the use; it is the land use that does not work for me."

Senior land use planner Michael Romeo of Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, speaking on behalf of the applicant, said the proposal mitigates impacts more effectively than the by-right residential development.

On the western boundary, he said there will be a 125-foot enhanced buffer along Wright Farm and a 358-foot setback from the nearest home in the Wright Farm neighborhood. Romeo said the planned Route 7/690 interchange will bring significant improvements and reduce pressure on Hirst Road. "It will reduce traffic by 25%."



Speaking on behalf of the applicant, Jamie Emery of Emery & Garrett Ground Water Investigations said a large well system would require monthly operations and maintenance, allowing for regular monitoring, while individual homes would rely on private wells without centralized oversight.

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) said a 4,500-square-foot home typically uses between 2,000 and 4,000 gallons per day during the summer months with sprinkler use.

TeKrony asked Charles Yudd, director of planning and development for JK Land Holdings, for data supporting his

assertion that 39 homes on the 117-acre property would consume more water than the proposed nearly one-million-square-foot industrial development.

Yudd said his assessment was based on utility bill data from similar uses in other localities. He said flex uses vary widely in water demand depending on the mix of office and storage, with long-term storage generally requiring low water usage per square foot. He reiterated that overall water demand would be higher under 39 individual homes.

TeKrony responded, "That's anecdotal, that's not data."

Citizen Comments

Mayor Chris Bertaut urged the Board not to move the proposal forward, saying it would have severe and long-lasting impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods—"and by surrounding, I mean they literally go around this proposal."

He said it includes more than 600 homes and brings with it catastrophic increases in traffic and long-term impacts to the availability of groundwater for both residential wells and municipal water supply.

At the Jan. 8, 2025, Purcellville Town Council special meeting, Bertaut, along with Vice Mayor Ben Nett and Council members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil, voted against the Valley Commerce Center annexation proposal.

Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought did not vote against the application, saying they had previously been part of a council majority that voted to move the process forward.

He added, "This project was rejected by your planning department because it is fundamentally incompatible with uses envisioned in the County's Comprehensive Plan and also in Purcellville's Comprehensive Plan for this area."

Council Member Erin Rayner asked, "Can you please, please remove the Northern Collector Road portion of Mayfair Crown Drive from Purcellville Road that ends at Centerfield Road from the Transportation Plan?"

However, at the Jan. 14, 2025 Purcellville Town Council meeting—more than a year before the April 15, 2026 County public hearing—Rayner declined to vote to remove the Northern Collector Road from Purcellville's Transportation Plan. She said, "Just randomly removing this without a transportation study is illogical."

Mayfair resident Dan Carvill said he

was speaking for concerns raised by residents from several nearby communities, including 262 homes in Mayfair, 100 in Wright Farm, 34 in Chestnut Hills, 72 in Catoctin Meadows, and 137 in Old Dominion Valley.

"I want you to think back to when you first owned a home—when you were looking for something safe for your family—where your kids could play in the streets. You wanted a home—a place that matched your values. We chose this area for our homes to start our lives."

Nan Forbes said hundreds of homeowners near this site have made the biggest financial decision in their lives to have a home in Purcellville. "They have invested financially in Purcellville based on a reliance in the Comprehensive Plan. No one bought their home expecting an industrial park next door ... There are traffic issues, water issues and a gross denigration of the rural character of Purcellville and western Loudoun County."

Michael Parish said that the County planning staff has recommended denial of the application finding it inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. He said, "This site is designated as rural neighborhood, not an industrial park."

"Even after multiple submissions the County has stated that there is insufficient information to evaluate water usage and impacts," said Parish.

Ryan Goller, who sells and leases industrial and flex space, spoke in support of the proposal, saying there is a shortage of industrial space, especially in western Loudoun. He said the project is needed and aligns with existing development patterns and that he visits the nearby industrial park on Richardson Lane weekly.

Tony Howard, CEO of the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber supports the proposed Valley Commerce Center. "Loudoun faces a serious imbalance in its economy imbalances created by critical shortages of flex industrial, light manufacturing and warehouse space that is constraining small business growth."

Audrey Young said the project is "so detrimental to the health and safety of the general welfare of the residents of Purcellville."

"I support the Valley Commerce Center to help fellow business like mine grow," said Scott Moffat with Crisak, LLC.

Chase Stewart a commercial real estate broker said she supports the project because there is a need for more flex

LET'S KEEP PURCELLVILLE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

space. She said that multiple businesses have gone to Prince William to find space.

“Our town faces a real shortage of light commercial rental space that small service businesses rely on to operate” close to the clients his company serves, said business owner Joseph Parker.

President of JK Moving, David Cox said the project would supply much needed supplemental warehouse space “for our long-term customers, including archives and record storage.”

Lloyd Harting said truck traffic is already bad on Purcellville Road—which is a narrow country road with narrow lanes. “It is physically impossible for two tractor trailers to pass each other going in opposite directions and there are two signs on Purcellville Road which specifically state that through trucks are prohibited.”

Council Member Susan Khalil said, “This project is fundamentally incompatible with both the County’s Comprehensive Plan and the Town of Purcellville’s Comprehensive Plan. These plans exist for a reason—to guide thoughtful, consistent growth that reflects the character and long-term vision of our community.” This proposal does the opposite, she said.

Jenilee Belanger, HOA president for Mayfair and speaking on behalf of the 262 homeowners, said, “We are here today in opposition of the proposed Valley Commerce Center as it represents a fundamental departure of the Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan. It’s a conversion from low intensity to an industrial park designation that was never intended for this area.”

Pasquale DiBari, a Wright Farm resident, said the negative impacts cannot be mitigated. “Please oppose it.”

He said the proposal would “industrialize Purcellville from a rural town to a congested mess. It will open a Pandora’s box for greater unwanted infrastructure needs for second and third order effects.”



DiBari said his family originated from southern Italy, where small charming villages align with a way of life for everyday people to interact, worship, eat, shop, raise their families and enjoy life. “It’s called La Dolce Vita.”

Brook Middleton said, “If you are an HVAC contractor or a plumber or a landscaper and operating from your home you just can’t do that. There is just nowhere to go.” He said the application will be an asset to the community.

Angela Mendez, a Mayfair resident, said the community she grew up in was so dangerous that “we had an emergency plan in place, not for fire, not for earthquakes but for stray bullets.” She said she shared this “so you can understand how important my home is and my community.”

She said she and her husband worked hard, made sacrifices and saved and held onto one dream—“to give our daughter a better life from the one we came from. Moving to Purcellville wasn’t just buying a home; it wasn’t just a transaction; it was the moment that dream came true. “Please protect our children and reject this proposal.”

Application Moved to May 19 for a vote

Kershner said he was maybe on the fence about the application at the beginning of the meeting. Although he is still undecided, the Board is going through the process.

The application is a “very hard” one because it was approved by the Planning Commission yet opposed by staff—and the neighborhoods oppose it.

The applicant is “a very responsible applicant ... and has done more for Loudoun County than I think anyone else in terms of preservation ... so when he comes forward with a project like this, I think it’s with careful eyes.”

“The one question I always ask when we have an application in front of us is nothing is not going to happen ... what are the chances we get a worse application.”

Kershner said that he has researched large lot homes and the water use for 39 homes will be 1,000 gallons per day at a minimum, which is the same as “this application.”

He said he heard tonight that we need flex industrial and he doesn’t want the applicant to go elsewhere outside the county.

“It boils down to traffic and the 7/690 Interchange will make this a lot likely a project that will work,” he said.



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OPINION: WHAT HOCKEY TAUGHT ME, CON'T. FROM PAGE 6

That lesson applies far beyond hockey. Life does not lower the bar for our children. We can't build confidence by cushioning every fall. We build it by teaching them how to get back up.

Competence Comes From Repetition

There is nothing glamorous about skill development. It's repetition. Edges. Stickhandling. Passing drills. Shooting. Over and over again.

Kids don't become competent because they feel inspired. They become competent because they practice.

In today's world, we talk endlessly about motivation, but far less about mastery. Yet competence is one of the strongest drivers of self-worth. When a child knows they can execute a skill under pressure, their posture changes. Their voice changes. Their mindset changes.

Competence reduces anxiety. It replaces fear with preparation.

I've watched players who once hid on the bench begin asking to be on the ice in the final minute of a close game. Not because they suddenly became fearless, but because they became capable.

That's a profound lesson for life.

Whether it's school, business, relationships, or leadership—competence breeds confidence. And competence only comes from disciplined effort.

Motivation Comes From Within—And From “Writhing”

Over the years, I've come to believe something that might sound uncomfortable: motivation is born in writhing.

By writhing, I mean that internal struggle—the frustration of missing the shot, losing the game, getting beat to the puck, or sitting out a shift because you didn't execute. That discomfort, when handled correctly, becomes fuel.

Too often, adults rush to eliminate that feeling. We explain it away. We protect kids from it. But that tension—that emotional friction—is what builds internal drive.

When a player skates off the ice angry because they know they could have done better, that's not a problem to fix. That's motivation taking root.

The key is teaching them how to process it. Not with shame. Not with blame. But with ownership.

“What are you going to do about it?”

That question changes everything.

It shifts the locus of control inward. It tells a child that improvement is in their hands.

External rewards—stickers, trophies, praise—are temporary. Internal motivation, born from personal standards and the desire to improve, is enduring. And it is forged in moments of discomfort.

The Bigger Lesson

Twenty-one years in the US Navy Special Operations Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Bomb Disposal, and playing and coaching hockey taught me that success in life doesn't come from avoiding hardship. It comes from engaging with it.

Confidence is the belief that “I can.”

Competence is the proof that “I have.”

Motivation is the fire that says “I will.”

When those three align, you don't just get better athletes. You get strong human beings.

In a world increasingly focused on comfort and immediate gratification, youth sports remain one of the last arenas where effort still matters, where merit is visible, and where improvement is earned.

That's why I believe these lessons are universal. Whether a child becomes a

professional athlete or never laces up skates again, the traits developed on that ice will carry into boardrooms, marriages, military units, and communities.

We don't need to raise perfect children. We need to raise capable ones.

Kids who know how to struggle.

Kids who know how to practice.

Kids who know how to own their results.

That's what I thought I was teaching when I became a hockey coach.

What I now understand is that they were teaching me.

And the lesson is simple: confidence, competence, and motivation aren't sports principles.

They are life principles.

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.”

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

vortex—in which things are definitely not always what they seem.

My continued travels next took me to a former place of worship—this time what appeared to be an abandoned church building across the highway from the existing Chestnut Hill United Methodist Church—which is a sturdy-looking brick structure; the older location exhibited a great deal of character, history, and to my finding—some wonderful stories.

Just across the roadway at 90 degrees I

took in the sight of a small (story & a half), wooden structure with the sign “Wesley House” just above the front door. Again, I sensed a great deal of history, isolation and perseverance. I'm sure these facilities will pass several more tests of time, as they undoubtedly have in the past.

I was grateful to spend a bit of time at these locations, and ostensibly soak up a bit of their solidity, after the state-fair carnival-ride effects of my recent trip on Chestnut Hill Road.

I hadn't really been monitoring my

mapping system, and shortly after re-em-barking on my journey of discovery, I could see the obviously major intersection approaching with Route Nine – Charles Town Pike, at Keyes Gap—pretty much at the location of the pass between a couple of peaks of the Blue Ridge.

I stopped long enough to get acquainted with the clouds passing overhead—or rather, at eye level—and attempted to distinguish the line between solid ground of the hills, and the (mostly) gaseous makeup of water vapor and lighter

elements composing a very refreshing breath of air.

I was grateful I'd picked a relatively pleasant time of year to pause at this elevation. I shook my head as I recalled making mail deliveries within a quarter-mile of this spot, with a foot of new snow on the ground.

Don't try that at home. Almost as hair-raising as thinking about photography when making the initial climb up 'the mountain' on the other end of Chestnut Hill Road.

LETTER: VALLEY COMMERCE CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

homeowner may pump more than 400 gallons in one day, but not all of them will do so on any given day, and no one will do it 365 days per year, especially not during the several months of winter weather.

The USEPA states that roughly 30% of the average 400 gpd usage per home is used exterior to the home for lawns, gardening, etc., but some homes use more for exterior uses, especially in arid parts of the country, where exterior needs may account for 60% of the total water usage.

Based on this data, the resulting estimated average usage would therefore

be 700 gpd per home in high usage areas. Applying this greater value to all 39 homes yields a total usage of 27,300 gpd. The applicant's proposed pumping rate is still more than 1.5 times this estimate, which is based on USEPA high-use, arid region data.

Groundwater is a crucial resource for homes, agriculture, communities, and businesses in Western Loudoun County, and there is some evidence that groundwater levels locally and regionally may be declining.

This means that even current groundwater usage may not be entirely sustainable in the long term, and there are many by-right homes, farms, and

properly zoned businesses yet to be built in Western Loudoun which will all lead to increased groundwater usage. Therefore, eventual depletion of this crucial groundwater resource is virtually certain if steps are not taken to restrain its usage and/or enhance the recharge of Western Loudoun aquifer systems.

The proposed project will withdraw much more groundwater each year than the 39 by-right homes on this site, and it will therefore accelerate groundwater depletion.

Why is this project's excessive groundwater pumping rate being considered for approval, when the applicant has not incorporated various well-known

techniques and technologies to minimize the need for potable water?

Investing in active water harvesting and greywater reuse would reduce the need for groundwater pumping and reduce the likelihood that future offsite well replacement will ever be needed.

The proposed project should have been designed to protect and conserve the groundwater resources that we all, including the applicant's project, are dependent on.

I respectfully recommend that this application be denied.

*Wayne B. Bergstrom
Ph.D., P.E. (emeritus)
Hillsboro*

LETTER: CONFLICT OF INTERESTS,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Western Loudoun County lies within the County's Rural Policy Area, so its character is the opposite of the densely-developed eastern Loudoun County. Furthermore, there is appropriate land available in eastern Loudoun County for further commercial and industrial development.

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors will be voting on the

rezoning proposal on May 19. How the supervisors vote that day will identify who their real constituents are.

Those supervisors who vote against approving the rezoning proposal will reveal that they represent the interests of Loudoun County residents over the interests of Loudoun County businesses. Those supervisors who vote for approving the rezoning proposal will reveal that they represent the interests of Loudoun County businesses

over the interests of Loudoun County residents.

One important point that the supervisors should also remember before they vote is that Loudoun County residents will be voting in the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors election that will be held in November of 2027, while Loudoun County businesses will not be able to vote in that election.

*Lloyd Harting
Purcellville*

LEESBURG COMPRESSOR STATION SPEX,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

EGTS's neighbor said. "[EGTS] helped the other plant get quieter, and [EGTS] was quieter than [the other station]. They've been pretty much a good neighbor."

Leesburg resident Chris Tandy opposed the special exception, citing

environmental concerns.

"I would ask you to vote against the expansion because of climate change," Tandy said. "Obviously, natural gas is a significant greenhouse gas. There's plenty of research that suggests that natural gas is as harmful to the planet as coal is when the leak rate is factored in."

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little

River) said she would support the special exception and that she would research renewable energy options before the voting on the application in a business meeting.

The Board voted 8-0-1 to forward the application to a business meeting. Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) was absent.

RAYNER ET AL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

to amend their filing, the revised complaint did not alter the court's fundamental conclusion that the matter falls outside its purview.

The plaintiffs' attorney has a limited window to file objections or pursue further legal action, including a potential appeal.

More broadly, the case represents the latest development in an ongoing series of disputes following the shift in council control after the 2024 election. Since then, council proceedings have been marked by repeated legal challenges, procedural conflicts, and sharply contested claims surrounding fiscal authority, reflecting deep divisions over the

town's growth strategy, governance, and financial direction.

Following the enactment of SB648, the council could be split 3-3. The court could appoint a temporary replacement to fill Nett's seat, and that appointee will determine the council's voting balance until the outcome of Nett's trial in December.

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LETTER: THANKS ARTHUR GODFREY,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

a few 30 second ads where he just had to get up from a chair and move to a pay phone, and drop a dime into the phone. But his emphysema was so bad, that he could hardly make it ten feet.

He had his own oxygen tank nearby. In 1982, he was only 79, but looked and moved like he was much older. He died about a year later on March 13, 1983. He was 79, just a few months shy of 80.

On the set, there was a lot of dead time between takes designed to give him a chance to rest and catch his breath, literally. He scolded the crew and chastised them not to smoke, or else they would wind up like him.

I had time to talk to him, and I told him that “he” was the last job I was doing in LA and we were moving to Virginia the very next day. His eyes lit up and he asked me where we were moving to? I answered and said, “Reston,” for a short time, because we knew it was a planned community and we chose an apartment for six months.

We knew that we would not be next to an all-night bowling alley or disco. It was 1982 after all, and we had no real way to pick an apartment online, but I did have a small apartment guidebook that I picked up somewhere. From it, we chose an apartment near Wiehle Avenue.

He told me to check Leesburg out when

we started looking for a more permanent house. So, after we settled into our DC jobs and started to look for a house—we took the advice from our new co-workers to avoid anything north or south of DC on or near 95. Also to stay away from the eastern suburbs for the same reason, traffic would eat us up.

So, one sunny April morning we headed to Leesburg where Ryan Homes was building a new subdivision called Carrvale. It may have been one of the first big subdivisions in Leesburg at the time.

We went out to see the new homes and signed on the dotted line. We fell in love with Leesburg on first sight. We were taking Arthur Godfrey’s suggestion and were going to move that June. Thanks Arthur.

We lived there until 1993, but when our commute into DC on Route 7 just got worse and worse, longer and longer, we knew we had to make a change.

When we moved to Leesburg in 1982, we drove the Dulles Toll Road and headed north on a nearly empty Route 28 and hung a left on Route 7—all the way to Leesburg in the dark during winter and no traffic lights or even lights at all.

I think it was about 15 miles from Route 7 to Leesburg. The first lights we saw were from the FAA ATC. Total darkness. Our biggest fear was the deer that

congregated near the Xerox Conference Center entrance.

As signal lights got more plentiful and the Marcus Bles property started to get developed, we made the move to Lovettsville, so we could take the MARC train into DC. We hated to leave Leesburg, but with every new traffic signal on Route 7, our commute became longer.

A few years ago, I was thinking about Arthur Godfrey after someone asked me, “How we come to Leesburg?” As I related the story, I wondered what happened to Arthur?

Now, with the internet and Wikipedia, it was an easy find. Arthur Godfrey is buried in the Union Cemetery in Leesburg.

Next chance I had, I went to the cemetery and asked the cemetery staff where he was buried, and they pointed to where he was buried. I was shocked. I never heard this story even in the local papers.

I took a few pictures. It was sort of completing a circle. Had I not worked on the insurance commercial on my last day in California, and had it not been with Arthur Godfrey, we would never have found Leesburg. Fate? Karma? Who knows.

Some years ago, I heard a story about Arthur Godfrey and his connection to the Leesburg airport. According to local accounts, after finishing his television show in New York, he would fly from Teterboro Airport to his Beacon Hill

Farm near Leesburg.

As Stanley Caulkins once recalled, Godfrey reportedly found the runways at the old airport too short for his DC-3 in marginal weather and offered to help extend them—though this story has not been definitively corroborated.

What is documented is his significant role in the airport’s early history. In 1950, he purchased the Leesburg Airpark and donated it to the Town of Leesburg on the condition that it remain a public airport for 20 years. He regularly flew between Leesburg and New York, calling the airfield the “Old Cow Pasture” on his national radio program.

As the Town grew, leaders determined a larger airport was needed. In the early 1960s, Leesburg secured federal funding for a new site, and Godfrey released the Town from the restriction on his donated property, allowing it to be sold to help fund construction.

When the new airport opened on October 10, 1964, it was named Godfrey Field in his honor. It later expanded alongside regional growth following the opening of Dulles International Airport in 1962, and in 2000 was renamed Leesburg Executive Airport at Godfrey Field.

Please pass to Tim Jon. He may get a kick out of the Union Cemetery link to his wonderful story.

*George Santulli
Lovettsville*

LETTER: SUPPORT WELL-PLANNED FLEX SPACE,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

this kind of space when the need is so obvious.

The ripple effects are real. When local businesses can’t find a place to operate, they don’t just disappear—they relocate. And when they leave, residents feel it. Fewer service providers, longer wait times, higher costs, and ultimately a weaker local economy.

This isn’t just a business issue—it’s a community issue. Supporting well-planned flex space developments is part of maintaining access to the everyday services people depend on and preserving a strong local tax base.

Loudoun has long benefited from a diverse mix of small businesses. If the county wants to keep it that way, it needs to make room for them to exist and grow. Ignoring that reality risks pushing them—and the value they bring—somewhere else.

*Ben Carpenter
Carpenter Beach Construction/
Premier Electrical Services*

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Some researchers are projecting that within the next couple of decades, teens’ first sexual experience could increasingly shift toward synthetic forms, including robot-mediated intimacy. Whether or not this prediction proves accurate, it reflects a larger truth: technology is steadily moving into spaces once reserved for human contact, vulnerability, and mutual dependence.

Scholars such as Sherry Turkle have long warned that as technology mediates more of our relationships, we risk losing the depth and meaning that come from embodied human connection. I now see young adults who have completed school, started careers, and built social networks entirely online—yet feel isolated.

We see rising rates of loneliness, delayed independence, and what is often described as a “failure to launch.” The paradox is striking: the same technologies designed to make life easier may be undermining the very skills needed to live it well.

What I am describing here is not just a

Western phenomenon. In Japan, the term “hikikomori” describes young adults who withdraw almost entirely from society, a trend now observed in other technologically advanced countries.

In South Korea, “gwanwang” refers to those who live primarily in virtual worlds. These international patterns suggest that the digital opt-out is a global issue, reshaping adulthood everywhere.

For decades, our greatest concerns about adolescent derailment centered on drugs and alcohol—substances that, while still a real and present danger for many teens, are widely recognized, regulated, and addressed as public health threats. Technology, by contrast, has become a quiet, socially sanctioned, and often encouraged “drug of choice” for a generation of young people. Its effects can be equally or more insidious, less stigmatized, and far more pervasive, making its developmental consequences easier to overlook.

As both a psychologist and a parent, I believe the solution is not to reject

technology, but to rebalance it. We must intentionally reintroduce friction into the lives of young people. This means encouraging part-time work, in-person friendships, and real-world problem-solving. It means allowing space for discomfort, failure, and uncertainty. Those experiences are not obstacles to development; they are its foundation.

We should be asking a necessary question: if growing up becomes optional, what kind of adults will we create? How ready will our future leaders be to lead?

Convenience is seductive, but competence is earned. And it is competence—built through lived experience—that ultimately gives life meaning, direction, and resilience. As a community, we must help young people rediscover the value of growing up fully, in the real 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.

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RESIDENT DEMONSTRATES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

safety, noise, traffic and long-term disruption to the character of the area.

“Residents of the surrounding area have expressed substantial and well documented opposition to the proposed insulation of the disc golf course and the parking lots,” said Jackson.



Karen Pantas said her home abuts a parcel where seven disc golf holes are planned. “I have been deeply opposed to this portion of the project since the plans came out,” she said.

To illustrate her concern about noise, Pantas brought a disc golf basket into the boardroom and, while speaking, struck it several times with a frisbee, demonstrating the sound she and nearby residents would hear.

“The noise is extremely disturbing,” she said. She added, “Westpark is in a neighborhood surrounded by homes,” where residents have built their lives and expect peace. “You would not want this near your home. I don’t want it near mine.”

Resident Noel Green said the proposed pavilion raises serious concerns. “We already experience problems with late night activity in the area and adding a pavilion will add another gathering place that may worsen those existing problems.

“Additionally, Loudoun County has indicated this will be an unstaffed park and that raises serious concerns about maintenance, supervision, and accountability.”

Construction is expected to begin in fall 2026, with completion anticipated by spring 2028.

STUDENTS TAKE CENTER COURT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

support from local businesses and community members.

“We are excited to partner with these local elementary schools in Loudoun County and create a memorable experience for students,” said Josh Kirby, the team’s director of communications and media relations. “The entire Western Loudoun community and beyond has made such an incredible impact by supporting the Kids Get in Free Initiative.”

At halftime, the energy continued with a performance by the Loudounettes, a high-energy hip hop and jazz team from the Dance Academy of Loudoun. The group, directed by Hallie Mansoor, features dancers ranging in age and showcased a mix of fast-paced routines that kept the crowd engaged.

For many families, the afternoon was about the experience—bringing together schools, students and community members for a day that mixed sports with celebration.

AI AND I, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

fluorescent ceiling fixtures, to old flat acrylic lenses. The goal was to quiet a particularly stubborn construction manager. I reported that the deep-cell fixtures produced a more effective “bat wing” light distribution, and that design became our standard.

Had AI existed then, much of that research could have been done in minutes. Today I use AI often, though I’m no expert. This is simply my ongoing experience with it.

Is AI Accurate?

My first foray into AI was with ChatGPT. I started with a basic question: “What are the largest cities in Austria?” The answer came back quickly and seemed solid. Then I tried something more involved: “Compare Roman and Norse mythology.” Again, the response was fast and impressively organized. As a newcomer, I was amazed.

Then I heard that AI could be wrong. I concocted a test. I asked ChatGPT a legal question: “In Virginia, what is the liability of a farm owner in a slip-and-fall case?” Its response looked authoritative, replete with case citations. But when I checked several of those citations, most were incorrect or irrelevant. These so-called “hallucinations” are a known limitation of AI, but seeing them firsthand was jarring.

That raised two obvious questions: How much trust should one place in AI? What AI source is best?

Four AI Engines

I gave **ChatGPT** another chance. I asked whether the phrase “presumed innocent until proven guilty” is technically accurate. It responded with a standard explanation: “a foundational principle of criminal law meaning the accused is legally considered innocent until proven otherwise.” That answer is familiar—but not precise.

I prefer a clearer statement: “presumed not guilty until adjudicated guilty.” Consider an example. A man stands over a body, knife in hand, blood everywhere. Police arrive and arrest him on the spot. Do people actually believe he is “innocent”? Of course not. They assume guilt—but also recognize that guilt must be proven in court. That distinction matters.

Gemini, built into Google, was next. It described the phrase as a legal fiction and discussed burden of proof. That was partially useful, but still somewhat vague.

Claude.ai did better: it explained that the presumption of innocence is a procedural rule governing how trials are conducted, not a statement about what anyone truly believes. That was much closer to the mark.

Perplexity.ai began with strong framing: “the phrase is legal shorthand and inherently imprecise; courts do not declare factual innocence, only that guilt was not proven.” That, to me, was the most satisfying AI answer, even if I still prefer my own phrasing.

Research vs. Analysis

AI is excellent at gathering and summarizing

information, but its outputs require a degree of skepticism. Traditional Google search gives you links; AI tools give you synthesized answers. Both are useful, but what I often want is analysis—something closer to judgment.

So I tried a more subjective question.

For several years, Emily and I shared a hobby: driving sports cars on the Summit Point tracks in West Virginia. (I once hit 165 mph.) My last track car, a heavily modified Porsche Cayman S, was a thrill. Then its front suspension broke in a turn, and the car was totaled.

That incident helped me decide to step away from track driving. The hobby had begun to feel like piling up hundred-dollar bills, dousing them with gasoline, and lighting a match.

Still, I miss sporty driving. So I posed a question to the four AI systems: “Which Porsche Cayman model is most likely to hold its value—a 2008 S, a 2010 S, or a 2014 base?”

The answers:

ChatGPT: 2008 Cayman S

Gemini: 2010 Cayman S

Claude: 2008 Cayman S

Perplexity: 2014 Cayman base

Four AI systems, three different answers. That tells you something. There’s more: AI can inform a decision, but it doesn’t make one. In the end, factoring in price, performance, and comfort, I’ve settled—tentatively—on the 2014.

Curiosity

I’ve always been curious, and AI has become a convenient outlet for that. These days I ask constantly questions: Should olives be refrigerated after opening? What are Europe’s largest metropolitan areas? When was Henry IV of France born? What is plasma physics? What distinguishes “presumed” from “assumed”? (They are not the same.)

My questions never really stop. AI makes it easy to indulge that curiosity.

AI and Writing

For this piece, I stayed with Microsoft Word through multiple drafts. Then I ran it through Perplexity to see what it might suggest. It offered several edits, most of which I accepted. I also asked it to shorten the piece by about 200 words. It did so effectively—but I had to perform some editing, mainly for style.

AI helps, but it doesn’t present a polished document. There are always a perfect word and a perfect sentence, and finding them still is a human task. This is, then, the seventh draft.

Charlie Houston once played elaborate word games with his father and later competed in the National Crossword Puzzle Tournament. His wife tries to ignore his idiosyncrasies.

Perplexity.ai suggested this article reflects “intellectual humility.” Those who know Charlie would likely disagree.

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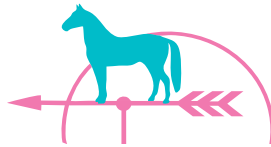


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On The Market...



Lovettsville - 5 bedrooms



Leesburg -16 acres- with Barn



Just listed St. Louis Rd. \$479,000

“

In a fast-moving market, their commitment is unmatched. Dedication that shows just how much they prioritize being reachable whenever their clients need them most.

-Chris & Pat- Upperville, VA

”



**Just listed Old Waterford Road
21 Acres**

“

Sam & Curt are trusted advisors, hard workers and very straightforward. They have helped us tremendously over the years.

-Shawn Halveland, Home Project Connections, Waterford

”



**Coming Soon- Horse Property
Lovettsville**



JACK IS "MOVE- IN" READY!



Bluemont- Land- 5.5 Acres

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!

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