



## Randall calls Loudoun “historic and resilient” in State of the County address

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

Chair-at-Large Phyllis Randall used her annual State of the County address on May 21, to frame Loudoun County’s past and future as part of a broader American story, weaving together themes of military service, immigration, economic growth, racial injustice and civic responsibility.

Randall delivered a speech titled “Loudoun’s American Story,” arguing that the county’s history reflects both the nation’s triumphs and contradictions.

“Loudoun, the history of our county is a study in contrast,” Randall said near the



conclusion of the address. “A story as varied, challenging, powerful and victorious as ours is written in bittersweet ink.”

Throughout the speech, Randall repeatedly connected Loudoun’s development to larger moments in American history, beginning with the Revolutionary War and the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

“Those men were far from perfect,” she said of the nation’s founders. “However, even with their many imperfections, these men wrote a document that

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established a new nation that has withstood the test of time.”

Randall, the daughter of a military family,

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## “I can shout if I want; I can shout if I want.” Stought says during heated Purcellville budget debate

BY VALERIE CURY

On May 12, the Purcellville Town Council passed its \$31,779,808 budget in a 4–3 vote. Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted in favor, while Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought voted against.

Utility rates are set to increase by 16.5% for water service and 14.5% for wastewater service due to increased operating costs and capital improvement projects.

During the public comment portion of the April 28 Purcellville Town Council work session, several residents who regularly support Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright and Caleb Stought addressed the council, continuing a pattern of contentious exchanges

that have characterized council meetings.

Paul McCray, who is running for Town Council in the November election, referenced the recent court decision in Vice Mayor Ben Nett’s recall case, in which Nett was not removed from office.

“I’m sorry the recent decision in court didn’t go how most people wanted,” McCray said. “But justice takes time.”

McCray also thanked Rayner, Wright and Stought for what he described as using the law and the town charter to oppose actions taken by the council majority.

Purcellville resident Justin Morrow told the council he missed his six-year-old son’s baseball game to attend the meeting. Morrow said he struggled to explain the town’s political conflicts to his son and criticized the

council majority for what he described as a lack of accountability.

Morrow then said, “You all are guilty, but not accountable. We are not seeing justice tonight. The mayor can’t run a simple meeting without f-----g up a simple agenda. He added, “This is un-f-----g believable.”

Former Council Member Joan Lehr also addressed the council during public comment, telling members of the council majority, “You are really done. You are not going to make it.”

Lehr’s remarks referenced the upcoming November elections and criticized the council majority associated with slow-growth policies and lower-tax priorities.

Lehr previously served on the Town Council and

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# Freedom High School Gymnast Wins National Title, Commits to Penn State

BY VALERIE CURY

For Jackson Barker, perseverance paid off in a big way this season.

The Freedom High School senior, Class of 2026, captured the national title on rings at the Men's Artistic Gymnastics National Championships in Oklahoma City earlier this month, cementing his status as one of the top rings specialists in the country. Barker, a Level 10 gymnast from Loudoun County, also recently signed with Penn State Nittany Lions men's gymnastics for the Class of 2030.

Representing Capital Gymnastics National Training Center, Barker competed May 6–10 and delivered standout performances in both the preliminary and final rounds. After posting a 13.85 in preliminaries, he followed with a 13.75 in finals. Combined, his 27.60 score comfortably secured the national championship, ahead of the second-place score of 25.350.

The victory capped off a dominant 2026 season in which Barker won every rings competition he entered. He also recorded a personal-best score of 14.6 — currently the highest score in men's artistic club gymnastics.

"What makes the story meaningful to me is that last year I didn't even place nationally," Barker said. "This season I came back and swept the year, ending it with a national championship in one of the toughest events in men's gymnastics."

The achievement was especially meaningful after a difficult 2025 season, when Barker fell short of expectations at nationals in Salt Lake City. Last year, he scored a 10.9 and tied for ninth place.

Rather than discouraging him, the setback fueled his determination.

"You don't have to be the best right away," Barker said. "You just have to keep showing up when most people would quit."

Barker credited much of his success to his longtime coach, David, who continued to support him through challenging moments.



"I would like to thank my Coach Jesus David Pacheco. He saw something in me before a lot of people did," Barker said. "When things didn't go my way last year, he never let me doubt what I was capable of. He pushed me through every tough day, every setback, and every moment people counted me out."

"Winning this national title means a lot, but sharing it with the coach who helped build me into this athlete means even more. Thank you for everything."

Barker has been involved in gymnastics for 14 years and made the unusual decision early in his career to specialize almost entirely in rings—a move some questioned at the time.

"When I was younger, I was told to not put all my eggs in one basket," he said. "I was told I was crazy for putting my focus on just rings."

That focus ultimately paid off, earning Barker a place in Penn State's men's gymnastics program and the opportunity to compete in the Big Ten Conference.

Now, with a national title and a commitment to Penn State, Barker's perseverance and dedication have clearly paid off.

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# Unlimited Events Debate Exposes Rural Divide at Special BOS Meeting

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

The debate over the future of western Loudoun came down at the Board's May 4 meeting to two competing visions of rural life.

For winery and brewery owners in Loudoun County, private events such as weddings, concerts and festivals are more than supplemental income—they are viewed as an important part of the economic model that helps sustain farms and rural businesses.

For nearby residents those events have increasingly raised concerns about traffic, noise, public safety and growing commercial activity in rural residential areas long defined by quiet roads, farmland and open space.

Those competing visions dominated a special May 4 meeting of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors focused on Western Loudoun Rural Uses and Standards. At the center of the debate was whether wineries and breweries should be permitted to host an unlimited number of events each year.

The sharpest fight centered on Motion 20, a proposal that would have allowed farm wineries, limited breweries and limited distilleries to host private parties and events "with no limitations on the number of such," provided they complied with state alcohol laws.

County staff opposed the proposal, warning that unlimited events could worsen traffic, noise and safety concerns on rural roads. Instead, staff backed an alternative approach centered on use-specific standards tied to the size and intensity of operations.

During public comment, winery and brewery owners repeatedly argued that limiting events would threaten the survival of rural businesses already operating on narrow margins.

Peter Deliso of 868 Estate Vineyards told supervisors that events are inseparable from the agricultural business model.

"Events are not incidental. They are essential," Deliso said. "We sell wine by bringing customers to our property. These events are an integral part of our business. They are not something separate."

Steve Bazzo of Bazzo Family Vineyards described events as the direct driver of wine sales. "For us, events equal on-premises wine sales," He said. "It's the only reason we operate."

Tollga Baki of Hillsboro Winery and Brewery argued that the county was standing in the way of ordinary business activity.

"Any artificial limits on these events amounts to the county literally standing between us and our ability to sell our products," said Baki.

Amee Henkle of Lost Creek Winery pointed to the dramatic expansion of Loudoun's wine industry over the past four decades, saying events and tasting rooms are what allow farms to survive economically.

Kate Zurschmeide of Great Country Farms urged supervisors to support Motion 20 and avoid what she called unnecessary regulation and "capping out revenue potential."

Residents painted a far different picture of life beside increasingly event-focused rural businesses.

Britton Rogan, an equestrian resident and horse farm operator, described how nearby event activity has directly affected her agricultural business.

"What we're seeing is a by-right agricultural use operating at a level that is no longer consistent with the size of the parcel," Rogan said.

"On less than 15 acres, this neighboring operation is regularly bringing hundreds of people on site, and transporting additional people by shuttle daily.

"That level of activity functions like a high capacity commercial or special event use, but it is not subject to the same performance standards. The impacts are measurable," she explained.

"The increased traffic on rural roads, early morning—by the way, my family was awoken at 5:15 this morning—and late night activity, the smell of sewage, noise, trespassing, and conditions incompatible with adjacent uses that include my residence and my horses," she added.

Rogan said she has already lost clients "because the surrounding environment no longer meets the expectations for a safe,

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BY CHARLIE HOUSTON

Nope, that's not the cost of three new Loudoun County high schools (which would be more than that.) It's not County spending for six weeks. Nope, IT's MINE.

Yep, it's all mine. Thank you, Mega Millions. Charlie Houston won!

## OPINION

While the prize was broadcast at \$1.5 billion, that's not how it works. I took my winnings as a lump-sum payment, which is substantially less than the aggregate of payments over a number of years. The lottery then withheld taxes on that lump sum. Still, I pocket a lot of money and dream about spending it

Unfortunately, all of this was a fantasy that appeared during my deepest sleep and lingered during an hour or so of half-sleep. I don't even play MegaMillions.

By the time my feet were on the floor and I was heading to the shower, I knew my winnings were not real. No matter. How about an imaginary spending spree?

## Art

I lust for fine art and with now-deep pockets I'd amass a fine collection of

paintings. These days paintings can command stratospheric prices but art can be a good investment, so I'd indulge my hankerings with \$72, 078 million, leaving me with a nice round \$600 mill.

## Time for a Pause

Before I get carried away, I'll get professional advice and invest half that remainder, or \$300 million. I'll sleep well. Then I'd gleefully deploy the rest of the money, also \$300 million.

## A Viennese Pied a Terre

What a great city! A very nice flat might set me back about \$5 million. Add another \$2 million for furnishings and art. Vienna is also a great base from which to explore Europe. We'd need wheels, maybe a mid-sized BMW for longer trips and a Porsche for exploring the Alpine areas. I could happily dream tonight about a transatlantic collection of cars.

## A Castle is a Man's Home

Not literally a castle. We'd hire a good

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# Beyond the Downgrade and the Real Cost of Purcellville's Utilities

BY PURCELLVILLE MAYOR CHRIS BERTAUT

Let's talk about the credit rating—but let's tell the whole story.

## OPINION

No one should dismiss a downgrade or a negative outlook. They matter. But it is misleading to suggest that Purcellville's utility challenge suddenly began because one Council used meals tax or General Fund support to reduce pressure on residents.

The water and sewer issue is the product of a long-standing legacy debt burden, operating-cost challenges, capital-planning problems, and ratepayer affordability concerns.

When Mayor Kwasi Fraser came into office, Purcellville was already carrying substantial General and Utility Fund, water, and sewer debt—\$61 million to be exact. The problem was not simply the amount of debt.

It was the structure of the debt: early prepayment penalties, limited flexibility, balloon-payment pressure, and years in which the Town was paying heavily

toward interest rather than meaningfully reducing principal.

The restructuring and refinancing actions taken during the Fraser years were not about creating new debt. They were designed to remove constraints, lower interest costs, defease debt where possible, improve repayment flexibility, protect residents from severe rate shock, and ultimately position the Town to pay down principal.

From 2014 to 2022, overall Town debt was reduced by more than \$9 million. That is not inaction. That is measurable progress.

It is also important to remember that during that same period, utility rate increases were generally held within a moderate and predictable range—often between 0% and 5%.

The Town also used other tools: operational cost controls, reduced chargeback pressure, nutrient credit bank revenue, approximately \$10.58 million in ARPA federal funds, increased General Fund

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# Rural Loudoun at Risk: Commercialization Over Community

BY DAVID VERHEY, PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF PAXSON-AIRMONT

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors recently voted to advance Supervisor Caleb Kershner's (Catoctin) pro-industry zoning framework to expand event-based commercial activity in western Loudoun. County staff will now draft the ordinance changes needed to implement it. The Board approved the plan despite strong opposition from western Loudoun residents.

## OPINION

Kershner's proposal would let wineries, breweries, and distilleries host effectively unlimited events in rural Loudoun, with real consequences for nearby residents, family farms, country roads, and water resources. More events mean more traffic, more noise, greater strain on wells and septic systems, and more commercial activity in areas never meant to function as entertainment corridors.

Most residents support local wineries, breweries, and agriculture. That is not the issue. The issue is turning western Loudoun into a commercial event district with few meaningful limits.

Kershner said he introduced the new zoning framework at the request of industry groups. But western Loudoun residents opposed it, raising concerns about traffic, noise, water, infrastructure, and the loss of rural character.

After hearing these concerns, several supervisors from eastern Loudoun acknowledged the need for limits and stronger protections for rural residents. Yet Supervisor Kershner, whose district includes the communities most directly affected, continues pushing in the opposite direction.

This raises a simple question: if supervisors from eastern Loudoun are listening to western Loudoun residents, why isn't western Loudoun's own supervisor listening?

This is not the only fight. Western Loudoun residents are also battling data center developer Chuck Kuhn's Valley Commerce Center near Purcellville, which would drop industrial-scale development into the rural policy area.

Kuhn's JK Community Farm is now pushing on a second front. It has reportedly renewed its effort to build a banquet and event center on its historic Paxson Road property,

even after the Land Trust of Virginia warned the county that a building for private parties, corporate functions and weddings would violate the property's conservation easement, which permits only agricultural farm buildings.

JK's answer is to call the building a "farm building" and promise only occasional events for up to 245 people in the name of charity. But a different label doesn't change the truth. Hosting private parties, weddings, and corporate functions for revenue is commercial activity, no matter whether the profits underwrite Mr. Kuhn's charity. This is the same commercialization proposal in different packaging.

When is this going to stop?

The Board of Supervisors cannot keep allowing rural properties to become targets for commercial event expansion in defiance of community concerns and longstanding conservation protections.

Western Loudoun residents have repeatedly opposed industrial-scale and high-intensity commercial projects

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## From Desk Job to Sharp Blades: Bill Suter Finds His Way Home

BY VALERIE CURY

For Bill Suter, life has come full circle—and this time, it comes with lawn mowers, small engines, a six-year-old sidekick and even a cockatoo named Peekaboo.

The Lovettsville resident and 2008 Loudoun Valley High School graduate is the new owner of Sharp Blades, the longtime Loudoun County small-engine repair business built by Ronnie Fox. For Suter, the opportunity felt less like a career change and more like finding his way back home.



“I was tired of being a desk jockey,” Suter said. “I missed working with my hands, being outside and meeting people again. This is exactly what I wanted to do.”

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## Protect Our Water Before Our Wells Run Dry

*Support a Virginia DEQ  
Groundwater Management  
Area for Loudoun*

Dear Editor:

In April, the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC) and sponsoring organizations (Loudoun Watershed Watch, Loudoun's Future, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Piedmont Environmental Council, and Save Rural Loudoun) held three public meetings about western Loudoun's groundwater resources, with over 300 residents attending. The meetings highlighted an important assessment of Loudoun's groundwater supply produced in 2025.

The Groundwater Study shows groundwater levels declining in western Loudoun for several decades. Our geology sharply limits available groundwater, even as wells increased from 6000 in 1980 to 19,000 today. Our farmers and residents face a growing risk of dry wells, a problem that can't be easily fixed by extending public water service.

The Study recommends a Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Groundwater Management Area to help protect western Loudoun's limited groundwater resources. LCPCC and its partners encourage the County government to advocate with DEQ to establish this protection.

The authors of the Study are three

long-time western Loudoun residents. These highly qualified, public-minded gentlemen spearheaded LCPCC's Agriculture Work Group efforts over many long months.

John Adams, of the Loudoun Farm Bureau and 50-year operator of Rock Croft Farm, was the first to press the initiative and engage county organizations. David Ward, a hydrogeologist with over 40 years' experience with Loudoun groundwater and former county employee, was lead author. His expertise and scientific insights were key to understanding the problem and explaining it to the public. Andrew Stoddard, a nationally recognized water resources engineer, was co-author. His modeling experience and analysis reinforced the report's scientific rigor.

LCPCC is a coalition of over 50 Loudoun participating organizations. Together, we share information and ideas, while striving to help protect Loudoun's environmental and historic resources. On behalf of our many participating organizations, we thank the authors and everyone who is helping bring attention to the serious issues related to groundwater. We encourage all Loudoun residents to recognize our groundwater as the precious resource it is and to support a request to Virginia DEQ to establish a Groundwater Management Area that includes Loudoun.

The full report is available at Loudoun County Groundwater Study.

*Loudoun County Preservation & Conservation Coalition Executive Committee, Loudoun Watershed Watch, Loudoun's Future, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Piedmont Environmental Council, and Save Rural Loudoun*

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— Ask Dr. Mike —

# Making the Most of Summer 2026 for Your Kids: A Parent's Guide

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER PSY.D.

Summer remains a treasured season for children and families—a time to play, recharge, and make lifelong memories. For many parents, our own childhood summers evoke images of unsupervised afternoons, neighborhood games that stretched until dusk, and the freedom to roam without the structure or oversight that is common today. We

remember the joy of spontaneous adventures, the lessons learned from boredom, and the friendships forged in the absence of screens and schedules.

However, the world has changed. Today's families face different realities: increased digital engagement, more dual-working households, evolving safety concerns, and a greater emphasis on structured activities.

For many, the “free-range” approach of the past isn't practical or feasible. Our children's core needs—for connection, exploration, and opportunities to develop new skills—are unchanged, but how we help them meet those needs requires more intention and planning than ever before.

Here are ten research-backed tips to help your child thrive this summer:

**1. Establish a Flexible, Predictable Routine.** While

summer gives a welcome break from the rigidity of the school year, most children and teens still benefit from a basic daily structure. Predictable routines help kids feel secure and support the development of executive functioning and self-regulation. For younger children, visual schedules can be helpful. For teens, involve them in planning their days to foster independence and responsibility.

**2. Prioritize Outdoor Time.** Spending time outside is linked to better mental health, increased physical activity, and improved attention. A 2024 JAMA Pediatrics review found that regular outdoor play reduces rates of anxiety and depression and supports healthy sleep and weight. Encourage your child to explore local parks, ride bikes, or simply play in the backyard. If your child is reluctant, start with short, fun activities and build from there.

**3. Enroll in Day Camps and Overnight Camps.** Summer camps are more than just a way to fill the calendar; they're powerful developmental experiences. The American Camp Association's 2025 Impact Study highlights that both day and overnight camps foster social-emotional skills, resilience, and independence.

Overnight camps, in particular, help children and teens step outside their comfort zones, developing autonomy and self-confidence. Day camps provide structure, peer connections, and exposure to new interests, supporting community engagement and reducing screen time.

**4. Balance Structured and Unstructured Activities.** A healthy summer includes both organized activities (sports, classes, camps) and free time for creative play. Structured activities teach teamwork, discipline, and social skills, while unstructured time encourages imagination, problem-solving, and self-direction. Research has shown that children who experience both types of activities demonstrate better cognitive and emotional development.

**5. Support Social Connections.** Friendships are essential for children's emotional well-being. Arrange regular playdates, group outings, or family gatherings to help your child maintain and build relationships. Research has shown that social connection during summer can buffer against loneliness and promote positive adjustment when school resumes.

**6. Encourage Chores and Responsibility.** Assigning chores helps children learn essential life skills and contributes to their sense of competence and belonging. Recent studies show that children who participate in household tasks are more likely to develop self-efficacy, academic success, and social competence. Make chores age-appropriate and integrate them into the daily routine.

**7. Limit and Balance Screen Time.** While technology can offer educational and social benefits, numerous studies have shown that excessive screen time is linked to sleep

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# Court Ruling Reshapes Purcellville Governance Under State Law

BY VALERIE CURY

On May 28, Loudoun County Circuit Court Judge Randy I. Bellows upheld the constitutionality of a recently enacted state law and ordered the immediate suspension of Purcellville Vice Mayor Ben Nett and Town Manager Kwasi Fraser while felony criminal charges against them remain pending.

**GOVERNMENT**

Bellows issued the ruling after hearing arguments from Ryan Campbell, counsel for Nett, and John Boneta, counsel for Fraser. Special Prosecutor and Stafford County Commonwealth's Attorney Eric Olsen appeared on behalf of the Commonwealth and argued that the legislation had been lawfully enacted and should be enforced.

Sponsored by State Senator Russet Perry, SB 648 was written to apply only to towns within Planning District 8 with populations between 8,000 and 10,000 residents based on the most recent U.S. Census. Purcellville is the only town within Perry's Senate district that falls within those parameters, making it the only locality in her district subject to the legislation's provisions.

The legislation contains several provisions affecting the Town of Purcellville, including:

- Requires the suspension of any town officer facing felony criminal charges while the criminal case and any related removal proceedings are pending. A court may appoint a suitable person to serve in the officer's place during the suspension.
- Requires the Town of Purcellville to commission an independent study evaluating the condition of the town's debt, infrastructure, utilities and other significant liability risks.
- Requires the study to be conducted by a public institution of higher education with at least 15,000 students in consultation with the chief administrative officer of a locality in Planning District 8 with a population of at least 500,000 residents.
- Requires the study to identify and prioritize the town's needs and make recommendations, including possible amendments to the town charter. The study must be completed by July 1, 2027.
- Requires the town to adopt a plan consistent with the study's recommendations in a fiscally responsible manner

that does not jeopardize the town's bond rating.

- Prohibits the Town Council from voting on matters that have not been published on a council agenda at least three days before the meeting unless three-fourths of all council members vote at the start of the meeting to add the item or amend an existing agenda item.
- Gives any Purcellville resident standing to challenge in court a council vote that allegedly violates the agenda requirements or certain provisions of Virginia's conflict-of-interest laws.
- Allows a prevailing resident in such a lawsuit to recover attorney fees.
- Requires any full-time town manager to be a resident of Virginia unless the Town Council waives that requirement by a majority vote.
- Establishes a continuing conflict-of-interest provision under which a member of a governing body who previously worked for a governmental agency under that body's control is deemed to have a

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### Five questions that could change how you see retirement

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI,  
EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Saving for retirement is important, but it's only part of the picture. If you're within five to 10 years of your target retirement date, it's time to start thinking about what you actually want your retirement to look like. After all, getting to retirement isn't the end goal — it's what you want to do once you're there that matters.

Start by asking yourself these five questions.

When do you want to retire? The age at which you retire matters more than you may realize. Retiring early sounds appealing, but it means saving more and having less time to do it. It can also create gaps in health care coverage and income before key benefits kick in. For example, Social Security benefits can begin at 62, but at a reduced amount. Full benefits are available between ages 66 and 67,

depending on birth year, and waiting until 70 means the maximum benefit. Medicare doesn't start until age 65, and penalty-free withdrawals from retirement accounts generally aren't allowed until age 59½.

For couples, timing gets even more complicated. Staggering retirement dates can sometimes maximize benefits; in other cases, retiring at the same time works better.

A financial advisor can help you sort through these decisions and find the approach that makes the most sense for your situation.

How do you want to spend your time in retirement? Many new retirees are surprised to find that having unlimited free time feels disorienting rather than freeing. Thinking ahead about how to fill the days with meaningful activity — whether that's travel, volunteering, pursuing hobbies or spending more time with family — can make the transition smoother.

It helps to sketch out what a typical

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## Purcellville Accepts More Than \$6.8 Million in Preliminary PFAS Treatment Funding

BY VALERIE CURY

At the Town of Purcellville Work Session on May 26, Director of Public Works Andrea Broshkevitch outlined two major preliminary funding offers intended to support PFAS treatment improvements at two of the town's groundwater treatment facilities.

According to Broshkevitch, the town received a preliminary funding offer of \$4,597,200 for the Nature Park Groundwater Treatment Plant PFAS treatment improvements project and \$2,249,000 for the Main Street Groundwater Treatment Plant PFAS treatment improvements project.

"Both amounts are offered as principal forgiveness effectively functioning as grant funding through the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water," Broshkevitch said.

She explained that the preliminary offer letters indicate the funding originates from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or other potential funding sources, but said the final funding package would clarify the exact source of the money.

Broshkevitch told council that town staff must notify the Virginia Department of Health in writing no later than June 8 regarding the town's acceptance of the funding offers.

The Town Council voted unanimously to accept the funding.

During the discussion, Broshkevitch also stated that the town would be expected to achieve "structural balance" within the water enterprise fund at the time of project completion.

However, the wording contained in the preliminary Virginia Department of Health funding documents appears more focused on long-term financial sustainability and revenue planning than on any explicit requirement for "structural balance."

The May 8 VDH letters state that acceptance of the funding reflects "a commitment to evaluate revenues and adjust rates as necessary to ensure revenue growth" that accounts for operational costs, inflation, equipment replacement, technology upgrades, capital improvements, future regulations, and possible revenue reductions tied to water conservation efforts.

The agency additionally "urges waterworks owners to establish and fund a capital reserve fund that adequately supports capital improvements and asset replacements" and recommends utilities implement "automatic annual rate adjustments

that exceed inflation."

Attached to the preliminary funding offer was a "Building Financial Sustainability/Financial Health Indicators" document outlining financial benchmarks and evaluation tools used by the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Resources Authority for revolving fund loan projects.

The document explains that utilities may be evaluated on several financial indicators including debt service coverage ratios, days cash on hand, operating ratios, debt payout ratios, total debt versus total valuation, and affordability indexes tied to median household income.

Among the benchmarks listed, VDH identifies "adequate" and "strong" ranges for reserve levels, debt management, and operating revenue performance. The document also states that waterworks are "expected to meet or exceed the target rate criteria at the time of project completion."

The guidance further notes that "fairly structured utility rates that implement gradual rate increases annually have been the most acceptable to the ratepayers and most effective in keeping revenue at pace with costs."

VDH also recommends utilities maintain updated Waterworks Business Operation Plans, Asset Management Plans, and Capital Improvement Plans in order to demonstrate long-term technical, managerial, and financial sustainability.

The preliminary funding package remains contingent upon the availability of federal and state appropriations as well as compliance with additional state and federal requirements.

Conditions outlined in the award documents include adherence to Virginia Department of Health and Environmental Protection Agency requirements, maintaining compliance with water regulations, demonstrating financial and managerial capacity, timely project completion, and compliance with federal procurement and labor requirements such as Build America/Buy America provisions and Davis-Bacon prevailing wage standards.

The VDH guidance documents discuss implementation schedules for utilities that may require future rate increases, allowing those increases to be phased in gradually over time. The preliminary funding offer does not specifically state that significant rate increases are currently required for Purcellville.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 >

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# Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Dulles Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, Again!

BY TIM JON

“This must be what a kid in a free candy supply house feels like,” I thought to myself as I explored one of my favorite places on Planet Earth during a belated reunion tour. Or better.

You see, I’d long and carefully monitored the progress of the Dulles Air & Space Museum—officially called the Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center (when you fork over 60-some million dollars to support the project they tend to remember your name), since the days of its planning stages, past the groundbreaking ceremony, through the ambitious construction phases, and over the course of its three-day grand opening in December of 2003.

My coverage of the impossibly-impressive facility included standing along a Dulles Airport runway as the supersonic Air France Concorde came in and made its landing for placement in the Museum, as well as holding a similar spot when the Boeing Strato-liner (pretty much the commercial counterpart to the B-17, and from a similar, bygone era) came in—all bright, shiny and silver—which would catch the attention of actor John Travolta (you see, I had to ask him kid stuff during a subsequent interview, like what his favorite plane was), and the pinnacle (for me):

standing just outside the giant rear ‘garage doors’ of the Museum, to watch as the star of the ‘show’—the Mach 3, Lockheed SR-71—was carefully wheeled up to the access point and given the once-and twice-over by everyone lucky enough to be on hand for the occasion.

Heck. I remember taking my first gander at the Space Shuttle Enterprise as it sat in a metal shed on a Dulles Airport backlot. Yup, I didn’t earn much money in those days, as News Director for AM 1200 Wage Radio in Leesburg, “Your Sound Choice in Loudoun County,” but I more than made

up for it in experiences like these.

But that was all roughly 20 years ago. Now, I deliver mail in Purcellville, which pays a lot better, but takes a great deal of time, energy and attention. So, when they turn me loose, I explore, and I owed myself a return to the Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center.

I visited on a bright, crisp autumn morning, and other than a couple of busloads of students, I felt like I had the whole museum to myself. Walking around my impressive old friend, the Blackbird (which I used to affectionately describe as a giant ice pick designed by Salvador Dali), I had the sense I was on the front porch of an old homestead at a family reunion.

I enjoyed reliving fond memories of getting to know the late Don Lopez, a World War Two Flying Tiger pilot, who became an ‘ace’ in that conflict and later applied himself enough to help design rockets for the Apollo program. That’s his P-40 hanging from the ceiling of the Museum, with “Lope’s Hope” stenciled on the side.

I also remembered, a bit sentimentally, I’ll admit—the salute to service veterans at the facility, back during the openings in 2003, which I attended with my parents—as my dad had been through the sec-

ond world war as an ordinance specialist aboard a PBY Catalina based on Guam.

So yes, after all these years and their varied experiences, I spent much of that more recent morning reminiscing with past times; I also made some new

acquaintances: the Navy’s Blue Angel (a McDonnell Douglas F-18) and Grumman F-14 Tomcat, as well as the formidable F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. And many, many more.

Now, fortunately for my equilibrium and this story, I remained on the Museum’s ground level for most of my visit: my ascendance to the upper walkways later in the morning set off bouts of vertigo that left me grasping for the handrails and daring myself to inch just close enough to the edge in order to get some clear shots from



TIM JON



CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

# Ketocin Baptist Church Celebrates 275 Years



Ketocin Baptist Church will commemorate a remarkable milestone with its 275th Homecoming Celebration on Sunday, June 7, at 2 p.m., joining in the national spirit of the United States Semiquincentennial. The special event will feature renowned local speaker Rich Gillespie, followed by a light luncheon and fellowship.

Founded in 1751, Ketocin Baptist Church stands as one of Loudoun County's oldest houses of worship. Its name, originally spelled "Ketocton," is derived from a Native American term believed to mean "the ancient wooded hill," a fitting description of the peaceful landscape it has occupied for nearly three centuries.

The current church building, constructed in 1854, remains a striking example of early American ecclesiastical architecture. Built of brick in five-course

Flemish bond and resting on a native fieldstone foundation, the structure features a standing-seam metal roof, classic twelve-over-twelve sash windows, and original wooden shutters with hand-forged hardware. Inside, visitors can view a rare trompe-l'oeil mural attributed to noted local artist Lucien Whiting Powell, whose work adds historic and artistic significance to the sanctuary.

Ketocin's roots trace back to mission work led by John Thomas & John Gano and the early leadership of its first resident pastor, John Garrard. By the time of the American Revolution, the church was guided by John Marks, a strong supporter of independence whose family members

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »


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## **HEATED PURCELLVILLE BUDGET DEBATE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

supported expanding the wastewater treatment facility to accommodate anticipated future growth. At the time, the facility was operating at approximately 40% capacity.

The wastewater treatment facility expansion contributed to approximately \$60 million in long-term debt obligations. Those debt obligations continue to impact the town's utility finances and contribute to current water and wastewater rate increases.

Interim Town Manager Tony Sabio discussed the three utility scenarios—E, F, and G—while Finance Director Liz Krens explained that utility rate increases under Scenario E would be 9% for both water and wastewater services.

In Sabio's initial proposed Scenario F budget, the increases were 24% for water and 16% for wastewater. Scenario G proposed increasing the rates by 16.5% for water and 14.5% for wastewater.

Council Member Erin Rayner opposed eliminating the Deputy Police Chief position. She said the proposed 9% utility increases were insulting, adding, "Stop stealing from the General Fund to prop up the Enterprise Fund."

Council Member Caleb Stought said the lowest proposed increase of 9% for both funds would move the town further away from structural balance. He also said he was not in favor of removing the Deputy Police Chief position.

Sabio said that any scenario would get the town to structural balance depending on which scenario the council chose. He said some approaches would achieve structural balance faster than others. "So, we can build out the rest all the way through to structural balance."

Stought said delaying higher utility rate increases would require the town to draw on reserves longer. He said that if the council approved a large increase now—such as 60%—the town could reach structural balance sooner rather than over a period of years like "three or four years from now."

"If you front load to get to structural balance there's no draw on reserves. If you push it way out, there's a lot of draw on reserves," he said.

Council Member Susan Khalil said, "All of the assumptions are that we are not going to increase any revenue and I think we have great opportunities for doing that as far as grants and other areas."

Khalil said she was leaning toward Scenario G and added that it was not far off from Scenario F. She said reaching structural balance this year would require major

increases, "but I am very optimistic."

She said after speaking with Sabio and staff that all efforts would focus on pursuing as much outside money as possible.

"So I say, don't tax the people of Purcellville too much. We already pay Fireman's Field tax, Purcellville Town tax, and we cover our police department," Khalil said. "We are already paying so much. Let's give some relief as far as the water rates are concerned."

"We can address it year by year as long as Stantec [Town's Utility Consultant] goes with it and it looks doable."

Rayner said that utility fees are not a tax. "We are not taxing the people of Purcellville. We are charging appropriate amounts for the usage of the utility."

She said she was against transferring funds from the general fund to the utility fund "because it's gonna hurt our bond rating and it's just not right."

The town does have a policy to transfer a portion of the town's meals tax to the utility fund, and this practice has not been said to affect the town's bond rating when done under existing policy parameters.

According to previous statements from David Rose, senior vice president and manager of public finance at Davenport & Company LLC, such transfers do not negatively affect the town's bond rating when conducted within established policy guidelines.

Council Member Kevin Wright said he wanted to "rip the band-aid off as quickly as possible" by implementing a 60% increase for FY 27, saying that "in future years the pain is not nearly as bad." He said the town has \$61 million in capital improvement projects.

Wright said a larger increase now would reduce borrowing and allow the town to fund more projects in cash, potentially lowering long-term costs since loans are running at 4% to 5%.

Mayor Chris Bertaut said he was in favor of Scenario G which raises the rates by 16.5% for water and 14.5% for sewer.

He said he supported a phased approach to reaching structural balance over several years because "it's a great deal of stress on our residents dealing with this." Bertaut added that the phased approach would give the town time "to seek out grants to cut down on the possible capital improvement project costs."

Bertaut said the reason the town would take out loans "is there's a time value to money and that's why people take out mortgages on their houses. These are long-term investments that we are making as a town and funding them entirely up front really doesn't make fiscal sense."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

**FROM DESK JOB**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Suter's journey to Sharp Blades has been anything but ordinary.

While attending Loudoun Valley, he worked at Progressive Automotive in Hamilton, where he first developed a love for mechanical work. After college, he continued working there before heading west to Wyoming, where he spent several years maintaining ATVs and snowmobiles for a tour company in Jackson Hole.

"It was beautiful country and great experience," Suter said. "But Loudoun has always been home."

That path eventually brought him and his wife back to Purcellville, where he worked in the insurance restoration industry. The job later took the couple to Oklahoma and Colorado before eventually returning to Loudoun County once again. But after taking another restoration position that kept him behind a desk, Suter realized something was missing.

Then came the phone call that changed everything.

When Suter learned Ronnie

Fox was considering selling Sharp Blades, he immediately knew he had found the right fit.

"I called Ronnie and the rest is history," Suter said.

Today, Suter spends his days repairing lawn mowers, genera-



tors, snow blowers, small tractors and other equipment throughout Loudoun County—work he says never feels repetitive because every customer and every machine tells a different story.

"One day you're fixing a mower at a farm, the next day you're helping somebody get their generator running," he said. "I love getting my hands dirty again."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »

## Purcellville Farmers Market Brings Fresh Flavor and Community Downtown

BY VALERIE CURY

There is something magical about a small-town Saturday morning.

The sidewalks begin to stir, neighbors wave hello before coffee has fully kicked in, children tug parents toward pastries and lemonade, and the scent of fresh bread drifts through downtown air. In Purcellville, that magic is officially back.

The Purcellville Farmers Market is now open every Saturday from May through October from 9 a.m. to noon in the Town of Purcellville parking lot at the corner of Hatcher Avenue and Main Street—and this year's market feels less like a shopping trip and more like a weekly community celebration.

Sponsored by Silas Redd, owner of Nostalgia Boutique and Mister on Main, the market brings together local farmers, bakers, artisans and specialty food vendors in the heart of downtown.

"Farmers markets are where communities reconnect," Redd said. "You meet the people growing your food, baking your bread and creating products with care. We wanted this market to feel welcoming, joyful and uniquely Purcellville—a place where families can slow down, shop local and enjoy a beautiful Saturday morning together."



And there is no shortage of reasons to stop by.

Visitors can fill their bags with seasonal produce, flowers, fresh meats, pastries, artisan breads, gourmet treats and specialty beverages from a growing lineup of vendors.

Among them is Tudor Hall Produce offering seasonal produce, vegetable plants and cut flowers, while Eklektik Kitchen serves up gourmet cookies, coffee and trendy dirty sodas.

Anyone arriving with a sweet tooth may find themselves unable to resist Miss Tina's Piedmont Kitchen with its donuts, breads, muffins and seasonal treats, or Surely Goodness Bakery featuring organic baked goods including cinnamon rolls, brownies and banana bread.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

# Tuskies Wine Dinner with Early Mountain Vineyards

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7:00 PM

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[WWW.Tuskies.com](http://WWW.Tuskies.com)



**RANDALL CALLS LOUDOUN**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

spoke at length about patriotism and public service, describing how her parents taught her that “the price one pays for living in America is service.”

She said service can take many forms—from volunteering in schools and nonprofits to helping neighbors—but argued that military service remains uniquely important.

“Military service is indeed the one calling that allows a free society to remain free,” she said before asking veterans and active-duty service members in attendance to stand and be recognized.

Randall also highlighted immigration as central to both the nation’s and Loudoun’s identity, saying many first-generation immigrants come to the United States seeking “a brighter, more prosperous, safer, and freer future for themselves and their families.”

“In Loudoun, diversity is not just our strength, it is our goal,” she said.

Much of the address focused on housing and the local economy.

Randall said Loudoun has dramatically expanded its investment in attainable housing during her tenure as chair. In 2016, she said, the county allocated roughly \$1 million to attainable housing funds. Today, that figure stands at \$29 million.

She pointed to 19 attainable housing

projects that have produced or are expected to produce more than 2,000 housing units for households earning between 30% and 70% of the area median income.

Still, Randall acknowledged the county faces continuing affordability challenges.

“We are well aware that we have a long way to go,” she said, “not just to address homelessness, but to address people who are precariously housed.”

The chair praised Loudoun’s economic performance, crediting Economic Development Executive Director Buddy Rizer and Visit Loudoun President and CEO Beth Erickson for helping guide the county’s growth.

“In 2025, Loudoun boasted \$2 billion in new commercial investments,” Randall said, along with more than 8,000 economic wins across multiple business sectors.

She noted the county’s unemployment rate remains at 3.2%, below the national average, and said Loudoun has nearly 15,000 businesses.

Randall also spotlighted the county’s growing tourism economy, noting that visitor spending reached nearly \$5 billion in 2024.

At the same time, she emphasized preserving western Loudoun’s rural identity, saying economic development and land conservation can coexist.

“While rural areas around the Commonwealth and nation are losing farms, in Loudoun the number of farms in our rural area grew by 6%,” she said.

Randall devoted a substantial portion of her remarks to Loudoun’s history, particularly the county’s role during the Revolutionary War and the civil rights era.

She noted Loudoun supplied troops and food to the Continental Army and described the county as the “breadbasket” that helped sustain George Washington’s forces.

“Without Loudoun, the Revolutionary War may not have been won,” she said.

But Randall also focused on the county’s history of slavery and segregation, urging residents to confront difficult parts of the past rather than ignore them.

“Loving Loudoun and our nation does not require ignoring or glossing over painful periods,” she said.

One of the longest sections of the speech centered on the history of Frederick Douglass High School, Loudoun’s segregated Black high school, which opened in 1941 after years of organizing and fundraising by Black families who had repeatedly been denied educational opportunities for their children.

“The story of Frederick Douglass High School ... is the story of a community that was told ‘no’ at every turn,” Randall

said. “And at every turn, they found a way forward.”

She recounted how Black parents and community members raised money through bake sales and fish fries to purchase land for the school, only to be forced to sell it to the school system for \$1 in order for construction to move forward.

“Although being forced to sell their hard-earned land for just \$1 was a brutal indignity,” Randall said, “the parents of Black students knew this was the only avenue to allow their students to obtain a high school diploma.”

Randall also touched on county finances, saying Loudoun’s reserves remain strong and all three major credit rating agencies recently reaffirmed the county’s AAA bond rating.

She said the county has reduced the personal property tax rate on vehicles while keeping the higher tax rate on data center equipment.

“At the same time,” she cautioned, “the influences of federal government policies are already having a significant negative impact on the finances of local governments in the Washington Metro region.”

Near the end of the speech, Randall reflected on political disagreement and civic culture, referencing her friendship

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

**19th Annual!**



# WLAST

June 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

## Western Loudoun Art & Studio Tour

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# Catoctin Creek Distillery Unveils Refreshed Tasting Room Experience

Scott and Becky Harris are inviting the community to pull up a chair, enjoy a handcrafted cocktail and experience a refreshed new chapter at Catoctin Creek Distilling Company in downtown Purcellville.

The founders of Virginia's first legal distillery since Prohibition recently announced a major refresh of the distillery's tasting room experience, complete with expanded hours, an enhanced cocktail and mocktail menu, upgraded hospitality features and a Grand Re-Opening celebration planned for July 1.

Designed to feel more like a welcoming cocktail destination than a traditional tasting counter, the refreshed space

focuses on comfort, conversation and creating a memorable gathering place for both locals and visitors alike.

The updates come in part thanks to the recent passage of Virginia Senate Bill 424, signed into law by Governor Abigail Spanberger. The legislation allows Virginia distilleries to serve larger pours to customers, opening the door for expanded cocktail offerings and a more elevated tasting room experience.

Catoctin Creek officials expressed appreciation to bill sponsors Sen. Russet Perry and Del. Marcus Simon, as well as local representatives Del. Delores Oates, Del. John McAuliff and Sen. Timmy French for their support of the

legislation.

Visitors to the distillery can expect several new additions and improvements, including extended evening and weekend hours, expanded seating and improved table layouts designed for comfort and flow.

The distillery's cocktail program has also been significantly expanded, featuring signature drinks crafted with house-made spirits, classic cocktails and seasonal specialties. For guests seeking non-alcoholic options, Catoctin Creek has added a dedicated mocktail refrigerator stocked with premium selections including seltzers, sodas and non-alcoholic beer.

Additional hospitality touches—including complimentary snacks at tables—are also part of the upgraded experience. Visitors will still be able to purchase bottles of the distillery's award-winning spirits directly onsite.

To help accommodate guests and staffing needs, reservations are encouraged through the distillery's website, although walk-ins will continue to be welcomed as space allows. Groups larger than eight are encouraged to contact the distillery in advance.

The Grand Re-Opening celebration is scheduled for 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 1, at the distillery located at 120 W. Main

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 >

# Nett Launches Website and Video Series

"This is not just about one elected official."

With those words, Purcellville Vice Mayor Ben Nett announced the launch of a new website, NoMoreLawfare.com and Alive with Ben Nett, and video series detailing legal cases, employment-related matters and political targeting that he says have unfolded since he first ran for office in Purcellville.

According to a recent press release, the first installment of "The Battle of Purcellville" is now available on Nett's

website, NoMoreLawfare.com. The site includes videos, court filings, timelines and other materials that Nett says provide additional context regarding those events.

Nett stated that the video series is intended to share information about the events and encourage residents to review the materials for themselves.

Among the materials highlighted on the website is the decision of an independent grievance panel that unanimously ruled in Nett's favor and ordered that the town's

action terminating his employment be reversed. The panel further ordered Nett's reinstatement with back pay and directed the town to reimburse attorney fees in accordance with its ruling.

"I believe the facts matter, and I am confident that when people see the full picture—openly and transparently—they will understand what is at stake," Nett said in the release.

For additional information and updates, visit NoMoreLawfare.com. The videos are also available on Nett's YouTube channel, "Alive with Ben Nett."

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**UNLIMITED EVENTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

consistent agricultural setting.”

Gem Bingol, Senior Land Use Field Representative with the Piedmont Environmental Council, urged supervisors to preserve stronger protections in the county’s Mountainside Overlay District, arguing that sensitive mountain areas deserve additional scrutiny, not fewer restrictions.

“We continue to promote greater protections than generally proposed in the motions for the sensitive MOD.” She described the MOD as a valuable asset that deserves a waiver-based, case-by-case approach instead of blanket changes.

John Ellis, who lives near two rural establishments, described weekends dominated by competing outdoor music.

“On Saturdays and Sundays of most weekends from spring to fall it sounds like who’s competing to make more noise,” Ellis said. “We cannot play our own music in our own backyard because we cannot hear it over what’s happening.”

**OPINION: RURAL LOUDOUN AT RISK, CON’T. FROM PAGE 6**

that undermine the rural policy area. They are simply asking county leaders to protect rural Loudoun rather than steadily carve it up for commercial expansion.

Rural communities should not be forced to absorb the impacts of unlimited commercialization so private operators can grow their event businesses and profits. That is not balanced land-use policy, and it is not fair to the residents who live with the consequences every day.

Residents and community organizations have repeatedly raised these concerns directly with Supervisor Kershner, yet he has offered no meaningful commitment to stronger protections for western Loudoun’s rural communities. Western Loudoun needs a representative who will listen to their constituents, respect the county’s rural land-use policies, and vote no on further commercialization and industrialization of the rural policy area. Kershner is failing his constituents.

Once rural areas are commercialized at this scale, the change becomes extremely difficult to reverse. Western Loudoun’s future should be decided by the people who live there, not by industry pressure campaigns.

*Friends of Paxson-Airmont is a 501(c)(3) community organization based in Round Hill, Virginia, advocating for the protection of rural Loudoun County’s natural resources, agricultural heritage, and quality of life.*

Maura Walsh-Copeland summarized the frustration felt by many residents who believe the county has spent years revisiting the same issues without establishing firm standards.

“After three rural ZOAMs, it’s time for your staff and citizens to get off the rural uses roller coaster,” she said.

Walsh-Copeland argued that Loudoun has clear authority to regulate local land use decisions involving events and public safety.

“The business costs of compliance should never supersede public safety,” she said. “Loudoun does have authority to set consistent hours of operation, and set consistent setbacks and parking ratios that are needed for the protection of children and patrons, and trespass, noise, and road issues.”

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) emerged as the board’s strongest defender of the winery and brewery industry, warning that tighter regulations could devastate one of western Loudoun’s most recognizable economic sectors.

“If we even speak about limiting these and their ability to do that, we are going to ruin the wine industry, the brewery industry that we have grown accustomed to and enjoy in Loudoun County,” Kershner said. “It is a very dangerous path that we walk down.”

Kershner argued that Virginia state law limits the county’s ability to regulate farm wineries and breweries.

“I am literally in shock that we’re talking about regulating one of the most important businesses to Western Loudoun, and we don’t know the problems that actually exist,” he said.

Supervisor Laura TeKrony (D-Little River) pushed back, arguing that the county has spent years hearing complaints from residents affected by increasingly intense rural event

operations.

“Unlimited events with unlimited guests flies in the face of public input that we have heard for 10 years now,” TeKrony said. “Unlimited events on a 10-acre brewery—that is not okay. I don’t know how it could ever be okay.”

TeKrony advocated for use-specific standards addressing parking, road access, amplified music and lighting.

“I just want to make sure the standards include parking, road access, road upgrade, and outdoor amplified music,” she said. “We really do need to be looking at use-specific standards that help mitigate the use ... take into account the impact of the neighbor.”

Supervisor Mike Turner (D-Ashburn) acknowledged the exhaustion surrounding years of zoning debates.

“My sympathies to the members of the finance committee,” Turner said. “I’ve been doing this for two years, and now I’m confused.”

Tensions escalated after Kershner attempted to add language emphasizing that any future standards must remain strictly consistent with state law. Turner rejected the amendment, prompting Kershner to imply that supervisors were willing to exceed their legal authority.

“I’ve been a supervisor for six years,” Turner responded. “It’s the first time I’ve ever been accused by a colleague of advocating that the staff violates state law. It really astounds me that that is tolerated by this board and this chair.”

Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) attempted to calm the dispute, reminding colleagues that no final ordinance language had yet been written.

“If we’re that unsure that staff is following the law, then we have bigger issues than what’s here that need to be addressed,” Letourneau said. “I’m not gonna look at staff and say that you’re not following state law.”

**JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14**

these different perspectives.

I felt at the time, that it had taken as much bravery for me to scale these mild heights and cross those walkways, as it had for the pilots to operate the aircraft among which I was painstakingly passing. I later surmised that I must have presented as interesting an attraction (and much more humorous) as the myriad objects so carefully placed in the Museum.

And, as I drove home after my rapid-fire photo session (I captured over 200 eye-catching images in just over an hour), I was again reminded that—as incredible as these pieces of human ingenuity and technology are—it’s the human connection, the personal stories and experiences that hold my attention and the precious places in my memory system.

I would be quite proud to play a small part in some of those reminiscences connected to the Dulles Smithsonian, after my earthly time has expired. Yup, I’ll be that kid in the candy supply house.

**PURCELLVILLE ACCEPTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

PFAS, commonly referred to as “forever chemicals,” are manmade compounds used in products such as nonstick cookware, food packaging, stain-resistant fabrics, and firefighting foam.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, PFAS break down very slowly and can accumulate in both the environment and the human body over time.

In 2024, the EPA finalized the nation’s first drinking water standards for several PFAS compounds, including PFOA and PFOS. Water systems across the country are now working to comply with the new federal regulations.

Broshkevitch said the town received the preliminary grant funding in part because Purcellville was among the first localities to submit its application. Council members praised town staff for their work in securing the funding opportunity.

The board eventually retained Motion 20 after a 4-4-1 tie vote, with Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) serving as the tie-breaking “yes” vote to make the final vote 5-3-1.

Supervisors later approved a separate motion directing staff to explore use-specific standards for rural event operations, including parking, roads, lighting and amplified music. That motion passed 7-1-1, with Kershner opposed.

The board also debated operating hours. Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) proposed capping Sunday operations at 9 p.m., saying residents deserve evenings without loud music extending late into the night.

“I do believe that people have the right to, some days, have things go down and not go hearing music all the way to 11 o’clock or 12 o’clock at night,” Randall said.

That proposal failed in a 4-4-1 tie. Kershner then successfully moved to extend Sunday hours to 10 p.m., which passed 7-1-1, with Randall casting the lone dissenting vote.

By the end of the meeting, supervisors remained divided over whether wineries and breweries in western Loudoun should be allowed unlimited events and more flexible operating hours in rural residential areas.

At its May 19 meeting, the Board of Supervisors voted 5-4 to revisit the issue of event limits for wineries and other agricultural venues after Supervisor Kristen Umstatt (D-Leesburg) asked the board to reconsider direction from May 4.

Several supervisors cited concerns about public safety oversight, fire code compliance, and the County’s ability to monitor large gatherings as reasons to continue evaluating potential event cap options before a final decision. Kershner, who originally raised the issue at the May 4 meeting, opposed reopening the discussion.

**FROM DESK JOB, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19**

Ronnie Fox has spent the past month working alongside Suter, helping transition the business and introducing him to long-time customers before Fox and his wife, Kim, relocate to Florida.

“Ronnie has been an inspiration to me,” Suter said. “He built something people really trust, and I’m honored to continue it.”

The handoff has already produced plenty of memorable moments. At one homeowners association, residents began lining up lawn mowers for service before 8 a.m.

A highlight for Suter was meeting Peekaboo, Fox’s beloved cockatoo, whose larger-than-life personality quickly made an impression. Peekaboo is now preparing to return to Florida with Ronnie and Kim — a fitting homecoming for the spirited bird who grew up there.

“No offense to anybody,” Suter joked, “but meeting Peekaboo was definitely one of the

more memorable introductions.”

There have also apparently been snakes. “Each one of us has seen a snake at our homes,” Suter laughed, referring to himself and Fox, “but not on the job yet.”

Perhaps the most meaningful moments, however, come from closer to home.

Suter’s six-year-old son has enthusiastically embraced the family’s new adventure and frequently asks, “Daddy, can I ride with you and Ronnie today?” For Suter, that excitement says everything.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for me,” he said. “I get to work outdoors, help people, fix things and be part of the community again. That’s hard to beat.”

Sharp Blades will continue operating under the same name and phone number, 540-338-3408. Customers may also reach Suter by email at sharpbladesva@gmail.com.

**FINANCIAL FOCUS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12**

week, month or even first year might look like. If there are big gaps, it’s worth thinking now about what might fill them in rewarding ways.

Where do you want to live as a retiree? Some retirees stay put, while others downsize or relocate entirely. Either way, it’s wise to consider whether a chosen location will work well as you get older, taking into account factors like proximity to family, access to health care, cost of living and climate.

What will your retirement lifestyle cost? It’s not uncommon for retirees to discover that their travel, entertainment or leisure expenses were higher than expected. The more active and involved you plan to be, the more you will likely need to budget.

Does your retirement involve giving back? Retirement often brings both the time and motivation to be more generous. Whether the goal is helping family members, donating to charity or volunteering in the community, it’s worth defining those goals and building

them into an overall plan.

Now that your vision is taking shape, turn it into a plan. Work with your financial advisor to align your savings with the life you want — and revisit that plan as your priorities evolve so your retirement keeps pace with you. 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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**COURT RULING RESHAPES PURCELLVILLE,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

continuing personal interest in that agency for two years after leaving employment.

- Provides that the legislation expires on July 1, 2028.

Virginia operates under the Dillon Rule, a legal doctrine that grants local governments only those powers specifically authorized by the Virginia General

Assembly. Unlike “home rule” states, where municipalities enjoy broader autonomy, Virginia’s towns, cities and counties derive their authority from state law.

Because of this framework, the General Assembly maintains substantial oversight of local governments and may enact legislation governing local operations, procedures and powers. The issue has become particularly

relevant in Purcellville, where state legislation enacted during the 2026 General Assembly session directly affects the town’s governance and administrative procedures.

The decision also has political ramifications for the Town Council. A majority of the current council was elected after campaigning on priorities that included managing growth, limiting taxes and increasing government efficiency. With

Nett suspended from office, that majority no longer exists, leaving the council evenly divided and potentially affecting the outcome of future votes.

The criminal cases against Nett and Fraser involving allegations of bid-rigging and fraud are currently scheduled for trial Dec. 7. Nett’s separate trial on four felony counts involving alleged improper database access is scheduled for Oct. 26.

**ASK DR. MIKE,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

problems, mood issues, and reduced physical activity. Set clear limits and encourage “tech-free” times, especially during meals and before bed. Use parental controls and model healthy digital habits.

**8. Spend Meaningful Time as a Family.** Children value time with their parents above all else. Whether it’s a family meal, a walk, a game night, or a day trip, these moments strengthen family bonds and support children’s emotional health. Research has shown that frequent family meals are associated with better academic performance and lower rates of risky behaviors.

**9. Prevent the Summer Slide with Learning Activities.** Summer learning loss is real, but it can be prevented with intentional activities. Encourage reading, visits to the library, museum trips, or participation in enrichment programs. Studies have shown that even brief, regular academic engagement over the summer can make a significant difference when school resumes.

**10. Promote Healthy Sleep and Nutrition.** Summer can disrupt routines, but adequate sleep and balanced nutrition remain crucial. Children who maintain consistent sleep schedules and eat regular, nutritious meals perform better academically and emotionally. Aim for regular bedtimes, limited sugar and caffeine, and family meals whenever possible.

In summary, Summer 2026 is an opportunity for your child to rest, explore, and grow. While the days of unsupervised, free-roaming childhoods may be behind us, today’s parents can still offer their children a summer filled with adventure, connection, and meaningful experiences.

By blending structure with freedom, encouraging outdoor play and camp experiences, supporting friendships and family time, and prioritizing health and learning, you can help your child make the most of these precious months. With thoughtful planning, flexibility, and a focus on well-being, this summer can be both joyful and enriching—not just for your child, but for your whole family.

*Everything good, everything magical happens between the months of June and August.*

—Jenny Han

*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, Ashburn.*

**RANDALL CALLS LOUDOUN,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

with former local Republican leader John Whitbeck.

“While there are clearly things John and

I don’t agree on,” she said, “when John and I disagree, we do so without being disrespectful, disparaging, demeaning or degrading to one another.”

Randall closed the address by describing

**OPINION: BEYOND THE DOWNGRADE,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

revenues, and a growing meals tax base.

Meals tax revenue doubled as more businesses came to Purcellville. That mattered because it gave the Town options beyond simply placing the entire burden on water and sewer ratepayers.

So, the real question is not whether rates should ever increase. Of course, rates must be sufficient to support reliable water and sewer service.

The real question is whether structural balance should be achieved only through large rate shocks on residents and businesses, or whether the Town should first examine every structural lever available: chargebacks, CIP assumptions, debt strategy, reserves, grants, outside funding, County financial participation, operational efficiencies, technology savings, and the true timing and necessity of future capital projects.

Purcellville is also unique in another important respect. Nearly 45% of our land is used for schools, government facilities, churches, nonprofits, and other tax-exempt institutions that do not directly contribute to the Town’s tax base, leaving residents and businesses carrying a disproportionate share of the financial burden.

That reality matters when discussing utility affordability and long-term infrastructure costs. County participation should not mean encouraging endless annexation or growth simply to generate temporary hookup-fee revenue.

Growth without structural balance eventually requires more roads, more

utilities, more staffing, more police coverage, and higher long-term operating costs—all of which place additional pressure on taxpayers and ratepayers while eroding the very small-town character residents value.

A one-time hookup fee is not a long-term financial strategy. It is a temporary revenue event followed by decades of additional service obligations and operational costs.

County participation should mean actual County financial participation.

Purcellville residents and businesses already contribute approximately \$18 million annually to Loudoun County through taxes, while the Town hosts multiple County-supported schools and public infrastructure assets that benefit the broader region. A discussion about shared infrastructure costs and County cost-sharing is not unreasonable; it is responsible fiscal policy.

A credit rating is not a political trophy. Nor should a downgrade become a campaign weapon. It is a financial signal, and that signal should absolutely be taken seriously. But the solution should not be reduced to “raise rates dramatically or you are irresponsible.”

The more prudent path is a credible utility recovery plan that balances five things: reliable water and sewer service; transparent and validated capital needs; protection of reserves; fair and affordable rates; and structural reform of the underlying cost drivers.

Reasonable, and phased utility rate adjustments are necessary. But sustainable policy requires more than simply raising rates. It requires long-term reform, disciplined capital planning, operational efficiency, and

fair regional cost participation.

The prior Fraser-era approach bought the Town time, reduced debt, avoided new borrowing, and protected residents from immediate severe utility increases. The next phase should build on that foundation—not rewrite history to suggest nothing was done.

Actions do have consequences. So does incomplete storytelling. Purcellville deserves a full accounting, not a selective one.

The Town’s credit rating is an important issue, but it should not be used as a political shortcut to justify rate shock on residents and businesses—nor should it be used to justify annexations.

A responsible Town does not solve a structural utility problem by placing the entire burden on ratepayers alone—especially when Purcellville residents and businesses already send approximately \$18 million of their hard-earned money to Loudoun County each year.

If County facilities and the broader regional economy benefit from Purcellville’s infrastructure, then a conversation should occur regarding temporary County financial participation—potentially in the range of \$2 million annually—as part of achieving stronger structural balance within the utility fund.

The path forward should not be “raise rates first and ask questions later.”

It should be: verify the numbers, validate capital projects, review General Fund charges to the utility funds, pursue outside funding, engage the County, protect reserves, and build a credible long-term affordability plan.

Loudoun as both forward-looking and resilient, saying current leaders are preparing the county for future generations.

“Today the elected and administrative leadership in Loudoun are planting trees

whose fruit we will not eat and whose shade we will not enjoy,” she said.

“But we do so gladly as we are entrusting to the next generation of Loudouners the baton in the relay of history.”

**CATOCTIN CREEK DISTILLERY,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

St. in Purcellville. Community members, local officials and media representatives are invited to attend and experience the refreshed space firsthand. The distillery will also offer half-price specials on all menu items throughout the day.

“This refresh is about elevating the way guests experience Catoctin Creek,” said Scott Harris, founder and general manager. “We want our tasting room to feel like the best seat in Loudoun County for enjoying a craft cocktail, learning about spirits and spending time with friends.”

Founded in 2009 by Scott and Becky Harris, Catoctin Creek Distilling Company is best known for its award-winning Roundstone Rye whisky and its commitment to sustainability, transparency and traditional distilling methods while remaining family-owned and independent.

For additional information, go to [CatoctinCreekDistilling.com](http://CatoctinCreekDistilling.com).

**PURCELLVILLE FARMERS MARKET,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Bread lovers can explore artisan creations from Bread House and Lockhart Crumb, both offering fresh breads, pastries, cookies and sourdough specialties.

The market also features globally inspired flavors from Bunmi Zesty Foods with African-inspired sauces and spices, along with locally raised meats, eggs and vegetables from Jake Farm.

Nature lovers and wellness-minded shoppers can browse Planetary Farms for fruits, vegetables, herbs, nuts, tinctures and canned goods, while flower enthusiasts can take home stunning locally cut bouquets from Fantasy Farm Flowers.

For something refreshing, visitors can cool down with gourmet lemonades and specialty drinks from The Quack Shack or sample creamed honey and honey wine from Capital Sculptural Garden and Winery.

Redd said the market is continuing to grow and is currently seeking acoustic music performers interested in playing during market hours. Musicians can sign up through the market website [PurcellvilleFarmers.com](http://PurcellvilleFarmers.com).

More than anything, though, the market offers something increasingly rare—a reason to gather.

In a fast-moving world filled with screens and schedules, the Purcellville Farmers Market invites residents to linger a little longer—to sip coffee while listening to live music, to chat with local growers, to bump into friends unexpectedly and to remember what makes small-town life special.

So set the alarm, grab a reusable tote bag and make Saturday mornings downtown part of the routine again.

Fresh flowers, warm pastries and friendly faces are waiting.

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**KETOCTIN BAPTIST CHURCH**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

served in the war. The church also played a foundational role in organizing Virginia's first Baptist association in 1766.

Surrounding the church, the historic cemetery tells the story of generations, containing the graves of early settlers, pastors, and soldiers from both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Together, the church and its grounds reflect over 275 years of faith, resilience, and

community in Loudoun County.

Though the congregation experienced periods of decline in the 20th century, Ketoctin Baptist Church has endured. Revitalization efforts in the early 2000s helped restore regular worship and preserve its legacy, ensuring that the church & cemetery remains an active and meaningful presence today.

"This celebration is not only about

honoring our past, but also about recognizing the enduring spirit of faith and community that continues here," organizers shared. "As our nation marks 250 years, we are proud to reflect on the role this small but historic church has played in that larger story."

The public is invited to attend this special homecoming event and experience the history, fellowship, and beauty of Ketoctin Baptist Church.



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**HEATED PURCELLVILLE BUDGET DEBATE**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Stought reiterated that raising rates by more than 50% now could save the town millions in long-term loan interest. He said the estimated \$5.8 million in interest savings over 30 years could be applied to capital improvement projects.

He said that the County pays higher water rates than residents, and if you want the County to pay their fair share, increase water rates—and by not doing so—"You are allowing the County to get by scot-free by not paying us the revenue through the schools."

Bertaut made a motion to draft an ordinance for the May 12 meeting based on Scenario G. This passed in a 4-3 vote—with Rayner saying, "You dismissed all of our concerns."

Khalil said, "We have been at this budget for months now. We have all studied it. At the end of the day, we were voted in to do the people's work. I have to approve a

budget based on what I ran on."

Yelling during the exchange, Stought accused the council majority of rushing Scenario G through the process and doing so for favors and "special interests."

He further accused the council majority of "making decisions behind closed doors in secret and ram it down the citizens' face."

Bertaut jumped in and said, "And you were not elected to shout at a council meeting, sir."

"I can shout if I want; I can shout if I want," Stought replied.

Khalil said that the council minority had "not one suggestion for cutting anything." She said the only answer the minority had given was "to raise rates to an astronomical level."

"We have a fiduciary responsibility to make sure the residents of this town and our businesses do not pay more than what they absolutely have to, and that's what we are trying to do."

Khalil said the council minority had done little more than make accusations and that was irresponsible.

At this point, Justin Morrow told her to "go f--- yourself." He also made an obscene gesture. Morrow then left the chamber before being escorted out, but not before telling the mayor, "Goodbye b---."

Bertaut explained that people take out mortgages because they cannot afford to pay the full cost upfront and are willing to bear the interest over time. Addressing the current scenario of 30-year loans on \$60 million, he said the interest could total about \$5.8 million, but would be paid over 30 years.

Bertaut said the schools pay a lot less in water usage per unit of land area than our residents and businesses.

Replying to Stought's remarks about "ramming through a budget," Bertaut said the 16.5% water increase and 14.5% wastewater increase "gets us to

structural balance. It just doesn't do it in one year, which I would consider to be a ram through as well."

Rayner complained that certain council members met with the town manager and staff "in private" to discuss and ask questions about the budget. She called it "secret meetings and secret proposals."

Sabio said some council members met with him and staff to discuss the budget, while others did not. "I'm not going to fault a council member for coming in. Everyone was invited."

Rayner replied, "This should have been done here and not in secret."

Vice Mayor Ben Nett then asked Sabio whether council members who met with him and staff during the budget process merely provided requested feedback and asked questions, or whether they attempted to "tell you what to do."

Sabio responded that no council member had attempted to tell "him or staff what to do."

**OPINION: \$672,078.82**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

architect and build a custom home about two-thirds the size of western Loudoun's larger McMansions. It would be of a first-class quality, such as huge panoramic windows facing a splendid view.

But where would it be? Drive Skyline Drive, stop at any overlook and you'll see the Shenandoah Valley spreading out before you, with the Alleghany Mountains as a backdrop. Ethereal. I want that view.

### Loudoun's Unfortunate Changes: Should We Move?

This is tough. We've lived here for a long time, have a lot of friends and have spent countless days engaged in civic work, usually focused on protecting the rural character of western Loudoun. When I moved here it was wonderful—mostly farms, horses everywhere, manageable traffic, peace and quiet, dark skies, neighborly people and reasonable taxes.

We would hate to leave Loudoun but all of those things are gone, crowded out by commercialization, dense subdivisions everywhere, event centers and the

politically-powerful alcohol industry. We will tough it out for now, but it's a topic I'm sure many people in the west are asking themselves as our rural character erodes from crowds, traffic, noise...and worries about water.

It's that last group that really tees me off. On May 4, the Board of Supervisors gave a green light to the spirits businesses to operate as they please, with almost no meaningful limits on things like sizes of parties, hours of operation, exterior lighting and loud amplified music—seven days a week. The alcohol purveyors were there in full force; it seemed that fewer citizens spoke.

Supervisor Kershner seemed eager to grant what the liquor people demanded. Caleb's always been friendly and claims an agricultural background. He just doesn't vote that way.

### Location, Location, Location

My MegaMillions jackpot wasn't real, but I'll continue to imagine with how I might use the remaining \$300 million. I'd look into buying every bit of private land on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge and

putting it all into conservation easements that would protect the mountain forever. Nice thought, but probably costing more money than my fantasy says that I have.

A road runs along the mountain's crest north or Route 9, meandering between Loudoun and Clark counties and between Virginia and West Virginia. What a great place for our dream house! I'll bend reality and state that there'd be enough almost-flat land for horses and barns.

A hundred acres might be enough. About twenty acres of it would be in Loudoun, the remainder in Clarke County or in West Virginia—nice places with low taxes and a disinclination to mess with you. That's where the main residence would be, while a guest cottage would be in the small Loudoun portion. We'd use the cottage to keep our voting registration in Loudoun.

### Which Brings Us to Politics

I'd hire two experts. First would be someone who'd help recruit electable candidates in Loudoun: Charismatic, energetic moderates who are committed to conservation and to fiscally responsible County spending. The second consultant

would be an election specialist to run the campaigns. If it looked possible to elect a new Board (with one exception—Laura Tekrony,) I'd make unprecedented campaign contributions.

I'd do the same with the out-of-control School Board, which consumes the largest share of the County budget. A majority of its members really need to go. I'd demand that the new commonsense Board uses chainsaws and axes to cut spending and fire most of the main-office bureaucrats.

### A Big Yellow Bulldozer

There should be enough money left for me to buy out a number of breweries, any "limited distilleries" and some event centers. I might be able to convert a few into residences. For the rest, I'd get a sitework contractor show up with a huge Caterpillar D-9 bulldozer and scrape the wretched establishments off the face of the earth.

*Charlie Houston and his wife live on a historic farm on a scenic road south of Waterford. His dreams are usually fantasies. In some cases he wishes they were real.*

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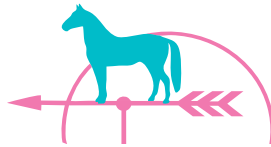


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