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## Today

## One Year Later, Town Manager Orders Nett Reinstated

Legal guidance given. No decision came. One year later, Sabio ordered the Grievance Panel's final and binding decision implemented.

BY VALERIE CURY

After more than a year of political turmoil, lawsuits, criminal charges, competing legal claims, Purcellville Interim Town Manager Anthony Sabio has issued an administrative directive ordering the Town to implement the Grievance Panel's final and binding decision restoring Carl Benjamin "Ben" Nett to Town employment.

The directive, signed Aug. 1, represents the first formal administrative action taken by a Town official who had no involvement in the events that led to Nett's termination.

Sabio concluded that the relief awarded by the independent Employee Grievance Panel—including reinstatement, back pay, restoration of employment benefits and



qualifying attorney's fees (up to \$144 per hour)—is fully consistent with the Town of Purcellville's written personnel policies and grievance procedures.

Effective 8:45 p.m. Aug. 1, Sabio ordered Nett restored to Town employment in the status required by the Grievance Panel's decision.

### A Deliberately Independent Review

Throughout the directive, Sabio repeatedly emphasizes one central point—his decision was made independently.

Unlike nearly every Town official involved in the dispute over the past year, Sabio states he had no role in the investigation, disciplinary process, grievance proceedings or



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evidentiary hearing that culminated in the Panel's decision.

"I was not employed by, appointed to, or acting on behalf of the Town of Purcellville during the investigation, employment action, grievance filing, panel-selection process, evidentiary hearing, or issuance of the Panel Decision," Sabio wrote.

Because he had "no direct or personal involvement" in the matter, Sabio concluded

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## Planning Commission Recommends Denial of Spring Valley Data Center Proposal

BY VALERIE CURY

On July 23, the Loudoun County Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the Board of Supervisors deny the proposed Spring Valley Technology Park, a 325-acre data center campus along the east side of Evergreen Mills Road in the Ashburn District.

The commission voted 6-0-3, with Commissioners Eric Combs (Ashburn), Clifford Keirce (Sterling), and James Banks (Algonkian) absent. The application now advances to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors for final consideration.

The proposal seeks to rezone the site



The applicant's representative, Antonio Calabrese, listens as a nine-year-old resident urges the Planning Commission to deny the application.

from the Transitional Residential-10 (TR-10) large lot neighborhood place type zoning district to the Industrial Park (IP) zoning district to permit construction of 12 data centers totaling up to 3.25 million square feet, three campus-dedicated utility substations, and a utility-scale energy storage facility.

The campus would be developed in two phases, with five data center buildings in the first land bay and seven additional buildings in the second land bay.

In addition to the rezoning request, the applicant sought multiple special exceptions

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## Purcellville's Biggest Community Treasure Hunt Returns Oct. 10

### Registration Opens Aug. 17 for the 23rd Annual Purcellville Tag Sale

Every attic has a story. Every garage has a forgotten treasure. Every collector knows the thrill of discovering something unexpected.

On Saturday, Oct. 10, Purcellville will once again transform into one giant treasure hunt as the 23rd Annual Purcellville Tag Sale returns for a full day of bargain hunting, vintage finds, antiques, collectibles, handcrafted items, home decor, and countless one-of-a-kind discoveries.

Whether you're searching for that perfect piece of furniture, a rare collectible, children's toys, holiday decor, or simply enjoy the excitement of never knowing what you'll find next, the Purcellville Tag Sale offers an adventure around every corner.

Registration for sellers opens Monday, Aug. 17, and continues through Monday, Sept. 21 at [PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com](http://PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com).

Until registration opens, the website will display a notice that all spaces are currently sold out. That message will remain until registration opens at 8 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 17, when available spaces will become visible for purchase.

The event has become one of Purcellville's most anticipated fall traditions, drawing visitors from across Loudoun County and beyond to spend the day exploring neighborhoods, meeting neighbors, and supporting local businesses.

"The Tag Sale is one of those rare events where everyone leaves happy," said organizer Silas Redd, owner of Nostalgia Boutique and Mister on Main. "Some people find the vintage piece they've been searching for years. Others clean out a garage, make a little extra money, and meet people they never would have otherwise. It's shopping, recycling, and community all rolled into one fun day."

Thinking about participating? Don't wait.

Every year, registration fills quickly. The first 40 participants to register will be featured on the printed event map distributed to shoppers throughout the community, giving early registrants additional visibility.

The Tag Sale has grown into more than a community yard sale. It has become an annual destination that brings thousands of visitors to Purcellville, where many spend the day browsing local shops, enjoying restaurants, and discovering everything downtown has to offer.

"It's amazing to watch people spend an entire Saturday exploring Purcellville," Redd said. "Families make a day of it. Friends plan shopping trips together. Visitors discover businesses they've never been in before. It's a wonderful reminder of what makes this town so special."

Seller registration begins Monday, Aug. 17, and closes Monday, Sept. 21, at [PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com](http://PurcellvilleVaTagSale.com).

For information or additional details, text Silas Redd at 540-751-8252 or email [ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com](mailto:ShopAtNostalgia@gmail.com).

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# FINANCIAL FOCUS® The Hidden Danger of Investing Too Cautiously

SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI,  
EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

One of the most significant risks investors face isn't losing money in a market dip; it's failing to reach their long-term financial goals.

Many people focus heavily on short-term losses in the stock market and try to protect their savings by investing conservatively or avoiding stocks altogether. But that runs the risk that their savings won't grow enough to keep up with inflation or support future needs.

Understanding what investment risk really means helps you make smarter financial decisions, considering these three key aspects.

- **Risk tolerance** describes your emotional comfort with risk. If you'd want to pull your money out of the market during a downturn, that reveals something about your tolerance. Many

financial advisors use questionnaires to help clients understand how they might react in different market conditions.

- **Risk capacity** refers to how much risk you can afford to take. Your time-line matters. A 35-year-old saving for retirement has decades to ride out market swings. A retiree drawing income from their portfolio doesn't have that same cushion.
- **Required risk** describes how much risk you may need to take to reach your financial goals. Higher returns generally come with higher risk, though higher risk does not guarantee higher returns. If you need strong growth to retire comfortably, you may need to accept more short-term volatility.

Sometimes these elements don't line up. You might be uncomfortable with risk but need strong growth to meet your goals.

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# Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Vestal's Gap Road and Lanesville Historic District

BY TIM JON

I guess I'll never really know which was more invigorating—the biting cold or the close brush with celebrity; my walk that morning along a narrow, primitive dirt road in Eastern Loudoun County included hefty doses of these two sensations, and lots more

to offer in the way of memorable moments for the mind, body and soul.

I had no sooner stepped from my parked car than the un-Virginia-like temperature and tundra-esque wind chills forced a hurried close covering of any remaining exposed skin, more than gently encouraged by the gusty blasts emanating—I was quite sure—from no civilized place in the known world.

But, a Minnesota native (with German Lutheran upbringing) knows no conditions too harsh for completion of one's mission, so I battled the combination of Mother Nature and chronic vertigo to not only remain on



my feet, but successfully traverse the entire length of the preserved portion of Vestal's Gap Road.

And this little corridor—unbeknownst to most outside our locality—is where we (yes, you're in on this, too at this point) encountered the Father of our Country; you see, in addition to this connecting path representing

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# Purcellville's Future: The Difference Between Revitalization and Reinvention

BY VALERIE CURY

Every election in Purcellville promises the same thing—protecting the town's character while encouraging economic growth. The real differences are not found in campaign slogans. They are found in the decisions elected officials make once they take office.

## OPINION

The Loudoun Times-Mirror's mid-July article appears to portray Purcellville's current Town Council majority as opposed to downtown revitalization and resistant to economic development. The record tells a different story.

The debate has never been whether Purcellville should thrive. It is whether revitalization should strengthen the town residents chose to live in—or gradually transform it into something else.

This year's election is especially significant because voters are not choosing between competing slogans. They are choosing between two fundamentally different approaches to Purcellville's future.

One emphasizes preserving the framework residents established in the Comprehensive Plan while encouraging redevelopment that complements the historic district.

The other supports greater residential density downtown, taller buildings, and expanding the town's boundaries through annexation. Those differences are reflected not in campaign messaging, but in council votes, public statements, and campaign finance reports.

Those differences matter because they extend beyond individual projects. They reflect fundamentally different visions for what Purcellville will become.

The decisions made by the next Town Council will determine whether Purcellville continues to be guided by its adopted plans or moves toward a different pattern of development.

That choice deserves a complete and accurate discussion based on facts, history, and the record—not selective narratives or campaign rhetoric.

The current council majority was elected on a platform of slow growth, preserving Purcellville's small-town character, following the Comprehensive Plan, and evaluating the long-term costs of major development and annexation.

Throughout their time in office, Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan

Khalil have governed according to those principles. They have maintained that excessive growth can alter the town's character, increase costs to taxpayers, and strain transportation and utility infrastructure.

Those are not arguments against economic development or private investment. They are arguments for balance, fiscal responsibility, redevelopment that respects Purcellville's historic character, and growth that remains consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Downtown revitalization has never been the issue. Throughout Purcellville's historic district, property owners have invested millions restoring buildings, improving storefronts, and strengthening local businesses—all while preserving the character that makes downtown unique.

The Comprehensive Plan was adopted to ensure that redevelopment complements that character rather than replacing it.

The question has never been whether to encourage investment. It has always been whether the scale, density, and design of new development are consistent with the community's long-term vision.

No project better illustrates that debate than Vineyard Square.

More than 15 years ago, the Lazaro Town Council approved a six-story, 40-unit condominium building along the narrow 21<sup>st</sup> Street corridor, despite the project's inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

That approval has remained at the center of the debate over how much density belongs in Purcellville's historic downtown ever since. Despite more than fifteen years of active approvals, the project was never built.

Approximately four years ago, Casey Chapman, who manages the properties, returned with a proposal described as a compromise. Rather than one large building, the new proposal reduced the 40 condos to 36 condominium units divided into several buildings behind the existing streetscape.

Although presented as a compromise, it was a fundamentally different project than the approved site plan and would have required amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. No formal application was ever submitted because four-, five-, or six-story buildings are not consistent with the town's Zoning Ordinance.

When the original approvals expired

in July 2025, the property did not become undevelopable. It simply became subject to the same rules that apply to every other property owner.

The site can still be redeveloped under the current zoning ordinance, which permits two-and-a-half-story buildings with retail, commercial, and office uses, along with up to two dwelling units per building.

That distinction matters. Opposing an

out-of-scale proposal is not opposing redevelopment. It is insisting that redevelopment respect the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and the historic character residents have spent decades preserving.

The public record provides additional context. Virginia campaign finance reports show that affiliates of Vineyard Square's

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# Sergeants and Newbies

BY CHARLIE HOUSTON

This is not about military sergeants, but about a mentality that's ascribed to many of that rank. It's also about homeowners who're relatively new to western Loudoun and a few old-timers who share a too-common attitude.

My topic is our network of unpaved roads and the unloved VDOT.

## VDOT's Duties

Virginia Code defines VDOT's mission:

1. To maintain and operate the system of state highways
2. To develop (new) highways
3. To ensure the safety of the traveling public

But as they say, there are many a slip between cup and lip. Who defines "maintenance?" (Certainly not citizens.) Or, "... ensure the safety?"

VDOT reports to the powerful Commonwealth Transportation Board, which provides funding, selects highway projects, and sets policy. There are nine VDOT districts in the state, divided into "residencies." Loudoun is one.

Do VDOT's policies help our historic unpaved roads? If they are, do local VDOT residencies follow those policies?

## An Army Analogy

Organizations love hierarchy. The Army's headed by a four-star General. Next come lower generals, then colonels, lieutenant colonels and lesser officers. The enlisted ranks are lower, descending from Sergeant Major down to privates.

VDOT's similar. The Governor at the top, then the Secretary of Transportation, followed by the Commissioner of VDOT, then district and residency managers, and finally to the guy operating a grader.

In maintaining roads, the grader operator likely uses his machine as he always has, even if he had been told to do something different. Consider how many people are above the grader operator, each of whom can give directions. At each step, information can get distorted or minimized before it ultimately reaches the grader operator ... who may be immune to any change.

There seems to be very little quality control and the grader guy can blithely keep doing his same old thing.

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# Choose Your 3-5 Wisely

BY KEN FALKE

Recently, I spent several unforgettable days wandering through England and Ireland with a handful of close friends. We weren't chasing business opportunities or checking items off a bucket list. We were simply spending time together. We laughed more than we slept, solved none of the world's problems, and yet somehow returned home with full hearts.

The trip reminded me of something I've come to believe: one of the greatest investments you'll ever make isn't in your career, your portfolio, or your résumé. It's in your closest friends.

Research suggests we become the average of the three to five people with

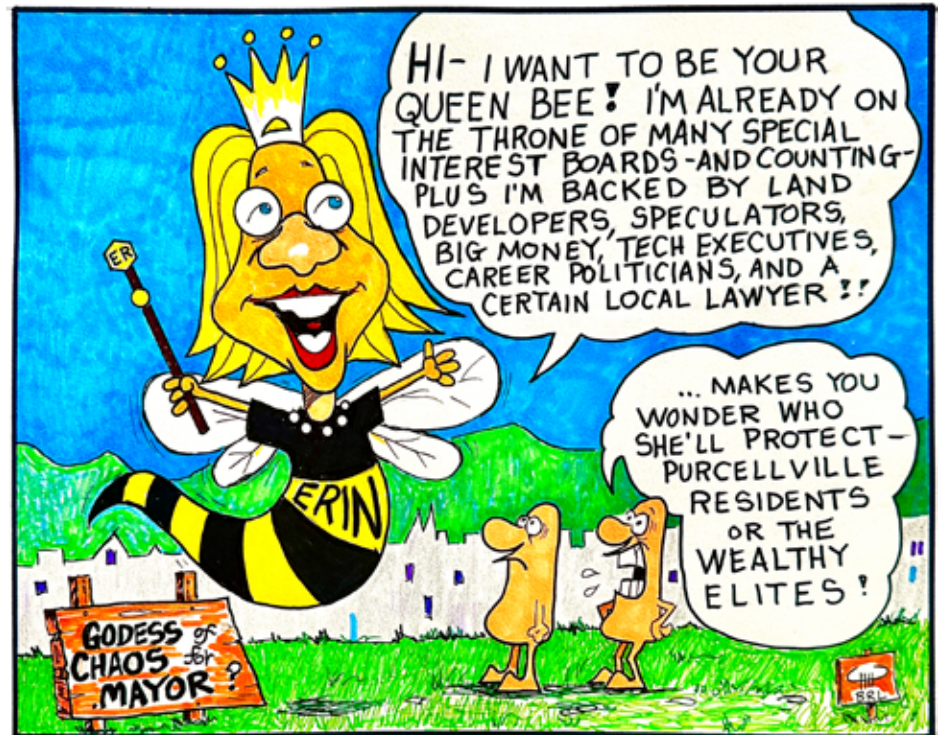
whom we spend the most time with. Whether the number is three or five isn't really the point. The principle is. The people closest to us shape how we think, what we value, how we respond to adversity, and ultimately, who we become.

During our week together, we wandered through places that have stood for centuries. We walked the streets of London and Dublin, where history rises from every stone. Standing in those cities has a way of reminding you how small your own problems really are.

One morning, we quietly slipped away and made our pilgrimage across Abbey Road. Like countless Beatles fans before us, we laughed as we recreated one of the most famous walks in music history.

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KILJOY BY CHIP BECK



# A Tribute to My Dear Brother, Louis Jett

BY KWASI FRASER, FORMER FOUR TERM MAYOR OF PURCELLVILLE

Today, I remember and say farewell to my dear brother, my friend, my mentor, and one of the greatest keepers of Black history that Loudoun County has ever known.

Louis, your transition from this earthly life leaves a void that cannot be filled, but your legacy ensures your voice will never be silenced. You lived not for recognition or applause, but for the truth. For more than three decades, you dedicated your life to preserving the history of Black Americans in Loudoun County so that no generation would ever have to ask, "Who came before us?" or "What did they endure?"

You understood that a people without memory are a people without direction. While others allowed history to fade, you

rescued it. While others looked away, you documented. While others questioned the value of the past, you spent countless hours ensuring that the names, stories, churches, schools, grounds, cemeteries, families, triumphs, and struggles of our people would never be forgotten.

I will forever be grateful that you captured my own journey as I had the privilege of serving four terms as the first Black Mayor of Loudoun County and the Town of Purcellville. You recognized that my story was never just about one person; it was another chapter in the continuing story of Black perseverance, public service, excellence, and leadership. Because of your faithful work, that chapter now belongs not only to me, but to every young Black child who will one day believe that they, too, can lead.

You stood beside me when others sought to persecute me or viewed excellence as trespass. When criticism was loud, your encouragement was louder. When others attempted to rewrite the narrative, you remained committed to recording the truth. Your friendship was steadfast, your counsel wise, and

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# When Politics Becomes Intimidation

Dear Editor:

Residents have long debated growth, taxes, zoning, and the future of our town. Those are exactly the issues that belong in every election. Reasonable people can disagree about how Purcellville should grow, how government should operate, and what priorities elected officials should pursue. Those disagreements are healthy because they are part of democracy. This election, however, has crossed a line.

## LETTER

The issue is no longer simply politics. It is intimidation.

Some of Erin Rayner's supporters have created an atmosphere that should concern every resident, regardless of which candidate they support. Local businesses have been pressured over campaign signs supporting Mayor Chris Bertaut and his team.

Rather than respecting the right of business owners to decide what may be displayed on their own property, supporters have confronted businesses and attempted

to pressure them into removing campaign signs.

That is not campaigning. It is intimidation.

The attacks have extended beyond local businesses. Some of Erin Rayner's supporters have taken to social media to falsely claim that campaign signs were displayed on private property without the owners' permission.

The signs were placed with the property owners' consent. Instead of respecting their neighbors' right to support the candidate of their choice, these false accusations have sought to discredit both the property owners and the campaign.

The same pattern has played out at Town Council meetings. Residents have witnessed shouting, profanity, personal attacks, and accusations made without evidence. Meetings that should encourage thoughtful public discussion have too often been overshadowed by hostility and disruption. That behavior discourages civic participation and diminishes the respectful dialogue our community deserves.

Purcellville is a town of neighbors. We shop in the same stores, support the same

local businesses, attend the same churches, volunteer together, and cheer for the same children on our ballfields. Long after this election is over, we will still see one another on Main Street, at the grocery store, and at community events.

Political disagreement is healthy. Political intimidation is not.

Every candidate should be judged not only by campaign promises but also by the tone of the campaign, the conduct of those who campaign on the candidate's behalf, and what is tolerated when that conduct crosses the line. Campaigns should encourage respectful debate, honest disagreement, and the free exchange of ideas—not pressure, fear, or hostility.

This election is about more than who will serve as mayor. It is about the kind of community Purcellville chooses to be.

Every resident has the right to support the candidate of their choice without being pressured, falsely accused, or intimidated. That principle should never depend on which campaign someone supports.

Purcellville is a small town. Elections come and go, but neighbors remain. The tone we accept today will shape the community we have tomorrow.

*Hank Speckhardt*

*Candidate for Purcellville Town Council*

— Ask Dr. Mike —

## Navigating the Quiet House: Redefining Parenthood and Purpose in the Empty Nest

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER PSY.D.

As a psychologist working with families in our community, I often consult with parents navigating major life transitions.

Few of these milestones, however, carry the emotional weight of the "empty nest." When the front door closes behind your youngest child—whether they are heading off to college, starting a career, or embarking on their own independent journey—the silence left behind can feel deafening.

The sudden absence of daily chatter, extracurricular schedules, and teenage energy often triggers a complex wave of emotions. It is entirely natural to experience a profound sense of grief, anxiety, or even a temporary loss of direction.

However, this transition, while

challenging, also marks the beginning of a rich chapter dedicated to self-discovery and personal renewal.

Understanding the Transition  
"Empty Nest Syndrome" is not a clinical diagnosis, but rather a deeply felt developmental transition. For decades, your daily routine, schedule, and identity may have been anchored by the immediate needs of your children. When those responsibilities shift, it is common to experience a temporary identity crisis.

Furthermore, parental instinct does not simply switch off. The worry we carry for our children often intensifies when they are out of our direct line of sight, which can exacerbate feelings of vulnerability.

Acknowledging that these feelings are a normal part of the parenting journey is the first step toward navigating them constructively.

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# Planning Commission Remands Cochran Tech Data Center to Work Session

BY KATIE NORTHCOTT

Citizens rallied against a proposed data center in Leesburg at a Loudoun County Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, July 23.

The proposed data center, submitted by Cochran Tech, would be built on a 17.52-acre property on Cochran Mill Road in Leesburg that is currently zoned Joint Land Management Area-3 (JLMA-3) Employment.

The applicant is seeking to rezone the property to Industrial Park (IP). Surrounding uses include residential neighborhoods, industrial properties, and several existing data centers, including Twin Creeks, Belmont Innovation, and Vantage. To proceed, the project would require a zoning amendment, a minor special exception, and four special exceptions.

The proposal first came before the Commission for a public hearing on July 29, 2025, and the Commission forwarded the application to the Board of Supervisors with a 7-0-2 vote. Commissioners Robin-Eve Jasper (Little River) and James Banks, Jr. (Algonkian) were absent.

At its business meeting on April 21, 2026, the Board denied the application with a vote of 7-1-1. Supervisor Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg) opposed the motion, and Supervisor Sylvia Glass (D-Broad Run) was absent. The Board voted 6-1-1-1 to reconsider the denial at its May 5, 2026 meeting. Supervisor Laura TeKrony opposed the motion, Supervisor Michael Turner was absent, and Supervisor Juli Briskman abstained.

As a result of the vote to reconsider, the application was remanded to the Commission for a recommendation.

During its July 23 public hearing, the Commission heard from nine speakers who opposed the application. The Commission's chairman had to remind members of the public that no audible responses were allowed during the public comment period as comments in opposition to the application were repeatedly met with applause.

Speakers brought concerns about noise, environmental impact, strain on the electrical grid, and proximity to a residential development.

"Tonight I'm here to hold an intervention. Loudoun County has an addiction, and the data centers and their lobbies are the dealers," one speaker said.

One speaker said his driveway was on the parcel.

"They control all of the access to my house," the speaker said. "Whatever they do that affects my driveway, whether it's a tree falling or rocks landing, I can't get in and out, so it's not a matter of inconvenience. It's a matter of my safety and welfare."

Emily Johnson, Piedmont Environmental Council Field Representative for Loudoun County, addressed potential environmental impacts of the data center.

"The extra grading next to Goose Creek is only going to further impact an impaired waterway, and offsite contributions to trails do not account for onsite green space impacts," Johnson said.

Since the denial, Cochran Tech has made several changes to its application. These changes included reduced size, additional grading, additional windows, additional screening, revised location, and revised configuration.

Additionally, the applicant proffered to

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# Subramanyam Offers a Lifeline as SCC Refuses to Halt Golden to Mars Project

BY VALERIE CURY

One day after the Virginia State Corporation Commission declined to suspend its final order approving Dominion Energy's Golden to Mars transmission project, U.S. Rep. Suhas Subramanyam announced what he believes could be a significant new alternative—routing the transmission line primarily along Route 606 instead of through neighborhoods or across school property.

The two announcements highlight the growing tension between a legal process the SCC considers complete and continued efforts by elected officials and residents to identify a less harmful route for one of the many controversial infrastructure projects driven by the enormous electricity demands created by Loudoun County's more than 250 data centers.



## SCC Refuses to Delay Project Further

On July 20, the SCC issued an Order Denying Suspension, rejecting requests filed by the Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun County and the Loudoun Valley Estates Homeowners Association to suspend the Commission's June 29 Final Order while petitions for reconsideration are reviewed.

The School Board had asked the Commission to reconsider portions of its June 29 decision or clarify aspects of the order. The homeowners association sought reconsideration or a rehearing, while Loudoun County requested that the Final Order be suspended pending expedited review.

The Commission declined the requests.

In its order, the SCC reiterated its conclusion that further delays would threaten electric reliability within Virginia.

"The Commission found that continued delay in this matter unreasonably jeopardizes the provision of reliable electric service within the Commonwealth."

Because of that finding, the Commission ruled it would not suspend its Final Order while the various petitions remain pending.

Perhaps even more significantly, the Commission stated that the evidentiary record has been closed since Jan. 15, 2026, and denied any requests to reopen it.

The order concludes:

"The Commission hereby declines to delay this matter further by suspending the Final Order ... Accordingly ... this matter is dismissed."

The ruling leaves Dominion's approved transmission route intact while the Commission considers any remaining legal filings.

## Subramanyam Says Route 606 May Be Possible After All

Less than 24 hours later, Congressman Suhas Subramanyam announced what could represent a turning point in the debate.

In a July 21 news release, Subramanyam said the community has been presented with what he described as a "false choice" between routing the transmission line through residential neighborhoods or across school property.

Subramanyam said he now believes that may not be the only option.

"We've been faced with a false choice," the congressman said.

Sterling resident Vicky Hu illustrates the height of a proposed 180-ft transmission pole.



# Pressure Builds to Reconsider Rt. 606 for Golden-to-Mars Project

New request builds on Congressman Subramanyam's proposal after NOAA discussions suggest previously unavailable route may be feasible.

BY VALERIE CURY

The effort to reroute Dominion Energy's controversial Golden-to-Mars transmission line away from neighborhoods and school property continues to gain momentum as two Loudoun-area state lawmakers have formally asked the Virginia State Corporation Commission to reconsider a Route 606 alternative first proposed by Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10).

In a July 23 letter to the Commission, Del. JJ Singh (D-26) and Sen. Kannan Srinivasan (D-32) requested that regulators revisit their June 29 Final Order approving Dominion Energy's transmission project in light of what they describe as significant new information regarding the potential use of federal property along Route 606, also known as Old Ox Road.

Their request follows Subramanyam's July 21 announcement that discussions with federal officials indicate a route long believed to be unavailable may now warrant serious consideration.

## Building on Subramanyam's Proposal

The lawmakers specifically credited Subramanyam's efforts in bringing the Route 606 alternative forward.

"We write to request that the Virginia State Corporation Commission reconsider its Final Order in Case No. PUR-2025-00056, Dominion Energy's Golden-to-Mars transmission line, in light of new information regarding statements from Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10)," Singh and Srinivasan wrote.

The lawmakers said they were asking the Commission to reconsider its Final Order in light of Subramanyam's recent statements regarding discussions with federal agencies about the potential use of federal property along the Route 606 corridor.

"Route 606 (Old Ox Road) has not been fully vetted. His recent discussions with federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), indicate a strong willingness to engage regarding the use of federal property for transmission infrastructure."

Subramanyam announced July 21 that after meeting personally with NOAA Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs, he believes the agency is willing to explore allowing Dominion to utilize portions of federal property, creating a route that could avoid both established residential neighborhoods and Loudoun County Public Schools property.

Route 606 had not previously advanced as a practical alternative because the project would require access across NOAA property, which had long been considered unavailable for the transmission line. Subramanyam said his recent discussions with the agency suggest there is now a strong willingness to explore that possibility.

## A Significant Shift From Earlier County Recommendations

The renewed interest in Route 606 marks a notable change from the position Loudoun County adopted before the SCC hearings began.

In January 2025, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted 8-0-1, with Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) absent, to identify



## Trump Administration Announces \$20 Billion Expansion of Dulles Airport

Washington Dulles International Airport, one of Loudoun County’s largest economic assets, is set to undergo the largest expansion in its history under a newly announced partnership between the Trump administration, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and United Airlines.

President Donald Trump and U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy unveiled the plan on July 29, announcing a capital investment program exceeding \$20 billion—nearly tripling the approximately \$7 billion modernization program already underway.

The project calls for more than 5 million

square feet of new or renovated airport facilities, including new concourses, additional gates, expanded international arrivals, upgraded passenger transportation and improvements intended to increase the airport’s capacity for future growth.

**Local Impact**

For Loudoun County, where Dulles serves as a major transportation and employment center, the investment is expected to support continued economic growth while expanding the airport’s ability to accommodate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »

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## Louis Jett—More Than A Footnote In Local History

BY CHIP BECK, EdD

Not every historian works in an ivory tower on an Ivy League campus. A rare one might work out of a cabin on the side of a wooded mountain.

Not every biographer chronicles the lives of famous celebrities already known to many. Some focus on the stories of persons who were forgotten or ignored.

Not every researcher delves into the National Archives or libraries of major universities to uncover injustices in foreign lands. One historian, born and raised in Western Loudoun County, poured through the back pages and obituaries of local newspapers, community newsletters, family correspondences, and church announcements for decades to uncover and document the struggles and personal victories of residents who were largely denied publicity in their time of being.

The community treasure I have in mind was Louis Albert Jett (76), who passed away on July 17. Perishing with him was a lifetime of knowledge and local folklore that cannot be resurrected. Even with the advent of the Internet and Wikipedia, knowing what to look for, where to seek the data, and which people to ask about, are pieces of a demographic puzzle that was unique to the mind, experiences, and background of Louis Jett.

Louis was born in the Loudoun County Black community of Willard on February 25, 1950. He played and attended school there until the entire community was razed to the ground by the Right of Eminent Domain in 1958-1962 so Dulles International Airport could be built in its place. As one former resident later told Louis, "I doubt that would have happened if it had been a white community living there."

Thus it happened at about age 11, Louis and his family relocated to the outskirts of Hillsboro, itself a predominantly white enclave founded as "The Gap" in 1752. From those colonial beginnings to modern times, the Mill Town's African American employees, hired hands, or area farmers were scattered on secluded hillside cabins, existing as clusters of Black families north and south of Hillsboro on the east side of Short Hill Mountain.

It was mostly on that mountain, uphill from a gravel lane called Ashbury Church Road, that Louis lived modestly but proudly for the rest of his life. For the most part he toiled as an independent handyman who repaired broken things or cleaned up the trash, debris, and occasional treasures from



Watercolor Portrait of Louis Jett, December 16, 2023, at Hill Tom's Cabin by Hillsboro historical artist Chip Beck.

area farms and properties. That hard labor was essentially his day job, but in his free time, Louis became a champion of his people's stories and memories.

Louis was especially passionate when it came to chronicling the obliterated Black community of Willard, where his life began even as his birthplace faced its demise. At the end of his life, Louis still lobbied for reparations or recognition for the families that were undercompensated and unceremoniously displaced from the historic 19th Century farming village and crossroads so a patchwork of long jet runways and multiple passenger terminals could relieve Washington's old National Airport of its increasing noise and airway congestion.

To acquire the village and its land, which boasted a Baptist Church, the Willard Colored School, a general store, 300 structures to include homes, and a post office, the Federal Government simply "condemned" the properties writ large and paid residents \$500 an acre to pack up and move along. Today, those acres would sell in eastern Loudoun County for \$1 million an acre, maybe even \$5 million dollars for a Data Center.

As he grew older and became conscious of social disparities, Louis adopted his research habits and cataloging technique of collecting local stories about Black History,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 »

**LOUIS JETT**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

families, and events from his grandmother, Elizabeth Lucas Jett, who meticulously snipped articles from daily newspapers and community newsletters, and then pasted them in chronological order in binders and notebooks.

In a way, his grandmother constituted a data bridge back to earlier generations of descendants of freed slaves who built Willard and worked as farmers, sharecroppers, farmhands, laborers, craftsmen, or timber workers throughout the county.

When his grandmother could no longer keep up her chronicles, Louis enthusiastically kept up the tradition. Over a period of 26 years, he became an authority and de facto historian of the descendants of enslaved people and free men and women of Loudoun County.

The vast wealth of knowledge he developed about the past and living histories of Western Loudoun earned Louis a role as secretary of Loudoun's Black History Committee. From 2006 to 2010 he supplied the Thomas Balch Library with all the materials it needed for the annual Black History Month exhibits.

Then, in the summer of 2010, an arsonist surreptitiously set fire to the Asbury Methodist Church, a small stone chapel built in

1887 just outside the Hillsboro City Limits. The church was not far removed from the Jett homestead. Constructed by Black craftsmen for their segregated-community use in the 19th Century, Louis helped maintain the chapel as a volunteer handyman and convenient caretaker.

The church was also where Louis temporarily had stored all one hundred of his treasured five-inch binders, bulging with decades of research he and his grandmother had collected, organized, and maintained.

Every one of the binders were destroyed in the fire. The historical details they contained went up in smoke. There were no backup copies or files.

Whether the arsonist set the fire as a racial statement against the presence of a Black church or as a hateful act to obliterate a unique and irreplaceable archive of Western Loudoun's Black history is not known. The arsonist was never caught so the motives remain suspicious, but unproven.

In the years following the devastating loss of his lifetime data collection, Louis and members of the Black History Committee continued to search for, and protect, Loudoun's dwindling repositories of memorabilia and recollections. Good finds were scarce. Much of what turned up was illegible, brittle, faded, moldy, or waterlogged. None

of it matched the details existing in the destroyed Jett family notebooks.

Over the past three years, this writer and fellow former member of the Hillsboro Preservation Foundation, Matt Danielson, have begun modest efforts to update and expand the 1976 *Memories of a Mill Town*, a history of The Gap (Hillsboro) published during the U.S. Bicentennial.

While the document contains a wealth of data on the town's commercial frontier origins, its founding and notable residents, and events spanning 200 years, one of the account's shortcomings was that it read more like a genealogical account from Genesis rather than an engaging narrative of a little town with more than its fair share of excitement, intrigue, and colorful characters.

Among the deficiencies in the historical pamphlet was the omission of significant references to Indigenous or African American communities or personages who played their own roles in the history of Western Loudoun, the frontier town called The Gap, the Civil War, and the post-enslavement period. Louis Jett had agreed, informally, to provide us input or contacts from friends and relatives who he hoped might still be able to provide unique remembrances of the Black-and-white interactions in Hillsboro's

past.

Toward this end, one crisp day in December 2023, when dense vegetation no longer obscured the overgrown walls, foundations, and ruins scattered along the old colonial wagon road that stretched from Hillsboro to the Potomac River on the east side of Short Hill Mountain, Louis Jett, Matt Danielson, and I set out on foot from Hill Tom's Cabin in search of the stone paddocks and the legendary "Wolf's Den,"—the Civil War hideout of Colonel John Mosby, aka The Gray Ghost.

We found the Wolf's den, consisting of giant boulders that long ago tumbled down from higher on the mountain, plus an incredible number of waist or chest-high stone walls climbing up, as well as across, the face of Short Hill Mountain for more than a mile. The sheer weight of those immense rocks forming the walls boggled our minds as to who, and how many people it took to pile thousands of those large stones one-on-top of another, using only pre-Civil War or even Colonial-era tools and manpower.

It was obvious to Louis, Matt and me, as the self-taught historians we all were, that the old wagon road—virtually impassable today—once served communities of Black and white sharecroppers or subsistence farmers back when the region was still

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »



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# Middleburg Soldier Competes for Army's Top Honor in Europe

BY VALERIE CURY

"Be all you can be, and nothing worth doing should be done halfway."

Those were the words Blake Barfield's grandfather repeated throughout his childhood in Middleburg.

Today, they have become the philosophy guiding the young soldier as he competes against some of the U.S. Army's top squads in Europe.

Barfield, a Network Communication Systems Specialist assigned to the 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is representing his command in the U.S. Army Europe and Africa Best Squad Competition after helping lead his team to a second-place finish in the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Best Squad Competition.

The weeklong competition, taking place July 30 through Aug. 6 at the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany, brings together elite squads from across Europe to test every aspect of military excellence.

Soldiers are evaluated on technical and tactical proficiency, communication, teamwork, endurance, resilience and leadership under demanding conditions. The winning squad



U.S. Army Spc. Blake Barfield throws a grenade toward a bunker during qualification as part of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command Best Squad Competition at U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria, Germany, April 21. The event tests Soldiers' accuracy, technique, and confidence while reinforcing safe handling procedures (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Tanisha Karn).

will advance to represent U.S. Army Europe and Africa at the Army Best Squad Competition, where one noncommissioned officer and one junior enlisted soldier will ultimately be named the Army's Best NCO and Best Soldier of the Year.

For Barfield, the competition represents much more than an opportunity to earn a title.

"I've taken these words with me throughout my career and done everything possible to be all I can be," Barfield said, reflecting on the advice his grandfather shared throughout his childhood.

Those lessons carried him from western Loudoun County to military service overseas, where he now serves alongside soldiers responsible for sustaining Army operations across Europe.

While the competition measures marksmanship, technical expertise and physical endurance, it also places a premium on trust, communication and the ability to perform as a cohesive team under pressure—qualities that often define military success long after the competition ends.

For Barfield, those values have become a way of life.

From a small Loudoun County community to one of the Army's most demanding competitions, he continues to live by the advice that first inspired him as a boy: give your very best, finish what you start and never do anything halfway.

## Bach's Masterpieces Come to Life on the Harp at Wheatland Concert Series



One of the world's greatest musical masterpieces will be heard in an extraordinary new way when the Wheatland Concert Series welcomes acclaimed harpist Dr. Alyson Kanne on Saturday, Aug. 22, at 6 p.m. for an intimate evening devoted to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

While Bach composed his celebrated works for keyboard instruments, they take on an entirely new character when performed on the harp. Rich, luminous, and remarkably expressive, the instrument reveals colors and textures that transform familiar masterpieces into a fresh musical experience.

The evening will feature selections from Bach's monumental Goldberg Variations, along with movements from the French Suite and other beloved works.

Legend tells us that in 1741 Count Hermann Karl von Keyserling commissioned Bach to compose music that would bring him comfort during long, sleepless nights of illness, rewarding the composer with a goblet filled with gold.

The resulting Goldberg Variations have become one of the towering achievements of classical music. Bach

biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel later wrote that even such a magnificent gift "was not enough to pay for their artistic value."

Following the concert's first half, guests will enjoy an elegant French wine dinner prepared by Magnolias at the Mill, creating an evening that celebrates both music and fine cuisine.

The menu includes warm Salade Chèvre Chaud with local greens, walnuts and lardon; a classic Bouillabaisse featuring monkfish, shrimp, salmon and mussels in a Pernod broth with garlic croustade; and a traditional French Plum Torte served with homemade cinnamon ice cream, coffee and a selection of teas. Each course is paired with French wines selected to complement the menu.

Presented in an intimate setting with limited seating, the evening offers guests a rare opportunity to experience Bach's timeless music in an unforgettable way—through the elegant voice of the harp, accompanied by exceptional food and wine.

Tickets and additional information are available at [www.shiloh-manor.com](http://www.shiloh-manor.com).

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# Applications Open for Loudoun’s Battle of the Bands

Think your band has what it takes to rock the stage?

Loudoun County is now accepting applications for the 2026 Battle of the Bands, giving talented teen musicians the chance to perform live, compete for prizes and gain valuable feedback from music industry professionals.

For more than 20 years, Battle of the Bands has showcased some of Loudoun County’s most promising young performers. Organized by Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Loudoun Youth Inc. and the Loudoun County Youth Advisory Council, the annual competition reflects YAC’s mission of creating opportunities “for teens, by teens.”

Applications are being accepted through 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 31, and participation is limited to the first 30 qualifying acts.

The competition gives teen musicians a rare opportunity to perform free of charge before a live audience at a professional venue complete with high-quality sound production. In addition to competing for prizes, performers receive constructive critiques from a panel of experienced music professionals, helping them sharpen their stage presence and musicianship.

Over the years, Battle of the Bands has served as a launching pad for many young artists. Former participants have gone on to perform on national stages, including the Vans Warped Tour, American Idol, and even opened for Bon Jovi at Capital One Arena.

For application information, competition dates, locations and ticket details, visit [Loudoun.Gov/Teens](http://Loudoun.Gov/Teens).

# Young Chefs Can Learn to Make Mexican Favorites at La Prensa

Future foodies can trade the microwave for a che’s apron this summer during a hands-on Junior Chefs Cooking Workshop at La Prensa Tacos & Tapas, 21305 Windmill Park Drive, Suite 140, in Sterling.

The two-day workshop will be held Monday and Tuesday, Aug. 10-11, from noon to 3 p.m. each day, giving children the opportunity to step into the kitchen and prepare a variety of classic Mexican dishes from scratch while learning basic cooking techniques and kitchen skills.

Under the guidance of La Prensa chef Tomas Lobato, participants will make fresh tortillas, homemade salsa and guacamole, crispy tortilla chips, rice and beans, flavorful taco fillings, tacos and quesadillas. Along the way, they’ll chop, mix, cook, assemble their creations and, best of all, enjoy eating what they’ve made.

The workshop is designed to be interactive, with class sizes kept small so every young chef has plenty of hands-on time in the kitchen. One registration includes both days of instruction.

The cost is \$200 per child, and all ingredients and cooking materials are provided.

Space is limited. For more information or to register, contact La Prensa Tacos & Tapas at 703-421-4950 or go to [LaPrensaRestaurant.com](http://LaPrensaRestaurant.com).



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**PLANNING COMMISSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

and zoning modifications to accommodate the project.

These included reducing required setbacks adjacent to residential properties, eliminating building step-back requirements designed to lessen visual impacts, removing required buffering between certain industrial uses on-site, and allowing mechanical equipment adjacent to residential properties to be screened by walls rather than principal buildings.

The proposal also raised broader land use questions because of its location within Loudoun County's Transition Policy Area. The site lies along the county's Urban Growth Boundary in an area designated as a Transitional Large Lot Neighborhood, a place type where the Comprehensive Plan envisions predominantly residential development, agriculture, substantial open space, and the protection of natural and environmental resources.

The designation is intended to provide a gradual transition between suburban development and the county's Rural Policy Area while preserving the area's environmental and rural character.

Recommending denial, planning staff concluded the proposal represented a fundamental departure from the Loudoun County 2019 General Plan.



According to staff, introducing industrial-scale development at this location would fundamentally alter the planned character of the area and be incompatible with surrounding neighborhoods, large-lot residential properties, and agricultural land.

The proposed intensity of development also substantially exceeded what the Comprehensive Plan envisions for the area. The application proposed buildings up to 100 feet tall, more than double the approximately 45-foot building height anticipated for the Transitional Large Lot Neighborhood place type.

The report concluded the project's scale, building massing, and requested zoning modifications could not be sufficiently mitigated. It also cited unresolved transportation issues, including roadway improvements, emergency access, and impacts to an existing residence.

Beyond land use and transportation concerns, the staff report identified unresolved issues involving watershed protection, environmental impacts, wetlands and stream corridors, heritage resources, archaeological investigations, and protection of the nearby Goose Creek watershed, which feeds Beaverdam Reservoir, one of eastern Loudoun County's primary drinking water sources.

Representing the applicant, Antonio Calabrese, a partner with DLA Piper LLP, presented the proposal. He said that

the campus had been carefully designed to minimize its visibility and impacts on surrounding properties. "Unless you're flying over in a plane, a helicopter, or a very large drone, you will not be able to see nor hear this campus as it has been designed," he said.

Calabrese said the project's level of buffering and screening could not be achieved in the county's more typical data center locations because those sites do not provide sufficient room for the same design approach.

The public hearing drew significant community participation, with 68 residents signing up to speak. Despite the late hour, nearly 50 remained to address the commission, and all but one urged the commission to reject the proposal.

### Residents Speak

Area resident Mete Sahin said the Transition Policy Area was created to preserve the area "for low-density housing and various other uses that are not compatible with data centers whatsoever." He added that the county should not go against its own plans. "Data centers are industrial facilities, and they will change the character of the area, and it would go downhill from there," he said.

Thomas David urged the Planning Commission to evaluate the application based on the county's adopted plans and policies. "My request is simply that you assess the petition regarding the Spring Valley Technology Park against the laws, the regulations, and plans that control this very issue," he said.

Referring to the Comprehensive Plan's Transition Policy Area designation and the property's residential zoning, David told commissioners, "Those terms are neither elastic nor ambiguous."

Erika Sovey said she and her husband chose Loudoun County more than 20 years ago because of its reputation as "one of the best places in America to raise a family."

She said they intentionally purchased a home near Beaver Dam Reservoir, where they enjoy fishing, kayaking, hiking, and spending time outdoors with their son. "Families moved here because of those natural resources, not to live next to or across from one of the largest data center developments in the region," she said.

Speaking on behalf of the Greenville Preserve Homeowners Association, President Joe Payne asked for denial of the application, saying the Board represented 225 homes directly across from the proposed site.

"There's no reason to go through all of this stuff unless you're trying to put something that simply does not belong there," said Payne. He said that the project's extensive buffering and mitigation measures reflected its incompatibility with the Transition Policy Area.

Sixteen-year-old Ryan Reategui, who lives less than a mile from the proposed site, said he enjoys fishing in Goose Creek, exploring the woods on his family's property, and watching bald eagles near Beaver Dam Reservoir.

He urged commissioners to consider the long-term consequences of the proposal, saying, "Please think beyond the next years and consider what this decision means for the



next 50."

A nine-year-old, the youngest speaker of the evening, walked to the staff and applicant presentation table carrying a baby tree and placed it on the table as a symbol of growth and patience.

Referring to the sapling, she said, "This baby tree is a lot like me. It's still growing, and if you give it time, it will become something amazing."

She urged commissioners to slow the process, adding, "My parents and my teachers tell me to stop, think, and make good choices, like 'measure twice, cut once.' Maybe today we should measure

twice and then decide to pause because some decisions can't be taken back."

She concluded, "I'm only nine years old. I don't get to vote, but I do have to live with your decisions."

Kelly McGinn urged the commission to restore public confidence by following the Comprehensive Plan, telling commissioners, "Show us that the TPA is more than words just on paper. Show us that existing neighborhoods and the people that live here are worth protecting."

Speaking on behalf of the Loudoun Nature Conservation Project, Evan Gigliotti asked the commission to deny the rezoning application, saying the project's air quality impacts and inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan outweighed its benefits.

Martins Chase resident Adam Dovens said he and his wife chose their home for its open space and rural surroundings. He asked commissioners, "How much more of our carefully chosen home do you want to take from us for a data center that nobody wants in an area that isn't zoned for their operations?"

Emily Johnson, Land Use Field Representative for the Piedmont Environmental Council, urged the Planning Commission to deny the application, saying the proposal was incompatible with the Comprehensive Plan and surrounding development.

Johnson said the organization's concerns included impacts to open space, tree canopy, wildlife habitat, Goose Creek, historic resources, infrastructure, and neighboring residential communities.

One of the last speakers of the evening said he had polled his animals about the proposal. "My calves are going to go crazy ... They were just born. They don't get a vote. The other five were dead set against it. The donkeys were making a ruckus. I don't speak donkey, but I'm pretty sure they're against it too."

Following public comment, commissioners unanimously agreed the proposal was incompatible with the location and recommended denial. Several described the application as a well-designed project in the wrong place, while emphasizing it conflicted with the purpose of the Transition Policy Area and the surrounding residential and rural landscape.

Before the vote, commissioners also thanked the residents who participated throughout the process and encouraged them to remain engaged as future proposals for the property are considered.

All six commissioners present voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors deny the rezoning application.

# Major Milestone Brings White's Ferry One Step Closer to Reopening

BY VALERIE CURY

After nearly six years of determined effort, White's Ferry moved significantly closer to returning to service Friday, July 24, as Montgomery County and Potomac Crossing, LLC announced an agreement that clears one of the final major hurdles to restoring the historic Potomac River crossing.

At a ceremony overlooking the dormant ferry landing in Dickerson, Maryland, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich joined White's Ferry owner Chuck Kuhn, state and local officials, and community leaders to announce that Montgomery County will purchase the Maryland ferry property for \$1.5 million while Chuck and Stacy Kuhn will donate the ferry boats, business assets, and equipment—valued at more than \$7 million—to the county.

The agreement transfers ownership of the Maryland landing and ferry operation into public hands, positioning Montgomery County to restore service once landing rights on the Virginia side are secured.

For Chuck Kuhn, Friday's announcement marked the culmination of a journey that began six years ago with a simple objective.

"My wife Stacy and I purchased White's Ferry... after the ferry had been shut down, and we have truly spent six years trying to work together with the Virginia shoreline, Montgomery County, Loudoun County, the State of Maryland, and the State of Virginia to get to where we are today," Kuhn said. "The only goal was to get the ferry open. We never were worried about who owned it. We just wanted to make sure the ferry got back open for the community."

Calling the announcement "a great step," Kuhn thanked officials on both sides of the Potomac for remaining committed to restoring the historic crossing.

"I'd like to thank all of the Montgomery County officials, Poolesville officials, for everything you all have done, staying with me for six years to get this ferry reopened," he said. Kuhn also recognized Loudoun County Board Chair Phyllis Randall, Supervisor Caleb Kershner, Loudoun County Attorney Leo Rogers, and others for their efforts in moving the project forward.

Elrich praised Kuhn's perseverance throughout the lengthy process.

"I want to thank Chuck Kuhn and his wife Stacy for making this possible," Elrich



said. "Thank you for your perseverance and sticking to the original mission. You could have easily thrown up your hands and said, 'This is never going to happen. I'm going to do something else.' You didn't do that, and I appreciate this."

Elrich called the agreement "a major milestone" that will allow Montgomery County to move forward with restoring one of the region's most important transportation links.

Under the agreement, Montgomery County will acquire approximately 2.5 acres of riverfront property, including the ferry landing, store, boat launch, storage buildings, and related improvements.

Once the transfer is complete, the county plans to remove the ferry vessel from the river, inspect its condition, complete any necessary repairs, and prepare it for operation when service can resume.

The county also intends to continue operating existing businesses on the property and explore additional recreational and tourism opportunities at the site.

Elrich emphasized the ferry's importance not only to commuters but also to businesses and communities throughout the region.

"This community has been without this vital service for about six years," he said, noting that restoring the crossing will reduce travel times, reconnect workers with employers, support businesses in Poolesville, and strengthen regional economic activity.

Friday's announcement drew a bipartisan group of federal, state, county, and local officials, including U.S. Rep. April McClain Delaney, Maryland Delegate Lily Qi, Montgomery County Council President Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Council Vice President Marilyn Balcombe, Poolesville Town Commission President Jim Brown, and Montgomery County Department of Transportation Director Chris Conklin, all expressing optimism that the agreement represents the strongest opportunity yet to restore the historic ferry crossing.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

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ONE YEAR LATER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

he was able to make the administrative determination required under Virginia law as the Town’s chief administrative officer.

A Final and Binding Decision

Virginia law provides that Grievance Panel decisions are final and binding. The chief administrative officer’s role is not to retry the case, but to determine whether the relief awarded is consistent with the locality’s written personnel policies.

Sabio made clear that his directive does exactly that, and nothing more.

The order specifically states that it does not reconsider the evidence presented to the Panel, decide the merits of pending criminal or civil proceedings, determine anyone’s personal liability or adopt every factual or legal conclusion contained in the Panel’s written decision.

Instead, Sabio concluded that reversing Nett’s termination, restoring him to employment, awarding back pay and benefits, and allowing qualifying attorney’s fees all fall within the types of relief authorized under the Town’s own grievance policies.

Detailed Orders for Implementation

The directive instructs payroll, human resources and finance personnel who had no prior involvement in the underlying dispute to begin restoring Nett’s employment records, calculating back pay, reinstating benefits and documenting service credit.

It also orders officials who previously participated in the underlying personnel matter or related legal disputes to play no discretionary role in carrying out the directive.

Sabio wrote that those individuals are to receive the directive only for purposes of notice or performing strictly ministerial functions and “shall not delay, condition, reinterpret, or modify the reinstatement.”

The directive further instructs Town litigation counsel to address the pending court enforcement action filed after the Town previously declined to implement the Grievance Panel’s order.

Separate From Criminal Proceedings

The directive repeatedly distinguishes Nett’s employment rights under the grievance process from the criminal cases

that remain pending against him.

Sabio states that implementing the Grievance Panel’s decision does not determine the merits of those criminal charges, affect Nett’s status as an elected official or constitute an admission of liability by the Town.

The directive also separates Nett’s reinstatement from any future determination regarding whether he will actually perform police duties, noting that his prospective duty status will be addressed through a separate personnel directive.

Turning a Page

Although narrow in legal scope, Sabio’s directive represents a significant milestone in one of Purcellville’s most contentious personnel disputes.

For nearly a year and a half, the case has been at the center of one of the most consequential legal and administrative disputes in Purcellville’s recent history, generating multiple lawsuits, criminal proceedings and appeals.

Rather than revisiting those disputes, Sabio framed his role as one of administrative obligation.

His directive concludes that the Grievance Panel’s award is consistent with the Town’s written personnel policies and therefore must be implemented under Virginia law, while leaving all remaining legal disputes to the courts.

Why the Grievance Panel Ordered Reinstatement

Sabio’s directive follows a unanimous decision by an independent three-member Employee Grievance Panel that overturned Nett’s termination after concluding the Town failed to prove any of the allegations used to justify his dismissal.

The Panel found that Nett did not engage in the conduct described in the termination notice, did not commit misconduct, did not violate the law and ordered his reinstatement with back pay, benefits and attorney’s fees.

Beyond rejecting each of the Town’s allegations, the Panel concluded that Nett had been subjected to political targeting surrounding his candidacy for and subsequent election to the Purcellville Town Council.

The decision states that multiple internal investigations, increased scrutiny, disciplinary actions and other events occurring in rapid succession “reasonably support Mr. Nett’s feeling that he was being targeted at work,” adding that his testimony on the issue was “credible and factually unchallenged by the Town.”

The Panel went further, finding that political divisions influenced the disciplinary process itself. It concluded that “these political divides motivated the Department to terminate Mr. Nett because of his election to Town Council,” citing testimony and evidence presented during the hearing.

In its written decision, the Panel also criticized the Town’s investigation, finding that it relied heavily on allegations that were unsupported by the greater weight of the evidence, failed to follow the Town’s own progressive discipline policies and treated Nett differently from Department supervisors.

Sabio’s role under Virginia law was limited to determining whether the relief ordered by the Grievance Panel was consistent with the Town’s written personnel policies. He concluded that it was and ordered the Town to implement the Panel’s relief.

Implementation Delayed Despite Legal Guidance

Sabio’s directive also brings to a close a chapter that remained unresolved nearly a year after the Grievance Panel issued its unanimous decision.

Text messages from November 2025 show that then-Interim Town Manager Diana Hays had received advice and guidance concerning the Grievance Panel’s decision from Town Attorney Robert Sproul, former Town Attorney John Cafferky and the Town’s insurance counsel. In one exchange, Sproul told Mayor Chris Bertaut that “both John and I, and now insurance counsel, have provided Diana with advice and guidance, but we cannot force her to make a decision one way or another.”

The following day, Bertaut asked whether Hays had been explicitly told that she faced a deadline to sign off on the relief ordered by the Grievance Panel and whether she had been advised of the legal risks of failing to act. Cafferky responded that he had told Hays, “She needs to move on this by tomorrow at the latest.”

When Bertaut checked again on Nov. 7 for an update on the Grievance Panel relief, Sproul replied that no decision had been made and that he could not say “with any degree of certainty when or if a decision will be made.”

More than a year after the Grievance Panel unanimously ordered Nett reinstated, Sabio became the first Town Manager to formally determine that the Grievance Panel’s relief was consistent with the Town’s written personnel policies and direct implementation of its final and binding decision.

PLANNING COMMISSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

construct or fund some bridges and trail sections of Loudoun County’s Linear Parks & Trail System.

Despite the changes, the proposed 70-foot building height exceeds the parcel’s JLMA Employment Place Type requirement of 50-foot building height limits. However, the proposed 20-foot grading would give the data center the appearance of being shorter.

County staff recommended that the applicant provide more details on elevation and its proffer to contribute to bridges and trails.

Commissioner Ad Barnes (Leesburg) made a motion to deny the application. However, his motion met opposition.

“I’m very concerned that we’re totally going rogue on this,” Commissioner Dale Polen Myers said. “We have no findings that any of us have seen for denial. We don’t know what it is. We’ve heard different comments that should be looked at [and] shouldn’t be looked at. We’ve got a lot of emotions running here. The sensible thing to do is to take this to a work session.”

The Commission ultimately voted to send the application to a work session with a 3-2-1-3 vote. Commissioners Robin-Eve Jasper (Little River) and Barnes opposed the motion. Commissioners Clifford Keirce (Sterling), Eric Combs (Ashburn), and Banks were absent. Commissioner Michelle Frank (Broad Run) abstained.

OPINION: A TRIBUTE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

your loyalty unwavering. For that, I will remain forever grateful.

Perhaps your greatest gift was not simply preserving history, it was giving future generations a roadmap. Through your writings, you laid out a vision that will outlive us all. You documented not only where we have been, but where we must yet go.

Your work calls upon every generation to confront injustice, to correct historical wrongs (Village of Willard), to preserve sacred places (Emancipation Grounds), and to continue the unfinished work of securing justice for all.

You understood that history is not meant to sit quietly on a shelf. It is meant to awaken conscience, inspire courage, and instigate action.

The seeds you planted will continue to bear fruit. Young people will learn because you taught. Communities will remember because you recorded. Families will discover their heritage because you cared enough to preserve it. Long after we are gone, your life’s work will continue to speak.

Thank you, my brother, for your kindness, your wisdom, your generosity, and your unwavering love for your people.

**OPINION: CHOOSE YOUR 3-5 WISELY,**  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

For a few minutes, grown men became boys again. Those moments matter.

Later that week, we stood inside Churchill's War Rooms, where some of history's most consequential decisions were made. Looking around those underground rooms, I was reminded that Winston Churchill understood something our generation often forgets: Victory always requires people standing shoulder to shoulder. No one wins life's greatest battles alone.

Three events we attended centered on the military, surrounded by men whose lives are defined by service, sacrifice, and brotherhood. Their stories are different, but the common thread is unmistakable. The strongest among them weren't those who stood apart. They were those who stood together.

Between those unforgettable experiences were dozens of moments that would never appear on social media. Long conversations over dinners that stretched for hours. Great food, good wine, and warm beer. Stories we'd all heard before but laughed at anyway. Inside jokes that made no sense to anyone else. Looking back, those ordinary moments were the most valuable part of the entire trip.

As I've grown older, I've realized friendship isn't measured by how many names are stored in your phone or how many people "like" your posts. It's measured by the handful of people who consistently make you better.

Real friends celebrate your victories without envy. They tell you the truth when you need to hear it, not just what you want to hear. They remind you who you are when life has you questioning yourself. Perhaps most importantly, they inspire you to become a better husband, wife, father, mother, leader, neighbor, and friend.

These relationships don't happen by accident. They require something increasingly rare: time. Not text messages. Not social media. Not an occasional birthday greeting. Real time means shared experiences, long

walks, road trips, meals without checking your phone, difficult conversations, and simply doing life together.

We live in a culture that celebrates being busy. We schedule meetings months in advance but somehow struggle to schedule a weekend with the people who matter most. That's a costly mistake.

Research continues to show that loneliness is one of the greatest threats to our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Yet we often treat deep friendships as luxuries rather than necessities. The irony is that many of us work tirelessly to build successful lives while unintentionally neglecting the very relationships that make those lives worth living.

As I boarded the flight home, one thought kept returning to me: someday there will be a last trip, a last dinner, a last laugh, and a last chance to sit beside someone you've known for decades and tell the stories one more time.

The tragedy is that we'll never know when we're living those moments.

So don't wait.

Plan the trip. Take the vacation. Gather your people. Laugh until your sides hurt. Spend less time worrying about what you're accomplishing and more time appreciating who you're becoming—and who is helping shape that journey.

Because in the end, your résumé will tell people what you did. But your closest friends will tell the story of who you became. Choose your three to five wisely. Then make the time to be with them.

*Ken Falke, is a 21-year veteran of the US Navy Special Operations Explosive Ordnance Disposal community. Falke is a serial entrepreneur and the 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."*

**OPINION: A TRIBUTE,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Thank you for believing that every story mattered and every life deserved to be remembered. Thank you for showing us that preserving history is itself an act of justice.

Your labor on this earth is complete, but your legacy has only begun.

May our God receive you with open arms. May those whose stories you faithfully preserved welcome you home with joy. May your spirit find eternal peace in the presence of those who came before us, knowing that

you honored them well.

And may we who remain have the courage to continue the work you so faithfully began.

Rest in eternal peace, my dear brother.

Your life mattered. Your work mattered. Your love mattered. And your legacy will endure forever.

May brother Louis Jett's memory be a blessing, and the work he devoted his life to continue to inspire generations yet to come.

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OPINION: SERGEANTS AND NEWBIES,  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Resources for VDOT

VDOT’s Research Council is about to release its two-year-long study of unpaved roads. Hopefully it’s helpful. VDOT can also use many technical papers on unpaved roads, from Penn State, USDA, the Federal Highway Administration and others.

Does VDOT utilize these resources? The conditions of many unpaved roads shout, “No!”

Unpaved Roads and VDOT

A yellow motor grader shows up periodically. Its operator is given an area to work, such as Route 698 from Limestone Creek north to Route 703. He’ll run his machine up and down that section of road,

smoothing out washboarding and pot-holes. If they’re extensive, perhaps after a major storm, a few dumptruck loads of gravel will be dumped for the grader to spread around.

That treatment might be effective for a month, oftentimes just for a few weeks. Then it’s back to disrepair and the process repeats.

In dry conditions, gravel roads produce dust as the gravel can quickly crumble into particles. VDOT might then spray calcium chloride—but only in front of houses.

On unpaved roads where houses are further apart, today’s dust treatment is spotty and pointless. Instead, treat the entire road! That’s sergeant mentality—avoid change and keep doing things the same old way.

VDOT Once Got Things Right,  
Then Almost Ruined It

Using material from the Research Council and Penn State, four years ago VDOT did a test section of Route 698 south of Limestone Creek. It spread its regular 21A aggregate (gravel) along with a binder, and then used a big roller to compact everything.

Workers created a “crown” in the center of the road to improve drainage. The results were excellent: a smooth, dust-free and lasting surface.

The regular grader operator soon arrived. Oops! Nobody told him to avoid the test section’s crown, so he just shaved it flat. While he literally erased part of the test, that section of road still outperforms other road sections.

Why isn’t this technique VDOT’s standard practice?

Complainers

VDOT and county Supervisors hear a lot of complaints. Sometimes Supervisors take matters up with VDOT. Often the complainer is a self-important guy with a sense of entitlement.

Recently, a lout living in a bland subdivision off Old Wheatland Road so tormented Supervisors and VDOT that they gave in and paved a section of that road.

No one in authority considered that speeds would increase dramatically, or that the road had at least five blind hills. Something bad is bound to happen there.

Something bad has already happened near us. Hurley Lane is a short road.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Strategies for Finding New Purpose

Transitioning into this new phase of life requires patience and intentionality. Here are several clinically grounded strategies to help you navigate the empty nest:

**Acknowledge and Process Your Grief:** Do not rush yourself through the sadness. Allow yourself to feel the loss of that specific hands-on caregiving chapter. Journaling, mindfulness practices, or speaking with a therapist can provide the space needed to process these emotions.

**Reinvest in Relationships:** For couples, this period offers a valuable opportunity to reconnect. Without the daily demands of active parenting, you can focus on rediscovering shared interests and strengthening your partnership.

For single parents, this is an opportune time to deepen friendships and build supportive community networks.

**Establish New Routines:** Structure provides comfort during times of change. Designing a new daily routine that

prioritizes your physical health, self-care, and personal interests can restore a sense of control and predictability.

**Pursue Personal Enrichment:** Consider this an open invitation to explore interests that may have been sidelined during the busy parenting years. Whether it is enrolling in a continuing education course, learning an instrument, picking up a creative hobby, or traveling, investing in your own mind and spirit is highly therapeutic.

**Redirect Your Caregiving Energy:** The desire to nurture and guide does not disappear. Many parents find immense fulfillment in volunteering for local charities, mentoring young professionals, or participating in community initiatives where their decades of experience can benefit others.

**Redefine the Parent-Child Bond:** Your role as a parent has not ended; it has simply evolved. Modern technology allows for consistent, healthy communication. By respecting their growing autonomy while remaining a steady, supportive presence, you can cultivate a rewarding adult-to-adult relationship with your child.

A New Chapter Begins

An empty nest does not signify a vacant life; rather, it represents a clean slate. While the structure of your daily interactions has changed, your significance in your child’s life remains steadfast. They will continue to need your wisdom, love, and support—they will simply access it differently as they build their own independent lives.

As you navigate this transition, remember that fostering your child’s independence is a profound achievement, and investing in your own growth is the next natural step of the journey.

“The greatest gift you can give your children is not the path you clear for them, but the strength you show them as you walk your own.”—Unknown

*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.*

DULLES AIRPORT EXPANSION,  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

business and leisure travel.

Federal officials said the project will create thousands of construction and aviation-related jobs and generate billions of dollars in economic activity throughout the Washington metropolitan region.

The expanded airport also is expected to increase domestic and international flight options, strengthening access for the region’s business community and the technology sector that has made Loudoun County an international destination for investment.

Airport Improvements

The modernization plan includes:

- Replacement of the aging Concourses C and D with facilities capable of serving larger aircraft and additional international routes.
- Additional gates to accommodate

more flights.

- Expanded AeroTrain service and new pedestrian tunnels that will eventually replace the airport’s mobile lounges.
- A larger U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility for international arrivals.
- A modern baggage handling system designed to reduce luggage wait times.
- Additional concessions, expanded United Club space and a larger United Polaris lounge.

The project also includes construction of a parking garage directly across from the main terminal. According to Trump, the garage is expected to accommodate approximately 32,000 vehicles and will be connected to the terminal by enclosed glass walkways, allowing travelers to walk directly into the airport. He said the facility would be the largest parking garage in the world.

The project preserves Eero Saarinen’s iconic main terminal while replacing or

modernizing much of the surrounding airport infrastructure.

Building on Existing Plans

The announcement accelerates a long-range modernization program already underway through the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority’s master plan.

In December 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation invited developers, architects and engineers to submit proposals for accelerating the redevelopment of Dulles. More than 30 proposals were reviewed before federal officials selected the plan announced Wednesday.

“This new construction effort builds upon the multiyear Dulles Master Plan, developed in consultation with our airline partners, to modernize Washington’s main international airport,” Airports Authority President and CEO Jack Potter said. “We are grateful for the Trump administration’s interest in accelerating the pace and scope of our plans.”

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said the project will improve passenger mobility, modernize airport facilities and preserve Dulles’ distinctive architecture.

“President Trump’s work to make D.C. safe and beautiful has already reshaped our nation’s capital for the better. But to truly achieve this vision, we need to invest in an international gateway that is worthy of the greatest country on earth,” said Duffy.

“By partnering with United Airlines and MWAA, we will create thousands of jobs and build a world-class airport filled with stunning architecture, efficient security screenings, hundreds of new flights, and improved mobility—all while preserving Dulles’ iconic primary terminal.

“Say goodbye to those stale concourses, endless walkways, and those absurd mobile lounges, and say hello to a state-of-the-art facility that will inspire millions of flyers for generations to come,” he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

**JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE)**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the long-ago stomping grounds of George Washington, here we (yes, us again) were—taking a casual—if somewhat frigid stroll along his very footsteps, on Presidents Day 2025.

Now, one with a somewhat more linear mind than I might presume that I had been aware—from the outset—of this intersection of history and geography; no—not this sometimes-vacant-minded storyteller!

Only at the point at which my brain (or perhaps a more southerly region of my body) became sufficiently frozen, did I become conscious of the situation: here I was, on this day of all days on the calendar, walking with George Washington himself! And I found it quite the humbling experience, to say the least.

You may recall my sharing space with Honest Abe one warm, sunny morning at his national memorial. On that occasion, I remember feeling—as a moral representative of our species—distinctly inadequate.

But, back to our first President. I must say, in all honesty (here the shadow of the cherry tree looms), I was treated with as much respect as any dignitary—foreign or domestic—and I sensed in my ethereal companion the hallmark qualities of leadership capability, moral strength, humility and courage—all of which I'd learned about from my primary education. In fact, we got along just fine, the President and I, especially surprising, with my identity as one of those media types.

And, you know? I took a lesson from this experience: true greatness (compared with some contemporary pretenders) has nothing to fear from exposure to the public; on the contrary, both sides can benefit from these revelations. The truth hurts no one.

So after we'd walked the mostly tree-lined length of Vestals Gap Road and back to my car—with pauses at the historic little village of Lanesboro and a delightful detour at its quaint, one-room on each floor, anyway



schoolhouse, and a brief photo session with some curious whitetail deer, we made our formal—and informal—since we're just a couple of regular, down-to-earth guys farewells.

However—if memory serves correctly—a future engagement was set for another stroll down memory lane along the little Vestals Gap Road, at perhaps a more meteorologically friendly morning: now, you understand: ol' GW may no longer appear to us in the flesh, but this irreplaceable statesman from the past made it quite clear, at least to me, that he and his associates like the aforementioned lawyer from Illinois still keep an eye on things, which should encourage our current (and future) leaders to treat this country and its citizens in a manner befitting their deserts.

In addition, we must also recognize the generosity and forethought of one of our local heroes in this story—the late Claude Moore, in leaving the acreage in today's adventure for the use and benefits of the public, whom he would never know or see. His philanthropy left us not only the vast County Park in Sterling, but the nearly-untouched Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Ashburn.

Humanity still has its good points. History can always teach us. And, we, some of us, anyway—the ones who don't yet know everything, can always learn.

**FINANCIAL FOCUS**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

**Balance and diversification matter:** Finding the right balance matters more than you might think. A small difference in your annual rate of return, from 5% to 7% for instance, doesn't just add up a little. It multiplies. That's the power of compounding—returns earning their own returns, year after year, building on an ever-growing base. Over 30 or 35 years, that can become significant.

You needn't choose between playing it so safe your money barely keeps up with inflation and taking on more risk than you're comfortable with. Instead, a balanced mix can fit your comfort level and still help grow your money over time.

**The age factor:** You'll want to adjust your approach to risk as you get older. If retirement is years away, your portfolio may lean toward growth investments like stocks and stock mutual funds; you have time to absorb short-term losses and benefit from long-term gains. Lower risk investments like bonds still play a role because they can help smooth out changes in your portfolio's value.

As you near retirement, your portfolio may shift toward a more even mix of stocks and bonds to limit exposure to large market swings. The goal is to protect what you've built while still generating enough growth to fund a retirement that could last decades.

Investing well isn't about eliminating risk; it's about taking the right amount of it. Too little risk can be just as damaging as too much. A financial advisor can help you find the balance that matches your comfort level, your financial situation and your long-term goals.

Investors should understand the risks involved with owning investments, including interest rate risk, credit risk and market risk. The value of investments fluctuates and investors can lose some or all of their principal. Remember, your individual financial goals and questions deserve individual attention. If you think you need specific financial advice, please reach out to a local financial advisor.

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

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**OPINION: PURCELLVILLE'S FUTURE**, CON'T. FROM PG. 5

manager, Casey Chapman, and individuals associated with his uncle's development company were among Council Member Erin Rayner's largest campaign contributors.

The debate extends beyond Vineyard Square. The Nichols Hardware redevelopment has been welcomed because it restores historic buildings and strengthens downtown.

The unresolved issue is whether the property should be permitted to nearly double the number of apartments allowed under the zoning ordinance—from six to 11.

Erin Rayner's campaign sign for mayor is displayed in the window of Nichols Hardware. Nichols is also seeking approval for greater residential density in the same historic corridor.

These decisions are not about one owner or one project. They establish precedents.

Every exception becomes the basis for the next request.

Incremental increases in residential density can fundamentally change the scale, function, and character of a historic downtown.

The Board of Zoning Appeals denied Nichols' request.

The same selective narrative appears in the article's discussion of Purcellville's participation in the Virginia Main Street program. The article leaves readers with the impression that the council majority opposed downtown revitalization because it voted to end the Town's participation in that program. That leaves out important context.

Downtown revitalization was already well underway. Main Street and the 21st Street corridor are filled with examples of business owners investing to restore historic buildings, renovate storefronts, and strengthen downtown without relying on the Virginia Main Street program.

The question before the Town Council was never whether downtown should be improved. It was whether a state-sponsored redevelopment program requiring additional local resources and staffing was

necessary when private investment was already achieving that goal.

The Virginia Main Street program is administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Its advanced tier can include housing-related development strategies.

Purcellville does not lack a vision for downtown. That vision was established through years of public input and is reflected in the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and private investment that continues to preserve and strengthen the historic district.

Rayner has cited San Diego's Gaslamp District as an example of the downtown transformation she envisions.

The issue is not whether downtown should evolve. It is whether that evolution should remain consistent with the character residents have repeatedly chosen to protect.

Rayner also cited the redevelopment of the former mill as evidence that the community initially resisted a project it later embraced. That portrayal rewrites the history of what actually occurred.

In the Loudoun Times-Mirror, Rayner stated, "Everyone was afraid of Magnolia's when it was being redeveloped, and now it is a landmark everyone talks about."

The renovation was not an example of a community resisting change. It received broad community support as residents embraced the opportunity to preserve an important historic property while bringing it back into active use as a renowned restaurant.

Confidence in the project stemmed in part from Bruce Brownell's respected expertise in historic renovation and redevelopment.

That is precisely the distinction missing from the article. Purcellville has never rejected revitalization. Time and again, the community has embraced redevelopment that respects its history, complements its scale, and strengthens downtown.

What residents have questioned are proposals that require greater residential density, taller buildings, or exceptions to the planning principles that have guided the

town for decades.

The clearest example of the article's false narrative is its discussion of the Valley Commerce Center annexation. The article states that Council Member Erin Rayner "was also a vocal critic of Valley Commerce Center."

The public record directly contradicts that characterization. For more than fifteen years, residents consistently opposed annexing the 117-acre property into the Town of Purcellville. The land could already be developed by right as a 39-lot residential subdivision, yet successive proposals sought annexation. The most recent proposal called for an industrial project totaling 1.2 million square feet.

Rather than seeking to end years of annexation efforts, Rayner—who was part of a different council majority for one year before the 2024 election—voted in 2024 to continue annexation negotiations through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Rayner also supported pursuing a potential negotiated annexation, a process involving only the town, the county, and the developer rather than the traditional public review process.

Ultimately, the decisive vote came after the new council majority took office on Jan. 1, 2025. One of the new council majority's first major actions was to deny the annexation proposal outright. Mayor Chris Bertaut, Vice Mayor Ben Nett, and Council Members Carol Luke and Susan Khalil voted to end the annexation.

Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought voted against terminating it.

The voting record is equally clear on the Northern Collector Road. The same three council members voted against removing the road from Purcellville's Townwide Transportation Plan.

Those votes are not political spin; they are the official record. They reveal the real divide in this election—whether Purcellville should continue expanding its boundaries and pursuing large-scale development, or whether growth should remain within the limits established in the Comprehensive Plan and the town's existing infrastructure.

Council Member Caleb Stought has since

publicly opposed the Valley Commerce Center County rezoning proposal after the town's annexation effort ended. Rayner and Wright, however, have not publicly opposed the county rezoning proposal.

The article references Magic Kayhan's Pavilion on Main Street and the Norbo Medical Building. Both projects are moving through the Town's established review process.

The Pavilion project is permitted under existing zoning. The only Town Council vote related to the Norbo project was unanimous approval of a waiver concerning entrance measurements.

Kayhan has not submitted a rezoning application for his property at the exit from the traffic circle onto Berlin Turnpike. Any proposal to expand allowed uses would require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

The larger issue is not one apartment building or one redevelopment project. It is whether voters are presented with the full context of Purcellville's recent history.

What deserves scrutiny is not thoughtful redevelopment itself, but the repeated effort to redefine the debate. Support for preserving the Comprehensive Plan is portrayed as opposition to revitalization.

Community support for historic preservation is recast as resistance to change. Those narratives may make for effective campaign messaging, but they are not supported by the votes cast or the actions taken.

This election is not about whether Purcellville should grow. It is about whether growth will continue to follow the vision residents established through the Comprehensive Plan or whether it will gradually reshape the town's character.

Campaigns come and go. Headlines fade. Political narratives may be rewritten. The public record does not.

When voters cast their ballots this November, they should look beyond campaign messaging and judge candidates by the record they established while serving in office. Votes endure long after campaign promises are forgotten.

#### DULLES AIRPORT EXPANSION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said the investment builds on the airline's long-term commitment to its Dulles hub and will support future expansion of domestic and international service.

#### Financing and Construction

According to the Department of Transportation, the investment increases the airport's planned modernization program from approximately \$7 billion to more than \$20 billion.

Most of the work will be financed through municipal bonds issued by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority in partnership with airlines serving Dulles. Additional portions of the project are expected to include public-private partnerships.

Construction will occur in phases over several years while the airport remains in operation.

Some improvements are already underway. Later this year, the first phase of the new Concourse E is expected to open with 14 United gates, expanded passenger lounges and direct access to the AeroTrain system.

#### WHITE'S FERRY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

While additional work remains before ferry service can resume, both Kuhn and Elrich expressed confidence that Friday's agreement fundamentally changes the path forward.

"We've done everything we can," Elrich said. "Now the ferry belongs to the residents of Montgomery County ... We stand ready to work with them to achieve that goal."

For Kuhn, however, the measure of success has never been ownership.

"We just wanted to make sure the ferry got back open for the community," he said.

**LOUIS JETT**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

considered a frontier.

It was an area where Louis roamed and played with his cousins and friends when they were still kids approaching their teenage years in the middle of the 20th Century. Matt and I could see the joy in Louis' face when he dug up those experiences like gold nuggets from the depths of his personal memory.

So I ask myself, from an historical perspective, did the stories uncovered by Louis Jett over a lifetime die with him? Or is he now visiting with his ancestors and family friends who are regaling him with other stories and details he never knew. For Louis, that would be Heaven.

Services will be held at First Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 216 Loudoun Street SW, Leesburg, for Louis Jett on 5 September 2026. Visitation: 10-11 a.m.; Funeral Service: 11-12:15 a.m.

**OPINION: SERGEANTS AND NEWBIES**,  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Toward Clarkes Gap Road it's paved, though the asphalt surface was badly deteriorated. The section of Hurley towards Old Waterford Road is unpaved.

VDOT put new, smooth asphalt atop the existing, crumbling paved surface. Late one night, a kid turned onto Hurley's unpaved section, where you cannot go fast, but when he soon reached the new, smooth asphalt, he gunned the car. Now speeding, he hit a tree head-on. The car caught fire and exploded. The kid was killed.

Unpaved roads are safer because of their lower speeds.

**Dust**

Nobody likes dust, but I consider my dusty car as a proclamation that we live on a country road. Some folks worry that major highway projects (Routes 15 and 9) will cause cut-through traffic on the unpaved roads, making things worse. I urge patience until those projects are complete.

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When I bought our place, I asked the realtor, "Is this a Waterford address?" She replied, "Yes." Well, it wasn't. Our zip code is Paeonian Springs. I like that very much.

You may live in a new subdivision off an unpaved road and had a similar Q&A with your realtor: "Is that road going to be paved?" and heard the realtor reply, "Yes."

Actually, your realtor had no idea; that road remains unpaved. Now your Escalade is dusty and you're angry. You call, complain. After all, you're entitled.

The problem is your false expectations. The world does not revolve around the finish of your SUV.

*Charlie Houston and his wife live near Waterford on a small, historic farm. They value their unpaved road for its history and its calm ambience.*

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**PRESSURE BUILDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10**

Route 4 as the county's preferred alignment and Route 3 as its secondary preference for the Golden-to-Mars transmission project.

The motion, introduced by Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) and seconded by Supervisor Michael Turner (D-Ashburn), also directed county staff to continue working with Dominion Energy, Loudoun County Public Schools, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and affected property owners to further develop those routes. The Board also urged Dominion to underground transmission lines wherever feasible within 500 feet of homes or public schools and directed staff to ask the School Board to support either Route 3 or Route 4.

During the discussion, supervisors emphasized that the Board of Supervisors could recommend preferred routes but could not require the School Board to grant Dominion access across school property.

Supervisor Matt Letourneau (R-Dulles) noted that while the county could advocate for Routes 3 and 4, "we cannot compel Loudoun County Public Schools to provide that right-of-way to Dominion. That is a decision for the School Board."

Route 606 was not part of the Board's adopted recommendation.

Subramanyam's discussions with NOAA have introduced information that was not available when either the Board of Supervisors or the State Corporation Commission evaluated the project.

**Lawmakers Seek Targeted Review**

Rather than asking the Commission to reopen the entire case, Singh and Srinivasan urged regulators to use whatever procedural authority remains available to evaluate the Route 606 alignment.

"We request that the Commission use whatever mechanism it has to evaluate the Route 606 alignment."

They added:

"A brief, targeted review would benefit the community immensely and ensure every alternative has been thoroughly considered."

**Legal Hurdles Remain**

The lawmakers' request comes only days after the SCC issued an order declining to suspend its June 29 Final Order while petitions for reconsideration remain pending.

In its July 20 ruling, the Commission stated that the evidentiary record closed on Jan. 15, 2026, and declined requests to reopen it to consider additional evidence submitted afterward.

The Commission concluded that further delay would "unreasonably jeopardize the provision of reliable electric service within the Commonwealth."

That order left Dominion's approval fully in effect while the Commission continues considering pending petitions for reconsideration.

Whether the Commission has any procedural avenue to evaluate Route 606 despite its earlier decision remains uncertain.

**Dominion Urges Court to Deny Stay**

Dominion Energy has now asked the Supreme Court of Virginia to deny the Loudoun County School Board's request to suspend the SCC's approval while the appeal proceeds, arguing that further delay could threaten electric reliability throughout Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth.

In a July 31 filing, Dominion said the School Board is unlikely to succeed on appeal and argued that postponing construction of the Golden-to-Mars project would increase the risk of electrical system overloads and potential service interruptions. The company cited the SCC's findings that

the transmission line is urgently needed to address growing electrical demand and prevent reliability problems.

Dominion also criticized the School Board's June acquisition of approximately 12.74 acres along the approved Route 3A corridor, characterizing the transaction as a last-minute effort to obstruct the project. The filing repeatedly referenced comments by SCC commissioners expressing concern that the land acquisition appeared to be an attempt to delay the project.

The company stated, however, that it will not begin construction, tree clearing or other work on the newly acquired School Board property unless and until it obtains the necessary property rights or legal authority.

**Appeals Continue**

Meanwhile, legal challenges to the project continue.

On July 28, the Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun County, Vicky H. Hu, trustee of the Vicky H. Hu Living Trust, and resident Theresa Ghiorzi each filed notices of appeal with the Supreme Court of Virginia seeking review of the SCC's June 29 Final Order approving the Golden-to-Mars transmission project.

Dominion filed its response to the School Board's request for a stay on July 31. The Supreme Court has not yet ruled on whether the SCC's order will remain in effect while the appeal proceeds.

The notices of appeal preserve each party's right to seek appellate review but do not automatically stay the Commission's order.

Whether the SCC ultimately agrees to consider the Route 606 proposal remains unclear. However, the request from Singh and Srinivasan adds growing political support to an alternative that only recently emerged after Subramanyam's discussions with federal officials suggested that a route previously believed to be unavailable may now deserve a closer look.

**SUBRAMANYAM OFFERS A LIFELINE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10**

Subramanyam said he had previously been told that routing the transmission line primarily along Route 606 was not feasible because the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), whose property lies along portions of the corridor, would oppose such a route.

After sending a formal letter to NOAA and meeting personally with NOAA Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs, however, Subramanyam said he believes that position has changed.

"I am confident that the Administrator and his team will explore and even support allowing an alternative Golden to Mars route along their property," he said.

The proposed Route 606 alignment would generally follow Old Ox Road rather than passing through established residential communities or school campuses.

**Calling for a New Look**

Subramanyam is urging Dominion Energy, the State Corporation Commission, and state and local officials to revisit the issue.

"If we aren't going to underground these lines, I urge the utility company, local and state officials, and the State

Corporation Commission to come back to the table and make Route 606 the choice for the Golden to Mars transmission project," he said.

He argued that every reasonable alternative should be evaluated before construction proceeds, saying the community should not be forced to choose between protecting neighborhoods and protecting schools.

**A Door Closes, Another Opens**

The timing of the two announcements underscores the difficult position facing the community.

Legally, the SCC's July 20 order signals that the Commission believes the extensive evidentiary process has concluded and that continued delays threaten electric reliability. The Commission also made clear it does not intend to reopen the factual record that closed in January.

However, Subramanyam's announcement raises the possibility that a route previously believed to be unavailable may warrant renewed discussion outside the current SCC record.

Whether the proposed Route 606 alignment can still be considered despite the Commission's refusal the day before to reopen the case remains uncertain.

The SCC's latest order indicates that any new routing proposal would not be evaluated within the existing evidentiary record, leaving questions about what procedural avenue would be available to pursue such an alternative.

Subramanyam, however, urged officials not to abandon what he believes could be a less harmful solution.

"We must consider every option possible, particularly if it can help mitigate harm to our schools and residents," he said. "These Golden to Mars deliberations have caused too much pain and the proposed routes will create too much harm to generations of Loudoun residents. We must prioritize giving this option a look instead of endless litigation and fights."

**Update:** On July 28, the Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun County, Vicky H. Hu, trustee of the Vicky H. Hu Living Trust, and resident Theresa Ghiorzi each filed notices of appeal to the Supreme Court of Virginia seeking review of the State Corporation Commission's June 29 Final Order approving Dominion Energy's Golden to Mars transmission project. The notices preserve each party's right to pursue appellate review but do not automatically stay the Commission's order.



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