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From Purcellville to West Virginia

Inside Chapman's Move Into Data Centers and Energy Infrastructure



BY VALERIE CURY

GOVERNMENT

For more than a decade, Casey Chapman has been a familiar figure in Purcellville's development industry.

Chapman, his brother Sam Chapman and business partner Aaron McCleary are part of CaseCo, a Purcellville-based construction and development company whose interests have included residential and commercial construction, restoration and real estate development.

Among Chapman's most controversial local projects was Vineyard Square on 21st Street in historic downtown Purcellville. Chapman later served as manager of the project, which was approved during Mayor Bob Lazaro's terms in office and remained active for more than 15 years.

The approved site plan called for a six-story development with 40 condominiums on the narrow, one-way street, despite being inconsistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The project was approved without an application to amend either document.

Vineyard Square was never built, although its permits were extended four times, including twice under COVID-era legislation pushed by development-industry lobbyists.

By the time the extensions expired, Mayor Chris Bertaut had a Town Council majority opposed to further extensions. No additional extension came before the Council, and the long-running Vineyard Square approvals expired.

Chapman-associated businesses have also been substantial contributors to Erin Rayner's Purcellville campaigns.

Campaign finance records show that over the course of her campaigns, Erin Rayner has received substantial contributions from individuals, businesses, LLCs and political organizations.

One of the political organizations contributing to Rayner was Citizens for Virginia PAC, a now-terminated super PAC with a Wisconsin mailing address.

Campaign finance records show that Jeffrey S. Brown contributed $25,000 to Citizens for Virginia PAC in May 2023, listing Dell in Sterling as his employer and sales as his occupation. Citizens for Virginia PAC subsequently contributed $15,000 to Rayner on Oct. 16, 2024.

Brown had previously contributed $5,000 directly to Rayner on Oct. 27, 2022, listing Red River in Sterling as his employer and information technology as his field.

Red River provides data-center infrastructure and has a dedicated data-center practice encompassing artificial intelligence and machine-learning platforms, cloud computing, high-performance computing, servers and storage, and security. Red River and Dell Technologies are longstanding partners, working together on infrastructure and data-center modernization.

Rayner also received $10,000 from Natalie Hornbaker and $1,500 from David Brian Hornbaker, both managers with development company Mountaineer Pipe Corporation. The Purcellville company is run by Calvin Chapman, Casey Chapman's uncle. Rayner received $2,000 from Calvin Chapman individually.

Other contributions include $6,250 from CaseCo LLC; $4,250 from Merit Restorations, both Chapman affiliated companies; $2,000 from JAKCO LLC; $2,900 from individuals associated with undeveloped properties in Purcellville; $750 from Rainbud LLC; $250 from Chapman Brothers LLC; and $250 from Hirst Road LLC.

This election cycle, the names on Rayner for Mayor's campaign finance reports are different.

Five business entities—Valley Energy Co., Hirst Road LLC, Rosebud LLC, Generations Holding LLC and CCand7 LLC—contributed a combined $8,500. All five reported the same address: 117 N. Bailey Lane in Purcellville, the current address of Valley Energy.

Meghan Kulinski, one of Valley Energy's owners, contributed another $500 personally.

Together, the six contributions total $9,000.

When appearing before the Purcellville Town Council, Chapman has identified himself as "CaseCo LLC, 125 Hirst Road." His involvement in Loudoun land-use issues extends beyond Purcellville. Board Chair Phyllis Randall selected Chapman to serve as a representative in Loudoun County's Western Loudoun Rural Uses and Standards review.

The same Hirst Road address also appears in West Virginia corporate records for a venture operating on an entirely different scale.

Fundamental Data LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, registered in West Virginia

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 »



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Wallace “Wally” Payne, The Man Behind a Leesburg Landmark, Dies at 90

BY PATRICK MALONE | MALONE NEWS SERVICE

Long before downtown Leesburg became the popular destination it is today, Payne’s Biker Bar was a fixture on North King Street. So was Wallace D. “Wally” Payne.

Known to friends and customers as Wally, Payne was the longtime owner and namesake of one of the most memorable establishments in Leesburg history. He died September 5 at his home in Beverly Hills, Florida. He was 90.

For decades, Payne’s occupied 5 and 7 N. King St., directly across from the Loudoun County Courthouse. Motorcycles lined the street outside. Inside, bikers mixed with police officers, lawyers, tradesmen and other professionals in a place that stood apart from the increasingly polished image of historic downtown Leesburg, so much so that years after Wally was gone, and after the bar itself had been renamed Downtown Saloon, people still called it Payne’s. That may be the best measure of the mark he left on Leesburg.



The original Payne’s Biker Bar neon sign remains illuminated on North King Street in downtown Leesburg, more than 25 years after Payne’s closed under that name. The landmark sign still carries its famous courthouse-themed motto, “Better off here than across the street.” Photo by Patrick Malone/Malone News Service.

Wallace D. Payne was born August 21, 1936, in Middleburg to Alton Dewees Payne Sr. and Helen Fleming Payne. He grew up on a dairy farm west of Leesburg and later served in the U.S. Air Force.

The North King Street storefront had already been part of downtown Leesburg’s commercial life for more than a century, having housed Dr. Mott’s Drug Store and later Purcell & Littlejohn Drug Store, which operated there until the early 1960s.

By the mid-1960s, the bar that would become synonymous with Payne’s name had taken its place across from the courthouse. A 1990 Washington Post profile reported that Payne’s Old Towne Pub had been open for 24 years, placing its start around 1966. Over time it was also known as Payne’s Biker Cafe and Payne’s Biker Bar, but around Leesburg, it was simply Payne’s.

And Payne’s was different.

A Washington Post writer visiting in 1990 described it as an outsider on a historic street where many businesses depended on tourists drawn to the town’s more polished image. Motorcycles lined the curb, and inside were biker photographs and scratched wooden booths. The Post also reported in 1990 that the bar advertised itself as Leesburg’s only authorized Harley-Davidson T-shirt distributor.

Wally, however, wanted people to look beyond the leather jackets and motorcycles.

“The image of a biker doing evil is wrong,” he told The Post in 1990, noting that riders came from every walk of life, doctors, police officers, carpenters and bricklayers. Members of the Leesburg Police Department and Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office were among his customers.

Wally’s charitable work also helped change how some in Leesburg viewed him and the bar. In 1990 alone, The Post reported he raised $6,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association by leading dozens of motorcyclists on charity rides, roughly $15,000 today. The MDA honored him at a Washington-area reception, and The Post reported that he had quietly raised thousands more in prior years for charities and firefighters.

Even Frank Raflo, the former Leesburg mayor and newspaper editor who had not always been sympathetic toward the biker bar, publicly acknowledged what Payne’s had become.

“Payne’s is an important part of the community in Leesburg,” Raflo told The Post in 1990.

By 1996, Payne’s T-shirts had become souvenirs in their own right. The Washington Post included a Payne’s Biker Bar shirt in a holiday feature about unusual gifts. The shirts sold for $17.50, about $37 today.

By then, the bar’s courthouse-themed motto, “Better off here than across the street,” had become one of its most recognizable features, displayed in neon in the window and printed on its T-shirts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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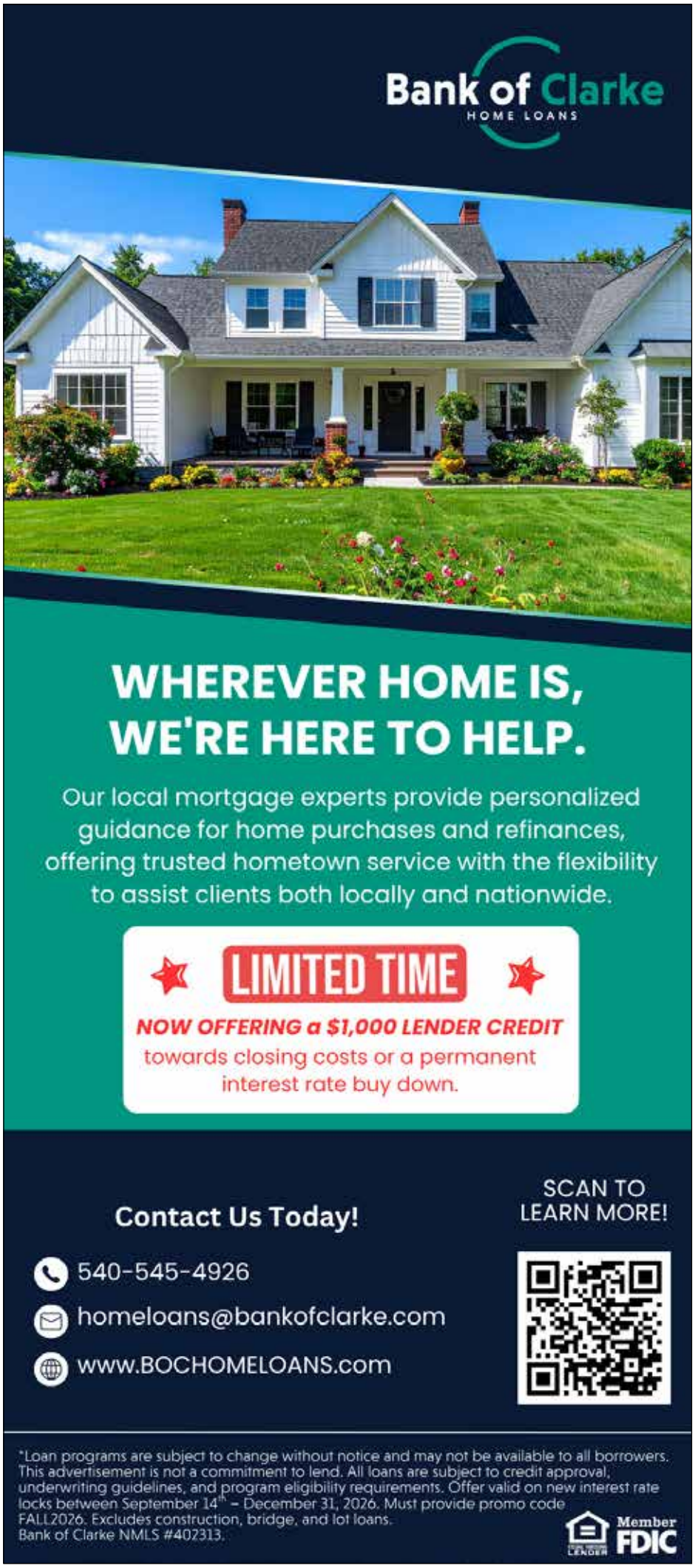
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SUBMITTED BY JOSHUA WOLINSKI, EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

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JOSHUA WOLINSKI

Tax deductions

The standard deduction was raised in 2025 and has now been indefinitely extended.

Taking the standard deduction: A new provision in 2026 lets you deduct up to $1,000 in charitable cash contributions ($2,000 if filing jointly) made directly to qualified charitable organizations. However, contributions to DAFs are specifically excluded. You can still receive other DAF advantages, including tax-free growth and capital gains avoidance, just not a deduction for the DAF contribution itself.

Itemizing deductions: A new 2026 rule limits what's deductible: only aggregate charitable contributions exceeding 0.5% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) are deductible. If you don't give enough in a single year to clear that floor, a DAF's "bunching" strategy may be effective. You combine several years of giving into one DAF contribution and distribute funds at your own pace, making the 0.5% AGI floor easier to clear.

In the 37% federal marginal tax bracket: Your itemized deduction tax benefit is now capped at 35%, applied after any other deduction-specific limits such as the 0.5% AGI floor. Factor this into your charitable giving strategy with your tax professional.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

Western Loudoun Farming Costs Some Serious Moooo-lah: Just Ask Ms. Kisses

BY RIA NARAYAN

My prayers were answered. Cyclospora showed up this summer. Add E. coli and Salmonella, and my parents couldn't force feed me lettuce and salad anymore. For once, I could look them in the eye and say eating veggies can actually be dangerous!


RIA NARAYAN

But then the CDC declared the lettuce outbreak over, and it was back to negotiating greens. My offer was simple: Give me a puppy, and I'll swallow my broccoli whole. No puppy. No deal.

With no golden retriever in sight, McDonald's it was. But this debate about my food got me thinking. Didn't Old MacDonald, like, have a farm?

I told my mom to go on tour with me. My Great Loudoun Farm Tour: a journey to find the farmers who were after my nutrition.

Now, before we begin, can you keep a secret? Yeah, same.

Somewhere along our tour, I felt weird standing next to animals that might end up next to my broccoli someday. I don't speak



chicken, but as these chicken tender minions pecked at my boots, I imagined them boasting that if their T. rex ancestors were still alive, I'd be kibble.

I recently learned some of T. rex's relatives had feathers. Ginormous fluffy chicken with an appetite to kill? That was enough for me. This felt less like a farm tour and more like Jurassic Farm, so I ran my first 5K over to the calmer looking animals.

Some were really big. Some were magically small. Ever met a Highland cow? Visit Sterling

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Curmudgeonly Thoughts

BY CHARLIE HOUSTON

There's a lot going on in the county, most of it bad, so I'm taking a break from my usual topics. I'll ramble a bit and start with automobiles.

OPINION

Convertibles

If your hair is turning gray, don't buy a convertible. People will note your hair and say, "Look at that old guy, trying to sport around and look younger."

Over the years, I've owned five convertibles but gave up my last one in 2002.

Horsepower

In most cases, prodigious horsepower is illogical but intoxicating. There's a certain, guttural thrill when you press the accelerator of a powerful car, especially when you're passing somebody in an Escalade.

It simply feels good to know that you command great power. But how can you really use it?

On public roads, mega horsepower can quickly get you into mega trouble with the police. (That happened to me about ten years ago.) Great power also can bring grave consequences. Some years ago, some idiot parents thought a new McLaren would make a perfect eighteenth birthday present for their idiot son.

The staff at the McLaren dealership in Sterling were cautious. They sold the kid a five- or six-hundred-horsepower rocket but insisted on giving the boy a two-hour lesson on how to drive the car safely. Heading home, the young lout totaled the car.

Great amounts of horsepower are fun on a racetrack, and usually safe if the driver has been trained appropriately. Oddly, though, on trackdays Miata drivers are given more respect than yabbos in Corvettes. (Miata drivers focus on their driving skills, which encompass much more than horsepower.)

Fast Cars as Bragging Rights

Imagine this scene. Four forty-ish men in bespoke suits are sitting around a restaurant table on K Street. Perhaps they are lawyers or lobbyists and make more money than they deserve. One tosses his BMW key fob onto

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

My Silence Is Disciplined. It Is Not Consent

BY KWASI FRASER

To the Citizens of Purcellville:

For the past fourteen months, my family and I have endured a season we never imagined. Through it all, many citizens of Purcellville have stood beside us—with prayers, encouraging words, quiet acts of kindness, and an unwavering refusal to mistake an accusation for a conviction.

OPINION

To each of you, I offer my deepest gratitude.

You remembered that in America, a person is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. You remembered my years of service. Most importantly, you remembered that behind every headline is a human being—and behind that human being is a family carrying a burden the public may never fully see.

I have remained largely silent, but not because I consent to what has been alleged. Not because I accept the falsehoods spoken about me. And certainly not because I have nothing to say.

My silence is disciplined. It is not consent.

I am innocent. As Town Manager, I possessed the authority to conduct Town business, gather information from prospective service providers, evaluate responses, and make procurement decisions within the responsibilities entrusted to my office. And that is what I did.

Nevertheless, Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright, and Caleb Stought participated in conduct that I believe created a hostile and ethically troubling work environment. In my experience, that conduct included public interrogation, secret recordings, the unauthorized acquisition of working material from my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

The Myth of Toughness

BY KEN FALKE

Bullies have always mistaken intimidation for strength. Too often, the rest of us mistake it for leadership.

History is filled with men and women who pound their chests, demand loyalty, silence critics, and rule through fear. They look tough. They aren't. They lack the confidence to persuade, so they intimidate. They lack the character to lead, so they dominate.

OPINION

The real tragedy isn't that bullies exist. Every generation produces them. The tragedy is that we reward them. We elect them. We promote them. We give them television cameras, social media followers, and corner offices. Then we act surprised when the next generation imitates them.

I spent more than two decades in the military, serving alongside some of the toughest men I'll ever know. They taught me something I'll never forget—the strongest person in the room rarely announces it.

The toughest warriors I served with never bullied anyone. They didn't need to. They mastered their craft, earned the respect of their teammates, and accepted responsibility when things went wrong. They listened more than they talked. They stayed calm when everyone else lost control. They projected confidence without demanding attention and that's what strength looks like.

Today, we celebrate something very different. We reward outrage. We applaud insults. We confuse cruelty with honesty and arrogance with confidence. We cheer public humiliation as though embarrassing an opponent somehow proves intelligence or courage.

It doesn't. It proves insecurity. Bullies don't attack because they feel strong, they attack because they fear losing control, criticism, accountability, and disagreement. Instead of earning respect, they demand loyalty.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 »

Team Mayberry versus Team Megabucks

BY LLOYD HARTING

Over the past 20 months the Town of Purcellville has served as the playing field for an acrimonious public conflict between Team Mayberry and Team Megabucks.

In November of 2024, the residents of Purcellville elected Christopher Bertaut, Ben Nett, and Susan Khalil to the Town Council.

OPINION

All three identified themselves as "Team Mayberry." A sitting council member, Carol Luke, also identified herself as a member.

Their objective was to keep Purcellville a safe, peaceful and comfortable community with a stable population; end further expansion of the town; foster the success of small businesses rather than large "big box" businesses; and require town government to exercise fiscal restraint, operate efficiently and keep living in Purcellville affordable for its residents.

The other competitor is what I call "Team Megabucks." In my view, it represents a convergence of interests among certain members of the Purcellville Town Council, town employees, Virginia elected officials, large businesses and wealthy investors, and certain members of the Loudoun County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

I believe these interests share a desire for greater influence over Purcellville's future, particularly regarding growth and development where significant financial interests are at stake.

Investors have an interest in maximizing returns. Developers benefit from opportunities to build on undeveloped land and to pursue rezonings and annexations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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Fool Me Once ...

LETTER

We have all become painfully aware that Loudoun County planners and decision makers made serious mistakes in allowing more "by right" data center development than the available resources or the public's good will could sustain.

There's nothing to be gained by assigning blame. But it is important to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Sadly, the County is doing exactly that—by allowing more "by right" development in rural Loudoun than the area can possibly absorb.

Our small towns, historic villages, residences, and businesses are entirely dependent on pumping water out of the ground. Currently, we have 19,000 wells and the average distance between them is 500 feet. This is already unsustainable and our water tables are falling.

Nevertheless, the County's Zoning Ordinance allows developers to build 10,000 more rural residences "by right." Each new unit would require yet another well, nearly doubling the demands on our already stressed groundwater resources.

Rural Loudoun's hilly, winding, narrow roads are clogged with much more traffic than they were designed for. Frustrated drivers make bad decisions. We have the highest number of deer collisions in the state. Our roads are increasingly unsafe and expensive to drive on.

Allowing for 10,000 more residences entails adding 100,000 more vehicle trips per day to the already existing congestion. That would severely exacerbate an already serious bottleneck in rural Loudoun, in the same way that adding allowing 100 more data centers is overwhelming the available supplies of power and water in our urban and suburban areas.

Rural Loudoun is on a course for the same kind of crisis we're already facing with data center development—not enough resources and not enough infrastructure to support the scale of development the County has allowed for.

The County Board of Supervisors has legal authority under state law to decide how much "by right" development it should allow. And, despite strong opposition from wealthy and powerful

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 »

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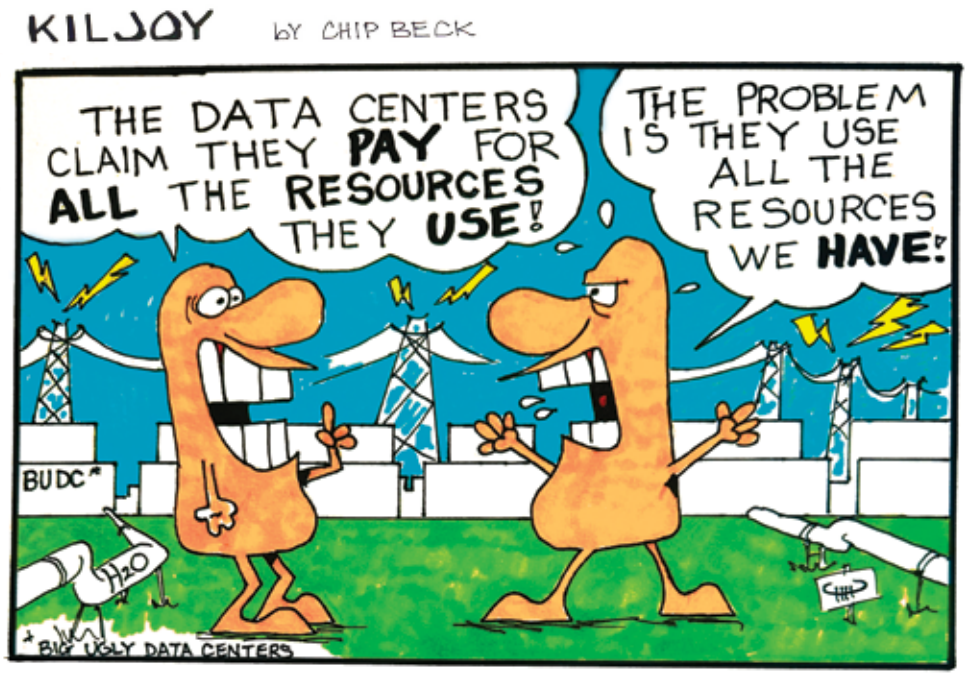
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Just Like Nothing (else) on Earth: Historic Lime Kilns

BY TIM JON

It had to be the coldest day in about three hundred years; at least, that's what my hands told me. By the time I'd walked the short distance from my car to the site for today's story, I was almost wishing we could fire up these historic relics and pass around the hot chocolate.

But, no such luck; I was left to enjoy the sub-zero temperatures as I hastily shot a series of photos before I needed to re-don my pair of winter gloves. Not the visit I had been anticipating—for quite some time—to a familiar site along the W & OD Trail in Leesburg—the long-dormant pair of lime kilns abutting the (just as dormant) railroad tracks, running parallel to the walking, running and biking (oh, and I'd better not forget horseback riding!) path (which itself runs from Arlington in the east out to Purcellville in the west).



TIM JON

For the non-historians among us, the quarrying and rendering of the very prolific limestone in our region created an industry running from the latter 1800's to shortly after the turn of the 20th century—supplying farmers with a viable fertilizer for crops, and builders with plaster compound for the construction of walls and roads.

Other materials would eventually replace lime for these purposes, and now—in the 21st century—artifacts such as lime kilns have been relegated to the historic relic category. And, in the County Seat of Loudoun, pretty much smack dab in the center of Town, right along the recreational trail that essentially bisects the community, we can take a short walk from Harrison Street—near Raflo Park (a site we've covered in this series roughly a decade prior to this writing) to the official marker set up by the Northern Virginia Parks

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 »

— Ask Dr. Mike —

The Value of "No" in a Yes-Day World

BY MICHAEL OBERSCHNEIDER PSY.D.

If you've seen the movie Yes Day, you already know the basic setup. Allison and Carlos Torres have three kids who have reached a highly logical, child-brained conclusion: Mom is a domestic dictator who says "no" a lot. To shake things up—and prove they aren't total joy-killers—the parents agree to a 24-hour social experiment. For one full day, they must say "yes" to their children's requests within basic safety and budget limits.

Ask Dr. Mike



DR. MIKE

Predictably, chaos ensues: massive ice cream sundaes, drive-through car wash disasters, and increasingly wild demands. But right around the moment the parents realize they may have made a catastrophic mistake, the movie lands on a profound psychological truth: Kids love "yes," but they desperately need "no."

This isn't because we need to run our homes like boot camps, because suffering builds character, or because we want to ruin their fun. Kids need limits.

Most of us have run our own unofficial, unsanctioned "Yes Days." It is the exhausted Tuesday-night version, when we agree to one more episode, skip tooth brushing, or buy the cheap plastic toy just to avoid an emotional meltdown. Then there are all those trips to Starbucks, Chick-fil-A, Chipotle, or wherever else our children have decided they need to dine.

The danger is not the occasional surrender. Every parent has moments when getting through the evening matters more than enforcing the boundary. The problem comes when "yes" becomes our default setting.

In parenting, we often fall into a psychological trap: We interpret our child's distress as our own failure. They cry, and we feel guilty. They scream, and we question every parenting decision we have made.

Our job is not to keep our children happy all the time. Our job is to help them learn that they can be unhappy and still be completely okay.

A healthy "no" does not need to be delivered with a snarl, nor does it require a defense analysis. Sometimes it is as simple as acknowledging the desire and holding the boundary: "I know you really want that. The answer is no."

The magic is not in the phrasing; it is in the psychological workout that follows. When we hold the boundary, a child is forced to flex self-regulation muscles. They practice wanting something and not getting it, feeling angry without the world ending, and tolerating disappointment.

We want our kids to graduate from high school with solid impulse control, yet we sometimes forget they have to practice it now. They do not get grit by reading about it; they get it by surviving being told, "Not today."

I see this often. Many clients are smart enough to get into college—from Radford to Harvard—but some are not mature enough to last because they have not developed the grit and resilience that comes from not always getting their way.

This is where delayed gratification comes in. We have all heard of the famous Marshmallow Test, and while modern research shows that a child's ability to wait is influenced by environment and trust, the core skill still matters.

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Remembering John Lane Fuog

John Lane Fuog left us all on September 4, 2026 after a short, courageous battle with pancreatic cancer, at the age of 74.

John was born in Foxborough, Massachusetts, son of Paul Arnold Fuog and Evelyn Lane Fuog. His parents later separated, leaving John and his younger brother in custody of their father, who moved to Annandale Virginia, in 1963.



In his adolescence, he was enrolled in Staunton Military Academy for 2 years, but relieved of his attendance (although, years later received an honorary diploma), returning to Annandale High School where he graduated in 1970.

John enlisted in the United States Navy Reserves in 1971, while embarking on a career with the Washington Post as a Distributor in the Northern Virginia area, a position that continued for 17 years.

It was in 1972 that John moved to Loudoun County at the suggestion of a friend, finally living on Old California Rd in Leesburg. In his daytime hours and with his entrepreneurial spirit, he was a co-owner of a "youthful store" in downtown Leesburg, The Marrakech Express from 1973-1975.

He then moved to Purcellville in 1979, married in 1981, welcoming his two children.

John eventually became interested in the building industry starting with Ashbaugh Buildings, before establishing his own company in 1981, Fuog/InterBuild, which he remained president for 45 years, still located in Purcellville. Many employees have remained with him for decades.

In 2001, he moved to Lovettsville, where he married Vickie A. Fuog in 2006 and was a wonderful stepfather to Elijah Apperson. Then, in 2023, John's "out of the box" thinking led him to start of a new venture, Cool Spring Distillery, on the farm in Lovettsville.

John will be remembered for his lifelong passion for golfing, being a member of Stoneleigh Golf for more than 33 years. His integrity and fairness was always present on the course. He had a love of music of many genres and was a certified scuba diver. He was a loyal patriot but acquired dual citizenship with Canada allowed by his parental heritage.

He was an avid learner, reading everything imaginable to include the Washington Post daily. John had a kind, welcoming smile, a constant sense of humor and the confidence to manifest his dream. He was tenacious in his pursuits, as well as a genuinely loving man.

He was a modern-day Will Rogers who would greet and converse with anyone. He was an ardent supporter of our community and today's youth, cultivating potential by being a Boy Scout Leader in the 1980's and 90's, serving on the Purcellville Community Center Board for many years, being a host family for interns and ballplayers, and currently, serving on the Board of Equalization for Loudoun County.

He is survived by his wife of 20 years, Vickie A. Fuog, children, Daniel Fuog of Martinsburg, WV and Jennifer Fuog, of Purcellville, stepsons Elijah Apperson of Nashville, TN, James Apperson, of Harpers Ferry, WV, grandson, Finn Apperson, brothers J. Michael Fuog (Pam Parker) of Chicago, Arnie Fuog (Maureen Welsch) of Cape Charles, VA, nephews Taylor Fuog (Vanessa) of Miami, Jason Fuog of Wenatchee, WA and Eric Fuog (Karin) of Boston, along with great nephews and niece, and faithful canine, Nellie Bly.

Most importantly, John is survived by countless old and new friends that he called family. He is predeceased by his parents, brothers Carl Fuog and Paul Fuog and sister Priscilla Ludwiler.

A Celebration of Life will be held on, Sunday, October 4, 2026 starting at 11 for visitation, 12 service with reception to follow, located at Stoneleigh Golf and Country Club, Round Hill, Virginia.

We invite all friends to attend and ask that you please click on the link to assist us in the count for this wonderful celebration, everloved.com/life-of/john-fuog/.

In lieu of flowers, consider donating to Loudoun Junior Golf in developing youth golf:www.loudounjuniorgolf.org/page/show/9352545-charitable-donations.

The Woodie William Foundation, which honors and supports Gold Star Families: www.woodywilliams.org/donation-opportunities.html, or simply contributing to your local community as you wish.

Residents Bring Fear, Anger and Resolve Over Former GW Campus

BY VALERIE CURY

GOVERNMENT

For over an hour and a half, Loudoun County officials talked about zoning ordinances, site plans, proffers, electrical substations and the complicated regulatory history of the former George Washington University campus.









Then the residents got the microphone.

They talked about their children. Their health. The water beneath their homes. The air they breathe. Property values. Diesel generators. And what it means to live next to a place they believed would remain a university and research campus—only to learn it could become a massive data center complex.

Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) hosted the Sept. 24 town hall, bringing county officials and residents together as Loudoun reviews Amazon's resubmitted site plan for the former GW Virginia Science and Technology Campus.

Briskman said she has not voted for a data center since 2022 and repeatedly told residents she does not want another one built in Loudoun County.

She outlined county efforts she has pursued or supported to restrict future data center development, including ending the Route 28 Tax District's special zoning status, revisiting the county's decades-old zoning interpretation for data centers, a proposed pause on certain new data center applications, tougher decommissioning requirements and increased air-quality monitoring.

"You will not see me supporting any data centers north of Route Seven in Algonkian District, and especially here," Briskman said.

Briskman said she believes the proposed project can be stopped and outlined the steps the county is taking as Amazon's site plan moves through the administrative review process.

Amazon purchased the 122-acre campus earlier this year for more than $420 million. The company's plan proposes four data center buildings totaling just over 805,000 square feet and 84 backup generators, according to Deputy County Administrator Danny Davis.

The development would affect nine of the property's 10 parcels.

The county initially rejected Amazon's August site-plan submission because it did not meet minimum requirements. Davis said a revised application was accepted for review Sept. 23.

He emphasized that accepting the plan for review is not the same as approving it.

Unlike a rezoning or special exception, a site plan is an administrative application. It does not go before the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors for a public hearing or vote. County staff determine whether the application complies with zoning, proffers and development regulations.

Complicating the case is the property's unusual zoning history.

The campus remains subject to Loudoun's 1972 Zoning Ordinance because it lies within the Route 28 Tax District. The county, however, is moving to transition affected properties into its current zoning ordinance.

Davis said the Route 28 Tax District is scheduled to end in December. Once the affected properties move under the current zoning ordinance, data centers would require a special exception and public hearings before the Board of Supervisors.

Davis told residents that Loudoun's zoning administrator revised a 25-year-old advisory opinion this summer and determined that data centers are not permitted as a principal use under the 1972 ordinance, although they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 »

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Sproul Built Purcellville's Grievance Process

Now He Says It Was "Not Certifiable"

BY VALERIE CURY

For approximately four months in 2025, attorney Robert Sproul developed and oversaw the grievance process the Town of Purcellville used to hear then-police officer Carl Benjamin "Ben" Nett's challenge to his termination.

In an April 22, 2025 email to Nett's attorney, John Cook, Sproul acknowledged that the grievance procedure in the Town's 2024 Employee Handbook had not itself been certified by the Loudoun County Circuit Court. But he said the previously certified 2005 procedure and the 2024 procedure were substantively the same.

"The 2005 and the 2024 procedures, insofar as they concern the steps, the process, the timelines involved, and the panel hearing, appear to be substantively the same, though there are small differences in the formatting," Sproul wrote.

"We also submit that the 2024 procedure complies with the requirements found in the code."

Sixteen months later, Sproul took a different position.

"The Town does need to amend its grievance procedure so that I can certify it to the court," Sproul wrote Aug. 18, 2026. "The current grievance procedure is not certifiable."

Between those two statements, the process Sproul helped establish had produced a unanimous decision in Nett's favor—and a yearlong fight over whether the Town would honor it.

Before Nett's grievance proceeded, then-Town Attorney John Cafferky had recused himself from evaluating the legitimacy of the investigation into Nett because neither he nor the Town Manager had been informed of Nett's administrative leave beforehand.

Sproul was retained to develop and oversee the grievance process, in part because the Town's Human Resources Department had failed to maintain the required list of grievance panel members.

At the time, Sproul and Cafferky took the position that the Town did not need to obtain a new certification of the 2024 grievance procedure because the substance of the procedure previously certified in 2005 had not changed.

Cook later described Sproul's role directly.

"There seems to be some confusion about the genesis of what I call the 'process agreement'—that is, the agreement that was reached under which the grievance was conducted," Cook wrote Sproul on July 31, 2026.

"The drafting of that agreement was handled by you and negotiated by you and me. It did not come from 'the Town' and was not something that Kwasi Fraser and Ben Nett cooked up, despite certain filings in court by some people that suggested that."

The grievance went forward. An independent three-member Grievance Panel conducted an evidentiary hearing and issued a unanimous 21-page decision.

The Panel rejected the allegations used to terminate Nett, finding that his actions did not constitute misconduct or violate the law. It also found that the Police Department failed to follow progressive and proportional disciplinary requirements in the Town Employee Handbook and Department General Orders.

The Panel further found that Nett had been targeted based on his dual roles as a police officer and elected Town Council member and that political divisions motivated the Department's decision to terminate him.

It reversed Nett's termination and ordered him reinstated with back pay, applicable benefits and qualifying attorney's fees.

The Town did not implement the decision.

By November 2025, then-Interim Town Manager Diana Hays had received legal advice from Sproul, Cafferky and the Town's insurance counsel.

Sproul told Mayor Chris Bertaut that the attorneys had provided Hays advice and guidance but could not force her to act. Cafferky told Hays she needed to act.

She did not.

The dispute then shifted from the Panel's findings to whether the grievance process itself was legally valid.

Stafford County Commonwealth's Attorney Eric Olsen, serving as special prosecutor in matters involving Nett, took a position outside his prosecutorial role that the grievance procedure did not comply with Virginia law, that the Panel lacked authority to hear

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 »



BetterALife Marks 10 Years with Debut of New Children's Choir

BY VALERIE CURY

A nonprofit that began 10 years ago with a $75 check to help pay a child's school lunch debt celebrated a decade of service Saturday evening with the debut performance of a new children's choir.

BetterALife marked its 10th anniversary Sept. 26 with a gala at the AC Hotel Marriott in Reston Town Center, bringing together supporters, volunteers and families to celebrate an organization that has grown from a small effort to help children in need into a nonprofit serving thousands of children and families in Loudoun and Fairfax counties.

But among the evening's highlights was something entirely new: the first public performance of Voices of Hope, BetterALife's newly formed children's choir.

Made up of girls from third grade through middle school, the choir performed songs during the anniversary celebration after arriving at the hotel by limousine and rehearsing before the gala.

The young singers delivered an outstanding debut performance, adding something special to a well-attended evening celebrating BetterALife's first 10 years.

The choir grew out of BetterALife's anniversary celebration a year earlier, when longtime choir teacher Matt Berthot volunteered to create a group that would give children another way to build confidence and, quite literally, "find their voice."



The girls initially had another name in mind—"Elizabeth's Minions," a playful reference to BetterALife founder and CEO Elizabeth Ford. Ultimately, however, they settled on Voices of Hope, a name more closely reflecting the organization's mission and what the choir hopes to bring to others.

The Saturday night performance was only the beginning. Voices of Hope plans to continue performing this winter at nursing homes, businesses and community events. The group rehearses each Tuesday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

For Ford, the performance also marked another chapter in a story that began on a much smaller scale.

BetterALife traces its beginnings to a $75 check Ford wrote to help cover public school lunch debt. From that act grew an organization that today provides after-school programming, mentoring, food assistance and life-skills classes through locations in Purcellville and Reston.

"I knew what it felt like to be a child who was hungry, and when I wrote that first check to Sterling Elementary School for $75 to help make sure children could eat lunch at school, I simply wanted to make a difference where I could," Ford said. "I never imagined that this would grow into my life's work, although I knew I wanted it to."

Over its first decade, BetterALife has supported approximately 30,000 children, including about 12,000 so far this year. Its assistance has included thousands of school lunches and pantry and holiday meals, along with backpacks, gifts, winter coats and other necessities for children and families.

But Ford remembers when helping just 20 children seemed enormous.

"The first time we were able to help 20 children, I remember thinking, this is huge. I was so proud of this number of children," Ford said. "Literally, I was jumping up and down in excitement that I got to help so many. It was basically an entire school classroom, which to me was major just starting out."

The organization's work has also expanded beyond meeting an immediate need for food or clothing.

"Food is often where our relationship with a child begins, not where it ends," Ford said.

BetterALife's programs provide ongoing support, mentoring and practical skills while giving young people a place to develop relationships and confidence.

That made the debut of Voices of Hope particularly fitting for the organization's 10th anniversary. An effort that began by helping meet one child's basic need has grown into one that also gives children opportunities to discover their talents and share them with the community.

For Ford, however, the numbers tell only part of the story.

"You can count 12,000 children. You can count the number of meals given out, the pounds of bags of food distributed, and the number of families served," she said. "But you cannot put a number on the moment a child realizes someone sees them, someone cares, and knows that they are not alone."

As BetterALife begins its second decade, Voices of Hope will now become another public face of the organization—and give its youngest participants a voice of their own.

For more information about BetterALife, visit BetterALife.org.



Top Eventing Horses and Riders Return to Morven Park Oct, 8-11



Sweeping Virginia landscapes and world-class sport will come together this fall as the nation's top eventing horses and athletes return to Leesburg for the 2026 U.S. Equestrian Open of Eventing Final, Oct. 8–11, at the Morven Park International Equestrian Center.

Admission and parking are free, giving longtime equestrian fans and those who have never seen eventing an opportunity to watch some of the country's top horses and athletes compete in dressage, show jumping and the sport's signature phase—cross-country across the Morven Park property.

The Final culminates a season-long series of 20 qualifying events held across the country. Athletes earn points throughout the year to qualify for the finale at Morven Park. More than $200,000 in prize money will be awarded at the Final, with an additional $50,000 distributed among the three highest-placed combinations in the overall series standings.

"Whether you're a lifelong equestrian fan or have never watched an eventing competition before, this is an incredible event to experience," said Stacey Metcalfe, Executive Director/CEO, Morven Park. "Spectators will see the country's top horses and athletes compete at beautiful Morven Park, enjoy food and vendors, and take in the excitement of cross-country, show jumping and dressage. With free admission and parking, it's a can't-miss fall weekend for everyone."

Last year's inaugural Final was won by four-time U.S. Olympian Boyd Martin of Cochranville, Pennsylvania, aboard Miks Master C. This year's field will include top-ranked eventers, Olympians and World Championship athletes.

Eventing is often compared to an equestrian triathlon, testing horse and rider in three disciplines: dressage, cross-country and show jumping. Cross-country challenges horses and riders over varied terrain and solid obstacles, including drops, banks, water crossings and ditches.

Visitors can also explore an on-site vendor village and food trucks. Competition will take place rain or shine.

Schedule: Thursday, Oct. 8, dressage at 11 a.m.; Friday, Oct. 9, dressage from 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 10, show jumping at 9 a.m. and cross-country from 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; Sunday, Oct. 11, horse inspection at 8 a.m., cross-country from 9 a.m.–4 p.m., and show jumping and awards from 10:30 a.m.–3 p.m.

Schedules may change. Visit www.morvenpark.org for updates.

Pumpkin Blasts Kick Off Fall at Temple Hall Farm



Fall arrived with a bang at Temple Hall Farm Regional Park as NOVA Parks opened its 2026 Pumpkin Patch & Flower Fields season with a weekend of pumpkin blasting, live music and family activities.

NOVA Parks Executive Director Justin Wilson launched the season Sept. 26 with the inaugural pumpkin blast, followed by free rounds at the pumpkin blaster. Live music by Lloyd Halverson continued throughout the opening weekend.

The fall fun continues daily through Nov. 3, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with pick-your-own pumpkins and flowers, wagon rides, farm animals, jumping pillows, a giant tube slide, scavenger hunt, playground, corn box, farm museum, yard games and other activities.

The working farm setting adds to the fall atmosphere, with heritage-breed farm animals, open fields and plenty of room for families to spend an autumn day outdoors.

And for visitors who would rather launch a pumpkin than pick one, the Pumpkin Blast Zone is available for an additional fee. Food and seasonal drinks are also available for purchase.

Admission includes a pumpkin and flowers and is $15 per person on weekends and $12 on weekdays. Children under 2 are admitted free.

Temple Hall Farm Regional Park is located at 15855 Limestone School Road in Leesburg.

For more information, visit NOVA Parks' Temple Hall Farm Pumpkin Patch & Flower Fields.



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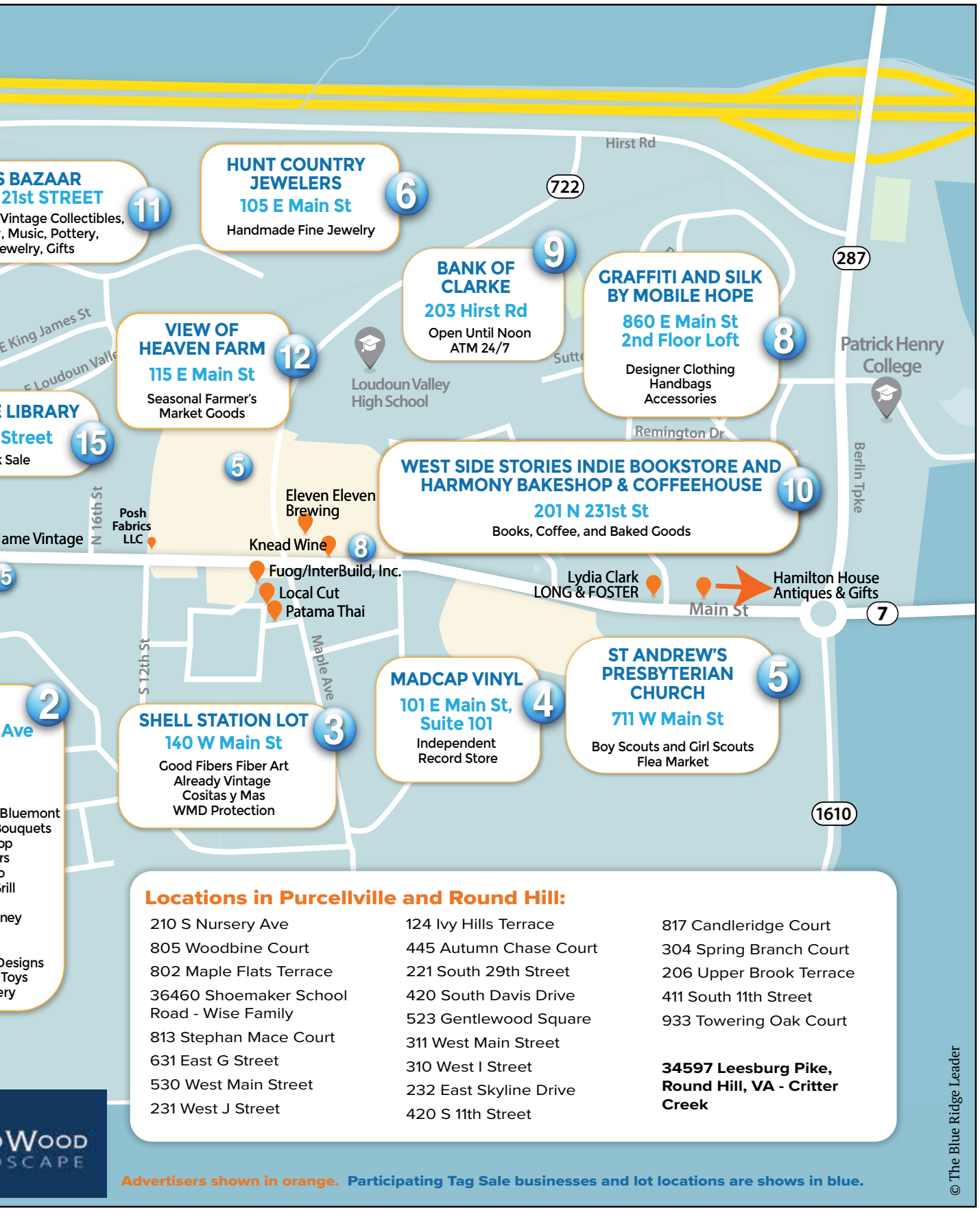


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The Linden Opens 130 Affordable Homes for Loudoun Seniors

BY VALERIE CURY

Every morning, 65-year-old Kevin Porreco wakes up in his new apartment at The Linden Senior Residences, looks out the window and gives thanks.

Porreco came to Virginia about two years ago to be closer to his daughter. Living on Social Security, he knew he would need affordable housing and began looking long before The Linden was built.

Then one night, searching online, he came across plans for a new affordable senior community in Loudoun County.

"I immediately drafted a letter and sent it to Miss Romero," Porreco recalled at The Linden's grand opening. The building hadn't even broken ground.

Today, he is home.

"This was just more than a blessing. It was just spectacular," he said. "I now have a home that I can afford that is just state of the art."

Porreco was among the residents, elected officials, housing advocates, developers and community partners who gathered to celebrate the opening, on Sept. 25, of The Linden, a new 130-apartment affordable community for adults age 55 and older in South Riding.

Located at 42715 Avonlea Grand Drive near Chantilly, The Linden serves residents earning between 30% and 60% of the area median income. It is True Ground Housing Partners' second senior community in Loudoun County.

"The Linden shows what is possible when thoughtful design, resident-centered services, and strong partnerships come together," True Ground President and CEO Carmen Romero said. "This community offers residents welcoming spaces, resources to support their wellbeing, and a foundation to shape their next chapter."

The approximately $64 million development includes 10,000 square feet of amenity space, accessible gathering areas, a wellness suite, fitness center with equipment for aging adults, business center, raised garden beds, courtyard, bocce court, outdoor exercise equipment and free high-speed Wi-Fi.











But much of the conversation at the grand opening was about something less visible: what happens after someone receives the keys.

"We can house, we can build units, but it's the people really when it comes down to it, right?" Loudoun County housing director Eric Schieler said.

True Ground's resident-services program is funded entirely through philanthropic gifts and provides onsite support and programming aimed at housing stability, access to resources, health and wellbeing, and building connections among residents.

At The Linden, a partnership with HealthWorks for Northern Virginia will increase access to health-related services. Resident listening sessions will help determine future programming, while activities are designed in part to combat social isolation, an issue that can significantly affect older adults' health

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29 »

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BOS delay Golden Substation decision amidst split over design and reliability

BY SOPHIA CLIFTON

GOVERNMENT

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors again postponed a decision on Dominion Energy's proposed Golden Substation on Sept. 1, with a narrow 5-4 vote reflecting a growing divide over how much more the company should be required to do to improve the project's appearance and how much risk the county can take with a facility officials say is important to the regional electric grid.

The board approved the project's commission permit but voted to forward three special-exception applications to its Dec. 1 business meeting.

The Golden proposal has already been delayed once. In July, the board voted 7-1-1 to postpone action so Dominion could explore additional architectural and landscaping changes, particularly because of the project's prominent location along Rt, 28 and the W&OD corridor.

That debate continued through the public comment portion of the Sept. 1 business meeting, with residents divided less over whether electricity infrastructure is needed than over whether Dominion's current design is good enough.

Thomas Donahue urged supervisors to look beyond the substation itself.

"When you vote on a substation, you need to consider not just where it is and what it looks like, but also what's going to be connected to it," he said, arguing that the board should consider the broader impact of the electrical infrastructure associated with the project.

He warned that approving Golden could effectively endorse the transmission lines that would connect it and said the substation could give the county additional leverage in its broader fight over electrical infrastructure.

Victor Block, the HOA president of Loudoun Valley Estates, challenged supervisors to stick to the standard they have repeatedly articulated for major projects.

"The question tonight, will this board hold Dominion to the standard we have heard from you over and over? Do better, get these projects right," Block said.

He questioned repeated arguments that certain design changes could not be made because of construction schedules, equipment orders or other constraints.

"Every answer is the same claim. It's too late to do better," Block said. "If the only argument left is if time ran out, ask yourself, who managed the clock?"

Block also pointed to the location and scale of the electrical infrastructure, asking how often 500-kilovolt substations are placed so close to residential areas. He ended with a message that became a refrain throughout the public comment: "We expect Dominion to build here like their own families live here, too. Insist we get this right."

Lauren Lillestolen made a similar request.

"With respect to the Golden Substation, please defer the vote until Dominion commits to building a substation worthy of Loudoun County residents," she said, arguing that reliability should not be used to justify accepting what she described as "the bare minimum."

She told supervisors that she had seen substations in other nearby counties with more attractive facades and additional safety features and asked why Loudoun should receive different treatment.

Philip Emanuel focused on the board's authority over the facility's design.

"We previously heard that your hands are tied when it comes to transmission line routes," Emanuel said. "But tonight, on the special exemption for the Golden Substation, your hands are not tied."

Emanuel argued that the county has direct authority over what is built along Pacific Boulevard and near the W&OD Trail. He described a design involving 115-foot structures and a 20-foot wall as being "right on top of our most used public trail" and said Dominion should not be allowed to use its project timeline as leverage.

"Whatever standard you set tonight will become the baseline for dozens of future applications across Loudoun," he said. Emanuel ultimately asked supervisors to "defer, do not deny" the application until Dominion could deliver a design that better protected the trail and reflected community expectations.

When the board began its discussion, staff reported that there had been no updates since the previous public hearing. Supervisor Koran Saines (D-Sterling) then moved to approve the commission permit while sending the special exceptions to Dec. 1.

Saines said he remained frustrated by Dominion's repeated explanations that particular improvements could not be made.

"I still feel that, as you heard some of the comments this evening from residents, that Dominion has said, they can't do this, can't do that, when you give them suggestions," Saines said. "However, they're still, I feel they still are able to do the right thing and come to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 »

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FROM PURCELLVILLE TO WEST VIRGINIA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in July 2024. Its principal and designated business address is 125 Hirst Road, Suite 1A, Purcellville.

Chapman is repeatedly identified in government records as Fundamental Data's "Responsible Official."

The company is now behind Ridgeline, a proposed multi-billion-dollar energy and digital-infrastructure development in Tucker County, West Virginia, that Fundamental Data says is intended to support artificial intelligence, cloud computing and other large-scale digital systems.

But the corporate structure behind Fundamental Data is less clear.

West Virginia records identify two limited liability companies—Prism Fundamental LLC and Emerick LLC—as Fundamental Data's managers. Both use the 125 Hirst Road address. Publicly available records reviewed by the *Blue Ridge Leader* do not disclose who ultimately owns or controls those companies.

One individual, however, appears repeatedly alongside Chapman in the Ridgeline permitting record—Lewis Reynolds, CEO of Prism Renewables.

West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection correspondence shows Reynolds was involved from the beginning of the permitting process. When an agency engineer later assembled documents in response to a public-records request, he described collecting emails with Chapman, Reynolds and environmental consultant Leah Blinn.

A Project Measured in Gigawatts

Ridgeline is not a conventional development proposal.

Information presented to West Virginia officials described a contemplated first phase involving approximately 800 megawatts of natural-gas generation, 1.3 gigawatts of solar generation and 14 data-center buildings. A later phase could add approximately 3.1 gigawatts of gas-fired generation.

Ridgeline could eventually extend far beyond the initial site. Fundamental Data representatives have said the project, if fully developed, could encompass up to 10,000 contiguous acres across Tucker and Grant counties.

Fundamental Data describes Ridgeline as a "large-scale data and energy infrastructure project" designed to support artificial intelligence, cloud computing and enterprise systems, and says the project would deliver billions in private capital investment.

Chapman has been equally direct about its scale.

"Ridgeline is not a modest project, and it was never conceived as one," he wrote in a March 2026 response to U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse and other senators.

Chapman cited proximity to natural gas, a major transmission node, abundant water and substantial land. He also cited a jurisdiction that does not impose local zoning, permitting and regulatory layers that add cost and time to projects elsewhere.

That last point would take on particular significance because of a sweeping West Virginia data-center law enacted in 2025.

The Power Plant Behind Ridgeline

Fundamental Data entered West Virginia's formal permitting system through the power plant.

On March 18, 2025, the company submitted an application to West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for a large combustion-turbine facility near Thomas and Davis, which have a combined population of approximately 1,200, in a county with an estimated population of just 6,540.

The proposed facility would sit in Tucker County's high-elevation mountain landscape, within two miles of Blackwater Falls State Park and portions of the Monongahela National Forest.

The county is known for its mountains, forests, rivers, waterfalls and vast stretches of protected land. More than half of the county is protected, including Monongahela National Forest, Dolly Sods and Otter Creek wilderness areas, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and three state parks, including Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley.

The landscape includes rare wetlands, red spruce forests, wildlife habitat and the Blackwater River, making it a destination for hiking, skiing, fishing, hunting, birding and other outdoor recreation.

The proposed plant would rely primarily on natural gas, with diesel for backup.

> "Ridgeline is not a modest project, and it was never conceived as one."
>
> —*Casey Chapman*

The permit authorizes three 10-million-gallon diesel storage tanks—30 million gallons of storage capacity—with annual diesel throughput of up to 15 million gallons.

West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection ultimately issued Ridgeline a synthetic minor air permit—a classification with enforceable restrictions intended to keep emissions below thresholds for major-source requirements.

But "minor source" does not mean emission-free.

The project's permitted nitrogen-oxide emissions became particularly controversial because the permit allows up to 99.35 tons per year, just below the 100-ton threshold at issue in the permit challenge.

Opponents argued the facility should have been treated as a major source. Fundamental Data and WVDEP disputed that position, and the West Virginia Air Quality Board upheld the permit while requiring additional testing.

Natural-gas turbines and diesel generators can emit nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide and other pollutants.

The Potential Health Impact

A January 2026 analysis commissioned by Tucker United, a grassroots coalition of Tucker County residents and allies opposed to Ridgeline, examined the potential public-health effects of emissions from the proposed plant.

The study was conducted by Applied Impact, with Michael Cork of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health as lead analyst and Harvard professor Francesca Dominici as senior scientific adviser. Using emissions authorized by Ridgeline's air permit, researchers modeled the movement and health effects of fine particulate matter, or PM2.5.

The analysis found that Davis and Thomas could experience the largest modeled increases in PM2.5 and estimated more than 250,000 people across the region would be exposed to additional particulate pollution.

Using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's COBRA health-impact model, researchers estimated $19 million to $35 million annually in health-related damages, including 1.2 to 2.3 additional premature deaths per year, along with asthma, heart attacks, respiratory hospitalizations and lost workdays.

The modeled effects would extend well beyond West Virginia. The study estimated approximately 55% of the total population exposure burden would occur in Virginia. Loudoun County alone accounted for 4.25%.

A Real-World Example in Loudoun

At Vantage Data Centers' VA2 facility in Sterling, Virginia DEQ records show eight natural-gas turbines, 40 emergency diesel generators and two diesel black-start generators. The gas turbines became the facility's primary power source in 2024.

Loudoun County says it is the only data center in the county operating full time on natural-gas turbines instead of grid power. The county has described the continuous noise as reminiscent of a jet engine and audible within a 1.5- to 2-mile radius.

Residents have complained about noise, smoke and air quality, including breathing and hearing problems, headaches, dry eyes and hospital visits. One resident living approximately 150 feet from the facility told Virginia regulators that generator operation produced black smoke and disruptive noise.

Ridgeline's contemplated reliance on large-scale natural-gas generation, backed by diesel, raises many of the same concerns.

"This Project Came Out of the Blue"

For many Tucker County residents, Ridgeline did not arrive through an economic-development announcement. They learned about it through the air-permit process.

Resident Pamela Moe discovered the project through the legally required air-permit notice in the local newspaper and began circulating information and filing public-records requests.

Local officials also said they had not been involved beforehand.

At an April 2025 town hall, Tucker County Development Authority Executive Director Steve Leyh said the project "came out of the blue."

West Virginia Changes the Rules

At almost exactly the same time, West Virginia was rewriting the rules governing large data centers and the power systems serving them.

On March 18, 2025—the same day Fundamental Data's Ridgeline air-permit application was received—House Bill 2014 was introduced in the West Virginia Legislature.

West Virginia House of Delegates Speaker Roger Hanshaw (R-Clay) was the lead House sponsor, joined by six other delegates. The legislation states that it was introduced "By Request of the Executive."

The bill looked directly across the state line to Virginia.

Its findings identified Loudoun County as having the world's highest concentration of high-level computational power and data centers and called that concentration a national-security vulnerability.

The legislation listed West Virginia's competitive advantages, including abundant energy, proximity to Washington and what it called "the least restrictive regulatory environment in the Nation."

HB 2014 did more than encourage data-center investment.

For qualifying certified microgrid districts and high-impact data centers, the law restricts local governments from enforcing zoning, noise, viewshed, lighting, development and land-use regulations, as well as certain building-permitting and inspection requirements.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 »

PURCELLVILLE'S GRIEVANCE PROCESS,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

the grievance and that its decision was invalid.

On Aug. 1, 2026, Interim Town Manager Anthony Sabio, after reviewing the Town's Employee Handbook and grievance procedure, the Panel decision and the pending enforcement action, determined that the relief awarded by the Panel was consistent with the Town's written personnel and grievance policies.

Sabio emphasized that he had no involvement in the earlier proceedings.

"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.

Effective at 8:45 p.m. Aug. 1, Sabio ordered Nett restored to Town employment. He also directed officials previously involved in the personnel dispute not to exercise discretion over implementation. They "shall not delay, condition, reinterpret, or modify the reinstatement," he wrote.

For the first time in more than a year, the Town had an administrative directive ordering the Panel's decision implemented.

It lasted 13 days.

Michael Rogers became interim town manager Aug. 3. On Aug. 13, he rescinded Sabio's order and directed Town employees to take no action to implement the Panel decision.

"Accordingly, the August 1 directive is hereby rescinded, and no action shall be taken to implement the Grievance Panel's decision," Rogers wrote. "Therefore, Carl Benjamin Nett is not reinstated as an employee of the Town of Purcellville."

Rogers cited an Aug. 11 letter from Olsen, who maintained that Sabio lacked authority to act and that the grievance proceeding itself was legally defective.

Although Sproul had recused himself from the Nett grievance matter, on Aug. 18—five days after Rogers rescinded Sabio's directive—he advised Rogers on what to do next.

"I believe there needs to be an 'official' directive to the relevant staff not to implement Sabio's directive based upon the finding that Sabio was without authority to make such a directive specific to the grievance panel decision," Sproul wrote.

"From there, a court will decide whether the decision should be implemented. The Town doesn't (and shouldn't) take any action until a court weighs in."

Sproul continued, "A court may order an additional proceeding, but that shouldn't be done until a court weighs in on the previous process."

Then he turned to the very grievance procedure he developed and defended before Nett's hearing.

"The Town does need to amend its grievance procedure so that I can certify it to the court," Sproul wrote. "The current grievance procedure is not certifiable."

Less than a month later, the Purcellville Town Council voted 3-2 on Sept. 8 to adopt a new procedure. Council Members Erin Rayner, Kevin Wright and Caleb Stought voted in favor. Mayor Chris Bertaut and Council Member Carol Luke voted against it.

The new procedure replaces the three-member Grievance Panel that decided Nett's case with an administrative hearing officer appointed by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia or, alternatively, through the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management.

It does not, however, resolve the existing Grievance Panel decision in Nett's favor. Before Nett's hearing, Sproul himself said the 2024 procedure was substantively the same as the certified 2005 procedure and under Virginia law the decisions of a Grievance Panel are final and binding.

The two statements from Sproul remain.

On April 22, 2025: "We also submit that the 2024 procedure complies with the requirements found in the code."

On Aug. 18, 2026: "The current grievance procedure is not certifiable."









ASK DR. MIKE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

streaming.

When we tell a child they have to wait or save up for something, we are not just teaching financial literacy. We are teaching frustration tolerance and helping them realize that the itchy, uncomfortable feeling of wanting something right now is survivable. This foundation of resilience helps them.

Let's talk about the dreaded phrase: "I'm boooored." For many parents, this trigger word sends them into panic-induced entertainment-coordinator mode, offering snacks, screens, or a list of Pinterest crafts. But your child is bored, not stranded in a desert.

Boredom is actually a fertile psychological state. When we do not immediately rescue children from it, they are forced to look inward and ask, "Okay now what?"

That friction is where creativity lives. It is where they invent a game using a cardboard box and mismatched socks, and where they develop initiative. If we always provide the soundtrack to their lives, they will never learn how to sing.

How do we deliver a boundary without causing a nuclear meltdown? Try a simple three-step clinical framework. First, empathize by validating the feeling without agreeing to the drama: "I get it—you're really disappointed we have to leave the park."

Second, state the boundary clearly and briefly, without debating: "But it's time to go. The answer is no."

Finally, hold the space by showing that you can handle their storm: "It's okay to be mad. I'll stay right here with you while you cool down."

This third step is the game-changer because you are demonstrating that you are the anchor. When they inevitably inform you that you are the worst parent in the history of civilization, smile inwardly.

A "Yes Day" is a blast, and we should say yes to the giant ice cream, the living-room fort, making slime, the later night out for the teen, and the memories. But do not fear the "no." While "yes" gives them joy, "no" gives them something far more enduring: the opportunity to discover that they are stronger than their temporary discomfort.

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

OPINION: CURMUDGEONLY THOUGHTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the table and smirks. The man to his right trumps him with a Mercedes key, saying, "AMG model, 805 horsepower." A third man tosses a Porsche fob on top of those two. "Turbo S convertible, zero-to-sixty in 2.4 seconds." The last man wins when he tosses his McLaren key fob onto the pile: "750S, top speed of 206 mph."

I'd be happy with any of those cars and would take the McLaren and the Porsche to the track. Otherwise, the car would be hidden in our garage, not driven around to show off as these imaginary men would do.

Proper Driving

I've complained before about passive-aggressive drivers who park themselves in the fast lane, drive at exactly the speed limit, and thereby purposefully force a train of cars to stack up behind them. It's rude. It's unsafe.

Oddly, I think assertive driving can be fine and fun if the driver is competent and polite. Being decisive is also important. On-ramps make this clear. You need to exit the ramp close to the pace of oncoming traffic. That's safe. I see too many drivers slow down to, say, forty miles per hour on the ramp. That creates a major problem for them: How do they then merge into fast-moving traffic when they're much slower?

It's easy to tell if the driver ahead of you is—or is not—competent: He or she rides their brakes forever at every hill, every curve. It shows that they are tentative and unsure. Failing to use turn signals at every turn or lane change greatly increases their chance of being rear-ended.

If—when—some other driver barges in front of you or does something bad, do not make eye contact or flip him off. Distract yourself by thinking of a puppy or ice cream.

Men's Facial Hair

If your hair is blonde, gray, or silver, don't try to grow a beard, and perhaps not even a mustache.

During most of my life, beards were rarely seen; mustaches were a little bit less unusual. In most instances, they were both neatly trimmed. Not so today. It's common to see unshaven necks, which look ridiculous.

I see the merit in not shaving daily, but please, please at least shave your neck.

It's not unusual to see someone with a mountain-man beard, where the goal is to grow it as long as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29 »

JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE) ON EARTH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Authority, which maintains and operates the W & OD Trail.

Now, on the day that I last visited, the historic marker was much the worse for wear due to mildew—with legibility being a major issue; the lime kilns themselves, though, looked to me about ready to be re-fired up—if only to keep warm the extremities of a chronologically-challenged storyteller—with questionable emotional, intellectual and spiritual (may as well throw physical in there too, what the heck) stability.

The stone and brick work of the kilns appeared to have maintained a respectable level of integrity, considering they were installed in just a few years following the American Civil War.

Imagine the timeline of roughly a hundred 40 years, seen from that site: the prosperous railroad line continuing from the 1800's until the 1960's, then shutting down, the widespread use of literal horsepower transitioning to that of the combustion engine (and now electric vehicles), air balloons giving way to manned airplanes, rockets and spaceships (and drones), chalkboards being replaced by calculators, and 'old-fashioned' crank telephones fading out in deference to wall-mounted, extended corded 1970's models, then to today's so-called 'smart-phones,' milk being a nourishing liquid issuing from a cow, then from glass bottles delivered to private homes, and now in a supermarket carton. And so on.



At the time of the lime kiln operation, I would have been typing this story out on a manual typewriter and volubly cursing every mistake in my progress. Now I enjoy the luxury of one of the most frustrating computers known to mankind. Thank goodness for progress!

On a brighter note, I would have—at the time of the installation of the beloved lime kilns along the W & OD—most assuredly been listening to recorded music on the then recently-invented phonograph record player (obviously not yet electric), which would have graduated to an electrified device with turntable & LP (long player) disc, amplifier and speakers.

Our lime kilns could have watched your storyteller moving through time—while he and other audiophiles fiddled around with reel-to-reel, cassette, and of course the dreaded eight-track tape formats, then onto the CD (compact disc) era, and finally to today's industry standard (at least for most popular use)—the digital audio file.

I prefer to write most of the stories in this series while listening to music under the mp3 format, generally instrumental, for inspiration without distraction.

And, our lime kilns have seen and heard it all. So, anytime you pass by something you consider 'old,' remember the lengthy timeline of things it has 'witnessed,' or at least with which it has coexisted.

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Tradeoffs to consider

While these tax benefits can make a DAF attractive, it's worth understanding the tradeoffs. Once you contribute assets to a DAF, that gift is irrevocable. Your investment options are also limited to what's available in the DAF program you've chosen, and DAFs can incur administrative costs in addition to fees charged on the underlying investments.

A good next step

Because DAFs can have significant implications for your tax situation, consult with your tax professional before taking action. Your financial advisor can also help you evaluate DAF benefits and tradeoffs and compare sponsors, since programs offer different features.

If a DAF is appropriate, it can be a meaningful and efficient way to support charitable giving for years to come.

Remember, your individual financial goals and questions deserve individual attention. If you think you might need specific financial advice, please reach out to a local financial advisor.

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WESTERN LOUDOUN FARMING,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Hills Farm and you'll see why you can't look away. They had me at their NeeDoh noses. Love at first sight. I needed one, and she would be known as Ms. Kisses.

I was sure this would fly with Dad. She could be our lawn mower AND make fertilizer!

That was before we got to Ms. Laura Immelman of Scarlet Springs Farm. She took time to teach me about her farm, including that while her sheep and goats looked uber cute, some of her sheep could cost thousands of dollars, and her cows could cost $10,000 or more.

HOLY COW. Lamborghini cattle.

Asking Dad for Ms. Kisses was getting challenging.

Mr. Ghorley Gregg of Twin Maple Farm broke down what it costs to keep a farm running. So let's talk Moooo-lah. Sorry, I had to.

First, equipment. Remember, people, you're not picking up a tractor for $19.99 at Target. Mr. Gregg told us tractors can easily cost $100,000 or more. Suddenly, Ms. Kisses' lawn mower service wasn't looking so free.

Then there's diesel. Mr. Gregg said his tractor crosses the field at least five times to make a bale of hay. With diesel costing him about twice as much, plus fertilizer, Ms. Kisses' dinner isn't looking cheap either.

Mr. Gregg said southern Virginia has been hit harder by the hay shortage. The problem is so serious that Virginia recently declared a state of emergency to help get more hay to farmers. Here in Loudoun, his bigger concern is the cost of producing it. Twin Maple is absorbing some higher costs to keep customers, but he said that isn't sustainable forever.

Near my home, Mr. Michael Bertozzi owns Cavallo Farm, a competitive Hunter/Jumper show barn. He told us his horses go through about 12 bales a day, and competition horses need premium hay, so cheaper hay isn't an option.

There's no hay shortage there, but he's stuck paying premium prices. And once prices go up, Mr. Bertozzi doesn't expect them to come back down.

At Sterling Hills Farm, Ms. Robin Darter told us they make their own hay and use rotational grazing, which keeps the cows grazing longer and reduces how much hay they need.

Things were starting to click. Farms don't always depend on just one way of making money.

Ms. Molly Kroiz of Georges Mill Farm raises goats and makes artisan cheese. She said people are often more willing to pay for an experience than pay more for food. Visitors can eat cheese and even bottle-feed baby goats. I learned that's called agritourism: another way to make money for the farm.

Ms. Darter built agritourism into Sterling Hills after starting with five Highland cattle, while Ms. Immelman does it with animals like her goats.

That matters if a vineyard has a bad harvest or crops get hit by drought, pests or disease. Animals still need to eat. Having more than one way to make money can help keep a farm going.

Ms. Kroiz, Ms. Immelman and Ms. Darter taught me that having more than one source of income was always part of the plan, not a backup.

My Great Western Loudoun Farm Tour taught me what farmers actually worry about. It's hay, diesel, equipment, fertilizer and customers, while somehow still putting those darn veggies on my plate.

As for Ms. Kisses?

Dad, can we call my puppy Ms. Kisses instead?

Ria Narayan may only be 9, which means she doesn't have a driver's license or a vote, but that hasn't stopped her from having something to say. With plenty of questions, plenty of curiosity and her own point of view, Ria's Loudoun Lens shares Loudoun as she sees it.

LETTER: FOOL ME ONCE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

corporations, a groundswell of public anger has persuaded a majority of the supervisors to "move forward toward a temporary pause in processing new data center applications."

This is a lot like closing the barn door after the horses have escaped. But a belated something is better than nothing at all.

Unfortunately, the Board has yet to even recognize that the County is making the same mistake with respect to "by right" development in rural areas. They are currently in the process of reviewing rural zoning standards, but have explicitly decided not to even consider whether allowing 10,000 more "by right" residences, 10,000 more wells, and 100,000 more vehicle trips per day is smart public planning.

It's time to re-think the scale of all "by right" development in Loudoun, including in our rural areas. If we do, it might still be possible to keep some of the horses in the barn.

Before finalizing the ongoing review of rural zoning, the Board of Supervisors should re-visit the scale of "by right" development in our rural areas and ramp it down to a level that will not overwhelm the available resources and infrastructure.

We've been fooled once. It's on all of us to make sure it doesn't happen again.

—John Ellis

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors of Save Rural Loudoun, a non-profit public education and rural advocacy organization based in Loudoun County.

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FROM PURCELLVILLE TO WEST VIRGINIA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

"We Were the Guys"

More than a year later, an engineer working with Fundamental Data made an extraordinary public statement about HB 2014.

Edward G. "Ted" McGavran III, a professional engineer and principal of McGavran Engineering, was directly involved with Ridgeline. He attended the West Virginia Air Quality Board hearings in December 2025 in person with Casey Chapman and Lewis Reynolds as representatives of Fundamental Data and participated in a May 2026 Davis town hall about the project.

Then, on July 6, 2026, McGavran appeared before the City Council in Belmont, North Carolina, where he lives, and spoke openly about Fundamental Data, Ridgeline and HB 2014.

"We were the guys who basically wrote [HB 2014] and got it through the [West Virginia] Legislature in 2024 and early 2025," McGavran said. "That gave us the opportunity to generate and set out the rules for what's called a microgrid. Well, it's really a 'macrogrid,' as big as it's going to be."

McGavran then described what he said the law meant for Fundamental Data's West Virginia project.

"We can do pretty much whatever we want to do up there," he said.

Fundamental Data subsequently disputed McGavran's account, saying he was not authorized to speak for the company and that Fundamental Data "did not draft, write, or play any role in drafting HB 2014."

Gov. Patrick Morrisey's office also disputed McGavran's statement, saying HB 2014 was the governor's bill and its drafting had been limited to the governor's office.

A Striking Contrast

Another portion of McGavran's Belmont appearance presented a striking contrast.

While advising officials in his own North Carolina community about potential data-center development, McGavran urged them to consider protections against generator noise.

"We've got a small town, a small compact town, and so a diesel generator makes noise," he said.

Yet HB 2014 prevents West Virginia localities from applying certain local noise restrictions to certified high-impact data centers and microgrid districts.

Fundamental Data says McGavran was speaking personally and was not authorized to represent the company.

In Belmont, McGavran was urging his own community to consider protections that West Virginia law restricts localities from imposing on qualifying projects.

That stands in sharp contrast to McGavran's own description of Fundamental Data's position in West Virginia: "We can do pretty much whatever we want to do up there."

What Exactly Is Fundamental Data Building?



By 2026, even West Virginia officials were grappling with a fundamental question—What exactly is Ridgeline?

At a May 18 meeting involving Fundamental Data, state officials and local representatives, the company discussed a project involving a localized microgrid, large-scale gas and solar generation and 14 contemplated data-center buildings.

State Commerce officials concluded that the description appeared to trigger West Virginia's high-impact-data-center certification requirements.

Chapman disagreed.

In a June 18, 2026 letter to the Department of Commerce, Chapman argued that Fundamental Data "does not represent a data center developer." Instead, he said, the company develops electrical generation that could be attractive to data-center companies.

"The data centers contemplated for the project remain conceptual, and what is ultimately built will be determined by the eventual users of the power we generate," Chapman wrote.

State officials rescinded their violation notice, concluding that it was not yet evident that Ridgeline would meet the statutory definition of a high-impact data center.

But Fundamental Data's current public description of Ridgeline is more expansive.

Its website calls Ridgeline a "large-scale data and energy infrastructure project" designed to support artificial intelligence, cloud computing and enterprise systems.

Chapman has also made clear the facility is intended to evolve.

In his March 27, 2026 response to three U.S. senators, Chapman said Ridgeline is designed to be hydrogen-compatible and future development could incorporate advanced gasification and nuclear energy supported by carbon capture.

"We are not building a static asset," he wrote. "We are building a platform."

The House Speaker Later Represents Fundamental Data

Hanshaw was the lead House sponsor of HB 2014, which the official legislative record says was introduced at the request of the executive branch.

Less than a year later, on March 16, 2026, Hanshaw, an attorney with Bowles Rice, began representing Fundamental Data as an attorney in litigation involving the Ridgeline air permit.

Fundamental Data Was Lobbying Congress

Fundamental Data was also active in Washington before the Ridgeline air permit became public.

Federal Lobbying Disclosure Act filings show the company retained the Purcellville-based Da Vinci Group, a government-relations and lobbying firm, in 2024 to lobby the House and Senate.

One filing reported $10,000 in lobbying income and described the issues as commerce and data-management matters, including privacy protection.

A subsequent termination report listed $50,000 in lobbying income and described the work as including "Introductions to Members of Congress."

Where the Record Ends

Ridgeline raises a larger question about how enormous data-and-energy projects are regulated.

The air regulator evaluates emissions from the power plant. State economic-development officials administer the high-impact-data-center law.

Local governments have lost significant regulatory authority over qualifying projects. Meanwhile, Fundamental Data says the ultimate users of the electricity—and therefore the final configuration of the data centers—have not yet been determined.

From 125 Hirst Road in Purcellville, Fundamental Data has moved into a development world measured not in houses, apartments or commercial square footage, but in billions of dollars and gigawatts of power.

Ridgeline would rely heavily on natural-gas generation to support power-hungry digital infrastructure. Its emergence coincided with a West Virginia law designed to attract data centers with abundant energy and a less restrictive regulatory environment while curtailing significant local authority.

Loudoun County, with more than 250 data centers built or under construction and many more in the development pipeline, offers a nearby example of what development on that scale can mean for communities around it.

Data centers have been built throughout the county, including near established neighborhoods. Their enormous demand for electricity has brought the need for vast new power infrastructure, including transmission lines. They also place significant demands on water resources.

Across Loudoun, that expansion has raised concerns about noise, energy and water demands, land use, and proximity to established communities. At one Sterling facility, natural-gas turbines have amplified those concerns, with residents reporting continuous noise, smoke, air-quality concerns and health problems.

For Loudoun residents whose homes and neighborhoods lie alongside the industry's continuing expansion and the infrastructure required to support it, questions about energy, water, land use, infrastructure, health and community impact are not abstract.

FORMER GW CAMPUS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

could qualify as an accessory use subordinate to another principal use.

Briskman told the crowd she believes those developments give the county significant tools to fight the project.

"I want you to know that I feel your worry and your pain," she said. "I know why you're concerned, but I also honestly feel that we can stop it."

Then came the questions.

One longtime University Center resident asked about water beneath the property and runoff to the Potomac River. She also told officials she had found an Indigenous artifact near the campus and asked whether archaeological resources would be protected.

County officials said a required Phase I archaeological study was missing from Amazon's first submission and could trigger further study. Erosion, sediment control and stormwater requirements are also part of the review.

Perhaps the most emotional moment came from a retired registered nurse who had spent more than four decades caring for patients.

"I've not heard really anything regarding people," Pamela Finster told officials.

Her voice breaking at times, she spoke about people with respiratory illnesses, cancer patients, the immunocompromised and people already struggling to breathe.

"There are people in our community that I love dearly," she said. "You need to have somebody standing up for the patients, these people who are struggling to live."

Briskman agreed, pointing to her efforts to get additional air-quality monitors in Loudoun and concerns she said have emerged around data centers operating close to residential communities.

Another resident, Kim Fulmer, who lives in University Center with her two young sons, noted that her neighbors were there—even her son's pre-K teacher.

"What we lack is information," she said.

Amazon's first site plan had been rejected, she said, yet the company returned with another submission in roughly six weeks.

County officials cautioned that accepting the application does not mean approval is imminent.

The first review must be completed within 40 days, officials said, with subsequent submissions generally reviewed within 30 days. But the applicant controls how quickly it responds to deficiencies, and large projects can require repeated submissions.

"Something this large, they're going to run into resubmissions," one county official said.

If Amazon eventually resolves every legally applicable deficiency, however, he said the county would be required by law to approve the site plan.

Residents repeatedly returned to the 84 diesel generators shown on the plan.

One asked what "backup" really means when the electrical infrastructure needed to serve the project does not yet appear on the site plan.

Davis said backup generators cannot legally replace permanent primary power.

"They could not build the buildings, put the backup generators there, and then say, 'Oh, I don't have power from Dominion. I'm going to run my generators until I get Dominion power,'" he said. "That would be a complete violation of the zoning ordinance, and we would shut them down."

County officials said Loudoun cannot require an applicant to provide information about electrical demand and grid impacts as part of a site plan review. Such authority, they said, would have to come from the Virginia General Assembly.

Others worried about declining property values, the proximity of data centers to homes and whether Loudoun is already carrying too much of the nation's data center burden.

One woman questioned why the county was still discussing data center development near neighborhoods at all.

"I'm standing here good and ticked off," she said.

Another resident asked whether Amazon would sue if the county blocks the project after the company spent hundreds of millions of dollars buying the property.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Carlos Teran would not speculate about what legal claims Amazon might bring, but identified areas where disputes could arise, including the site-plan process, zoning interpretations, the Route 28 Tax District and property covenants.

"The county feels its position on this matter is very, very strong," Teran said, adding that officials believe the steps the county is taking are "very legally sound."

"I would much rather have Amazon suing me than you suing me," Briskman told one

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 »

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WALLACE "WALLY" PAYNE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

In September 1997, riders associated with Payne's took part in a charity motorcycle ride benefiting a Loudoun County teenager battling cancer. It was part of a longer tradition later referenced in a Virginia Court of Appeals opinion citing motorcycle enthusiasts in "a number of 'charity rides' sponsored by Payne's Biker Bar in Leesburg, Virginia."

In March 1998, a fire blamed on an overheated deep-fat fryer caused an estimated $80,000 in damage, about $164,000 today. No one was injured, and firefighters from Leesburg, Hamilton, Lucketts and Loudoun closed King Street for about two hours.

The Post called Payne's "a landmark in Leesburg's historic district," and the bar reopened within days.

In 2000, Payne's closed after more than three decades on North King Street. It later reopened as Downtown Saloon.

According to his obituary, Wally moved from Leesburg to Citrus County, Florida, around 2002, where he became sole owner of Pine Ridge Community Golf & Country Club in Beverly Hills.

He remained active there as a member of American Legion Post 0293, a life member of Loyal Order of Moose lodges 1582 and 3000, a member of VFW Post 9760 and an usher at Gulf to Lake Church.

Back in Leesburg, the Payne's name endured.

A 2007 Washington Post story about the historic U.S. 15 corridor still identified Payne's Biker Bar as the former name of Downtown Saloon.

Two years later, The Post went even further, referring to the establishment as "Downtown Saloon, a.k.a. Payne's Biker Bar."

Payne was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Larry Payne, and Larry's wife, Margarita; and his brother, Alton "Buddy" Payne Jr.

He is survived by his wife, Marie Julian-Payne; daughters Mariann Serrianne D'Esposito and her husband, Edward, and Ann Serrianne Serrats and her husband, Ron; brother Ronnie Payne; sister-in-law Lucy Edwards; brother-in-law Mike Curry; and grandchildren Kyle Flynn, Emily Flynn and Dominic Scenna.

The family received friends Friday, September 11, at Gulf to Lake Church in Crystal River, Florida. He was buried at Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Beverly Hills. Brown Funeral Home in Lecanto, Florida, handled the arrangements.

Wally Payne lived long enough to see the Leesburg he knew change dramatically. Businesses came and went, downtown evolved and Payne's became Downtown Saloon, but people kept calling the place Payne's.

For generations who knew Leesburg, Payne's was difficult to forget.

So was Wally Payne.

FORMER GW CAMPUS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

resident, "because if Amazon's suing me, they're not building the data center."

As the meeting neared its end, a resident asked what the community could do.

Because Amazon's application is administrative, supervisors cannot order county staff to reject it. Briskman encouraged residents to support zoning changes, lobby county and state lawmakers and stay involved as the review continues.

Delegate Marty Martinez (D-29) encouraged residents to weigh in as legislation moves through the General Assembly.

For residents looking for a simple answer to whether four data centers will ultimately rise on the former university campus, there wasn't one.

The project involves a complicated collision of old zoning rights, new regulations, environmental concerns, state law and a pending administrative application.

A community that thought it was living beside a university campus is now fighting over what may replace it.

"When your livability is impacted, that all goes out the window," Briskman said, "If you can't breathe clean air and drink clean water, and your kids can't sleep at night, I'm not sure anybody really cares if their tax rate's going to go down or up."

OPINION: TEAM MAYBERRY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Construction companies compete for contracts to build projects and to replace infrastructure. Big box businesses seek to expand their markets. Consultants seek town contracts.

Political campaigns often depend on contributions from businesses and wealthy donors. These interests benefit from growth and increased spending, while residents are left to pay the costs and risk losing Purcellville's small-town character.

Team Megabucks, in my opinion, is well-organized and well-financed, and sees Purcellville as an opportunity for growth and financial gain, regardless of the consequences for residents and established small businesses.

More troubling to me is what I see as support from certain Virginia elected officials and government institutions bringing the considerable power of the state into what should remain a local debate over Purcellville's future.

There are no rules of the game that ensure a level playing field. Mockery, bullying, intimidation, ridicule, harassment, insults, doxxing, vulgar language and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 »

OPINION: MY SILENCE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ChatGPT account, and slanderous public statements that sought to injure my name and reputation.

They are entitled to their political opinions. They are not entitled to discard fairness, dignity, ethics, and due process.

Nor are they entitled to rewrite my record.

As Town Manager, I personally reviewed, edited, and approved the submission of Purcellville's PFAS grant application. That work contributed directly to the Town securing approximately $7 million to address PFAS contamination and protect its drinking water.

Yet, Council Members Rayner, Wright, and Stought have not acknowledged my contribution. In my judgment, acknowledging it would contradict the narrative they have promoted—that I was inexperienced, incompetent, and unqualified to serve at the pleasure of the Town Council.

But a narrative is not a record, and repetition cannot convert falsehood into fact.

The $7 million award did not arrive by accident. It required careful review, professional judgment, administrative leadership, and final approval. I performed that work as Town Manager, just as I performed the other responsibilities entrusted to me.

Before serving as Town Manager, I served four terms as Mayor. During my public service, I helped:

- Reduce the Town's inherited debt by more than $9 million.
- Preserve Purcellville's character through a responsible slow-growth strategy.
- Welcome more than 200 new businesses to Purcellville.
- Preside over a sustained increase in Purcellville property values throughout my four terms as Mayor.
- More than double the Town's meals-tax revenue during my four terms—without increasing the meals-tax rate—through business growth and stronger local economic activity.
- Secure 2,000 boxes of USDA food to replenish local food banks during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Transform a decrepit municipal maintenance facility into one of Virginia's largest makerspaces—an innovative community asset that manufactured benches for students learning from home and protective face shields for emergency responders during the pandemic.
- Partner with Biobot Analytics, Harvard University, MIT, and Brigham and Women's Hospital to make Purcellville one of the first towns in America to use wastewater-based epidemiology to detect the community spread of COVID-19.
- Advocate alongside municipal leaders through the National League of Cities for direct federal pandemic relief, resulting in approximately $10.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding for Purcellville.
- Take legislative action to allocate more than $8 million of those ARPA funds to critical infrastructure projects serving the people of Purcellville.
- Champion the planting of approximately 100,000 trees and the creation of Virginia's largest nutrient-credit bank on municipally owned land.
- Allocated funds to increase Purcellville's potable-water storage capacity by approximately 29 percent.
- Help Virginia secure an $85.4 million Department of Energy grant for grid resilience and innovation.
- Review, edit, and approve the Town's PFAS grant submission, contributing directly to Purcellville receiving approximately $7 million to address PFAS contamination and protect its drinking water.

These are not aspirations written in a campaign brochure. They are measurable results—debt reduced, businesses welcomed, revenues increased without raising the tax rate, property values strengthened, infrastructure improved, federal funding secured, and lives protected.

The record remains, even when some refuse to acknowledge it.

There are moments in public life when excellence is not celebrated but treated as trespass—when achievement becomes inconvenient because it disrupts a preferred story about who is competent, who belongs, and who is permitted to lead.

I know that feeling. My family knows its cost.

Still, we remain standing.

To the citizens who have defended the presumption of innocence, asked difficult questions, supported my family, and refused to abandon justice when it became uncomfortable: thank you.

You have reminded us that institutions do not possess the final word on a person's character. An unconstitutional legislative bill cannot erase a lifetime of service. A suspension cannot become a conviction. An accusation cannot be permitted to bury the truth.

I will have my day in court. Until then, I will continue to carry myself with faith, discipline, and dignity.

My silence is disciplined. It is not consent. And it will not last forever.

With enduring gratitude,

Kwasi Fraser

OPINION: CURMUDGEONLY THOUGHTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

possible. That worked for Rip Van Winkle, but it won't work for you.

Russia Started It

"It" being the rotten state of college football today.

Hark back to the Olympic Games of the late twentieth century. Russia and its allies were also correctly accused of paying their athletes.

While we fought that payment practice, we eventually gave up at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics when the US featured the "Dream Team" of NBA stars. So much for amateur sports at that level. At least college football remained pure. Except it wasn't. Many star players drove around in fancy cars their families could not afford. For instance, Georgia's quarterback Carson Beck drove around in a Lamborghini, presumably thanks to a wealthy alumnus.

Nowadays, collegians can freely transfer from one school to another and whore themselves out to whatever school pays them the most. Broadcast announcers now speak of players this way: "Running back Jones, now starting for LSU, a transfer from UCLA and before that, Pittsburgh."

Perhaps the announcers could dig a little and change the introduction to "Running back Jones, now starting for LSU after receiving four million dollars …"

Charlie Houston and his wife live on a small, historic horse farm below Waterford. He once hit 165 mph at the Summit Point Racetrack. He didn't crash.

THE LINDEN OPENS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

and wellbeing.

The project also represents a substantial public, private and philanthropic investment.

Loudoun County provided more than $6 million through its Affordable Multi-Family Housing Loan Program. Virginia Housing awarded both 9% and 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, while Truist invested approximately $29 million in tax-credit equity. Additional financing came through Virginia Housing and state housing programs.

Board of Supervisors Chair At-Large Phyllis Randall said Loudoun's commitment to housing can be measured in its investment. When she took office in 2016, she said, the county was putting $1 million into its Housing Trust Fund. Today, she said, that figure is $29 million.

"And you know, the truth is, attainable housing means a lot of things here," Randall said. "It means teachers. It means firefighters. It means wait staff. It means nurses."

"The Northern Virginia area, the Washington metro area, is not an inexpensive area to live in," she continued. "And so, if we're going to actually have anyone who wants to live in the most wonderful county in the country, we have to make sure that we have opportunities for attainable housing."

Supervisor Matt Letourneau (R-Dulles) focused on another part of the equation—the importance of allowing older adults to remain near their families and communities.

"We have a lot of multi-generational families in this part of the county, and really throughout the county," he said.

Having places where seniors can stay in the community or move closer to family, Letourneau said, is important to maintaining a community with different generations.

The Linden is part of a larger community master-planned by Peterson Companies that is expected to include retail, offices and additional housing. A second phase, The Maple, is planned next door in partnership with Gibson Spyre LLC and will add affordable family housing, creating a multigenerational community.

Philanthropy helped make The Linden possible before construction began and will continue playing a role long after the ribbon cutting. The Loudoun Community Cabinet provided early predevelopment funding, while philanthropic contributions support True Ground's resident-services program.

For all the financing, partnerships, programs and years required to bring The Linden from an idea to a home for 130 households, Porreco offered a simpler measure of its impact.

He had been living at The Linden for about six weeks. "Every morning I wake up, I truly look out the window and give gratitude," he said.

For Porreco, after years of looking for affordable housing, that window is finally his own.

For more information, visit www.truegroundhousing.org.

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OPINION: THE MYTH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Instead of building people up, they tear people down. Instead of winning with ideas, they try to win through intimidation and that's not toughness, its fear wearing a mask.

Unfortunately, this problem extends far beyond politics. We see it in business leaders who manage through intimidation instead of inspiration. We see it in coaches who confuse humiliation with discipline. We see it on social media, were anonymous critics mistake cruelty for courage. We even see it in our neighborhoods and around our dinner tables.

Every time we reward that behavior, we teach the next generation the wrong lesson. Children don't become what we tell them to become. They become what they see us celebrate. If we applaud bullies, we shouldn't act shocked when our children decide that's what leadership looks like.

America deserves better. The greatest leaders in our history didn't inspire people by making them afraid. They inspired people by giving them something worth believing in. They built trust instead of fear. They accepted responsibility instead of shifting blame. They made difficult decisions without humiliating everyone around them.

They understood something we've started to forget; real strength doesn't make other people smaller, real strength makes other people stronger. Whether you lead a family, a company, a platoon, a classroom, or a nation, people will remember far less about how powerful you appeared than how you made them feel. Did you give them confidence? Did you earn their trust? Did you make them better, or did you simply make them afraid?

That's the question every leader should ask before speaking, posting, or stepping behind a microphone. America doesn't need louder voices; it needs stronger character. We don't need more self-appointed tough guys, we need more people secure enough to listen, humble enough to admit mistakes, disciplined enough to control their emotions, and courageous enough to put principles ahead of ego.

Politics should challenge ideas—not intimidate people. Leadership should inspire—not bully. Character should command respect—not demand it.

Because in the end, history rarely remembers the loudest voice in the room. It remembers the leader who made everyone else stronger.

That's real toughness. Everything else is just an act.

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.

BOS DELAY GOLDEN SUBSTATION DECISION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

the table with a better design than what we are getting."

Not every supervisor agreed that another delay was justified.

Supervisor Kristen Umstattd (D-Leesburg) asked staff whether postponing the decision until December could jeopardize grid reliability. Staff responded that the county did not have enough information to make that determination, adding that Dominion would likely argue that timing was important, but that staff could not independently evaluate the consequences.

Supervisor Juli Briskman (D-Algonkian) opposed the delay and said she believed the board should deny the application outright. She argued the proposed substation does not fit the county's 2019 General Plan designation for the area and criticized the proposed screening.

"The little bamboo fences that are proposed to screen this massive, electrical metal monster from the W&OD are wholly inadequate," Briskman said.

She also questioned Dominion's timeline arguments, noting that the regional transmission planning work had begun years earlier. "I'm not buying that there's a time crunch," she said. She indicated she would oppose the project again if it returned in December.

Supervisor Matthew Letourneau (R-Dulles) took the opposite position, saying Dominion had pursued possible alternatives and that some of the requested changes were constrained by existing rights of way.

"This is a reliability substation," Letourneau said, arguing that starting over at this stage could create consequences beyond the project itself. He said he had supported the earlier postponement because he wanted a better product, but believed Dominion had since made improvements "to the extent that are physically able."

"I'm not gonna jeopardize my constituents' ability to have refrigeration, because I want to send a message," Letourneau said.

Supervisor Caleb Kershner (R-Catoctin) also opposed further delay. He acknowledged that the design might not be perfect but said a recent power interruption illustrated the importance of maintaining reliability.

"At the end of the day, it is the residents," Kershner said. "We have to look out for the residents first."

He ultimately framed the choice as taking "certainty over the perfect."

Supervisor Michael Turner (D-Ashburn) similarly emphasized the broader grid picture, telling colleagues that the Golden project is one part of a four-substation reliability loop.

"This grid reliability project of these four substations is absolutely essential for overall grid reliability for every single man, woman and child in Loudoun County," Turner said. "Golden is part of that."

Board Chair Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) ultimately sided with the delay. She said meetings with Dominion had produced progress but expressed frustration that the county repeatedly has to push the company for improvements.

"Dominion could have done this already, to be quite honest," Randall said.

At the same time, Randall warned against treating reliability as a secondary issue, noting that residents with medical needs depend on dependable electricity. She said the public message she had heard was not necessarily "deny," but "delay," while giving Dominion another opportunity to improve the design.

The board's 5-4 vote sent the special exceptions to Dec. 1. Saines closed by stressing that the delay would not immediately stop the project or eliminate its other approval requirements.

"They're not gonna be moving dirt tomorrow if this is approved," he said. But he argued that waiting until December would make clear that supervisors expect Dominion to "do better" with its designs.

OPINION: TEAM MAYBERRY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

obscene gestures at public Town Council meetings, daily online attacks, employee terminations, defamation lawsuits, removal actions against elected officials, Purcellville-specific state legislation, and criminal investigations, arrests and prosecutions have all become part of this battle.

The consequences have been substantial: one Town Council member resigned, another declined to seek reelection, and the Vice Mayor and Town Manager were suspended and criminally charged. I believe that those charges are dubious and are among the most troubling examples of how government power has been brought into Purcellville's political disputes. Taken together these actions have given Team Megabucks a powerful advantage.

Yet Team Mayberry has not responded in kind. Despite the attacks and distractions, its members have remained focused on real issues facing Purcellville residents and businesses.

Here is an example of what is at stake. A national grocery chain has expressed interest in developing a property near West Colonial Highway and Main Street that is not currently zoned for its contemplated use. Other suggestions have also included the potential for several large commercial buildings on the site, although no proposal has yet come before the Town Council.

Purcellville already has two grocery stores, and this is one of the town's most heavily traveled areas. Adding several large commercial buildings would bring substantially more traffic to an already congested corridor. Decisions of this magnitude should be discussed openly and publicly before they move any further.

The November election is about more than who sits on the Town Council. It is about the direction Purcellville takes from here.

Purcellville will change, and some properties in town do need redevelopment. Property owners can improve and reinvest in their properties consistent with the Town's zoning and planning rules.

Redevelopment is different from changing those rules to accommodate greater density, larger projects or expansion beyond the Town's boundaries, particularly when developers and property interests seeking those changes are also campaign donors.

Purcellville is not simply a collection of parcels to be exploited for highest financial return. It is a community people choose to call home. The question before voters is whether change will respect Purcellville's small-town character—or gradually replace it.

Once we give away the things that make Purcellville worth calling home, we may discover too late that they cannot be bought back.

Lloyd Harting is a Purcellville resident and a member of the Purcellville Planning Commission.

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