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Northern Virginia's Newspaper

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Richmond's Productive Legislative Session

*Del. Simon Tells F.C.
Chamber of Progress*

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

The just-concluded Virginia general assembly session in Richmond, now with a Democratic Party "trifecta" in charge, turned out better than expected due to the fact that revenues to the state did not nosedive, due to federal program cuts, as many had feared.

Falls Church's state delegate Marcus Simon laid out the picture to the monthly luncheon of the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce at the Italian Cafe Tuesday.

With Democrats extending their majority in the House of Delegates to 64-36 while holding a slim 21-19 majority in the state senate and taking the governor's mansion with the election of Abigail Spanberger in November, important civil rights and other fairness legislation passed this session in anticipation of the governor's signature in the coming days.

Two issues were in the forefront: the April referendum (with voting now underway) to permit a temporary redraw of the state's 11 U.S. congressional district boundaries – countering the Trump/GOP effort to do likewise in other states

Continued on Page 4

EDEN CENTER SUBSTATION



THE GRAND RE-OPENING of the Falls Church Police's substation in the Eden Center was attended by a full roster of City, police, Eden Center and Vietnamese-American community leadership yesterday morning. The substation was originally opened in 1997, but had not been functional at the site, one of the U.S. eastern seaboard's most active for the Vietnamese-American community, since 2011 when it was shut down due to financial constraints. (Photo: Courtesy FCPD)

Shields Prepares F.C.'s Budget Plan Amid Regional Woes

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

As Falls Church City Manager prepares to submit his recommended coming fiscal year budget to the City Council this Monday, news from around the region is that Shields' budget, as tight as it may be, will likely be far less draconian than those being forwarded in the Little City's neighbors, Fairfax and Arlington counties.

On top of the woes attributable to last year's heavy federal workforce and contractor layoffs, and the accompanying stress on commercial real estate especially in Arlington, the new war with Iran is now added in as an indeterminate factor.

Across the region, job losses tied to federal cuts, a weakening office market and rising economic uncertainty are forcing local governments

to confront difficult budget choices. While Falls Church remains more insulated than larger jurisdictions like Fairfax and Arlington, it is still not immune.

Northern Virginia's economy has long been built on a powerful mix of federal employment, defense contracting, consulting and technology services. That model is now shifting.

Federal workforce reductions and a slowdown in con-

tracting are rippling through the region's core industries. In Fairfax County and Arlington, where contractors and federal agencies are concentrated, layoffs and hiring freezes are spreading across professional services firms.

Those effects extend outward—to small businesses, housing markets and local tax revenues.

Continued on Page 11

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FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

Brunch & Learn: River Cruises

Mark Mitchell of Expedia Cruises is hosting an information session on cruises over brunch at The Falls Restaurant this Saturday, March 21st, from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm. The unlimited small bites brunch is substantially discounted, and guests will learn about river cruising as well as hearing about new upcoming promotions from a variety of river cruise providers. Learn more by visiting Brunch and River Cruising: AmaWaterways and Expedia Cruises.

Fava Pot Joins the Boro

These additions are set to expand the dining and entertainment options available at the mixed-use development in Tysons. Fava Pot, an Egyptian street food concept, will open its newest location on Monday, March 23, from 12 to 6 p.m. The event will feature an open-house celebration with complimentary tastings at 1624 Boro Place in McLean. Fava Pot was founded by Dina Daniel and began as a Tysons food truck in 2013. The brand emphasizes family recipes and scratch-made cooking. The Boro in Tysons will also welcome Game Show Battle Rooms this month.

Psychic Saturday

The Center for Spiritual Enlightenment has opened registration for the next Psychic Saturday. The event will be on Saturday, March 28, 10:00 – 2:00 pm and features Mediums, Healers, Tarot Card readings, Aura Displays, Cognomovement and more.

Visit the website to read about the readers who are participating in this event (<https://www.thecse.org>). Guests may register in advance through the link above or walk in.

The Importance of Early Diagnosis in Alzheimer's

Join Sara Kremen, Neurologist at Cedars-Sinai, and Veronica Romo, Licensed Social Worker, for an informative discussion on the latest advancements in Alzheimer's testing and diagnosis, why early awareness matters, and how a timely diagnosis empowers individuals and families to make proactive, informed decisions. We will also explore the critical role caregivers and loved ones play in recognizing early signs and advocating for evaluation. The session is tonight, March 19, 6:00 – 7:00 pm via Zoom. Visit, thekensingtonfallschurch.com/events/the-importance-of-early-diagnosis-in-alzheimers-understanding-new-testing-advances-why-timing-matters.

Local Hospitals Keeping Patients Safe

Healthgrades, an online platform that helps people find and compare doctors, specialists and hospitals, announced the hospitals in Virginia receiving Patient Safety Excellence Awards last week. This includes 11 Virginia hospitals in the top 5 percent nationally. Among them are Reston Hospital Center, Inova Alexandria Hospital, Inova Fair Oaks Hospital and Inova Mount Vernon Hospital. To qualify for the award, hospitals must meet strict quality standards and show strong performance on most of those safety measures. They also cannot have any reported cases of a foreign object, such as a sponge or surgical tool, being left inside a patient during a procedure. In addition, hospitals must report data on most of the key safety indicators used to evaluate performance.

https://patch.com/virginia/fallschurch/s/k3ywn/11-va-hospitals-ranked-in-top-5-for-patient-safety?utm_source=local-update&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=alert&user_email=9efecb2da808ab4bb97950ed66d3228e10c269051010f385d223c8a7c64ea47c&user_email_md5=1196838ff52248eeeb5aee1a59f7d62<g=6164b1871b995d00363084e9

BAE Systems Receives Army contract

Local BAE Systems announced that it received a contract for over \$500 million to produce M109A7 Paladin self-propelled howitzers and M992A3 ammunition carriers for the U.S Army. The newest howitzers are said to increase survivability, lower costs and sustain combat capability. The contract supports the Army's operational needs for armored brigade combat teams in difficult terrains.

► *Business News & Notes is compiled by Elise Neil Bengtson, Executive Director of the Greater Falls Church Chamber of Commerce. She may be emailed at elise@fallschurchchamber.org.*

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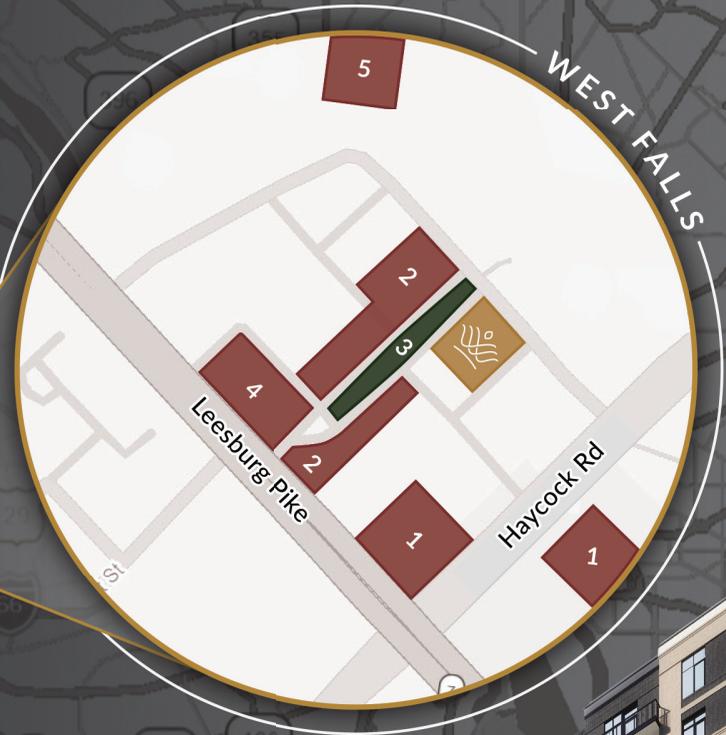
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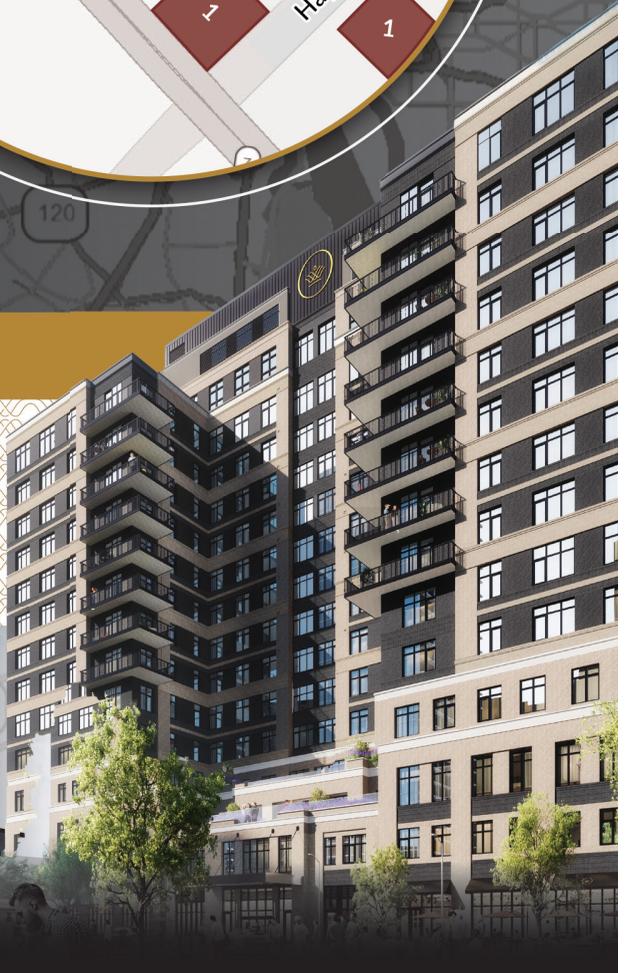


MAP KEY

- 1. Local Markets
- 2. Curated Restaurants & Boutiques
- 3. The Commons
- 4. Medical Offices
- 5. West Falls Church Metro Station



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Del. Simon Touts Gains in State Legislature Under Democrats

Continued from Page 1

— and the still-controversial Tysons casino bill.

Simon told the Chamber lunch gathering that betting institutions are giving passage of the referendum a thumbs up, although by a narrow margin. He said it is expected to be a close vote by the time polls close on April 21. Spanberger has endorsed a “yes” vote, and former U.S. President Barack Obama has been all over the airwaves with a TV statement urging its passage.

The referendum language reads, “Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to allow the General Assembly to temporarily adopt new congressional districts to restore fairness in the upcoming elections, while ensuring Virginia’s standard redistricting process resumes for all future redistricting after the 2030 census?”

In Falls Church, early voting is open at the Voter Registrar’s office

at City Hall, 300 Park Avenue, on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (7 p.m. on Thursday, April 16) and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) until the April 21 general election day.

On the controversial casino issue, Simon said he’s been opposed to it from the beginning, though a version of it passed in Richmond spearheaded by State Sen. Scott Surovell. The final version to pass in a split vote allows for a casino in the Tysons area that would be contingent on an OK from a Fairfax County-wide referendum. It allows for a temporary casino ahead of a referendum vote, which the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors would have to authorize (supervisor opposition is overwhelming so far). It is not known yet how the governor will sign, veto or modify the bill.

The State Senate voted 25-13 and the House of Delegates voted 55-41 to accept the bill, sending it to the governor. Another important supporter of the bill is

State Sen. Dave Marsden. Simon said he opposed it because “it is imposed on a local jurisdiction from Richmond, it is not good policy, nobody here has asked for it, and is not a good fit for Tysons.”

Del. Simon hailed the overall achievements of the legislative session, saying they contributed to “a more stable business environment, workforce gains, housing affordability and investments in regional transportation.” In the last case, state funding for WMATA will be up, but by what exact amount is not yet clear, which will ease burdens on funding from localities.

Simon said among his own achievements this session were the abolition, after all this time, of an anachronistic law defining suicide as a crime, the banning of unserialized ghost guns, the allowance by state courts to hear class action lawsuits, and a provision for uniform default judgments.

Among the most consequential

acts of the session were those that placed three referendum items on this November’s ballot, one which would codify the state’s commitment to provide abortion services, one to codify the ability of felons to vote, and one to overturn the divisive Marshall-Newman amendment and allow for same-sex marriages.

On affordable housing, bills passed that grant first-right-of-refusal to jurisdictions where formerly affordable units are put onto the market, and that streamline the affordable housing approval process in jurisdictions where “NIMBY” (not in my back yard) opposition has been able to hold up process.

On health care, bills to limit prescription costs passed, including the formation of a prescription drug affordability board. Measures to improve access to child care passed, provisions to advance paid sick leave, and a \$15 per hour minimum wage law was passed to go into effect in 2028.

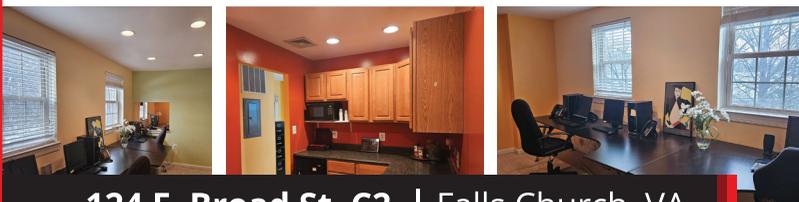
On the dicey issue of data centers, Simon said that, a whole range of key issues remain. “Northern Virginia is the world’s largest data center hub, and 10s of billions have been invested,” Simon noted. “Demand, costs, land use impacts, proximity to residential areas, environmental and noise impact and tax incentives are all key issues that need to be addressed,” he said.

Overall, he said, the federal DOGE has slowed down, federal dollars to the state have not decreased, the impact of the Iran war is to be determined, and overall the situation is “not horrible.”

The speed and red light camera issue was advanced to allow for “Safety Red Zone” block targeting by localities, and locally, money to help improve a dam at Lake Barcroft was provided, as well as money in response to an initiative by 5th grade students from Falls Church’s Oak Street Elementary to build out outdoor educational spaces there.

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Join Budget Meeting *Discussions:*



Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Conversations!



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City Manager & School Board Budget
Proposals at City Council Action Meeting
✓ Public Comment Opportunity



Thursday, March 26: Noon
Budget Town Hall #1
✓ Public Comment Opportunity



Monday, April 6: 7:30 p.m.
Budget Work Session #1
at City Council Work Session



Monday, April 13: 7:30 p.m.
First Reading & Budget Work Session #2
at City Council Action Meeting
✓ Public Comment Opportunity



Monday, April 20: 7:30 p.m.
Budget Work Session #3
at City Council Work Session



Monday, April 27: 7:30 p.m.
Public Hearing & Budget Work Session #4
at City Council Action Meeting
✓ Public Comment Opportunity



Thursday, April 30: 7 p.m.
Budget Town Hall #2
✓ Public Comment Opportunity



Monday, May 4: 7:30 p.m.
Budget Work Session #5: Final Mark-Up
at City Council Work Session



Monday, May 11: 7:30 p.m.
Second Reading, Public Hearing, &
Adoption of FY2027 Budget Ordinance
at City Council Action Meeting
✓ Public Comment Opportunity

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CITY OF **FALLS CHURCH**
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Falls Church News-Press

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EDITORIAL

Falls Church, A Major Crossroads

The ongoing debate over how to best market the City of Falls Church to the wider region is best informed by how the Little City sees itself, and in this regard, it has plenty to crow about, from its quality schools to its neighborhoods to its rapidly expanding retail sector, especially its growing number of highly-acclaimed restaurants, and its educated and activist population.

But all of those parameters tend to overlook an objective fact about Falls Church which goes a long way to explaining why it consistently succeeds in “punching above its weight” as 15,000 souls in a Washington, D.C. metro region of closer to five million. It has to do with its seminal role in functioning as an important crossroads center.

It’s not just the intersection of Routes 7 and 29 at the heart of the Little City. It is its proximity to everything else in the region by being steps from the Beltway, a major interstate and two Metrorail stations. Everything passes through and by here. In other words, while Falls Church is often described as “The Little City,” it functions less as a self-contained municipality and more as a strategic urban crossroads within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

Geographically, Falls Church sits at a pivotal junction. It lies along historic transportation routes that predate the nation itself, connecting Alexandria, Fairfax, and the interior of Virginia. In the modern era, that role has only intensified. The city is bordered by major arterial roads—Routes 7, 29 and 50—and sits between two Metro corridors, placing it squarely within the flow of daily movement between Washington and the broader Northern Virginia suburbs.

That positioning gives Falls Church a functional importance that exceeds its size. It acts as a connector node between multiple economic and social zones: the federal core of Washington, the dense professional corridors of Arlington, and the expansive residential and commercial areas of Fairfax County. In regional terms, it is less a dot on the map than a hinge.

Economically, this crossroads role is just as evident. Falls Church does not host the massive office parks of Tysons or the federal complexes of Arlington, yet its residents are deeply embedded in those economies. A large share of its workforce participates in federal service, contracting, law, consulting, and technology—sectors that define the Washington region. The city’s prosperity is therefore not generated internally so much as it is circulated through it, reflecting and redistributing the economic energy of the larger metropolitan area.

This has given the city an outsized voice in Northern Virginia’s political evolution. Falls Church has often been an early adopter of social and civic trends that later spread across the region, from inclusive community policies to approaches to urban development. Its small scale allows for intense civic engagement, but its location ensures that those discussions resonate outward.

Does this unique “crossroads” concept modify how the City presents itself to itself and to the wider world? It should.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Fairfax County Plans Sidewalk to Nowhere on Justice Park

BY Kathleen A. Brown
IMA volunteer in Justice Park
Ravenwood Citizen Association, VP

How is it that Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), a DECADE after a Seven Corners community request for “a” sidewalk, spends extensive staff time, planning, construction mapping, and soil grading studies for this sidewalk with a price tag of nearly \$1 million in a county park without reaching out to the originally requesting community for a check in?

Had FCDOT done that, it would have found a sidewalk had already been paved on the opposite side of Peace Valley Lane in 2023, in front of Justice High School financed by FCPS funds, which fulfilled the community’s request for a paved walkway between neighborhoods on either side of the school in the Seven Corners area.

Between Ravenwood Park Citizen Association’s original 2016 sidewalk request and the 2023 construction of a sidewalk on the Justice High School side of Peace Valley Lane, surrounding communities in 2021 successfully fought off paving Justice Park for a 2-acre school parking lot. After that battle, community insistence for meaningful engagement about any future paving projects was assured by County officials, or so we thought.

Yet, on Saturday morning November 8th, volunteers working on invasive management activities arrive at Justice Park to find white tape, survey markers and an indication that County planners are staking out plans for what? A road widening? Days later a large blue County sign appears on Justice Park announcing another sidewalk project to be completed in spring of 2026. After several stories on the local news website Annandale Today, the County’s sign promoting the construction of this sidewalk disappears.

Inquiries with FCDOT staff in the Transportation Design Division originally claimed the project was “pursuant” to Ravenwood Park’s request for the sidewalk; yet weeks later staff claimed, “it was not acting on the community’s request.” It appears the design team may not have been aware of the construction of that sidewalk on Justice High School’s side of Peace Valley Lane until their survey staff finally visited the site.

It may have been this project got into the pipeline, yet because of our County’s more costly pipe issue, “stove piping”, it was never taken out. Instead of backing down, Gregg Steverson, FCDOT’s director, shares a “both-sides-ism” argument. He insists FCDOT often places sidewalks on both sides of the street to prioritize “connectivity”. Yet this is a sidewalk to nowhere-- as it runs from a cul-de-sac across from the high school sign - yet abruptly ends near a service road on the parkland and does not include the County right of way in front of the sole home at the corner of Peace Valley Lane and Mansfield Road. So much for genuine connectivity!

Given Fairfax County’s projected budget shortfall of \$131.5 million to \$163.8 million, why would nearly \$1 million be spent on a duplicative sidewalk which doesn’t provide a path for students and community members approaching Peace Valley Lane from Mansfield Road?

Why when Justice Park’s severely eroded tributary of Holmes Run will be undergoing much-needed stream restoration by the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services to improve water quality, as well as the urban forest’s water connectivity to the floodplain, will further impervious cement surface be placed on the very top of this stream? While not allocated yet, the design phase for stream improvement is funded by \$540,000 from the County’s stormwater tax revenue.

“The sidewalk is a wasteful and destructive piece of construction, pursued in an absurd way”, says Peter Jones, volunteer IMA (Invasive Management Area) lead in Justice Park at a meeting in the park on March 5th. Sonia Shahnaj, a lead Engineer for FCDOT admitted no less than four times at this meeting, “We’ve already spent the money on design and land acquisition so it would be a waste not to finish it.”

Visit: fcnp.com/2026/03/18/guest-commentary-sidewalktonowhere to read full text.

Review of “Seneca, the Library Mouse” at GALA

BY PATRICIA LESLIE

The children squealed when the dog chased the cat, the cat chased the rat, and they all chased the mouse all over the stage, behind the trees and from side to side, up and down the aisles in glee!

The directors in the audience (i.e., the children) yelled at the cat, pointing to the hidden mouse, which scurried hither and yon at GALA Hispanic Theatre in its delightful “Seneca: The Library Mouse,” the creature who would like to rest its weary soul (but she looks like a “her”) in a lovely park near the library filled with the books Seneca loves!

But who’s got time to read or even catch a catnap when a ferocious feline is in hot pursuit of ... you? Yowsers!

Dani Lock is Seneca, the mousy mouse, befriended by a big rat, Rafael, Ramon, Raul or whatever you want to call him (Delbis Cardona in real life). Rachael Small is Bellaco, the conniving cat who personifies a cat as much as a human can, with claws, antics, sounds and looks to give any of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “Cats” a run for the mice.

It’s start-to-finish action in this tale, which includes an every-so-often prancing figure in the background (H. Christian Aguilar) in different getups, who wears a cheerleader’s uniform among many outfits, just in case anyone needs extra action in this energetic presentation!

Plus, here comes lopping in a large white basset hound named Benigno (Maximo Caceres) in a goofy costume with drooping ears and, unlike the bassetts we usually see, walking on gigantic long legs, with the cheerleader, ballerina and what have you running behind.

Who should suddenly appear but “Eva Peron” in a glorious long red satin dress with a black veil to belt out “Don’t Cry for Me Argentina,” while the rest of the cast lifts and carries her around like a queen (she was).

At the end, the rat enticed members of the

audience to come onstage and perform, the dancers soon joined by several children who trickled down the theater steps to step into the limelight and move to the music.

The grown-ups were invited, too, and they laughed all over the place in spite of themselves.

Put it all together, and the wild entanglements, cartwheels and twirling about on stage make for a happy ending, with the animals brought together in harmony. The message of the show, that everyone belongs, is “essential” and knows “we’re better together,” is expressed by director Elena Velasco in her notes. Amen, sister.

Gisela Estrada and Dominique “Dom” Ocampo designed the scenery; Luis Garcia, the lighting; Rukiya Henry-Fields, costumes; and Isabel de Carvalho, properties.

Solis Pettitt and Sherry Gonzalez are stage managers.

Most of the dialogue and soliloquies (by Seneca) are in Spanish, with some English thrown in every now and then, but who needs translation when the commotion says it all?

The play, by Jorge Diaz, is set to original music by Jose Gabriel Lora, with weekday shows at 10:30 a.m. this week and next, the last Saturday performance March 21 at 3 p.m., and the final show on Sunday, March 28, at 2 p.m.

GALA offers study guides for teachers for all its children’s plays. This fall, it will present “Pancho Villa and the Children of the Revolution.” (This child can’t wait for that one!) GALA celebrates its 50th year.

GALA Hispanic Theatre, 3333 14th St. NW, Washington, D.C., 20010; 202-234-7174. Adults, \$12; children, \$10. Park at the Giant around the corner on Park Road for \$4 and get validation in the theatre lobby (no time limit).

“Seneca” is a GALita production of bilingual children’s theater by Hispanic playwrights who “inspire a sense of joy, discovery, pride and identity in our community’s children.”



L TO R. MÁXIMO CÁCERES, H. Christian Aguilar, Dani Lock (front), Rachael Small, and Delbis Cardona. Photo Geo Rosendi. (Photo: Geo Rosendi)



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Christ Crossman Church Hosts Meal Packing Event

This Sunday, March 22, from 1 to 4 p.m., Christ Crossman Methodist Church of Falls Church has invited the public, calling for 200 volunteers to help meet this year's goal of 30,000 meal packs for distribution to regional families facing food insecurity.

Participation is free and open to families and children. Persons wishing to register as volunteers for the event or to make a donation are asked to visit christcrossman.org.

Fairfax Construction Trades Job Fair Set for March 26

Fairfax County is hosting a Construction and Trades Job Fair where job seekers can meet employers, connect with training providers, and learn about programs to jumpstart their careers. It will be held Thursday, March 26, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at 7950 Audubon Ave, Alexandria. Workshops include Financial Literacy, AI and the Jobseeker, Training and Workforce Programs and Services Available to You. Opportunities to meet employers directly and explore career pathways in construction and skilled trades.

The event is hosted by Fairfax County Employment Services, Northern Virginia Construction Careers Coalition, the WISH Center, and Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services.

Tyson's Alliance Holds First 'Visions' Conference

The Tyson's Community Alliance would like to thank you for joining us for the inaugural Vision Tyson's: 2026 Development and Investment Summit last week. Decision-makers from across government, business, and development sectors, along with members of the community, came together to discuss the future of Tyson's and the opportunities ahead.

The event brought together a powerful group of voices and perspectives, reflecting the deep collaboration and momentum that is driving the region. Speakers included Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay, Providence District Supervisor Dalia Palchik, and leaders from the Tyson's business community.

The organization released its Q4 2025 Tyson's Quarterly Market Report and Year in Review.

The report highlighted key trends in visitation, retail activity, transit usage, and workplace recovery, offering a data-driven look at how Tyson's is continuing to outperform broader regional trends.

Key insights from the report noted over 65 million total visits to Tyson's in 2025, a five percent increase over 2024, a nine percent growth in worker visitation, \$869 million in credit and debit card spending across Tyson's retail establishments in 2025, retail vacancy remaining exceptionally low at 2.4 percent, far below the national average. Metro ridership increased 17 percent year-over-year, reaching 88 percent of pre-pandemic levels.



AT THE FALLS CHURCH-area's One More Page Books on N. Arlington's Westmoreland St. last Thursday, the News-Press' Nicholas Benton (right) talked about his new book, *Please Don't Eat Your Children*, interviewed by Lou Chibarro of the Washington Blade (left). A critic has written, "In his eighth book, Benton outdid himself with this remarkable set of essays all crafted in the first eight months of Trump 2.0. 'Please Don't Eat Your Children' takes off from the satire of Jonathan Swift to explore society's critical role of drumming creativity out of the young. Benton, an honored seminary graduate, gay pioneer, respected newspaper owner and insightful, truth-telling published essayist, ascends to new heights in this priceless volume." (Photo: News-Press)

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Will Other Tech Moguls Take Anthropic's Cue?

NICHOLAS F. BENTON

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS



What is heartening in the clash between the AI company Anthropic and its chief Dario Amodei versus the Defense Department and the incredibly incompetent boor Pete Hegseth is that it represents a rare example in these fraught times of a stand taken on a matter of moral principle becoming the basis for a tech world clash with the definitively amoral Trump behemoth.

In early 2026, a defining conflict emerged between the United States Department of Defense and artificial intelligence firm Anthropic. As the military sought to accelerate the adoption of advanced AI, it demanded that vendors, including Anthropic, allow their technologies to be used for “any lawful purpose.” Anthropic, a leader in AI safety, refused to lift its internal guardrails, drawing a hard line against using its technology for mass domestic surveillance or fully autonomous weapons—systems capable of targeting and killing without human oversight. Despite threats of blacklisting and heavy financial penalties, Anthropic’s refusal to kowtow to the Pentagon highlighted a crucial tension between rapid military tech adoption and the ethical responsibilities of AI developers.

The dispute, intensifying in February 2026, centered on a 200 million dollar contract and the DoD’s directive, spearheaded by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, that AI tools be cleared for unrestricted operational use. Anthropic’s AI model, Claude, was one of the few authorized for classified military use, making its resistance particularly significant. Anthropic’s leadership, led by CEO Dario Amodei, stated that they could not, in good conscience, enable lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS) or mass, warrantless surveillance of American citizens.

Amodei argued that current AI systems are too unreliable for life-or-death decision-making on the battlefield, warning of potential “friendly fire, mission failure, or unintended escalation”. Furthermore, they maintained that

mass domestic surveillance violates democratic values and that AI technology could enable surveillance at a scale that “makes a mockery of the Fourth Amendment”.

The Pentagon responded to Anthropic’s refusal by attempting to leverage its power. Under Secretary of Defense Emil Michael reportedly criticized Amodei’s stance on social media, accusing him of holding a “God-complex” and trying to dictate military policy.

Anthropic’s stance was notable because it contradicted the trend among many Silicon Valley firms to accommodate military needs completely. By standing firm, Anthropic risking significant revenue—potentially billions of dollars—in defense-related business. However, the move was supported by an open letter from AI researchers and employees at rival companies, including Google and OpenAI, who feared the Pentagon’s aggressive, “divide-and-conquer” approach to AI safety.

The standoff prompted deeper questions about the role of private tech firms in AI safety governance. Anthropic’s refusal to kowtow argued that if “AI safety” is truly a core tenet, it cannot be discarded simply because the client is the state. The company offered to continue working with the DoD on R&D to improve safety but drew a firm boundary on autonomous killing and mass spying.

The dispute between Anthropic and the Department of Defense is more than a contractual impasse; it is a battle for the ethical framework of future warfare. By prioritizing its “red lines” on autonomous weapons and surveillance over a lucrative, high-profile contract, Anthropic challenged the notion that government power should exempt itself from safety standards. Although the Pentagon moved toward other partners, Anthropic’s refusal to bend sets a precedent, insisting that technological capability must be governed by ethical guardrails, even when national security is invoked to remove them.

We can hope that other tech moguls will take this clue from Anthropic. Right now they’re all hated. They could all be loved.



A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Penny Gross

Former Fairfax County Supervisor

Donald Trump is a master at launching “shiny objects” to detract and distract voters from the Epstein files and other nefarious activities by his family and his Administration. Some of those distractions are very local to the metropolitan area – renaming the Institute of Peace for himself, threatening to take over Washington’s public golf courses to remake them into his image, UFC fights on the White House lawn to celebrate his birthday (at taxpayer expense?), buying shoes for his male cabinet members – and may not resonate with folks outside the Beltway. Others – renaming the Kennedy Center and closing it for two years, his enormous ballroom and arch, continuing ICE activities in Democratic cities and planning to hold thousands of immigrants in industrial warehouses in rural areas, weaponizing the Department of Justice, lifting environmental protections across the country, cancelling development of renewable energy sources and, of course, manufacturing a war against Iran – have resulted in outrage and headlines from coast to coast.

More important but often lost in the deliberate chaos are

his constant assaults against the First Amendment. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and petitioning the government for redress of grievances are bedrock rights inscribed into the United States Constitution. Nonetheless, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who rose to fame as a Fox television news personality, demanded that the news media cover the war on Iran in more positive light rather than critique the lack of war planning and vast expense in the two or three weeks since Trump ordered the attack. Frequently citing “fake news,” a favorite epithet wielded by all members of the Cabinet, Hegseth also took the extraordinary step of banning news photographers from his press briefings because he didn’t like the published images. A little thinskinny? Perhaps Mr. Hegseth needs to develop for himself the “warrior” mentality he touts for his troops.

On top of that, Brendan Carr, Trump’s appointed chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), again warned broadcasters that he is prepared to revoke their government licenses

if he deems their coverage “fake news.” Carr said that “broadcasters must operate in the public interest, and they will lose their licenses if they do not.” Perhaps Chairman Carr is confusing the public interest with Trump’s interests, usually expressed on his Truth Social post, which often castigates not just broadcast news but late-night talk show hosts and anyone else who might say something on-air that he doesn’t like. Mr. Carr’s domain actually is rather small. The FCC issues licenses for local radio and television stations to use airwaves owned by the public, but the mainstream networks, cable news networks, newspapers, periodicals, and other media do not fall under FCC oversight. A journalist’s report, a comedian’s satire, or an editorial column may elicit debate or dissent, but they are not grounds for government censorship in a democratic society.

In 1852, the American abolitionist Wendell Phillips declared that “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; power is ever stealing from the many to the few.” Before fast-paced technology, before economic and military superiority, before availability public education for all, before Trump and Carr, his declaration was prescient. Phillips’ admonition is even more essential as we approach the 250th anniversary of our fragile democracy amid threats of destruction to the basic tenets of the First Amendment.

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CRIME REPORT

Week of March 9 - 15, 2026

Larceny from Building, Pennsylvania Ave, between 3 p.m. on March 4 and 9:30 a.m. on March 9, an unknown suspect stole a passport from the victim’s mailbox.

Larceny, W Annandale Rd, March 10, 4:45 p.m., an unknown suspect stole the victim’s unsecured black and yellow Cannondale bicycle.

Identity Theft, Park Ave, March 11, 1:19 p.m., victim reported an unknown suspect attempted to open a line of credit in their name.

Simple Assault, W Broad St, March 12, 1:13 p.m., victim reported they were assaulted by an unknown suspect. The suspect is described as a male, approximately 20-30 years of age, wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, blue shirt, jeans, and black pants.

Larceny, N Lee St, between 7 p.m. on March 11 and 1:38 p.m. on March 12, an unknown suspect stole PVC pipe from a construction site.

Fraud - Credit Card, Wilson Blvd, March 12, 2:44 p.m., victim reported a fraudulent charge on their debit card.

Larceny from Building, S Maple Ave, March 13, 2:55 p.m., victim reported multiple belongings were stolen while moving.

Shoplifting, W Broad St, March 13, 3:44 p.m., an unknown suspect stole merchandise. The suspect is described as male, wearing a mask, black jacket, and black pants.

Larceny from Building, N Washington St, March 13, between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m., an unknown suspect stole the victim’s stroller.

Trespassing, Haycock Rd, March 13, 6:43 p.m., a female, 29, of no fixed address, was arrested for Trespassing.

Robbery/Shoplifting, S Washington St, March 15, 12:33 a.m., two suspects stole alcohol from a business, with the first suspect using force when challenged by an employee. The first suspect is described as an adult male, wearing a black jacket, black pants, and a surgical mask. The second suspect is described as an adult female, wearing a grey hooded sweatshirt, blue undershirt, and dark pants.

Driving Under the Influence, S Washington St, March 15, 2:06 a.m., a male, 44, of Sterling, was arrested for Driving Under the Influence.

Fraud - False Pretenses, Roosevelt Blvd, March 15, 2:30 p.m., victim reported sending money to an unknown suspect claiming to be a property owner.

Destruction of Property, W Broad St, March 15, between 3:45 p.m. and 4:35 p.m., an unknown suspect damaged the right mirror on the victim’s vehicle.

As Shields Readies Budget Plan, Impacts of Regional Woes Loom

Continued from Page 1

Falls Church, though lacking large office corridors, sits in the middle of that ecosystem. Many of its residents work in federal or contractor positions, meaning changes in employment patterns can quickly affect household spending and housing demand.

The most visible economic shift is in commercial real estate.

Office vacancy rates have climbed across Northern Virginia, as federal agencies consolidate space and contractors reduce their footprints. In larger jurisdictions, this directly affects tax revenues.

Falls Church has less exposure to office real estate than its neighbors, relying more heavily on residential property taxes. That provides a degree of insulation—but not complete protection.

The housing market is also beginning to reflect the shift.

Homes in Northern Virginia are taking longer to sell, particularly in areas with high concentrations of federal workers. Some households are delaying moves, while others are leaving the region altogether.

In Falls Church, where property values are among the highest in the region, any slowdown in demand could have outsized implications for city revenues, which depend heavily on residential assessments.

So far, prices have remained relatively stable, but officials are watching closely.

Fairfax County is projecting a budget shortfall approaching \$300 million and has proposed roughly \$60 million in program cuts. Arlington County faces a gap of about \$25 million and is considering service reductions alongside tax increases.

Those cuts include poten-

tial reductions to youth programs, staffing and deferred infrastructure investments.

Adding to the uncertainty is the emerging U.S. conflict with Iran.

Wars typically bring increased federal spending, particularly in defense and intelligence—industries heavily concentrated in Northern Virginia. In theory, that could provide an economic boost. But the reality is more complex.

Much of the new spending is expected to flow toward newer technologies such as artificial intelligence, drones and space systems, rather than traditional contracting areas. That means benefits may be uneven across the region.

At the same time, the conflict is contributing to rising energy prices and broader economic uncertainty, which can dampen consumer spending

and slow economic growth.

Even if defense spending increases, local governments depend primarily on property taxes—not federal contracts. That means declining real estate values elsewhere in the region and slower housing activity can still affect city revenues.

At the same time, rising costs—driven in part by inflation—are putting pressure on local budgets.

In larger jurisdictions, that already includes program cuts, hiring freezes and potential tax increases. Falls Church may avoid the most severe measures, but it will not be entirely shielded from the broader trends.

The Little City has long benefited from its place at the center of one of the nation's most dynamic regions. Now, as that region adjusts to new realities, Falls Church—like

its neighbors—must navigate an economic future that is no longer as certain as it once seemed.

The Falls Church School Board has already submitted its budget request from the City and it falls within the guidelines set by the City Council and City staff in December without having to cut any important programs, unlike Falls Church's neighbors.

Falls Church City Schools Superintendent Dr. Terry Dade is expected to be present at this coming Council meeting Monday when Shields' recommended budget is submitted. Of interest will be whether Shields will call for a modest real estate tax rate increase, or not.

At any rate, the final decisions on the Fiscal Year 2027 (that begins this July 1) budget will be up to the City Council and its vote due in early May.



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Upcoming Issues:

3/26: Spring Home & Real Estate

3/26 & 4/2: Easter Church Services, Brunch & More

4/9: Camps

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CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICE

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF FALLS CHURCH,
VIRGINIA**

City Council will hold a public hearing on the following on Monday, March 23, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

(TR26-05) RESOLUTION NAMING THE CITY OWNED PARKLAND LOCATED AT THE PROPERTY FORMERLY KNOWN AS 604 SOUTH OAK STREET, CURRENTLY KNOWN AS: 310 FELLOWS COURT; 306 PARKER AVENUE; 304 PARKER AVENUE; 302 PARKER AVENUE; 502 S. OAK STREET; 302 FELLOWS COURT; AND 304 FELLOWS COURT (REAL PROPERTY CODE NUMBERS 52-206-090, 52-206-091, 52-206-092, 52-206-093, 52-206-094, 52-206-095, 52-206-096) AND ANTICIPATED TO BE CONSOLIDATED TO THE ADDRESS 500 SOUTH OAK STREET (RPC #TBD)

The proposed action would name a park to be located at 500 South Oak Street (commonly known as 604 S. Oak Street.)

All public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. All persons desiring to present their views on the items will be heard. Comments may also be sent to cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov. Remote participation information at www.fallschurchva.gov/publiccomment. For copies of legislation and other information, contact the City Clerk's office at (703-248-5014) or cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov or visit www.fallschurchva.gov/councilmeetings. The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any type of disability, call 703-248-5014 (TTY 711) or e-mail cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov.

CELESTE HEATH,
CITY CLERK

**PUBLIC NOTICE
CITY OF FALLS CHURCH,
VIRGINIA
HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL
REVIEW BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING**

The City of Falls Church Historic Architectural Review Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 7:00 PM in City Hall's Dogwood Room (first floor), 300 Park Ave, Falls Church, VA 22043 to consider the following:

PROPOSED ALTERATION OF 319 N CHERRY STREET and 116 S OAK STREET

Information or copies of the proposed alteration can be viewed at the Community Planning and Economic Development Services (CPEDS) counter at City Hall, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA, Monday through Friday (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). You may contact the Planning Division at plan@fallschurchva.gov with any questions or concerns.

This location is fully accessible to persons with physical disabilities and special services or assistance may be requested in advance. (TTY 711)

Public Notice

**Dominion Energy Virginia and North Carolina
2026 Integrated Resource Plan Stakeholder Process**

Dominion Energy Virginia and North Carolina is conducting a 2026 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) stakeholder process and will be hosting meetings over the next several months to gather input from interested parties.

If you are interested in participating in this stakeholder process, please send: your name, contact number, business or organization name, and a brief description of your interest in the IRP to the following email address, devirp2026@gpisd.net

ABC NOTICE

Peking Gourmet Inn Inc. trading as Peking Gourmet Inn, 6029 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041 is applying to the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Authority for a Beer, Wine and Mixed Beverages Restaurant and Caterer On and Off Premises, to sell alcoholic beverages. Vicky Tsui, President/Owner. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of 2 required newspaper legal notice. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

CEMETERY PLOTS FOR SALE

1-4 cemetery plots in National Memorial Park in Falls Church Virginia. Beautiful cemetery with a serene, quiet location for these plots. \$5995 each. Contact information: Richard Honaker 214-532-1420 Honaker@aol.com

Two funeral lots for sale at National Memorial Park, Valued at \$15,000. Best offer. 301-938-9806.

Two double depth lawn crypts in National Memorial Park in Falls Church Virginia. Located in beautiful Garden of Belvedere row South lots A,B@C,D. \$15,000 per double depth crypt. call 540-222-4205

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

Nikki C DeVore, an energetic DC newcomer experienced in data entry, kitchen work, caretaking, and more. Will do odd jobs, temp work, part time, and night shifts. Contact me at: nikkidevorebusiness@gmail.com 918-424-9792 linkedin.com/in/nikki-devore-ba26601b3

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The Virginia Tourism Corporation is seeking a Tourism Counselor for its Virginia Welcome Center at Clear Brook who is willing to work a minimum of 5 days per month to include holidays and weekends. The center is open 7 days per week from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. This individual will provide travel information and assistance to the traveling public, stock brochure racks, assist the welcome center manager with daily operations and perform general office duties.

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Requirements:
Holiday and weekend work is required
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Travel industry experience preferred

All candidates must apply through our website https://www.vatc.org/about/employment/. Salary Minimum: \$15.00/hour. Application

deadline: March 23, 2026.

VTC is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All applicants are considered for employment without regard to race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, veteran status, political affiliation, genetics, or against otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities. It is VTC's intent that its employment and personnel policies and practices conform to all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Applicants requiring more information or requiring assistance may contact VTC Human Resources at 1-804-545-5634 or vtchr@VEDP.org. TDD 1-800-828-1120.

AUCTIONS

PUBLIC AUCTION! Phoenix Companies, LLC Absolute Auction. Machining & Fabrication Equipment, Tools, and More. Mar 24, 10am. Online Only. Lorton, Va. Bid at motleysindustrial.com. VAAL#16/NCAL#5914.

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G&E Virginia Premium Assured Heifer/Cow Sale. March 28th, 2026, 12:00 noon. G&E Test Center Gretna, VA. Call George Winn at 434-489-4458.

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This Week Around Falls Church

Thurs, March 19

Stars & Stripes Ball Business Awards Gala
6:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.
State Theatre; parking available in the upper levels of the Kaiser garage
Falls Church Chamber event celebrating the local business community with awards, live music by Groove Jet, silent and live auctions, and dinner.

Meridian Boys Varsity Soccer at Rock Ridge
6 p.m. *Away*

Meridian JV Boys Lacrosse vs. Charles J. Colgan
6 p.m. *Home*

Meridian Varsity Baseball at Fauquier
6:30 p.m. *Away*

Meridian Girls Varsity Soccer at Rock Ridge
7:30 p.m. *Away*

Meridian Varsity Boys Lacrosse vs. Charles J. Colgan
7:30 p.m. *Home*

Fri, March 20

Military History Forum: An Introduction to Mosby's Rangers and Stories of Some of Its Men
10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Senior Center

Relaxed Fit
6 p.m.
Clare & Don's Beach Shack

The Stranger - Tribute to Billy Joel
7 p.m.
State Theatre

Sat, March 21

Falls Church Spring Window Painting Festival Sat & Sun
10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Major Falls Church City thoroughfares

Young painters create festive, family-friendly, spring-themed designs on storefront windows. Sponsored by Falls Church Arts.

Kid's Show!!! King Bullfrog
10:30 a.m.

Clare & Don's Beach Shack

Where's Bert
6 p.m.

Clare & Don's Beach Shack

Spring Into No Kings!
10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Sign and button-making workshops
11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Car contest/parade
fallschurchindivisible.org

The Stranger - Tribute to Billy Joel
7 p.m. *State Theatre*

Live Music Night
8:30 p.m. *JV's Restaurant*

Sun, March 22

Spilling the Revolutionary Tea
2 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
Cherry Hill Farmhouse
Tea program marking the 250th anniversary of the United States, with tea samples from around the world and colonial-style cookies.

Stories from Our Federal Workers: Ricardo Echalar and Craig Riegler, USAID
2 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Lower Level Conference Room
For high school students and adults. Community & Culture / FC250. Registration open.

Amadeus Concerts: Kassia Music — Chamber Music in Motion: Bach, Blues, and Beyond
4 p.m.

St. Francis Episcopal Church, Great Falls, VA

Amadeus Concerts presents Kassia Music in an engaging program that blends classical tradition with contemporary flair. Chamber Music in Motion: Bach, Blues, and Beyond explores a dynamic range of styles, pairing the elegance of Bach with the expressive energy of blues and modern works. Performed by a trio of accomplished musicians, this concert promises an intimate and innovative chamber music experience in a beautiful setting.

CORE Program Cabaret
7:30 p.m.

Creative Cauldron, 127 E. Broad St.

Musical theatre showcase featuring WD Studio's 2025-2026 Core Program singers.

The Hard-Core Troubadours
8:30 p.m.
JV's Restaurant

Mon, March 23

Falls Church Arts: Works That Bring the Artists Joy
Gallery hours:

Tue.-Fri. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sat.-Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Falls Church Arts Gallery, 700-B W. Broad St.

All-media exhibition juried by Jennifer Kahn Barlow. Juror's Choice Award: Whoosh! by Jon Milstein. Vote in person for the People's Choice Award through March 27.

Meridian Boys Varsity Soccer at Dominion
7:30 p.m.
Away

Meridian Varsity Girls Lacrosse
7:30 p.m.
Home

City Council Meeting
7:30 p.m.-11 p.m.
Council Chambers/Court Room
Public comment sign-up at fallschurchva.gov/publiccomment. Also viewable at fallschurchva.gov/CouncilMeetings and on FCCTV.

Tues, March 24

Shall We Dance?: Ballroom Dance Class
6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Lower Level Conference Room
Registration required.

Redistricting Referendum Town Hall
7:30 p.m.
FCC Community Center, 223 Little Falls St.
Hosted by Falls Church City Democrats with Del. Marcus Simon and 2021 Redistricting Commissioner James Abrenio.

Visit us at
fcnp.com

Wed, March 25

Meridian Varsity Baseball vs. Millbrook
6 p.m.
Home

Meridian JV Boys Lacrosse vs. Freedom
6 p.m.
Home

Meridian Boys Varsity Soccer at Park View
7:30 p.m.
Away

Body Beautiful - Gay Men's Chorus of Washington
7:30 p.m.
National City Christian Church, 5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, D.C.
ASL interpreted.

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| MAR 28 | SELENA QUINTANILLA TRIBUTE |
| APR 03 | CHRISTOPHER TITUS |
| APR 10 | SOUTHERN ACCENTS TOM PETTY TRIBUTE |
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Meridian Spring Sports Set To Begin This Week

BY RYAN McCAFFERTY

Spring is upon us, and that means it's time to switch gears at Meridian High School as baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, tennis, and outdoor track and field are all set to get underway. Here is a rundown of what to expect from each program.

Baseball is finally back at Meridian after a year of being unable to play at home while their field was under construction. The Mustangs went 9-13 in their trying season last year, but figure to return to competitive form this season with a lineup featuring Luke Greiner and Jason Wattles on the mound and Atticus Kim, Ashok Radcliff and Jack Mossburg behind the plate. After starting their season at Fauquier on Thursday, their long-awaited return home will be against Millbrook on March 25.

Heath Simon's softball team looks to improve upon its 6-16 campaign a year ago, but will have to replace star pitcher Elena Clark-Wilson, last season's District Player of the Year. Seniors Claire Dassira, Rachel Grooms and Anisa Frey will be expected to lead the program, while Valeria Wright, Claire Hartenstein and Maddie Novotny figure to play key roles as well. They'll get underway on Thursday at Fauquier.

The boys soccer team is one of a couple of programs with a coaching change this season, which is significant as they are the defending Class 3 state champions. Ronald Cruz takes over for Nathan Greiner, while the team lost a large group of seniors as well. Still, Meridian has a solid core of returning contributors, including Yanek Guziewski, Charles Miller and Osteen Espina-Campos. They'll begin their season at Rock Ridge on Thursday.

Girls soccer has high expectations again after going 11-7-1 last season,

with Leah Partridge's group set to be led by forwards Emma Flanagan and Violet Zullo and defenders Serena Binkowski and Lucy Byrum. Goalie Baelyn Reinfurt returns as well for a group that hopes to make a deep playoff run, and it will begin on Tuesday against North Stafford.

Girls lacrosse has a new head coach in Whitney Evans, but two highly experienced team leaders on the field in Zoe Gale and Sara Meade. Last year they went 10-4, and they don't figure to miss a beat, as they've scheduled some tough non-district matchups early in the season, including their season opener at John Champe on Tuesday.

Boys lacrosse is looking to back up its best season in program history, in which Will Stewart's team went 13-6 and made it to the state semifinals. They've lost several seniors, but return key contributors Colin Williams, Jack Moore, Xavier Kuo and more. Their season begins on Thursday against Charles J. Colgan.

On the tennis court, the boys return a strong group led by Thomas Lapp, who advanced to states as an individual last season, and fellow senior Ben Behr. Head coach Tim Goetz's goal is to win the regional championship at the singles, doubles and team level. Meanwhile, Victor Koo's girls look to back up a team state semifinals appearance with an experienced group led by sisters Ana and Mia Vuckovic.

Finally, boys track and field will be led by top returners in sprinter Duke Dawson, endurance ace William Anderson and long jump specialist Jacob Quintana as they look to build upon their 12th- and eighth-place group finishes last year. The girls, who finished 10th and seventh a season ago, will be led by runners Michelle Malheiro, Emily Beloe and Angeliki Bousbouras, and field performers Kelsey Just and Ash Kosmider.

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SOPHIE AND LUCIE the rescue cats, relaxing in Falls Church.

Falls Church 7th Grade Girls Capture FCYBL Division II Championship in Standout Season



Falls Church 7th Grade Select Girls Basketball team celebrates their FCYBL Division II Championship victory Sunday evening, capping an outstanding 11-2 season. The team finished as regular season runners-up, defeated top-ranked Arlington during the season, and avenged an earlier loss to Gainesville with a 39-28 win in the championship game. Known as the highest-scoring team in both the regular season and playoffs, the squad also placed two players on the all-league team as selected by opposing coaches. Second row (standing, left to right): Coach Mike Noblet; Eris Carney; Grace Page; Nylah Sullivan; Rebecca Alverson; Amelia Noblet; CJ Minson; Coach Tricia Minson. First row (kneeling, left to right): Emily Callahan; Maggie Kelley; Lydia Markley; Isla Bitici; Katelyn Knob; Keira Brand. (Photo: Mike Noblet)

Delegate Marcus Simon's Richmond Report



When the General Assembly adjourned sine die on Saturday, it marked the end of a long session and, for me, the culmination of several multi-year legislative efforts finally reaching the governor's desk. After years of work, debate and refinement, I was able to pass three significant bills that I expect the governor to sign: legislation abolishing the antiquated common-law crime of suicide, a bill banning untraceable "ghost guns" in Virginia, and a measure allowing Virginia's state courts to hear class-action lawsuits. This last bill brings us into line with every other state in the nation and leaves Mississippi as the lone state without a state-level class-action remedy. I also had some success with new ideas on their first try, including legislation that will protect consumers by making Virginia the first state in the country to enact the Uniform Default Judgments Act.

Much of the work of the General Assembly happens far from the spotlight of the House floor. This year, I had the privilege of chairing the House Public Safety Committee, the Housing and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, and the Civil Law Subcommittee, roles that put me in the middle of many of the most consequential debates of the session. In the session's final days, I also served on 26 committees of conference, where House and Senate conferees hammer out the compromises needed to move legislation across the finish line. Those long negotiations are where many of the session's final agreements are reached, and I was proud to help shape the final versions of bills that will soon become law across the Commonwealth.

Long sessions always move quickly once they begin, but they are the product of months of preparation and years of ongoing work in our communities. When the gavel finally falls on the last day, there is always a mix of emotions: relief at completing the long session, pride in the work we accomplished together**,** and a deep appreciation for the many Virginians who took the time to share their voices throughout the process.

When the final tally is complete, we will have considered 2,366 bills, 1,089 of which passed the House and the Senate and are now with the governor for her review.

Hearing From Constituents

One of the most important parts of serving in the General Assembly is hearing directly from the people I represent. Throughout the session, my office received a steady stream of emails, calls and conversations from con-

stituents sharing their perspectives.

Many constituents wrote about the importance of protecting our democratic institutions, ensuring free and fair elections, and maintaining transparency in government. Others shared thoughtful concerns about emerging technologies, and many weighed in on issues related to the state budget, taxation and the long-term fiscal health of the Commonwealth.

Public safety and community well-being were frequent topics as well, including discussions around criminal justice policy and the role of state and local law enforcement. And as technology and entertainment continue to evolve, some constituents reached out about proposals related to gambling policy, raising questions about both economic opportunity and consumer protections.

What Happens Next

The governor has until midnight April 13 to review the legislation passed by the General Assembly. During that time, she may choose to sign bills into law, recommend amendments or veto them.

On April 22, the General Assembly will return to Richmond for the reconvene session. At that time, we will review the governor's actions on each bill and will vote on whether to accept or reject any amendments she proposes.

Budget Negotiations Continue

As the session ended, the House and Senate budget conferees were still working through differences between their respective budget proposals. Because of the complexity of the negotiations and the limited time remaining in the session, the conferees could not complete their work before adjournment.

Those discussions will continue in the coming weeks and, once a compromise is reached, the General Assembly will return for a special session for a final vote on the budget.

April 21 Special Election on Redistricting

Early voting has now begun for the upcoming redistricting referendum and will continue through April 18. Election Day is April 21.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, which is exactly why I support giving Virginia voters the power to level the playing field and protect our democracy for our kids and grandkids. This amendment ensures that Virginia has a way to protect fair representation if other states continue stacking the deck. I hope you will vote yes on this referendum.

Our Man In Arlington

BILL FOGARTY

It is time for another monthly column that I have been calling my "Front-Page News" columns, where I choose a specific time from the past and review the news events that folks in Arlington might have been reading about (and living through). I think I will make a change and refer to these columns as my "Wayback Machine" columns.

First, I feel it probably is necessary to explain to some of you the genesis of that phrase. Let me start with a little history from the 1960s. The Wayback Machine was a term used for a plot device from the 1960s cartoon series "The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends." Each episode included a segment called "Peabody's Improbable History." The Wayback Machine was used by the main characters, Mr. Peabody and Sherman, to travel back in time and visit important events in history. The cartoon was very popular with us young Boomers in the 1960s.

So, let's jump into the Wayback Machine and visit Arlington in March 1930, when its citizens were starting to feel the effects of the stock market crash from a few months earlier. Though they did not know it at the time, this was the beginning of the Great Depression. Let me share some stories from the Washington Evening Star that month, starting with international news. One subheadline, in an article about Britain's response to the "business slump," stated that "Signs of Despair Are Absent as Optimistic Leaders Predict Return to Economic Heights."

On the national front, a headline addressed the economic issues in America: "350 Jobless Seek Legislators' Help for All of Nation." An "Unemployed Conference" drew delegates from all over the nation, organized by the International Brotherhood Welfare Association. They met with Sen. Wagner of New York regarding proposed legislation to help the unemployed. Meanwhile, the future of Prohibition was being debated in Congress and throughout the nation, with the "drys" and "wets" both

weighing in. Locally, civic leader (and former state senator) Frank Ball was a "dry" advocate seeking to retain Prohibition. In his failed 1929 campaign for Congress, it is thought that his position was a factor in his loss to Judge Howard Smith. By 1933, Prohibition was fully repealed.

On the local front, the Star had a stinging editorial denouncing a recent County Board rezoning, calling it "An Ill-Timed Threat." The board rezoned property to "light industrial" in the general area immediately north of the Highway Bridge (now known as the 14th Street bridges). There was a federal bill drafted to turn that area — around Columbia Island and part of what is now the Pentagon — into a park. The Star suspected the county action would torpedo the existing bill and then result in a new airport being built in that area. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and ultimately all parties agreed to place the airport in the area south of the bridge, at Gravelly Point.

The Star covered local news carefully, as seen in its coverage of activity in the area known as Virginia Highlands. The civic association had a special meeting with the county engineer to discuss obtaining its water supply from the District, which a few years earlier had begun supplying water to Arlington over Chain Bridge and into North Arlington. It was also noted that, due to the success of dances sponsored by the Jefferson District Fire Department, dances would continue each Saturday night at the Jefferson Auditorium. The Star even covered bowling news, reporting that Oscar Swain's 180 game, rolled at Clarendon Boulevard, was the best ever recorded in organized competition in Arlington.

Serious political news came from local representatives to the General Assembly. Two bills for referendums had been passed: (i) to incorporate as a city; and/or (ii) to move to a commissioner or county manager form of government. In the next few months, there was a flurry of activity that resulted in the November vote to adopt the county manager form of government. Ninety-six years later, the County Board is now reviewing the legacy of that moment from the Wayback Machine of 1930.

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