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*'Democracy Thrives In Sunshine'*

## Alarming Cost of New Affordable Housing

EDA Head Litkenhous  
Cites Major \$ Issues

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

A scathing reaction to news of the costs to move ahead on a tentative plan for redevelopment of the Virginia Village on S. Maple in Falls Church by the chair of the City's Economic Development Authority (EDA) Tuesday night stunned an audience that included F.C. Mayor Letty Hardi. The plan is designed to add significantly to the City's affordable housing stock.

EDA Chair Ross Litkenhous, a local businessman and former member of the Falls Church City Council, balked at a report suggesting moving ahead with a "request for proposal" for redevelopment of the site would involve an expenditure of \$175,000 for a couple of month's effort by a consultant to the project.

"I think the public would be shocked if they learned the high cost of doing this project," Litkenhous stated. He emphasized repeatedly that he supports the goal of adding more affordable housing to the City's current stock but said he questions the costs involved.

The EDA and the City are in the process of forging an

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## EASTER EGGS BEWARE!



AND THEY'RE OFF! Junior Easter egg hunters broke free from constraints to embark on their annual endeavors as sleuths in search of eggs allegedly deposited at Falls Church's Cherry Hill Park by the Easter Bunny, him/herself last weekend. (Photo: Gary Mester)

## Rusted Signal Arm at W. Broad & West Raises Concern

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

A signal mast arm so corroded that it has been considered unsafe for over three years to load up with any more signage sits at the Falls Church intersection of W. Broad and N. West Streets.

This is while street maintenance efforts in the City of Falls Church are facing a \$700,000 cut in funding in the City Manager's proposed budget, and at the bud-

get work session of the Falls Church City Council Monday, Council members expressed serious concerns about the City falling further behind on street paving, sidewalk repair and signal light maintenance issues.

A growing backlog of untended projects drew explicit expressions of dismay by Council members Justine Underhill and Arthur Agin at the work session, with Agin saying he was unaware that last year's funding level for the work was only a

one-time allocation, dropped by the \$700,000 this year due to the drop in the City's investment income.

"We're leveling off at a low level, and we need to get out of this hole," Agin said. On the other hand, the City staff offered that there are only two persons at City Hall assigned to working on such things. "We need to set priorities, because we can only do so much," Amanda Stout Brain, the City's director of public works, said.

"We're obviously not going in the right direction now," noted Vice Mayor Laura Downs. "If we don't keep up, in 20 years we will have a real mess on our hands."

The cut in funding is due to the fact that a \$710,054 grant to repave N. Washington St. between Park Ave. and the City line will be undertaken this spring, and not renewed.

"There is a significant amount

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# FALLS CHURCH NEWS BRIEFS

## 3 Former F.C. Teachers Named Grand Marshals for Memorial Day

Three former Falls Church City Public Schools (FCCPS) teachers, Nan Hoff, Shey Wakeley, and Mary Jo West, were named this week Grand Marshals for the 44th Annual City of Falls Church Memorial Day Parade that will be held on Monday, May 25. The three will share Grand Marshal duties.

Selected by the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, this year's honorees were chosen for their "lasting impact on decades of FCCPS students across their 79 years of combined service," according to a City statement.

Hoff and Wakeley served as kindergarten lead and para-professional at Mount Daniel Elementary, and West served as the band instructor at Meridian High School. They all retired at the end of the 2024 - 2025 school year. Nominations from across the City recognize the community building and dedication to a high-quality education that they each embody.

One nomination from a colleague of Hoff and Wakeley read "this dynamic teaching duo has made an extraordinary impact on the lives of hundreds of kindergarten students, and their legacy of positive influence, dedication, and collaboration speaks volumes about their character and commitment to our community... Now, as a colleague at Mount Daniel, I continue to be inspired by their professionalism, dedication, and unwavering focus on the students they serve."

Hoff and Wakeley not only left a lasting impact on their colleagues and the City's youngest students, "They have also embraced [us] ... kindergarten parents. Upon meeting them, almost every worry we had instantly melted away as they greeted us with hugs and smiles and instilled a sense of calm," another nominee wrote.

Nominations for West echoed the sentiment of providing an exceptional education for her students. "She significantly enhanced the stature of not only the music program but also the performing arts program... [and was] a nationally recognized teacher ranked as one of the top high school music teachers in the country," one nominee submitted.

Fostering a community of musicians with a deep appreciation for music, one nominee wrote in praise of West, "She has been a huge influence and inspiration for decades of Falls Church music students... many of whom went on to major in music in college and continue their music both as a hobby and professionally." West continues to promote lifelong learning and appreciation of the arts as the current director of the City of Falls Church Concert Band.

The Grand Marshals will lead the annual parade along Park Avenue starting at 2 p.m. on Monday, May 25. The parade and festival will occur rain or shine. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vendors, food, inflatables, live entertainment, and an onsite VA250 Interactive Mobile Museum are included in Falls Church's single biggest public event of the year.

## State Sen. Saddam Salim Announces Congressional Run

Virginia State Senator Saddam Aslan Salim this week announced that he will run for the U.S. congressional 7th district seat in a Democratic primary that will be held in August pending passage of a special referendum redrawing congressional districts later this month. Salim joins a growing field of Democrats who will contend in the primary, should the referendum pass.

Salim will join a field that includes J.P. Cooney, Del. Dan Helmer (D-Burke), Dorothy McAuliffe, Del. Adele McClure (D-Arlington), Matthew G. Rainforth, Alex Thymmons, and U.S. Rep. Eugene Vindman (D), who represents the existing 7th Congressional District.



**IN WHAT'S BECOME** an annual tradition in the City of Falls Church, a blue pin wheel exhibition was set up Monday at an entrance to Cherry Hill Park off across from the library in recognition of Anti-Child Abuse Month. Mayor Letty Hardi (far left) led the annual recognition. (Photo: Gary Mester)

## 2 F.C. Connections to RAMMY Nominations

The finalists of the 44th annual Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington (RAMW) finalist nominations announced this week included two Falls Church establishments. Bridie McCulla of the Northside Social was named among the nominees for pastry chef/baker of the year and the Solace Outpost is nominated for best beer program. The winners will be announced at the Rammy's annual gala on June 29.

## U.Va. Law School Ranked No. 4, GMU No. 32 in U.S. News Report

The University of Virginia was named the fourth best law school in the U.S., according to a poll of graduate programs published by the U.S. News and World Report this week. Other Virginia law schools ranked included George Mason University, Arlington, at No. 32, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, at No. 33, William and Mary, Williamsburg, at No. 34, University of Richmond at No. 62, Regent University at No. 91, Liberty University at No. 144 and the Appalachian School of Law at No. 175.

The University of Virginia was ranked No. 4 among business schools and No. 6 among education schools, while Virginia Commonwealth University of Richmond came in No. 2 in a four way tie for best masters in fine arts program in the U.S.

## F.C.'s Cauldron Announces 'Bold New Voices' Festival

Falls Church's Creative Cauldron Stage this week announced its "Bold New Voices" festival, running from this Saturday, April 11, through May 9. The festival is sponsored by Diener and Associates, certified public accountants, and funded by project grants from ArtsFairfax and the Arts and Humanities Council of Falls Church.

This initiative, established in 2019, serves as a platform for women and playwrights and composers, with a dedicated focus on supporting women of color who are traditionally underrepresented in the theater industry.

The festival offers audiences a unique opportunity to participate in the artistic process.

Attendees will experience professionally staged readings of new plays and musicals, providing feedback that will help the Bold New Voices Selection Committee choose the final offering for Creative Cauldron's 2026-27 mainstage season.

This Saturday, the festival begins with *The C Word* Written by Sarah Lina Sparks and directed by Sally Imbriano. All performances are free to the public.

## Fairfax County Public Hearings On Upcoming Budget Next Week

Public hearings on the FY2027 Budget will be held at the Fairfax County Government Center Board Auditorium at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 15, and 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 16, 2026.

In addition, a separate public hearing on the FY2027 effective tax rate increase will take place on Tuesday, April 14 at 3:00 p.m. in the Board Auditorium.



**SUSAN DERRY** (right) captivated her audience with an evening of showtunes at the Creative Cauldron last weekend. She's here with Cauldron regular Barbara Bear. (Photo: News-Press)

# Dust Up on Costs of Virginia Village Affordable Housing Project

Continued from Page 1

agreement on moving forward and are bound by deadlines for submissions for grant aid to move ahead. There was not a quorum at Tuesday's EDA meeting, so no formal action on that front was undertaken.

EDA member Brian Williams, another prominent local business owner and member of the EDA board, echoed some of Litkenhous' concerns.

Mayor Hardi, on the other hand, chimed in that the project's purpose is to conform with the City's goal of adding to its affordable housing numbers that have shrunken to historic lows.

Litkenhous questioned whether the City and EDA (both of whom own four-plex units on the current Virginia Village site and have been acquiring them with the goal of putting a large affordable housing building on the site) would get enough new affordable housing to make the overall plan worth the cost and effort.

"There are 80 affordable units there now," Litkenhous noted. "Are we going to be able to double that number to

make this work?" he asked. A new building with 160 affordable apartments would test the ability of the City to approve a project of that scale, given strong nearby opposition that has already surfaced.

Actually, in discussions of the current plan, it been proposed that a lot more units be built on the Virginia Village's much larger parcel of land (4.5 acres), with a multifamily building of 124 units in a first phase and as many as 160 more units after that.

At a recent community meeting, it was noted, neighbors expressed concerns on the size of a prospective new building, noting that it would clash with the surrounding residential neighborhood if it were much more than two stories in height.

Over a decade ago, plans for a similar affordable structure near Virginia Village wound up being dashed by a 4-3 vote against a step to move forward due to neighborhood pressure.

The Wilden project for affordable housing in the City of Falls Church was defeated in the summer of 2010.

Then, the City Council rejected a critical amendment to move the project forward by a 4-3 vote, causing the project to collapse. The project was planned for a site near Virginia Village on S. Washington Street and was named in honor of long-time affordable housing advocate Bob Wilden.

That project anticipated a five-story building with 60 units primarily

intended for seniors and individuals with disabilities earning between 30 and 60 percent of the area median income.

Upcoming public review meetings are planned for this Saturday, April 11, at the Oak Street Elementary, 601 S. Oak, at 10 a.m. and Tuesday, April 14, at the Columbia Baptist Church, 103 W. Columbia, at 7 p.m.



A hot bowl of pho at Eden Center. Voted best shopping center in the DMV!

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- Music and Poetry Performance

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### PANELISTS



**XAVIER SMITH**  
President,  
Black Student Union  
Meridian High School



**CHLO'E EDWARDS**  
Social justice advocate  
Founder of Her Changes



**MICHELLE GOLDBERG**  
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# F.C. is Falling Behind on Renovation of Key Public Projects

Continued from Page 1

of work that needs to be done here to avoid putting good money after bad," Council member David Snyder said. "If this is really a long-term problem then we need to figure out how to address it."

Underhill asked whether bonding for making improvements would be feasible, but City Manager Wyatt Shields said that the City bond policy is that a loan repayment be done before the benefits of using the funds expire.

"We don't love that we're going backwards on this, because we're also going backwards on sidewalk repairs, too," said Mayor Letty Hardi.

Hardi also noted the more urgent problem may be the deteriorating condition of signal lights around the City. She cited the Planning Department report that there are some mast arm signal lights that have become seriously rusted, such as the one at the intersection of W. Broad and West street.

"This is more of a public safety problem than some potholes," she observed. "This is an alarming condition," she noted.

The problem was identified in a 2023 assessment of 10 of the City's 38 mast arm signal lights. The deterioration of the Broad and West mast arm is so severe that it can not hold any additional signage, such as no-turn or red signs, it was noted.

That mast arm was determined to have less than a 10 percent useful life left, according to the study.

City Manager Wyatt Shields said he would return with proposals to stretch the paving budget further in time for final Council budget consideration in May.

But given economic realities, something else may have to be cut to fund additional paving. "It's a challenge," Shields said of the city government's fiscal situation.

The additional funding provided for fiscal 2026 has allowed the city to pave nearly 3.9 lane-miles of roadway, up from 2.2 lane-miles in fiscal 2025.

"We are making really good headway," deputy public-works director Tara Hoff told Council members. Hoff said staff would work with whatever budget number materialized.

Vice Mayor Downs cited the lack of timed signals on N. Washington near W. Broad in front of Clare and Don's has caused traffic to back up there, and suggested it get priority attention. Hardi cited problems at the intersection of Park and Maple, which will eventually be addressed by the Park Avenue "Great Streets" project, but in the meantime have been subjected to considerable deterioration.

Agin cited the broken lights at Lincoln and Great Falls that went unrepaired for months, and also the deterioration of the Oak Street bridge that occurred before it was finally addressed

Hardi hailed the Smart Cities grant that is in the process of improving the coordinated signalization of W. Broad.

This spring's paving schedule

includes five segments, 6,486 feet, with improvements to include ADA curb ramps at intersections. Anne St. between Jackson and Knollwood, Knollwood Dr. between S. Spring and Timber, Parker Ave. between Kent and Timber, S. Spring St. between Parker and Jackson, W. Oak St. from N. West and Walnut, the intersection of Great Falls and

Little Falls, Park Ave. from N. Washington to the Kaiser garage, and a big pothole on N. Maple near Park.

It was noted that while 283 potholes in the City were repaired in Fiscal Year 2025 using 4.5 tons of asphalt, in the current fiscal year, only 42 potholes have been fixed using one ton of asphalt.



FALLS CHURCH CITY Council member Justine Underhill (far right) questions City staff about needed paving, sidewalk and signal light upgrades at Monday's F.C. Council work session. (Photo: News-Press)

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# Identity & the Better Angels of Your Nature

NICHOLAS F.  
BENTON

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

Who are you, really? The biggest problem in politics, much less love and war where all things are fair, is the elusive nature of our very being as humans on this planet.

For example, all the efforts at emergency redistricting by Trump and anti-Trumpers is predicated on historic voting patterns. But they do not take into account how radically those patterns have changed in the year or so since Trump returned to the White House and is exhibiting behavior that is crazier and more vicious than ever.

As we know, Democrats are winning in districts now that before this last year were solidly pro-Republican. That elusive voter in that voting booth may not be the same person he or she was a year ago.

We know that there are more neurons in the human brain than there are stars in the Milky Way. The human brain is the most advanced aspect of the entire universe that we have been able to study so much more in the last decade, thanks to the James Webb telescope and other things.

Consider this: in humanity's entire history on this planet, we are at the point now where we can say that we will survive and progress beyond the limitations of this particular planet. That is an immense development of truly cosmic significance, yet it is hardly acknowledged.

We have the technical means now to get to the moon, and to Mars. This means that no matter what else happens, some small portion of our species, with our brains included, will be able to escape Planet Earth in the event of some cataclysmic catastrophe. That is no small achievement for us.

It means we are truly now intergalactic. In another million years, a small time frame in the context of the big picture, we'll be able to travel to and colonize

anywhere to keep our evolution happening, and the biggest first step has happened in our own lifetimes.

There are those who argue that the universe as we are discovering it now is very hostile and unwelcoming. Yes, that may be what it appears to be, but don't forget that the universe includes us, we human beings, and our precious brains.

Artificial intelligence is and always will be a product of our brains, a by-product, if you will. It is already amazing, but even at its best it is the result of our work, our minds. The fear that people have about AI is the fear we have about ourselves, which brings me back to the main point of this.

So, who are you, really? I suggest you are not one person, but you are an array of potentials. Think of your options at this very moment. How many different pathways of response to this moment in time do you have? You get to choose which one you will follow. And so forth with each moment of your existence going forward. In the domain of politics, the choices you make in the polling booth are reflective of this reality.

The genius of Abraham Lincoln was in the phrase he evoked in his historic first inaugural Address, in which he concluded: "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

"The better angels of our nature" touches directly on our actual condition as human beings. When arguing for a better union, it is essential that the better angels of your nature are invoked to address the better angels of the nature of whomever you are addressing.

So it was in Lincoln's second inaugural address given as the Civil War was about to end, that he stated, "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds."



## A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Penny Gross

Former Fairfax County Supervisor

Donald Trump spends entirely too much time inside our heads. A new outrageous antic nearly every day. Profane middle-of-the-night Truth Social posts. Almost daily press sessions in the gilded Oval Office with a yammering chief executive edging closer to 25th amendment consideration. Cabinet meetings that are simply sycophantic opportunities to extol Mr. Trump rather than address the serious issues affecting the American people. And a 24-hour news cycle that hypes it all.

Despite Trump's free rent in the White House and in our crania, many ordinary activities seem to be unaffected by the current national and international chaos. Easter services, Passover seders, and recent Eid celebrations reinforced the protections of the First Amendment. Fans of college basketball were thrilled by both the men's and women's NCAA tournament, highlighting sportsmanship and pure delight in the faces of the young athletes on the court. Another major league baseball season has begun. Spring is blooming in a riot of color: pink

and white cherry blossoms, bright yellow daffodils and forsythia, the soft pale green of new tree leaves, vibrant fuchsia of early azaleas and rhododendrons, orange honeysuckle strands, creamy magnolia blossoms. Grocery stores and gasoline stations are open, fully stocked, and crowded.

BUT – prices are high and moving higher as the war against Iran impacts energy prices globally; climate change affects growing seasons; and the specter of greater global disruption grows every day. The highest gasoline price in Annandale was \$4.39 last week although the same national brand was \$3.89 two miles down the road. The cost of fuel is reflected in prices at the grocery store since every item on the shelves is delivered by a truck. Farmers are not making money from those higher prices, but somebody is. Spring planting is in danger since fertilizer components must travel through the now-closed Strait of Hormuz. Reduced harvests will mean consumer higher prices in the fall.

All this comes at a time when budgets are being considered at

every level of government. If a budget is supposed to reflect the values of the organization, Mr. Trump's request to increase the federal defense budget by nearly half, to \$1.5 trillion, appears only to reflect his obsession with using military might to wage war and threaten allies. His request for more taxpayer dollars for defense also proposed devastating cuts to "non-defense" spending, those programs that invest now and in the future for health care, education, environment, energy and, important to local services, community development block grants (CDBG). Last week, Mr. Trump ranted that the federal government cannot cover childcare, Medicaid, Medicare, and other programs important to ordinary citizens, insisting that the states should take over the responsibility. He professed no comment about how the states and, ultimately, local jurisdictions would raise the billions of dollars needed to assume those federal tasks. Local programs that provide a network of human services support often use CDBG funds to expand limited community resources. A basic economic premise is modelled on the concept of "guns or butter," whether governments should opt to spend tax dollars on military defense or on social services. Literally and figuratively, Donald Trump has chosen guns.

## CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CRIME REPORT

### Week of March 30 - April 5, 2026

Larceny from Building, W Broad St, Mar 30, 11:33 a.m., victim reported belongings were stolen from an apartment while in the process of moving.

Violation of Protective Order, Park Ave, Mar 30, 4:19 p.m., a male, 79, of the City of Falls Church, was arrested on three counts of violation of a protective order.

Destruction of Property, Mar 30, 6:52 p.m., victim reported their vehicle was damaged by a baseball.

Fraud – False Pretenses, N Underwood St, Apr 2, 3:49 p.m., victim reported giving money and gold bars to an unknown suspect claiming to be with the Federal Trade Commission and that the victim's personal information had been stolen.

Residential Burglary/Destruction of Property, Ridge Pl, Apr 4, 7:00 a.m., victim reported the

glass window on a door was broken and a jewelry box was stolen.

Assault - Aggravated Domestic, Roosevelt Blvd, Apr 5, 10:38 a.m., officers responded to a report of stabbing. A female, 26, of the City of Falls Church, was arrested for malicious wounding and assault on family member.

Assault - Domestic, Wilson Blvd, Apr 5, 11:25 p.m., an Asian male, 45, of Chantilly, was arrested for assault on family member.

## Don't Miss the Memorial Day Issue

Coming May 21

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## EDITORIAL

# On Housing Affordability

There was no way this newspaper could ignore the exchanges at Tuesday night's Falls Church Economic Development Authority meeting where its chair Ross Litkenhous expressed major concerns about the costs associated with the new plan to redevelop the 4.5 acre Virginia Village site to add significant net new affordable housing units.

A lot of heat will be accompanying this project every step of the way, and it will surely challenge Falls Church's local leaders' commitment to the goal of adding significant new affordable housing to the City's stock of otherwise absurdly expensive housing. Despite the fact that lack of affordable housing is the nation's Number One crisis right now (at least outside of what's going on in the White House), when it comes to taking the kinds of measures required to deal with the matter, there always appear to be a myriad of obstructions and most of them arise at the local level.

This newspaper was around for every one of the numerous painful public hearings that occurred in the first decade of this century when yeoman and tireless efforts of the local housing association led by Carol Jackson and backed by the late Bob Young ran into such powerful resistance at the neighborhood level. Plans to build new affordable housing at numerous locations around the Little City ran into a growing blizzard of resistance, and when it finally came down to the Wilden Project, a modest five-story senior housing proposal on S. Washington St., the carefully tended multiple of contributing elements, including federal, state and local money, came crashing down on one 4-3 vote on a hot summer night that undid the whole shebang.

More painful meetings of that same sort have already begun, including Tuesday's. Not that there shouldn't be careful and watchful oversight of every penny going into this thing, as Litkenhous' diligence exhibited Tuesday. There should be for sure. But what has to be watched is the extent to which the same old tiresome "Not in My Back Yard" (NIMBY) sentiment is behind a usual, highly uncreative mantra of "I'm for it, but just not here, or now."

On the plus side, there has arisen a fairly recent YIMBY ("Yes in My Back Yard") movement of housing advocates which is growing in the wake of the increasingly desperate need for housing that families making average salaries can afford.

Our favorite image invoked the last time this was going on was of the invisible people who were not in the room, the elderly, the infirm, the disadvantaged, who filled chairs as the future residents of the housing being sought. They are present in our minds and our spirits at all these meetings.

## Our Man In Arlington

### BILL FOGARTY

It is time for the April edition of my "guest column" concept. This month, I asked Ben D'Avanzo, a resident of the Pentagon City area, to provide a perspective on a topic of his choice. If one were to give a title to his piece, one might call it "An Ode to Arlington's Playgrounds." Ben wears many hats as an engaged civic volunteer in Arlington. Among other efforts, Ben is chair of the Crystal and Pentagon Cities Council, an Arlington advisory body, but he is speaking in his personal capacity in this column. And if any of you readers have nominations for a terrific playground, let me know at historybillfogs@gmail.com.

Another View from Arlington: by Ben D'Avanzo

Growing up in the 1990s in a Massachusetts suburb, our town had one main playground that my family would drive to. It was a perfectly fine playground, but getting there was a chore, and one playground meant not a lot of variety. It's with that experience in mind that I am delighted that I moved into the 2202 area of Arlington in 2017. It is my good fortune that my family lives within a 15-minute walk of half a dozen excellent and different playgrounds.

Before having our two young children, I had generally ignored the playgrounds in Arlington. After all, as a young professional, I found that the restaurants and festivals were much more interesting. But as I have traveled the region with my kids, I have grown grateful for how the county has invested in play infrastructure for families, and I appreciate what that says about our priorities as a community.

From the hill-and-tunnel experience at Long Bridge Park to the bridge and towers at Metropolitan Park to the dual playgrounds at Virginia Highlands, my family has a wealth of options to choose from. It's that walkable community infrastructure that originally drew

my wife and me to Arlington, and now, with our kids, it is what keeps us here. While our surrounding jurisdictions, as well as those across the country, have perfectly fine playgrounds, I have found the options in Arlington to have an "above and beyond" variety and quality. And, of course, it is not limited to our neighborhood. Rocky Run, Bluemont, Fairlington, Chestnut Hills and Mosaic playgrounds are part of our core rotation, each with its own charm.

As our county considers its current budget and the difficult decisions involved, I am glad that we have continued to invest in community infrastructure like playgrounds. I also have some ideas about where we should invest in the future. For example, one only has to head to Westpost (formerly Pentagon Row) on any evening to see the value of co-locating restaurants alongside spaces for play. For those who have not been there, this Pentagon City development features a horseshoe of restaurants around two areas, depending on the season: an open turf play area or a skating rink. Many European cities have plazas that perform a similar function, but Westpost appears unique in the region. I know many families that would love to see more playgrounds co-located with other civic and retail functions.

Children are our future. Creating safe, fun and attractive spaces that work for all kinds of families (including children with disabilities) is a core piece of Arlington's success. You only have to spend time on a playground, hearing the many languages spoken and trading knowing looks with other parents as we wrangle our kids, to understand how important these spaces are as a community equalizer. As we invest in growing our housing infrastructure, work to attract businesses and ensure our policies reflect our equity values, let us appreciate those in the past who chose to invest in innovative, interesting and fun places for our current generation of children to play. And let's work to emulate them in the future.

## PLATFORM

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**CAMP PINECREST**



**WASHINGTON SAILING MARINA**



# Summer Camps Filling Fast Across Northern Virginia

BY FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

With summer fast approaching, families across Falls Church and Northern Virginia are moving quickly to secure spots in what has become an increasingly competitive camp market. From academic enrichment to outdoor adventure, many local programs are already nearing capacity, reflecting sustained and growing demand across the region.

Camps such as Kenwood School, Capitol Debate, Pinecrest School, and Washington Sailing Marina Camp are offering a wide range of options this year—and filling up quickly as parents prioritize structured, engaging summer experiences for their children. For many families, summer camp is no longer just a seasonal option, but an essential part of a child's annual routine.

Nationally, more than 26 million children attend summer camp each year, according to the American Camp Association. In Northern Virginia, where families often place a high value on both academic achievement and extracurricular development, that demand is especially pronounced. Camp directors throughout

the region say enrollment has remained strong in recent years, with some programs reporting waitlists well before the school year ends.

“Summer camps have really evolved,” said one local organizer. “Parents aren't just looking for something to fill the day—they want programs that offer real value, whether that's learning a new skill, building confidence, or just getting kids active and social.”

Academic-focused camps continue to be a major draw, particularly among families looking to balance summer fun with intellectual growth. Capitol Debate, for example, offers programs centered on public speaking, argumentation, and critical thinking—skills that translate directly into classroom success and future career readiness. Students not only gain confidence in expressing their ideas but also learn how to analyze complex issues and engage in thoughtful discussion. These types of camps have grown in popularity as families look for ways to give students an academic edge without sacrificing the enjoyment that summer should bring.

Private school-based camps also remain a cornerstone of the local land-

scape. Pinecrest School and Kenwood School both offer structured summer programs that blend academics with traditional camp activities such as arts and crafts, sports, games, and outdoor play. For many families, these camps provide a familiar and trusted environment, especially for younger children or those already enrolled during the school year. The continuity of setting and staff can make the transition into summer programming smoother, while still offering variety and excitement.

In addition to academics, creativity-focused programming continues to expand. Many camps now incorporate visual arts, music, theater, and hands-on building projects into their weekly schedules. This reflects a broader understanding among parents and educators that creative expression plays a key role in child development. Camps that offer opportunities for performance, design, and experimentation are increasingly attractive to families seeking well-rounded experiences.

Outdoor and experiential camps are also seeing a surge in interest. At Washington Sailing Marina Camp, children take to the water to learn the fundamentals of sailing while building independence, resilience, and teamwork. Programs like these provide a unique combination of skill-building and adventure, giving campers experiences that are difficult to replicate in a classroom setting. Waterfront and nature-based camps have become especially popular as families continue to prioritize screen-free activities and real-world engagement.

“Kids remember the things they actually do,” one parent said. “Whether it's sailing, performing, or competing, those experiences stick with them long after the summer ends.”

The growing demand for camps reflects a broader shift in how summer is viewed. Rather than a simple break from school, many families now see it as an extension of learning and personal development. It's increasingly common for parents to piece together multiple camps over the course of the summer, exposing their children to a variety of interests—from STEM and athletics to arts and outdoor exploration.

This “mix-and-match” approach allows families to tailor the summer experience to their child's evolving interests while also keeping schedules flexible. It also reflects the reality that few camps run the entire summer, requiring parents to plan strategically across several weeks or even months.

Cost, however, remains an important consideration. In Northern Virginia, weekly camp tuition typically ranges

from \$200 to \$600 or more, depending on the program, specialty, and duration of each day. Specialty camps—particularly those involving advanced instruction, technology, or waterfront access—can cost even more. While these expenses can add up quickly for families planning multiple weeks of activities, many still view camp as a worthwhile investment in their children's growth, social development, and overall well-being.

Another notable trend is how early families are planning. Camp organizers report that registrations are happening sooner each year, with some programs reaching capacity by late winter or early spring. The combination of high demand and limited space has created a sense of urgency for parents trying to secure their top choices, especially for the most popular programs and age groups.

In response, some camps are expanding their offerings, adding additional sessions, extending hours, or diversifying programming to accommodate demand. Others are increasing staff or enhancing facilities to improve the overall camper experience. Even so, availability remains tight as summer draws closer, and late registrations can be difficult to accommodate.


There is also a growing emphasis on flexibility and accessibility. Some camps now offer half-day options, extended care, or multi-week discounts to better meet the needs of working families. Scholarships and financial aid programs, while limited, are also becoming more common as providers seek to broaden access to their programs.

For families still finalizing plans, experts recommend acting quickly and remaining open to a range of options. Exploring a mix of camps—academic, recreational, and outdoor—can help create a balanced and enriching summer experience while increasing the chances of finding available spots. Being flexible on dates or locations can also make a significant difference in securing a place.

Ultimately, summer camps continue to play a vital role in the lives of children and families across Northern Virginia. They offer not only a solution to childcare needs, but also an opportunity for growth, discovery, and connection.

Summer will be here before you know it, and Northern Virginia's summer camp season is shaping up to be another busy—and highly competitive—one.

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# Why Kids Need Real-World Social Skills More Than Ever

BY FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

As summer camp season approaches, educators and youth development experts are placing renewed emphasis on one of the most important—and increasingly overlooked—areas of childhood growth: the ability to build friendships and communicate effectively in person.

In today's digital-first world, children are growing up surrounded by screens, artificial intelligence, and online platforms that shape how they learn and interact. While these technologies offer clear advantages, research shows they are also contributing to a decline in face-to-face communication skills at a critical stage of development.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children ages 8 to 12 spend an average of four to six hours per day on screens, while teenagers average as much as nine hours daily. These figures, which exclude time spent on schoolwork, reflect a major shift in

how young people spend their free time compared to previous generations.

At the same time, studies suggest that increased screen use is directly impacting social development. A widely cited UCLA study found that children who spent just five days at a screen-free outdoor camp significantly improved their ability to recognize facial expressions and interpret emotional cues. These skills—often referred to as components of emotional intelligence—are essential for effective communication, empathy, and relationship-building.

Experts note that these abilities cannot be fully developed through digital interaction alone.

“Communication is more than words,” child development specialists emphasize. “It involves tone, body language, eye contact, and the ability to respond in real time. Those are skills that require in-person practice.”

This is where summer camps and youth programs play a critical role.

Unlike structured classroom settings or screen-based environments, camps place children in dynamic, social situations throughout the day. Whether working together in team sports, collaborating on creative projects, or navigating unstructured play, campers are constantly practicing how to engage with others.

They learn how to introduce themselves to new peers, resolve disagreements, take turns, and contribute to a group. These interactions may seem simple, but they form the foundation for long-term social and professional success.

The importance of these so-called “soft skills” is increasingly supported by workforce data. A 2023 LinkedIn Global Talent Trends report found that 92 percent of employers say soft skills—including communication, teamwork, and adaptability—are just as important as technical skills, if not more so. Similarly, the World Economic Forum consistently ranks interpersonal skills among the top competencies needed for future

jobs, alongside analytical thinking and technological literacy.

Despite this, many opportunities to develop these skills during the school year have diminished. Increased academic demands, larger class sizes, and the integration of digital tools into everyday learning mean that students often spend less time engaging in open-ended, face-to-face interaction.

The long-term implications are becoming more visible. Some educators report that students are less comfortable speaking up in groups, initiating conversations, or working through conflicts without adult intervention. Others point to rising concerns about social anxiety among children and adolescents, which some researchers link in part to reduced in-person interaction.

Summer camps offer a counterbalance.

By design, they encourage children to step outside their usual routines and social circles. Campers are often grouped with peers they have never met, creating opportunities

to form new friendships and practice communication in a supportive environment. Without the constant presence of phones or screens, children are more likely to engage directly with those around them.

These experiences can have lasting benefits.

In addition to improving communication and social confidence, strong interpersonal skills are linked to better academic outcomes, improved mental health, and greater success in collaborative environments. Children who can effectively express themselves and understand others are better equipped to navigate challenges both in and out of the classroom.

As technology continues to advance—and as artificial intelligence becomes more integrated into education and the workplace—the value of human-centered skills is only expected to grow. While digital literacy remains essential, it is not a substitute for the ability to connect, collaborate, and communicate in real life.

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# NORTHERN VIRGINIA GAY NEWS

## Saturday Meet Ups Popularity Soars at Freddie's Beach Bar

In an area known for its vibrant diversity, a local tradition is continuing to weave the social fabric of the Northern Virginia LGBTQ+ community one weekend at a time. Go Gay DC, Metro DC's LGBTQ+ Community, hosts its popular LGBTQ+ Community Brunch at the iconic Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant at 11 a.m. every Saturday morning.

The event, which takes place every Saturday, bridges the gap between digital interaction and real-world friendship.

Freddie's Beach Bar, a staple of Arlington's 23rd Street for the past 25 years, provides the perfect backdrop for the gathering. Voted "Best Virginia Bar" by Washington Blade readers, the venue is famous for its "straight-friendly" LGBTQ+ atmosphere and its signature rainbow-clad exterior.

Organizers emphasize that the brunch is designed to be a safe, inclusive, and low-pressure environment. "This is about making meaningful new connections," says TJ Flavell, Go GayDC's leader and founder. "Whether you're new to the area or a long-time local, the goal is to provide a space where everyone under the rainbow feels welcome."

Attendees can look forward to a casual atmosphere where name tags are provided to help break the ice. While the event is free to attend, guests are responsible for their own tabs to keep the morning stress-free; there is no group tab.

The highlight for many is the Freddie's brunch deal: an all-you-can-eat buffet for \$14.99, which includes a mimosa (or coffee/soda) and dessert. For those looking for specific favorites, the full regular menu is also available.

This unique brunch attracts people from across the DMV and spans the generations - from twenty somethings to octogenarians. It is also conversational - a chance to learn about topics you never thought of before.

Sometimes Freddie Lutz, the owner of Freddie's makes an appearance when he's not at his other restaurant in Rehoboth Beach.

The series is spearheaded by Go Gay DC, a community organization focused on friendship, leadership, and service. With a reach of over 10,000 LGBTQ+ across the DMV area, the group hosts a variety of events—from book clubs to happy hours—designed to foster a sense of community in the metropolitan Washington area.

## Gay Book Club Convenes 3rd Thursdays at Arlington

On the third Thursday of every month, the quiet clinking of wine glasses and the rich aroma of marinara at Federico Ristorante Italiano located at 519 23rd Street South, Arlington, Virginia, are joined by a different kind of sensory experience: a deep dive into the world of literature.

The LGBTQ+ Book Club, hosted by the nonprofit organization Equality NoVa, has become a staple of the local community, offering a safe and inclusive space for readers of all backgrounds to gather, dine, and debate. Their next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 16, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

This month, the group is set to discuss *Bury Your Gays* by Chuck Tingle. While the title might sound provocative, it fits perfectly with the club's mission to explore a wide range of genres. According to organizers, the group "doesn't discriminate when it comes to genre," with past selections ranging from classic literature and best-selling novels to biographies and queer fiction.

"It's about more than just the books," said a member of Equality NoVa, a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) dedicated to serving Northern Virginia's LGBTQ+ community and their allies. "It's an opportunity to engage in a rewarding activity, build relationships, and enjoy a great meal."

## Online Site Notes Importance Of Traffic Patterns at Freddie's

In a bizarre but revealing twist of open-source intelligence, a social media account is using pizza delivery patterns and gay bar foot traffic in Washington, D.C., to forecast Pentagon military activity, including recent strikes in the Middle East.

The account, Pentagon Pizza Report, has gained attention for its unusual yet surprisingly accurate method: tracking the surge in pizza orders near the Pentagon alongside declining attendance at Freddie's Beach Bar, a nearby gay bar. The result? A reliable indicator that something major is happening behind the Pentagon's secure walls.

Last Thursday night, the account posted that Crystal City pizza venues were experiencing a "huge surge in activity," while Freddie's Beach Bar had unusually low attendance for a Thursday. Just hours later, Israel launched a major strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, killing over 200 people, including military officials and nuclear scientists.

## SCOTUS: Conversion Therapy Ruling Is Complicated

The Supreme Court's 8-1 ruling in *Chiles v. Salazar* struck down Colorado's ban on conversion therapy for minors — but legal experts caution against reading it as the court endorsing the practice. The majority found Colorado's law unconstitutional because it regulated therapists' speech in a viewpoint-non-neutral way, not because conversion therapy is safe or effective. "Nothing in this opinion is an endorsement of conversion therapy," the National Center for Lesbian Rights' Shannon Minter told reporters. Read more in *The Advocate*.

## Georgia: Every Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill Defeated in 2026 Legislative Session

Nearly all 15 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced in the 2026 legislative session were defeated — including attempts to ban puberty blockers, bar trans student athletes from aligned locker rooms, and criminalize librarians who provide LGBTQ+ books to minors. "Despite state leadership fixating on restricting LGBTQ+ rights as their core priority over the past years, we made it clear that scapegoating LGBTQ+ Georgians is not a winning political strategy," executive director Jeff Graham said. The win was credited to grassroots organizing across more than 60 counties. Read more in *PinkNews*.

## Wisconsin: Governor Evers Vetoes Five Anti-Trans Bills

On Trans Day of Visibility, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers - a democrat - vetoed five bills that would have barred transgender girls from school sports, required schools to out trans students to parents without consent, and imposed other restrictions. Evers offered no extended statement — just a blunt rejection, noting the appropriate response was "not approved." His vetoes extend a consistent record of blocking anti-trans legislation even as the federal government escalates its own restrictions. Read in *Instinct Magazine*.

—Fabrice Houdart

### LGBTQ Calendar for This Coming Week

Friday, April 10, 2026 7:00 p.m. –  
LGBTQ+ Community Happy Hour at Uproar Lounge, DC.

Saturday, April 11, 2026 11:00 a.m.  
LGBTQ+ Community Brunch @ Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant.

Monday, April 13 –  
LGBTQ+ Monday Funday Happy Hour, Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant.

Thursday, April 16 –  
LGBTQ+ Book Club, Federico Restaurant, Crystal City.

Friday, April 17 –  
LGBTQ+ Social in the City at Hotel Zena, 7 p.m.



**TERRA HOOT**, the veteran elementary school teacher turned major drag talent, led her monthly Children's Book Hour at Freddie's Beach Bar last weekend to a packed house. She hails from Terre Haute, Indiana, hence her drag name. (Photo: News-Press)

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**LEGAL NOTICE**

**VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE**

Final day of registration is Tuesday, April 14th for the April 21st Special Election. Sample Ballots can be found online: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/vote>

All citizens, including those who are currently 17 years old, who will turn 18 years old by the November 3, 2026, General Election are eligible to register and vote in the April 21st Special Election.

Online Voter Registration and early/absentee ballot by mail applications: <http://www.vote.virginia.gov/>

Deadline for applications submitted online via the Virginia Department of Election website is 11:59 pm on April 14, 2026. Only applicants with a DMV ID like a driver's license can submit an application electronically and these applications may also be untimely if missing material information. Please note: those applications filled out online that are required to be printed and delivered to the registrar should be treated as regular mailed in applications and need to be postmarked by April 14, 2026, to meet the deadline. The 5:00 p.m. deadline on April 14, 2026, applies if any of these are submitted in-person at the registrar's office.

The deadline for mailed in applications remains that they be postmarked by April 14, 2026.

Early/Absentee Voting for the City of Falls Church  
In-Person early voting began in May at our office at City Hall, 300 Park Ave, and will continue through Saturday, April 18th, 2026. During that time, residents wishing to vote early can do so 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday through Friday.  
We are open the following additional hours:  
Saturday, April 11th: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Thursday, April 16th: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Saturday, April 18th: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Mailed ballots with a postmark no later than April 21, 2026 can be received by our office until noon on Friday, April 24, 2026.

Vote By Mail: The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot by mail is Friday, April 10th, 2026, but we don't recommend that you wait that long.

Election Day Reminders for the City of Falls Church

Ward 1 votes at Oak Street Elementary School in the trailers  
Ward 2 and Ward 3 votes at the Falls Church Community Center

Residents are reminded that on Election Day, street parking is available on both sides of Little Falls Street by the Community Center and on Oak, Seaton, Fellows, Parker, Timber, and Jackson near Oak Street Elementary School. Additional details, can be found online at [www.fallschurchva.gov/Vote](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/Vote). Contact the Registrar's office at 703-248-5085 (TTY 711) or [vote@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:vote@fallschurchva.gov) for more information.

**North Carolina  
Cumberland County  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No.:25SP001056-250  
IN RE ADOPTION OF:  
Victor Guerrero, Jr., Adoptee  
Alfredo Crespo, Petitioner  
Vs.  
Victor Guerrero, Respondent**

TO: VICTOR GUERRERO, the above-named Respondent, the biological father of Victor Guerrero, Jr. Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you in the above referenced court and file. The Petitioner is seeking to adopt VICTOR GUERRERO, JR., an adult male, born November 11, 2000, in Kentucky. You are required to make a defense to such pleading not later than 40 days from the first publication date of this notice in accordance with N.C.G.S. 48-2-401(f) in order to participate in and to receive further notice of the proceeding, including notice of the time and location of any hearing in this matter. A copy of your written response must be served on Plaintiff's attorney at the address below by hand delivery or by first-class mail, postage prepaid and filed with the Clerk of Superior Court. Upon your failure to respond, the Plaintiff seeking service against you will apply to the court for the relief sought.

**North Carolina  
Cumberland County  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No.:25SP001057-250  
IN RE ADOPTION OF:  
Victoria Susana Guerrero, Adoptee  
Alfredo Crespo, Petitioner  
Vs.  
Victor Guerrero, Respondent**

TO: VICTOR GUERRERO, the above-named Respondent, the biological father of Victoria Susana Guerrero. Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you in the above referenced court and file. The Petitioner is seeking to adopt VICTORIA SUSANA GUERRERO, an adult female, born November 10, 1998, in Tennessee. You are required to make a defense to such pleading not later than 40 days from the first publication date of this notice in accordance with N.C.G.S. 48-2-401(f) in order to participate in and to receive further notice of the proceeding, including notice of the time and location of any hearing in this matter. A copy of your written response must be served on Plaintiff's attorney at the address below by hand delivery or by first-class mail, postage prepaid and filed with the Clerk of Superior Court. Upon your failure to respond, the Plaintiff seeking service against you will apply to the court for the relief sought.

**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 Restaurant with Caterer license, for wine and beer on and off premises and mixed beverage, to sell alcoholic beverages. Vicky Wang 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](http://www.abc.virginia.gov) or 800-552-3200.

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# FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

## Cheese Cartel Ribbon Cutting

Thursday, April 9, 4:00 pm – The Chamber is excited to celebrate the opening of The Cheese Cartel in Founders Row, 922 W. Broad Street. You are invited to join City Council and the Chamber Board of Directors. A reception follows the ceremony where you can meet owner Alyssa Romashko and learn more about the business.

## Join the Little City Clean Up

Volunteer to join the City-wide clean-up on Saturday, April 11. Families, groups and individuals can help keep the Little City beautiful and waterways clean. Meet at the Community Center, 223 Little Falls St., at 10:00 am and be sure to wear closed-toe shoes. No registration necessary. Questions can be sent to [Recycling@fallschurchvs.gov](mailto:Recycling@fallschurchvs.gov).

## Bold New Voices Festival Opens

Creative Cauldron Stage launches its “Bold New Voices” Festival this Saturday, April 11 and runs through May 9. This initiative established in 2019, serves as a vital platform for women and playwrights and composers, with a dedicated focus on supporting women of color who are traditionally underrepresented in the theater industry. Audiences are invited to provide feedback to the staged readings of new plays and musicals, contributing to the selection of a 2026-27 mainstage season production. All tickets are free.

## Knife & Tool Sharpening

The Roaming Stone will be setting up at Casual Pint to sharpen all your knives, garden tools, lawn mower blades, and anything else that can be sharpened on Sunday, April 12, 12:00 – 3:00 pm. Enjoy some food and a pint or two while you wait for your blades. Mug Club members get a 10% discount off sharpening.

## Virginia Dream FC Fan Fest

Join local semi-pro soccer team Virginia Dream FC as it kicks off the 2026 season with a community Fan Fest on Sunday, April 12, 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Commons Park in West Falls. The event features a live DJ, lawn games, face painting, player appearances and a Virginia Dream merchandise raffle. West Falls restaurants will be open with food and drinks. Founded in 2022, the team had a strong run in the US Open Cup last year. Fans will march to the Meridian High School Stadium at 7:30 for the first game of the season against Alexandria United FC.

► *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](mailto:elise@fallschurchchamber.org).*



# Proposed Constitutional Amendment

## To be voted on at the April 21, 2026, Special Election

### BALLOT QUESTION

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?

**EXPLANATION FOR VOTERS** (Approved by House and Senate Privileges and Elections Committees on February 20, 2026)

#### Present Law

Virginia's eleven congressional districts are drawn once every ten years by the Virginia Redistricting Commission, a legislative body made up of eight legislators and eight citizens, with an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. Virginia's congressional districts were last redrawn in 2021 and will next be redrawn in 2031.

#### Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment would give the General Assembly the authority to redraw one or more of Virginia's congressional districts before 2031 in limited circumstances. In the event that another state redraws its own congressional districts before 2031, without being ordered by a court to do so, the General Assembly would then be able to redraw Virginia's congressional districts. The General Assembly's power to do so would continue until October 31, 2030, and the Virginia Redistricting Commission would reassume the responsibility of drawing the congressional districts in 2031.

The proposed district map has been approved by the General Assembly and would take effect only if the constitutional amendment is approved by the voters.

A “yes” vote would allow the General Assembly to redraw Virginia's congressional districts, since other states have done so, in addition to giving effect to the proposed district map in time for the 2026 Congressional elections, and return the responsibility of drawing the congressional districts in 2031 to the Virginia Redistricting Commission.

A “no” vote would leave the authority to draw congressional districts with the Virginia Redistricting Commission once a decade and Virginia's current districts would remain in place.

### FULL TEXT OF AMENDMENT

[Proposed new language is underlined. Deleted old language is ~~stricken~~.]

#### ARTICLE II.

##### Franchise and Officers

#### Section 6. Apportionment.

Members of the House of Representatives of the United States and members of the Senate and of the House of Delegates of the General Assembly shall be elected from electoral districts established pursuant to this section and Section 6-A of this Constitution. Every electoral district shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory and shall be so constituted as to give, as nearly as is practicable, representation in proportion to the population of the district. Every electoral district shall be drawn in accordance with the requirements of federal and state laws that address racial and ethnic fairness, including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, and judicial decisions interpreting such laws. Districts shall provide, where practicable, opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to elect candidates of their choice.

The Commonwealth shall be reapportioned into electoral districts in accordance with this section and Section 6-A in the year 2021 and every ten years thereafter, except that the General Assembly shall be authorized to modify one or more congressional districts at any point following the adoption of a decennial reapportionment law, but prior to the next decennial census, in the event that any State of the United States of America conducts a redistricting of such state's congressional districts at any point following that state's adoption of a decennial reapportionment law for any purpose other than (i) the completion of the state's decennial redistricting in response to a federal census and reapportionment mandated by the Constitution of the United States and established in federal law or (ii) as ordered by any state or federal court to remedy an unlawful or unconstitutional district map.

Any such decennial reapportionment law, or reapportionment law modifying one or more congressional districts, shall take effect immediately and not be subject to the limitations contained in Article IV, Section 13, of this Constitution.

The districts delineated in the ~~decennial~~ any reapportionment law shall be implemented for the November general election for the United States House of Representatives, Senate, or House of Delegates, respectively, that is held immediately prior to the expiration of the term being served in the year that the reapportionment law is required to be enacted. A member in office at the time that a decennial redistricting law is enacted shall complete his term of office and shall continue to represent the district from which he was elected for the duration of such term of office so long as he does not move his residence from the district from which he was elected. Any vacancy occurring during such term shall be filled from the same district that elected the member whose vacancy is being filled.

#### SCHEDULE

#### Section 6. Application and duration of certain redistricting amendments.

The authorization in Article II, Section 6 authorizing the General Assembly to modify one or more congressional districts at any point following adoption of a decennial reapportionment law in the event that any State of the United States of America conducts a redistricting of such state's congressional districts at any point following that state's adoption of a decennial reapportionment law shall be limited to making such modifications between January 1, 2025, and October 31, 2030, in response to actions taken by another state between January 1, 2025, and October 31, 2030

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# 'Project Hail Mary' Movie Review

BY LISA SINROD

This is a charming science fiction story adapted from the 2021 novel of the same name by Andy Weir. Weir wrote the highly successful 2014 novel "The Martian", which also subsequently became a movie. The PG-13 film is directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who are best known for the animated superhero comedy "The Lego Movie". The plot of this science driven survival story has many appealing components. Ryan Gosling was a good choice as the lead character, providing a heart-warming performance as Ryland Grace. Grace, a shaggy haired middle school science teacher, wakes up on a spaceship with no memory or knowledge as to why he is there. He is alone in the vessel, which is hurtling through space, except for two dead crew members aboard. From this opening, the film uses a blend of returning memories and present action to gradually reveal how Grace came to be here. The audience joins Grace in trying to figure out what is happening and why he is there.

As Grace's memory returns, he learns that he is on a mission to save Earth due to the dimming of the Sun and stars from a micro-organism. This mission is designed to discover the details of this calamitous prob-

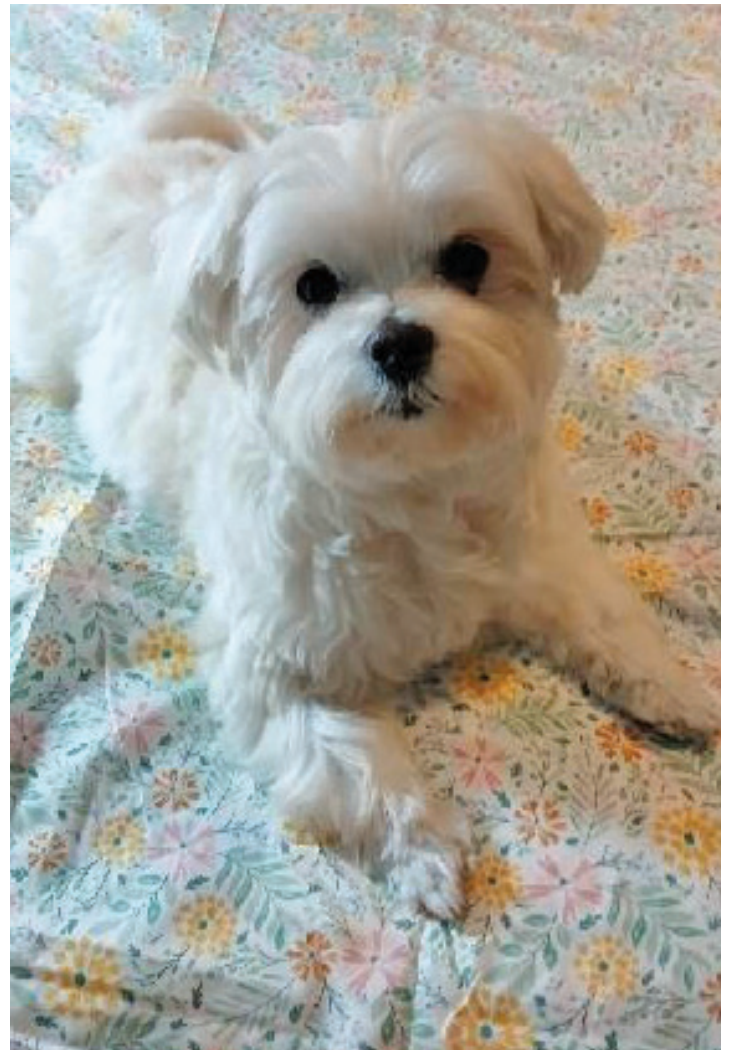
lem and to fix it while in space. The cause of the death of his crewmates is unknown at first, and haunting. Some of the best scenes involve the lead up to Grace's arrival on the mission (presented in flashbacks), his resistance to participating and his interactions with staff and crew members on the ground. As this is a world-wide mission, scientists in the field of microbiology are brought in from many places to provide expertise, and include Grace. What he doesn't expect is to actually be part of the crew aboard the space mission itself, particularly because he is not a trained astronaut. The mission is also a highly dangerous one, with no expectation of a return to Earth.

Aspects of the plot are moving and some parts of it can be downright silly, and yet the film in its entirety really works. It's a feel-good movie, which can be a welcome thing these days, and the performances by Gosling and Sandra Huller anchor the film. Huller portrays Eva Stratt, the taciturn yet deeply human leader of the global mission to save Earth. We've seen her before in "Anatomy of a Fall" and "The Zone of Interest". The East German actress is pitch perfect for this role. Gosling brings humor and wonder to his role, as he becomes increasingly creative in teaching himself how to manage

this mission in real time in outer space. The film's special effects are clever, and you'll likely find yourself rooting for the mission's success and feeling the suspense throughout. Gosling carries the dialogue of the plot well, which is essential given that he is the only living human occupying the space vessel. The development of his astronaut skills and coping mechanisms is lovely to watch unfold, as he makes contact with another living (non-human) entity while in space. To say more would unduly give away the plot.

The film feels fresh and inventive, despite the many movies involving space missions in recent decades. This adaptation of Weir's novel vividly conveys the deep allure that outer space holds for us. Rather than having a space horror or disaster plot, "Project Hail Mary" dabbles with matters of scientific interest and upbeat themes of potential bonding with non-human creatures. Despite its seemingly far-fetched premise, the film feels deeply authentic. Each new obstacle draws us further into Ryland Grace's corner. This is an enjoyable film which likely will appeal to a broad cross-section of movie viewers. I recommend seeing this one in a movie theater if you can, as it is well suited for the largest screen possible.

## CRITTER CORNER



PICTURED HERE IS RUSTY

# Meridian Mustangs Crush Manassas Park Cougars

BY DINOS SIMCOX

On Tuesday, April 7th, Meridian's varsity baseball team destroyed Manassas Park by a mind-boggling score of 26-1. The game was never in doubt, as the Mustangs boasted a 13-0 lead after two innings. The game was officially over by the middle of the fifth inning, when the mercy rule was invoked.

While the Mustangs did have an excellent first inning, scoring four runs, it was the second inning that really set the tone of the game. The Cougars had the bases loaded with just one out, but the Mustangs, led by senior pitcher Ryan McDonald, rallied to force two quick outs and end

the inning. Meridian proceeded to score nine runs in the bottom of the second, essentially sealing the game then and there.

However, the Mustangs didn't take their foot off the gas. They scored eight runs in the third, and five runs in the fourth, meanwhile allowing just one run. After the top of the fifth, the game ended per mercy regulations. Senior Andrew Niemi led the scoring with 5 RBIs, followed by freshman Nate Landers and senior Jack Mossburg, both notching 3 RBIs apiece.

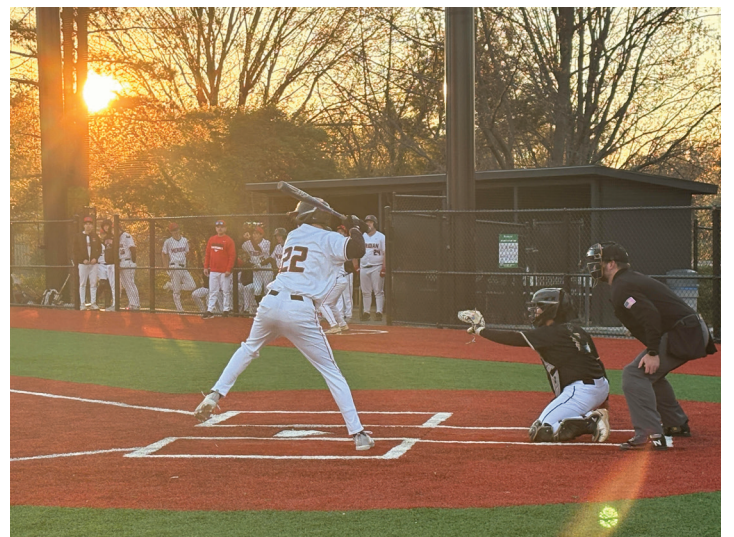
"This was a great game for us to come out of spring break and get the rust off, get some at-bats in, just get the competitive juices going again,"

Mustangs head coach Adam Amerine commented.

Coach Amerine also commented on the importance of the Mustang's defensive stand in the second inning.

"That was huge. Anytime you're playing a team that's down a little bit, you don't want to give them any hope, so it was good to come out of [that inning] with no runs allowed," coach Amerine reflected.

The emphatic win pushed the Mustang's record to 3-4 on the year. The team will look to continue this form into their next few games, starting with their game on April 10th, where they will travel to Brentsville to take on the Tigers.



Junior Jason Wattles (#22) looks for a hit early in the game. (Photo: Dinos Simcox)

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# This Week Around Falls Church

## Thurs, April 9

**Girls Varsity Tennis vs. Warren County**  
4:30 p.m.  
Skyline High School.

**Boys Varsity Tennis vs. Warren County**  
4:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Girls JV Soccer vs. Mt. Vernon**  
6 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Boys JV Soccer vs. Mt. Vernon**  
6 p.m.  
Mount Vernon High School.

**Varsity Softball vs. Washington-Liberty**  
6 p.m.  
Washington-Liberty High School.

**JV Softball vs. Washington-Liberty**  
6 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**WERQ Dance Fitness Pop-Up**  
6:15-7:15 p.m.  
Cherry Hill Park, 312 Park Ave.  
Free outdoor fitness class.

**Sporcle Pub Quiz**  
7-9 p.m.  
Clare & Don's Beach Shack, 130 N. Washington St.

**Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting**  
7:30 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Girls Varsity Soccer vs. Mt. Vernon**  
7:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Boys Varsity Soccer vs. Mt. Vernon**  
7:30 p.m.  
Mount Vernon High School.

## Fri, April 10

**Boys Varsity Track Invitational (vs. Woodgrove)**  
3 p.m.  
Woodgrove High School.

**Boys Varsity Tennis vs. Brentsville**  
4 p.m.  
Brentsville District High School.

**Girls Varsity Tennis vs. Brentsville**  
4:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**JV Baseball vs. Brentsville**  
6 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Boys JV Lacrosse vs. Broad Run**  
6 p.m.  
Broad Run High School.

**Shartel & Hume**  
6 p.m.  
Clare & Don's Beach Shack, 130 N. Washington St.

**Varsity Baseball vs. Brentsville**  
6:30 p.m.  
Brentsville District High School.

**Varsity Softball vs. Brentsville**  
6:30 p.m.  
Brentsville District High School.

**Boys Varsity Lacrosse vs. Broad Run**  
7:30 p.m.  
Broad Run High School.

## Sat, April 11

**Girls Varsity Lacrosse Tournament (vs. South Lakes)**  
8 a.m.  
Fairfax High School.

**Farmers Market**  
8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Mulch Mania (Free Mulch Giveaway)**  
8 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Recycling Center, 217 Gordon Rd.  
Free mulch for residents.

**Girls JV Lacrosse vs. James Madison**  
8:30 a.m.  
Madison High School.

**Move Falls Church Fitness Challenge**  
9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Falls Church.

**Ice Cream Social**  
10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Cherry Hill Farmhouse, 312 Park Ave.

**Spring Community Clean-Up**  
10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St.

**Girls Varsity Lacrosse Tournament (vs. Robinson)**  
10:20 a.m.  
Fairfax High School.

**Community Workshop to Combat Othring and Build Belonging**  
12 p.m. lunch; 1-3:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School, 121 Mustang Alley.  
Free; all welcome.

**Cherry Hill Garden Plaque Unveiling**  
1-2 p.m.  
Cherry Hill Farmhouse, 312 Park Ave.

**Victorian Voices in 1900**  
2-3 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave.

**A Promising Local Band**  
5 p.m.  
Clare & Don's Beach Shack, 130 N. Washington St.

## Sun, April 12

**Poetry Reading with Heather Grant**  
2-3 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave.  
Registration required.

## Mon, April 13

**Falls Church 250 Committee Meeting**  
10-11:30 a.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Boys Varsity Soccer vs. Falls Church**  
5:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**General Assembly Town Hall**  
6-8 p.m.  
Lubber Run Community Center, 300 N. Park Dr., Arlington.  
Public feedback welcome.

**Boys JV Lacrosse vs. Forest Park**  
6 p.m.  
Forest Park High School.

**Spring Concert: 9th Street Quartet**  
6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave.

**Varsity Softball vs. Alexandria City**  
6:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**JV Softball vs. Alexandria City**  
6:30 p.m.  
Alexandria City High School.

**Girls Varsity Soccer vs. Falls Church**  
7 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**City Council Meeting**  
7:30 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Listening Room: OTV & Tone Rangers**  
7:30 p.m.  
Clare & Don's Beach Shack,

**Boys Varsity Lacrosse vs. Forest Park**  
7:30 p.m.  
Forest Park High School.

## Tues, April 14

**Girls Varsity Tennis vs. Rock Ridge**  
4:30 p.m.  
Rock Ridge High School.

**Boys Varsity Tennis vs. Rock Ridge**  
4:30 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Mahj Jane Mahjong**  
5:30 p.m.  
Clare & Don's Beach Shack, 130 N. Washington St.

**Varsity Baseball vs. Liberty (Bealeton)**  
6 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Girls JV Soccer vs. Skyline**  
6 p.m.  
Meridian High School.

**Boys JV Soccer vs. Skyline**  
6 p.m.  
Skyline High School.

**Housing Commission Meeting**  
6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Virginia Village Community Meeting #4 (Draft Amendment Review)**  
7-9 p.m.  
Columbia Baptist Church, 103 W. Columbia St.

**Boys Varsity Soccer vs. Skyline**  
7:30 p.m.  
Skyline High School.

## Weds, April 15

**Council Agenda Meeting**  
8:30-9 a.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Library Board of Trustees Meeting**  
6-8 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave.

**Urban Forestry Commission Meeting**  
7-9:30 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
7:30 p.m.  
Falls Church City Hall, 300 Park Ave.



**COMING SOON**

<b>APR 10</b>	<b>SOUTHERN ACCENTS TOM PETTY TRIBUTE</b>
<b>APR 11</b>	<b>GRATEFUL DUB REGGAE INFUSED GRATEFUL DEAD</b>
<b>APR 17</b>	<b>5 DOLLAR COMEDY NIGHT</b>
<b>APR 18</b>	<b>POLICE CARS TRIBUTE TO THE POLICE &amp; THE CARS</b>
<b>APR 24</b>	<b>ALMOST QUEEN TRIBUTE TO QUEEN</b>
<b>APR 25</b>	<b>SHOT THRU THE HEART BON JOVI TRIBUTE</b>
<b>MAY 01</b>	<b>ABACAB TRIBUTE TO GENESIS &amp; PHIL COLLINS</b>
<b>MAY 15</b>	<b>LIVE SALSA NIGHT</b>
<b>MAY 16</b>	<b>SUPER 70S ROCK SHOW 70S ARENA ROCK</b>

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Baths



Heated  
Pool



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2 - 4 PM



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