

APRIL 23 - 29, 2026

FOUNDED
1991

VOL. XXXVI
No. 11

Falls Church News-Press

Northern Virginia's Newspaper

FALLS CHURCH,
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'Democracy Thrives In Sunshine'

Virginia Approves Redistricting Referendum

*NoVa's Overwhelming Vote
Powers "Yes" Victory*

BY NICK GATZ
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

Virginia voters signed off Tuesday on a closely watched redistricting referendum, delivering what many Democrats are calling a clear rebuke to MAGA-driven efforts to tilt congressional maps and underscoring a broader point that, in Virginia, democracy still matters and voters' voices are being heard.

Statewide, the numbers were close but decisive. The measure passed with 1,575,272 votes, or 51.46 percent, in favor and 1,486,132 votes, or 48.54 percent opposed, according to unofficial results from the Virginia Department of Elections. In a sharply divided political climate, the outcome reflected a Commonwealth that debated the issue intensely and ultimately made its choice at the ballot box.

In Northern Virginia, that choice came through loud and unmistakable.

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Meridian

High School

Lasso Pages

12-13

PLAY BALL



YOUNG PLAYERS BURST into laughter and sprint across the grass at Westgate Field, chasing the debuting FCKLL Pickle mascot during Falls Church Kiwanis Little League's Opening Day celebration, as hundreds of families, coaches, and community members look on. The energetic moment followed the league's annual parade and ceremony, where teams lined up by division to kick off a record-setting spring season filled with excitement, growth, and community spirit. (Photo: Anna Southworth)

What Passed, What Didn't, and What's Ahead in Va.

BY MARCUS SIMON

Dozens of friends, supporters and local leaders joined me on Monday, April 20, 2026, at the headquarters of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors for a luncheon fundraiser and conversation about the 2026 General Assembly session, what happened in Richmond this year, and what may be coming next.

Some of the more notable attendees included the

City Treasurer Jody Acosta, Commissioner of the Revenue Tom Clinton, and Clerk of the Court of Falls Church and Arlington, Paul Ferguson, along with the Clerks of Court from Alexandria and Fairfax County, Greg Parks and Chris Falcon.

The afternoon began with a presentation dubbed "How It Started, How It's Going, Reconvene Edition" that compared my predictions for session back in January with

how things actually turned out on the eve of my return to Richmond, namely Governor Abigail Spanberger's 8 vetoes and 180 recommendations to amend bills we passed during the 2026 General Assembly Session.

Noting that Democrats held the governorship and strong majorities in the House and Senate, and there was real optimism that we could move a number of priorities forward in January, we looked at some of

the 932 bills that the Governor has already signed into law, an impressive number.

Despite full Democratic Control of the legislative process this year, not everything operated by consensus. We discussed several of Governor Abigail Spanberger's 8 vetoes so far this year, including the Tyson's Casino a bill, bills making it easier to sell impounded vehicles, a number of criminal

Continued on Page 11



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NOTICE OF PROPOSED REAL PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

(TO26-04) ORDINANCE SETTING THE RATE OF TAX LEVY ON REAL ESTATE FOR TAX YEAR 2027 AND ON PERSONAL PROPERTY, MACHINERY AND TOOLS AND ALL OTHER PROPERTY SEGREGATED BY LAW FOR LOCAL TAXATION IN THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH VIRGINIA FOR TAX YEAR 2026

The City of Falls Church proposes to increase property tax levies.

1. Assessment Increase. Total assessed value of real property, excluding additional assessments due to new construction or improvements to property, exceeds last year's total assessed value of real property by 5.35 percent.
2. Lowered Rate Necessary to Offset Increased Assessment. The tax rate which would levy the same amount of real estate tax as last year, when multiplied by the new total assessed value of real estate with the exclusions mentioned above would be \$1.125 per \$100 of assessed value. This rate will be known as the "lowered tax rate."
3. Effective Rate Increase. The City of Falls Church proposes to adopt a tax rate of \$1.185 per \$100 of assessed value. The difference between the lowered tax rate and the proposed rate would be \$0.060 per \$100, or 5.33 percent. This difference will be known as the "effective tax rate increase." Individual property taxes may, however, increase at a percentage greater than or less than the above percentage.
4. Proposed Total General Fund Budget Decrease. Based on the proposed real property tax rate and changes in other revenues, the total General Fund budget of the City of Falls Church will increase by 0.76 percent.

Public hearings on the increase will be held on April 27, 2026 and May 11, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as they may be heard, in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. The hearings shall be open to the public. The City Council will permit persons desiring to be heard an opportunity to present oral testimony within such reasonable time limits as shall be determined by the City Council.

For copies of legislation, contact the City Clerk's office at (703-248-5014) or cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov or visit www.fallschurchva.gov. 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).

CELESTE HEATH, CITY CLERK

FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

Let's Welcome an Honor Flight

The Rio Grande Honor Flight group is coming to DC today, April 23 and Falls Church wants to give them a really big welcome. They land at Reagan National Airport and will arrive at Hilton Garden Inn at approximately 4:00 p.m. The community is invited to welcome the World War II veterans upon their arrival.

Psychic Saturday

The Center for Spiritual Enlightenment has opened registration for the next Psychic Saturday – this Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Visit the website to read about the readers who are participating in this event (<https://www.these.org>). Guests may register in advance through the link or walk in.

2nd Annual Paddles for a Purpose Fundraiser

This Saturday, April 25, 2- 5 p.m., Hope for Grieving Families hosts a play clinic, a beginner and intermediate round robin style tournament as well as a 50/50 raffle and a silent auction. There's no need to form a team, just purchase a ticket for the level you are interested in. Equipment will be available but of course you may bring your own paddle if you have one. Money raised will support the free monthly programming for grieving families with children in the area.

business.fallschurchchamber.org/events/details/2nd-annual-paddles-for-a-purpose-fundraiser-for-hope-for-grieving-families-81911?calendarMonth=2026-04-01

Beethoven Times Two

The Washington Sinfonietta presents Beethoven Times Two on Saturday, April 25, 7:30 p.m. at Falls Church Episcopal. The orchestra performs Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F, Op. 93 and Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61 featuring Ava Pakiam, violin. A reception follows. Tickets are available online in advance (<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6714847>) and at the door. All youth 18 and under are admitted free. The address is 115 E. Fairfax Street.

Jazz Jam at Solace Outpost

Enjoy spontaneous jazz grooves and improvisations with your beer on the last Wednesday of every month, next Wednesday, April 29 7 – 10 p.m. at Solace Outpost. All instrumentalists and vocalists are welcome: sax, trumpet, keys, bass, drums, guitar, voice - bring your axe and join the house rhythm section. No cover, simply show up and enjoy the vibes.

Brain Health Guidance for Aging Adults and Caregivers

The Kensington Falls Church hosts informative and engaging conversations with local renowned neurologists for the first of a 3-part series on Wednesday, April 29, 5 – 6 p.m. This is an opportunity for community members, caregivers, and families to learn more about brain health and neurological conditions that affect movement, memory, and overall cognitive function. There will be an open Q&A following Dr. Jennifer Pauldurai's presentation. Contact Kayla Hulbert, Outreach & Events Coordinator at kulbert@kensingtonsl.com with any questions.

► *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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- 2. Curated Restaurants & Boutiques
- 3. The Commons
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- 5. West Falls Church Metro Station



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F.C. Voices Heard as Referendum Vote Runs 5-to-1 in Favor

Continued from Page 1

In Falls Church and surrounding precincts, the “Yes” vote surged to roughly a 5-to-1 margin, a striking show of support that helped push the referendum across the finish line. Once again, the region demonstrated its outsized role in shaping statewide outcomes, particularly on issues tied to national politics and democratic process.

The referendum allows the General Assembly to redraw congressional district lines through the 2030 election cycle, stepping in for the bipartisan commission created just a few years ago. After the next census, the commission is expected to resume its role.

The context behind that decision was front and center in the reaction from state leaders.

“Virginia voters have spoken,” Gov. Abigail Spanberger said, calling the referendum “a temporary measure to push back

against a President who claims he is ‘entitled’ to more Republican seats in Congress.”

She added, “We responded the right way: at the ballot box,” while also emphasizing she remains “committed to ensuring Virginia’s bipartisan redistricting commission gets back to work after the 2030 census.”

Virginia Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell cast the result in broader democratic terms.

“Tonight, Virginians did what Virginians have always done: they answered a question about the nature of our democracy,” he said, “and they answered it in favor of the people.”

Supporters of the referendum echoed that sentiment in the immediate aftermath of the vote.

“Virginia voted to stand up to Donald Trump’s efforts to rig the 2026 election,” one message circulated following the results read. “It wasn’t easy, and Republicans did their best to create confusion

but thanks to you and your support, we won.”

That same message pointed to Northern Virginia’s decisive role, noting that Falls Church delivered 80.71 percent of its vote in favor of the measure, with Arlington and Alexandria just under 80 percent and Fairfax County just under 70 percent.

For supporters, the referendum was about more than procedure. It was about ensuring that Virginia is not outmaneuvered in a national redistricting fight already well underway in other states. With legislatures across the country redrawing lines in ways that could shape Congress for years, many saw this as a necessary step to maintain balance.

That argument clearly resonated with voters in Northern Virginia. The Falls Church results, with “Yes” votes outpacing “No” votes by about five to one, reflect a strong local consensus that the state needed to act. High turnout and decisive mar-

gins in Fairfax County and nearby communities again proved pivotal, turning what might have been an uncertain statewide outcome into a victory.

The contrast with the statewide totals underscores a familiar reality. While Virginia as a whole remains closely divided, its most populous and fast-growing regions continue to lean heavily toward Democratic priorities and to play a determining role in major decisions.

U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, whose 8th District currently includes Falls Church, pointed to the broader implications in his statement following the vote, emphasizing the importance of participation and the role voters played in shaping the outcome.

Looking ahead, the focus shifts to implementation. The General Assembly has already advanced a proposed congressional map that would take effect for the 2026, 2028 and 2030 elections. Legal challenges are

likely, and the courts may yet weigh in on how the process unfolds.

Still, the broader takeaway cuts through the legal and political complexity.

Whether you agree with the outcome or not, the decision was made by voters, not dictated by partisan politics, and Virginians have made their wishes clear. There will be those who are unhappy with the result, but this vote will help shape the Commonwealth’s future in a way that reflects the will of its people and positions Virginia to deliver what is best for the state as a whole.

In Virginia, democracy is not abstract. It is active, contested and ultimately decided at the ballot box. This week, voters showed up, made their voices heard, and in doing so signaled that the direction of the state will be determined not by any one faction, but by Virginians themselves.

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Vol. XXXV, No. 11
APRIL 23 - 29, 2026

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EDITORIAL

Virginia Votes Yes On Referendum

Virginia lived up to its legacy as a birthplace of liberty this week. A critical referendum that effectively blocks the latest move by pro-Trump forces to undercut free and fair elections in the U.S. was passed, thanks to every Virginia resident who contributed to the effort.

This was a particularly tough referendum, because the issue was complicated, and compounded by the fact that pro-Trump forces were clearly willing to use everything at their disposal, mostly ad messaging, to dupe and confuse voters. It was a shameful display by Trumpians that ran the gamut of the GOP, former Virginia governor Youngkin included, in a wild, heavily-funded campaign of overt lies and deception. Key GOP monied interests like billionaire Peter Thiel did not hesitate to throw millions at the ill-intended effort that profoundly disrespected every Virginian by lying to them with such abandon.

The Republicans thus clinched their standing as the distinct minority party in Virginia by virtue of this wholly-unethical effort. Who could ever trust anything they will have to say ever again? We think the bizarre deception that tried to portray two leading Democrats — President Obama and Gov. Spanberger — as well as the whole civil rights movement as being on their side of the issue not only failed, it backfired, as angry citizens took it as a slap in the face against their basic intelligence and were thus redoubled in their resolve to send the whole regrettable Trump effort packing.

The fight to restore truth and civility in American politics has scored a major victory with global implications. Now the hard work of the 2026 midterm election year continues, buoyed by our achievements to date. We must remain unwilling to rest until a massive win this November blocks whatever further devious plans the Trumpians have, and begins a rout of humanity's commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

Our Man In Arlington

BILL FOGARTY

Continuing my theme of bringing in additional "Voices from Arlington", I am sharing my column with Joseph Ventrone, a long-time Arlington resident with extensive expertise in housing issues that spans over fifty years, including stints in the private sector, federal agencies, and on Capitol Hill. He is a member of the Arlington Housing Commission, and President of the North Rosslyn Civic Association. In his essay he writes about the innovative General Assembly bill referred to as the "Faith in Housing Bill" that has been amended by the governor, and is awaiting a response from the General Assembly. The views expressed are his own.

**From "Maybe in My Backyard" to "Yes in My Backyard":
by Joseph Ventrone**

At a time when Virginia—and especially communities like Arlington—face a growing shortage of affordable and workforce housing, the General Assembly has an opportunity to take a meaningful step forward. The Faith in Housing Bill (HB1279), coupled with Governor Spanberger's thoughtful amendments, offers a practical, balanced path to unlock new housing while addressing legitimate community concerns.

Predictably, many civic associations have raised concerns about the bill's "by-right" development provisions, arguing that it reduces local control. That concern deserves to be heard. But it also reflects a deeper truth: our current system makes it extraordinarily difficult to build affordable housing. Lengthy approvals, uncertainty, and high costs have created a process where even well-intentioned projects struggle to move forward. The result is fewer homes, higher rents, and fewer options for working families.

HB1279 addresses this directly by allowing certain housing developments on faith-owned land to proceed by right. This is not a giveaway to developers — it is a recognition that faith-based and nonprofit organizations are uniquely positioned to help. They are often land-rich, mission-driven, and deeply rooted in their communities.

Importantly, Governor Spanberger's amendments significantly strengthen the bill by adding com-

mon-sense guardrails. Projects must comply with environmental, historic, and siting requirements applicable to similar developments. They cannot exceed by-right height limits, ensuring that new buildings remain consistent with neighborhood scale. Historic districts retain their protections, and localities can still guide growth toward transit corridors and appropriate redevelopment areas.

These improvements strike the right balance—preserving community character while removing unnecessary barriers that have long delayed housing production.

For those with community concerns, it is important to recognize that meaningful constraints still remain. Projects will continue to depend on local funding sources and financing. Practical limitations — such as infrastructure requirements and proximity constraints like the 500-foot rule — will naturally shape where development occurs. In other words, this is not a free-for-all. A sensible approach would be to evaluate how the law works in its first year and make adjustments if needed based on real-world outcomes.

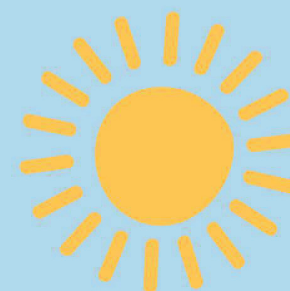
Arlington already offers strong examples of how this model can work. Several nonprofit, church-affiliated developments have successfully delivered affordable housing that integrates seamlessly into neighborhoods. These are not theoretical successes — they are real, local proof points.

From my own professional experience, I have seen firsthand that nonprofit providers can deliver high-quality, service-enriched housing. One standout example in our own backyard is Culpepper Gardens, which has provided stable, affordable housing for seniors for decades. It demonstrates what is possible when mission-driven organizations are empowered to act.

The broader impact of HB1279 could be significant. By expanding eligibility to areas planned for water and sewer service, the bill opens more sites for development. By deeming projects consistent with local comprehensive plans, it removes one of the most time-consuming hurdles. Together, these changes can accelerate the delivery of much-needed housing, particularly near transit and job centers.

PLATFORM

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(FCKLL) Little League Kickoff

BY WHITNEY OWEN

The Falls Church Kiwanis Little League (FCKLL) officially launched its spring baseball season Saturday morning with its annual Spring Baseball Parade and Ceremony, drawing hundreds of young players, families, volunteers, and community leaders to the Westgate ball field for a celebration of baseball and community.

The festivities began with teams marching together in a traditional parade before lining up on the field by division. Players from the league's youngest T-Ball division to its oldest Majors teams proudly represented their sponsors as their names were announced, setting a festive and energetic tone for the league's 78th season.

FCKLL President Whitney Owen welcomed the crowd and reflected on both the league's deep roots and its recent growth. Founded in 1948, FCKLL is the oldest Little League in Virginia — and it continues to expand in a big way.

"We continue to grow and evolve," Owen said in her remarks. "This spring we are proud to

field 50 teams with 586 players across the league — almost a 20% increase over last year, including adding four total teams and fielding our own Falls Church Intermediate team for the first time in several years."

Owen credited the league's success to its volunteers and community support, noting more than 200 volunteers, including over 100 managers and coaches, along with dedicated parents, umpires, board members, and sponsors. She also highlighted milestones such as a record number of T-Ball and Single A teams and the league's potential to field its first-ever Intermediate All-Star team.

Community leaders and special guests joined the celebration, including Falls Church Mayor Letty Hardi, Virginia Delegate Marcus Simon, and representatives from the Washington Nationals, who addressed the crowd and later participated in ceremonial first pitches alongside FCKLL alumni (graduating high school seniors from Meridian, Marshall, and McLean high schools.)

One of the most memorable moments of the morning came

with the debut of the league's brand-new mascot: the FCKLL Pickle.

Introduced by Owen to loud cheers, the Pickle quickly stole the show — especially with the league's youngest players. As soon as the fuzzy green character appeared, kids sprinted across the grass, laughing and chasing the Pickle around the field in a burst of pure joy. Parents snapped photos as players lined up for hugs and high fives, instantly proving that the Pickle was a home run with fans.

The ceremony concluded with the Little League Pledge, a reminder of the league's focus on sportsmanship, teamwork, and fun, followed by a final message to families to enjoy the season ahead.

With a record number of teams, strong community involvement, and a new mascot already beloved by players, the Falls Church Kiwanis Little League enters the spring season with momentum, excitement, and a shared commitment to developing "good ball-players and great people."

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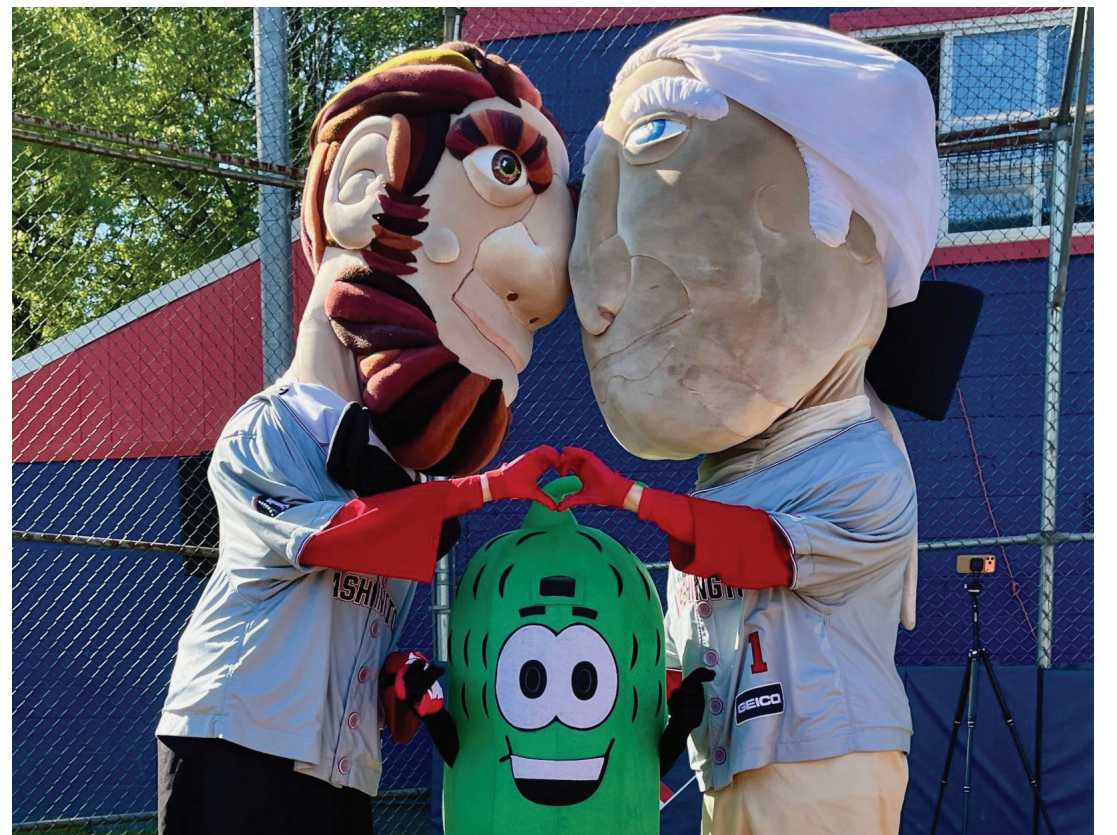
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THE FALLS CHURCH KIWANIS Little League (FCKLL) had its season kickoff event this past Saturday. (Photo: Anna Southworth)

Join Budget Meeting *Discussions:*



Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Conversations!



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.
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Adoption of FY2027 Budget Ordinance
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CITY OF **FALLS CHURCH**

Hershey's Sweet New Interactive Treat at Tysons Corner Mall

BY NICK GATZ
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

At Tysons Corner Center, the newest attraction isn't just a store, it's an experience. The Hershey Super Sweet Adventure immersive shop draws you in immediately with bursts of bright color and the unmistakable sweetness of chocolate in the air. It reflects the mall's continued move toward interactive destinations, blending retail with entertainment in a way that feels fresh, engaging and family-friendly.

But make no mistake, it is a store, and a unique one at that. Alongside the experience, shelves are stocked with exclusive Hershey's treats, specialty candies and novelty items you won't typically find in a standard grocery aisle. Browsing becomes part of the attraction, with limited-edition sweets and eye-catching displays throughout.

From the moment the doors open, guests are greeted by a friendly, upbeat staff ready to guide them through the attrac-

tion. The experience is designed to mimic a whimsical version of the candy-making process. While it leans toward younger visitors, there is enough creativity and energy to keep older kids and even adults engaged.

Each participant receives a badge at the start, setting the stage for a journey through four interactive stations. At each stop, guests complete simple, hands-on tasks that simulate different parts of the candy-making process. It is less about technical accuracy and more about fun, with colorful visuals and playful challenges keeping things moving.

My 14-year-old daughter, who does not always gravitate toward kid-focused activities, genuinely enjoyed it. That alone speaks to how well the experience balances its audience, lighthearted without feeling overly childish.

The highlight comes at the end. The experience builds toward the chance to create your own chocolate bar, a truly fun and memorable finale that should not be missed. We will

not divulge all the steps, that is part of the appeal, but it is well worth it.

The journey wraps up with a treat in hand and, of course, an opportunity to explore the store once more before heading out. Located on the bottom floor

near Macy's and Parking Lot A at Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons, VA, the experience is open through the end of the year. Visitors can learn more or purchase tickets at hersheysupersweetadventure.com.

Hershey's at Tysons Corner

is a clear example of how malls are evolving, offering something to do, not just somewhere to shop. For families, particularly those with children, it is an easy recommendation and one experience that should not be missed.



Customizable Hershey's Chocolate Bar Wrapper at Hershey Super Sweet Adventure. Photo: (Kyle Flubacker)

Meridian Sports Recap: 4/14 - 4/20

BY DINOS SIMCOX

Another week has come and gone, and it's been a strong one for Meridian's spring sports, with the teams combining for 11 wins and five losses. The Mustangs tallied several quality wins, with many sports punching well above their weight class.

Baseball turned a corner this week, squeaking out two very close wins against Liberty and Skyline, 3-2 and 2-1 respectively. This has brought their record all the way up to 5-5, an impressive turnaround from their 2-4 start to the season. The team's young core continues to improve.

Boys lacrosse continued their stellar season, winning two more games and bringing their record to a perfect 9-0 on the year. Their first game of the week was a dominant 16-5 victory over Kettle

Run. Their next game was a nail-biter, as the Mustangs escaped Albemarle victorious, 8-7. The team continues to showcase their incredible talent and resilience, and with more than half the season already in the books, the team inches closer to a perfect regular season.

Girls lacrosse went 2-1 this week, with strong wins against Kettle Run and West Potomac, and one close loss to Albemarle. This brought their record to 6-2, with their only losses coming to very strong schools. The Mustangs currently boast one of the best records in the region, and they continue to improve as time goes on.

Softball failed to secure their first win of the season this week, forfeiting a game against Kettle Run, and losing another to Skyline later in the week. With the season

more than half over, it remains to be seen if the Mustangs will be able to scrape together a few wins and end the season on a positive note.

Boys tennis suffered their first loss of the season against Rock Ridge, losing 8-1. However, they quickly rebounded with a superb 9-0 victory over Skyline, bringing their season record to a fantastic 7-1.

Girls tennis managed to stay undefeated, beating Rock Ridge 6-3 and Skyline 9-0. Their record now sits at 8-0.

Boys soccer won both their games this week, steamrolling Skyline 8-0, then beating one of the best teams in the state, 6A Alexandria City, 2-1. This pair of impressive wins improved the Mustangs' record to 7-1. Despite the fact that the team's award-winning head coach Nathan Greiner

retired after their state championship last season, Meridian's new head coach Ronald Cruz-Rivas has taken the reins and retained the success that the program enjoyed under coach Greiner.

Girls soccer split their matches this week dropping a 2-0 loss to 6A Alexandria City. They also

beat Warren County 7-0. Their record sits at 5-3. However, the squad is almost certainly better than their record indicates. All their losses have been to strong programs that narrowly defeated them, and several of their wins have been dominating performances.



Meridian Sophomore Zach Miller (#7) celebrates with his team after a goal. (Photo: Paul Meade)

Big Wins, Tough Fights, and Warning Signs for Virginia's Future

Continued from Page 1

justice reform measures, and a bill to legalize and regulate skill games.

I also highlighted some of my own legislative victories I was especially proud to help deliver this year.

First was House Bill 40, my legislation banning so-called ghost guns — unserialized, untraceable firearms that have increasingly shown up in crimes across the country. I first introduced this bill years ago, and it took repeated efforts across multiple sessions to finally get it to the governor's desk.

I also talked about House Bill 43, which abolishes the English common-law crime of suicide in Virginia. It was one of those outdated laws that no longer reflected modern understanding of mental health, compassion, or justice, and I'm proud we were finally able to remove it from the books.

Then there was House Bill 131, requiring colleges and universities to establish clear policies for student religious accommodations involving exams

and attendance. What made that bill especially meaningful to me is that it started with one student constituent who brought me the idea over the summer. Less than a year later, it became law.

That is still one of the best parts of this job — seeing how one person with a good idea can make a real difference.

Because we were meeting at NVAR, I also spent time discussing housing, consumer protection, and real estate legislation. I covered my bill that will require settlement agents to share information with new homebuyers about restrictive racial covenants and the process to remove them from their title, House Bill 444 on consumer debt reform, and House Bill 163, my deed fraud prevention measure aimed at protecting homeowners from home title theft via forged deeds and fraudulent transfers.

From there, I turned to what may be on the horizon for the rest of this year. Some of the bills the Governor amended may not be accepted by the

legislature. We expect continued debate over paid family leave, a regulated marijuana marketplace, immigration policy, and major energy issues involving solar power, utility policy, and grid modernization.

I also shared some concerns about Virginia's economic picture. State revenues currently look strong, but beneath the surface there are warning signs. Job growth has slowed, labor force participation has declined, and Northern Virginia remains especially vulnerable to instability in the federal workforce and contracting sectors.

Virginia can look healthy on paper even while challenges are gathering in the distance.

After the presentation, we had a live-question-and-answer session.

Several attendees asked about collective bargaining and whether further legislation may be considered in coming sessions. We discussed how local governments continue to seek flexibility in managing labor relations.

Others asked about "balcony solar,"

an emerging concept that would allow apartment and condominium residents to use plug-in solar technology even if they do not own a roof. I said I believe energy policy will continue to evolve quickly, and consumers want more options.

There were also questions about the Highway Use Fee applied to electric vehicles. I acknowledged the frustration many EV owners feel, while also noting the challenge of fairly funding transportation infrastructure as gas tax revenues decline.

And, of course, there were questions about gun violence prevention beyond my ghost guns bill. I said there is still more work to do — including safe storage measures, trafficking enforcement, and keeping firearms away from dangerous individuals while respecting responsible ownership.

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Special

LASSO

Edition

Spring

Meridian High School, Falls Church, Virginia

2026

Phone ban to be implemented in the 2026-27 school year

BY BEN BEHR

As of April 9, the 2025 phone policy was updated by Governor Abigail Spanberger, the new policy containing significantly harsher restrictions on phones in school. SB108, introduced by State Senator Stella Parks, altered the language of the original policy from “restricted use” during the school day to “prohibited use” on school property.

This shift creates a massive change in FCCPS policy. The school’s response to the original bill restricted devices solely during instructional time by requiring them to remain in numbered classroom pouches. This is drastically different from “bell to bell” restrictions, referring to the 8:30 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. bells, as outlined by the new upgraded policy language.

When asked why Meridian first opted for a more lenient phone policy, while many schools in the area had tougher phone restrictions, Principal Peter Laub responded, “I think some of the reasons for phone restrictions was that students were getting lost in their phones, and struggling to make personal connections with other kids or with adults, or they were being bullied on social media. We were not experiencing either of those problems here [at Meridian].”

To Principal Laub, phones did not present a challenge in Meridian as much as a learning opportunity.

“What I’d like more than

anything is to help students navigate the world with a phone. How to use it as an efficient tool, how to minimize distractions, and how to navigate a world of social media in a healthy proactive way,” he added.

Though this bill does take away from a school’s ability to properly introduce phones to students and removes it as a teaching tool, there were arguments made for its benefits.

“I’ve seen both teachers and students report that at the end of the day [the phone] can be kind of annoying and if we can remove or reduce the number of distractions in the classroom setting, it’s better. Most of the efficiency tools that you use on your phone you can use on your laptop,” Principal Laub stated.

This sentiment was similarly echoed by school board member Jarrod Anderson and English teacher Mr. Brian Walsh.

“Just because students don’t have their phones during the school day doesn’t mean they won’t still be learning how to manage it during the other 16 hours of the day,” Mr. Anderson commented. “The many benefits of prohibited phone usage in increased focus and interpersonal communication greatly outweigh the slight negatives.”

Mr. Walsh shared a similar opinion. “I think that with phones in class, teachers have been forced to turn into detectives always trying to catch students rather

than simply teach them. The more restrictions we can have on phones the better.”

On the other hand, more moderate perspectives on phone usage during the school day were also offered.

“Phone usage for teens is a highly complicated issue,” school board member Kathleen Tysse stated. “I think for Pre-K through to 8th grade prohibition of phones is a very effective step. Restricting a graduating senior’s phone usage who may need to communicate with an employer or check college applications, however, compared to a freshman with none of those responsibilities isn’t necessarily the best way to handle this issue.”

English teacher Ms. Lisa Eaton shares Ms. Tysse’s more nuanced perspective on the differences between a freshman and senior.

“I think [phone restrictions] should be based on the age of the children, like a gradual release of responsibility. I think perhaps ninth graders would be more strict whereas seniors could be less strict,” Ms. Eaton commented.

Ms. Eaton also raised the point that this updated phone policy may not have even been necessary given the effectiveness of our current restrictions.

“For this particular school, since we instituted the phone caddies, that has really changed the dynamic of the classroom,” she added.



Virginia has updated its phone policy in schools to be even more restrictive in the next school year. (Photo Via Vox)

Other teachers also recognize the positive effects of this year’s phone policy, and are content with the current system.

“I honestly like the phone plan we currently have, I think it works really well,” stated the Algebra I and IB Math AI SL I teacher Mr. Josh Slager.

Whether or not this jump to prohibition was necessary, the decision is no longer in the hands of the school.

“No matter how I’d like to see this policy play out in the high school, the decision is no longer up to me,” Ms. Tysse expressed.

The only question that remains for Meridian is how best to implement the bill for the incoming school year.

“There’s no fool proof method,” Mr. Laub said. “I have no interest in metal detectors or searching students, I think it’ll be a combination of a tool whether it’s a locker or a pouch, with a stricter policy that says ‘hey, I see you have your phone out’ and then

taking it from the student rather than telling them to put it away.”

Mr. Anderson proposed an alternative view on the most effective way to enact the bill.

“I think to really make this policy effective you really need teachers to just crack down on phone usage. Students keep devices in their bags and there needs to be a step towards harsher measures and punishments if phones are out,” he argued.

Mr. Walsh offered his own solution to implementation.

“One argument could be that you alter the day-to-day schedule to have Stable Group before first period and then students have to leave the phone there instead of carrying it with them all day,” he suggested.

There is no question as to whether phones will be prohibited in the coming school year, but for now the question of implementation remains with no clear solution emerging.

No Uninvited Guests: Meridian's Shield Against Immigration Enforcement

BY RACHEL GROOMS



Common signs protest the presence of ICE at schools due to concerns regarding student safety. (Photo via nea.org)

National debates surrounding immigration enforcement encompass the political world. At Meridian, the conversation becomes more personal. As federal rhetoric shifts and state protections evolve, many students are left to consider whether the school administration is truly prepared.

The prevailing sentiment among students indicated apprehension. A majority of students expressed negative feelings towards the potential presence of immigration enforcement on campus.

“School is supposed to be a space of equal opportunity,” one student remarked. “Education should be accessible and safe for all, regardless of race, or immigration status.”

For others, the fear stems from a place of anxiety. “ICE-related issues affect me emotionally a lot. They cause stress, anxiety, and constant worry, especially about my family and friends. It makes it harder to focus in class and affects my performance. Sometimes it also makes me feel unsafe, even at school.”

When asked, “Do you feel the school is prepared to support students who may be impacted by immigration-related concerns?” a majority of students responded with “not sure” or a similar phrase. This uncertainty stems from a disconnect between administrative protocol and student awareness.

Neighboring districts have taken more public steps to address student anxiety. Alexandria City (ACPS) launched a “Report ICE” hotline so residents can notify if the agents are seen near sensitive locations like schools. Arlington (APS) distributed “Know Your Rights” flyers in multiple languages and created a “Family Preparedness Plan” that helps students know exactly what to do if a parent is detained while they are in school.

According to census data, approximately 16.6% to 17.1% of the population in Falls Church is foreign-born. This creates a high-stakes environment for any shift in national immigration enforcement policy.

Virginia’s statewide approach to immigration enforcement drastically shifted the day Gov. Abigail Spanberger took office. By ending the section 287(g) agreements that had required state and local agencies to cooperate with ICE, agencies were required to identify and terminate any remaining agreements.

At the federal level, the tone is a complete contrast. According to a Department of Homeland Security

statement, “This action empowers the brave men and women in CBP and ICE to enforce our immigration laws and catch criminal aliens — including murderers and rapists — who have illegally come into our country. Criminals will no longer be able to hide in America’s schools and churches to avoid arrest. The Trump Administration will not tie the hands of our brave law enforcement, and instead trusts them to use common sense.”

For students who already feel vulnerable, this rhetoric has an impact. In nearby districts, this uncertainty has escalated into schoolwide walkouts. At Woodbridge High School an anti-ICE demonstration resulted in over 300 student suspensions, reflecting how strongly many students feel about the issue.

Legally, however, public schools operate with strict protections. Under *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), public schools cannot deny education based on immigration status. FERPA also requires schools to protect the privacy of student records.

“FERPA is a federal law that requires schools to protect the privacy of student education records, so the guidance given to our principals and directors is to touch base with me so that I can make sure we comply with the law — and any court issued document — while protecting the privacy of students,” stated the school division’s attorney Patricia Minson.

Principal Laub was

quick to clarify the protocol. “If ICE showed up at school, we call our school division’s lawyer... She then determines whether they have a valid warrant or executive order.”

He explained that he has the authority to deny entry to anyone who isn’t a student or an employee.

“I can either invite them in. Or I can tell them, no thanks, we’re not having visitors right now.”

If law enforcement presents a valid judicial warrant, however, the school may legally be required to comply.

“There is a difference between a judicial warrant or subpoena and an immigration warrant... the response would depend on what is included in the document presented by an ICE officer,” Minson explained.

Principal Laub stressed that student information is not shared casually. “I would never give that information out unless there’s a legal warrant... cardinal rule number one is we don’t tell anyone any information about our students, period.”

He also acknowledged scenarios happening at other local schools where ICE agents would wait just outside of the school property, operating from a public space. In these cases, he would not have authority to deny them access.

Inside the building though, his answer was firm. “We’re not having that here at Meridian... we don’t let uninvited guests into school.”

Laub also noted that teachers are intentionally shielded from handling these types of situations. “We’re just not gonna have a scenario where police just show up at a classroom door. That’s not gonna happen.”

Many students were hoping for a statement to be put out regarding safety in the classroom; not a political statement, just clarity and reassurance.

One student noted, “It would also help to have clear information about rights and resources, and staff who understand these situations.”

Another student was direct about what they believed the school should release publicly.

“I think the school needs to express more that they’re a safe space and send out a message saying they will ban ICE from entry.”

When I asked Laub whether he feels worried for student safety, he said no — but not because he thinks nothing could happen.

“I feel confident that we have in place the people and the steps to take care of all of our students should crises and emergencies occur.”

He also expressed willingness to communicate more with the student body if anxiety persisted.

“Every student that is legally enrolled here at Meridian High School in Falls Church, VA, is a student that we care for and treat with equal respect and dignity.”

This Week Around Falls Church

Thursday, April 23

Historic Architectural Review Board Meeting
7:00–9:00 p.m.
City Hall, Dogwood Room A and B
Verified city meeting listing.

Thursday Night Sporele Events Pub Quiz
7:00–9:00 p.m.
Clare & Don's Beach Shack

Friday, April 24

Dan & Chuck
5:30 p.m.
Clare & Don's Beach Shack

Listening Room Show: Virginia Man x Sun Child Solo Acoustic Show
Doors at 6:00 p.m.; show 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards
7:30 p.m.
The Music Center at Strathmore
Finalists perform original work live, winners announced.

Saturday, April 25

Falls Church Farmers Market
8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
City Hall Parking Lot, 300 Park Ave., Falls Church

Falls Church Arbor Day Celebration and Tree Planting
11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Cherry Hill Park

Free Concert: The Renaissance Revelers
4:00 p.m.
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Arlington
Concert benefits AFAC through donations.

His Girl Friday (Creative Cauldron)
2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
127 E. Broad St., Falls Church

Molly & Mark Duo
9:30 p.m.
Dogwood Tavern

Sunday, April 26

Earth Day Every Day Festival
11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Lee Heights Shops, Arlington
Free family-friendly festival with music, art, food and more.

Staging Shakespeare: From Script to Performance
2:00–3:00 p.m.
Mary Riley Styles Public Library
Registration required.

Monday, April 27

Electoral Board Canvass Reconvenes
10:00 a.m.
300 Park Ave., Falls Church

City Council Meeting
7:30–11:00 p.m.
Council Chambers/Court Room
Public comment welcome.

Tuesday, April 28

Recycling 101: How To Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle
6:30–7:30 p.m.
Mary Riley Styles Public Library
Registration required.

Wednesday, April 29

Public Utilities Commission
7:00–9:00 p.m.
Laurel Room, 300 Park Ave., Falls Church

Urban Forestry Commission Meeting
7:00–9:30 p.m.
City Hall, Dogwood Room A and B

Queer Book Club
7:00–8:00 p.m.
One More Page Bookstore, Arlington

Ongoing 250 and Counting Exhibition (Falls Church Arts)
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For Breaking News and Events



FAMILIES AND YOUNG ARTISTS gather for hands-on creativity during World Art Day festivities in Falls Church this past weekend, where children explored painting and crafts at an outdoor community art station. (Photo: Gary Mester)



THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH hosted Vietnamese Heritage Day this past weekend at Cherry Hill Farmhouse with live performances, folk dances, music, and martial arts demonstrations. (Photo: Gary Mester)



COMING SOON

APR 25 SHOT THRU THE HEART BON JOVI TRIBUTE

MAY 01 ABACAB TRIBUTE TO GENESIS & PHIL COLLINS

MAY 09 THE LEGWARMERS 80S RETRO DANCE PARTY

MAY 15 LIVE SALSA NIGHT

MAY 16 SUPER 70S ROCK SHOW 70S ARENA ROCK

MAY 17 THE ULTIMATE DOORS TRIBUTE TO THE DOORS

MAY 22 MISIL STEREO TRIBUTE TO SODA STEREO

MAY 23 5 DOLLAR COMEDY NIGHT

MAY 29 EYES OF THE NILE TRIBUTE TO IRON MAIDEN

MAY 30 BOSTYX TRIBUTE TO BOSTON & STYX

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A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Penny Gross
Former Fairfax County Supervisor

It's never a good idea to pick a fight with the Pope. Leaders in the Middle Ages learned that lesson and were excommunicated, but Donald Trump and J.D. Vance either are unaware of Pope Leo XIV's moral authority as the worldwide leader of more than a billion Catholics, or they just don't care. It's probably a combination of the two. Mr. Trump is not Catholic, so he was not raised to respect the role of the Pope or instilled with the grace to refrain from challenging his authority over matters of faith, theology, and morality. Trump says he relies on his "gut" when making decisions. A pope, on the other hand, must use his head, heart, and soul to inform and frame any papal comments about important issues affecting Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The dust-up between the Trump Administration and the Vatican is unusual but not surprising. Picking fights with world leaders is a hallmark of this administration, led by the bully-in-chief and his vice-bully. Perhaps Pope Leo's remarks challenging global leaders "who are ravaging the world by spending bil-

ions on war" hit too close to home, even though the first American Pope mentioned no names. Mr. Vance said Pope Leo should "stay out of politics and concentrate on matters of morality." As pastor to the world, morality is exactly what Pope Leo was focused on when he said that "the masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet often a lifetime is not enough to rebuild."

This was not the first time that J.D. Vance has lectured a pope. He hadn't been vice president for a full month before he castigated the late Pope Francis for the church's aid to immigrants, questioning whether that effort was about humanitarian concerns or simply a worry about the bottom line, such as obtaining government grants to help with refugee resettlements. (The Trump Administration cancelled an \$11 million grant to Florida Catholic Charities last month, although it is unknown whether the cancellation was a result of the most recent dispute.) When Mr. Vance insisted that the concept of "ordo amoris" (the order of love) meant that the well-being of fellow Americans

outweighed any care for immigrants, Pope Francis reminded him that "ordo amoris" teaches that all persons deserve dignified treatment, especially the poorest and marginalized. It does not grant privilege to some and sacrifice to others.

My old catechism textbook lays it out incontrovertibly: the Pope and the bishops, as the lawful successors of the apostles, have power from Christ Himself to teach, to sanctify, and to govern the faithful in spiritual matters. As I wrote in a February 2025 column, my Catholic education focused on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as well as the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. There was no "I" or "me" in Catholic school; the focus was on service to others, and how we could make the world a better place. Mr. Vance converted to Catholicism in 2019. What was covered in the pre-baptism classes he took is unknown to me, but he might have benefitted from a broader Catholic education, and learned more about theological and cardinal virtues. We should want candidates and elected officials to share and practice accepted common values, but Mr. Vance should have figured out that a vice president's charge is politics. He should leave theology and morality to Pope Leo.

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CRIME REPORT

**Week of
April 13 - 19, 2026**

Larceny from Vehicle, W Broad St, Apr 13, 9:44 a.m., an unknown suspect stole a red tool case from the back of the victim's vehicle.

Fraud - False Pretenses, W Broad St, Apr 13, 11:11 a.m., victim provided banking information to an unknown suspect imper-

sonating an Uber Eats Support agent, which led to unauthorized charges.

Destruction of Property, Haycock Rd, Apr 17, 10:54 a.m., a report for graffiti was taken.

Shoplifting, E Broad St, Apr 17, 4:32 p.m., an unknown male suspect stole merchandise.

Sexual Assault, Park Ave, Apr 19, 8:52 p.m., a delayed report for sexual assault was taken.

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LEGAL NOTICE

**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.

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

The ordinances referenced below were given first reading on April 13, 2026. Public hearings are scheduled for Monday, April 27, 2026 and Monday, May 11, 2026, with second reading and Council action scheduled for Monday, May 11, 2026. All meetings begin at 7:30 p.m.; public hearings will be held as soon thereafter as the matters may be heard.

(TO26-03) ORDINANCE FIXING AND DETERMINING THE BUDGET OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR EXPENDITURE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 ACROSS THE FOLLOWING FUNDS: GENERAL FUND; SEWER FUND; STORMWATER FUND; CABLE ACCESS FUND; AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND; SCHOOL OPERATING FUND; SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE FUND; SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE FUND; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FUNDS; AND ADOPTING THE FY2027-FY2032 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

The FY2027 proposed budget and Capital

Improvements Program (CIP) includes: \$134,334,059 for the General Fund revenues and expenditures. \$11,133,259 for the Sewer Fund revenues and expenditures. \$2,839,324 for the Stormwater Fund revenues and expenditures. \$290,815 for the Cable Access Fund revenues and expenditures. \$3,853,412 for the Affordable Housing Fund revenues and expenditures. \$71,591,629 for the School Operating Fund revenues and expenditures. \$3,058,845 School Community Service Fund revenues and expenditures. \$1,789,008 for the School Food Service Fund revenues and expenditures.

The proposed FY2027 budget and appropriation for the CIP includes \$1,969,000 for the General Government and Schools, \$9,435,208 for the Special Transportation Fund, \$6,183,259 for the Sewer Fund, and \$1,332,935 for the Stormwater Fund for a total of \$18,920,402. The FY2027 CIP is funded with \$8,704,909 in grants, \$2,404,000 of General Fund revenues, \$985,000 of General Fund Capital Reserves, and \$6,183,259 of Sewer Fund revenues and fund balance; and \$643,234 of Stormwater Fund revenues and fund balance.

The proposed FY2027-2032 CIP includes \$19,916,000 for the General Government and Schools, \$100,650,158 for the Special Transportation Fund, \$33,465,330 for the Sewer Fund, and \$8,694,035 for the Stormwater Fund for a total of \$162,717,523 to be funded with \$94,856,409 in grants, \$13,940,000 of General Fund revenues, \$4,860,000 of General Fund Capital Reserves, \$13,673,259 of Sewer Fund revenues and fund balance, \$2,084,734 of Stormwater Fund revenues and fund balance, and \$27,281,121 of debt proceeds; \$6,022,000 is unfunded.

The FY2027 budget and appropriation for the West Falls Community Development Authority Fund includes \$885,057 in expenditures and revenues and revenues from prior year surplus of \$10,917 and special assessments of \$874,140 which will be levied and collected by the City in accordance with the request from the West Falls Community Development Authority (CDA) pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding dated July 1, 2022 between the City, CDA, and other parties.

(TO26-04) ORDINANCE SETTING THE RATE OF TAX LEVY ON REAL ESTATE FOR TAX YEAR 2027 AND ON PERSONAL PROPERTY, MACHINERY AND TOOLS AND ALL OTHER PROPERTY SEGREGATED BY LAW FOR LOCAL TAXATION IN THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH VIRGINIA FOR TAX YEAR 2026

The proposed real estate tax rate for the tax year beginning July 1, 2026 is:

- \$1.185 upon each \$100.00 of assessed value of real estate in the City of Falls Church, which is no change from the current rate. (See display ad in this newspaper for more details.)

The proposed tax rate for tangible personal property, and machinery and tools, and all other property segregated by law for the tax year beginning January 1, 2026 are:

- \$5.00 upon each \$100.00 of assessed value on tangible personal property, and machinery and tools, and all other property segregated by law for local taxation within the City, including the property separately classified by § 58.1-3500 et seq. of the Code of Virginia, which is no change from the current rate;
- \$5.00 upon each \$100 of assessed value for vehicles classified under § 58.1-3506 A.48.a through 58.1-3506 A.48.d, which is an increase of \$0.20 (4.2%) from the current rate;
- and pursuant to § 58.1-2606 of the Code of Virginia, a portion of assessed value of tangible personal property of public service corporations shall be taxed at the real estate rate.

(TO26-05) ORDINANCE SETTING THE STORMWATER UTILITY BILLING UNIT RATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHAPTER 42, ARTICLE VII OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA AS OF JULY 1, 2026

Under the legal authority granted by VA § 15.2-2114, an increase to the City stormwater

utility unit billing rate from \$21.83 per 200 square feet of impervious surface (billing unit) to \$23.36 per billing unit annually is proposed, effective July 1, 2026, which would constitute an increase of 7% per billing unit, resulting in an approximately \$23.00 annual increase to the stormwater fee for the average homeowner

(TO26-06) ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, CHAPTER 42, "UTILITIES," ARTICLE III, "SEWERS," SECTION 42-172, "AVAILABILITY CHARGE," TO INCREASE SEWER SERVICE AND AVAILABILITY CHARGES

Under the legal authority granted by VA § 15.2-2119, sewer rates and fees are proposed as follows:

an increase to the sewer commodity rate from \$11.15 per thousand gallons of water billed (billing unit) to \$11.71 is proposed, effective July 1, 2026, which would constitute an increase of 5% per billing unit. A 5% increase to sewer availability charges from \$10,009 to \$10,509 for single-family dwellings and detached and semi-detached duplexes or townhouses; from \$8,008.00 to \$8,408 for apartment or condominium buildings; from \$2,503 to \$2,628 for motel, hotel units; and from \$500 to \$525 for each drainage fixture unit for commercial, industrial, and other uses.

(TO26-07) ORDINANCE SETTING THE SOLID WASTE COLLECTION FEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHAPTER 34 "SOLID WASTE," SECTION 34-3 "RESIDENTIAL SOLID WASTE COLLECTION," OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA, TO BE EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026

Under the legal authority granted by VA § 15.2-928(A)(vi) solid waste fees are proposed as follows:

- A \$10 increase to the solid waste fee from \$236 to \$246 per year for a small (35-gallon) refuse cart; and
- A \$12 increase to the solid waste fee from \$336 to \$348 per year for a large (64/65-gallon) refuse cart.

(TO26-12) ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 15, "FEES;" ARTICLE I "IN GENERAL," ARTICLE II, "DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES;" AND ARTICLE III, "DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS" OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH, TO ADJUST DEVELOPMENT-RELATED FEES; TO REMOVE REFERENCE TO COPY FEES; AND ADJUST THE FEE FOR RETURNED CHECKS

Under the legal authority granted by Virginia law to establish and adjust fees related to development, fees are proposed to be increased to recover the reasonable costs associated with administering, reviewing, and enforcing applicable building, fire, and zoning regulations.

All public hearings will be held in the Council Chambers, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia. Remote participation information at www.fallschurchva.gov/publiccomment. Comments may also be sent to cityclerk@fallschurchva.gov. For copies of legislation, 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).

CELESTE HEATH, CITY CLERK

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ABC NOTICE

Kyuramen IAD LLC trading as Kyuramen, 2340 Silver Arrow Way, Herndon, VA 20171 is applying to the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Authority for a Restaurant, Beer and Wine and Mixed Beverage and Specialty Liqueurs, On and Off premises. Kam Wong, Managing Member. 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.

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LEGAL NOTICE

**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF AN APPLICATION BY VIRGINIA ELECTRIC AND POWER COMPANY
FOR REVISION OF RATE ADJUSTMENT CLAUSE: RIDER CERC, CHESTERFIELD ENERGY
RELIABILITY CENTER, FOR THE RATE YEAR COMMENCING JANUARY 1, 2027
CASE NO. PUR-2026-00022**

On March 3, 2026, Virginia Electric and Power Company ("Dominion" or "Company") filed an application ("Application") with the State Corporation Commission ("Commission") pursuant to § 56-585.1 A 6 of the Code of Virginia ("Code") and the directive contained in Ordering Paragraph (2) of the Commission's Final Order in Case No. PUR-2025-00037 to revise its rate adjustment clause ("RAC"), Rider CERC, for costs associated with Dominion's Chesterfield Energy Reliability Center Project ("CERC Project"). Through the Application, the Company seeks to update the Commission on the status of the CERC Project and to revise its Rider CERC RAC for the rate year commencing January 1, 2027, through December 31, 2027 ("Rate Year").

The total revenue requirement requested for recovery for the Rate Year through Rider CERC is \$70,423,197. The Company asserts that due to the suspension of the CERC Project Final Order, Dominion is recovering the revenue requirement authorized in that case over the remainder of the 2026 rate year, beginning in March. Further, Dominion asserts that the true-up for this Rate Year will be proposed in the 2027 Rider CERC annual update.

If the proposed Rider CERC is approved as requested, it would incrementally increase a residential customer's monthly bill, based on 1,000 kilowatt hours of usage per month, by \$0.39. Dominion also requests, for billing purposes, a rate effective date for usage on or after the latter of January 1, 2027, or the first day of the month which is at least 15 days following the date of any Commission order approving the updates to Rider CERC.

The Company's Application and related documents can be viewed on the Commission's website at <https://www.scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch#caseDocs/146798>.

Interested persons are encouraged to review the Application and supporting documents for the details of the Company's proposal.

TAKE NOTICE that the Commission may apportion revenues among customer classes and/or design rates in a manner differing from that shown in the Application and supporting documents and thus may adopt rates that differ from those appearing in the Company's Application and supporting documents.

The Commission entered an Order for Notice and Hearing in this proceeding that, among other things, scheduled a public hearing on Dominion's Application. On September 1, 2026, at 10 a.m., the Hearing Examiner appointed to this case will hold the telephonic portion of the hearing for the purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses. On or before August 25, 2026, any person desiring to offer testimony as a public witness shall provide to the Commission: (a) your name, and (b) the telephone number that you wish the Commission to call during the hearing to receive your testimony. This information may be provided to the Commission: (i) by filling out a form on the Commission's website at [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting](https://www.scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting); or (ii) by calling (804) 371-9141. This public witness hearing will be webcast at [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting](https://www.scc.virginia.gov/case-information/webcasting).

Beginning at 10 a.m. on September 1, 2026, the Hearing Examiner will telephone sequentially each person who has signed up to testify as provided above.

Beginning at 10 a.m. on September 1, 2026, or at the conclusion of the public witness portion of the hearing, whichever is later, in the Commission's second floor courtroom located in the Tyler Building, 1300 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, the Hearing Examiner will convene a hearing to receive testimony and evidence related to the Application from the Company, any respondents, and the Commission's Staff.

To promote administrative efficiency and timely service of filings upon participants, the Commission has directed the electronic filing of testimony and pleadings, unless

they contain confidential information, and has required electronic service on parties to this proceeding.

An electronic copy of the public version of the Company's Application may be obtained by submitting a written request to counsel for the Company: Elaine S. Ryan, Esquire, McGuireWoods LLP, Gateway Plaza, 800 East Canal Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or eryan@mcguirewoods.com. Interested persons also may download unofficial copies of the public version of the Application and other documents filed in this case from the Commission's website: <https://www.scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch#caseDocs/146798>.

On or before August 25, 2026, any interested person may file comments on the Application by following the instructions found on the Commission's website: [scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submitpublic-comments](https://www.scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submitpublic-comments). Those unable, as a practical matter, to file comments electronically may file such comments by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00022.

On or before June 1, 2026, any person or entity wishing to participate as a respondent in this proceeding may do so by filing a notice of participation at [scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](https://www.scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling). Those unable, as a practical matter, to file a notice of participation electronically may file such notice by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel. The respondent simultaneously shall serve electronically a copy of the notice of participation on counsel to the Company, Commission Staff, and any other respondents. Pursuant to Rule 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, 5 VAC 5-20-10, *et seq.* ("Rules of Practice"), any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation, or government body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by Rule 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00022.

On or before June 30, 2026, each respondent may file with the Clerk of the Commission at [scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](https://www.scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling) any testimony and exhibits by which the respondent expects to establish its case. Any respondent unable, as a practical matter, to file testimony and exhibits electronically may file such by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Each witness's testimony shall include a summary not to exceed one page. All testimony and exhibits shall be served electronically on the Commission's Staff, the Company, and all other respondents simultaneous with their filing. In all filings, respondents shall comply with the Commission's Rules of Practice, including 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, and 5 VAC 5-20-240, *Prepared testimony and exhibits*. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2026-00022.

Any documents filed in paper form with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission in this docket may use both sides of the paper. In all other respects, except as modified by the Commission's Order for Notice and Hearing, all filings shall comply fully with the requirements of 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice.

The public version of the Company's Application and other documents filed in this case, the Commission's Rules of Practice, and the Commission's Order for Notice and Hearing may be viewed at: <https://www.scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch#caseDocs/146798> and <https://www.scc.virginia.gov/case-information/rules-of-practice-and-procedure/>.

VIRGINIA ELECTRIC AND POWER COMPANY

IN MEMORIAM: HENRY J. (JACK) GORDON

LTC Henry J. (Jack) Gordon (ret) died on September 4, 2025, of late-stage Alzheimer's disease at the age of 89. He was born on Governor's Island, NY, NY, and lived at Fort Leavenworth, KS and Newark, NJ as a child. Jack received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point and graduated in 1958. He was an Army Ranger and his career spanned 24 years. He served two tours in Vietnam and received several awards, including Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster (twice), Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf and Combat Infantryman Badge. He earned his Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Pittsburgh. He attended and later taught at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS. While there he pursued a Ph.D. in International Affairs finishing all but the dissertation. Next, he was assigned to University of Notre

Dame as Professor of Military Science and became a devoted Irish fan. While there he developed and co-taught the University's first class on War, Law, and Ethics with professors from other departments. He was an avid reader, sailor, and DIY guy. He learned to sail in San Francisco Bay on his 30-foot boat HHS Bliss. He was elected Commodore of the Presidio Yacht Club and was recognized with multiple awards. With friends, he sailed in Tonga, British Virgin Islands, Greece, and Baja California. Jack is survived by his wife of 65 years, Henriette; his children John (Kelly) Gordon, Atlantic Beach, FL; Leslie Gordon, Falls Church, VA; three grandchildren William (Melissa) Gordon, Marietta, GA; Kresil Cloud, Fort Collins, CO; Peter Shuman, Falls Church, VA; and two great-grandchildren Quinn and Miles Gordon. Services will be April 30, 2026—10 A.M. mass at St. James Catholic Church, 705 Park Avenue, Falls Church; 1 P.M.

Interment at Arlington National Cemetery. In lieu of flowers please make a donation to Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 North Virginia Street, Falls Church, VA 22046.



CRITTER CORNER



PENNY HARPER LOVING LIFE!

IN MEMORIAM: EDITH ("EDIE") SMOLINSKI

Edith ("Edie") Smolinski, 87, passed away peacefully on April 6, 2026, at Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads.

Born on November 27, 1938, in Bemus Point, New York, Edie was the youngest of four children. She graduated from Bemus Point High School and went on to earn her bachelor's degree from SUNY Oswego. Dedicated to lifelong learning and service, she later received master's degrees from both the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech.

Edie was preceded in death by her beloved husband of 62 years, Tom Smolinski. Together they built a life centered on family, community, and shared purpose. She is survived by her four children: Scott (Valerie) Smolinski, Tim (Vicky) Smolinski, Mary (Kenny) McInerney, and Sarah Kassan. She also leaves behind seven cherished grandchildren—Kelly (John) Thorsen, Heather (James) Brock, Clare McInerney, Tommy McInerney, Grant Kassan, Chad Kassan, and Ava Smolinski—each of whom brought her immense pride and joy.

In 1972, Edie and Tom settled in Falls Church, Virginia, where Edie devoted her career to education in Fairfax County Public Schools. She began as a middle school mathematics teacher and went on to serve as a guidance counselor and later

Director of Guidance. Throughout her career, she was a steadfast advocate for students, guided by her deep belief in the inherent worth and potential of every individual.

Edie's commitment to service extended far beyond her professional life. For more than 30 years, she and Tom were active members of the Kiwanis Club of South Arlington. She served as president of Citizens for a Better City (CBC) in Falls Church, volunteered with Arlington Thrive (formerly AMEN), and was an engaged participant in the League of Women Voters. She organized numerous "Help the Homeless" Walks at Arlington schools, raising vital support for Thrive clients, and was a dedicated supporter of the Falls Church Education Foundation, helping provide scholarships to local students. In recognition of her lasting contributions, Edie was honored as part of the 2023 Falls Church Women's History Walk, celebrating women who have made a meaningful impact on the community.

Edie and Tom cherished their summers at the Chautauqua Institution in New York, where they enjoyed enriching lectures, music, outdoor activities, and the fellowship of dear friends. In 2015, they moved to Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads, where they embraced a

vibrant and welcoming community. They quickly formed deep and lasting friendships and became a beloved presence there.

Edie found particular joy in playing and teaching mahjong. She delighted in both the strategy of the game and the connections it fostered, devoting time and care to her mahjong group and treasuring the laughter, friendship, and shared moments they created together.

Edie will be remembered for her warmth, generosity, and unwavering belief in others. Her legacy lives on in the many lives she touched—as an educator, volunteer, friend, and devoted member of her family.

A Celebration of Life and reception will be held on Sunday, May 31, at 4:00 p.m. at Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads.



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MOVEMENT ADVANCEMENT PROJECT, 2024

ad COUNCIL

You Could Watch It All Night: 'My Fair Lady' Sparkles in Vienna

BY PATRICIA LESLIE

I could have watched all night and still have watched some more of Vienna Theatre Company's "My Fair Lady," now onstage at Vienna's Community Center.

It's a delight, the best I've seen of the theatre's plays over several years, hard to imagine that a show this big could be successfully produced by a community theatre with an all-volunteer staff, but, oh!

That overpowering feeling, a thousand things they've never done before.

The enchanting music alone pours out of every door and is well worth the price of a ticket (\$18) with knockout costumes by Juliana Cofrancesco and Farrell Hartigan.

Stage manager and last-minute director Katie Boone says the company saved its money for this "Lady," and it shows.

The actors get all spruced up and lookin' in their prime with four costume changes for each actor and four changes alone in one scene for the female star, Eliza Doolittle (Nicole Keats Headd).

She has a delicate, crystal clear voice which carries her well beyond

expectations, like one of the beautiful flowers she tries to sell to the haughty and mighty convincing Charles Boone who is Mr. Higgins, the conceited aristocrat who, with his sidekick Greg LaNave as the perfectly cast Colonel Pickering, have a contest to see if Eliza can change her Cockney talk and fool 'em at a fancy ball and masquerade as a duchess, or, would that be a princess?

That's how the speech professor (Brandon Seehoffer) describes her at the ball: She's royalty from Hungary!

It's 1912 in London when (maybe) class distinctions are more pronounced than they are today and Eliza by her wit becomes a part of Higgins's courtly circle, Professor Higgins who soon grows accustomed to Eliza's face.

He was serenely independent and content before they met and yet...

But not to ignore the show's producer, Eric Storck, who doubles as Eliza's father, Alfred P. Doolittle, another perfectly cast and costumed poor fellow from the gutter who's down on his luck but finds a little bit of it to land him a gig and some

shillings from no less than academia's finest.

Mrs. Pearce (Nancy Nowalk) is Higgins's housekeeper whose eyes roll hither and yon and back again as she hears Higgins spout some new epithet he throws at the "garbage" found in the street. (Hats off to costumers and the hair and makeup artist who fashioned Mrs. Pearce's hair in a quite right old-fashioned marm style with a quaint dress to match.)

Janice Zucker is Mr. Higgins's mother, equally as strong and worldly well endowed to put down her son and his foolishness.

And then there's Freddy (Patrick Cochran), the strongest vocalist, who often walked down the street where Eliza stays with Higgins on Wimpole Street.

Charles Boone and Jack Rollins have judiciously used props (by Claire Tse) in a marvelous example of what can be done on a small budget.

In front of the stage curtains, they put up a front door and bushes where actors come and go while Freddy marches up and down the stage singing that he is several stories high.

And lest not forget the disarming ensemble who carry every scene they're in, producing the best music and laughs, critical to the show's success.

It's spring, budge outa your chair for ding! dong! The bells will chime. "My Fair Lady" is based on the 1964 classic film by Allen Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe which was adapted from the 1956 Broadway production which won six Tony awards. The film, starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison, won eight Academy Awards.

Wouldn't it be lovely if the production omitted the 1950's and 60's sexist orders and words but don't let them keep you from enjoying this fabulous show.

Other members of the cast are

Shelby Kaplan, Cara Giambrone, Kim Paul, Caroline Kinney, Steven Palkovitz, Christine Domin, Bella Hyun Huh, Susan Pauly, Ann Storck and Lauren Sunday.

The creative team includes Ari McSherry, lighting; Zophia Pryzby, choreographer; Darin Stringer, music director; Emily Doppée, Myer Kim and Jon Roberts sound designers and, Roberts, special effects, too.

Duration: A fast three hours with a 15-minute break. Now through May 3, 2026 on Friday and Saturday nights at 7 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna, VA 22180. Buy tickets online or at the box office. For more information: vtshows@yahoo.com



From left, Patrick Cochran, Kim Paul, Caroline Kinney, Christine Domin and Lauren Sunday in Vienna Theatre Company's "My Fair Lady" (Photo: Kevin Lukacs)

'250 and Counting:' FCA's Take on the Semiquincentennial

BY MARK DREISONSTOK

In 2026, the United States is celebrating the 250th anniversary of its founding. The U.S. Semiquincentennial is the theme of "250 and Counting" at Falls Church Arts Gallery and, as is usual for the venue, presents a wide swath of takes on the given theme. Artworks with historical, cultural, and political allusions abound, all in a variety of media.

An enjoyable historically themed portrait with a local setting features subjects dressed in 1776-era historical costume in Falls Church in Rajendra KC's vivid watercolor "Independence Shared in Falls Church." It commemorates September 10, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was read publicly at the front entrance of The Falls Church, the church which gave the community its name.

America is a land of capital-

ism and consumerism, and this was reflected in artworks featuring Marlboro cigarettes, McDonalds' French fries (Alexa Hanisch's oil painting "The Golden Order"), and Brown's Hardware, late of Falls Church. Of course, capitalism and consumerism can blend into communities with local establishments and their demise. Recently, the Falls Church community lost its iconic hardware establishment of more than 140 years. Susan Updike's linocut "Brown's Hardware" beautifully and warmly memorializes this community icon as it had been for generations, so that even now as it is no more, it never truly will be gone.

Another Updike linocut of interest is "Thomas Point." This time the subject is an American lighthouse, namely a close-to-water screw-pile lighthouse using anchors drilled down into the ground below to affix themselves to the seafloor. For many, the scene will remind them

of the scenic waterways of the U.S., such as the Chesapeake Bay, the location of "Thomas Point."

The Nation's Capital is on display in "Monumental Reflections," Amy Woodhouse's mixed media conception of the Washington Monument, and two views of Washington in cherry blossom time: "Nancy M. Patrick's broad acrylic "Cherry Blossoms" and Ann Tannous' beautiful oil painting, "Hello Jefferson," with the cherry blossoms among the Jefferson Memorial and the Tidal Basin.

In the exhibition, moments from American history are showcased. We were particularly reminded of the history of Marion Anderson in "Merete Evans' poignant watercolor "When the Nation Listened." The gallery card reads: "Marion Anderson sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before a crowd of 75,000 people and was broadcast to millions of listeners nationwide."

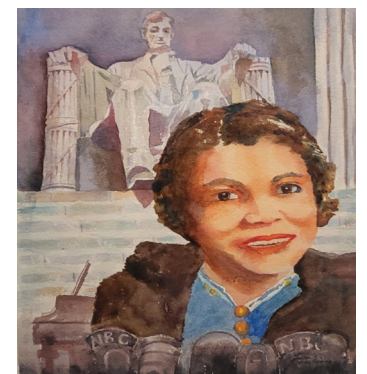
This followed the Daughters of the American Revolution's denial to the singer of "permission to perform at Constitutional Hall because of her race." The painting depicts not only the celebrated contralto but also the statue of the seated Lincoln in the background, a piano, and radio microphones.

Xianling Liu's watercolor "Walking for Peace" presents "a group of Buddhist monks walking from Texas to Washington, D.C.," an event in recent memory which many readers will likely recall. Other artworks in the collection present the freedom to demonstrate and protest, which is a vital part of American democracy.

Finally, patriotism is on display in Miguel Hobbs' mixed media on canvas "Threads of Service," which reflects his experience as a soldier who once wore the uniform of the U.S. armed services. Threads of cloth colored in the red, white, and

blue of the American flag and with the emblems of the various service branches reflect, according to the artist, "honoring national ideals" as well as "the bodies and minds I saw changed by war."

"250 and Counting," on exhibition through May 31, 2026, will give visitors much to contemplate in terms of American ideals, scenery, cities, communities, and historical events.



"When The Nation Listened" (Photo: Falls Church Arts)

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