

January 29 -  
February 4, 2026  
FOUNDED  
1991  
•  
VOL. XXXV  
No. 51

# Falls Church News-Press

FALLS CHURCH,  
VIRGINIA  
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THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH'S INDEPENDENT, LOCALLY-OWNED NEWSPAPER OF RECORD, SERVING N. VIRGINIA

## C'wealth Atty Leads National Fight Back

FC's Dehghani-Tafti Joins.  
Anti-Federal Overreach

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

Concerned that with new Democratic leadership in Virginia that Virginia could become the target of a major ICE offensive, Falls Church's and Arlington's Commonwealth Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti joined eight fellow district attorneys and prosecutors across the nation Tuesday in an association called The Project to Fight Against Federal Overreach. The effort is designed to assist in prosecuting federal law enforcement officers who violate state laws.

The coalition of progressive district attorneys and prosecutors includes the elected attorneys, in addition to Dehghani-Tafti, from Commonwealth Attorney Steve Descano in Fairfax County to Norfolk and Portsmouth in Virginia, Pima County, Arizona, Dallas and Austin, Texas, Philadelphia, Pa., and Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Minnesota.

The Fight Against Federal Overreach (FAFO) coalition gained national notoriety through a report in the New York Times yesterday headlined, "City Prosecutors Join

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## Winter Arts



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## ENOUGH, ALREADY



**SNOW, SNOW, SNOW.** The extraordinary weather event that slammed much of the eastern part of the U.S., including this area, was unique because of the persistence of the sub-freezing temperatures that have persisted, adding a heavy snow and icing component that continues to make movement risky for all. Egad, more snow is forecast for the weekend. (Photo: Jen Cooper)

## Falls Church's CBC Holds Key Annual Meeting

BY HAL LIPPMAN

(Ed. Note – Hal Lippman, former vice mayor of Falls Church, is president of the Citizens for a Better City, Falls Church's longest-standing non-partisan civic activist organization. The following is a report authored by him at the organization's recent annual meeting).

At its Annual Meeting on January 23, 2026 at the home of Gabi and John Sandoz, the Citizens for a Better City celebrated its accomplishments during the past year – its 66th of existence and ongoing involvement in Falls Church – and elected its Executive Committee and officers for new two-year terms. The Executive committee officers

are Hal Lippman (President), Gabi Sandoz (Treasurer), Sally Ekfelt (Corresponding Secretary), and Phil Duncan (Administrative Secretary) and at-large members Jody Acosta, Nancy Brandon, Tom Clinton, Paul Handly, Lindy Hockenberry, Julie Krachman, Brian O'Connor, and Josh Singer. During the meeting a Hail and Farewell honored those present who were recently elected/re-elected – Art Agin, Marybeth Connelly, Dave Snyder, Mary Kate Hughes, Anne Sherwood – and outgoing Vice-Mayor, Debbie Hiscott (with presentation of the CBC ALL STAR Award).

Opening the meeting, President Hal Lippman reported that 2025 became a banner year from the get-

go with the unveiling of our new logo designed by City resident, Leesa Margarella. After that, we did what we've always done: raised awareness about, provided information on, and promoted citizen engagement in local government and important issues facing our community; and, as is the case every two years, became immersed in our local School Board and City Council elections.

Regarding the latter, in May we had a highly successful "How to Become a Candidate" panel discussion with a mix of former candidates and key City officials. Among the attendees were three eventual candidates in the November election; all of whom said the event was very helpful and, later on, two were ulti-

mately elected. Next, in September, we held a well-attended candidate "Meet and Greet" at Falls Church Arts at which 10 of the 11 CC and SB candidates were able to mix and mingle informally with voters, media representatives, and others.

In October, we held our uniquely moderated Candidate Forum panel discussions in collaboration with the PTAs and Falls Church Forward. Unlike other such local campaign events, ours emphasized a format that promotes cross-discussion between and among the candidates, resulting in lively and informative exchanges regarding key issues and challenges facing our Little City.

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# FALLS CHURCH

# News Briefs

## Brown’s Hardware Location To Become ‘Wonder’ Site

Wonder, a combination dine-in food court with 44 seats and restaurant home delivery service, will be filling the now boarded-up spaces in the 100 block of W. Broad St., site of the former Brown’s Hardware, with an opening scheduled for April 2, according to the City of Falls Church’s Economic Development Office.

The operation, with multiple locations around the D.C. area already, will offer what it calls “lightning fast food delivery, takeout and dine-in from iconic restaurants, all in one location.”

“Delivery, takeout, and dine-in from some of the best chefs and restaurants in the country. Order from multiple restaurants at once, brought to your door in a single delivery. Pizza, Mexican, Burgers, Italian, Indian, Greek, and more, all in one place. Order online or on the Wonder app, open daily for lunch and dinner,” the new business promises.

## F.C. Business Licence Forms Mailed Out This Week

The 2026 Falls Church City Business License Renewal Forms should be delivered to all City businesses in the next week or so, according to F.C. Commissioner of the Revenue Tom Clinton. “They are currently at our printer located in Lynchburg and are delayed by the Storm,” he said.

The 2026 Business License Renewal Form (the counter version without business’s data) is always available on the City’s website. Forms can also be sent by e-mail. The deadline to renew all business licenses is by March 2, 2026, or postmarked by that date, to avoid a 10 percent late payment penalty.

All paid 2025 business license holders are in good standing until March 1, 2026, due to the annual two month grace period for January and February.

Business licenses can be paid online at: [www.fallschurchva.gov/pay](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/pay) by entering a business license number (this never changes), and a bill number (this changes every year), that the Commissioner’s office generates, and it is sent out, after receiving a business’ gross receipts figure from 2025 first. There is a 2.95 percent credit card fee paid to the Treasurer’s vendor, or it can be paid for free by using an e-check.

2026 Business License Renewal Form and a check can be dropped in the US Mail, in the yellow City Hall 24/7 Drop Box located next to the West Wing Door entrance, or in person at the Commissioner of the Revenue’s Office, Suite 202W of the West Wing of City Hall, located at 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046.

The office is open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily. Call (703) 248-5450, or e-mail [commissioner@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:commissioner@fallschurchva.gov) with questions.

## Affordable Medicine Act Advances in Richmond

The Affordable Medicine Act, which aims to lower prescription drug costs and improve health care affordability in Virginia, advanced out of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee Monday evening.

Its central feature is the creation of a Prescription Drug Affordability Board with authority to set upper payment limits on high-cost medications. The bill builds on state policies and the federal Inflation Reduction Act.

“The board would be an independent body of health and medical experts appointed by the governor, the House and the Senate. It would use proven database strategies already working in other states and at the federal level to lower prescription drug prices,” said Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Charlottesville, the bill’s sponsor.

To streamline implementation, board members must be appointed by Oct. 1, 2026, and the board would initially adopt payment caps tied to Medicare-negotiated prices for 25 drugs. 10 would take effect beginning in 2027, with 15 additional drugs following in 2028.

## Bob & Edith’s Location in N. Arlington Closes

The Bob and Edith’s Diner location on Langston Blvd. in North Arlington has closed for good, the business has confirmed.

The local diner chain, ranked the No. 2 best breakfast spot in the county in an ARLnow Reader’s

Choice poll, announced Monday that its location at 5050 Langston Blvd had permanently closed.

The restaurant opened in Summer 2020 as one of eight Bob and Edith’s locations in Northern Virginia, including other spots still operating in Crystal City and on Columbia Pike.

Bob and Edith’s started in 1969 with the purchase and re-branding of a local restaurant called Gary’s Donut Dinette. The chain offers a large range of breakfast, lunch and dinner options, including six signature omelettes and 20 different sandwiches and burgers.

## Dulles Airport Sets New Passenger Count Record

Ongoing growth in international travel helped propel Dulles International Airport to a record-setting year in 2025, say officials with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. They will not have confirmed final passenger counts until late February, but the authority’s president and CEO, Jack Potter, said the expectation is for a 6 percent increase from the record year in 2024.

The 2024 passenger count at Dulles was 27,254,087, up 8.4 percent from 2023 and the highest since its opening in 1962. The airport benefits from United Airlines expanding service, as well as by the arrival of new domestic and international carriers.

## Amazon Terminating All ‘Fresh’ and “Go’ Grocery Stores

Amazon is throwing in the towel on Amazon Fresh, announcing Tuesday that it will close all locations. The last day of operation for Amazon Fresh and Amazon Go stores is Feb. 1, with the exception of its California locations.

Amazon plans to renovate and reopen “various” sites as Whole Foods Markets, but details are not yet finalized. In total, the company operates 57 Amazon Fresh stores and 15 Amazon Go stores, which will also close after Feb. 1.



COOPER AND KITTY are 5 month old Pomskies. They are trying out their Husky lineage. (Photo: Nicole Jensen)



KATHY’S 11-YEAR-OLD son ice skating in their backyard, not on a pond. (Photo: Kathy Hite)



# Dehghani-Tafti, Descano Among Anti-Fed Overreach Prosecutors

Continued from Page 1

Forces to Bring Charges Against Federal Agents,” and begins, “Nine progressive prosecutors will work together...” and it identifies Dehghani-Tafti as representing Falls Church and Arlington.

At a FAFO online press conference yesterday, in response to a question from the News-Press, Dehghani-Tafti affirmed that she is concerned that Virginia may become an ICE target now that it has statewide Democratic leadership.

Dehghani-Tafti’s nationally high profile action was augmented in the City of Falls Church Tuesday night by strong statements from Mayor Letty Hardi and two other City Council members at the outset of the City Council meeting at City Hall.

Hardi began the meeting with the following statement:

“Before we begin, I want us to pause to honor Alex Pretti and Renee Good (and others we’re learning who have also died in federal custody) whose deaths in Minnesota should trouble every one of us. This was not only a tragic loss of life—it is a warning sign. These were lives lost under circumstances that raise serious questions about the use of power and the steady erosion of civil liberties that are supposed to protect us all.

“What happened in Minnesota should concern every community - even thousands of miles away here in Falls Church - because when basic rights are weakened anywhere, they are weakened everywhere.

“Here in Falls Church, we value the dignity and rights of every individual. We believe in accountability in law enforcement, in transparent investigations, and in policing that protects without fear or intimidation. That’s why I want to be clear: the kinds of federal enforcement operations that have led to these deaths — and the lack of credible, independent review that should follow — are not something we welcome in our community.

“So tonight, we stand in solidarity with Minnesota, with the families who are grieving, and with all those calling for accountability and justice. Let us take a moment of silence to honor Alex and Renee and hold their families and communities in our hearts.”

Her remarks were followed by strong statements along the same line from Councilmen David Snyder and Arthur Agin.

Dehghani-Tafti issued a statement yesterday morning about her decision to become one of nine prosecutors in the U.S. to join the Project to Fight Against Federal Overreach. It reads

:”Until now, have never been in a situation in the U.S. where a militarized police force enters our communities and does what it wants with complete impu-

nity, and this coalition has formed to ensure that all law enforcement officers and agencies are subject to the rule of law, working together to return to the most fundamental and foundational of American principles:

“All law enforcement power is subject to civilian accountability; every single law enforcement officer in the county – whether local, county state, or federal – answers to and is accountable to us -- the public “Not a single law enforcement officer – whether local, county, state, or federal – can be allowed to operate with impunity or behave as if it is above the law.

“As elected prosecutors, our message is simple: any and all law enforcement agencies operating in our communities are subject to the rule of law, no matter the acronym on their jackets. And, if you break the law, we have the jurisdiction, we have the authority, we have the power, and we need no one’s permission, to investigate, charge, and prosecute you. We will do so because we care about our communities, we care about our country, and we care about our democracy.”

These statements were augmented this week by video and online comments from U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, representing the 8th District of Northern Virginia that includes Falls Church. He said:

“The Department of Homeland Security is murdering American citizens. Congress cannot allow that to continue, we must act following the shooting deaths in Minneapolis of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. We need a full, independent investigation into these killings.

ICE, CBP and other DHS personnel must leave Minnesota and other cities where they have been sent to sow division and fear,” he said..

“No more occupation. No more assaults on Americans peacefully exercising their rights. No more masked agents. No more warrantless entries. No more mass arrests to fill deportation quotas. I voted against funding for DHS. Congress shouldn’t pass funding for this lawless agency without major guardrails. And the House should impeach Kristi Noem.”

On a social media video, Beyer added, “The murder of Alex Pretti by [CBP] is an outrage. This is the most horrifying act of our government I’ve ever seen on video.

“Like the murder of Renee Good, eyewitness videos prove that [the Department of] Homeland Security is lying about the shooting. [In the videos] We see a [CBP] agent charge a woman who has been filming him. Then he shoves her to the ground and pepper sprays her face.

“Alex Pretti does what you or I would do, he tries to protect her by placing himself between her and the agent, and then struggles to help her to her

feet. They both slip on the ice, but Alex continues to shield the woman with his body.

“That’s when we witness the murder, CBP agents pepper spray him, tackle him to the ground, and then shoot him in the back again and again, shots the Department of Homeland Security insanely calls ‘defensive shots.’

“I’ve called for the resignation of Kristi Noem, and I will vote for her impeachment.

She’s obstructing local authorities from investigating two murders committed in Minneapolis by DHS agents.

“DHS cannot be allowed to investigate itself. That’s how it’s done in dictatorships, not in America. [These DHS agents are] Wearing masks – federal forces are entering people’s homes without warrants, they’re violating our constitutional rights, and sowing division and fear, all to meet a Kristi Noem [deportation] quota.”



A hot bowl of *pho* at Eden Center.

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# Pride House Milan to Nurture Community During the Olympics

BY LOIS ELFMAN

No doubt, members of the LGBTQ+ community have been competing at the Olympic Winter Games for decades. In recent years, more and more have come out and shared their whole selves with the world. At the upcoming Olympics and Paralympics in Milan-Cortina, Italy, Pride House Milan 2026 will be a place to celebrate diversity and inclusion in sport and to support the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies.

The venue is the MEET Digital Culture Center, which will embody Olympic values such as unity, respect and inclusion. Along with providing a warm and friendly place, Pride House will host events, performances and talks. Starting Feb. 6, the day of the Opening Ceremony, visitors can follow the Games live streamed and raise awareness through meetings with athletes and international guests.

Among the Olympic athletes taking part is Canadian pairs skater Eric Radford, a three-time Olympian (2014, '18 and '22) and three-time Olympic medalist (gold, silver and bronze). Since retiring from competition, he's been traveling the world and performing.

"A feeling of being included, a feeling of safety, a safe space where you can be your true self is something universal that all humans want to have and feel," said Radford, who has recently become a mentor for Compete Proud, a diversity, equity and inclusion digital sports platform. "Because of the history of LGBT

people and having to fight against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and all kinds of phobias, [Pride House is] a signal of change. It's a signal of how far we've come as a movement. It's always nice to see it in the athletic sphere."

Each sport has its own unique timeline of development when it comes to inclusion, openness and progress, Radford noted. While figure skating may be ahead of some other winter sports, there are still struggles. Radford did not publicly come out until after the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, due to an anti-LGBTQ environment in Russia, which hosted the Sochi Games. Competing as an out and proud man at his next two Olympics was liberating and joyful for him. Even if some athletes cannot make it to Pride House due to scheduling or logistics, knowing it exists, said Radford, provides confidence.

Pride House Milan is organized by Arcigay together with CIG Arcigay Milano and in collaboration with Pride Sport Milano. It is part of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Cultural Olympiad and is held under the patronage of the Municipality of Milan and the Embassy of Canada, with the support of the Council of Europe.

"The Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games represent an extraordinary opportunity to reaffirm that sport is, and must be, a space of inclusion, respect and equal dignity," said Gabriele Piazzoni, Secretary General of Arcigay. "In this sense, the presence of the Pride House that Arcigay has

envisioned and supported takes on an extremely important symbolic and political value: an open, visible, and welcoming place that strongly affirms that LGBTQIA+ people are a full part of the sporting community and of society."

On Feb. 14, past Olympic figure skaters Radford, Javier Raya (founder and managing director of Compete Proud) and ice dancer Kaitlyn Weaver will be joined by 2026 Olympians Paul Poirier and Lewis Gibson as well as athletes from other sports for the panel discussion Out & Proud: Athletes living authentically on and off the field.

"I'll be speaking to my experience, telling my story and my observations of how things have changed and developed, and, of course, need to continue to change and develop," Radford said.

In an interesting development, two of the stars of the TV series "Heated Rivalry," which centers on a romance between two closeted hockey players, carried the Olympic torch in Italy last week as part of the Milan Cortina 2026 torch relay.

"A big part of this is creating community," said Radford. "A big part of the Olympics is in between practices and competitions, where is a good space that you can go and relax, decompress and refocus, and feel supported and safe."

For information about events, go to <https://www.milanopride.it/pride-house-2026/>. Updates will also be on Instagram @pride-house.milano2026.



(Photos: Courtesy of Milano Pride)

# Lippman Details Key Achievements of F.C.'s CBC in Past Year

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CBC takes pride in noting it was the only organization that held a public forum for the SB candidates and the discussion that took place there was everything one could hope from such an event – being topical, informative, respectful, and even poignant (as when a candidate seeking reelection spontaneously mentioned having lost friends over her positions and votes during her first term).

In addition to these campaign-focused events, we reintroduced our landmark Campaign Integrity Pledge, the purpose of which is to ensure that Falls Church City elections remain local, accessible, affordable, and are conducted with civility. It is worth reminding that what prompted the Pledge in the first place was the unprecedented sums of money (over \$57,000) contributed in 2021 to two SB candidates (one received \$33,600, the other \$23,800) by outside organizations and individuals with no direct connection to or involvement in our City. These two contributions amounted to more than 80 percent of the total raised by all the other SB candidates in that election (the next closest candidate raised \$5,000).

Based on what we can glean from the data reported by the candidates who ran in 2025, here are some initial findings:

10 of the 11 candidates in the just completed election cycle signed the Pledge and when combined with the 2023 election signings (7 of 7) brings the total since the Pledge was developed to 17 out of 18 (nearly 95%);

The Pledge is working pursuant to its intent to discourage contributions from outside sources, as reflected in all 2025 candidates' campaign filings (with the exception of the lone candidate that declined to sign it);

Running for office still appears to be affordable, although campaign costs have increased notably (seemingly attributable, among other variables, because for the first time there are more people living in apartments and condos than detached single family homes in the City) and self-funding of all or a significant part of campaigns is more common than in past elections.

Average campaign contributions 2019 – 2025 fluctuated based on the number of candidates running for available spots and the intensity of the election, but overall did not

increase markedly – for the SB from \$9,455 in 2019 (four running for three) to \$10,651 in 2025 (five running for four) and for the CC from \$7,785 in 2019 (four running for three) to \$9,211 in 2025 (six running for four);

More candidates, 7 out of 11 (four SB, three CC), raised in excess of \$9,000 than ever before; in the 2024 special election both candidates did so, while in 2023 it was one, in 2021 four, in 2019 two.

Following the discussion of the Pledge, the presentation turned to our accomplishments in raising awareness and providing information about city government and important local issues. We continued to regularly pass along information to our membership and City-related distribution lists about weekly blogs, monthly newsletters, and announcements of City and other civic organizations' ongoing functions and special events. We also regularly submitted articles, press releases, and letters to the editor that were published in the Falls Church News Press, Falls Church Independent, Arlington Now, and elsewhere.

Next, the President's report turned to CBC's landmark Youth Representatives Program, which since 2014 has provided City high school students with a unique opportunity to learn about local government and civic engagement firsthand; practice and grow their leadership skills; and contribute to the work of City and other community organizations. With the addition of the 2025-2026 Youth Representative class, more than 300 Meridian High School students have served with dozens of local entities and organizations, including the League of Women Voters, Environmental Sustainability Council; Economic Development Authority; Housing Commission; Chamber of Commerce, Human Services Advisory Council, and Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation Social Justice Committee.

Wrapping up this part of the agenda, for the very first time at an Annual Meeting a Youth Representative appeared in person. This was Meridian High School Junior, Ela Rees, who wowed everyone present with her talk about what she's learned and felt about her experience with the Falls Church Education Foundation, along with

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On the Martyrdoms  
Of Pretti and Good

NICHOLAS F.  
BENTON

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

The second execution in Minneapolis by Trump shock troops last weekend needs to be understood in the context of the on-going coup against the U.S. Constitutional government that is well underway. The next major inflection point in this process will be the effective cancellation of the November 2026 Congressional elections.

Managing eruptions of dissent with minor changes in this effort should not be considered a derailling of the effort overall. But the initial reaction by the administration to the news of the murder of Alex Pretti revealed the monstrous face animating this coup, especially as it was represented by the remarks of Kristi Noem, blatantly lying angrily to assert that the peace-minded VA nurse was a murderous terrorist.

In keeping with the Trump m.-o. of accusing enemies of exactly what he, himself, is primarily guilty of Noem’s remarks told on herself and the entire coup plot. This is an overall enterprise of domestic terrorism, aimed at undoing lawful democratic processes with deliberate acts of force, aggression and indiscriminate terror against U.S. institutions and citizens.

The fact that this year’s goal of controlling, if not calling off, this November’s critical mid-term election was revealed by Attorney General Pam Bondi’s bald-faced attempt at extortion. She called on Minnesota officials to hand over all the state’s voting roles as a condition for the calling off of federal forces.

All the efforts to stem the increasingly repugnant moves by the Trump coup process need to be primarily mindful of its goal to overturn the November election. Not only the usual campaign processes that, in any honest accounting of what should occur, would result in a huge anti-Trump vote, but extraordinary efforts to safeguard the election process itself are required.

By now, this should be self-evident, but I do not see enough of a public call to action on this front forthcoming yet. Usual party

bureaucratic efforts to handle this effort behind the scenes, as it were, will not cut it. All the possible tools of chicanery using electronic and AI means can be expected to be called into play, as well as public efforts to deter voting. We need to be shouting from the rooftops that this is a critical threat to be alerted to.

An included aspect of this will involve the achievement in Virginia, California and other majority Democratic states of redistricting efforts to counter Republican efforts at doing the same thing. In Virginia, a critical general election to achieve this will be in April.

As for the latest Minneapolis execution, itself, it is worth remembering the victim for his unusually giving and caring personality and life-practice. Of American martyrs of the last year, he stands out, surely more worthy of our gratitude for his life than almost anyone else I can think of, surely more than Charlie Kirk.

Based on his life stories, someone could hardly be a more profound opposite of Kirk than Alex Pretti. As a childhood friend of his, English teacher J.D. Atkins, said of Pretti on national TV Monday, Pretti represented “the best of us,” as he was “service minded” and “everything he did in his adult life aligned with how I knew him growing up”

His life exemplified the core spirit of all those in this nation that are coming together to stand up against the Trump coup.

It was notable that Trump’s dissembling press secretary attempted to identify Trump with the term, empathy, at Monday’s White House press briefing, because if anything his effort lacks, it is exactly that.

The most concerning aspect of this political time is that I can see no way that the coup effort can be defused short of what will most likely be ugly and painful confrontations which might, indeed, make January 6, 2021 seem like a picnic.

If they were willing to engage in th at style of violent insurrection on January 6 last time, it can hardly be assumed they will go quietly this time, especially as they can be counted on to expect a need to, one way or another, overturn the November election.

Let the martyrdoms of Renee Good and Alex Preddi stand as clarion calls to action to save our republic.



A Penny for Your  
Thoughts

By Penny Gross  
Former Fairfax County Supervisor

Exhausted seems to be the word of the day, or week, or the past year. Reporters are exhausted following all the shiny objects launched by the Trump White House. Minnesotans are exhausted by the ICE occupation of their cities, which has resulted in the shooting deaths of two American citizens so far, and Mainers may not be far behind. Global leaders are exhausted by the Trump brand of threats and saber-rattling against nations that have been our allies for more than 80 years. Our immigrant neighbors are exhausted by the cat-and-mouse games instigated by Secretary Noem and her thuggish agents. It appears that the only people not exhausted are the ICE agents who travel in packs, and Donald Trump, who seems to use the chaos he causes as an energy drink.

Trust, or lack of trust, is the other word of the day and week, as trust has been ripped apart during the first year of the second Trump administration. Our global allies are questioning whether they can trust the United States. Americans are questioning whether they can trust the government institutions they have relied on for generations. When I was growing up, parents and teachers often

reminded teens that respectable reputations can take years to develop but can be destroyed overnight. Now we’ve seen that destruction, on a global scale. More than two centuries of American reputation has been destroyed in a year by Donald Trump.

To be fair, alliances are subject to change. World events affect response; personality traits of global leaders affect participation (remember Charles DeGaulle’s imperious approach that pulled France out of NATO’s military command structure?); fledgling democracies struggle to find footing amid histories of royalty and dictators. The membership of NATO has expanded from 12 founding countries in 1949 to 32 nations today. NATO allies jointly responded to the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis and, ultimately, the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Weapons are different today. Communications are different today. Markets and trade are different today. But the basic foundation of trust is not different today, which is why Mr. Trump’s rambling and aggressive posture toward our allies is so shocking. Regardless of the

outcome to his lust for Greenland’s real estate, it will take years, perhaps more than a generation, to rebuild and regain the trust of our European allies.

Fear is a strong emotion, and fear is being used by the Trump Administration as a cudgel against allies, immigrants, access to health care, LGBTQ+, and anyone and anything targeted by the White House. People are scared – for themselves, their family, their neighbors. American

citizens are wondering what kinds of identification they need to carry just in case they get caught in an ICE enforcement action, or just to vote. At a recent meeting in Fairfax County, attendees asked for clarification from a guest speaker, Commonwealth’s Attorney Steve Descano, who cautioned that you can observe, peacefully protest, and film actions by government agents but should always be mindful of your own safety and that of others. Most ordinary forms of ID – drivers’ licenses with the black star of Real ID, American passports, student and military badges – are issued to citizens and some non-citizens, so they are not necessarily proof of citizenship. Have we reached a point where we must carry a birth certificate on our person? And if we do, will ICE and Homeland Security even care? Do you know where your birth certificate is? No wonder everyone is exhausted!

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH  
CRIME REPORT

Week of  
Jan 19 - 25, 2026

Simple Assault, W Broad St, Jan 19, 07:08 p.m., victim reported a physical altercation with a known suspect. No injuries were reported.

Larceny – Theft from Building, W Broad St, Jan 22, 1:57 p.m., officers responded to a late report of a larceny from a building. The victim reported that on Dec 30, a package was misdelivered to a neighbor who claims they did not take possession of it.

Missing Adult, Shirley St, Jan 22, 8:00 p.m., officers took report of a critically missing adult, last seen at his residence on Shirley St at 3:00 p.m. The missing adult was located by the Metropolitan Police Department on Jan 23 at 8:41 p.m.

Fraud, S Washington St, Jan 23, 1:26 p.m., an incident of credit card fraud was reported. No loss was incurred.

Disorderly Conduct, Drunk in Public, S Washington St, Jan 24, 12:35 a.m., a 46-year-old white male was arrested for

Disorderly Conduct and Drunk in Public.

Trespass, N Washington St, Jan 24, 11:05 a.m., a black female, 48, of no fixed address, was issued a summons for Trespass.

Shoplifting, W Broad St, Jan 24, 2:06 p.m., unknown suspects took items of value without paying. Suspects are both described as black males, approximately 18-25 years of age. Suspect one wearing a black beanie, black coat, blue jeans, and pink shoes. Suspect two wearing a gray jacket, black hoodie, blue jeans, and black shoes. Investigation continues.

Visit us at Fcnp.com

2026 Issues  
Coming Soon:

2/5 - Camps & Schools

2/12 - Winter Senior Living

Contact Sue :

sjohnson@fcnp.com



Falls Church  
News-Press

Since 1991, an award-winning  
LGBT-owned general Interest  
community newspaper.

Vol. XXXV, No. 51  
JANUARY 29 -  
FEBRUARY 4, 2026

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EDITORIAL

Will Virginia  
Be Next?

“A national coalition of locally-elected, top prosecutors today announced the formation of the Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach – an effort to hold federal officials accountable when they exceed their lawful authority, especially in states around the country where federal agents are being surged. The coalition launches amid growing concerns about warrant-less entries, unlawful detentions, and coercive enforcement tactics by federal agents, and it’s intended to ensure that constitutional limits on federal power are actively enforced through lawful institutions.”

So reads the first paragraph of a press release issued by FAFO (Fight Against Federal Overreach) that kicked off its national effort this week with Falls Church and Arlington’s Commonwealth Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti and her Fairfax County counterpart Steve Descano as among nine founding members. The report of this development in the New York Times this week put Falls Church, by association with Dehghani-Tafti, in a global spotlight.

With four of the first nine prosecutors founding this group from Virginia, in fact (the other two besides Dehghani-Tafti and Descano being Ramin Fatehi from Norfolk and Stephanie Morales from Portsmouth), it is not lost on us that, with the sweep of Democratic statewide leaders taking office here this month, Virginia may soon become a target of the Trump administration’s national storm trooper offensive. In fact, at a national online press conference hosted by the FAFO group yesterday, in response to a question from the News-Press, Dehghani-Tafti confirmed just that concern.

So, it is critical that this effort expand, and that poignant comments like those of Falls Church Mayor Letty Hardi and City Council members David Snyder and Arthur Agin resound throughout the commonwealth without delay. Mayor Hardi’s remarks (published elsewhere in this edition) were not only a call for a moment of silence at the start of Tuesday’s City Council meeting to honor the memory of the two individuals slain by Trump storm troopers in Minnesota, but also, as she said, “a warning” of what may be to come.

Her remarks and the organizing action of the Fight Against Federal Overreach make it clear to us that a backing off by the Trump domestic terror offensive is not to be expected.

Alert citizens right here in Falls Church and its surrounding areas must be ready to stand up for democracy and the rule of law in their communities the way brave citizens in Minneapolis have been doing. Keep your cell phones charged, learn to tote a whistle and make sure you have plenty of warm clothes to wear outside in this Minneapolis-like weather.

We are called to become a critical front-line part of a national resistance to the fascist coup that the Trump administration is attempting to perpetrate on us all. We can be grateful that we have the example of the brave citizens of Minneapolis for showing us the law abiding and non-violent way to do it. Now, we ourselves need to be prepared for what may be coming.

PLATFORM

1. Keep the news clean and fair.

2. Play no favorites, never mix business and editorial policy.

3. Do not let the news columns reflect editorial content.

4. Publish the news that is public property without fear or favor of friend or foe.

5. Accept no charity and ask no favors.

6. Give ‘value received’ for every dollar you take in.

7. Make the paper show a profit if you can, but above all keep it clean, fearless and fair.

Fighting Overreach

Continued from Page 4

a special project she and her fellow Youth Rep, Landon Manwaring, put together to inform more of their fellow MHS students about FCEF. In her presentation Ela was a shining example of the YRP and CBC’s hope that she and her YRP contemporaries will be inspired by their experience to a lifetime of service and leadership in whatever they may do and wherever they may live.

Concluding his report, the President mentioned that in 2026 CBC intends to build on its experience with the Candidate Integrity Pledge to look for

ways for it to be updated and/or improved. In addition, CBC will focus intently on the long-lived and pressing issues we, and other “venerable” organizations, have been experiencing for years with declining membership and numbers of volunteers. With so many community leaders at the Annual Meeting, it was worth reminding that there may be a tipping point looming where CBC finds itself unable to continue and their help is needed through their continued membership and mentioning us to their friends, neighbors, and anyone who cares about our local government, public schools, and community in general.

CORRECTION

In last week’s Real Estate Edition FOXCRAFT Design Group’s bio was inadvertently missed:

FOXCRAFT Design Group is in their 37th year as an award-winning design/ build firm and general contractor.

FOXCRAFT is among the most creative, experienced design/build firms in the region, specializing in meeting clients’ budget expectations and overcoming ever changing national and county codes, regulations and guidelines. Chandler Fox, the owner at FOXCRAFT, is also a

licensed real estate agent, so his expertise in both building and real estate provides the best of both worlds for the client. Fox analyzes the property for current and future marketability and helps his clients make an intelligent decision about whether or not a renovation is the best investment for their property’s future value. “We build relationships with every client, based on their individual needs and wants, and advise them honestly, as to the best path for their family’s future”.



LETTERS TO EDITOR

Don’t Forget the Birds

WOW. What a storm we just had. While the snow is beautiful, it has covered up a lot of natural food, making it a critical time to feed the birds. Not only is it a chance to help birds get the necessary fats for

surviving longer nights and colder temperatures, but it’s also a great time to see a variety of birds visiting your feeders.

The Cardinals, Blue Jays, Chickadees, Woodpeckers, and other backyard birds greatly appreciate it.

Asher Prusky  
Wild Birds Unlimited



# Winter Arts Preview



Pages 7-11



# Renwick Shows Artists' Contributions to State Fairs

BY PATRICIA LESLIE

Gigantic boots large enough to accommodate an adult inside flank the entrance to the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, introducing its fantastic exhibition, "State Fairs: Growing American Craft."

The boots are "Big Tex's Boots," made of steel, Styrofoam, aqua resin, fiberglass, and acrylic paint. They were a size 70 in 1952, growing to size 96 in 2013. Handmade and painted in Texas, they feature the state flag, capital, flower (the bluebonnet), and bird (the northern mockingbird).

The gallery's exhibition of artists' contributions to state fairs is the first of any in the land. It starts in the mid-19th century and continues up to the present day, with more than 240 creations from 43 states and photographs from all 50 states.

How about a full-sized cow made of butter, or a dress made of butter cartons?

At the Iowa State Fair, Sarah Pratt and her twin daughters are famous for their life-size butter cow, a tradition started by John

K. Daniels at the fair in 1911—and one Pratt has extended to state fairs in Missouri and Illinois. At the Renwick, the cow is protected by a glass chiller case.

Mary Ann Titrud and Wilma Ryan made their butter-carton dress, which was actually worn by a dairy princess in 1965 at the Minnesota State Fair. It's made of 475 cardboard squares cut from butter cartons. (Talk about uncomfortable!)

How about a quilt of buttons? Or a pyramid of 700 glass jars of preserved fruits and vegetables? They're all here, folks—along with everything from a stunning embroidered tiger swallowtail butterfly so eye-popping you'd swear it was the real thing.

Complementing the exhibition is Justin Favela's large "Capilla de Maiz" ("Maize Chapel"), made of polyester sheets, cement, steel, staples, and tape. It celebrates "corn," often called "yellow gold," and its importance to American identity. Favela's work fills 4,200 square feet under a 40-foot ceiling, with changing lighting intended to instill a calming effect.

Margarita Cabrera made a life-size clay replica of a John Deere tractor, designed "to draw attention to the immigrant workers American agriculture depends on," according to the label. Susie Brandt, a professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, guided 4-H clubs from several states in creating two quilts on view.

These are just a few of the striking inventions found at the museum, which extends across two floors.

Another quilt comes from Grace Snyder of Nebraska, who took to quilting in 1888 when she was six and bored by watching cattle. Her quilt—made of about 87,000 tiny triangles—won the Sweepstakes Award in 1944 at the Nebraska State Fair, earning her a grand total of \$2.50.

Few can claim as many ribbons as Carol St. Clair Johnson, who won her first blue ribbon in 1981 and later combined more than 600 ribbons into a quilt that won Best in Category at the 2023 New Mexico State Fair.

On a serious note is a quilt made by female inmates in Kentucky—victims of domestic abuse—whose art renderings and words moved Governor Brereton Jones, when he saw their quilt at the 1965 state fair, to work toward commutations for them.

Researchers worked with artists, historians, librarians, conservators, dairy princesses, cowboys, vendors, and more for five years to bring the exhibition to fruition, and all their efforts show.

Related events for the show include a "handi-hour" (happy hour) on Feb. 11 at 5:30 p.m., with live music, cider, beer, snacks, materials to make crafts, and more. Admission is \$25 for ages 21 and older. Registration begins Feb. 2, 2026.

A catalogue of the exhibition with 100 photographs is available at the shop for \$39.95.


Renwick's show takes the Grand Prize for best exhibition of state fairs anywhere. See it and be astonished by the creative genius and assembly of your fellow countrypeople.

The Renwick Gallery is at the corner of Pennsylvania Ave. and 17th St. NW, next door to Blair House. It is open every day from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., two blocks from the Farragut West Metro Station. "State Fairs" ends Sept. 7, 2026. Free admission.



A 1940 "Friendship Quilt" of almost 12,000 buttons which placed fourth in a novelty quilt contest at the Missouri State Fair. (Photo: Patricia Leslie)

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# Snapshots

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# Mercy: Movie Review

BY LISA SINROD

This film, rated PG-13, is set in the near future (2029) in crime-ridden Los Angeles, where traditional courts have been replaced by an AI-driven judicial system called Mercy. This system uses sophisticated surveillance footage as well as algorithms and digital data in order to conduct trials via digital interfaces. Even the judge is an AI creation, supposedly rendering decisions solely through factual analysis and without the bias that humans bring to these determinations. Ultimately, the absence of the fallible human touch in this futuristic justice system ends up being the point. The AI data driven aspects seem advanced beyond where we will be in three short years, therefore I would have preferred the future time stamp to be in the 2030s, but when it comes to AI – who knows? Maybe that is the point also.

The film stars Chris Pratt (“Parks and Recreation”) as Detective Chris Raven, a cop charged with a serious crime which he claims to have no memory of committing. Unlike our current justice system where a defendant is innocent until proven guilty, in the Mercy trial system Raven must prove his innocence to the AI judge within in a set time limit. This near-future system renders lawyers and juries obsolete. Rebecca Ferguson, who had a recurring role in the “Mission: Impossible” franchise opposite Tom Cruise, plays the judge with icy finesse. Her gradual evolution from robotic precision to moments of nuanced sentience as the trial progresses is skillfully portrayed. Her real-life symmetrical appearance renders her as well-cast for this role.

The film is presented in real time, with the 90-minute trial countdown clock shown throughout. I found the high-tech elements to be fast paced and intriguing. I also liked the tension between AI neutrality and Raven’s emotional appeal to the AI judge. Some may view “Mercy” as a cautionary tale about the future of AI, however my take was that the film is more of an ode to the necessity of humanity playing a key role in all major decisions and outcomes. Nuance and caring seem to overtake the AI judge to the point where her system starts to seek overrides and also begins to malfunction, during the analysis of what really happened in the case in which Raven is accused.

I enjoyed Mercy despite the script being somewhat formulaic and the derivative nature of the plot. At times the movie feels choppy and inconsistent. This story has been told before in different ways, but I found the suspense and time clock tension for the outcome to be compelling enough to hold my attention. Pratt doesn’t seem fully comfortable in the role and his acting style is uneven, likely due to limitations in the script. The film would have been more meaningful and satisfying if it had a greater exploration of the themes which it topically raised, such as the philosophical conflict around AI justice. “Mercy” struck me as ambivalent as to whether it was a more of a suspense crime story or a cautionary tale. The blend of the two is at times awkward, but I found myself entertained and did not regret seeing this movie. Check it out if you want to see whether you agree, or if these themes interest you. As for whether he did it or not, you’ll have to see the movie if you want to find out.

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# ‘Sunshine Boys’ Shines at Vienna Theatre

BY PATRICIA LESLIE

For fans of “Grumpy Old Men” and “The Odd Couple,” please “enter” and “come in” to see “The Sunshine Boys,” another of Neil Simon’s comedies about, well, old men, performed at the Vienna Theatre Company by actors who thoroughly enjoy their roles.

It’s a good warmup and alternative to the harsh weather of the last few days, a night (or day) at the theatre, to delight in the wills and ways of a gruesome twosome who battle it out over a slight of 11 years ago and haven’t spoken since.

Sound familiar?

Anyone in your life you’ve cut off or are the subject of a silent treatment?

There’s hope for redemption. And these two grump masters can show you how.

They battle it out in vaude-villian fashion, which is what they used to do for 43 years together as “Lewis and Clark” (not to be confused with the

discoverers).

Wearing de rigueur pajamas most of the time (he’s an old man), Willie (Paul Smith) complains about everything in general until his nephew, Ben (Eddie Perez) rescues Willie from his dull life with Ben’s plan to resurrect the former comedy team for a CBS special.

Ben is a caring, devoted nephew who does cause wonder about what keeps him going back for more verbal onslaughts by his uncle who tells his nephew, “I’m happy; I just look miserable.”

After much coaxing, Willie agrees to meet his partner in comedy, Al Lewis (Steve Rosenthal) who comes to Willie’s apartment to “rehearse” for the show where - surprise! - there’s a calamity!

Meanwhile, a cute stereotypical nurse (Jocelyn Steiner), the dream of every dirty old man with all the exaggerated antics (and parts) to whit fancies, enters, soon followed by Carolyn Corsano Wong as the

no-nonsense nurse in charge who sternly puts Willie in his place (which is, the bed).

Willie doesn’t know he’s a “Sunshine Boy” who carries every scene with his incredible talent as a tottering, jerky curmudgeon.

For Willie’s room, Charles Boone has put together a marvelous set with props by Pat Jannell where Willie and Al move chairs about in a silent dance number they perform in helter-skelter movements, one of the funnier scenes and you just had to wonder how much rehearsal did it take?

At intermission, director Terri Ritchey fretted about the coming snowfall and possible show cancellations, but cloudy skies can’t hide peeking sunlight for long and shine on these boys and make them whole again.

Other cast members are Bobb Jordan (also, assistant stage manager), Kim Paul, Reece Smyth (also, assistant director) and John Totten.



FROM LEFT, Steve Rosenthal and Paul Smith star in Vienna Theatre Company’s “Sunshine Boys” now on stage at the Vienna Community Center. (Photo by Carol Wagner)

Production team members include Eric Storeck, producer; Cheryl Billingsley and Carol Wagner, costumes; Michelle Matthews, sound; David Ritchey, stage manager; Steven Wong, lighting and Sprite Briner, hair and makeup.

Others on production: Claire Tse, Janet Kennelly, Diane Bierworth and Ari McSherry.

Two hours with one intermission. Vienna Theatre Company, 120 Cherry St. at the Vienna Community Center. Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2 p.m., through Feb. 8, 2026. Tickets, \$16 at the box office or online. For more information: vtcshows@yahoo.com. Some adult language.



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# D.C. Galleries Full of Stars

BY PATRICIA LESLIE

The stars are shining brightly over and in Washington, D.C.

From opera star Maria Callas’s costumes to stars from Australia, Washington’s galleries have something for every taste, and they’re free to see!

Six costumes worn by Maria Callas (1923-1977), one of the greatest opera singers of the 20th century, are shown for the first time in the U.S. at the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, formerly the Corcoran Gallery near the White House.

They are gowns Callas wore in La Scala operas in Milan, dresses which range from a short dull mustard color in “La Sonnambula” in 1955 when she acted as a peasant, to a blue satin silk brocade floor length she wore in “Ifigenia in Tauride” in 1957.

In the same year, she wore a heavy dark blue velvet gown with a long fur-trimmed cape in “Anna Bolena” in a “lavish production” and one of Callas’s “greatest triumphs,” says Wikipedia.

Her last costume on display at the Brady was for her role as Fiorilla in the 1955 production of “Il Turco In Italia.”

Meanwhile, other “stars” shining in D.C. for the first time are over at the East Building of the National Gallery of Art in “The Stars We Do Not See,” the largest presentation of Australian aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art ever presented in North America.

Almost 200 works by 130 artists from the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, ranging from necklaces to huge canvases, photographs, video and neon which cover the late 1800s to present times are presented, many of the pieces traveling outside Australia for the first time.

Included is a video of Burarra women weaving traditional fish traps, bags, skirts and other items of natural materials

Myles Russell-Cook, Victoria’s former senior curator and current artistic director of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, curated the exhibition, writing on the Gallery’s website that Australia’s aboriginal artists can be traced back 65,000 years.

Australia has two distinct groups of Indigenous peoples: Aboriginals, who have roots in the mainland and Tasmania, and Torres Strait Islanders whose origination can be found on the islands off the northeast coast of Australia and the bottom of Papua New Guinea.

Before the British arrived in 1788, there were more than 600 Indigenous nations, representing more than 250 language groups and over 500 dialects.

Viewers will find some of the works similar to others in the exhibition with complicated crosses and dots, the crosses which represent visible stars in the sky and what is visible in the known universe, while the dots are the unknowns with everything connected, the knowns and unknowns. (Former U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his “knowns and unknowns” might have had an Australian

connection.)

The National Gallery of Art offers several related events for the Australian show.

At the East Building Information Desk, one hour public tours will start at 1 p.m. on Jan. 31, Feb. 7, Feb. 13, Feb. 27. Reservations are not required.

On Feb. 8 at 2 p.m., “Still We Rise,” films by Indigenous Australians will be screened in the East Building Auditorium. Register on the website.

On Feb. 12 beginning at 6 p.m., the National Gallery returns its celebrated “Gallery Nights” featuring music and festivities about the Australian exhibition. Sign up for lottery tickets on the website.

On Feb. 28 in the East Building concourse, Cameron McCarthy, an Australian artist and performer, will play the didgeridoo at 2 p.m. and, again, at 4 p.m. to demonstrate its sounds which mimic Australian animals.

The National Gallery has many related items for sale in its gift shop, ranging from mugs to socks to jewelry to tote bags, from \$5 up to \$100, including a catalogue for \$60 (hardback, 320 pages).

From Washington, the Australian exhibition will travel to museums in Denver, Portland, Oregon and Salem, Mass.

Included in the Callas exhibition are sketches of the gowns and rare photographs of Callas. Corcoran Theatre and Dance students researched and wrote the label copies for the exhibition; La Scala loaned the costumes.

Callas died at 53 of a heart attack, possibly caused by an extreme weight loss of 80 pounds when she was only 30. Some attribute her voice’s decline in her 30s to her weight loss and drugs. She retired from the stage at age 41.

“Callas at La Scala” is presented by the Italian Cultural Institute and the Embassy of Greece, in collaboration with La Scala Opera House and George Washington University which owns the former Corcoran building.

Callas ends Mar. 21, 2026 at the Brady Gallery, 500 17th St. NW, open Wednesday - Saturday, 1 - 5 p.m. (closed Feb. 14, 2026), and Australia ends Mar. 1, 2026 at the National Gallery of Art, 4th St. and Constitution Ave. NW, open every day, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Timed entry for either exhibition is not required.



WHEN SHE SANG at La Scala Opera House, Maria Callas wore these gowns, now on view at the Luther W. Brady Gallery, formerly the Corcoran Gallery. (Photos by Patricia Leslie)

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LEGAL NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) of the City of Falls Church, Virginia will hold a public hearing on February 12, 2026, at 7:30 PM in the Council Chambers, located at 300 Park Avenue, for consideration of the following item:

- Variance application V1667-25 by Kiara Ventura-Lopez (Applicant), on behalf of Tracy Montgomery (Owner), for a variance to 1) Section 48-238(3)(a) to allow a front setback of 17 feet 4 inches instead of the 30 feet minimum and 2) Section 48-238(3)(a) to allow a side yard setback of 9 feet 6 inches instead of the 13 feet minimum to construct a covered front porch at 509 S Spring Street, RPC#52-602-025 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential District, continued from July 10, 2025 by the applicant.

- Variance application V1675-26 by Joel Jer-makian, (Applicant and Owner), for a variance to Section 48-238(3)(a) to allow a rear yard setback of 24 feet and 2 inches instead of the 40 feet minimum to construct a proposed 16 feet by 18 feet screened-in porch at 303 E Broad Street, RPC#53-117-033 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential District.

Public comment and questions may be submitted to zoning@fallschurchva.gov until 4:30 pm on February 12, 2026. Agenda and application materials will be available the week prior to the scheduled hearing at: http://www.fallschurchva.gov/BZA

Information on the above application is also available for review upon request to staff at zoning@fallschurchva.gov.

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

The following was given first reading at the January 27, 2026, City Council meeting. Public hearings, second readings, and possible City Council actions are scheduled for Monday, February 9, 2026 at 7:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

(TO26-01) ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE 2090 AND ORDINANCE 2103 REGARDING THE BUDGET OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026: GENERAL FUND, SCHOOL OPERATING FUND, AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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

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ABC NOTICE

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

West Falls Community Association Inc, trading as West Falls Community Association, 7120 Leesburg Pike, Suite 101B, Falls Church, Fairfax County, VA is applying to the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Authority for a Commercial Lifestyle Center, Wine, Beer, Mixed Beverages, Consumed On Premises to sell alcoholic beverages. 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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# Before the Storm...From the Heart

BY PATTI AND DEAN DeBUCK

While sitting in Sfizi in anticipation of the approaching storm, we noticed a group assembling at a nearby table. Within minutes over 25 people, including some cute little ones, were enjoying conversation and a fantastic meal. There is much debate about Falls Church city becoming a big city but this article is an example of how the little city can prevail. The “family” consisted of hotel employees with family members and the sponsor of this joyous gathering was Kevin Varr, General Manager of Hilton Garden Inn. Kevin is the guy who needs to keep the hotel going throughout the storm but His Marketing Manager, Serra Gunek, noted that “Kevin also has the biggest heart for his staff.” Many other loyal workers throughout the DMV are working regardless of the weather. But we cannot imagine that many bosses are treating their staff to such a great dinner and camaraderie. Long time locals can remember the discussions about building this hotel. The controversy about tearing down Burger King and the little houses which were

on this property was long and heated. Little did we realize how the development group was leading the way to grow a home town inn with little city charm. The hotel hosts community groups, wedding parties and even post funeral receptions. It provided a port in the storm for us and other neighbors we met here such as a woman whose husband is at the Kensington and another who has upcoming hip surgery and wanted to be close by. This morning we awoke to a generous breakfast buffet as we watched Kevin shoveling at 6 am alongside Amy Feather, the Kensington Executive Director. I am sure this scene is being repeated all up and down Broad Street at the numerous businesses that so many of us frequent because of their quality and variety. Another aspect of the storm’s timing is the impact on local restaurants. Luckily, we already took advantage of the offerings at The Little Falls Cafe, a new delight on the growing list of specialty offerings. We also dined at Elevation Burger last week as they generously set one day aside as a fund raiser for St. James School. Ellie Bird, Godfrey’s and Harvey’s are also on our

short list. In fact, Godfrey’s did a fabulous job last September in helping us celebrate a big birthday on their delightful patio. The storm also highlights the dependance of our economy on the many good people who come to America seeking opportunity. In the early 1900s many of our ancestors came from Europe but now we want to be welcoming to those from other continents as well. They become our hard working and family centered neighbors. We also know that one of the partners of the Palmer-Gosnell Management who developed the Hilton Garden Inn is a Falls Church hometown boy who appreciates the community. He has helped build a thriving company alongside many others who grew up far away from Falls Church. It is a team effort. The word we end on is resilience. In any storm, it is so rewarding to see neighbors and communities come together and make adjustments. Non-profits, businesses and families make adjustments and find strength in working together. Even faith communities, such as St. James adding a extra vigil Mass, react quickly to support their members.



Kevin Varr, general manager Hilton Garden Inn and Serra, Marketing Manager and their team at Sfizi. (Photo: Patti and Dean DeBuck)

## CRITTER CORNER



SOPHIE AND LUCIE the rescue cats, relaxing in Falls Church. Just because you're not famous doesn't mean your pet can't be! Please send in your Critter Corner submissions to [crittercorner@fcnp.com](mailto:crittercorner@fcnp.com).

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# FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

## Commonwealth Attorney’s Advisory Panel Opens

The Commonwealth’s Attorney is recruiting for community members to apply for the Commonwealth Attorney’s Advisory Panel (CAAP). They are seeking community members with a broad range of personal and professional experience. The CAAP serves as a community liaison, provides input on reform ideas, analyzes policies for equity impact, and keeps the community informed of the office’s goals and objectives. The CAAP consists of 7–10 residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, who are expected to meet quarterly with the Commonwealth Attorney and participate in special projects. The deadline to apply is February 7 and more information is available at the link.

## VA 250 Commemorative Partner

Businesses looking for new marketing opportunities may consider Virginia 250. It offers businesses the chance to market their products as an official Commemorative Partner of Virginia’s 250th celebration of our nation. VA250 offers benefits such as use of the official logo, templates, sample newsletter articles and press releases, and listing on the official VA250.org website. Partners may also submit events to the calendar and receive access to sell VA250 merchandise at their stores, online and offline. Learn more by visiting <https://va250.org/commemorative-partners/>.

## Hidden Eats

Ike Allen of Washingtonian shared his discovery of another great Eden Center restaurant. Wandering through the indoor hallways, he found Bánh Cuốn Saigon. He favors the bánh bột lọc, similar to that he has enjoyed in a Manhattan restaurant. His praise them for the consistent, highly specialized Vietnamese cooking.

## Soulful Sharing Potluck

The Center for Spiritual Enlightenment will hold a potluck lunch on Sunday, February 1, following the service at 11:30 am. While there is no formal sign up, participants are invited to bring a dish to share at the potluck.

## Passport Music Ends Sunday

Creative Cauldron has hosted folk, Latin, jazz, soul, blues and global musicians in its 14th annual Passport Music Festival. Tickets are still available for the remaining performances for Cecily, “Celebrating the Queens of Disco”, IO the Singer, and Raymi.

## Northrop Grumman Posts Quarterly Profit

Falls Church-based Northrop Grumman announced a higher fourth-quarter profit and revenue, largely due to its strong aeronautics business including sales of the B-21 Bomber and fuselages for Lockheed Martin’s F-35 aircraft. Its 2026 sales forecast of \$43.5 billion to \$44 billion fell short of Wall Street estimates of \$44.24 billion.

► *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).*

# Our Man In Arlington

## BILL FOGARTY

By the time this column gets published, we will all hopefully have survived the latest “snow event.” The early forecasts of 18 to 22 inches brought back memories of prior snowstorms; topmost in my mind was the Snowmageddon of 2010. Fortunately for me, the memories are simple enough to write about, thanks to the good work of the Arlington Historical Society. All I had to do was to put in a few key words in my on-line search, which brought up an informative Arlington Historical Society article entitled “2010 Snowmageddon”. Here are some of the details of that snow event from the article:

“On February 5, 2010, Arlington – and the entire DMV region – experienced the beginning of a major two-day snow event named “Snowmageddon” by then-President Barack Obama. The accumulated snowfall of 17.8” over two days at National Airport was then the fourth biggest recorded storm in Arlington (subsequently tied by the Blizzard of 2016). Snow levels increased west of Arlington, with Dulles Airport receiving more than 30”, setting what remains its top snow record. Several days later, the “Blizzard of 2010” dumped even more snow, while the area was still struggling to recover from the first storm. Following the double storm, power outages, collapsed roofs, blocked streets and train tracks, and closed airports all caused major problems. Huge snowdrifts and a shortage of road salt also limited snowplow action. Department of Environmental Services Director Bob Griffin worked for more than two weeks straight; snowplow crews put in 12-hour shifts, around the clock. The federal government closed for almost a week. At the same time, neighbors came together to help each other manage, while many schoolchildren enjoyed more than a week of snow days. Monthly and seasonal snow records were also set locally, with National Airport recording over 56” of snow that year.”

My specific memory involved a diligent and concerted effort to shovel out my car so that I could drive my daughter, and two neighbors,

to a pivotal hockey game between the Washington Capitals and the Pittsburgh Penguins. It turned out that the roads were fine, as the sun had come out (it was an afternoon game). The Capitals won in overtime by a score of 5 to 4, with Alex Ovechkin scoring a hat trick, and Mike Knuble getting the game-winning goal. It was an amazing game.

Finding such quick access to all these facts is yet another example of the value of having a strong local history organization. The Arlington Historical Society, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, got its start at an informal meeting of local citizens at one of Arlington’s oldest houses, the Glebe House, which was the home of former State Senator Frank Ball, Sr. in 1956. The name of the house comes from the property’s history as a “glebe” (an area of land within a parish used to support a parish priest.) In this case, the Church of England established this glebe before the American Revolution, to serve the Falls Church, and Christ Church in Alexandria. George Washington was the most famous member of Christ Church, owning Pew #5 and serving as a vestryman for the parish.

If you can follow my train of thought, from the Washington Capitals to Glebe House to Christ Church, this reference to George Washington takes us back to the present day, and our community celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. So let me end with a plug for the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (known as VA250), an initiative created by the Virginia General Assembly to plan and manage state-wide events.

Our very own Arlington VA250 Committee has announced plans for Arlington HistoryFest 250, a free outdoor festival to be held on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at Kenmore Middle School. Peter Vaselopulos, President of the Arlington Historical Society, is the Chair of the Arlington VA250 Committee. Arlington HistoryFest 250 promises to be great fun for the whole family. It kicks off a multi-month commemoration, connecting our County’s roots to the modern day. More details will follow this spring. Meanwhile, stay safe on the ice!

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