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In Memoriam: Janet Howell, a Force for Northern Virginia

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

Former State Senator Janet Howell was a force to be reckoned with.

For 32 years in the Virginia Senate, the Reston Democrat fought against injustice, championed Northern Virginia and helped shape policies affecting residents across the Commonwealth.

Howell died Aug. 1, 2026, at age 82, more than two years after concluding one of the longest legislative careers among women in Virginia history. She leaves behind her husband, Hunt Howell; their sons, Eric and Brian; three grandchildren; and generations of friends, colleagues, neighbors and constituents whose lives she touched through a lifetime of public service.

Born Janet Denison in Washington, D.C., in 1944, Howell grew up in a family committed to public service. Her mother, Elsie Lightbown Denison, worked for the U.S. Labor Department's Women's Bureau and was active in civic affairs. Her father, Edward F. Denison, was an economist who worked for the Commerce Department and the Brookings Institution. Howell graduated from Oberlin College in 1966 and earned a master's degree in international relations from the University of Pennsylvania in 1968. She married her college sweetheart, Hunt Howell, that same year.

After moving to Northern Virginia, Howell found both a home and a calling in Reston. She became deeply involved in community life, serving as president of the Reston Association and as a parent-teacher association president.

Long before she was a state senator, she was a community activist who believed that residents could come together to improve the place they called home. Reston was home to Howell long before it was the center of her political career.

In 1987, while serving as president of the Reston Community Association, she spoke about the community in distinctly personal terms. After three moves within Lake Anne Village, she noted that her children had never had to change friends—and added, "Neither have I." Years later, reflecting on the man who created Reston, she called



The Honorable Janet Howell (1944 - 2026)

Robert E. Simon "a great visionary" and "a dear friend." She returned to Simon's Founder's Day celebrations year after year, once telling him, "Thank you, Bob, you put together a community with your vision and determination against all odds."

Her path to Richmond began in the late 1980s. Howell worked as a legislative assistant to Fairfax Delegate Ken Plum from 1989 to 1991, gaining firsthand experience in Virginia government. She was elected to the Senate in November 1991 and took office in January 1992, representing a Fairfax County district centered around Reston.

She would remain there for 32 years. "A major contributor to compassionate government in Virginia," wrote Delegate Plum while sharing the news of her passing on Facebook.

Howell repeatedly broke barriers for women in Virginia politics. In 1995, she became the first woman to preside over the Senate, taking the chair for the 39 seconds needed to adjourn the chamber. In 1997, she became the first woman appointed to the powerful

Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. In 2008, she became the first woman named a Senate budget conferee, giving her a direct role in negotiating Virginia's spending plan. In 2020, she reached the pinnacle of her career when she became the first woman to chair the Finance and Appropriations Committee, overseeing decisions involving billions of dollars in state spending.

But Howell's legacy was never simply about historic firsts. "Janet was a role model, a mentor, a leader," reflected State Senator Jennifer Boysko. "She also knew how to kick ass and take names while maintaining grace and integrity."

She worked to strengthen Virginia's laws addressing family violence, protect children from sexual predators and safeguard genetic information. Her advocacy for children was informed by her own experience of being assaulted as a young girl. Following the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, she helped lead Senate efforts to reform Virginia's mental health system.

Education was another defining priority. Howell advocated for Virginia's public schools and early-childhood education and supported higher education. She also fought for women's rights and reproductive freedom and was a longtime supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment. Virginia finally approved ratification in 2020.

Throughout those years, Howell was part of a generation of Northern Virginia Democrats who transformed the region's influence in Richmond. She worked closely with longtime Senate leader Dick Saslaw and remained connected to Ken Plum, her former employer and fellow advocate for Fairfax County. Their relationships reflected both the camaraderie and political determination that characterized Northern Virginia's growing presence in the General Assembly.

Howell was also known for maintaining friendships across party lines. Politics could be fierce, but she understood that effective legislating depended on relationships, persistence and the ability to find common ground. "They were an elite group, led for years by John Chichester (R-Stafford), who acted in a manner often divorced from party politics," reflected Chap Petersen.

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The U.S. Constitution: A Living Framework at 250

BY AYA AMER

On September 17, 2026, Americans will observe Constitution Day, marking the 239th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia in 1787. The observance comes during a year of special significance, as the United States celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776.

The Constitution was created at a pivotal moment in the young nation's history. Delegates met in Philadelphia from May 25 to September 17, 1787, originally intending to revise the Articles of Confederation, the country's first governing document. Instead, they decided to create an entirely new framework for the federal government.

The debates were often contentious.

Delegates wrestled with questions that remain familiar today: How much power should the federal government have? How should states be represented? How should the president be chosen? Compromises eventually produced a document establishing three branches of government — legislative, executive and judicial — along with a system of checks and balances.

On September 17, 1787, 39 of the 55 delegates who attended the convention signed the completed Constitution. Three delegates — George Mason, Elbridge Gerry and Edmund Randolph — declined to sign. The document then went to the states for ratification. New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it on June 21, 1788, reaching the threshold required for the Constitution to take effect.

The convention also had its share of unusual, human moments. Benjamin Franklin, at 81 the oldest delegate,

suffered from gout and other health problems. He was sometimes carried to the sessions in a sedan chair by four prisoners from Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail. The story offers a reminder that the Constitution was created by real people dealing with disagreements, illness and the ordinary challenges of life.

There is even a small error — or historical curiosity — in the original document. Above the signatures, "Pennsylvania" is spelled "Pensylvania," with one "n." It is a minor detail, but one that makes the centuries-old document feel surprisingly human.

The Constitution has evolved alongside the nation over time. Beginning with the ratification of the Bill of Rights—the first 10 amendments—in 1791, an additional 17 amendments have been added to the document. Notably, the 27th Amendment was ratified in 1992, more

than two centuries after its initial proposal.

The Constitution's influence did not stop at America's borders. Beginning in the late 18th century, its ideas about federalism, elected government, separation of powers and individual rights became models for constitution-makers around the world. Countries including Mexico, Argentina and Australia borrowed elements of the American system while adapting them to their own histories and political traditions.

While preserved as a historic document at the National Archives, the Constitution remains the active framework of American governance. As the United States marks its 250th anniversary, Constitution Day serves as a reminder that the American experiment extended far beyond 1776 and 1787, continuing to be redefined and shaped by every generation.

Two Daughters Who Rejected Their Fathers' Communist Legacies

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

There is a striking historical parallel between Alina Fernández Revuelta, the daughter of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, and Svetlana Alliluyeva, the only daughter of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. Raised in the innermost circles of communist power, both women ultimately rejected the political systems built by their fathers and eventually sought refuge in the United States, where they spoke publicly about life under communist rule.

Both were raised in the shadow of men who exercised enormous personal power over their countries. Both ultimately rejected the political systems their fathers built. And both eventually found refuge in the United States, where they spoke publicly about the realities of life under communist rule.

Their stories offer a powerful reminder that ideology looks very different from inside a dictatorship than it does from the comfort of a Western university, television studio or Twitch stream.

Alina Fernández Revuelta was born in Cuba in 1956, the daughter of Fidel Castro and Natalia Revuelta. She did not initially know that Castro was her father; according to her account, she learned the truth when she was ten years old.

Similarly, Svetlana Alliluyeva grew up surrounded by the Soviet power structure during her father's regime. In 1967, she defected to the United States while in India, a event that attracted significant international attention. Alliluyeva later became an American citizen and publicly denounced both Stalin and communist rule in the Soviet Union.

Their experiences highlight broader discussions regarding how authoritarian communist systems are viewed in Western political discourse. While commentators often distinguish between social welfare policies and one-party dictatorships, political figures and commentators in the United States have at times faced criticism for praising specific achievements of communist regimes, such as literacy programs or economic models, while downplaying the accompanying political repression.

But Western political discourse sometimes becomes remarkably forgiving when communist regimes are involved.

Bernie Sanders, for example, attracted substantial criticism in 2020 after defending aspects of Fidel Castro's record. Sanders explicitly acknowledged the authoritarian nature of Cuba but argued that it was unfair to say that "everything is bad," pointing to Castro's literacy program as an accomplishment.

The criticism was not that literacy is undesirable. Obviously it is not. The problem is the tendency to discuss an authoritarian regime's accomplishments while treating the political repression surrounding them as an inconvenient footnote.

The same issue has resurfaced with Hasan Piker, one of the most influential socialist commentators among younger Americans. Piker has described himself as a socialist and has expressed admiration for communist China; in 2026, he traveled to Cuba as part of an aid convoy. Vox reported that when asked which country had implemented socialism most closely to his preferences, Piker identified China as the closest example.

More recently, the U.S. State Department singled out Piker and other American left-wing activists in a report concerning Cuba and what the administration described as communist influence and "fellow travelers."

Whatever one's politics, it is reasonable to ask why people who enjoy the political freedoms of the United States sometimes romanticize systems in which those freedoms are sharply restricted.

The experiences of Castro's daughter and Stalin's daughter don't settle every argument about socialism, capitalism

or American foreign policy. Nor does rejecting communism automatically make every alternative political system virtuous.

But their lives do provide something that abstract ideological debates often lack: firsthand testimony.

Fernández knew the Castro system from inside the ruling family. Alliluyeva knew the Soviet system from inside Stalin's household. Neither woman was an American Cold War propagandist who had simply read about communism in a history book.

Both saw enough of authoritarian communist rule to reject the political legacy of their fathers.

That should give pause to anyone tempted to romanticize dictatorship because its leaders promised equality, literacy, social justice or liberation.

The most revealing question may not be what a revolutionary government promises before it gains power. It is what happens to people who disagree with it after it does.

For Fernández and Alliluyeva, the answer was ultimately clear: they wanted out. And both chose America.

The Oakton & Vienna Independent

The Independent News Press
3976 Chain Bridge Road,
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 282-3813
info@theindependentnewspress.com

The Oakton & Vienna Independent, your source for local news, stories, and community updates. Established in our beloved City of Fairfax and operating since February 1, 2025,

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DEAR READER & FRIENDS:

As we barrel into fall with back to school and wind down our vacations, I am thrilled to get this September edition out to you with a focus on community conversations and our thoughts for the legend - the Honorable Janet Howell of Reston.

Before sitting down to write this letter, I spent the morning in meditation, reflecting on the heavy feelings I had about addressing communism in this paper. By the age of 18, I had already lived through an Islamic Republic under Sharia law, a military dictatorship under martial law, and dictatorial communism with socialist laws. Believing in my heart that there was an ideal democracy and that a melting pot meant diversity of thought, I chose America as my forever home that ended my nomadic life thanks to my diplomatic parents. I immigrated to America during the peak of the Desert Storm and Desert Shield conflicts. I remember flying on a Tarom plane while the captain kept my passport in the cockpit because my last name is Hossain. Later, during my studies at GMU, I pretty much devoted my academic career to analyzing diverse conflicts—ranging from the Cold War with a focus on leadership in the Americas and wildlife conservation issues to the evolving cognitive dissonance as societies create new identities to fit into. Compiling two curated reading lists on page 16 weighed heavily on my mind. Though it took me over twenty years to finish every book on those lists, I completely understand if you cannot read them at all but I hope you will take the time to read every word on page 16.

Our writers are busy heading back to school and returning from vacation: Layla Mohran is settling into Boston College, Hannah Lee is wrapping up at Laidlaw and returning from Europe, Daria Parnes spent most of August on a beach somewhere which is why we don't have a transportation page, Owen Korzak made it back to the University of Maryland and the Commanders from his summer in the City, and I made it to NYC for 8 days of which I spent an entire day on the train trying to get to Liberty otherwise a a successful vacation since the pandemic. The rest of our writers have been sketchy about their summer whereabouts but I promise to share news about our newsroom writers in every edition so you get to know us.

Our September edition highlights the trends, conversations, and possibilities that are helping define tomorrow. We hope these stories inspire curiosity, encourage discussion, and remind us that community dialogue between neighbors is something we all can help shape.

Thank you to our friends: our loyal donors, guest writers, advertisers, and those who send us leads, tips, and kind words. We always need some more money to operate. Know that I take every dollar you send us to heart because you have helped us reach 100K readers.

Thank you to the Oakton & Vienna residents for continuing to welcome our newspaper into your homes and communities. We appreciate the opportunity to share stories that inform, connect, and celebrate the people and ideas that make our community unique.

Be sure to write to me with ideas you would like to share and see in our newspaper at info@theindependentnewspress.com | (703) 282-3813 (call or text)

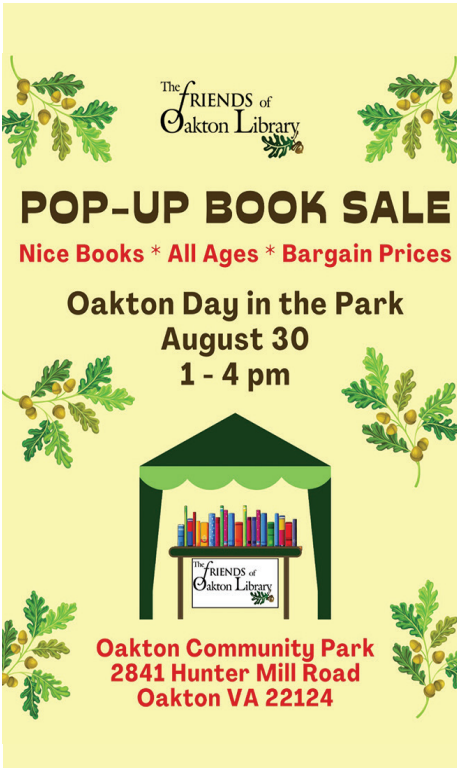
With gratitude, Tania Hossain
Publisher at The Independent News Press

Mayor & Chief @ Your Service



- Tuesday, September 08, 2026 | 07:00 PM - 09:00 PM
- Tuesday, November 10, 2026 | 07:00 PM - 09:00 PM
- Vienna Police Department Community Room - 215 Center Street S.

"Mayor & Chief at Your Service" is a community event where residents can connect with Mayor Linda Colbert and Police Chief Dan Janickery to learn how regional partnerships, 21st century technology, and good old fashioned detective work helped close the book on some recent local and regional crimes.



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MeMaw Is Waiting

BY AYA AMER

For many older Americans, a Meals on Wheels delivery is about more than a meal. It can be a reliable source of food, a friendly visit and sometimes the only connection to the outside world that a senior has that day. Now, the organization says a lack of federal funding is leaving more seniors waiting for help.

Meals on Wheels America launched its “MeMaw Is Waiting” advocacy campaign July 13 to bring attention to the growing need for senior nutrition programs. The organization says nearly 14 million seniors are facing food insecurity as the nation’s older population grows, while the costs of food, gasoline and daily operations continue to rise.

The funding shortage is already



No Senior Should Have To Wait (image courtesy Meals on Wheels America)

affecting local Meals on Wheels providers. Some have had to reduce delivery days, eliminate meal routes, pause new deliveries or create waiting lists. In some communities, providers have even been forced to shut down operations.

Nine out of 10 Meals on Wheels

providers rely on federal funding, with 60% depending on it for at least half of their operating budgets. Meals on Wheels America is asking Congress to increase funding for the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program from \$1.059 billion to \$2.285 billion for fiscal year 2027.

The increase would allow providers to continue serving the 2.6 million seniors who currently receive assistance and potentially reach another 2.5 million older adults who are food insecure but currently do not receive the service.

The organization also argues that Meals on Wheels provides benefits beyond nutrition. Regular meal deliveries can help reduce isolation, prevent unnecessary emergency room visits and help seniors remain independent in their homes. Meals on Wheels America estimates that social

isolation costs Medicare about \$9 billion each year, while senior falls cost the U.S. health care system approximately \$98 billion annually.

At the heart of the campaign is a simple idea: the people waiting for meals are not just statistics. They are grandparents, neighbors, friends and family members.

As Congress considers funding for the coming fiscal year, Meals on Wheels America is urging lawmakers to increase federal support so that fewer seniors have to wait for something as basic as a meal and a knock at the door.

For more information, readers can visit the following Meals on Wheels America website at <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/ways-to-advocate/>

MedVoyage Global Selects Fairfax City for First U.S. Headquarters

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – Northern Virginia is welcoming a new international technology company as MedVoyage Global Inc., a Taiwan-headquartered leader in satellite-enabled healthcare technology, establishes its first U.S. headquarters at the Mason Enterprise Center (MEC) Fairfax located in the City of Fairfax.

The company’s office, which opened Aug. 1 at 10300 Eaton Place, Suite 474, will support MedVoyage’s U.S. sales, systems engineering and regulatory compliance operations. Over the next two years, the company plans to expand its local workforce, adding systems engineers, clinical compliance specialists and commercial sales executives.

MedVoyage provides low-latency, satellite-enabled healthcare platforms that connect medical providers with patients in remote locations, maritime vessels and emergency response units around the world. Its technology supports more than 150,000 emergency and remote telehealth cases each year across more than 80 medical centers in 40 countries.

The company’s platform combines real-time streaming, low-Earth-orbit satellite technology and artificial intelligence-driven

clinical support to provide reliable digital healthcare in remote and off-grid environments. MedVoyage also provides automated pharmacy management capabilities.

"Selecting Fairfax City for our U.S. headquarters is a foundational step in our global scaling strategy," said Nemo Teng, CEO of MedVoyage Global Inc. "MEC Fairfax offers the ideal soft-landing environment and unparalleled access to the Northern Virginia tech ecosystem, placing us minutes away from critical federal and defense stakeholders such as the U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense. This facility allows us to rapidly build strategic U.S. partnerships, access premier regional engineering talent, and deploy our emergency and maritime telehealth solutions across North America."

The business attraction effort began through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance, of which Fairfax City Economic Development is a member. After evaluating regional technology hubs, MedVoyage selected MEC Fairfax as the base for its U.S. expansion.

"MedVoyage's decision to establish its first U.S. headquarters in Fairfax City

reflects the strength of our innovation economy and the collaborative business environment we've built," said Colleen Kardasz, CEO and Director of Fairfax City Economic Development.

MedVoyage's arrival adds another international company to Fairfax City's increasingly diverse innovation economy and brings new opportunities for local employment and business partnerships.

Run Down of the August 4 Primary Races

BY AYA AMER

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – Virginia's August 4 primary elections have set the stage for a series of closely watched congressional contests this fall, with several races potentially affecting the balance of power in Washington.

In the U.S. Senate, Republican voters selected retired Army Maj. Gen. Bert Mizusawa to challenge Democratic incumbent Mark Warner. Mizusawa defeated Kim Farington and David Williams in the Republican primary. Warner, who faced no Democratic challenger, will seek another term in November. The race is expected to receive significant attention, although Democrats currently have an advantage in the statewide contest.

The 1st Congressional District

will feature Republican incumbent Rob Wittman against Democrat Shannon Taylor, the Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney. Taylor won a crowded Democratic primary and will attempt to unseat Wittman in a district that has traditionally favored Republicans.

The 2nd District will also be closely watched. Former Democratic Rep. Elaine Luria won the Democratic nomination and will face Republican incumbent Jen Kiggans in a rematch. The Hampton Roads-based district is considered one of Virginia's more competitive congressional races.

In the 5th District, Republican incumbent John McGuire defeated his primary challenger and will face

Spanberger Enters Dominion-NextEra Merger Debate as Virginia Ratepayers Face Rising Energy Costs

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger is formally intervening in the State Corporation Commission’s review of the proposed \$67 billion merger between Dominion Energy and NextEra Energy, putting the state in a position to closely examine how the deal could affect Virginia households, businesses and the Commonwealth’s energy future.

The proposed merger would combine Dominion with NextEra Energy, one of the nation’s largest electric utilities and renewable-energy companies. For Virginians, the implications extend well beyond the corporate transaction.

Dominion provides electricity to customers throughout much of Virginia, including communities in Northern Virginia, Richmond, Central Virginia and Hampton Roads. Any changes involving the company’s ownership, investments or operating costs could have consequences for ratepayers across its service territory.

The merger itself does not currently have a confirmed price increase attached to it. Dominion and NextEra have said merger-related costs will not be passed on to customers and have proposed \$2.25 billion in bill credits for customers in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

However, Virginia electricity customers are already seeing higher costs.



The State Corporation Commission approved an increase of about \$11.24 per month for the average Dominion residential customer in 2026, followed by another \$2.36 monthly increase in 2027.

Concurrently, expanding electricity demand has driven up Dominion’s fuel costs significantly. The utility estimates these higher fuel expenditures could elevate an average residential monthly bill from roughly \$173 to \$195—representing an increase of about 13 percent. This cost growth is independent of the proposed NextEra transaction and stems primarily from fuel market pressures, wholesale power rates, and rising usage.

The issue is particularly important in Northern Virginia, where Loudoun and Prince William counties are home to one of the largest concentrations of data centers in the world.

Those facilities consume enormous amounts of electricity, and demand is expected to continue growing. Meeting that demand requires major investments

in power generation, transmission lines and other infrastructure.

Hampton Roads and other parts of Virginia are also experiencing economic and population growth that will require dependable electricity.

The question for regulators is who ultimately pays for that infrastructure and whether customers receive an appropriate share of the benefits.

Spanberger’s intervention allows her administration to formally participate in the SCC proceeding, present evidence and advocate for protections for Virginia consumers.

The governor and Virginia Chief Energy Officer Josephus Allmond have indicated that protecting ratepayers and ensuring continued investment in the state are priorities. The merger also has attracted attention from Virginia lawmakers, some of whom have urged the governor to consider additional

action, including a special legislative session. Legislators have expressed concerns about the potential long-term impact on utility rates, market competition, and accountability to Virginia consumers. Proponents of a special session argue that direct legislative oversight would allow lawmakers to evaluate regulatory protections, explore statutory safeguards against rate hikes, and ensure that any potential cost savings from the merger directly benefit state residents rather than corporate shareholders.

The SCC will ultimately determine whether the merger meets Virginia’s legal requirements and serves the public interest. Regulators could approve the transaction, reject it or impose conditions before allowing it to proceed.

Beyond a mere corporate acquisition, the Dominion-NextEra merger carries profound implications for Virginia’s energy trajectory—directly influencing who governs the state’s energy landscape and the financial burden placed on consumers.

Crucial concerns for residents center on preserving power grid reliability, keeping electric rates affordable, keeping investments and employment within the state, and identifying funding mechanisms for the extensive infrastructure required to accommodate rising demand.

From Page 4 → RUN DOWN...

Democrat Tom Perriello in November. The 7th District will feature another potentially competitive contest, with Republican voters choosing a challenger to Democratic incumbent Eugene Vindman.

Elsewhere, Democratic incumbents Don Beyer in the 8th District and Suhas Subramanyam in the 10th District advanced through their primaries. James Walkinshaw did not face a primary in the 11th District.

Approximately, 7% of Virginia voters turned out for this unusually late primary date. With Virginia’s congressional races now set, attention turns to the Nov. 3 general election and the battle for control of Congress.

Crime in Fairfax County: 2025 State Statistics

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

FAIRFAX, VA — The Virginia State Police released its 2025 Crime in Virginia report on July 15, 2026. The report contains crime statistics for Virginia’s localities and is compiled through the state’s Uniform Crime Reporting program.

For Fairfax County, the 2025 report lists a population of 1,072,656 and 35,115 reported incidents for the Fairfax County Police Department. The corresponding incident rate was 3,273.64 per 100,000 residents.

The report lists the following offenses among those reported by the Fairfax County Police Department:

Offenses reported by the department included 15 murders, 145 kidnappings or abductions, 107 forcible rapes, 238 other forcible sex offenses, 344 robberies, 383 aggravated assaults, 7,246 simple assaults or intimidation cases, 70 arsons, and 12 extortions or blackmail incidents.

These figures are reported offenses within Virginia’s incident-based reporting system. A single incident can contain more than one offense, so the number of offenses should not be interpreted as the number of individual incidents or offenders.

The 2025 report also provides statewide comparisons. Virginia recorded 18,693 violent-crime victims in 2025, a decrease of 5.9% from 2024.

Statewide homicides declined from 439 in 2024 to 378 in 2025, a decrease of 13.9%.

Statewide figures should not be confused with or substituted for these localized Fairfax County data points.

Because the 2025 release remains the most recently finalized annual dataset from the Virginia State Police, full-year figures for 2026 are not yet available, though VSP continually updates its online crime database as law enforcement agencies submit new data.

The statistics presented in this report are provided objectively, without drawing conclusions about broader trends in public safety.



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Fairfax City Restaurant Week Returns to Celebrate the Stories Behind Every Dish

The 10-Day Culinary Event Invites Diners to Discover the Signature Dishes That Define Fairfax City's Diverse Restaurant Community

Fairfax City Restaurant Week returns August 20–30, inviting residents and visitors to explore the flavors, traditions and stories behind the city's diverse restaurant scene.

More than 20 local restaurants will participate in the 10-day celebration, showcasing signature dishes that reflect their culinary identity, heritage and creativity. Participating eateries represent a wide range of cuisines, including Italian, Korean, Japanese, Latin American, Irish and Middle Eastern.

This year's event moves beyond traditional set-price menus, encouraging diners to discover the dishes each restaurant is most proud to serve—and the stories behind them.



"Every restaurant has a story to tell," said Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read. "This summer's theme gives diners a chance to experience the passion, culture and craftsmanship behind the dishes that define our community."

Participating restaurants include

Baku Delicious, Bellissimo Restaurant, Big Buns Fairfax, Boba TomTom, Commonwealth Brewing Co., Curry Mantra, Dolce Vita Italian Kitchen & Wine Bar, Draper's Steak & Seafood, El Pollo Rico, Hamrock's Restaurant, Hot Spot Hot Pot, Meokja Meokja, Ned's New England Deck, Okonomi Asian Grill, Old Dominion

Pizza, P.J. Skidoos, Sushi Friends Hashi, Patriot's Pub & Grill, The Auld Shebeen, The Wine House and Vivi Bubble Tea.

Restaurant Week is organized by a committee representing Fairfax City Economic Development, local business organizations, restaurant owners and consultants. The event aims to strengthen connections between restaurants, residents and visitors while highlighting Fairfax City as a vibrant dining destination.

For participating restaurants and featured signature dishes, readers can get the most up to date information on the following website at fairfaxcityrestaurantweek.com or follow @FairfaxCityRestaurantWeek on Instagram and Facebook.

COZE The Space Brings a New Approach to Self-Care to Fairfax

BY BETHANY HAN

Investing time in self-care shouldn't feel stressful, rushed, or uncomfortable. That philosophy was at the heart of COZE The Space, a new hair salon in Fairfax that opened its doors this summer with a goal of making every part of the salon experience feel calm, welcoming, and relaxing.

Located at 4002 University Drive, COZE The Space was designed with comfort in mind. Warm ambient lighting, soft neutral colors, and thoughtful details throughout the salon created an atmosphere that felt less like a traditional hair salon and more like a place to slow down and unwind.

The name COZE was inspired by the French idea of an intimate conversation—the kind that happens when people feel comfortable, present, and truly themselves. The salon's founders envisioned a space where beauty and connection could

naturally come together, allowing creativity to flow while guests felt welcomed, relaxed, and cared for.

COZE was founded by professional stylists Eunice Kim and Joanne Chung, both of whom brought more than a decade of experience in the hair care industry. With a shared passion for their craft, Kim and Chung created COZE as a place where artistry, personal connection, and self-care could come together.

The salon celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 7 at 4 p.m., officially welcoming the new business to Fairfax's local community.

For Fairfax residents looking for a new place to refresh their look while taking a moment to relax, located on 4002 University Drive, COZE The Space offered a welcoming new option close to home.

Jas and Fam Caribbean Flavor Celebrates Fair Oaks Mall Opening & Ribbon Cutting

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

A taste of Jamaica has officially arrived in the heart of Fairfax County. Jas and Fam Caribbean Flavor celebrated the grand opening of its newest location at Fair Oaks Mall with a ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted in partnership with the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce that took place on August 1.

The celebration marked an exciting milestone for the family-owned business, which has grown from its beginnings in Maryland's food truck industry into a thriving Caribbean restaurant with two physical locations.

Inspired by their mother's love of cooking, Jas and Fam Caribbean Flavor was created with a simple but meaningful mission: to share the flavors and culture of Jamaica with the DMV community. The restaurant's menu features authentic Jamaican favorites, including oxtail, curried goat, and flavorful beef patties that bring a nostalgic taste of the islands to local diners.

The Fair Oaks Mall opening is especially significant for customers in Northern Virginia.

Previously, those looking to enjoy Jas and Fam's food had to make the trip to Bowie, Maryland. With the new Fair Oaks location, authentic Jamaican cuisine is now much more accessible to the Fairfax community and surrounding areas.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony highlighted Jas and Fam's growth as a local small business and its commitment to the Fairfax community.

Since opening, the Fair Oaks location has built a loyal following drawn to its fresh food, welcoming atmosphere, and dedicated staff.

Beyond authentic cuisine, the restaurant shares Jamaican culture through live reggae music during the dining experience.

Its journey from a food truck to multiple locations reflects a continued focus on family, quality, and community values.

With its new location, Jas and Fam Caribbean Flavor continues to bring Jamaican food, music, and culture to Fairfax County.

Labor Day: Honoring the American Worker

BY KATE HOELZ

Labor Day is a holiday honoring this nation's workers. Celebrated on the first Monday of every September, it is an opportunity to recognize the millions of people whose daily efforts keep our communities, businesses, and country moving.

Many holidays center around the famous or powerful. There are days set aside to honor presidents, activists, and explorers, but until the late 19th century, there was no national occasion reserved for average, working-class Americans. That changed on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, when New York City celebrated the first Labor Day.

The celebration was surprisingly large. An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 workers marched through Manhattan, followed by a gathering attended by nearly 25,000 union members and their families. The day included speeches, a picnic, dancing, cigars, and fireworks.

Labor Day grew out of the labor movements of the late 1800s. The Industrial Revolution dramatically reshaped America's economy and society, while many workers faced long hours, dangerous conditions, and few workplace protections. Labor organizers pushed for better wages, safer workplaces, shorter hours, and greater respect for working people.

Two men, Peter J. McGuire, a co-

founder of the American Federation of Labor, and Matthew Maguire, a secretary of New York's Central Labor Union, are both credited with helping establish Labor Day. Historians continue to debate who deserves primary credit. What they shared was a belief that American workers deserved recognition for their contribution to the nation.

The idea spread quickly. Oregon became the first state to establish Labor Day as a legal holiday in 1887, and by 1894, 23 states had adopted the holiday. On June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed legislation establishing Labor Day as a national holiday, to be observed on the first Monday of September.

More than 140 years later, Labor

Day remains significant. It reminds us of hard-won workplace protections and the importance of workers having a voice in their wages, working conditions, benefits, and economic future. And today's workforce demonstrates the enormous scale of that contribution: about 169 million Americans were in the civilian labor force in June 2026, with roughly 162 million employed.

Labor Day is now associated with barbecues, travel, sales, and the unofficial end of summer. But beneath those traditions is a deeper purpose.

Labor Day reminds us that the prosperity of a nation isn't created only by its leaders, corporations, or institutions. It is built every day by the people who do the work.

Castellini Law Celebrates Grand Opening with Ribbon Cutting

BY BETHANY HAN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Castellini Law officially opened its doors in Fairfax on August 21 with a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the launch of its new boutique law firm.



helping clients protect what matters most, plan thoughtfully for the future, and make important decisions with greater confidence and clarity.

The ceremony took place at the firm's new office at 3900 University Drive, Suite 110, Fairfax, VA 22030, marking the beginning of the firm's work serving individuals and families throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

Castellini Law focuses primarily on estate planning and estate and trust administration, with an emphasis on personalized service and thoughtful guidance. The firm takes a client-first approach, working to understand each client's individual goals, circumstances, and priorities.

"We are proud to introduce our boutique law firm focused on estates and trusts, providing personalized, thoughtful counsel to individuals and families throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia," the firm stated in an Instagram post announcing the ribbon cutting.

For Castellini Law, estate planning is about more than preparing legal documents. The firm emphasizes

The firm's boutique approach provides clients with personal attention and tailored legal advice. Its services include assisting individuals and families with estate planning as well as helping clients navigate estate and trust administration.

"We believe estate planning is about more than documents," the firm stated. "It's about protecting what matters, planning thoughtfully for the future, and helping families navigate important decisions with confidence and clarity."

The August 21 ribbon cutting gave the firm an opportunity to introduce itself to the Fairfax community and formally celebrate the opening of its new office. Castellini Law can be reached at 703-775-0035 or clientservices@castellinilaw.com.

With its opening, Castellini Law joined the Fairfax business community with a focus on providing thoughtful, personalized legal guidance to individuals and families as they plan for the future and navigate important estate and trust matters.

Spire Global Wins \$3.7 Million NOAA Contract for Satellite Weather Data

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

VIENNA, VA — On August 16, Spire Global announced that it had been awarded a \$3.7 million contract by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide satellite-based weather data from September 18 through December 1, 2026. The agreement extends Spire's role in supplying commercial satellite observations used to support weather forecasting and atmospheric monitoring.

Under the contract, Spire will continue delivering global navigation satellite system radio occultation (GNSS-RO) data. This technology uses signals from navigation satellites as they pass through Earth's atmosphere to measure conditions such as temperature, pressure and humidity at different altitudes. The observations can then be incorporated into weather models to improve forecasts.

A notable component of the new agreement is the inclusion of Temporal Resolution Enhancements. These observations are designed to provide atmospheric measurements

at a broader range of times throughout the day, helping address gaps that can occur with traditional radio occultation coverage. NOAA's purchase represents the first time the agency has procured these enhanced profiles as a distinct deliverable under a commercial radio occultation contract.

The contract continues a growing relationship between NOAA and Spire. In 2025, Spire received an \$11.2 million NOAA award for GNSS-RO data under the agency's Commercial Weather Data Program. NOAA has also announced plans for another phase of commercial radio occultation data acquisition beginning December 1, 2026.

For Spire, the latest award highlights the increasing role of commercial satellite companies in providing data for government weather operations. For NOAA, access to additional near-real-time atmospheric observations could help strengthen forecasting capabilities and provide a more detailed picture of how weather systems evolve around the globe.

Four Months Riding with FCPD: What I Learned About the Police

GUEST COLUMN BY MICHAEL JAWER, RESIDENT OF VIENNA/DUNN LORING AND CHAPLAIN INTERN

Mediating a dispute between neighbors...calming down a man who's agitated and walking in traffic...counseling a teenager after his first drug arrest...bolstering the self-esteem of a young man who's had alcohol issues and run into problems. These are but a few instances of Fairfax County police officers doing what they do in the course of a shift to "increase the peace." It's different than what many of us expect the police to do routinely, such as pulling over drivers, investigating break-ins, and making arrests. Yes, they do all that but what impressed me most during four months of ridealongs was the way officers go about their business calmly, looking for ways to hear people out, deescalate tensions, and prevent flareups.

I had this opportunity as part of my training to become a chaplain; between January and June, 2026, I rode along, twice a week, with FCPD patrol officers. Half of those ridealongs covered a daylong shift; the other half went from 6 pm to midnight.

I went to every one of the County's eight districts and was privileged to drive through neighborhoods that I might not have gotten to otherwise – whether the heavily forested area south of Clifton, the rough-and-tumble Route 1 corridor toward Mt. Vernon, or the tangle of commerce that is Franconia-Springfield. As a Vienna resident, I was familiar with many parts of Fairfax County but not those. I gained insight into the economic disparities here: for every well-to-do suburban enclave, there are far grittier environs where petty crime and drug use is common.

What I also grew to appreciate was how well-trained (and young) our officers are. The vast majority of police I rode with are in their twenties; some were just out of the Academy. The training they receive there is impressive. It's evident in the steady and assured way they interact with citizens – asking careful questions, not making assumptions, not jumping to conclusions. Another emphasis (and one sees it constantly) is on treating people with courtesy and respect, whether it's a traffic stop or a drug bust. I was surprised by how restrained and polite the officers were, even with people they arrested

or who tried hard to provoke them (by cursing, kicking, etc.).

FCPD is also fairly diverse. I rode with White officers half the time but one out of four was Hispanic, one out of 10 was Black, and one out of 10 practiced Islam. About a quarter were female. Racially and religiously, FCPD approximates the County's considerable diversity.

One major surprise was how much of an officer's time is spent attending to situations involving Emotionally Distressed Persons, or EDPs. I'd estimate EDPs account for something like a quarter of all police calls in the County. These situations are difficult because officers aren't trained mental health professionals yet they have to decide on the spot if a person needs to go to treatment. Most EDPs are confused or incoherent, and some can become violent.

It's trite to say, but every shift is different and they're all unpredictable. As citizens, we owe a lot to the men and women in blue who put themselves on the line. "Catching the bad guys" is the reason some officers do what they do;

for others, it's a calling that members of their family have answered before. Policing involves long hours, occasional monotony, and considerable risk. It's truly a fraternity, where the brothers and sisters have each other's back. I was glad to see how well they support one another (especially in the case of a multiple homicide in Annandale where the entire shift responded and the perpetrator was shot dead). The job can be stressful but officers typically succeed in leaving their work at the station, processing what they need to, and moving on. That's not to say they don't need emotional and spiritual support. Although the County offers it (every District has a chaplain, and confidential counseling is available at a central location), supervisors and colleagues provide invaluable front-line solace. Never underestimate the power of humor and camaraderie.

My four months of ridealongs provided a window I wouldn't otherwise have had. By far my strongest takeaway is the humane way police officers go about their job. This may be news to many of us who simply read the headlines but I saw examples of it daily.

Aimee Willard: A Legacy That Changed the Law

BY ABBY DENNIS

PHILADELPHIA, PA – On June 20, 1996, a tragedy forever changed the lives of Aimee Willard's family, friends, teammates and the George Mason University community. Willard, just 22 years old, was a standout student-athlete who competed in both soccer and lacrosse. Known for her infectious energy, fierce competitive spirit and genuine warmth, she represented the dedication and teamwork that define a college athlete.

During that summer in the Philadelphia area, Willard was driving home after spending the evening with friends when her vehicle was struck by another car. After pulling over, she was abducted, and her body was subsequently found in a Philadelphia lot. She had been sexually assaulted and murdered.

The case gained national attention and raised significant questions regard-

ing whether her murder could have been avoided based on the history of her attacker, Arthur Bomar.

Bomar was a convicted murderer who had served part of a life sentence in Nevada prior to receiving parole. Upon relocating to Pennsylvania, he violated his parole conditions and interacted with law enforcement. Congressional testimony noted that Pennsylvania police had detained him on assault charges prior to Willard's death, but he was released instead of being returned to custody. Bomar later encountered Willard and committed the fatal crime.

Following her death, Willard's family began advocating for criminal justice reforms, seeking systemic changes to prevent repeat violent offenders from remaining at large.

Their efforts contributed to the passage of Aimee's Law in 2000 as part of

the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Signed by President Bill Clinton, the law was designed to encourage states to take greater responsibility for violent offenders released on parole or supervision.

Rather than establishing a national parole system or mandating continuous imprisonment, Aimee's Law introduced financial mechanisms concerning interstate repeat offenders. If an individual with a prior conviction for murder, rape, or a dangerous sexual offense in one state committed a qualifying offense in another, federal law enforcement funds allocated to the primary state could be reduced. Those funds would then be reallocated to the state responsible for the investigation, prosecution, and incarceration of the offender.

Additionally, the law mandated increased federal tracking and reporting of information regarding repeat violent offenders.

Willard's impact also extends into institutional recognition.

At George Mason, her memory continues through Patriot Athletics. The university established the Aimee Willard Commemorative Award, presented to a student-athlete who demonstrates the qualities that defined Aimee: intensity, consistency of purpose, achievement and teamwork.

Nearly three decades after her death, generations of Mason athletes continue to learn her name and carry her memory onto the field.

Aimee Willard was robbed of a future she deserved. But her life continues to inspire action, achievement and remembrance. Through a law bearing her name and through the athletes who strive to embody her spirit, Aimee's story remains a powerful reminder that one life can leave an enduring legacy.

The Courage to Speak

OP-ED BY AMINI BONANE,
CITY OF FAIRFAX RESIDENT

One of my earliest memories is the sound of adults lowering their voices.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I was born, conversations about politics or injustice rarely happened loudly. They happened quietly in kitchens, behind closed doors. Even as a young child, I could sense when a conversation carried risk. Voices softened. Someone might glance toward the door. I didn't understand the politics behind it, but I understood that some truths had to be spoken carefully. In places where freedom of speech isn't protected, silence becomes a survival skill.

My family eventually left Congo and came to the United States as refugees. I didn't fully grasp the reasons behind our journey, but I knew we were leaving everything familiar behind for a place

that promised safety and a future we could build ourselves.

Arriving in the U.S. felt overwhelming. The language was unfamiliar, the customs confusing. School was the greatest challenge. I spent long hours learning English, observing more than speaking. Listening felt safer than contributing. When teachers asked students to share their thoughts, other hands shot up quickly. Mine stayed on the desk.

Part of that hesitation was about language. I worried about my accent, about saying the wrong word. But part of it went deeper. Silence had been a protective habit in my early childhood, and old habits follow people across oceans.

Over time, I noticed something extraordinary: people here talked about everything. They debated on television, in classrooms, at community meetings. Public conversation wasn't

discouraged — it was expected. Slowly, I understood that democracy requires participation, and participation begins with speech.

One classroom memory stands out. The teacher asked a question I knew the answer to. Hands shot up around me. Mine stayed down. What if I sound foolish? Then another thought replaced it: What happens if I say nothing?

I raised my hand. My voice was cautious, my words imperfect. But nothing bad happened. A classmate responded. The conversation grew. For the first time, I understood my voice could be part of something larger.

That moment reshaped how I saw free speech — not just a constitutional right, but the realization that ideas only matter if spoken aloud.

Fairfax City became where I learned how speech connects to service. I returned after college and got involved in

community meetings, first listening, then gradually sharing my own perspective on housing, education, and civic life. Each time I spoke, I remembered those quiet kitchens in Congo, and the contrast felt striking.

Today's debates about political correctness and free speech raise real tension. But caution isn't censorship. Respectful language doesn't weaken free speech — it often makes real dialogue possible. I've watched personal stories shift entire rooms at community meetings, turning statistics into human conversations.

The greater danger to free speech isn't courtesy. It's the silence that grows when people believe their voices don't matter.

Freedom of speech transformed whispers into conversations, and it turned me from an observer into a participant. That transformation is not just a legal right — it's an act of courage.

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Let's Talk It Through: Finding Common Ground in Northern Virginia

GUEST COLUMN BY
ARLEEN R. BORYSIEWICZ, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF NVMS CONFLICT
RESOLUTION CENTER

Divorce rarely feels simple, especially when children, finances, and shared lives are on the line. For one local mother, the thought of untangling a marriage while protecting her family's emotional stability felt completely overwhelming. Instead of entering into a costly, high-conflict courtroom battle, she turned to the **NVMS Conflict Resolution Center**, a nonprofit conflict resolution organization.

As Northern Virginia's leading community mediation center, NVMS provides parties with Supreme Court of Virginia-certified professionals who help people resolve everything from family and workplace friction to neighbor and commercial disputes.

From their very first appointment, the process changed the dynamic.

Their neutral mediator stripped away intimidating legal jargon, helping them calmly navigate parenting plans, finances, and the future of their home. When an emotional impasse arose—with the husband convinced he simply couldn't afford to move out—the mediator broke down the numbers objectively to reveal practical, realistic housing options.

By the final session, the couple had built a comprehensive agreement that honored both their individual needs and their children's well-being. Rather than deepening hostility, mediation offered them a civilized path forward defined by dignity, clarity, and mutual respect.

Whether you are facing a difficult family disagreement, a business dispute, or a neighborhood conflict, you don't have to navigate it alone. Let NVMS help you talk through it.

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Vienna Cloud Seeks Exceptions to Fairfax County Data Center Rules

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

VIENNA, VA — A proposed data center redevelopment in Tysons has drawn statements from residents, environmental advocates, and Fairfax County officials as the developer seeks exceptions to zoning standards adopted for the data-center industry.

SFDC1 LLC is seeking county approval for Vienna Cloud, a redevelopment at 7980 and 7990 Quantum Drive. The approximately 14.4-acre property, located south of Leesburg Pike and west of the Capital Beltway, currently contains office and data-center buildings. The proposal would replace them with two new data-center buildings totaling approximately 316,000 square feet and increase the property's permitted floor-area ratio from 0.40 to 0.50.

The most significant issue for surrounding neighborhoods is the request to modify Fairfax County's data-center location standards. The county generally requires new data centers to be separated from residential properties by at least 200 feet. Vienna Cloud is seeking reduced

setbacks. According to reporting on the application, the proposed buildings would be approximately 107 feet from the Reserve at Tysons Corner apartments and 131 feet from the Heritage Point townhomes.

The project is also located within one mile of a Metrorail station entrance, another location restriction established when the Board of Supervisors updated data-center regulations in 2024. The application presents the question of whether the county will grant exceptions to standards adopted to address data-center development.

The community surrounding the proposal includes nearby residents, property owners, neighborhood stakeholders, and regional environmental and land-use organizations. Nature Forward has expressed opposition to the project, encouraging residents to contact county officials, participate in the public process, and submit comments regarding the requested zoning exceptions.

Nearby residents have cited potential concerns regarding large-scale data-

center operations, including mechanical noise, nighttime activity, construction impacts, traffic, visual changes, and the reduced distance between the proposed buildings and homes. The state's requirement for noise studies for qualifying high-energy-use facilities provides additional data regarding the project's potential noise levels.

Community participation does not necessarily mean opposing the entire redevelopment. Residents can also advocate for specific protections, including stronger setbacks, landscaping and screening, enforceable noise limits, independent noise monitoring, construction-hour restrictions, traffic management, and pedestrian improvements.

The developer, Serverfarm, presents a different vision. It describes Vienna Cloud as redevelopment of an existing property and highlights proposed landscaping, pedestrian improvements, recreational amenities, and changes intended to reduce impacts on nearby homes.

The debate therefore extends beyond a single development. It reflects a

larger community discussion about how Fairfax County should balance economic development and redevelopment with neighborhood compatibility, noise, energy use, and the zoning protections adopted in 2024.

State legislation effective July 1 requires noise studies as part of certain rezoning and special-exception applications involving high-energy-use facilities, including qualifying data centers.

Vienna Cloud still requires county approval before construction can begin. County records list the special-exception application as "Waiting for Resubmission," while a Fairfax County Planning Commission public hearing is currently scheduled for November 18, 2026.

The upcoming review provides an opportunity for public input, allowing residents and community organizations to submit comments, attend the public hearing, and evaluate whether the requested exceptions align with county land-use standards.

Northfax Zoning Update: Proposed Changes and Timeline

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — The City of Fairfax is considering zoning changes that could affect future development in Northfax. The proposed amendments are intended to better align the city's zoning regulations with the Northfax Small Area Plan, adopted in 2020, while establishing new standards for development in designated activity centers.

The proposed zoning changes address residential and mixed-use development, building heights, parking, and open space. An optional 'Activity Center' floating zone would permit higher density in commercial areas in exchange for public benefits.

- The zoning process has developed over several years:
- 2020: City Council adopts the Northfax Small Area Plan.
 - 2025: City officials begin more detailed discussions about implementing the small area plans through zoning changes.
 - February–March 2026: The Planning

Commission reviews the first draft of the proposed zoning amendments.

- March 26, 2026: The city holds a public open house on the proposed amendments.
- June 24, 2026: A revised public-review draft is released.
- June–July 2026: The Planning Commission continues reviewing the second draft.
- Fall 2026 and beyond: Additional Planning Commission and City Council review is expected before any final zoning ordinance is adopted.

The zoning discussions are occurring alongside several Northfax development proposals.

Northfax Chain Bridge, at 3575 Chain Bridge Road and 10464–10480 Fairfax Boulevard, is a proposed redevelopment of existing commercial properties. The concept calls for an eight-story building with up to 271 multifamily units, approximately 2,253 square feet of commercial space and 316 parking spaces. The project would require rezoning and several additional approvals.

The city's project page currently identifies it as a pre-application.

Northfax West, at 3570 Chain Bridge Road, is another potential residential development. A City Council work session scheduled for September 1, 2026 is expected to include a pre-application briefing for Phase IV. The concept includes up to 350 multifamily units, as much as 7,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and structured and surface parking.

Neither project represents an approved commitment to construction. Both remain subject to the city's development-review process.

Several infrastructure projects are also planned or under development.

A Chain Bridge Road pedestrian and bus-stop improvement project between Taba Cove and Warwick Avenue has received approximately \$9.25 million in VDOT SmartScale funding. Property acquisition and utility relocation are scheduled for 2026, with construction

anticipated in 2027–2028.

The city is designing a shared-use path along Chain Bridge Road between Assembly Drive and Northfax Street to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Plans are also underway for an east-west roadway connecting Chain Bridge Road and University Drive near Point 50, with potential funding in 2028 and construction in 2031–2032.

If adopted, the zoning amendments could give Northfax property owners additional options for residential and mixed-use redevelopment while establishing new requirements for building design, parking, open space and landscaping.

Potential Zoning Updates for Northfax - Open House will take place on September 2 from 5 - 8 pm at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. Residents can find more information about Northfax Small Area Plan on the following City website at www.fairfaxva.gov/Property-Business/Development/City-Plans/Small-Area-Plans/Northfax-Small-Area-Plan

Courthouse Plaza Plans Advance Following Summer Work Sessions

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – Plans to transform Courthouse Plaza into a mixed use development with 630 apartments moved further through City’s review process this summer, with both the Planning Commission and City Council examining the proposal.

The Planning Commission held a post-submission work session June 22, followed by a City Council post-submission work session July 28. Neither meeting represented final approval. Instead, the sessions provided opportunities for city officials to review the application and identify issues as plans continue through the development process.

The latest proposal calls for redeveloping approximately 10.34 acres at 10300 Willard Way and 3922 Blenheim Boulevard in two phases.

Phase 1 would include 315 multifamily residential units and 12,500 square feet of ground-floor retail. Phase 2 would add another 315 units and 50,000 square feet of retail. At full buildout, the project would therefore contain 630 apartments and 62,500 square feet of retail.

The applicant is seeking to rezone the property from Commercial Retail and Commercial General to Planned Development Mixed Use. Applications also include a master development plan, special exceptions and a major certificate of appropriateness. The summer reviews follow the applicant’s second submission of its master development plan May 7. The Board of Architectural Review held its own post-submission work session June 3 before the proposal reached the Planning Commission later that month.

The project had previously received pre-application briefings before the

Planning Commission Feb. 9 and City Council Feb. 24. A formal land use application was filed March 3.

Courthouse Plaza sits within an Activity Center identified in the City of Fairfax Comprehensive Plan and is also covered by the Old Town Fairfax Small Area Plan. Redevelopment would replace the existing shopping center format with a denser combination of housing and commercial space.

The project remains under review following the July City Council discussion.

That distinction is important. Work sessions allow elected and appointed officials to examine a proposal and provide feedback, but they do not grant the land use approvals necessary for construction.

The applicant can now respond to

comments generated through the review process and submit revised materials. City staff will continue reviewing the application before it advances to future public hearings and consideration of the requested land use approvals.

The summer meetings therefore mark another step rather than the conclusion of the process.

If eventually approved and fully constructed as proposed, Courthouse Plaza would introduce hundreds of new households while retaining a commercial component on a site currently dominated by retail.

For now, the numbers remain proposals: 10.34 acres, two phases, 630 apartments and 62,500 square feet of retail. What ultimately gets built will depend on how the plans change as the project proceeds through the remaining review and approval process.

Circle Gateway Returns With Larger Residential Proposal

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

Along-discussed redevelopment near Fairfax Circle is back before city officials with a larger residential proposal and a new round of review.

Woodbridge Commons LLC submitted a conceptual plan June 5 for Circle Gateway, which would replace two former commercial buildings at 3250 Blenheim Boulevard, previously occupied by Lotte Plaza and 7-Eleven.

The latest concept calls for an 11-story mixed use building with up to 261 apartments, 16,530 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and structured parking on approximately 1.64 acres.

That represents an increase from a 2022 concept for the property, which proposed approximately 230 apartments and 16,000 square feet of restaurant and retail space.

The Fairfax City Planning Commission reviewed the new concept during a pre-application briefing July 13. Because the project

remains in the pre-application stage, commissioners were reviewing the concept rather than voting on formal land use approvals.

The potential applicant anticipates requesting a rezoning from Commercial Retail to Commercial Urban, along with a special use permit for upper-story residential development. Special exceptions would also be needed for height, density and parking requirements. The project would be subject to the city’s Affordable Dwelling Unit ordinance.

Circle Gateway is part of the Fairfax Circle Activity Center, where city planning efforts envision a more walkable, mixed use neighborhood.

The next review is already scheduled. Fairfax City Council is expected to receive its pre-application briefing Sept. 1.

After that, the developer would still need to submit an application before the city could begin considering the requested land use approvals.

Vienna Plan Confronts Housing Affordability and Limited Space

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

TOWN OF VIENNA, VA – The Town’s proposed Comprehensive Plan is examining how a largely developed town can create housing opportunities for younger residents and middle-class families while preserving established neighborhoods.

Housing features prominently in Chapter 3, the land use section of the Planning Commission’s recommended 2026 plan. It calls for a housing needs assessment to identify affordability gaps and recommends exploring accessible and senior housing.

The Planning Commission recommended the plan Feb. 25. The Town Council held a public hearing May 4 and has continued reviewing the document.

Town Councilmember Roy Baldwin said one challenge is what happens as owners of Vienna’s larger homes become empty nesters. Another is “how to make it possible for young people and middle-class families to find housing in the Town.”

Baldwin is skeptical a housing assessment will reveal much that officials do not already know.

“No young persons or first-time home

buyers can afford any of the homes on single-family lots, which make up the vast majority of the inventory in the Town,” Baldwin said.

With little undeveloped land available, Baldwin sees Maple Avenue as a significant opportunity for additional housing. He supports encouraging mixed use residential and commercial redevelopment by allowing property owners to build up to four stories, with the top floor set back to avoid creating a “canyon effect.”

Such redevelopment could put apartments or condominiums above shops, restaurants and other businesses, adding housing without requiring widespread redevelopment of Vienna’s established single-family neighborhoods.

He also favors working with Fairfax County and Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn to support affordable housing nearby.

Vienna faces the challenge of balancing housing growth with preserving its local character. To improve affordability without disrupting established neighborhoods, the town aims to expand diverse housing options—such as townhouses and apartments—focusing growth along commercial corridors like Maple Avenue.

Overview of the 2026 U.S. Midterm Elections

BY AYA AMER

Americans will head to the polls Nov. 3 for the 2026 midterm elections, with control of Congress and dozens of state governments at stake. Voters will choose all 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and 35 senators, while 36 states will also hold gubernatorial elections.

The elections come during the second year of President Donald Trump’s second term and could determine the direction of federal policy for the remainder of his presidency. Midterm

elections have historically been shaped by voters’ views of the president and the state of the country, making the 2026 races closely watched by both parties.

The economy is emerging as one of the most important issues for voters. A July Pew Research Center survey found that only 24% of Americans rated economic conditions as excellent or good, while 76% described them as fair or poor. Concerns about affordability and the economy could influence how voters evaluate candidates in November.

Early polling shows a competitive

national environment. A July CNN poll found Democrats leading Republicans 47% to 39% among registered voters on the generic congressional ballot. Democrats also held an advantage among voters who said they were highly motivated to participate.

The House will be one of the central battlegrounds. Republicans currently hold a narrow majority, meaning Democrats would need to gain relatively few seats to take control. In the Senate, Republicans also hold the majority, with 35 seats on the ballot this year, including two special elections.

Governors’ races will add another layer to the election. Thirty-six states are scheduled to elect governors, with contests ranging from highly competitive battlegrounds to states where one party has a stronger advantage. State legislative and local elections will also take place across the country.

With Election Day approaching, economic concerns, voter enthusiasm and the balance of power in Washington will remain central to the 2026 campaign. The results will determine the makeup of the 120th Congress, which begins in January 2027.

November 3, 2026 Election Calendar



Early Voting Period

- Friday, September 18 - Saturday, October 31, 2026
- Two Saturdays, October 24 & October 31, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Two Sundays, October 18 & October 25, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- No appointment is required. Please bring an acceptable form of ID.

Deadline to Apply for a By-Mail Ballot

- Friday, October 23, 2026
- Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m.

Deadline to Register or Update Registration Information

- Friday, October 23, 2026
- Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. for in-person or by 11:59 p.m. for online registrations.
- Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked by the deadline.

Election Day

- Tuesday, November 3, 2026
- Polls are open from 6:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

For more information, voters can visit the following County Elections website at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/>

Democrats Put South Carolina First in 2028 Presidential Primary Calendar

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

AUSTIN, TX — The Democratic National Committee approved a new presidential primary calendar, placing South Carolina first on Jan. 22, 2028. Nevada follows on Feb. 1, with New Hampshire, New Mexico, Michigan, and Virginia holding contests on Feb. 29. Iowa, which traditionally kicked off the nominating process, was removed from the early-state lineup, while New Hampshire’s position was significantly reduced.

The adjustments aim to align the nominating timeline with the Democratic Party’s diverse voting base. Elevating South Carolina emphasizes key Black Democratic voters, who were instrumental in Joe Biden’s 2020 primary victory. Adding Nevada and New Mexico increases early participation

from Latino communities, while Michigan and Virginia engage organized labor and key battleground voters.

Party leaders hope the schedule encourages candidates to build broad coalitions early. Additionally, five of the six early states are competitive in general elections, giving contenders early exposure to crucial Electoral College battlegrounds. Key focus areas are expected to include economic opportunity, labor rights, immigration, and racial justice.

With President Donald Trump in office and no Democratic incumbent for 2028, the primary field remains wide open. Potential candidates are already making early appearances, signaling the start of a competitive nominating process under the reshaped calendar.

From Page 1 → **IN MEMORIAM...**

Even as her influence expanded statewide, she remained deeply rooted in Reston and Fairfax County. Before entering the Senate, she chaired Virginia’s State Board of Social Services, and throughout her legislative career she carried Northern Virginia’s concerns into debates over education, health care, social services, mental health and the state budget.

When Howell announced in

February 2023 that she would not seek another term, she said she had accomplished most of her legislative goals but acknowledged that important work remained, particularly in education and helping Virginians in need. Her final term ended Jan. 10, 2024.

Her legacy can be measured in numbers: 32 years in the Senate, more than two decades on the Finance and Appropriations Committee and a series of historic barriers broken for women.

But numbers tell only part of the story. “For over three decades, Janet served Northern Virginia with fierce determination, sharp intellect, and unwavering integrity,” stated State Senator Scott Surovell in reflection of her work.

Howell’s legacy lives in the children she worked to protect, the families she fought to help, the people confronting mental illness, the women demanding equality and the Northern Virginians who wanted their community’s voice heard in Richmond.

It also lives in her family: Hunt, her husband of more than 5 decades, her sons Eric and Brian, and her three grandchildren.

And it lives in Reston, the community she served before she ever held elected office and loved throughout her career. Janet Howell spent 32 years making Northern Virginia’s voice impossible to ignore. In doing so, she left an indelible mark on Virginia—and on the Reston community she called home.

Get Ready to Celebrate! National Hispanic Heritage Month Is Here!

Join the fun at Fiesta Fairfax!
Old Town Square

Saturday, October 03, 2026 |
02:00 PM to 07:30 PM

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — From September 15 to October 15, the nation bursts into a magnificent kaleidoscope of color, sound, and flavor for National Hispanic Heritage Month! This energetic, month-long fiesta is a fantastic opportunity to honor the incredible histories, cherished traditions, and dynamic cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latino communities. It's a wonderful invitation for everyone to dive in, join the fun, and experience the dazzling diversity that makes this heritage so special!

A Feast for the Senses: Tantalizing Flavors

One of the most delicious ways to join the celebration is through food! Hispanic cuisine is a sensational adventure of bold spices, fresh ingredients, and time-honored cooking techniques. Imagine savoring mouthwatering tacos, savory tamales, crispy empanadas, comforting arroz con pollo, and warm, delicious arepas—each offering a magnificent taste of distinct regional traditions. Staples like corn, beans, rice, vibrant peppers, and sweet plantains come together in brilliant combinations passed down lovingly through generations. There's no better



time to spice up your menu and discover the rich history behind these beloved dishes!

Feel the Beat:
Electrifying
Music & Dance

You can't talk about Hispanic culture without mentioning the infectious rhythms that get everyone moving! From the thrilling, fast-paced turns of salsa and the joyful bounce of merengue to the soulful moves of bachata, the lively bounce of cumbia, and the passionate drama of flamenco, music and dance are the very heartbeat of the celebration. These artistic expressions bring communities together, telling vivid stories and creating

unforgettable moments of connection on and off the dance floor!

Vivid Visions: Masterful Arts & Crafts

The creative spark doesn't stop at music! The visual arts offer an incredible, sparkling lens into Hispanic heritage. Brilliant textiles woven with striking patterns, captivating paintings, detailed pottery, striking photography, and handcrafted treasures highlight deep-rooted local history, family legacy, and proud cultural identities.

Join the Fiesta!

All throughout the month, local festivals, live concerts, inspiring art exhibits, and interactive cultural gatherings are popping up everywhere. Whether you're whipping up a vibrant new recipe, dancing to a new beat, or admiring breathtaking artwork, National Hispanic Heritage Month invites you to explore, participate, and cheer for the incredible richness of Hispanic culture!

The Tee-rific Sport of Golf

BY ABBY DENNIS

As August winds down the official National Golf Month, and there is no better time than now to go out and hit a few hole-in-ones than everyday. Whether you are aiming to break your personal best or simply trying out a new hobby, golf offers a fantastic way to unwind, appreciate the outdoors, and find a love for the sport.

To help local golfers stay smoothly flawless on and off the green. The Fairfax County Park Authority encourages players to download the free Golf Fairfax Mobile App, which is designed to elevate your experience across the multiple facilities. The app further allows golfers to quickly book tee times, track scoring stats, receive course updates, and stay informed on exclusive seasonal promotions.

If you are ready to play, here are four unique local courses worth visiting:

- **Laurel Hill Golf Club:** Built on the grounds of the former Lorton Reformatory, this premier venue

features a sprawling layout, pristine greens, and state-of-the-art TrackMan simulators at its golf academy.

- **Burke Lake Golf Center:** Featuring an award-winning double-decker driving range complete with LED night lighting and heated bays, this course is ideal for night practice and fast family rounds.
- **Pinecrest Golf Course:** Offering a climate-controlled indoor TrackMan studio, this course is known for its tight fairways and strategic layout, making it a go-to spot for virtual play and fate-driven swing analysis.
- **Twin Lakes Golf Course:** With two distinct 18-hole courses, this location offers vast scenic views, challenging water hazards, and classic woodland holes for anyone who dares to brave nature.

So go and grab your clubs and hit the greens today! It's time to discover a tee-rific passion for golf that'll stay with you for life.

Greek Mythology, Dark Comedy, and Time-Bending Drama Graces Northern Virginia Theatre Scene

BY PHILLIP KIM

Fairfax City Theatre opens the season with Mary Zimmerman's Argonautika (Sept 11–27). The Tony winner breathes fresh life into Greek mythology, when Prince Jason is tricked by his uncle and embarks on an impossible voyage. The result is a thrilling journey featuring encounters with familiar names such as Hercules and Medea. The play is "as entertaining as it is enlightening," especially as "bursts of humor and fantastical creatures enrich a story whose characters reveal remarkable complexity."

For a bold, poignant dark comedy, NextStop Theatre presents the U.S. premiere of Alice Stanley Jr.'s The Second Best School Shooting (Sept 17–Oct 11). Oscar

winner Adam McKay serving as an honorary executive producer, the play tackles grief, friendship and survival in a time tragedies have become too common. Stanley's script balances sharp satire with profound empathy while addressing "the brutally absurd and deeply human question: how do you grieve when the world has already moved on?"

Rounding out the season, 1st Stage in Tysons presents Harold Pinter's masterwork Betrayal (Oct 8–25). The Nobel laureate's 1978 drama unpacks a tense love triangle between Emma, her husband Robert, and his best friend Jerry. By reversing the chronology and uncovering secrets, the play reveals "how little we know about those we think we know so much about."

The Anime and Graphic Novels Behind the Cosplayers

BY MARK DREISONSTOK

In late July and early August, Washington, D.C., hosted the annual Otakon anime convention. Panel discussions, cute stuffed animals, and manga (comic books and graphic novels) as well as anime DVDs were ubiquitous. Cosplayers (elaborately costumed fans) wore outfits inspired by their favorite series and were happy to share the reasons for their fandom. Through meeting them, we learned of some of today's most popular comic book and video series.

We first met Alice, hailing from Baltimore and cosplaying Agott from "Witch Hat Atelier," a popular manga-turned-anime series. Alice (and several other attendees) saluted the series by dressing in a green robe and green pointed hat, lending witches a more innocent look than traditional black witch attire. The series is slightly reminiscent of Harry Potter, though focusing somewhat more on female spell-casters; young Coco, the protagonist, enrolls in a witch academy to learn sorcery after encountering rune-style incantations. Long ago Coco was given a magic book which she treasures as a child—just as all of us have a book we found magical in childhood. Agott, whom Alice personified, is Coco's roommate. In this world, one must be born a witch; magic is supposedly not something that



Alice as Agott, bringing to life "Witch Hat Atelier." (photo by Mark Dreisonstok. / TINP)

can be acquired. Coco, however, through sheer will alone, does just that. Will Coco and the community around her benefit from her sorcery? At first, we are not sure, as her first spell goes horribly awry!

We next interviewed Lauren Moncayo, a recently minted PhD from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her husband, Alex, introduced her to the world of anime, and they dressed as Yor and Loid Forger from "Spy x Family," their favorite manga.

This series revolves around the ultimate dysfunctional family: the husband, Loid Forger, is a spy (codename: Twilight) who marries as part of his cover. His wife, Yor, turns out to be an assassin (codename: Thorn Princess) for a rival superpower. Finally, their adopted child, Anya, is a telepath! Although Mr. and Mrs. Forger are not cognizant of each other's true identities, their daughter can read their thoughts and is fascinated by her new family's dynamic.

Not everyone at the event dressed in costume, however! For example, a fan going by the assumed name of Ottilia was there to celebrate a "golden oldie" from 1980s manga, "Vampire Princess Miyu," a work combining Western vampire lore with classical Japanese aesthetics

and settings. Teenage Miyu is a special vampire, able to survive sunlight. She also takes a limited amount of blood from her willing victims and is more interested in bringing happiness, repose, and closure to them than in creating terror. The anime version follows a slightly different plotline, focusing on Miyu's high school life as she navigates friendships with classmates while not letting them know of her vampire identity—even as she must fight off shinma (god-demons).

Those who missed the Otakon convention this year can prepare for the next by visiting local bookshops, many of which stock a vast assortment of Japanese-style graphic novels and sometimes also DVDs.

Antique Car Show



Saturday, May 16, 2026
| 10:00 AM - 03:00 PM
City Hall, 10455 Armstrong Street,
22030

Fairfax City's Antique Car Show brings a day of classic charm and family fun to the heart of the city!

<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Events-directory/Parks-and-Recreation/Special-Events/Antique-Car-Show>

BestCrosswords.com - "70s Music - Did You Hear?" by Steve Faiella on 8/6/2026 [easy]

Across

1- Command for Fido; 5- Religious offshoots; 10- Blueprint; 14- "I Feel Bad About My Neck" author Ephron; 15- Radium codiscoverer Marie or Pierre; 16- Unaccompanied; 17- Cry of frustration; 18- Big rock concert venue; 19- Cost to play a poker hand; 20- Breakup song by 56-Across; 23- Farm storage towers; 24- Tibetan beast who "talks" non-stop?; 25- Electrically charged atom; 28- Sahara and Gobi; 32- Displayed one's sleepiness; 34- Sporty Mazda model; 36- Gumbo thickener; 37- Prohibitive-sounding name of a pop singer from 56-Across; 41- Bridges in Hollywood; 43- Hawaiian kind of porch; 44- Polar region with a "circle"; 47- Life coaches, e.g.; 51- "Raiders of the Lost ____"; 52- Once around a racetrack; 54- Oversupplies; 56- Rock group named after its drummer and bassist who recorded 49-Down; 60- "Mamma Mia!" pop group; 63- Slow-moving mollusk; 64- Minuscule amount; 65- Wrinkle-removing appliance; 66- Foot-to-leg joint; 67- Ireland, poetically; 68- Basset hounds and Beagles; 69- Clarinets and oboes; 70- Nine-digit IDs in the U.S.;

Down

1- Minor obstacles; 2- Bagel shape, in math-speak; 3- Diamond-shaped sock pattern; 4- Yokels who created a search engine company?; 5- Mark from a surgical procedure; 6- Italian currency; 7- Ship's staff or a type of haircut; 8- Sounding like a toy piano; 9- St. Lawrence ____ (Marine shipping route); 10- Broadway offering; 11- Actor Chaney of "The Phantom of the Opera"; 12- Industrious insect; 13- Born, in marriage notices; 21- "I'm at your disposal!"; 22- Police blotter abbr.; 25- Calligraphers' supplies; 26- "Above," in verse; 27- Confidentiality contract, for short; 29- Amazon or Nile (Abbr); 30- Donkey pin-on; 31- Cook, as clams; 33- Chinese cooking vessel; 35- Oscar winner Hathaway; 37- Burlap bag; 38- Boy king of Egypt; 39- Actor McKellen; 40- U.S. Gas brand whose logo has a red triangle; 41- Sheep's bleat; 42- Do something wrong; 45- Down with the flu; 46- Roman emperor who enjoyed salad?; 48- Doo-wop selections, now; 49- Album by 56-Across that you may not want to trust as true; 50- Cholesterol medication, generally; 53- Tube-shaped pasta; 55- Reads, as bar codes; 56- Sports event attendees; 57- Seize; 58- Not domesticated; 59- Cheers at a futbol match; 60- Provide assistance to; 61- "Don't tase me, ____!" (2007 catchphrase); 62- Where cranberries grow

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25th Anniversary of 9/11: We Should Never Forget

READING LIST COMPILED BY
TANIA HOSSAIN

1. **The Only Plane in the Sky** – Garrett M. Graff

An oral history assembled from hundreds of firsthand accounts. You experience the day almost in real time—from the first reports of the hijackings through the Pentagon, the towers, Flight 93, and the night that followed. It's astonishingly vivid and emotional.

2. **102 Minutes** – Jim Dwyer & Kevin Flynn

If you want to understand what it was actually like inside the World Trade Center, read this. It reconstructs the final 102 minutes using phone calls, emergency communications, interviews, and survivor accounts.

3. **The Looming Tower** – Lawrence Wright

This is the one I'd recommend if you

want to understand how we got to 9/11. It reads like a thriller while explaining bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the FBI, CIA, and the intelligence failures preceding the attacks.

4. **Fall and Rise** – Mitchell Zuckoff

Extremely readable and deeply human. It follows people on the planes, in the towers, at the Pentagon, among first responders, and on the ground. A great choice if you want something broad rather than focused exclusively on the WTC.

5. **The Black Banners** – Ali H. Soufan

Soufan was an FBI agent who actually interrogated al-Qaeda members. His account provides an inside look at the investigation and, especially, the intelligence failures surrounding the threat.

6. **The Forever War** – Dexter Filkins

Filkins was a war correspondent in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's not primarily a 9/11 book, but if you're interested in how

September 11 transformed American foreign policy and warfare, it's essential.

7. **The Ground Truth** – John Farmer

Farmer was involved with the 9/11 Commission and digs into the discrepancies between the initial official account and what investigators eventually established. Particularly fascinating if you're interested in institutional failure.

8. **Without Precedent** – Thomas H. Kean & Lee H. Hamilton

Written by the Commission's chairman and vice chairman. It gives you a sense of the political battles, investigative process, and difficulty of establishing what actually happened.

9. **Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close** – Jonathan Safran Foer

Completely different from the others. It's about a child trying to make sense of his father's death in the World Trade Center. Strange, inventive, and heartbreaking.

10. **The Eleventh Day** – Anthony Summers & Robbyn Swan

A more investigative, sprawling account that examines the attacks, the intelligence failures, Saudi connections, and the aftermath. Best once you've read some of the more straightforward histories.

If I were choosing just three

For the most emotional: *The Only Plane in the Sky*

For the most terrifying/immersive: *102 Minutes*

For understanding the whole story: *The Looming Tower*

And if you're particularly fascinated by what happened inside the towers and what people experienced in those final minutes, I'd start with **** 102 Minutes ****. It's probably the most haunting book on the list.

Reading List: Daughters Who Rejected Their Fathers' Communist Legacies

COMPILED BY TANIA HOSSAIN

The interesting theme connecting all four books: both women were born into the inner circles of communist power, witnessed the system from unusually privileged positions, and ultimately rejected the political legacies of their fathers. Their stories provide a fascinating personal counterpoint to the more abstract historical and ideological literature about Soviet communism and Castro's Cuba.

Recommended reading order of the following 4 books.

1. **Castro's Daughter: An Exile's Memoir of Cuba** – Alina Fernández Revuelta - A firsthand account of Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Fernández, Fidel Castro's daughter, recounts growing up inside the revolutionary establishment, her complicated relationship with her father, and her growing disillusionment with the Cuban regime. She ultimately escaped Cuba in 1993 and settled in Miami. This is the essential book for understanding her personal journey from Castro's daughter to one of his most outspoken critics.

2. **Twenty Letters to a Friend** – Svetlana Alliluyeva - An intimate look at Stalin and life inside the Soviet ruling family.

Written by Joseph Stalin's only daughter, this memoir provides a remarkable portrait of Stalin as both a father and dictator. Alliluyeva describes her childhood, family relationships, and the atmosphere of fear surrounding Stalin's rule. She defected to the United States in 1967, shortly before the book was published.

3. **Only One Year** – Svetlana Alliluyeva - The story of her dramatic defection to America.

This is Alliluyeva's account of the extraordinary period surrounding her decision to leave the Soviet Union. It describes her travels in India, her decision to seek asylum, and her first experiences in the United States. It makes a fascinating companion to *Twenty Letters to a Friend*.

4. **Stalin's Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva** – Rosemary Sullivan - The definitive biography of Stalin's daughter.

Rosemary Sullivan goes beyond Alliluyeva's own memoirs to reconstruct her entire life: her childhood with Stalin, her relationships, her defection, her years in America, and her lifelong struggle with the enormous legacy of being Stalin's daughter. This is probably the best single book for someone who wants the complete story.

3 Writers Club

COMPILED BY TANIA HOSSAIN



Fairfax Sci-Fi/Fantasy Writing & Critique Group

Best if you write fiction and want real feedback on your work. The group focuses on constructive critique of science fiction and fantasy novels and short stories, with structured discussions of members' submissions. It's a good choice

if improving your actual manuscript is the priority.

Big Words Little City

Best if you want a friendly, social workshop environment. Based around Falls Church, the group combines writing workshops, feedback, and casual opportunities to meet other writers. It's a nice middle ground between a formal critique group and a purely social writing meetup.

Northern Virginia Writers Club

Best if you're serious about writing and potentially publishing. It's an established organization with aspiring, emerging, and published authors. Members have access to workshops, speakers, critique groups, beta readers, and writing events, including activities in the Fairfax area.

Start with Fairfax Sci-Fi/Fantasy if you want manuscript feedback, Big Words Little City if you want community, and Northern Virginia Writers Club if you're thinking about writing as a long-term pursuit or publishing.

Student Leadership and Sustainable Schools: Celebrating Excellence in FCPS

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

FAIRFAX, VA — Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) recently highlighted developments in student-led education initiatives and capital infrastructure projects across the district.

At Oakton High School, DECA chapter members Dev Rai, Austin Chen, and Ayush Ranjan authored and illustrated *The Seed That Grew*, a children's book covering saving, investing, and financial growth for elementary students. Alongside the book, the students created classroom read-aloud guides, discussion questions, activities, and assessments.

Together, the students created and illustrated *The Seed That Grew*, a children's book designed to introduce young learners to the fundamentals of saving, investing, patience, and long-term financial growth. Using an engaging story, the students found a creative way to make important financial concepts accessible to elementary school students.

Recognizing that educators need practical tools to bring financial literacy into the classroom, Dev, Austin, and Ayush also developed classroom read-alouds, discussion questions, activities, and assessments. Their goal was to create a complete financial literacy lesson that teachers could easily incorporate into their classrooms.

The results have been remarkable.

The students have:

- Distributed 274 books across 17 FCPS schools.
- Conducted eight classroom read-alouds.
- Raised more than \$1,000 to support printing and distribution.
- Expanded their initiative to student communities internationally.
- Measured a 74% increase in student understanding through pre- and post-lesson assessments.

The initiative earned first place at the 2026 Virginia DECA competition.

In capital infrastructure, three school projects—Cooper Middle School, Langley High School, and Oakton High School—recently received Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) Designed certifications by exceeding the 30-point threshold required for

environmental design and energy efficiency.

From the beginning, each project incorporated CHPS criteria designed to promote healthy, energy-efficient learning environments. All three projects exceeded the 30-point threshold required for certification, demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable design.

The evaluated initiatives achieved notable scores:

- **Cooper Middle School:** Entering its design stage in 2016 and receiving permits in 2019, construction began in October 2019. The facility secured a remarkable 45 points in its final evaluation.
- **Oakton High School:** Commencing design efforts in 2014 and securing permits in 2018, construction was finalized in autumn 2022. The initiative attained 40 points.
- **Langley High School:** Starting design planning in 2011 and earning permits in 2014, construction concluded in winter 2018. The modernization project recorded 31 points.

For projects permitted after 2025, FCPS will transition to the **Green Globes building certification program**, continuing the division's focus on environmentally responsible and sustainable construction.

These initiatives together showcase two significant commitments to Fairfax County's future.

On one hand, the efforts of Dev, Austin, and Ayush exemplify the impact of empowering students to pinpoint problems, devise solutions, and lead with intentionality. On the other hand, the CHPS-certified infrastructure projects highlight how intentional planning and sustainable engineering foster educational spaces that serve future generations of learners and teachers.

Whether through a storybook educating youth on long-term financial strategies or school facilities constructed around energy efficiency and environmental stewardship, both accomplishments share a central mission: **investing today to create a stronger tomorrow.**

This impact is profound. As our students lead and our schools transform, our communities are building a foundation where all students can learn, grow, and succeed.

FCPS New Student ID and Bus Navigation



Sample student ID cards, color-coded by school. The back of the card includes a QR code for more information and the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which is required by Virginia State law.

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is introducing a new student ID system for students who ride school buses. The district says the program is intended to provide an additional safety measure by helping confirm that students are on the correct bus, get on and off at the correct stop, and that only authorized students are riding.

Back to School: What's New?

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

FAIRFAX, VA — Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is introducing several changes for students and families during the 2026-27 school year. The updates include changes to transportation, technology policies, school meals, student support services, and safety procedures. FCPS says the changes are intended to provide families with information before the first day of school on August 24.

One of the changes involves student identification cards for students who ride FCPS buses. Students will tap their IDs when boarding and leaving the bus. According to FCPS, the system is intended to help confirm that students are using the correct bus and stop. The district states that the IDs will not track student movement beyond bus tap-ins and tap-outs.

FCPS is also implementing a bell-to-bell cellphone policy. Cellphones, smart devices, and related accessories must remain turned off and stored for the entire school day. Families who need to contact students during school hours are directed to contact the school's front office.

Other changes include a new ParentVUE app, a new online platform for viewing school menus and nutritional information, and updated Student Rights and Responsibilities guidelines. Elementary schools will continue three-hour early-release Wednesdays, but the number will decrease from eight to four.

Student support services are also expanding. Hazel Health's virtual mental healthcare services, previously available to high school students, will now be available to middle school students as well. FCPS is additionally introducing new mathematics instructional resources for Math 6 through Algebra 2.

For varsity football games, FCPS will introduce spectator weapons screening and standardized bag requirements. These measures, along with the other changes, will affect different aspects of the school experience as the new academic year begins.

Oakton Cougars Fall Sports Calendar: Key Dates to Watch

BY ABBY DENNIS

The arrival of a new school year also brings the return of fall sports at Oakton High School. With football, field hockey, volleyball, cross country and golf among the Cougars' fall offerings, September and October will be filled with opportunities for local fans to support Oakton student-athletes.

Oakton's fall sports officially got underway with practices and tryouts beginning August 3, with golf permitted to begin earlier. The school lists 49 athletic teams across 31 sports, making athletics a major part of the Oakton community.

Here are several dates and events to put on the calendar.

Friday, September 18 – Football vs. Colonial Forge
7 p.m. | Oakton High School
Circle this one. The Cougars will host

Colonial Forge in a non-district football matchup on Friday, September 18. The game is scheduled for 7 p.m. and should be one of Oakton's most anticipated early-season contests.

For Oakton fans, it is an opportunity to see the Cougars tested against a strong opponent while enjoying one of Northern Virginia's quintessential fall traditions: Friday-night football.

September – Field Hockey
September brings a full slate of field hockey competition as Oakton works through its regular-season schedule. Midweek games will provide plenty of opportunities for fans to see the Cougars at home, while road contests will test the team's depth and consistency.

With postseason competition ahead, September is an important month for Oakton to establish its identity and build momentum.

September – Girls Volleyball
The volleyball team will also be busy throughout September, with home and away matches providing an early test against district competition.

For fans in the stands, volleyball offers some of the most energetic weeknight competition on Oakton's fall calendar. Strong serving, blocking and the ability to perform under pressure will be critical as the Cougars work toward the postseason.

September and October – Cross Country Invitationals
Cross country takes the Cougars beyond the Oakton campus, with runners competing at invitationals and regional meets throughout Northern Virginia.

The meets offer an opportunity to watch Oakton's top runners compete individually while also seeing how the

team's depth develops. As championship season approaches, every runner can contribute to the team's overall performance.

September – Golf Heads Toward the Postseason
Oakton's golfers began their season earlier than most fall teams and will be looking to finish the regular season strongly in September.

The focus shifts toward postseason tournaments as the month progresses, making consistency especially important. For golf fans, September is the time to watch which Cougars emerge as the team's leading scorers.

For Cougar fans, the message is simple: check the calendar, wear the burgundy and gold, and get out to support the teams representing Oakton High School.

Warhawks on the Warpath: September 2026 Outlook

- Football – Friday Night Lights**
Madison opens September with a major home matchup against Lake Braddock on Friday, Sept. 3 at 7 p.m. The Warhawks then hit the road for West Springfield on Sept. 10, return home for Hayfield on Sept. 18, and close the month at George C. Marshall on Sept. 25.
- Sept. 3 – Lake Braddock, 7 p.m. – HOME
 - Sept. 10 – at West Springfield, 7 p.m.
 - Sept. 18 – Hayfield, 7 p.m. – HOME
 - Sept. 25 – at George C. Marshall, 7 p.m.

The opener actually comes before September, with Madison traveling to Stone Bridge on Friday, Aug. 28 at 7 p.m.

Field Hockey
Madison's field hockey squad also faces a demanding September slate, including a Sept. 9 matchup at South Lakes and a Sept. 14 meeting with Westfield. Those early-season contests

should provide valuable tests as the Warhawks work toward the heart of Concorde District play.

Volleyball: The Warhawks will be looking to turn their home court into a September advantage as the volleyball season gets rolling. Madison's 2026 campaign begins in August, with the schedule building toward the regular-season district battles later in the fall.

Golf & Cross Country: On the links and trails, Madison's fall athletes will be building toward the district and postseason stretch, with invitationals and regular-season competition providing opportunities to establish themselves early.

September is where the Warhawks start setting the tone: Friday-night football, packed volleyball gyms, home-field field hockey battles, district golf matches, and demanding cross-country invitationals make for a full month of competition across Madison athletics.

Fairfax County Updates Athletic Council Charter

BY ABBY DENNIS

FAIRFAX, VA – The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on June 9, 2026, approved a major overhaul of the Fairfax County Athletic Council's bylaws, marking the first significant revision since November 2004. The new bylaws replace and supersede those adopted on November 21, 2005, updating the council's structure to better reflect the steadily changing demographics and recreational interests of the Fairfax County community.

The Fairfax County Athletic Council, originally established by the Board of Supervisors in March 1974, serves as an important bridge between residents, county staff, the Park Authority and the School Board. The council advises on the management and planning of community athletic facilities, including decisions involving facility allocation and athletic resources.

While traditional sports such as baseball and soccer remain well represented, the council has observed significant growth in activities such as pickleball, cricket and Ultimate Frisbee. The changes to the bylaws are intended to ensure that the council's membership keeps pace with those evolving interests and gives a broader range of sports a voice in county decision-making.

Under the revised bylaws, slow-pitch and fast-

pitch softball representation has been consolidated into a single seat. This change creates a fourth at-large member position on the council, providing an opportunity for sports that previously lacked designated representation to have a formal voice.

Among the sports that can now receive representation through the expanded structure are track, wrestling, tennis, pickleball, hockey, cricket, swimming, badminton and Ultimate Frisbee. The changes give these growing athletic communities a more direct connection to county leadership and the decisions affecting athletic facilities and resources.

The council's core mission remains unchanged: to advise the county on managing, planning and providing community athletic facilities. Under the new bylaws, individuals representing specific sports will be nominated by the Athletic Council and appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

The June 9, 2026, approval represents the most significant update to the council's governing structure since the November 2004 revision. More than simply changing the way council seats are allocated, the revised bylaws are intended to ensure that as Fairfax County's recreational interests continue to expand, decision-makers hear a broader and more balanced range of community voices.

2026 College Football Season Brings New Era of Change

BY OWEN KORZAK

FAIRFAX, VA — The 2026 college football season begins with several major storylines, from a defending national champion looking to repeat to new eligibility rules that could change how teams build their rosters.

Indiana enters 2026 as the defending national champion after completing an undefeated 2025 season, winning their first national title in program history. The Hoosiers have gone from one of college football's biggest surprises to one of its biggest targets. Indiana enters the season ranked No. 6 in the preseason AP poll, putting it among the favorites to make another run at the College Football Playoff, and the National Championship.

For head coach Curt Cignetti and Indiana, the challenge will be proving

the past two seasons were not flukes. The Hoosiers will have to deal with the pressure that comes with being the defending champion while playing in a Big Ten conference that features several other national championship contenders.

Ohio State enters the season as one of the favorites. The Buckeyes return quarterback Julian Sayin and star receiver Jeremiah Smith and have enough talent to make another run at the College Football Playoff. Oregon, which reached the playoff semifinal last season, is another major threat in the Big Ten. Ohio State and Oregon rank No. 1 and 2 in the AP poll, respectively.

Georgia, Texas and Notre Dame also enter the season with national championship expectations.

The 12-team College Football

Playoff remains another major storyline. In August, it was reported that the NCAA would not entertain a 20-team playoff format yet. However, ramblings of a 16 or 24-team playoff remain present.

Additionally, college football is also entering a new eligibility era. The NCAA adopted an age-based eligibility model that will eventually replace the traditional system of four seasons of competition within a five-year window. Under the new model, eligible athletes can have up to five years of eligibility.

The new system eliminates traditional redshirt and season-of-competition rules. During the transition, current athletes and those entering college in 2026-27 will receive whichever eligibility system is more favorable to them. The new model will fully apply to incoming students beginning in fall 2027.

The change could significantly affect roster management. Coaches will have more flexibility in developing young players while also potentially keeping experienced athletes on their rosters longer.

Those changes come during an era already defined by the transfer portal, NIL and revenue sharing.

That makes Indiana's title defense one of many storylines entering 2026. The Hoosiers will try to prove they belong among college football's elite, while bluebloods like Ohio State, Oregon, Notre Dame, Texas and Georgia look to take the championship away.

With a new eligibility system, an expanded playoff and an increasingly unpredictable roster landscape, the 2026 season could be one of the most significant in college football history.

Commanders Bounce Back After Busy Off Season

BY OWEN KORZAK

WASHINGTON, DC — The Washington Commanders enter the 2026 season looking to bounce back after a disappointing 5-12 campaign last year. After reaching the NFC Championship in 2024, Washington made several major changes this offseason in an effort to return to contention in the NFC.

One of the biggest additions came late in the offseason with wide receiver Stefon Diggs. The veteran gives quarterback Jayden Daniels another experienced target and adds a proven playmaker to an offense that struggled to maintain consistency last season. Washington also selected Ohio State linebacker Sonny Styles with the seventh overall pick in the NFL Draft, adding versatility to a defense that is entering its first season under defensive coordinator Daronte Jones.

The Commanders also promoted David Blough from quarterbacks coach to offensive coordinator after Kliff Kingsbury's departure. The changes on

both sides of the ball mean Washington will have to learn new systems while trying to compete immediately.

The defense could be one of the team's biggest storylines. In addition to Styles, the Commanders added established veterans like pass rushers Odafe Oweh and K'Lavon Chaisson, linebacker Leo Chenal and defensive backs Rasul Douglas and Nick Cross. The Commanders have emphasized communication and attention to detail throughout training camp as players adjust to the new system.

Washington's schedule will provide several major tests. The Commanders open the regular season Sept. 13 against the Philadelphia Eagles, the reigning NFC East champions. They will also face the Dallas Cowboys and New York Giants twice while playing opponents from the NFC West, AFC South and other divisions. Washington will also play an international game in London against the Indianapolis Colts during the season.

The most important factor,

however, remains Daniels. After an impressive rookie season, the quarterback's development will determine how high Washington's ceiling can be. The addition of Diggs gives Daniels another experienced weapon, while the new offensive system will challenge him to continue developing as a passer.

The Commanders also need better health and depth. Left tackle Laremy Tunsil's status is an important storyline after tearing his tricep during training camp, while backup quarterback Marcus Mariota suffered an MCL sprain that will keep him out for the of the preseason. Washington expects Mariota to return for Week 1, while Tunsil will likely miss the majority of the season.

Washington's offseason moves show that the organization believes its 2025 season was an outlier rather than the beginning of a decline. With new coordinators, new veterans, a high first-round pick and a young quarterback entering another important season, expectations are rising.

NFL Stadium Boom Could Reshape Cities and the Fan Experience

BY OWEN KORZAK

BUFFALO, NY — The Buffalo Bills are among several NFL teams investing billions of dollars into new stadiums, creating a leaguewide boom that could change both the fan experience and the economies surrounding NFL franchises.

Buffalo's \$2.2 billion Highmark Stadium opened this summer, featuring modern amenities, improved concourses and a canopy designed to protect fans from severe weather. However, some fans have already criticized obstructed views and the size of the jumbotrons.

Other teams are still planning their next homes. The Chicago Bears are focusing on a potential \$4 billion stadium and mixed-use

development in Hammond, Indiana. The project could include retail, hotels and housing while providing the Bears with a modern enclosed stadium capable of hosting major events.

The Washington Commanders are also planning a new stadium in Washington, targeted for 2030. The proposed roofed venue is expected to hold more than 70,000 people and could become part of a larger development designed to host sports, entertainment and community events throughout the year.

The economic impact is a major selling point for these projects. The Tennessee Titans estimate their new Nissan Stadium will generate \$33.7 billion in economic impact over 30 years while supporting thousands of jobs.

Edsall Road Data Center Raises Questions for a Densely Populated Community

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

A major data center proposal on Edsall Road is raising growing concerns among residents of Bren Mar, Bren Pointe and surrounding communities. The proposed Plaza 500 development would transform a 34-acre commercial and industrial property at 6295 Edsall Road into a large data center campus, bringing new buildings, extensive electrical infrastructure and a proposed substation close to established residential neighborhoods.

The project is being developed by Starwood Capital Group. Fairfax County records describe plans for two two-story data center buildings, along with parking, drive aisles, utilities, landscaping and stormwater-management facilities. The first building, known as Plaza 500 South, is approximately 226,000 square feet and about 75 feet tall.

For residents, however, the size of the buildings is only part of the issue. The more fundamental question is whether a major, continuously operating industrial facility belongs in this particular location.

What does "densely populated" mean?

Population density refers to the number of people living within a given area of land. A densely populated community has many people, homes and other buildings located relatively close together.

That description is important when discussing the Edsall Road project.

The Plaza 500 property is not an isolated industrial site; it sits within an established community containing homes, businesses, schools, and parks near the Fairfax County–Alexandria border. In this densely populated area, the impacts of major developments—such as noise, construction traffic, lighting, and large infrastructure—directly affect many residents living in close proximity.

The proposed data center is also fundamentally different from a traditional office or warehouse. Data centers operate around the clock and require substantial cooling systems, electrical equipment, backup generators and other mechanical infrastructure.

That means the impact on nearby residents can continue long after construction is finished.

Perhaps the most significant part of the proposal is not the data center itself, but the infrastructure required to provide it with electricity.

Dominion Energy is proposing the Edsall Substation, which would connect to the existing Van Dorn Substation and support the growing electrical demand associated with development in the area. The proposal also includes new transmission infrastructure.

The scale of the electrical demand is substantial. Dominion has said the data center customer requested approximately 176 megawatts of projected load. The utility determined that the existing Van Dorn Substation would not have enough capacity to serve that demand without equipment overloads in the future.

The proposed substation has become a major concern for nearby residents because of its proximity to homes.

Unlike an industrial facility located in a remote business park, the proposed infrastructure would be placed next to an established residential community. Residents have raised concerns about potential noise, visual impacts, lighting, stormwater and the presence of transmission lines near their homes.

The timing of the data center and substation approvals has become another major point of contention.

Starwood has filed plans for the first data center building even though the proposed Edsall Substation is still going through Fairfax County's local review process.

Fairfax County's public records show the substation application under the county's public-facility review process. The project has also received state-level regulatory approval, but local review remains an important part of determining how the facility will fit into the surrounding community.

Tyler Ray, president of the Bren Pointe Homeowners Association, told the Washington Business Journal that he objects to Starwood filing its latest building plans before the substation is approved. "They are manipulating the process and going out of order intentionally to try to force the county to approve this despite the process not fully playing out yet," Ray said.

Ray's concern highlights the strong connection between the data center and the substation, as the facility cannot function without the substantial electrical power the substation would supply.

Supporters of the project can point to Northern Virginia's enormous role in the technology economy. Data centers support cloud computing, artificial intelligence, telecommunications and countless online services. They also generate construction activity and demand for skilled workers and contractors.

But economic benefits have to be weighed against local impacts.

The Edsall Road proposal is particularly significant because of its location in a relatively densely populated part of Fairfax County. A large data center and electrical substation may have a very different impact when surrounded by homes than when located in a remote industrial corridor.

Key concerns regarding the proposed data center and substation include their close proximity to residential homes, potential 24/7 noise, stormwater management challenges, construction traffic, and broader questions about land-use planning and community protection in densely populated areas.

These are not questions about opposing technology or economic growth. They are questions about responsible land-use planning.

The Edsall Road project is part of a much larger debate taking place throughout Northern Virginia. The region has become one of the world's leading data center markets, but available land is becoming increasingly limited. As developers look for additional sites, large facilities are being proposed closer to established communities.

That makes Plaza 500 an important test case.

The question facing Fairfax County is not simply whether the region needs more data centers. It is whether the county can accommodate that demand while protecting the residents who live closest to the infrastructure.

For the people living around Edsall Road, this is not an abstract debate about the future of the digital economy. It is about what their neighborhood will look and sound like for decades to come.

The community deserves clear answers about noise, electrical infrastructure, stormwater, lighting, construction impacts, setbacks and the relationship between the data center and the proposed substation.

Most importantly, residents deserve a meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions that could permanently change the character of their neighborhood.

The Plaza 500 project may ultimately move forward. But as Fairfax County considers the proposal, the central question should remain clear:

How can Northern Virginia continue to benefit from the data center economy without asking densely populated residential communities to bear an unreasonable share of its costs?

The Hemp Prohibition is Unconstitutional (and why it should matter to you)

BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLICATED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

Dear Friends and Virginians:
The last few days have been more frantic than usual

In mid-July, my law firm was retained by the hemp farmers and processors of Virginia to challenge the recently enacted ban passed in the State Budget.

On July 31, we filed a civil action for our clients to strike down the hemp ban as unconstitutional. On August 12, the U.S. District Court in Roanoke heard 5 hours of testimony on our request for an emergency injunction. On August 14, the District Court denied our motion, at least pending any actual criminal prosecution.

On August 15, the new hemp ban took effect.

OK, let's recap ...

Hemp is a long-standing agricultural product in Virginia. (Yes, the Father of our Country planted it). Thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill, the human consumption of hemp has been legal under Federal law, which Virginia initially modeled with its own legislation. In 2023, the hemp market was tightened by SB 903, which stated that all hemp products were held to a "25-1" balance of THC to cannabis, thus capping the intoxication level. My clients worked within that framework to plant fields, harvest the crops and sell therapeutic products. Each one of them established a successful, state-licensed business.

In late June 2026, without any

companion bill having been filed (much less debated), the General Assembly's Budget Report, without warning, revoked the "25-1" test and thus banned the majority of viable hemp products. That ban took effect on August 15.

Here's the problem: agricultural products are not normal consumer products. First of all, they're perishable. Secondly, they are planted and harvested once a year, which means that producers cannot suddenly "pivot" to a new product. They're stuck with what they have. In our case, my clients had harvested and processed a 2025 crop, now existing inventory, while the 2026 crop is already in the ground. Who's going to compensate them for this loss?

Our suit pled both a "regulatory taking" and a violation of "due process."

(My clients are potentially criminally liable for possessing a legally harvested product). The judge listened patiently to our arguments – but in the end wouldn't take the extraordinary measure of suspending a state law. It's too bad, because this one really sucks. And a General Assembly committee could have avoided this catastrophe by simply deferring the hemp ban until January, as I told the press afterwards.

"The Hemp Prohibition is Unconstitutional (and why it should matter to you)"

This is not a legalization issue – it's about fairness to farmers and small businesses.

And the Assembly totally failed in that respect.

25th Anniversary of 9/11 Honor Walk

The Army Historical Foundation invites visitors to take part in a special Honor Walk at the National Museum of the United States Army in remembrance of the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City, Arlington, Virginia, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

This free outdoor activation offers visitors a meaningful opportunity to pause, reflect, and honor the lives lost, the courage of first responders, and the service and sacrifice that followed. The Honor Walk will take place on the Museum's Demonstration Track on September 11, 12, and 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Participants are encouraged to plan their day on the Museum grounds, visit the Museum's galleries, and spend time in reflection while taking part in this commemorative experience. The Army Historical Foundation team will be on site at the track with water and light snacks available for participants.

For more information and to support the work of the Army Historical Foundation, please visit their website at <https://armyhistory.org/calendar/9-11-honor-walk/>



Five Wounded in Shooting at Virginia State University

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

ETTRICK, VA – Five people were wounded in a shooting at Virginia State University early Saturday, prompting a campus lockdown as police searched for those involved.

The shooting occurred around 1:30 a.m. near the university's Quad Annexes, an area that includes student housing. The victims, ranging in age from 17 to 23, were taken to hospitals. One person was critically injured, while the others sustained injuries that were not considered life-threatening.

Police arrested 19-year-old Camron Harris of Henrico, Virginia, after finding him hiding in a dormitory closet more than 14 hours after the shooting. Authorities said Harris is not a Virginia State student. He faces charges including malicious wounding and using a firearm in the commission of a felony.

Investigators said the case remains under investigation and that additional people may have fired weapons during the incident. Police are working to determine the circumstances that led to the shooting, including whether some gunfire was fired in self-defense.

The university issued a lockdown while officers searched the campus. The lockdown was later lifted after authorities determined there was no longer an immediate threat. Virginia State University, a historically Black university located about 24 miles south of Richmond, was preparing for the start of the fall semester when the shooting occurred.

Authorities continue to investigate the incident and are seeking information from witnesses. The university has not been identified as the intended target of the shooting, and investigators have not announced a motive.

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Invest in Peace – For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

Every year on September 21, communities around the world observe the International Day of Peace, a day dedicated to promoting peace, understanding, cooperation, and non-violence.

The United Nations established the International Day of Peace on September 30, 1981, through General Assembly Resolution 36/67. The first observance took place on September 21, 1982. Since then, the day has provided an opportunity for people to reflect on what peace means and how we can contribute to it in our everyday lives.

For 2026, the theme is “Invest in Peace – For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day.” The theme is a reminder that peace is not created only through international agreements or by ending conflicts. Peace is also built through the everyday choices we make in our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

So, what does peace mean for a community like Fairfax?

Peace means creating a community where people feel safe, respected, heard, and welcome, even when they have different opinions, backgrounds, experiences, or priorities. It doesn't

mean everyone has to agree. Fairfax, like any community, will have disagreements about schools, development, housing, traffic, politics, and other issues. A peaceful community is one where those differences can be addressed through respectful conversation, listening, cooperation, and problem-solving rather than hostility or aggression.

Peace can be found in everyday actions: a neighbor helping another neighbor, a student standing up against bullying, people taking the time to listen to a different perspective, or community members working together to solve a local problem.

Schools, families, community organizations, local leaders, and residents all have a role to play. When we create opportunities for people to connect, learn from one another, volunteer, and work together, we strengthen the relationships that make a community more resilient and connected.

International Day of Peace may be observed on September 21, but its message extends throughout the year. Peace begins where we live. Every act of kindness, every respectful conversation, every effort to understand someone else, and every willingness to work together is an investment in a safer, stronger, and more connected Fairfax.

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The Sweet Benefits of Local Honey

BY TANIA HOSSAIN
REPUBLICATED FROM THE
[BLOOMINGWELLNESS.BLOG](https://bloomingswellness.blog)

For many Fairfax-area residents, local honey is more than a delicious sweetener. It is a taste of the local landscape and a way to support area beekeepers and pollinators.

There is no official mileage definition for “local honey.” For purposes of our community, a practical definition is honey produced by bees kept within approximately 50 miles of Fairfax County. Honey from bees kept within 25 miles could be considered especially local. The important distinction is that the bees—and the apiary—should be local, not simply the store where the honey is sold.

Local honey comes in a remarkable variety of flavors because bees collect nectar from the plants flowering in their surroundings. Depending on the season and location, honey may have floral, fruity, herbal, earthy, or other distinctive characteristics.

Honey also contains naturally occurring antioxidants and other plant compounds. It has long been used as a traditional remedy for soothing sore throats and coughs. However, honey is still an added sugar and is best enjoyed in moderation. It should never be given



to children under one year of age.

Local honey is sometimes promoted as a natural treatment for seasonal allergies. While this is a popular belief, scientific evidence does not establish that eating local honey prevents or treats pollen allergies.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of buying local honey is supporting the people who care for bees in our community. Bees are important pollinators, and responsible beekeeping helps maintain awareness of the vital role pollinators play in our food system.

So the next time you drizzle honey over oatmeal, stir it into tea, or enjoy it with cheese, consider choosing honey produced by a beekeeper close to home. It is a small, sweet way to support Fairfax-area agriculture, beekeepers, and pollinators.

The Benefits of Reading in Three Beautiful Outdoor Settings

BY TANIA HOSSAIN
REPUBLISHED FROM
BLOOMINGWELLNESS.BLOG

Reading outdoors transforms a routine session into a restorative, memorable experience. Choosing a quiet natural setting introduces fresh air, natural sounds, and seasonal scenery. For fall reading, three ideal spots stand out: by a river or stream, deep in the woods, and in an open meadow.

1. Reading by a River or Stream

There is something naturally calming about reading beside moving water. The gentle sound of a river or stream can create a soothing background that makes it easier to settle into a book. Unlike the distractions of television, phones, or conversations, the sound of flowing water tends to be consistent and unobtrusive.

Reading near water can also encourage you to slow down. You may find yourself taking longer breaks to watch the current, notice the leaves floating downstream, or simply enjoy the



Image source Pixabay | illustrator Travesía_Literaria

scenery. These small pauses can make reading feel less like a task and more like an opportunity to relax.

Fall makes this setting particularly appealing. Colorful leaves reflected in the water, cooler temperatures, and the sound of running water can create an immersive atmosphere that complements everything from fiction to poetry.

2. Reading Deep in the Woods

Reading in the woods is an effective way to escape distractions, as the surrounding trees create a clear separation from daily life, enabling deeper focus. This environment provides inherent privacy, offering a secluded, personal space that facilitates concentration even when others are nearby.

The autumn season further

enhances this experience. Crisp air, the scent of fallen leaves, and vibrant foliage colors contribute to a distinct, seasonal atmosphere, turning the act of reading into an immersive, cinematic event.

Spending time among trees can also encourage you to put your phone away and become more aware of your surroundings. Instead of constantly switching between screens and notifications, you can focus on one story while occasionally looking up to appreciate the environment around you.

3. Reading in an Open Meadow

An open meadow offers a completely different experience. Rather than being surrounded by trees, you have an expansive view of the sky and landscape. This openness can make reading feel lighter and less confined.

A meadow is particularly appealing on a cool, sunny fall afternoon. You can spread out a blanket, find a comfortable spot, and read while enjoying the warmth of the sun. The occasional breeze

and sounds of birds or insects provide natural background noise without overwhelming the reading experience.

The open environment can also make it easier to take intentional breaks. You might read several chapters, put your book down, and simply watch the clouds or look across the landscape. These breaks can help prevent reading from becoming tiring, particularly during a long afternoon.

Each setting offers a different kind of escape. A river or stream is ideal for relaxation, the woods are best for privacy and concentration, and a meadow is perfect for openness and reflection.

Ultimately, the best outdoor reading location is one where you feel comfortable staying for a while. Bring a blanket or comfortable chair, dress for the cooler weather, and consider bringing a warm drink. When combined with a good book and the changing colors of fall, even a simple afternoon outside can become something to look forward to.

BestCrosswords.com - "70s Music - Did You Hear?" by Steve Faiella on 8/6/2026 [easy] (solution)

Across
1- Command for Fido; 5- Religious offshoots; 10- Blueprint; 14- "I Feel Bad About My Neck" author Ephron; 15- Radium codiscoverer Marie or Pierre; 16- Unaccompanied; 17- Cry of frustration; 18- Big rock concert venue; 19- Cost to play a poker hand; 20- Breakup song by 56-Across; 23- Farm storage towers; 24- Tibetan beast who "talks" non-stop?; 25- Electrically charged atom; 28- Sahara and Gobi; 32- Displayed one's sleepiness; 34- Sporty Mazda model; 36- Gumbo thickener; 37- Prohibitive-sounding name of a pop singer from 56-Across; 41- Bridges in Hollywood; 43- Hawaiian kind of porch; 44- Polar region with a "circle"; 47- Life coaches, e.g.; 51- "Raiders of the Lost ____"; 52- Once around a racetrack; 54- Oversupplies; 56- Rock group named after its drummer and bassist who recorded 49-Down; 60- "Mamma Mia!" pop group; 63- Slow-moving mollusk; 64- Minuscule amount; 65- Wrinkle-removing appliance; 66- Foot-to-leg joint; 67- Ireland, poetically; 68- Basset hounds and Beagles; 69- Clarinets and oboes; 70- Nine-digit IDs in the U.S.;

Down
1- Minor obstacles; 2- Bagel shape, in math-speak; 3- Diamond-shaped sock pattern; 4- Yokels who created a search engine company?; 5- Mark from a surgical procedure; 6- Italian currency; 7- Ship's staff or a type of haircut; 8- Sounding like a toy piano; 9- St. Lawrence ____ (Marine shipping route); 10- Broadway offering; 11- Actor Chaney of "The Phantom of the Opera"; 12- Industrious insect; 13- Born, in marriage notices; 21- "I'm at your disposal!"; 22- Police blotter abbr.; 25- Calligraphers' supplies; 26- "Above," in verse; 27- Confidentiality contract, for short; 29- Amazon or Nile (Abbr); 30- Donkey pin-on; 31- Cook, as clams; 33- Chinese cooking vessel; 35- Oscar winner Hathaway; 37- Burlap bag; 38- Boy king of Egypt; 39- Actor McKellen; 40- U.S. Gas brand whose logo has a red triangle; 41- Sheep's bleat; 42- Do something wrong; 45- Down with the flu; 46- Roman emperor who enjoyed salad?; 48- Doo-wop selections, now; 49- Album by 56-Across that you may not want to trust as true; 50- Cholesterol medication, generally; 53- Tube-shaped pasta; 55- Reads, as bar codes; 56- Sports event attendees; 57- Seize; 58- Not domesticated; 59- Cheers at a futbol match; 60- Provide assistance to; 61- "Don't tase me, ____!" (2007 catchphrase); 62- Where cranberries grow;

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