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Common Ground candidates pictured together at their September 13 campaign kickoff at Commonwealth Brewery (image TINP) | Candidates recommended by the City of Fairfax Democratic Committee (image courtesy of Anthony Amos)



Yard Signs Talking, Formidable Visible Teams, and Mr. Jones: 2026 City Elections Is Underway!

EDITORIAL ARTICLE
BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — There comes a moment every fall when you know election season has officially arrived in the City. It is better than the lip smacking pumpkin spice lattes and the drool worthy pistachio dubai cookies.

The signs appear, the mailers multiply, your neighbor suddenly has strong opinions about development, and somebody begins a conversation about taxes that was supposed to be about the weather.

On Nov. 3, voters will choose a mayor and six members of City Council in what is officially a nonpartisan election. But this year's campaign has developed some recognizable teams—and enough issues to keep Fairfax coffee-shop conversations going well into November.

At the center of the action are two mayoral candidates: Thomas D. "Tom" Peterson, running with the newly organized Fairfax Common Ground group with a round of handshakes, and Kirsten Sides Lockhart, who has been recommended for mayor by the City of Fairfax Democratic Committee after a membership selection process.

The Council race is even more interesting, with candidates associated with both groups as well as candidates running outside them. So this isn't quite a "pick your team and go home" election. So do exercise your free will.

Then there is Russell A. Jones who is eating his heart out under his platform "Stop Raising Taxes!" plastered on his white truck and campaigning with a ¼ page black and white flyer to get his message out. It takes guts to show up for a championship game. And a nod to Stephen S. Kim who is seemingly silent -

we respect your privacy.

Fairfax Common Ground brings together Peterson and five City Council candidates: incumbents Stacy R. Hall and Rachel M. McQuillen, along with new candidates Steve S. Chang, Susan Hartley Kuller, and Jessica L. Lough.

Their message is intentionally local, noted in their informational sample ballot without any position taken on constitutional matters or the 1% referendum. The group can be nutshell into - City of Fairfax government should focus on the City—not Washington, Richmond or the latest national political food fight.

Its stated principles include fiscal responsibility, transparent government, public participation and respectful collaboration. The group's platform also addresses public safety, environmental stewardship, economic development,

schools and maintaining Fairfax's quality of life.

The Common Ground philosophy is straightforward: find the issues Fairfax residents can agree on and start there. It's a particularly local argument at a time when even a conversation about potholes can somehow end up involving a photo op with a Congressman.

The City of Fairfax Democratic Committee has recommended Lockhart for mayor and four City Council candidates: incumbent Anthony T. Amos, and new candidates Sandi Slappey Brown, María José Padmore and Kelly M. O'Brien.

The committee says its recommendations considered candidates' positions, records where applicable and alignment with Democratic values. Issues

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Fairfax Lions Prepare for a Busy October of Fall Sports

The Woman Who Refused to Be the First

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Susan Fowler was twenty-four when she joined Uber as a site reliability engineer in 2015. She had already spent much of her life pushing through doors that were supposed to remain closed. Raised in rural Arizona, she taught herself enough to get into the University of Arizona and eventually transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied physics and graduated in 2014.

Then came Uber.

On her first day working with a new team, Fowler says her manager sent her sexually inappropriate messages through the company's internal chat system. She saved screenshots and reported him to Human Resources.

The response stunned her.

She was told it was his first offense and that he was considered a high

performer. Rather than removing him, Uber gave her a choice: transfer to another team or remain and potentially receive a poor performance review from the manager she had reported. She transferred.

Then she began talking with other women. What she discovered changed the story. Other female engineers told her they had experienced similar behavior from the same manager and had reported it before Fowler ever arrived. Yet, according to Fowler, they had also been told it was his "first offense."

That detail became central to her account: if every woman was told she was the first, the pattern could continue indefinitely. Fowler documented everything—messages, emails, dates, conversations and decisions. When she believed she was being retaliated against, she reported those incidents too. Eventually, she decided the internal system was not going to tell the story for her.

On February 19, 2017, Fowler published a detailed account of her year at Uber on her personal blog. The post quickly became a major Silicon Valley story. TIME later described her as the engineer whose blog post exposed serious dysfunction at Uber and contributed to the company's decision to fire more than 20 employees.

Uber commissioned an investigation led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and adopted recommendations addressing workplace culture, accountability and harassment. Travis Kalanick resigned as CEO in June 2017.

But Fowler's impact did not stop with Uber. Her experience also drew attention to forced arbitration—contract provisions that can require employees to resolve workplace disputes privately rather than in court. In 2017, TIME reported that roughly 60 million American workers were subject to mandatory arbitration clauses.

In 2017, Fowler was named one

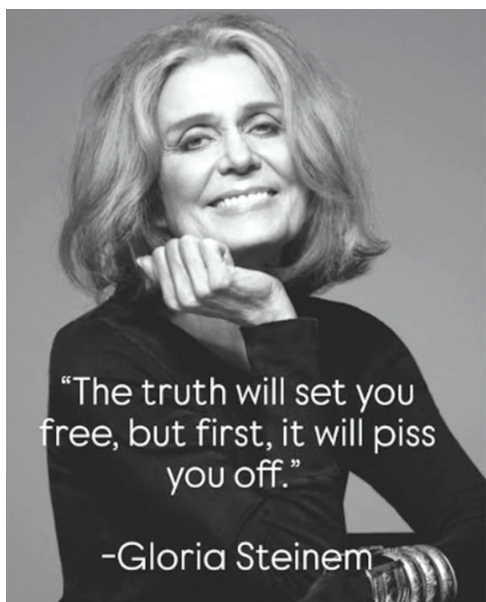
of TIME's "Silence Breakers," the group selected as the magazine's Person of the Year for their role in bringing sexual harassment and assault into public view.

Then came a significant legal change. In 2022, Congress enacted the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act. The law generally prevents employers from enforcing pre-dispute arbitration agreements for claims involving sexual assault or sexual harassment, giving individuals the choice to pursue those claims in court.

Fowler's story is ultimately about documentation, persistence and the power of making information public.

She was told she was the first. Then she discovered she wasn't. So she kept the evidence, told the story herself, and helped turn a private workplace complaint into part of a much larger national conversation about accountability.

Gloria Steinem: A Voice That Changed America



"The truth will set you free, but first, it will piss you off" was first documented at a Stanford University "Herstory" event in 1998. Image of Gloria Steinem public domain.

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

For more than half a century, Gloria Steinem has been one of the most recognizable voices in the American movement for women's rights. A writer, journalist, organizer and activist, Steinem helped bring issues affecting women into the national conversation and became an important figure in the modern feminist movement.

Steinem was born on March 25, 1934, in Toledo, Ohio. Her childhood was far from conventional. Her father, Leo, was a traveling antiques salesman, and the family spent much of Steinem's early life traveling around the country. Her mother, Ruth, had worked as a journalist but struggled with mental illness. After Steinem's parents separated when she was 10, young Gloria spent years helping care for her mother.

Those experiences appear to have influenced Steinem's understanding of how limited choices could shape a woman's life. She later attended Smith College, where she studied government, and then spent two years in India on a fellowship. The experience exposed her to grassroots organizing and helped deepen her interest in social and political change.

Steinem became increasingly involved in the women's movement during the late 1960s and 1970s. She advocated for equal opportunities for women in education and employment and spoke publicly about issues including reproductive rights, discrimination and violence against women. Her writing and speeches made her a familiar presence in American media.

In 1972, Steinem helped launch Ms. magazine, which provided a prominent platform for women's perspectives and feminist ideas. The publication became influential in shaping public discussions about gender, family, work and equality.

Steinem was also active in building organizations designed to turn activism into lasting change. She was a co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus and helped establish the Women's Action Alliance. She later became involved with Voters for Choice and the Women's Media Center, among other organizations.

Her influence has extended beyond the United States. Steinem has spoken

and written internationally about human rights, democracy and equality. She has also received numerous awards for her journalism and activism, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013.

For younger generations, Steinem's career offers a reminder of how journalism, community organizing and civic participation can work together. Whatever one's views on individual issues, her life illustrates the impact a determined public voice can have when it remains engaged over many decades. Her career is part of a larger American story about changing attitudes toward women and the continuing debate over equality and opportunity.



America's Time Capsule is a once-in-a-generation national record created to mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Led by America250, this official

project has preserved a representative snapshot of the United States at 250 years to be seen in 2276, when America celebrates its 500th anniversary. On July 4, 2026, the capsule was ceremonially buried at Independence National Historical Park, where it will remain sealed for 250 years as an enduring gift from today's Americans to future generations.

Be sure to read the entire
candidates questionnaire on [https://
fairfaxindependentnews.press/2026-
fairfax-city-election/](https://fairfaxindependentnews.press/2026-fairfax-city-election/)

Uncontested City of Fairfax School Board Supports 1% Local Sales and Use Tax

BY CAROLINE CHU

When Fairfax City residents head to their local polling place on November 3, Senate, U.S. Representative, and Mayor & Council candidates won't be the only ones on the ballot: City of Fairfax School Board candidates will be there too. Sitting City School Board members Lauren Bartelme, Kristina Cecere, Amit Hickman, Sarah Kelsey, and Carolyn Pitches are running again, uncontested as they were in 2024.

Under the Constitution and Code of Virginia, the City School Board is the five-member policy-making body for the City's school division. It appoints and evaluates the superintendent, sets district policy, approves the budget and capital spending, and awards contracts. However, it does not have a direct educational responsibility.

Since 1962, the City of Fairfax Schools has participated in a School Services Agreement (SSA) with the City, Fairfax County, and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). FCPS hires staff, manages daily school operations, and provides Fairfax City students and parents with full access to their services; in turn, the City School Board oversees this contract, carries out school building maintenance, and welcomes FCPS students into city schools. Chair Carolyn Pitches has described the partnership as mutually beneficial, attributing it with making the student body "culturally rich and diverse" whilst giving students

access to opportunities the City "could not achieve independently."

The School Board's partnership with FCPS is especially on display with their respective budgets. Almost 93 percent of the City's FY2026 school budget – \$71.4 million – was sent to FCPS as a tuition fee for 2,992 of the City's students. Because FCPS's budget is enormous, totaling around \$4 billion this year, a seemingly proportional increase of \$300 million in expenses for the county led to the distribution of an additional \$12.6 million from the school budget. Pitches noted the unusual change during the Fairfax City Council's March meeting. "Adjustments have typically varied only by \$1.5 million and sometimes in the city's favor," she said.

On November 3, voters will not only be deciding their vote for Mayor and City Council members; they will also share their critical input on a potential source of revenue the Board may use to fund its schools. At its July 2024 meeting, the City Council approved a resolution to place a referendum on the November ballot, asking voters whether to authorize a 1% local option sales and use tax in the City of Fairfax.

This referendum, now on the ballot for the upcoming election, will allow local voters to decide on the tax, a planned source of revenue for school capital projects. The tax is estimated to generate between \$12 to \$14 million per year to help finance the construction, renovation, modernization, and long term

maintenance of City schools.

In support of the new tax, the Council noted that its adoption will reduce the City's reliance on other local revenue sources, like the 2024 bond referendum, for building work going forward. The resolution also calls for continued coordination between the board, City Council, and city staff to keep the public informed about how the tax's revenue would be spent and what projects it would fund.

One Percent Sales Tax Ballot Language

Should the City of Fairfax be authorized to levy a general retail sales tax at a rate not to exceed one percent (1%), as determined by the City Council, to provide revenues solely for: (i) capital projects for new construction or renovation of schools serving the City, including bond and loan financing costs related to such needs; or (ii) public transportation purposes serving the City, including bond and loan financing costs related to such needs; or (iii) both capital projects for new construction or renovation of schools serving the City and public transportation purposes serving the City?

Explanation posted on the City of Fairfax School Website:

This ballot question asks whether voters want to give the City of Fairfax the authority to add up to a 1% local retail sales tax. Approval of the ballot question does not automatically impose the tax. Instead, it gives the City Council the legal authority to determine whether to adopt

the tax and, if so, at what rate (up to 1%).

If the tax is adopted, all revenue generated must be used only for specific capital purposes. Such revenue cannot be used for the City's day-to-day operating expenses, employee salaries, or other general government services. State law limits the use of the tax revenue to fund:

Capital projects for schools, including constructing new schools, renovating existing schools, and paying the costs of bonds or loans used to finance those projects; public transportation projects that serve the City, including the costs of bonds or loans used to finance those projects; or a combination of both school capital projects and public transportation projects.

The ballot question does not identify specific projects or determine how the revenue would be divided between schools and transportation. Those decisions would be made by the City Council if the referendum is approved and the tax is later adopted.

A "Yes" vote authorizes the City Council to levy a local retail sales tax of up to 1% and dedicate the proceeds solely to eligible school capital projects, public transportation projects, or both.

A "No" vote does not authorize the City Council to levy this additional local retail sales tax. As a result, this funding option would not be available for these purposes.

Kennedy Center Closes Main Building for Renovations

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., has closed its main building to the public. The closure followed a September 15 vote by the board of trustees to shut the building for roughly two years for extensive repairs, with doors locked later that day.

Officials cited serious safety concerns after plaster fell 60 feet from the Grand Foyer ceiling during a September 4 storm. Further inspection revealed water damage and deterioration in electrical systems, the garage, plumbing, and HVAC

infrastructure requiring major repairs.

The closure intersects with an ongoing legal dispute involving President Donald Trump, who became board chairman in 2025. A federal judge recently blocked efforts by Trump's allies to add his name to the building without congressional approval.

Trump suggested the repairs could cost hundreds of millions and raised the possibility of demolition. In response, a federal judge ordered 30 days' notice before any major physical changes occur. No demolition has taken place.

Programming continues at the adjacent REACH facility, while the National Symphony Orchestra and other productions will perform off-site. The Kennedy Center Honors and Mark Twain Prize will also proceed as planned.

Although the main building is closed, the Kennedy Center has not completely ceased operations. The REACH, an adjacent arts and education facility, is scheduled to continue programming, while the National Symphony Orchestra and some other Kennedy Center productions are expected to perform at off-site venues. The Kennedy Center

Honors and Mark Twain Prize are also planned to continue.

Staffing and finances remain under pressure. Over a dozen employees were laid off on September 18 amid earlier departures, and internal projections indicate substantial revenue shortfalls.

While the main building undergoes its planned two-year renovation, the institution continues operating at reduced capacity through off-site venues. The long-term future of the facility remains subject to pending litigation and funding decisions.

Spanberger’s Data Center Framework Raises Concerns

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — Governor Abigail Spanberger announced Friday, September 18, 2026, a sweeping Virginia Data Center Accountability Framework, accompanied by Executive Order 22, that would significantly change how Virginia handles the rapidly expanding data center industry.

“Virginia should be leading the nation in setting the highest standards for this industry,” Spanberger said in announcing the framework.

The proposal comes as Virginia continues to experience rapid growth in data center development, particularly as demand for computing capacity has accelerated with artificial intelligence. The expansion has also generated debate over electricity demand, utility costs, water use, land use, noise and environmental impacts.

The framework focuses on increasing transparency, strengthening environmental protections, lowering energy costs, advancing clean energy and grid reliability, and delivering greater benefits to Virginia workers and communities.

For Fairfax, the announcement raises an immediate question: What does it mean for data center projects that are already moving through the approval process? That question is particularly relevant to two local developments — the proposed Vienna Cloud project on Quantum Drive in Vienna and the Edsall Data Center Substation associated with Plaza 500.

One of the most significant proposals would eliminate by-right approval for data centers using more than 25 megawatts of electricity, requiring local approval for those facilities. The framework also proposes removing future large data centers from Virginia’s fast-track permitting process.

The Governor is also seeking greater transparency. Executive Order 22 prohibits state agencies from entering into or requiring non-disclosure agreements for commercial data center projects, while proposed legislation would extend that prohibition to local governments. The framework also calls for stronger community engagement and tools allowing localities to negotiate

community-centered agreements with developers.

Another major component addresses costs and environmental impacts by ensuring developers pay more for electricity demand and meeting stricter standards for water, efficiency, backup power, and noise.

In Vienna, developer Serverfarm is seeking Fairfax County approval to redevelop 7980 and 7990 Quantum Drive into a two-phase facility called Vienna Cloud, with a planned capacity of 50 megawatts (15 MW for NVA1 and 35 MW for NVA2). Serverfarm describes the project as a site modernization featuring water-free, air-cooled chillers, visual screening, and improvements to Quantum Field. However, the project faces opposition from groups like Nature Forward, and county records show its applications are currently awaiting resubmission.

Meanwhile, the situation at Plaza 500 differs. While the data center campus itself received county approval, the proposed Edsall Data Center Substation

remains subject to Fairfax County’s 2232 public-facilities review. The Save Bren Mar community group argues the substation should be denied to allow reconsideration of the associated infrastructure.

Importantly, Spanberger’s announcement does not establish a statewide moratorium or automatically force active proposals to restart their approval process. While Executive Order 22 enacts immediate administrative directives, major policy shifts require legislative action in 2027, it can take 6 months to a couple of years for these directives to get implemented.

The Governor’s new initiatives have met with skepticism from the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, a leading grassroots organization focused on data center development.. Their media release states “Imagine your house is on fire. You dial 9-1-1, and instead of a legion of firetrucks coming down your driveway to save your home, your family, all you own and care about... They show up with a spray bottle, and an ‘ACTION plan’ that won’t be implemented for 6 months to two years.”

NCAA Eligibility Fight Opens New Chapter

BY OWEN KORZAK

A Louisiana judge’s ruling against the NCAA has opened the door for former professional athletes to return to college sports, creating another challenge to the NCAA’s evolving eligibility rules and controversy.

East Baton Rouge Parish Judge William Jorden issued a preliminary injunction Sept. 3 preventing the NCAA from blocking former professionals from competing for Louisiana State University.

Among those players are former NFL athletes Zxavian Harris and Dae’Quan Wright, who both attended Ole Miss before declaring for the 2026 NFL Draft. Harris had signed with the New Orleans Saints after going undrafted. Wright spent time this offseason with the Philadelphia

Eagles and Cleveland Browns. Both testified that they would have remained in

college had they known they would later have another season of eligibility.

The NCAA has allowed athletes an additional season of competition under recently adopted rules, but players who had already entered professional sports found themselves caught between the old and new eligibility standards.

The SEC has opposed LSU’s attempt to add former professionals, arguing that its member schools must follow conference eligibility rules. The conference also adopted potential penalties for programs that use former professional athletes.

The ruling does not settle the larger dispute. The SEC has filed a separate federal lawsuit against LSU, meaning the former NFL players’ eligibility remains part of an ongoing legal battle. For the NCAA, the case is another example of how quickly college athletics is changing as courts, conferences and athletes continue to challenge traditional eligibility rules.

One time \$1M to FCPL in Carryover Budget

BY DARIA PARNES

FAIRFAX, VA — FCPL Library Director, Eric Carzon said he was thrilled to announce that County Executive Bryan Hill chose to put a \$1 million one-time addition to the FCPL FY2027 into his carryover budget package recommendation. It has been well received by the Board of Supervisors so far, and action on the package will occur on September 15th. Once approved, the proposal would bring the FCPL library collection budget for FY27 to \$5.1 million, a starting level that has not been seen in more than a decade.

The proposed funding is intended to increase the number of titles and copies acquired across all 22 branch locations, expanding physical inventory and addressing hold times for requested titles.

This additional money would

enable the timely purchase of new fiction as well as a wide array of consistently requested fiction and nonfiction that the library has not been able to purchase enough copies of, such as:

- Workforce preparedness and career development including job search, resume, and interview guides.
- In depth resources for high demand, economically relevant fields such as software development and artificial intelligence.
- Nonfiction eBooks in addition to the increasingly popular eBook fiction and best sellers.
- Other resources such as children’s materials, world languages, and adult fiction, that have lagged will be brought up to date.

Securing this funding early in the fiscal year allows library staff to utilize vendor pricing structures and promotional options during procurement.

SweatHouz Brings Contrast Therapy and Wellness to Fairfax

BY JACQUELINE DONALD

MOSAIC, VA — Fairfax and surrounding communities have a new way to incorporate wellness and recovery into their routines at SweatHouz, a wellness studio offering contrast therapy and private luxury suites.

SweatHouz, located in the Mosaic District, has several locations throughout the DC metro area, including Fairfax. The studio provides a contrast therapy experience that combines deliberate exposure to heat and cold through services including an infrared sauna, Vitamin C

shower, and cold plunge. Contrast therapy is available at all SweatHouz locations.

The concept behind contrast therapy is based on the body's response to exposure to heat and cold. Supporters of the practice say alternating between these temperatures may help promote relaxation and recovery, improve circulation, support muscle recovery, and contribute to an overall sense of well-being.

What sets SweatHouz apart from many other wellness businesses is its focus on providing each customer with a private luxury suite. The goal is to create

a comfortable and personal environment where guests can take time away from the demands of their daily routines.

Kevin, a local studio manager, shared that making wellness a priority is an important first step for people who may find it difficult to make time for themselves. Rather than waiting for the perfect time to begin a wellness routine, he encourages people to simply get started and explore activities that are new or outside their normal routines.

Another area of focus is reducing screen time. With many people spending

significant portions of their day scrolling through social media and using digital devices, being mindful of screen habits can create more opportunities to participate in activities that are relaxing, enriching, and beneficial to overall well-being.

The owners' vision for SweatHouz is to create a wellness space where people can step away from the busyness of everyday life, reset, and recharge. For Fairfax residents looking for new ways to make wellness part of their routine, SweatHouz offers an opportunity to slow down, disconnect, and dedicate time to personal recovery and relaxation.

The Happy Cat Hotel & Spa Brings Cat-Focused Boarding and Grooming

BY JACQUELINE DONALD

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Cat owners in Fairfax now have a new option for boarding and grooming with the opening of The Happy Cat Hotel & Spa on August 15, 2026 and is located at 3220 Blenheim Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22030.

Brittni Loutzenheiser is the co-owner of the newly opened Happy Cat Hotel & Spa Fairfax and which she operates with her husband, Nicolas Martinez. The hotel offers specialized boarding and grooming services designed specifically for cats. The Fairfax location is part of a growing franchise with additional locations in Alexandria and cities across the country, including locations in New Jersey, New York and New Mexico.

Unlike traditional pet boarding facilities, The Happy Cat Hotel & Spa is designed with the unique needs of cats in mind. The hotel features 31 individually themed rooms, giving cats more space to move around and explore during their stay. Some rooms are approximately 40 square feet and can accommodate up to three cats, while a larger room can accommodate up to five.

Each room is equipped with a litter box, water and food trays, while owners only need to provide their cat's food. Meals are served throughout a cat's stay, and medications can also be administered when needed.



Image courtesy Happy Cat Hotel & Spa

One of the hotel's features is its focus on enrichment. Each cat receives 15 minutes of enrichment time, allowing them to leave their room and explore designated areas of the hotel.

Owners can also stay connected with their pets while they are away. Every room has a webcam that clients can access if they choose. The hotel also provides owners with photographs and updates about how their cats are doing during their stay.

The rooms encourage cats to explore with perches and outdoor-facing windows, complete with a bird feeder and one-way film for bird watching.

Another window allows cats to see into a neighboring room, providing additional visual stimulation while maintaining separate accommodations.

Grooming frequency depends on coat length: medium to long-haired cats need grooming every 8 to 12 weeks, while short-haired cats require less frequent visits.

The idea for the business grew out of the owners' experience operating a pet-walking and pet-sitting business. They noticed that dogs often received more

attention in the pet-care industry and recognized that cats have different needs, particularly when it comes to grooming and boarding.

The Happy Cat Hotel & Spa was created with the goal of giving cats a comfortable environment designed specifically for them while providing owners with reassurance when they are away.

The Happy Cat Hotel & Spa offers feline-focused boarding, enrichment, grooming, and remote check-ins to give cat owners peace of mind while away.

Fiesta Fairfax: Old Town Square, 10415 North Street, 22030

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

Fiesta Fairfax is a community celebration observed during Hispanic Heritage Month and includes cultural performances, music, food vendors and educational exhibits highlighting the contributions and experiences of the Hispanic, Latino and Latinx community. The Old Town Square Stage will host folklore dance performances from various countries and live music to practice your dance moves!



Event information, including programming and cancellations are available on the following website at www.fairfaxva.gov/Events-directory/Parks-and-Recreation/Cultural-Arts/Monthly-Celebrations/Hispanic-Heritage-Month-Events/Fiesta-Fairfax

\$3.7 Million Quantum Technology Investment Includes City of Fairfax

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — The City is among five Northern Virginia localities included in a nearly \$3.7 million investment to develop the region’s workforce for the growing quantum technology industry.

The Virginia Quantum Hub received \$3,684,912 through the state’s Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) program. The regional initiative includes Fairfax City and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William. It is led by George Mason University’s Quantum Science & Engineering Center.

The investment is intended to build a workforce pipeline, expand access to quantum technology and strengthen partnerships between universities, community colleges, businesses and

local governments. State officials said the project addresses significant demand in the region, with more than 1,100 quantum-related jobs currently open in Northern Virginia.

Over the next three years, the Virginia Quantum Hub is expected to train more than 1,000 students and incumbent workers, award more than 1,200 credentials, place 375 people in quantum-related jobs and internships, and reach more than 30,000 secondary students through teacher training and immersion programs.

A central part of the project will be a four-tier quantum workforce pipeline, beginning with George Mason’s middle and high school teacher training and student immersion programs and continuing through college-level education and workforce training.

The project also includes a new Quantum Technician Lab and bootcamp at Northern Virginia Community College’s Manassas campus, along with courses designed to help workers already employed in the region’s technology sector develop quantum-related skills.

At George Mason University, the initiative will support a new master’s degree program in Quantum Science and Engineering, described by the project organizers as the first program of its kind in Virginia.

The Hub will also develop shared regional infrastructure centered around an open-architecture quantum computer, giving students, researchers and industry partners access to quantum computing resources.

Another component is an industry

partnership program bringing employers and academics together to help shape curriculum, develop technology and pursue federal research and workforce grants.

The regional coalition includes five economic development authorities, three school divisions and higher education partners including Northern Virginia Community College, Marymount University and Virginia Tech. Industry partners including Leidos, Aliro Quantum and IonQ have committed more than \$1.3 million in in-kind support, according to GO Virginia Region 7.

The Virginia Quantum Hub was the largest of four GO Virginia projects announced in September, with the state awarding more than \$6.2 million across the four initiatives.

Dominion–NextEra Merger Puts Prince William’s Power Future Under Scrutiny

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — A proposed merger between Dominion Energy and NextEra Energy is drawing scrutiny across Virginia as the State Corporation Commission considers how the transaction could affect electric rates, infrastructure and the Commonwealth’s rapidly growing demand for power.

The proposed acquisition of control of Dominion Energy Virginia is before the SCC in Case No. PUR-2026-00112. Dominion and NextEra filed their petition July 15. The SCC has scheduled the evidentiary hearing to begin Nov. 17, 2026, at 10 a.m. Case information is available on the following SCC website at (<https://www.scc.virginia.gov/about-the-scc/dominion-nextera-merger-updates>)

The merger comes as Virginia faces a major increase in electricity demand, driven in part by the expansion of data centers and other large electricity users. The impact is especially visible in Northern Virginia,

but the infrastructure needed to supply that demand reaches across the Commonwealth. The SCC is reviewing major transmission proposals in areas including Prince William, Loudoun, Fauquier and Frederick counties, among others.

Dominion and NextEra say combining the companies would provide greater financial resources and scale to meet Virginia’s energy needs. They have also proposed additional benefits for Virginia customers, including residential bill credits, increased funding for Dominion’s EnergyShare assistance program and employment commitments.

The companies say Dominion Energy Virginia would remain separately regulated and accountable to the SCC.

A major issue for regulators and customers is how the costs of expanding the electric system will be allocated.

Large transmission, generation and

distribution projects require substantial investment. With data centers consuming increasing amounts of electricity, consumer advocates and community organizations have questioned whether large customers are paying their appropriate share of the infrastructure costs required to serve them.

Virginia has already established special rate structures and protections for large electricity users.

Prince William County illustrates the broader debate. The Coalition to Protect Prince William County has opposed aspects of data-center development and related transmission infrastructure. In a Sept. 8 statement, the Coalition urged the SCC to examine the relationship between data-center demand, Dominion’s long-term power planning and future grid construction.

The Coalition has also raised concerns about proposed data centers entering utility planning processes before local land-use decisions have been finalized. Those claims are the

Coalition’s position and have not been presented here as findings by the SCC.

The merger itself would not approve individual data centers, transmission lines or substations. Those projects remain subject to separate regulatory and local processes.

However, the SCC’s review provides an opportunity to examine how the proposed ownership change could affect Dominion’s ability to finance and build infrastructure and how Virginia protects customers as electricity demand grows.

The public can participate in the SCC process. An in-person public-witness session is scheduled for Nov. 5 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the SCC’s second-floor courtroom, 1300 East Main St., Richmond. Written comments are due Nov. 9.

The Nov. 17 evidentiary hearing will be webcast on the following SCC website at (<https://www.scc.virginia.gov/about-the-scc/dominion-nextera-merger-updates>)

Real story behind the City of Fairfax Democratic Committee “recommendation”

OP-ED BY KATE DOYLE FEINGOLD, CITY RESIDENT AND FORMER CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

There is a real news story behind the City of Fairfax Democratic Committee “recommendation” and slate posted last month, but it isn’t being told.

This year the Democratic Party of VA told county and city party committees they couldn’t endorse candidates without a primary (see, the publicly available, 2026 DVPA Party Plan*). The City of Fairfax dem committee decided to “recommend” instead. The practical difference is probably nothing (since a “recommendation” so far results in the same support and presence on the dem sample ballot as an endorsement does*), but there are some key points to note. The city dem committee had a questionnaire on their website for individuals interested in party endorsement or support, and a handful of candidates responded to that questionnaire: Anthony Amos, Sandra Slappey Brown, Maria Padmore, and Kelly O’Brien. Everyone who responded to the CFDC questionnaire ended up on the recommendation list - along with Kirsten Lockhart. The endorsement committee for the city Dems is tiny (5 people*).

Two years ago the city dem committee orchestrated attacks against Amos for being a republican. They orchestrated attacks against other candidates - including me - with completely false and harmful posts. They also decided not to endorse Amini Bonane

(in 2024) an incredibly active Democrat who worked on countless campaigns, and Joe Harmon (in 2022) who was a former chair of the city dem committee (to be clear Bonane & Harmon didn’t ask for endorsement, but neither did others who have been endorsed in prior years or recommended this year*). What changed in two years for the city dem committee, from attacking Amos as a republican to now endorsing him? It’s unclear - but his voting in support of the GST, high density development, and a higher tax rate are probably the most important factors.

Across the country voters are telling us they are tired of the two parties failing to represent them, failing to follow through with campaign promises, failing to lower the cost of living, failing the environment, and failing to govern ethically and transparently. Amos and Lockhart are the only city dem “recommended” candidates with a voting record and they both consistently support high density development, the destruction of trees and forests, and increasing taxes.

Last election, 2024, the 11th district dem committee got involved (Gerry Connolly’s district RIP), and they paid for attacks against city local candidates. They also paid for and mailed a city sample ballot with endorsements which included Peterson, Hall and McQuillen - who are now not recommended by the city Dems. There appears to be no consistency and no transparency in how these local dem committees select who is endorsed

or recommended. Which may be why the state party chair said no more local party endorsements.

My recommendation is to look at voting records, candidate websites, ask pointed questions, and preserve independent elections in our city. You can email all the candidates and ask for direct responses about the issues you care about - if they won’t respond to you when they are asking for your vote, do you think they will after the election?

I know all the candidates have democratic beliefs - the key dividing issues in 2026 are high density development, environmental preservation, and cost of living. Look at Amos’ and Lockhart’s voting records - if you support high density development (i.e. 11 story apartment buildings at Fairfax circle that negatively impact existing small businesses), then they are your candidates. They also both supported destroying 100 acres of forest with a paved road through the forest called “GST.” And Amos voted for a higher advertised tax rate than the city manager asked for.

The city Dems may try the false attacks approach again, but I know our voters are smarter than that. I’m guessing they will put out false info about the GST and the required payback. The truth is that Peterson, Hall, and McQuillen had the guts to preserve 100 acres of the last contiguous forest in our city at a cost of \$35,000 per acre. That’s in comparison

to an approved \$20 million increase in cost for the Willard Sherwood project to preserve 1 acre of Van Dyke Park. The city-selected construction firm for the “GST” was from Pittsburgh - no local dollars to local business. The costs to operate and maintain the “GST” were never accurately calculated and would have quickly surpassed the payback amount. And the resulting flooding, heat, and decreased air quality would also severely negatively impact all residents.

I want elected leaders who respond to emails, ask tough questions, care about preserving the environment, and won’t unnecessarily increase our cost of living. I can see from the voting record and service on the dais that Peterson, Hall and McQuillen are leaders who do that. I believe Lough, Kuiler and Chang will also. But please, do your research and talk to your neighbors.

*The CFDC provided a response to my op-ed with one factual correction that the selection committee had 5 individuals not 3, so I made an update. They provided additional thoughts about what I “insinuated” so I added some clarifying information to hopefully eliminate any confusion. What I’ve written is backed up by evidence, including screenshots of attacks with the 11th district authorization statement, screenshots of attacks posted by CFDC, and informed by conversations with CFDC members, as well as my own experiences running for office in the City.

City of Fairfax Public Meetings to Watch in October

October will be a busy month for residents following transportation, development, zoning and other City of Fairfax issues. Most meetings start at 7:00 PM and take place at City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St., Fairfax, VA 22030, with some boards meeting at other locations.

For updated information, exact meeting times, live streaming, locations and agenda updates, please visit the following City of Fairfax website at www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Public-Meetings/City-Meetings

Tuesday, Oct. 6 – City Council Work Session, City Hall, Work Session Room 110/111. The Council will discuss transportation projects, potential changes

to the Residential Permit Parking District ordinance, a resolution concerning VDOT street-maintenance payments, possible zoning amendments related to adopted Small Area Plans, and FY2027 supplemental appropriations.

Monday, Oct. 12 – Planning Commission, City Hall, Council Chambers. The Commission will consider planning and land-use matters.

Tuesday, Oct. 13 – City Council Regular Meeting, City Hall, Council Chambers (Room 100). The agenda includes FY2027 supplemental appropriations, the Chain Bridge Road Sidewalk Project and a VDOT street-maintenance resolution. A public hearing

will address property acquisitions for the sidewalk project. The meeting also includes proclamations recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Garden Club of Fairfax centennial, Support Your Local Chamber Day and Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month.

Tuesday, Oct. 20 – Board of Zoning Appeals, City Hall, Room 100.

Wednesday, Oct. 21 – Board of Architectural Review, City Hall, Council Chambers, and Environmental Sustainability Committee, Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road.

Monday, Oct. 26 – Planning Commission, City Hall, Council

Chambers.

Tuesday, Oct. 27 – City Council Regular Meeting, City Hall, Council Chambers. The agenda includes temporary Verizon and Cox franchise extensions and a public hearing on the Mantua Hills Swimming Association’s proposed changes to pool and tennis-court operating hours. A tentative work session will also address **City Centre West**, a proposed mixed-use development at 10501 Main Street.

Residents should check the City’s meeting calendar before attending, as agendas, times and locations can change - www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Public-Meetings/City-Meetings

TOM
PETERSON

FOR MAYOR

READY TO LEAD
ON DAY ONE





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A SAFE, STRONG
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CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

44 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

24 YEARS IN FAIRFAX



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BEGUN

Tom4Fairfax.org

Paid for and authorized by Thomas D. Peterson for Mayor.

Elect

JESSICA LOUGH

to Fairfax City Council



RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP. RESULTS FOR FAIRFAX.

“

I've spent more than 20 years solving complex problems, managing large budgets, and delivering results for the U.S. government and some of America's largest companies. Now I want to put that experience to work for Fairfax.

”

On City Council, I'll fight for:

• Lower taxes & smarter spending:

Making every tax dollar count and planning responsibly for the future.

• A Council that does more than listen:

Bringing residents into decisions early and making sure their voices actually shape the outcome.

• Thoughtful growth:

Supporting local businesses and responsible development while protecting green spaces and what makes Fairfax feel like home. Informed decisions. Real results. A stronger Fairfax.

★ ★ ★ VOTE JESSICA LOUGH ★ ★ ★

for Fairfax City Council – November 3.

www.JessicaForFairfax.com

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RE-ELECT

STACY R. HALL

FOR FAIRFAX CITY COUNCIL

Early Voting Began Sept 18



Experienced. Transparent.
Dedicated to Serving Fairfax City.

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✓ Strong city schools

✓ Protecting green spaces

✓ Listening to our residents

STACY
HALL

FOR
CITY COUNCIL

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✓ RE-ELECT

Rachel McQuillen

FOR CITY COUNCIL



#2

ON THE BALLOT

✓

VOTE NOV. 3

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Paid for and authorized by Rachel for Fairfax

Selling Fairfax City to the Developers? Your Vote Matters

OP-ED BY ART HARMAN

Fairfax City. We are a small city; it feels more like a town, and it's our hometown. We grew up here. We moved here. We work and play here. But in the politician's future, "here" may not feel like home anymore.

Did you hear about the giant condo planned for Fairfax Circle? The Council voted it down. But certain Council members and the Mayor are still selling our city to developers. The buildings might not be eleven stories tall, but our little city will become saturated with multi-story buildings, narrow streets, and difficult parking.

Their vision isn't the city we love. It's more like Clarendon: a "condo canyon" that would increase our population by up to forty-four percent.

Do you want traffic 44% worse? Schools and infrastructure overburdened? You know they won't reduce your taxes by 44%—or even 1%.

Do you want to lose the family

businesses and restaurants you love? Once the small shopping centers are bulldozed, they will be gone forever. Like the 29 Diner and The Espositos.

Big developers charge rents and long-term leases that mom-and-pop shops can't afford—it's all about valuation. The culture and variety we love would be gone. Replaced by mall stores and chain restaurants. Careful growth is important. The reckless sale of our hometown should be stopped.

The next Mayor and Council will seal our city's fate or preserve the hometown we love. Residents are also alarmed about growing crime.

You may be afraid to let your kids play in some areas, but the Mayor and her allies look away, and crime will grow worse with the establishment candidates.

Here's one reason: The Fairfax Detention Center (jail) serves our city and the far larger county. Released county offenders are left here and often become homeless. Some commit repeat crimes.

This abandonment places on our tiny city the burden of housing, counseling, crime, police, courts, and homelessness. That's not fair.

We have 2 percent of the County's population and 5 percent of the budget. Yet we assume responsibility for 100 percent of released county offenders unless they leave the city.

The Mayor and Council allies could have worked with the county, where greater social services could make a difference. They didn't. That's not compassionate.

Worse, they proposed making crime risk-free. Homeless misdemeanor offenders would receive "no custody," free to repeat crimes again and again. That's not compassion for them, or for your family.

They doubled their pay! They tried to double their terms, insulating themselves from accountability. Given the chance, they'll pass that too.

Your choice is clear: 44% population

increase or responsible development.

Let crime soar, or make our hometown safer.

It is time for a change.

Our hometown had a proud tradition of openness, non-partisanship, and officials who took our concerns seriously. Let's restore that small-town caring.

Vote early for Councilman Thomas "Tom" Peterson for Mayor. Vote for Steve Chang, Stacy Hall, Susan Hartley Kuiler, Jessica Lough, and Rachel McQuillen—the "Common Ground" independents pledged to represent you.

In the past term, Councilors Hall, McQuillen, and Peterson restrained the greatest excesses. You can trust this team to listen to you and lead our city on a more responsible and compassionate path.

Art Harman is a long-time resident of Fairfax city. He's an expert on domestic and foreign policy and is an award-winning photographer and filmmaker.

Council Adopts Code of Ethics

BY AYA AMER

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA—The City Council unanimously adopted a Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct on September 8, 2026, establishing conduct guidelines for elected and appointed officials.

"In the 20 plus years that I have been City Attorney, this has come up on a number of occasions and interestingly, Council has never adopted a code of ethics in the City of Fairfax," noted City Attorney Brian Lubkerman at the May 26, 2026 Council work session. He added that while it is not unique to the City, many jurisdictions now do have a code of ethics.

The process was initiated by Council consensus on May 26, 2026, directing staff to draft a Code of Ethics to be presented at a work session before the August recess. A follow-up work session discussion was held on July 14, 2026, at which Lubkerman presented a draft covering stewardship, public conduct and behavior, transparency, public confidence, conflicts of interest, use of public resources, integrity, confidentiality, and loyalty to the locality and its mission; no formal action was taken at that session.

Designed to establish standards for serving the public interest, ensuring equitable treatment of residents, and avoiding conflicts of interest, the code governs the mayor, City Council members, and appointees to city boards and commissions.

A key section addresses conflicts of interest by requiring officials to declare legally mandated conflicts and abstain from related discussions or decisions. Furthermore, it regulates private interest representation, gifts, municipal resources, and confidential materials.

Additionally, the code outlines procedures for handling potential infractions. Officials who learn of a violation must notify the relevant governing body. The City Council holds the authority to issue sanctions, such as formal censures, reprimands, or the removal of committee assignments and seniority. However, a violation on its own will not nullify any official decisions made by the council, commissions, or city boards.

Officials must acknowledge and sign the standards during orientation, while existing statutory requirements remain independently applicable.

Fall Tree Giveaway

September 22 to November 30

Plant a tree at home and help bring trees to your neighborhood! Trees clean the air, provide shade, fight climate impacts like extreme heat (PDF), and improve the health of our community.

In partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, the city's urban forestry program is pleased to offer residents no-cost native trees each spring and fall. Learn



more about Community Tree Distributions.

To reserve your tree, please visit the following Fall Tree Giveaway website at www.fairfaxva.gov/Events-directory/Environment-Sustainability/Fall-Tree-Giveaway-2026

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Area Top Fall Festivals and Events

COMPILED BY AYA AMER

all festivals and events are coming up around the D.C., Maryland and Virginia area. Here are five events to check out this fall.

Fall Bird Walk | Washington, D.C.

The U.S. National Arboretum will host a Fall Bird Walk on Oct. 3 from 9 to 11 a.m. The guided walk, led by DC Bird Alliance guides, will take participants through the Arboretum's 451 acres while teaching bird identification tips during fall migration. The event will meet at the Visitor Center/Administration Building at 3501 New

York Avenue NE. Admission is free, with registration available through Eventbrite.

Maryland Renaissance Festival | Annapolis, Maryland

The Maryland Renaissance Festival will run on 19 selected days from Aug. 29 through Oct. 25 at Revel Grove, 1821 Crownsville Road. The festival is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and recreates a 16th-century village with more than 200 entertainers, shops, food and performances. Activities include armored jousting, stage shows, music and dancing. Adult tickets for ages 16 to 61 are \$31 before taxes and fees, while children ages

7 to 15 are \$17. Parking is free.

Providence Fallfest | Fairfax, Virginia

Providence Fallfest will take place Oct. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Jim Scott Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive. The free, family-friendly event will feature performances, games and other community activities. Admission is free and open to the public.

Annual Halloween Carnival | Fairfax Station, Virginia

The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum will hold its Annual Halloween Carnival on Oct. 25 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 11200

Fairfax Station Road. The event will feature Halloween games, prizes, costumes and activities for families. Admission is donation-based, with a suggested donation of \$20 for a family of four.

Oktoberfest Market | Fairfax, Virginia

The Oktoberfest Market will take place Oct. 17 at Fairfax Corner, with the venue listing showing hours from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The outdoor market will feature local craft beer samples, hand-braided pretzels, more than 40 local artisans, live music and cocktail sip-and-stroll options. Admission is free, while food, drinks and crafts are available for purchase.

SUSAN HARTLEY KUILER FOR CITY COUNCIL



VOTE NOV. 3

PRAGMATIC & COMMONSENSE
LEADERSHIP FOR A BETTER
FAIRFAX CITY

Kuiler4Fairfax.com
Email Susan at kuiler4fairfax@gmail.com

Dear City of Fairfax Residents,

I am running for City Council as an independent candidate because I love Fairfax—a welcoming place where neighbors know each other and local businesses remember your name.

Our city's character and high quality of life are built by neighbors who care, and I want to preserve that spirit while thoughtfully preparing for the future.

I believe local government works best when it is practical, transparent, and focused on solving problems. That is why I am running as an independent to represent people, not politics.

Every resident has a stake in Fairfax's future. I want to hear from everyone—homeowners, renters, families, seniors, students, and business owners alike—because good decisions begin with listening and finding common ground.

Building consensus isn't always the fastest path. It takes patience, respect, and yes, probably a few more meetings than anyone would choose for fun. But that's how trust is built, and it's how good communities stay strong.

Fairfax's future belongs to all of us. Together, we can make thoughtful, fiscally responsible decisions that keep our city beautiful, welcoming, safe, and vibrant for generations to come. I'd be honored to earn your vote—and even more honored to earn your trust.

I respectfully ask for your vote on Nov. 3.

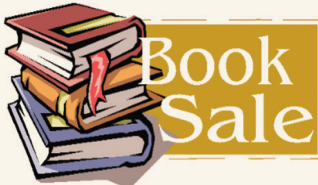
Sincerely,

Susan Hartley Kuiler



Paid for and Authorized by Susan Hartley Kuiler for Fairfax City Council

The City of Fairfax Regional Library Book Sale



The City of Fairfax Regional Library book sale is scheduled for October 22–25, 2026, at the City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax, VA 22030.
Fall Donated Books Sale

Thursday, Oct. 22

12:00–3:00 PM
Preview sale — \$30 admission, prepaid through PayPal

Friday, Oct. 23

10:00 AM–3:00 PM
General/open sale — free admission

Saturday, Oct. 24

10:00 AM–3:00 PM
General/open sale — free admission

Sunday, Oct. 25

10:00 AM–3:00 PM \$8 grocery-bag sale

The Sunday bag sale excludes children's books. The regular sale accepts cash, check, or credit card (with a \$10 minimum).

One thing to note: the Fairfax County Library's official Friends page confirms that the group holds two major sales annually, but it doesn't currently display these October dates itself. The October 22–25 schedule is currently listed by BookSaleFinder, so I'd recommend confirming with the Friends before making a special trip. Their contact is 703-293-2132 or folfairfaxcity@gmail.com.

Schools Plan \$204M in Capital Projects as Referendum Nears

BY ABBY DENNIS

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – The City is preparing for a major investment in its public schools, with renovations planned at Daniels Run and Providence elementary schools and a new roof at Fairfax High School. At its Sept. 14 meeting, the City of Fairfax School Board reviewed updated preliminary plans totaling approximately \$204.3 million across the three projects.

Built in 1956, Daniels Run Elementary is estimated at \$80.5 million, while Providence Elementary is estimated at \$82.8 million. Both projects include HVAC, lighting, ceiling and finish replacements, along with additional classroom space.

Daniels Run would receive a two-story addition, an expanded kitchen, and improvements to outdoor areas and parking. Providence would gain new classrooms, a fine arts wing, and

improvements to its courtyard, parking and drop-off areas.

The third project involves replacing the roof at Fairfax High School. Construction is estimated at \$41 million, with total costs reaching approximately \$43.5 million when design, planning and contingency costs are included. Construction is expected to begin in 2028, with the elementary school projects targeted for completion in 2030 and the high school roof work extending into 2031.

The projects stem from a \$220 million school bond referendum approved by City voters in November 2024. The referendum authorized the City to issue up to \$220 million in general-obligation bonds for school capital projects.

Current allocations include \$75.4 million for Daniels Run, \$84.8 million for Providence and \$43.5 million for Fairfax

High School. Another \$13.1 million is designated for technology, furniture and equipment, with \$3.12 million reserved for contingency and issuance costs. Funds may be reallocated as final project costs become clearer.

Because the \$204.3 million figure represents preliminary planning estimates, it does not necessarily reflect the final cost or exact amount the City will borrow. Final expenses and financing will depend on construction bids, schedules, borrowing decisions and future City Council action.

Voters will also consider a Nov. 3 ballot question asking whether to authorize City Council to levy an additional local retail sales tax of up to 1% for school capital projects and transit. A full 1% tax could generate approximately \$13.5 million annually, according to City Schools. The revenue could be used for capital projects or related debt service,

but not for operating expenses or salaries.

The measure would not automatically impose the tax. It would give City Council authority to establish a rate of up to 1% and decide whether to levy it.

Fairfax City's schools operate under a School Services Agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), dating to 1962 and revised in 1978. The City owns and maintains its four school buildings—Daniels Run, Providence, Katherine Johnson Middle and Fairfax High—while FCPS manages educational operations. This agreement is 48 years old.

City taxpayers therefore cover both annual FCPS tuition and the long-term financing of City-owned school facilities. The City's FY2027 tuition payment to FCPS is \$76.4 million, up 7% from \$71.4 million in FY2026. As of August 2024, the four schools served 5,315 students, including about 3,000 Fairfax City residents.

Groundbreaking: Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center



Willard-Sherwood redevelopment construction: early September 2026 (image TINP)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2026 | 10:30 AM
3750 BLENHEIM BLVD, FAIRFAX

Community members are invited to attend and join City and County representatives in commemorating the start of construction on this important project. The development of the center is a joint project of Fairfax City and Fairfax County to create a modern, centrally located facility that integrates health and human services programming and provides a community center serving both communities.

The center represents a significant investment in the health and well-being of residents in both communities. Developed as a joint project of the City and County, the new facility will provide

a modern, centrally located space that integrates health and human services with community programming and resources.

The center is designed to improve access to services while providing welcoming spaces for community activities, programs, and events. By bringing these services and opportunities together in one location, the facility will strengthen connections among residents and support the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

The groundbreaking marks an important milestone in the development of this new community resource and reflects the City and County's ongoing commitment to collaboration and investment in the region.



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Nearly 3,000 Homes Proposed Near Dunn Loring Metro

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

One of Merrifield's largest apartment communities could be transformed into a new neighborhood with nearly 3,000 homes under a redevelopment proposal moving through Fairfax County.

The Merrifield at Dunn Loring Station Apartments currently contain 706 rental units in more than 50 buildings constructed in 1968. The approximately 35 acre property sits within a half mile of the Dunn Loring Merrifield Metro station, placing it in an area where county planning policy encourages higher density development near transit.

Malkin Properties is seeking to redevelop the property with up to 2,975 multifamily units and 25,000 square feet of neighborhood serving retail.

The numbers illustrate the scale of the proposal. If fully built, the redevelopment would add as many as 2,269 homes to the

property, increasing the existing housing count by more than 320%. Buildings would range from five to 13 stories.

Redevelopment would occur in phases across seven development blocks rather than demolishing the entire community at once. Plans also call for approximately 7.8 acres of urban parks and recreational spaces, including an expansion of Hartland Green Park.

Transportation improvements are another major component. A planned segment of the Merrifield Ring Road would become a two lane multimodal street connecting Hartland Road with Park Tower Drive. New sidewalks, bicycle facilities and internal streets would create additional connections through the property and toward Metro.

But before thousands of new apartments can be built, hundreds of existing homes will eventually have to be removed.

County staff found that rents at the existing community generally serve households earning between 71% and 80% of the area median income. That makes displacement and affordability significant considerations as Fairfax weighs the benefits of adding substantially more housing near Metro.

The developer has proposed phased construction and a relocation program for existing residents, including opportunities to move elsewhere within the community when possible. County staff has recommended that future development applications include commitments addressing relocation assistance and replacement of existing affordable housing.

The proposal is also notable for what it does not include. Despite the property's proximity to Metro, commercial development would remain relatively limited. The requested 25,000 square feet of retail is intended primarily to serve

residents and activate portions of the new neighborhood.

The Fairfax County Planning Commission recommended approval of the Comprehensive Plan amendment July 22. The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to consider the amendment Sept. 15.

That vote would establish the planning framework for redevelopment, but it would not authorize construction. A separate rezoning application proposing the 2,975 apartments and retail space will require additional county review and public hearings.

For Merrifield, the proposal represents a substantial change to a community built nearly six decades ago: replacing 706 garden apartments with a denser neighborhood containing more than four times as many homes, new parks and stronger connections to Metro.

Historic Blenheim Restoration Moves Into Next Phase

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – Goats and sheep were only the beginning of a broader effort to restore the landscape surrounding Historic Blenheim.

The city is working to restore approximately 3.5 acres of habitat at the nearly 12 acre historic property, where invasive plants have spread through much of the woodland surrounding the site. Historic Blenheim had 67% tree canopy coverage in 2023, but city officials say much of that canopy is threatened by invasive species.

The first phase brought goats and sheep to Blenheim in June and July. The animals grazed on dense invasive vegetation, including English ivy, Vinca and multiflora rose, allowing crews to reach areas while limiting disturbance to the property's sensitive archaeological resources.

Now the project is moving into its next phase. Beginning in late

September, crews are expected to remove remaining invasive woody vegetation. Targeted herbicide treatments will follow, along with native plantings intended to prevent invasive species from returning and help the forest regenerate. Additional tree planting is anticipated in 2027.

The work complements Fairfax's broader SPROUT initiative, or Stewarding, Planting, Restoring Our Urban Trees, which focuses on planting trees, managing invasive species and engaging residents in the city's urban forest.

At Blenheim, that environmental work carries an additional responsibility. The property includes nearly 12 acres surrounding a circa 1859 house where Union soldiers left Civil War graffiti on interior walls.

Restoring the landscape is therefore about more than trees. It is also about protecting the setting around one of Fairfax's most significant historic resources.

Mosby Building Could Return to Residential Roots

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – A familiar Main Street office building could return to its original purpose under a redevelopment proposal now before the City of Fairfax.

The owner of the seven story Mosby Building at 10560 Main Street is proposing to convert the property into a mixed use development with 107 rental apartments while retaining commercial uses on the ground floor.

The numbers show how the building could change. Plans call for 46 studios, 33 one bedroom apartments, 10 one bedroom units with dens and 18 two bedroom apartments. Fourteen units could function as live work spaces, allowing residents to operate small businesses from their homes.

The proposal would reuse much of the existing building rather than replace it. The approximately 3.25 acre property would also include about 7,000 square feet of landscaped public open space along Main Street, along with resident amenities.

In some ways, the proposal would bring the Mosby Building back to its roots. The seven story structure was originally built in the 1960s as a 120 unit apartment building before being converted to offices in the early 1970s.

The project remains early in the city's review process and went through the Planning Commission briefing on July 27. The City Council received a pre-application briefing on Sept. 1. The applicant noted that roughly 65% of the floor area is vacant or expected to become vacant, with most existing tenant leases set to expire by 2028. The informational discussion involved no vote or approval. The project remains in the concept stage, and a formal development application has not been filed.

If advanced, the project would require city approvals, including changes to existing proffers, special exceptions and architectural review.

The proposal comes as Fairfax continues to consider how aging commercial properties can accommodate housing while preserving space for businesses.

About the 2026 Fairfax City Candidates Questionnaire

TANIA HOSSAIN | PUBLISHER’S NOTE

On August 31, 2026, The Independent News Press invited the City of Fairfax Mayoral and City Council Candidates Questionnaire to participate in our very first questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to give City of Fairfax voters an opportunity to hear directly from the candidates seeking to lead their City on matters of public affairs.

The questionnaire focuses on issues that affect residents today and the decisions the next Mayor and City Council will face during their terms in office. Questions address several important areas, including development and quality of life, the City budget and spending priorities, taxes and the cost of

local government, regional cooperation, major infrastructure projects, and the various regional relationships the City maintains.

Candidates are also asked to address the three proposed Virginia constitutional amendments appearing on the November 3 ballot, as well as their approach to civility, accountability, ethics, transparency, and effective governance.

Candidates were encouraged to provide specific answers to 10 questions and, where appropriate, identify concrete actions, priorities, and measurable outcomes. The goal is to move beyond broad campaign statements and provide residents with meaningful information about their thought process and

how candidates would approach the responsibilities of public office.

The Independent News Press does not have an Editorial Board and does not endorse candidates or political positions. The questionnaire is intended as a forum for candidates to communicate their views directly to the community and for readers to better understand the issues and differences among those seeking office.

Our questions mindfully stayed away from questions that would require responding to such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age and other federally protected classes. In addition, any candidate who did not participate will not appear in print or online other than

when referring to official documents.

We are publishing their opening statements and they are listed in the order of their election category and in alphabetical order of their last names. You can find candidate responses on the following *The Fairfax Independent* website at <https://fairfaxindependentnews.press/2026-fairfax-city-elections>

And finally, we appreciate the candidates who took the time out of their extremely busy schedule to participate and engage with our readers. We also encourage City voters to read the responses carefully, consider the issues that matter most to them, and vote their conscience on November 3, 2026. Early voting has started and will continue till October 31, 2026.



Kirsten Sides Lockhart Candidate for Mayor

My name is Kirsten Lockhart and I’m running for mayor of the City of Fairfax. I am currently the Vice Chair of the City’s Planning Commission, on which I have served for more than five years.

Professionally, I have worked in management and strategy consulting for more than twenty years, predominately in federal and defense markets in the DC metropolitan area.

I have lived in the City of Fairfax with my husband and two children since 2017, although I actually grew up just over the city-county line. Understanding that readers of the Independent obviously care deeply about development and environmental issues in the City, I’d like to take this opportunity to share my Planning Commission voting record on those items, as well as my other policy positions, all of which can be reviewed here: www.lockhartforfairfax.com/blog.

Thank you for your consideration – I look forward to earning your vote, and to representing the best interests of all City of Fairfax residents going forward.



Thomas D. “Tom” Peterson Candidate for Mayor

I am running for Mayor because I love this city and care deeply about its future. Fairfax has tremendous opportunities to remain a great place to live and become even better. But that will depend on important decisions and collaboration over the next few years among our community, the City, the City Council, and our many private and community partners.

I believe Fairfax needs a Mayor who is experienced, skilled, patient and trusted to help people with different

perspectives work together to achieve what is best for our city. Serving as a City Council member has taught me that there is no substitute for experience as an elected official. The decisions become very real. People depend on you—their safety, finances, neighborhoods, children and future. I have cast more than 200 votes affecting our residents, including many difficult ones, and I understand both the responsibility Council members carry and the support a Mayor can provide through active facilitation and collaboration.

I also bring 44 years of experience across government, business, nonprofit leadership and higher education, including work at the White House, U.S. Senate and EPA. Much of my career has involved helping diverse people and organizations work through difficult public decisions.

Through my service on eight regional boards and commissions, I also understand that Fairfax is part of a larger regional community requiring strong coordination and collaboration.

From all of this, I am ready to serve as Mayor on day one, and I ask for your support.



Polling Place and Ballot Information Lookup

Voters can use the Polling Place and Ballot Information Lookup tool to get current information about their voting options during Early Voting and on Election Day for Virginia’s statewide elections.

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/polling-place-lookup/>

Be sure to read the entire candidates questionnaire on
<https://fairfaxindependentnews.press/2026-fairfax-city-election/>

ANTHONY T. AMOS – INCUMBENT
Candidate for City Council

It is the honor of a lifetime to represent you on City Council. Thank you for your support and I hope to continue to show up for you. I currently co-lead the Move Fairfax Steering Committee, which is focused on addressing traffic circulation in Old Town and pedestrian safety across the city. Additionally, I serve on the Finance Committee, and Water and Air Quality committees with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the Virginia Municipal League. As the son of an Army veteran, the importance of service is core to who I am as a person.



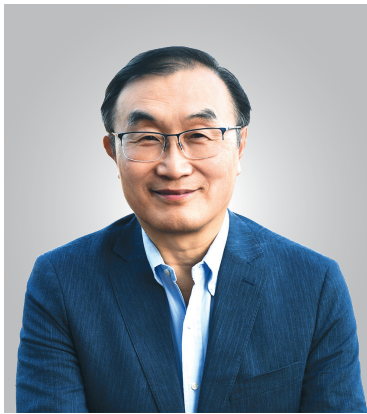
As the son of an Eritrean immigrant, my mom opened my perspective to the diverse communities of the world, many of which reside here in the city. And as a husband and new homeowner, moving out of our apartment at Layton Hall, I look forward to raising my family here and hope that the needs of the next generation are represented fairly as we balance that with the needs of our residents.

My background in local government makes me well-suited to the more difficult conversations we face and will face in the coming years. Having worked for both political parties and in both the public and private sectors, I am uniquely suited to navigating our challenges as it comes to budgeting, housing and development, and the economy and our small business needs. More importantly, it defines my temperament and allows me to also navigate the complexities of council, working to balance competing interests and to value the often-lost art of compromise while still being decisive.

Learn more at www.anthonytamos.org

STEVE S. CHANG
Candidate for City Council

Hello City of Fairfax. My name is Steve S. Chang. I am running for Fairfax City Council because my wife Jie and I love this community and want to help ensure that Fairfax remains a welcoming, thriving, and financially responsible city.



My campaign has been about building relationships with each City resident. In my eagerness to talk to you, I get so excited when I head out to door knock every day. Because public policy requires

people and without people, we don't have a City. You are important to me. And I can make one true promise to you that my door will open for you when you knock on mine.

My background spans business, non-profit leadership, Christian ministry, and community service. After pursuing doctoral studies in theoretical physics, I founded several businesses, including an IT company. I later founded Global Mission Church of Virginia and am one of four owners of The Independent News Press.

My commitment to Put Fairfax First focuses on community-driven leadership, fiscal responsibility, support for local businesses, environmental stewardship, and safe neighborhoods. I believe residents deserve meaningful input on decisions, and taxpayer resources must be managed carefully.

As Fairfax evolves, we must balance growth with protecting neighborhood identity, green spaces, and public services. Working alongside residents, city staff, the Mayor, and Council, I will seek practical, enduring solutions through respectful partnership. Please visit my website chang4fairfax.com for more information.

This City has given much to my family, and I am eager to give back. I would love to grab a cup of coffee or wine so please sign up for my events. Please welcome to my website to sign up for events at chang4fairfax.com.

I would be honored and grateful to earn your vote on November 3.

STACY R. HALL – INCUMBENT
Candidate for City Council

Fairfax is my home, and it is the only home my children have ever known. I am seeking reelection because I want to protect what makes our city special while helping Fairfax responsibly meet the financial, infrastructure and development challenges ahead.



During my first term, I have approached every issue with the same commitment: listen to residents, study the facts, ask difficult questions and be honest about the tradeoffs. I have worked to make our budget and long-term obligations easier to understand, supported stronger protections for public safety, advocated for continued investment in our schools, and pushed for meaningful resident engagement before major decisions are made.

My record also shows that I do not begin with a predetermined "yes" or "no." I raised concerns about the

early financial outlook for the Willard-Sherwood Health and Community Center, then supported it after a stronger county partnership and cost-recovery plan substantially reduced the projected burden on city taxpayers. I opposed the full George Snyder Trail because I believed its environmental impact and loss of hundreds of trees were too great. Asking questions is not obstruction; it is the responsibility that comes with representing our residents.

I bring financial experience, knowledge of our schools and a deep connection to this community. I will continue working for transparent government, responsible stewardship of tax dollars, safe neighborhoods, excellent schools, thoughtful development and protection of our green spaces. This is YOUR city, and YOUR voice matters. Please visit my website StacyForFairfax.com.

SUSAN HARTLEY KUILER
Candidate for City Council

I'm running for City Council because the character and quality of life in the City of Fairfax matter to me. Our shared future belongs to the people who live here now and those who are to come.



For that reason, our city is best served by thoughtful, inclusive debate on how we can address the needs of residents and businesses now and into the future. We need to return to more collaborative governance and commit to transparent decision-making.

I want to hear all voices and different points of view – homeowners, renters, neighborhoods, businesses, old, young, new to the city, long-timers – and not just the voices of a select few – and I am ready to do the hard work of building consensus on council and in the community at large to deliver practical, fiscally responsible solutions that keep our city beautiful, livable, and safe for all of us.

I will bring a business perspective to governance, as well as that of a resident and taxpayer. Fairfax City once enjoyed a healthy revenue ratio of 60% business and 40% residential taxes and fees. Today it is reversed: Residents provide 65% and businesses provide 35% of the city's revenue.

I believe we can grow our economy and address residential housing needs while preserving our natural resources and the unique character and quality of life that makes Fairfax City home. Fairfax works best when we work together. Our city belongs to all of us, and the best decisions come from listening to one another, respecting different points of view, and finding common ground. That's the kind of leadership I'll bring to City Hall.

I'm excited about what we can accomplish when we focus on what unites us—and I'm asking for your vote on Nov. 3 to help make that vision a reality.

RUSSELL A. JONES
Candidate for City Council

Hello, my name is Russell Jones , currently a member on the BZA board, I feel that over the last few city councils the direction the city is going is not in the best interests of the city residents. I felt compelled to run to see if I can do anything to change this. I'm the dark horse in this race. With no real political experience, no money and no backing, I'll find out if a long time resident can have a voice.



As a resident, mother, small-business owner, former School Board member, and now Council member, I see our city from many perspectives. I understand that Fairfax must evolve, but I also believe progress should be measured by more than how much we build or spend.

My approach is practical: protect taxpayers, support excellent schools and public safety, strengthen our local businesses, invest responsibly in infrastructure, and pursue redevelopment that adds lasting value without sacrificing the character and quality of life that make people choose Fairfax.

I am not afraid to vote no when the numbers, impacts, or community benefit do not make sense. I am equally willing to say yes to investments that move Fairfax forward.

I am seeking reelection because there is more work to do, and Fairfax deserves an independent voice willing to listen, dig into the details, and put our city first.

KELLY M. O'BRIEN
Candidate for City Council

I'm running for Fairfax City Council because experience, collaboration, and a real commitment to this community matter. I bring all three. Fairfax has been my home for 15 years. What I love is that it's still a place where people show up for each other, local businesses know their customers by name, and one person can actually make a difference.



If you care about your community, you should be willing to roll up your sleeves and help. That's led me to serve on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, work with the Old Town Fairfax Business Association, volunteer at community events, support local businesses, and create Fairfax 411 to help residents understand what's happening in their local government.

That involvement has also made me a familiar face. People stop me around the City to ask questions or share what's on their mind, whether I'm at a festival, the grocery store, or the gym. I don't always have the answer on the spot, but I know how to find it and who to ask. That's the kind of conduit I want to be on Council: approachable, responsive, and honest when I don't know something yet.

I'm running because I want to put my experience to work for this community and help it move forward. I bring nearly 20 years of professional local government and planning experience, and I know this community. I understand how local government actually works, and I know good ideas don't mean much without follow-through.

Fairfax is my home. I've spent years finding ways to contribute, and I'd be honored to continue that as a member

of City Council. But I'll keep finding ways to serve this community either way.

MARÍA JOSÉ PADMORE
Candidate for City Council

Since settling in Fairfax City in 2002, my life has been dedicated to connecting people, cultures, and institutions. As a proud resident, immigrant, dedicated community organizer, and full-time public servant working in Human Services at the Fairfax County Health Department, I am running for City Council because our local government must reflect and uplift our diverse, multicultural community.



My professional career gives me firsthand insight into the systemic health, welfare, and infrastructure challenges our local neighborhoods are experiencing. True progress requires solutions-oriented leadership, inclusivity, and unwavering systemic accountability. My platform focuses on breaking down linguistic and structural barriers, ensuring every working family has a powerful voice in local governance. Additionally, my extensive background in labor advocacy—including serving as Director of SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax, leading the historic unionization vote for nearly 12,000 county employees, and negotiating Virginia's first-ever public collective bargaining contract—demonstrates my proven ability to bring stakeholders together and deliver tangible, systemic results.

On the City Council, I will tackle the pressing issues on behalf of our community. My priorities include supporting our schools and teachers, expanding local housing protections and affordability, passing a Worker Retention ordinance to safeguard contracted service workers, and protecting collective bargaining options for city employees. I am also committed to ADA compliance across public spaces, expanding access to public transportation, and enacting equity- focused budgeting that ensures public dollars are distributed responsibly and effectively.

SANDI W. SLAPPEY BROWN
Candidate for City Council

I have been a social worker, primarily in local government, for more than 30 years. I understand how people and their environments interact, and how government can help shape those relationships. Serving on the Fairfax City



JESSICA L. LOUGH
Candidate for City Council

I'm running for City Council because I believe Fairfax deserves Council members who will listen to them, work respectfully with others, and make decisions based on facts. My goal is to protect what makes Fairfax special while preparing us for a strong and sustainable future.



I bring a mix of executive leadership, financial discipline, and a pragmatic approach to solving problems. Whether we are discussing development, transportation, housing, or the city budget, my approach is simple: look at the facts, talk with residents and business owners early, and focus on outcomes that benefit our community.

Listening is only step one. The valuable work is taking what you hear, pairing it with real data, and integrating it to make win-win solutions. Public input can often feel like a box-checking exercise after a decision is already made- I want residents to know their feedback shapes the final outcome.

RACHEL M. MCQUILLEN – INCUMBENT
Candidate for City Council

I did not run for City Council to simply go along with every proposal placed in front of us. I ran to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and make decisions based on what I believe is best for the people who call Fairfax City home.



Council feels like a natural extension of this. I can bring a balanced approach considering various perspectives, such as those of residents (both owners and renters), business owners, City staff, visitors, and potential future residents, along with various interests such as housing, environment, development, education, safety, transportation, amenities and more.

One of my priorities will be to help the City determine a path forward for development as there are many options being presented to us. We need to keep moving in a positive direction, replacing aging buildings and asphalt parking lots with new commercial and residential space in a way that stays true to our personality and culture.

Another priority is about creative and diverse options to support housing – for long-time residents and those who wish to move here; for younger and older residents; residents from various backgrounds and various income levels. I want to be a part of continuing to strengthen and diversify our housing options.

The third priority is about strengthening trust and stability in government. I want to explore changes to the City charter considering staggered terms, and potentially longer terms, for Council members. I want to explore the role of the Mayor in decision-making. I also want to ensure that the Council works closely with City staff to continue providing many and varied opportunities for residents and business owners to be heard and for their input to help shape the future of the City.

You can learn more about me at www.ssb4ffx.com

Notes to the Editor: Thank you for your kind words Mr. Smith!

”
Thank you for your recent articles about Communism in the September 2026 edition of The Fairfax Independent. Although I don't expect the leftist residents of this area to have enough humility or self-reflection to recognize the similarities between their own ideology and that of Communist regimes. I have added your recommendations to my reading list.

I've been reading your paper ever since I moved into the city. I was surprised to find that it's not yet another collection of leftist slogans and dogma masquerading as a newspaper. I appreciate that you specifically seem to write rational neutral articles. For example, I noticed that you didn't perpetuate the myth that local honey helps to remediate allergy symptoms. I have family members who are general practitioner doctors who fail to do that.

I also appreciated Amini Bonane's "The Courage to Speak". I'm glad that you found your courage to speak. I hope to see more articles that might help to keep Northern Virginia from turning into New York, San Francisco, Baltimore, Seattle, Chicago, etc.

”
MATT SMITH

November 3, 2026 Election Calendar

EARLY VOTING PERIOD

- Friday, September 18 - Saturday, October 31, 2026
- Fairfax City Hall opens from Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., excluding holidays
- 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.
- Learn More: www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Elections/Absentee-Voting

DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR A BY-MAIL BALLOT

- Friday, October 23, 2026
- Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m.
- Learn More: www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Elections/Absentee-Voting



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.
- Learn More: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Elections/Register-to-Vote>

ELECTION DAY

- Tuesday, November 3, 2026
- Polls are open from 6:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- City Polling Locations: www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Elections/How-To-Vote/City-Polling-Locations

MEET THE FAIRFAX CITY 2026 CANDIDATES FOR MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, AND THE SCHOOL BOARD

Wednesday, September 30
7pm - 8:30pm

Katherine Johnson Middle School Auditorium
(3801 Jermantown Rd.; Fairfax, VA 22030)

- Listen to and meet the candidates.
- Have your questions answered.
- Share your ideas.
- Interact personally with the candidates.
- Get ready for the General Election on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

Each candidate will be given two (2) minutes to speak to the audience. Following, there will be time for you to meet and mingle with the participating candidates.

FREE, NONPARTISAN event!

SPONSORED BY:

- League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area
- Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce
- Fairfax Forward Foundation



Co-Sponsors:

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. ® Lambda Kappa Omega Chapter; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. ® Alpha Beta Alpha Omega Chapter; Fairfax Citizens for Smarter Growth; American Association of University Women of Virginia; Bernie L. Bates Foundation, Inc.; Psi Alpha Alpha Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; Fairfax County Council of PTAs; Fairfax County Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.; Fairfax County NAACP; NCNW-NoVA Section; Northern Virginia Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.; and REV UP Virginia.

STEVE S. CHANG

PUTTING FAIRFAX FIRST

Local leadership matters. The Mayor and City Council make decisions that directly impact our community—from the budget and public safety to roads, parks, and development.

While I admire and respect many candidates running for office this year, as an independent-minded candidate, I am proud to have built strong relationships earlier in my campaign with five fellow candidates who share a commitment to finding common ground and working together to put Fairfax first.

I humbly ask for your vote on November 3 for - Thomas D. "Tom" Peterson for Mayor

Jessica L. Lough, Susan Hartley Kuiler & Steve S. Chang for City Council, and incumbents Stacy R. Hall & Rachel M. McQuillen to City Council

VOTE FOR STEVE S. CHANG

NOVEMBER 3 FOR CITY COUNCIL

Dear City of Fairfax Voters,

I am a husband, a father, a pastor, a businessman, and I love our City. Fairfax is more than where we live—it is our home, our community, and our shared future.

I am running because I believe Fairfax deserves leadership that listens, plans responsibly, and delivers results. Together, we can protect the character of our neighborhoods, support our local businesses, strengthen public safety, and ensure that Fairfax remains one of the best places in America to live, work, and raise a family.

I need your support and humbly ask for your vote on Nov. 3

So we can put Fairfax first.

Sincerely,

Steve S. Chang

CHANG4FAIRFAX.COM


NORTHERN VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®



Mayor

Vote for only one

- ☐ Kirsten Sides Lockhart
- ☒ Thomas D. "Tom" Peterson

Member City Council

Vote for not more than six

- ☒ Stacy R. Hall
- ☒ Rachel M McQuillen
- ☐ Anthony T. Amos
- ☐ Sandi W. Slappey Brown
- ☐ Kelly M. O'Brien
- ☐ Russell A. Jones
- ☐ Stephen S. Kim
- ☒ Susan Hartley Kuiler
- ☐ María José Padmore
- ☒ Steve S Chang
- ☒ Jessica L. Lough

페어팩스시 주민 여러분, 안녕하세요. 남편 이자 아버지, 목사이자 기업가로서 사랑하는 페어팩스를 위해 무소속 출마한 장세규(Steve S. Chang)입니다. 정당 정치 대신 오직 주민의 목소리에 귀 기울이겠습니다. 더 안전하고 살기 좋은 우리 지역 사회를 위해 소중한 한 표 꼭 부탁드립니다.

제 웹사이트를 방문하시면 더 많은 자료를 보실 수 있습니다. 감사합니다.

Saludos, residentes de la ciudad de Fairfax. Soy Steve S. Chang —esposo, padre, pastor y emprendedor— y me postulo como candidato independiente por la comunidad que amo. En lugar de la política partidista, escucharé las voces de los residentes. Solicito humildemente su valioso voto para ayudar a construir una comunidad más segura y mejor. Puede encontrar más información visitando mi sitio web. Gracias por votar por Steve S. Chang el 3 de noviembre.



Dear City Voters: As I am about to cross 4,000 doors that I have personally knocked on, I have been asked many questions, from gas-powered leaf blowers to tax hikes to development. I am responding to you as best as I can on my Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Chang4Fairfax> or please sign up for my newsletter on chang4fairfax.com - thank you for connecting and continuing our discussions. Thank you for voting for Steve S. Chang on November 3. - Steve

“Blithe Spirit” Mixes Halloween Chills and Drawing Room Comedy

BY MARK DREISONSTOK

Halloween started early at the Little Theatre of Alexandria in Northern Virginia in its September production of Noël Coward’s “Blithe Spirit,” a play successfully blending chills with a classic English 1930s-era drawing room comedy.

In this supernatural story (which Coward in understatement called an “improbable farce”), Charles Condomine and wife Ruth, along with their friends Dr. and Mrs. Bradman, hold a séance channeled by Madame Arcati, a medium. The purpose, unbeknownst to the medium, is to provide Charles, a writer, with material for a writing project about a fake but homicidal medium. Madame Arcati, however, turns out to be a real medium, highly successful in conjuring up Charles’ deceased first wife, the alluring Elvira.

The ghost of Elvira variously taunts and flirts with her erstwhile husband to the dismay of the disbelieving Ruth, who is convinced her husband is either suffering a nervous breakdown or descending into alcoholism. Unfortunately for Charles, he is the only one who can hear and see the

apparition of his first wife. Ruth, however, slowly begins to believe in the existence of the ghost ... and that Elvira might be plotting the early, unnatural demise of Charles!

The play contains witty dialogue (as when Charles is speaking to Elvira but Ruth assumes he is talking rudely to her). At the same time, this production (directed adroitly by Ward Key) had many uncanny moments: the eerie make-up of Elvira as well as poltergeists at one point wreaking havoc on physical objects in the drawing room in which this comedy’s dry lines were delivered.

Eric Kennedy was excellent as Charles, at various moments imperious, bewildered, and distraught by Elvira’s return from the grave. Eleonore Tapscott enjoyed an excellent comic turn as Madame Arcati, bringing physical as well as verbal humor to her part. Sarah Cusenza shone as Ruth, especially in the scenes in which the unearthly visitation of Elvira forced upon her character the realization that her marriage was far from ideal. Much of the energy which drove the production belonged to Katie

Weigl as Elvira, who brought out the vivacious nature of her character: Elvira’s playfulness, superficiality, vulnerability, and vindictiveness.

Readers who missed the show may be interested that its “blithe spirit” is still in the ether. We refer not to Elvira but to a highly enjoyable over-the-airwaves 2008 incarnation courtesy of BBC Radio at YouTube: Blithe Spirit (2008) by Noel Coward, starring Roger Allam and Maggie Steed The audio version retains the fun humor-and-thriller blend of the stage

work while presenting a fast-moving streamlined version, cutting the play’s nearly three-hour length in half to ninety minutes. The BBC version also gives the play fast-moving action by pulling the action out of the Condomine drawing room into garden paths, country lanes, and even a medium’s dwelling. This highly enjoyable spooky listening experience in a darkened room must suffice in anticipation of the next stage revival of this ghostly tale with an ability to cast insightful light on the social, romantic, and all-too-human relationships of the living.



50th Annual Fall Festival
Saturday, October 10, 2026 | 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM
Downtown Fairfax | 10415 North Street

What started out as a small market for artisans to display their wares has grown into a festival with more than 400+ art and craft vendors, informational vendors, food vendors, children's activities, multiple stages of entertainment, beer gardens, and more! Even though this event has grown immensely since its inception, it still holds that same hometown festival feeling. We look forward to hosting you in our historic downtown area!

BestCrosswords.com - "The Theory of Relatives" by Barb Olson on 9/4/2026 [moderate]

Across

1- Like a weeper's mascara, maybe; 8- Colourful Mexican shawls; 15- Queen of England, since 2023; 16- "Volunteers?"; 17- Part 1 of a Robert Heinlein quote; 18- Green Gables girl's locks; 19- Inflexible; 20- Musicians playing the duck in "Peter and the Wolf"; 22- Barr's "Roseanne" surname; 24- Tolkien evil goblin; 25- Dynamic start?; 28- Language suffix; 29- The quote, part 2; 32- Breaks down; 34- 180° from WSW; 35- Ready to play one's part; 36- The quote, part 3; 40- Web-related prefix; 43- Rt. ____ Prime Minister; 44- Some Morse Code clicks; 48- The quote, part 4; 52- Montreal Canadiens grp. until 1917; 53- Buckingham Palace "thrones"; 54- Swimmer Thorpe the "Thorpedo"; 55- Tot's jumpsuit; 57- Slangy "superlative!"; 60- Mortimer Adler's "How to ____ Book"; 61- America, in Acapulco; 63- End of the quote; 65- Less reputable; 66- "You agree, no?", online; 67- Bad traits for "Idol" contestants; 68- Shampoo brand meaning "grace";

Down

1- Less abundant; 2- Hit maker?; 3- Letter-shaped metal attractor; 4- Grow softer, on a score: Abbr.; 5- Engineless plane; 6- Right angle shape; 7- "Banana Boat" refrain; 8- Buddhist awakening; 9- Tenor Caruso; 10- Canadian Club products; 11- Took part in Sober October; 12- Have title to; 13- Palindromic Dutch city; 14- DOS part: Abbr.; 21- Royal Albert dinnerware, e.g.; 23- ____ and beef (surf and turf); 26- Nunavut explorer John ____; 27- Argos' prov.; 30- Article in Le Devoir?; 31- Poppy mo.; 33- "From what I can see ..."; 37- To mate; 38- Argos, on scoreboards; 39- Like some vbs.; 40- Argos' grp.; 41- "Hoo" header; 42- Bond before Craig; 45- "An American ____" (Gene Kelly musical, 1951); 46- What a good sleuth connects; 47- "Always in season" dessert brand; 49- Drip coffee brewing need; 50- Farmers who make a bundle?; 51- Interrupt rudely; 56- Rough yard?; 58- Ukrainian singer who covered "Wicked Game"; 59- Snowbirds mil. group; 61- Record ending; 62- Floral ring around the collar; 64- "Cheerleader" singer from Jamaica;

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Is Topaz Blue or Golden?

GUEST COLUMN BY T.J. SHEA, OWNER, FAIRFAX FINE JEWELRY

Both! Based on the conversations with customers in the store, I feel like there are some misconceptions surrounding Topaz. Given that November's birthstone is Imperial Topaz and December's alternate birthstone is Blue Topaz, I hope to clear up some of the confusion.

What is Imperial Topaz?

Imperial Topaz is a very rare gemstone exhibiting golden, pink, orange, or reddish-orange hues. It is extremely rare and today is largely mined at the Ouro Preto mines in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Imperial Topaz is usually untreated, however, some specimens go through a mild heat treatment, which is permanent. In the past it has been confused with Citrine, which is a quartz, whereas Topaz is an Aluminum Silicate. Topaz is significantly harder and more brilliant than Citrine. Top color



Image courtesy of Fairfax Fine Jewelry

untreated Imperial Topaz fetches \$500 to \$1,000 or more per carat.

What is Blue Topaz?

Almost all Blue Topaz that is commercially available is treated topaz that comes from the ground largely colorless. The first step in the process is irradiating the gem using either electrons or neutrons. This turns the topaz a muddy brown color. The second step is heat treating the stone to remove the brown and

bring out the blue color. The treatments are permanent and will not fade with exposure to heat or sunlight. The length of the irradiation and the type of irradiation used will determine the actual color of the topaz. In the trade, we identify topaz in one of three color categories. Sky Blue Topaz is a pale delicate blue reminiscent of the morning sky. Swiss Blue Topaz is a saturated, vibrant, electric blue color. London Blue Topaz is a deep, dark blue or teal-blue color. At the wholesale level, topaz often trades for less than \$30 per carat.

But, My Blue Topaz is Untreated

During the formation process in the Earth's crust, Natural Blue Topaz is formed by exposure to radiation. However, since this occurrence is quite rare, so is natural blue topaz. Real natural blue topaz is very pale in color and lightly saturated, similar to an aquamarine in appearance. Despite what people in my store say, it is incredibly unlikely that you have natural

blue topaz.

So, it must be very expensive?

Oddly, no. Modern gemological testing can not distinguish whether the irradiation step was natural or man-made, thus it is practically impossible to distinguish between natural and commercially treated topaz. Because there is such a huge flood of treated blue topaz on the market, and gemologists can not tell the difference, we have a Market Value Paradox. All stones trade as if they're commercially treated. Hmm, sounds like lab grown diamonds.

A Beautiful Gemstone

Regardless of the paradox and affordability, blue topaz is a great every day gemstone. It is durable and quite appealing. It is featured by designers in both silver and gold. Personally, the Swiss Blue Topaz color is my favorite. I hope you take the time to look at Topaz jewelry now that you know how it reaches the market.

America's Beloved Dolly Parton: A Life of Music, Magic, and Giving



Miss Dolly unveils nose art at McGhee Tyson ANG Base. (source: 10/10/2018: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service)

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Dolly Parton was much more than a country music superstar. Born in 1946 in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, she grew up in a large family with very little money. Those humble beginnings shaped the woman she became. Throughout her extraordinary career, Dolly remained connected to her roots and built a lifestyle around music, hard work, family, humor, business, and helping others.

Dolly was instantly recognizable for her enormous blonde hair, sparkling clothes, colorful makeup, and larger-than-life personality. But beneath the glamour was a talented songwriter and businesswoman who understood the importance of staying true to herself. She wrote thousands of songs, including "Jolene," "9 to

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From Page 20 →
AMERICA'S BELOVED...

5," and "I Will Always Love You," while also becoming a successful actress, producer, entrepreneur, and philanthropist.

One of Dolly's most visible accomplishments was Dollywood, the theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. She became a partner in the park in 1986, helping transform it into a major attraction celebrating the music, food, crafts, history, and culture of the Smoky Mountains. Today, Dollywood is not simply an amusement park. It combines roller coasters and family attractions with live entertainment, traditional Appalachian crafts, festivals, and Southern hospitality. The park also provides jobs and economic activity in the region that Dolly has always considered home.

Perhaps an even more lasting part of Dolly's legacy is Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Started in 1995, the program provides free, high-quality books to young children, encouraging families to make reading part of everyday life. What began as a local effort in Tennessee eventually expanded around the world. By 2026, the program had distributed more than 300 million books to children.

Dolly's connection to Virginia

is particularly significant. In 2024, Virginia established the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Virginia Program, creating a statewide initiative to encourage reading among preschool-age children. Participating children from birth through age five can receive one age-appropriate book each month at no cost to their families.

The program was already making a substantial impact. Virginia's 2024 annual report recorded 74 participating local programs, 69,664 registered children, and 750,335 books sent to Virginia children. For families across the Commonwealth, Dolly's legacy can therefore arrive in the mailbox every month in the form of a colorful new book.

Dolly was also known for her wonderful sense of humor. When people worried about her health, she famously joked, "I ain't dead yet." That playful spirit was part of what made her so memorable: she could be glamorous without taking herself too seriously.

Dolly Parton died on August 25, 2026, at age 80. Her legacy reaches far beyond her music. Through Dollywood, the Imagination Library, and decades of generosity, Dolly created something that reflects the values she learned growing up in Tennessee: dream big, work hard, laugh often, and help give the next generation a chance to dream, too.

Books for Healing, Understanding & Empowerment: Domestic Violence Awareness Month

COMPILED BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Five recommended books offering insight, support, and encouragement for survivors, families, and community members. These books are available in the Fairfax County Public Library and places where books are sold.

1. *Goodbye, Sweet Girl* – Kelly Sundberg

A powerful memoir about surviving domestic violence and finding the courage to leave an abusive relationship. Kelly Sundberg describes the complexities of love, fear, motherhood, and recovery while rebuilding her life. The book can help survivors recognize unhealthy patterns and feel less alone in their experiences.

2. *No Visible Bruises* – Rachel Louise Snyder

This book examines domestic violence through survivor stories, research, and reporting. Rachel Louise Snyder explores the dynamics of abuse, coercive control, and the challenges survivors face when seeking safety. It provides readers with a broader understanding of domestic violence and the social systems that can either help or hinder survivors.

3. *Crazy Love* – Leslie Morgan Steiner

In this memoir, Leslie Morgan Steiner

shares her experience of becoming involved in an abusive relationship and the difficult process of recognizing and leaving it. Her story explores fear, isolation, shame, and recovery. The book offers survivors and supporters insight into why leaving an abusive relationship can be complicated.

4. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship – Patricia Evans*

This practical self-help book focuses on recognizing verbal and emotional abuse. Patricia Evans describes common patterns of harmful communication and provides language that can help readers identify behaviors they may have experienced. It is designed to help people understand abusive dynamics, establish healthier boundaries, and regain confidence.

5. *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing* – Susan Anderson

Susan Anderson offers guidance for people recovering from painful relationship loss and abandonment. The book focuses on emotional recovery, rebuilding self-esteem, and developing a stronger sense of independence. While it is not specifically about domestic violence, its self-help approach may be useful for survivors rebuilding their lives after an abusive relationship.

BestCrosswords.com - "The Theory of Relatives" by Barb Olson on 9/4/2026 [moderate] (solution)

Across

1- Like a weeper's mascara, maybe; 8- Colourful Mexican shawls; 15- Queen of England, since 2023; 16- "Volunteers?"; 17- Part 1 of a Robert Heinlein quote; 18- Green Gables girl's locks; 19- Inflexible; 20- Musicians playing the duck in "Peter and the Wolf"; 22- Barr's "Roseanne" surname; 24- Tolkien evil goblin; 25- Dynamic start?; 28- Language suffix; 29- The quote, part 2; 32- Breaks down; 34- 180° from WSW; 35- Ready to play one's part; 36- The quote, part 3; 40- Web-related prefix; 43- Rt. ____ Prime Minister; 44- Some Morse Code clicks; 48- The quote, part 4; 52- Montreal Canadiens grp. until 1917; 53- Buckingham Palace "thrones"; 54- Swimmer Thorpe the "Thorpedo"; 55- Tot's jumpsuit; 57- Slangy "superlative!"; 60- Mortimer Adler's "How to ____ Book"; 61- America, in Acapulco; 63- End of the quote; 65- Less reputable; 66- "You agree, no?", online; 67- Bad traits for "Idol" contestants; 68- Shampoo brand meaning "grace";

Down

1- Less abundant; 2- Hit maker?; 3- Letter-shaped metal attractor; 4- Grow softer, on a score: Abbr.; 5- Engineless plane; 6- Right angle shape; 7- "Banana Boat" refrain; 8- Buddhist awakening; 9- Tenor Caruso; 10- Canadian Club products; 11- Took part in Sober October; 12- Have title to; 13- Palindromic Dutch city; 14- DOS part: Abbr.; 21- Royal Albert dinnerware, e.g.; 23- ____ and beef (surf and turf); 26- Nunavut explorer John ____; 27- Argos' prov.; 30- Article in Le Devoir?; 31- Poppy mo.; 33- "From what I can see ..."; 37- To mate; 38- Argos, on scoreboards; 39- Like some vbs.; 40- Argos' grp.; 41- "Hoo" header; 42- Bond before Craig; 45- "An American ____" (Gene Kelly musical, 1951); 46- What a good sleuth connects; 47- "Always in season" dessert brand; 49- Drip coffee brewing need; 50- Farmers who make a bundle?; 51- Interrupt rudely; 56- Rough yard?; 58- Ukrainian singer who covered "Wicked Game"; 59- Snowbirds mil. group; 61- Record ending; 62- Floral ring around the collar; 64- "Cheerleader" singer from Jamaica;

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FCPS Advances 2023–2030 Strategic Plan

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

FALLS CHURCH, VA – Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is continuing to implement its 2023–2030 Strategic Plan, which provides a framework for the school division’s goals, priorities and decision-making through the end of the decade. The plan focuses on student achievement, school environments, access to opportunities, community partnerships and preparation for the future. FCPS describes the plan as a way to establish shared priorities while providing measures that can be used to monitor progress over time.

The strategic plan is organized around five student-centered goals. The first, “Strong Start: PreK-12,” focuses on students building the knowledge and skills needed to progress through school. The second, “Safe, Supported, Included, and Empowered,” addresses students’ school experiences and the environments in which they learn. The third, “Academic Growth and Excellence,” focuses on academic progress and achievement. The fourth, “Equitable Access and Opportunity,” addresses

students’ access to educational programs and opportunities. The fifth, “Leading for Tomorrow’s Innovation,” focuses on preparing students for future education, careers and other opportunities.

Each goal contains specific measures that FCPS uses to track progress. These measures cover areas such as academic performance, attendance, student engagement, school climate, access to programs and preparation for life after graduation. The measures are intended to provide information that can be reviewed as the plan moves forward. FCPS publishes annual reports connected to the five goals, allowing the school division and School Board to review information related to the plan’s progress.

Four additional pillars provide support for the five student-centered goals. The first pillar, “Differentiated and Culturally Responsive Learning Environments,” focuses on creating learning environments that recognize different student needs and experiences. The second, “Vibrant Home, School and Community Partnerships,” emphasizes relationships among students’ families,

schools and community organizations. The third, “Diverse, Adaptive and Supported Workforce,” focuses on FCPS employees, including efforts related to recruiting, developing and supporting the school division’s workforce. The fourth, “Culture of Equity, Excellence and Accountability,” focuses on using data, resources, partnerships and continuous improvement to support the school division’s work.

The development of the strategic plan included a community engagement process that began in August 2022. According to FCPS, the process included more than 124,000 engagement touch points involving students, families, staff and community members. The school division also reported that the process included 11 planning teams, surveys and community meetings. Feedback collected during the process was used to help identify priorities and shape the goals included in the final plan.

The plan also includes an emphasis on equity and accountability. FCPS identifies equity commitments within the strategic plan that address differences in student

experiences and access to educational opportunities. The plan calls for the school division to examine data and use that information when making decisions. Annual reporting provides one method for reviewing whether progress is occurring in the areas identified by the plan.

Implementation of the strategic plan is expected to continue through 2030. During that period, FCPS will continue reporting information related to its five goals and associated measures. The reports give families, students, employees, community members and School Board representatives information they can use to follow the school division’s progress.

The strategic plan does not represent a single-year initiative but rather a long-term framework for FCPS. Its goals establish areas of focus for the school division, while the accompanying measures and annual reports provide information about implementation. As FCPS continues working toward the 2030 timeframe, updates to the plan and progress reports will provide additional information about how the school division is addressing its stated priorities.

Fairfax Schools Take Learning Outside the Classroom

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

FAIRFAX, VA – Nine Fairfax schools are among 118 Virginia schools recognized for hands-on environmental education during the 2025–26 school year.

Forget four walls and rows of desks. At schools across Fairfax County, the great outdoors is becoming part of the lesson plan.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) recognized 118 schools representing 43 school systems through its Virginia Naturally School Recognition Program, the largest number recognized since the program began in 2000. Thirty schools received recognition for the first time, while returning schools continued building environmental education programs. Together, the schools represent more than 77,000 students participating in environmental awareness and stewardship activities.

Fairfax County Public Schools had nine schools recognized: Westfield High

School, Haycock Elementary School, Terra Centre Elementary School, Clearview Elementary School, Terraset Elementary School, Westlawn Elementary School, Providence Elementary School, Belvedere Elementary School and Katherine Johnson Middle School. Their years of recognition range from one to 13, with Katherine Johnson Middle School reaching 13 years!.

Virginia Naturally looks for schools that make environmental learning active and relevant. Students participate in authentic, hands-on experiences connected to environmental or sustainable education, civic engagement and STEM. Schools also demonstrate learning experiences outside the classroom that connect fieldwork to what students are studying.

That might mean exploring a habitat, studying wildlife, working in a school garden, examining water quality or investigating a local environmental issue. A schoolyard can become a laboratory, giving students the opportunity to see science in action.

The program also provides ongoing recognition. Schools receive certificates and digital badges, while additional milestones include

a wooden plaque after the first year, a letter from the DWR director after five years and a metal schoolyard sign after 10 years.



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Fairfax Lions Prepare for a Busy October of Fall Sports

BY ABBY DENNIS

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA – October is when the fall sports season begins to feel different at Fairfax High School. Go Lions!

The early-season practices and September competitions give way to district races, senior celebrations and postseason preparation. For the Fairfax Lions, October 2026 will bring a full slate of football, field hockey and volleyball competition, along with championship preparation for cross country, golf and cheerleading.

With athletes from freshmen to seniors contributing across the programs, the month offers the Fairfax community plenty of opportunities to support its student-athletes.

Football Lions Enter District Stretch

Friday nights remain the centerpiece of the fall sports calendar, and the Fairfax football team has several important dates ahead.

The Lions opened the 2026 season against Langley, Westfield and Robinson before facing Chantilly on Sept. 18. The current Fairfax schedule lists the Lions' next game as a Sept. 25 home contest against West Potomac at 7 p.m., followed by an Oct. 2 road game at South County, also at 7 p.m.

The October football schedule continues with road and home contests as Fairfax moves through the heart of

its district schedule. The Lions will be looking for contributions throughout the roster as they prepare for the final portion of the regular season.

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S o p h o m o r e quarterback Javier Velazco has become an important part of the offense. Through the first part of the season, he was listed with 311 passing yards and two touchdown passes. Senior Branden Duffie has been another major contributor, leading Fairfax in rushing yards with 414 through the statistics most recently posted.

Junior Baker Morris, who plays quarterback and outside linebacker, provides versatility on both sides of the ball. Senior Ben Taylor contributes at linebacker and has handled place-kicking duties, while players such as Sabby Borgia, Gabriel Helmstutler, Joshua Bak, Nick Borgia, Aayden Oh, Clayton Smith, Daryn Caesar, Jashon Payne and Walter Van Bebber add depth and experience.

For Fairfax football fans, October will be a chance to see the Lions continue developing as the season moves toward its postseason phase.

Field Hockey Faces Key October Tests

The Fairfax field hockey team enters October with four scheduled

varsity matches, beginning with a road contest at Woodson on Oct. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The Lions then host Robinson on Oct. 6 at 7:30 p.m., welcome South County on Oct. 8 at 7 p.m., and travel to West Springfield on Oct. 12 for a 7 p.m. match.

The schedule gives Fairfax several opportunities to compete against Patriot District opponents before postseason competition.

The Lions' roster features a mix of experienced players and younger contributors. Nya Lowery has provided offensive production, while freshman Elly Morris has quickly become part of the attack. Junior goalkeeper Elise Nagler has also played an important defensive role.

Senior Laila Valdez and senior Zoe Galda provide leadership, while Audrey Medina, Harper Luong, Lily Rodgers, Eva Green, Juliette Yoo and Isabelle Yang are among the other players contributing to the program.

October also provides an opportunity for the Lions to recognize their seniors and prepare for the intensity of district and regional tournament play.

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FAIRFAX LIONS...

Former Fairfax High School Student, Flores Ortiz, Convicted of Assault Deported by Ice

BY ABBY DENNIS

A ccording to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), 19-year-old Flores Ortiz has been deported by federal authorities following his conviction for sexual assault involving multiple female students at Fairfax High School.

Flores Ortiz was arrested earlier this year after being charged with grabbing and groping female students in the high school's hallways. The incidents prompted widespread safety concerns among parents and community members, as well as complex matters regarding the overlap of local law enforcement procedures and its relationship with the federal immigration custody.

Following local judicial proceedings, Flores Ortiz was convicted of sexual assault charges originating from the hallway attacks, where he then served a local jail sentence. Upon completion, the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office transferred Ortiz into ICE custody in accordance with an immigration detainer. Federal immigration officials subsequently finalized his removal proceedings and deported him from the United States.

As a result of this case, school division officials and local authorities have placed a stronger emphasis on their continued commitment to student safety and enforcing security measures across school grounds, aiming to prevent similar incidents in the future and to help maintain an environment that students feel safe in.

FCPS Educational Technology Review

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

FALLS CHURCH, VA – Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has established an Educational Technology Review Committee (ETRC) to examine the school division's use of educational technology and provide recommendations to the Superintendent. The committee is tasked with considering whether technology is being used in ways that are responsible, effective, equitable, safe, secure and appropriate for students' developmental levels.

During the 2026–27 school year, the committee is reviewing several areas of educational technology. These include artificial intelligence, student access to electronic devices, digital literacy, technology use in classrooms and professional learning for staff. The committee is also considering how technology access and use may affect different groups of students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners and students who have limited technology access outside of school.

One area of discussion is whether

families should have options to prevent FCPS-issued devices from being taken home. The committee is also reviewing possible guidelines for developmentally appropriate technology use, including screen-time considerations by grade level. Other topics include application management, internet filtering, student access to artificial intelligence and digital literacy education.

The committee began meeting in July 2026. Its members include individuals representing different areas of the school community, and

meetings include opportunities to review information, discuss questions and provide feedback. The committee is expected to submit interim recommendations to the Superintendent by Oct. 31, 2026, followed by a final report in April 2027.

The committee's recommendations will provide information for FCPS as the school division continues to review how educational technology is used in schools. Final decisions regarding proposed changes will depend on the appropriate FCPS and School Board processes.

Commanders Drop Season Opener After Slow Start

BY OWEN KORZAK

WASHINGTON, DC — The Washington Commanders opened the 2026 season with a 24-22 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles, falling just short of a comeback in a game that exposed both the potential and growing pains of Washington's new-look team.

The Commanders trailed for most of the game but had a chance to tie the game with just over a minute remaining. Jayden Daniels found rookie Antonio Williams for a one-yard touchdown, cutting Philadelphia's lead to 24-22.

Washington went for two, but Daniels' pass to tight end John Bates was stopped short of the goal line. The Commanders then attempted an onside kick, but Philadelphia recovered and kneeled out the remaining time.

The late-game opportunity came after an inconsistent offensive performance. Washington managed only 50 yards across its seven non-scoring drives, struggling to consistently move the ball against Philadelphia's defense.

However, there were signs of what the offense can become. Washington

rushed for 132 yards, and Daniels finished with 164 passing yards and two touchdowns without throwing an interception. After falling behind 14-3, the Commanders put together a 12-play, 67-yard touchdown drive before halftime. Daniels also completed nine of 11 passes during Washington's final two drives.

The defense created problems of its own for Philadelphia. Jalen Hurts was sacked three times, and Washington forced the Eagles to punt seven times. Rookie Sonny Styles recorded the first sack of his career and added two tackles for loss.

However, Philadelphia's chunk plays proved costly. Dontayvion Wicks caught a 64-yard pass that set up Philadelphia's first touchdown, while Saquon Barkley broke a 42-yard run.

The Eagles totaled 318 yards, with more than half coming on just four plays.

Washington ultimately had opportunities to win but could not capitalize. At 0-1, Washington leaves Philadelphia knowing it can compete with one of the NFC's top teams, but also knowing it cannot afford the same mistakes in close games.

George Mason Athletics Enters Busy Stretch of Fall Season

BY OWEN KORZAK

George Mason athletics enters October with several teams competing across the country, giving the Patriots a busy stretch of the fall sports calendar.



Mason Men's Soccer are looking to build momentum after a difficult opening stretch. The Patriots will play their first four games of the month at home after traveling throughout the east coast. The men's soccer team has seven regular-season matches scheduled in October, beginning with a home matchup against Duquesne on Oct. 3. The Patriots will then host Loyola Chicago on Oct. 7, Stony Brook on Oct. 11 and George Washington on Oct. 17. Mason will travel to La Salle on Oct. 21 before returning home to face Rhode Island on Oct. 25. The Patriots close the regular season at VCU on Oct. 31. The Patriots hope that this can kickstart a run after winning just one of their first six matches.

While men's soccer works to find consistency, Mason's women's soccer team has gotten off to a stronger start at 4-2-2. They look to ride their momentum into conference play. Mason hosts Richmond on Oct. 3 and Duquesne on Oct. 11 before traveling to George Washington on Oct. 8 and St. Bonaventure on Oct. 17. The Patriots then return home for games against Rhode Island on Oct. 22 and La Salle on Oct. 25.

While soccer has a packed October, women's volleyball, who are off to a fiery 7-2

start, will have a similarly demanding conference schedule. The Patriots travel to Davidson for two matches on Oct. 2-3 and Fordham on Oct. 10-11. Mason returns home for a two-match series against VCU on Oct. 16-17 before traveling to Saint Louis on Oct. 23-24. The month concludes with a road matchup against George Washington on Oct. 28 and a home series against Dayton on Oct. 30-31.

That schedule will test the Patriots, as they will have several opportunities to establish itself in Atlantic 10 play. The Patriots began conference play in late September against Rhode Island, making October the first full month of league competition.

George Mason will also have men's golf competing in October. Coming off a program-best second-place finish at the 2026 Atlantic 10 Championship, the Patriots will compete at the Nemaquin Collegiate Invitational in Pennsylvania on Oct. 5-6 before finishing their fall schedule at the Moraine Intercollegiate in Ohio on Oct. 12-13.

With conference play taking center stage, October will provide a clearer picture of where several George Mason teams stand heading toward the postseason. Men's soccer, women's soccer and volleyball will all face important conference matchups, while men's golf will look to build on its record-setting 2025-26 season.

Previous Old Glory DC Coach Simon Cross Transitioning to Spearhead Young Glory Academy Expansion

BY ABBY DENNIS

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Old Glory DC has announced a decisive organizational choice to transition Head Coach Simon Cross of the Major League Rugby squad to now serve as the Director of Rugby Development and Player Pathways for Young Glory. Stepping down from his coaching role that has led his team to consecutive playoff appearances over three seasons, he will now take charge of a major evolution in the club's youth subdivision.

Cross's shift in role comes from the Young Glory initiative that commenced for the 2026/27 fall season that serves as an extended branch off the Major League Old Glory team, aiming to turn all the effort the community has put in into an elite Performance Academy designed to identify and cultivate local athletic talent across the DMV region. The specifics of the program targets high-performance male athletes aged 16 to 18, along with select 15-year-olds starting from mid-September and ending in mid-January. Training will take place three days a week split between two different fields, and



more information can be found on the team's official website.

Within the academy, the curriculum will rely heavily on essential rugby fundamentals like handling, tackle safety, and offloading, alongside extensive strength and conditioning. Furthermore, to ensure maximum safety, contact techniques will be taught and trained on wrestling mats. The program is specifically designed to accommodate multi-sport athletes without interfering with traditional high-school sports schedules, and efforts or even underway for the future girls' programming, which will broaden the scope of their academy exponentially.

By committing dedicated leadership to this community-driven development, Old Glory DC strives to build a sustainable hometown pipeline directly to the professional pitch. Reflecting on this goal, Cross has further expressed enthusiasm for being able to harness the athletic potential of the region, stating that his primary mission is to help find local talent and create an environment where young players can flourish.



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Sophie Cunningham’s WNBA Platform Comes With Controversy

BY OWEN KORZAK

Sophie Cunningham has become one of the WNBA’s most recognizable and controversial players, with attention surrounding her extending well beyond what happens on the basketball court.

Cunningham drew national attention in July after saying she wanted to “protect young girls” from having to compete against transgender women in sports. She stood by those comments in subsequent interviews, while also saying she does not hate transgender people and believes everyone should be treated with love and respect. Her comments drew criticism from some WNBA figures, while others publicly supported her.

The controversy followed Cunningham into arenas. Before a Fever game against the Seattle Storm, a group of fans held a rally supporting Cunningham and opposing transgender participation in girls’ sports. The situation escalated when Seattle Storm minority owner Celeste Keaton confronted two teenage fans wearing shirts supporting Cunningham. The WNBA suspended Keaton for five home games and fined the Storm.

Cunningham has also been at the center of on-court controversy. In August, Chicago Sky guard DiJonai Carrington was ejected after a Flagrant 2 foul on Cunningham. Cunningham then pushed Carrington and later said she believed

the contact was intentional. The incident came amid protests outside the arena related to Cunningham’s comments.

Those incidents raise a larger question about the relationship between athletes and the controversies surrounding them. Cunningham has said she wants to speak openly about issues she believes are important, but her comments have also created conversations that reach teammates, opponents, fans and league officials.

For Cunningham, the attention is no longer limited to how she performs on the court. Her public statements have become part of the story every time she steps onto it.



The Indiana Fever played the Phoenix Mercury on June 22, 2026, winning the game 86-77. Phoenix veteran DeWanna Bonner told Cunningham, “Don’t you point at me!” In response, Cunningham kept her arm extended, maintained direct eye contact, and wordlessly pointed back at Bonner for about 22 seconds while Bonner continued talking (public domain image)

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From Page 23 → FAIRFAX LIONS...

Volleyball Brings a Full October Schedule

The Fairfax girls volleyball team has one of the busiest October schedules among the Lions' fall programs.

The team hosts South Lakes on Oct. 1 at 6:30 p.m., followed by home matches against Woodson on Oct. 6 and West Potomac on Oct. 8, both at 6:30 p.m. Fairfax then travels to Robinson on Oct. 13 and South County on Oct. 15.

The Lions return home to face West Springfield on Oct. 19 at 6:30 p.m. before traveling to Alexandria City on Oct. 22 at 6:30 p.m.

The October stretch will test Fairfax in serving, passing, attacking and transition play while the Lions work toward postseason positioning.

The current 2026–27 Fairfax volleyball team entered late September with a 4-5 overall record and a 2-3 Patriot District record, according to the latest posted schedule information.

The Lions also have a boys volleyball program, giving Fairfax another group of athletes competing throughout the school year.

Golf Moves Into Tournament Season

The Fairfax golf team also enters

the postseason portion of its schedule during the fall.

Golf presents a different challenge from the other fall sports. Instead of a traditional game clock, athletes must manage an entire round while maintaining concentration and limiting mistakes.

Fairfax has a strong golf tradition, including former Lion Josh Duangmanee, who became the school's first Virginia 6A individual state champion. The current generation of Fairfax golfers now has an opportunity to continue that tradition as district and regional tournament competition arrives.

October is shaping up to be an exceptionally busy period for Fairfax High School athletics. Friday nights will feature football games, while mid-week matchups in field hockey and volleyball offer fans frequent chances to cheer on the Lions. Meanwhile, cross-country runners will prepare for championship meets, golfers will take on tournament competition, and cheerleaders will balance game-day performances with preparations for upcoming cheer events.

An invitation for the Fairfax community to support its student-athletes, October serves above all as a platform for these competitors to highlight the dedication they have demonstrated since summer training started. As the postseason draws near and the stakes grow higher, the Fairfax Lions stand prepared for the final stretch.

When Did Data Centers Get So Unpopular?

BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLISHED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

The last few months have seen one of the sharpest U-turns in American political history, as elected officials — who formerly fell at the feet of data center developers — are now suddenly opposed to those earth-hugging giant boxes.

Four years ago, there were nearly zero supporters on my bill to put modest controls on data centers (h/t Danica Roehm). It died on a 12-3 vote in the Rules Committee, where it had been deposited by my own Caucus leadership.

A few months later, I was hired to slow down the Digital Gateway project,

which sought to put 37 data centers by the historic Manassas Battlefield. We reached out to every Virginia lawmaker on Capitol Hill. Guess how many returned our call? (It rhymes with “hero”)

Now standing up to data centers is all the rage. What happened?

Lots of talk about enviro factors: water, power lines, noise. But in my mind, the answer is more human: data centers are ugly and they represent an intimidating future where knowledge and effort are replaced by an algorithm.

Let’s start with beauty. For all of history, man has been defined by what he builds: for the Egyptians, it was the pyramids, for medieval Christian,

cathedrals, for Americans, soaring skyscrapers like the World Trade Center.

These buildings defined our world. Their construction thrilled us; their destruction shocked us.

Second, the data center boom is driven by AI, which has pushed the stock market to dizzying heights. (For those of us who lived through the “dot com” boom of the late Nineties, this is familiar territory). But there is doubt.

Yes, the US should lead the world in technology. But what is the final goal for AI: are we trying to make ourselves irrelevant? What controls exist to ensure that creative and critical thinking remain essentially human activities?

In terms of the legal choices, I believe in “an equal playing field” for all industries.

That means ending the data center sales tax exemption which is currently costing the state \$2 billion a year. Also data centers should provide for their own power and water, so they don’t starve neighboring communities. A data center moratorium is more problematic, if only because there are so many permitted or “by right” projects already in the pipeline. (The critical issue will be powering them all).

Regardless, it’s fascinating to see data centers at the heart of a national conversation on energy, environment and ethics. Who knew??!!

Human vs. Robot: A Fight That Looked Like Science Fiction



BY TANIA HOSSAIN

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Science fiction took a strange step toward reality Friday when creator and influencer Frankie LaPenna climbed into a fighting cage with a six-foot humanoid robot.

The unusual matchup, organized by robotics company REK, was billed by the company as the first human-versus-humanoid-robot fight. The event took place in San Francisco as part of REK’s effort to develop a virtual-reality combat game in which humans remotely pilot humanoid robots.

LaPenna initially appeared to have the advantage. Wearing protective gear, he moved toward the machine and landed several punches to its body and head. The robot, however, quickly demonstrated that its greatest weapon might be its legs.

The machine responded with powerful

kicks, repeatedly driving LaPenna backward. In one of the most dramatic moments captured on video, a kick sent the influencer flying across the cage and crashing onto the mat. The footage shows him getting back up and continuing the confrontation.

The robot was not acting independently. A human pilot controlled the machine remotely, making the event less a battle between human intelligence and artificial intelligence than a demonstration of what a human-operated humanoid robot can physically do.

REK says the matchup represents a new form of entertainment built around humanoid robots. The company has previously staged robot-versus-robot competitions, but putting a human inside the cage provided spectators with a very different reference point for the machines’ size, balance and physical power.

For now, the spectacle remains closer to experimental entertainment than traditional combat sports. But for those watching from the stands—and millions more seeing the footage online—the image of a person being knocked across a cage by a humanoid robot was unmistakably futuristic.

And perhaps that is what made the fight so memorable: for a few minutes in San Francisco, science fiction looked surprisingly real.

Flock Cameras Spark Community Conversation

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Flock Safety cameras are becoming an increasingly visible part of the Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia region, including Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax.

The cameras use automated license-plate recognition technology to photograph passing vehicles and record information such as license plates, vehicle characteristics, time and location. Police departments say the technology can help recover stolen vehicles, locate missing people and assist with criminal investigations.

In the City of Fairfax, police use Flock and Axon license-plate recognition technology. City officials say the system does not use facial recognition and does not identify a driver’s face, race or gender. The city has reported cases in which license-plate technology helped investigators identify vehicles

connected to burglaries and other crimes.

Fairfax County also uses license-plate reader technology and reports that it has helped recover stolen vehicles and make arrests. At the same time, the county has been reviewing privacy and data-sharing issues surrounding the technology.

The debate has taken a different turn nearby. On September 15, 2026, the Arlington County Board directed the county to discontinue its use of 41 county-leased Flock cameras and remove them from public property. Officials said the decision followed concerns raised by residents, while noting that the county had received no reports of misuse.

As Flock cameras continue to appear throughout the region, communities such as Fairfax face an ongoing conversation about public safety, privacy, transparency and how technology should be used on local roads.

A Missing Link Is Finally Open: Government Center Parkway

BY DARIA PARNES

FAIRFAX, VA. — A long-planned piece of Fairfax's transportation network is finally in place. A new stretch of Government Center Parkway connecting Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax is now complete.

Local and regional officials gathered Thursday, Sept. 10, near Government Center Parkway and Jermantown Road for a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the completion of the extension.

The project fills a gap in the local road network between Stevenson Street in Fairfax County and Jermantown Road in the City of Fairfax. It provides a new east-west connection through an area that includes residential neighborhoods, businesses and community destinations.

The completed roadway includes three lanes, a center median and turn lanes, as well as sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks and on-road bicycle lanes. Lighting and landscaping are also part of the project.

The new connection gives motorists another route between Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax. The sidewalks, crosswalks and bicycle lanes provide facilities for people traveling through the corridor without a car.

The project has been in development for several



Left to right, Braddock District Supervisor Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Fairfax County BOS Chairman Jeff McKay, City of Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read and NVTA Chief Executive Officer Monica Backman (TINP / Parnes)

years. According to the City of Fairfax's project schedule, design work began in 2017, followed by right-of-way work in 2021. Construction began in spring 2025.

Funding came from both state and regional sources. The project received funding through the Virginia Department of Transportation's SmartScale program, while the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority contributed more than \$3.5 million in Regional Revenue and Local Funds.

NVTA lists the total project cost at approximately \$7.07 million.

The project involved the City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, VDOT and NVTA, reflecting cooperation among local, regional and state agencies on transportation improvements in Northern Virginia.

For residents and businesses in the surrounding area, the most immediate change is the addition of a new road connection where there was previously no direct link between Stevenson Street and Jermantown Road.

The extension also adds pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to the corridor. Sidewalks run along the roadway, with marked crossings for pedestrians, while bicycle lanes provide designated space for cyclists.

The project comes as development and transportation improvements continue in the Fairfax Center area and surrounding communities.

With construction now complete, Government Center Parkway provides another east-west route through the area and adds a new connection to the existing network of roads, sidewalks and bicycle facilities.

The ribbon-cutting marked the end of a project that began with design work nearly a decade ago and moved through right-of-way acquisition, funding and construction before opening to the public.

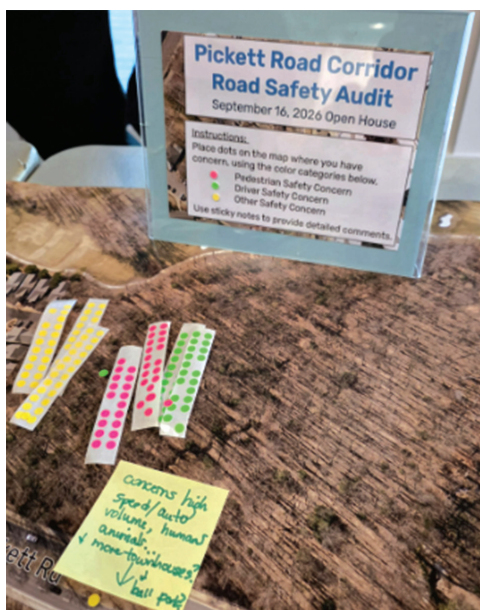
Pickett Road Safety Under Review After Death of 13-Year-Old Cyclist

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — The death of a 13-year-old bicyclist on Pickett Road in Fairfax City has brought renewed attention to a roadway already scheduled for a formal safety review.

On September 9, 2026, Fairfax City Police responded to the 3900 block of Pickett Road after a 13-year-old bicyclist was struck by a large truck. Police said preliminary information indicated that the truck was leaving a shopping center when the collision occurred. The child died at the scene. Fairfax City Police and the Fairfax County Police Department's Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating the circumstances of the crash. Because the victim was a juvenile, authorities have not released the child's identity.

The crash occurred one week before a city-sponsored community meeting on Pickett Road. On September 16, Fairfax City held a Road Safety Audit open house at the Historic Blenheim Interpretive Center, giving residents an opportunity to identify safety concerns and provide



Attendees engaged in providing feedback to City staff at the Pickett Road Corridor Road Safety Audit Open House (TINP / Hossain)

information about the approximately 1.6-mile section of Pickett Road between Main Street and Fairfax Boulevard.

The safety audit had been planned before the September crash. It is designed to examine the roadway as a whole rather than determine the cause of

an individual collision. An independent, multidisciplinary team will review potential safety issues affecting motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists and develop recommendations for improvements.

The city's current data show more than 200 crashes on the corridor between 2021 and 2025, including more than 50 crashes involving injuries. Earlier city records also documented a significant crash history. A city presentation reported more than 100 crashes during a three-year period, including one fatality. The periods overlap, so those numbers cannot be added together.

A complete 25-year total for Pickett Road is not provided in the city's published material. As a result, it would be inaccurate to state a single number of crashes or fatalities for the entire 2001–2026 period based on the available reports.

The audit is being funded through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Regional Roadway Safety Program. Fairfax City received \$80,000 for the project, with the award announced on May 29, 2026. The regional Transportation

Planning Board approved \$500,000 in total for six projects under the program for fiscal year 2027.

The \$80,000 is for the audit and related technical work. It is not construction funding for improvements that may eventually be recommended. Once the audit is completed, individual projects could require additional engineering, design, approval and funding.

The city initially anticipated that consultant data collection would begin in August or September 2026. The September 16 meeting was intended to gather residents' observations and concerns to help inform the study. Residents were able to review maps and identify locations they considered problematic.

The audit is expected to produce a prioritized list of short- and long-term safety strategies. Areas of review may include intersections, crossings, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, traffic patterns, visibility and other roadway conditions. The city expects the audit to be completed by June 30, 2027.



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30 Years Later, Dusty Turner Remains at the Center of a Virginia Murder Case

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA — More than three decades after Jennifer Evans disappeared from a Virginia Beach nightclub, the legal case surrounding her death continues to draw attention because of conflicting accounts, a recanted confession and a series of court decisions that ultimately left Dustin “Dusty” Turner’s convictions intact.

Evans, 21, disappeared in June 1995 after meeting Turner, then a Navy SEAL trainee, at The Bayou nightclub. Turner and fellow SEAL trainee Billy Joe Brown were later prosecuted in connection with her death. Evans’ body was recovered nine days after she disappeared.

Brown was convicted in 1996 of first-degree murder, abduction and attempted rape. Turner was tried separately in the Circuit Court of the City of Virginia Beach and convicted Sept. 5, 1996, of abduction with intent to defile and first-degree murder. He received an 82-year sentence.

Turner maintained that Brown was

responsible for Evans’ killing. Brown initially gave investigators and the courts accounts that implicated Turner.

The case took a major turn years later.

In 2002, Brown gave a recorded statement saying that he alone had killed Evans. He formalized that account in a 2003 affidavit. Turner subsequently sought a writ of actual innocence based on the newly discovered evidence.

During a 2008 evidentiary proceeding in Virginia Beach Circuit Court, Brown again testified that he had acted alone. The court found Brown credible in stating that he independently committed the murder and that Turner had played no role in killing or restraining Evans.

In August 2009, a three-judge panel of the Virginia Court of Appeals granted Turner a writ of actual innocence and ordered his murder and abduction convictions vacated.

That decision did not stand.

The Commonwealth sought rehearing, and in June 2010 the Court of Appeals, sitting en banc, reversed the earlier ruling. The court concluded that Brown’s account did not establish that Turner could not legally have been guilty of abduction. The court dismissed Turner’s petition.

Turner then appealed to the Supreme Court of Virginia.

On Sept. 16, 2011, the Supreme Court affirmed the en banc Court of Appeals. The justices held that Turner had not satisfied Virginia’s statutory requirements for obtaining a writ of actual innocence. His convictions therefore remained legally valid.

The case returned to public attention in 2026 when the Virginia Parole Board voted 3-2 to grant Turner parole after he had spent roughly 30 years in prison. He was released March 5.

His freedom was short-lived. On April 21, he was arrested for an alleged parole violation involving disclosure requirements connected to his criminal

and registered-sex-offender status. A hearing officer later found probable cause for the alleged violation.

The Parole Board subsequently ordered Turner released again, and he left jail May 20. His parole supervision was transferred to Indiana.

As of September 2026, Turner remains legally convicted of first-degree murder and abduction with intent to defile. He has not received a judicial declaration of actual innocence.

At the same time, the 2008 Virginia Beach Circuit Court finding concerning Brown’s recantation remains part of the record: that court found Brown credible when he said he acted independently in Evans’ murder and that Turner did not participate in the murder or restrain Evans.

Those two facts—the circuit court’s credibility finding and the appellate courts’ refusal to overturn Turner’s convictions—are central to understanding a case that has remained unresolved in the public eye for more than 30 years.

Spanberger Appointed Five to Virginia Parole Board

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — Governor Abigail Spanberger appointed five members to the Virginia Parole Board on March 4, 2026, according to records submitted to the General Assembly. Her administration announced the appointments publicly March 10.

The appointees are Shannon Dion, Valerie Boykin, Dr. Kecia Brothers Hayes, the Rev. Tyrone Nelson and Bishop Kevin White. Dion was selected to serve as chair.

The appointments were communicated to the General Assembly March 6. Virginia law requires Parole Board members to be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. Members serve four-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the governor.

Dion has worked in Virginia’s criminal justice system for nearly 25 years. Her previous positions include assistant

Commonwealth’s attorney in Richmond, work with the Virginia Attorney General’s Office and director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. She has served as director of the Virginia Victims Fund since 2023.

Boykin previously served as director of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice and works as a consultant on juvenile and criminal justice matters. Brothers Hayes serves as the department’s director of reentry services.

Nelson is pastor of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church and has served on the Henrico County Board of Supervisors since 2011. White is a pastor in Portsmouth.

The Virginia Parole Board reviews cases involving people who meet parole eligibility requirements under state law. Its duties include deciding whether to grant or deny parole and addressing certain matters involving parole supervision and violations.

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WHERE:
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Criminal charges that did not result in conviction can hinder a person’s ability to obtain employment, housing, and other benefits. Pre-register for the Fairfax Circuit Court/Sully District Expungement Clinic. Only charges filed in Fairfax County or the City of Fairfax are eligible.

5 Fun and Exciting Fall Foliage Locations to Visit This Year

COMPILED BY KATE HOELZ

As winter approaches, autumn colors peak across Virginia, starting in Southwest Virginia's Appalachian mountains and moving east to the Tidewater region. In Northern Virginia and the Fairfax area, foliage will peak around November 6, according to Explore Fall.

Fall fanatics looking for the ideal local locale to observe fall foliage may wish to consider the following:

KING STREET MILE - The King Street Mile is located in Old Town Alexandria. This historic street is home to centuries-old architecture, and over 200 small businesses. Seasonally decorated storefronts border brick-lined

sidewalks wreathed in the fall foliage from the trees that run along the length of the street.

PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK - With a unique ecology that bursts into vivid colors in the fall, Prince William Forest Park is home to hiking trails, campgrounds, bike paths, and more. It is open year round from sunrise to sunset. Pets are welcome, but must be kept on a leash of no more than 6 feet. There is an entrance fee of \$10-20.

BURKE LAKE PARK - This Fairfax County Park is a year-round favorite, but it comes to life in the fall. Nestled within 888 acres of water and woods are campgrounds, rec centers, and 4.7 miles of beautiful trail lined with red maples

and beech trees. The park is open 24 hours a day, and admission is free. Burke Lake Park is also a popular spot for pets. Dogs are welcome, and many pet owners take advantage of the park's rambling trails to give their furry friends some exercise.

GREAT FALLS PARK - Located in nearby McLean, this gorgeous state park offers a striking picture of the Potomac framed by a flaming arch of autumn leaves. Only fifteen miles from the Capital, this park spans an impressive 800 acres. It is open to dogs, with picnic tables and public restrooms on site. There is an entrance fee of about \$10-20 (for a Standard Pass). All digital passes must be purchased before visiting the park. There are physical passes available to be

purchased on location, but the park does not accept cash.

GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY - Another McLean contribution, George Washington Memorial Parkway provides a variety of trails for hiking and biking beneath a canopy of beautiful fiery leaves. The park is open to dogs, but they must be kept on a leash of no more than six feet. George Washington Memorial Parkway is known for its scenic recreational driving route, dotted with important historical sites and local wildlife. The Parkway is an excellent way to take in the fall foliage from the comfort of one's vehicle. Admission is free, and the Parkway itself is typically open 24 hours a day, although most of the connected sites are open from 6 AM to 10 PM.

Tea Around the World: Wellness Benefits

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

For thousands of years, tea has been more than a beverage. Across cultures, it has been part of ceremonies, hospitality, social gatherings, and daily routines. Today, research is exploring why tea may also have a place in a health-conscious lifestyle.

Many teas contain polyphenols—naturally occurring plant compounds with antioxidants and other biological properties. Studies have examined tea consumption in relation to cardiovascular health, blood pressure, metabolic health, and longevity. The evidence is promising, although researchers distinguish between associations found in population studies and effects demonstrated in clinical trials.

Green Tea: Rich in Plant Compounds

Green tea is particularly rich in catechins, including epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG). These compounds have been widely studied for their potential cardiovascular and metabolic effects.

A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found that green tea and its catechins produced modest reductions in blood pressure and total and LDL cholesterol. Other studies have associated regular tea consumption with lower cardiovascular risk, although much of this evidence is observational.

For everyday wellness, green tea

is also a naturally low-calorie alternative to sugary beverages.

Japan: Matcha and Mindful Energy

Matcha is a finely powdered green tea traditionally associated with Japanese tea culture. Unlike brewed tea, matcha involves consuming the entire leaf, providing concentrated amounts of tea compounds.

It also contains caffeine and L-theanine, an amino acid naturally found in tea. Researchers have studied this combination for potential effects on attention and cognitive performance, although the evidence does not support using matcha as a treatment for cognitive conditions.

Its wellness appeal may also come from the ritual itself: preparing and drinking matcha encourages a slower, more deliberate moment in the day.

India: Chai and the Benefits of Spice

Indian chai combines black tea with spices such as ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper. Black tea provides polyphenols and caffeine, while the spices contribute additional plant compounds.

Ginger, for example, has been studied for nausea and certain digestive symptoms. However, evidence for individual



ingredients should not be interpreted as proof that chai prevents disease.

Because traditional chai can contain substantial added sugar, using less sugar can make it a more everyday-friendly choice.

Morocco: Mint Tea and Social Wellness

Moroccan mint tea traditionally combines green tea, fresh mint, and sugar. Green tea provides polyphenols, while mint contributes its distinctive flavor and aroma.

Reducing added sugar can lower the beverage's calorie content without losing the character of the drink.

Tea also has a less measurable but meaningful role: in many cultures, it creates opportunities for conversation, hospitality, and connection. Wellness can include social well-being as well as nutrition.

South Africa: Caffeine-Free Rooibos

Rooibos comes from *Aspalathus linearis*, rather than the traditional tea plant *Camellia sinensis*. Naturally caffeine-free, it contains compounds such as aspalathin.

Preliminary laboratory and human research has investigated rooibos for

antioxidant and cardiometabolic effects, but its clinical evidence is less established than that for green or black tea.

Still, unsweetened rooibos is a flavorful caffeine-free option, particularly in the evening.

Hibiscus: A Promising Herbal Tea

Hibiscus has attracted scientific attention for its potential effects on blood pressure. A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized trials found that hibiscus consumption was associated with reductions in blood pressure, particularly among people with elevated blood pressure.

The findings are encouraging, but hibiscus should not replace prescribed medication or medical care.

Tea isn't a miracle cure, and different varieties have different levels of scientific evidence behind them. But unsweetened tea can be a low-calorie beverage that provides hydration, plant compounds, and—depending on the variety—caffeine.

From Japanese matcha and Chinese green tea to Indian chai, Moroccan mint tea, South African rooibos, and hibiscus, tea traditions offer a simple wellness lesson:

Wellness doesn't always have to be complicated. Sometimes it begins with boiling water, choosing a favorite cup, and taking a few quiet minutes to enjoy it.

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