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Fairfax Residents Raise Concerns Over $67 Billion Dominion-NextEra Merger

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

FAIRFAX, VA — Virginia regulators prepare for November evidentiary hearing as questions surrounding electricity rates, data centers and consumer protections remain unresolved.

A proposed $67 billion merger between Dominion Energy and Florida-based NextEra Energy drew residents, elected officials, business representatives and energy advocates to the Fairfax County Government Center on October 9, as Virginia regulators gathered public testimony on a transaction that could reshape the state's electricity industry.



Stop NextEra Coalition rally in front of the Fairfax County Government Center on Friday, October 9, 2026 prior to the start of the SCC hearing. (TINP image / Tania Hossain)

At a rally before the hearing, the Stop NextEra Coalition argued that the merger is driven by control over AI data center connections. With 70,000 megawatts in data center requests pending with Dominion, the coalition warned that an out-of-state entity like NextEra could dictate grid access and dismantle Virginia's ratepayer protections.

The hearing, conducted by the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC), focused on electricity affordability, growing energy demands from data centers, environmental commitments and consumer protections.

"My electric bill for a 600 square feet has gone up to $200," commented City of Fairfax resident Amini Bonane as she walked through the front doors of the government center to testify.

If approved, the merger would create the world's largest regulated electric utility, serving approximately 10 million customers across Virginia, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. Dominion's Virginia operations would retain their existing name.

Fairfax County Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn, who had previously urged the SCC to hold regional public hearings, testified against the merger, outlining five concerns: electricity affordability, climate commitments, grid reliability, economic growth and local accountability.

Alcorn emphasized that rising electricity costs are placing additional pressure on households and businesses. He also cited recurring power outages along Lawyers Road, Fox Mill Road and Hunter Mill Road, and stressed the importance of maintaining infrastructure investments to support development in Reston, Tysons and surrounding communities.

He questioned whether a Florida-based parent company would maintain Dominion's working relationships with local officials, citing cooperation on vegetation management along the W&OD Trail, streetlight maintenance and Reston's RELAC air-conditioning transition.

"My fear is that the merger may make things worse, maybe much worse," Alcorn said. "For all these reasons, I oppose this merger."

Del. Irene Shin, D-Herndon, raised questions about NextEra's commitment to Virginia's clean energy requirements. Del. Shin also expressed opposition, questioning NextEra's commitment to Virginia's clean energy requirements and raising concerns about the company's political activities in Florida.

Cindy Shao, President of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, spoke in favor of the transaction, emphasizing the importance of reliable electricity for small businesses, entrepreneurs and economic development.

Bruce Pete, who described having nearly 30 years of experience in energy policy and infrastructure development, including work with Dominion, also supported the merger. He emphasized that Virginia regulators would retain authority over utility rates and major infrastructure projects.

Supporters argued that combining Dominion's and NextEra's financial resources, technical expertise and infrastructure capabilities could strengthen Virginia's electrical grid and help meet growing demand.

Community leader Tyler Ray, founder of the Save Bren Mar Coalition focused his testimony on a proposed electrical substation associated with data center development near residential properties.

Ray described a proposed five-acre substation at the Plaza 500 site, which he said would be located approximately 67 feet from nearby homes. According to Ray, community members requested that Dominion move the facility farther from residences, but the company rejected alternative locations because of financial considerations.

Ray also alleged that Dominion had not been sufficiently transparent about the project's relationship to data center development. Save Bren Mar Coalition is trying to raise $3,000 in FOIA fees to get documents from Fairfax County between a member of the Board of Supervisors and the Bren Marr data center construction company.

He urged regulators to consider whether transferring ownership to an out-of-state company could further weaken accountability to local communities.

Dominion and NextEra maintain that combining their financial resources and operations would improve efficiency, lower financing costs and strengthen their ability to develop new electricity infrastructure.

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Town of Vienna Ranks No. 1 Among America's Best Suburbs to Live

TOWN OF VIENNA, VA — The Town of Vienna has earned national recognition as the No. 1 suburb to live in the United States, according to a 2026 study conducted by Liberty Home Products and featured in *Travel + Leisure* magazine on October 14.

The study evaluated 50 selected American suburbs using 12 factors, including household income, employment, educational attainment, crime, housing costs, poverty levels, commuting times and climate.

Vienna emerged at the top of the rankings, reflecting the Northern Virginia community's strong economic indicators, highly educated population and residential amenities.

According to the study, Vienna has a median household income of approximately $215,556, with nearly 75% of residents holding at least a bachelor's degree. The town's median monthly rent was reported at $2,410, while typical home values were approximately $1.1 million.

Located about 15 miles west of Washington, D.C., Vienna is home to fewer than 17,000 residents. Despite its proximity to the nation's capital and major employment centers, the town has maintained a distinctive small-town character.

Its historic Church Street, locally owned shops and restaurants, neighborhood parks and community events contribute to its appeal. The town also offers access to the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, recreational facilities and seasonal celebrations that bring residents together throughout the year.

Vienna's recognition follows another favorable assessment earlier this year. In July, HomeSnacks ranked Vienna first among the best places to live in Virginia, followed by Falls Church, Bridgewater, Lexington and Purcellville.

Nevertheless, the recognition places Vienna in the national spotlight and adds to its growing list of favorable rankings.

For a town covering approximately 4.4 square miles, the No. 1 designation represents another acknowledgment of the community's economic strength, educational attainment and residential appeal.

Independent Voters Make Up Record Share of Americans as Fairfax City Weighs Nonpartisan Elections

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

As Fairfax City prepares for its November 3 municipal elections, national polling and a previous local voter survey provide insight into Americans' political affiliations and attitudes toward nonpartisan elections.

Gallup reported that 45% of U.S. adults identified as political independents in 2025, the highest percentage recorded in the organization's long-running polling. By comparison, 27% identified as Democrats and 27% as Republicans.

The national findings reflect a continuing trend in which more Americans describe themselves as independent than identify with either major political party.

However, Gallup distinguishes between independents who lean toward Democrats or Republicans and those who express no preference for either party. Identifying as independent does not necessarily mean a voter is undecided or consistently votes for candidates from different parties.

In the City, a May 2024 survey conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy found that 67% of respondents supported keeping municipal elections nonpartisan, while 17% opposed the arrangement and 16% were undecided. The survey included 500 registered voters interviewed by telephone between May 23 and May 28, 2024. In the November 2024 election, City voters elected 4 out of the 7 independent candidates during a heavily contested Presidential election.

The results offer a local perspective on how residents viewed the structure of municipal elections at that time. However, support for nonpartisan elections is different from identifying as an independent voter. A person affiliated with either major political party may also favor elections in which candidates appear on the ballot without party labels.

Fairfax City's mayoral and City Council elections are conducted on a nonpartisan basis, meaning candidates do not appear on the ballot with Democratic or Republican designations. Political parties, organizations and individuals may nevertheless endorse or support candidates.

The Fairfax City Democrats have recommended a slate of candidates instead of endorsing them due to their state party guidance on this year's election. In addition, two of their recommended candidates were

The distinction between party identification, political endorsements and nonpartisan election procedures is important when interpreting polling results.

Neither Gallup's national findings nor the 2024 Fairfax City survey establishes how residents will vote in the upcoming municipal election. The local survey measured attitudes toward the election system rather than preferences among the candidates running in 2026.

As voters consider candidates for mayor and City Council, the surveys provide separate measures of political identification nationally and attitudes toward municipal election procedures locally. Actual election results will determine which candidates receive the support of Fairfax City voters.

Barbie Takes Over Richmond Museum with a Celebration of Fashion and History



BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — Barbie has arrived in Virginia's capital, bringing more than six decades of fashion, nostalgia and cultural history to the Virginia Museum of History & Culture.

The exhibition, Barbie: A Cultural Icon, opened October 17, 2026, and runs through January 18, 2027.

Featuring more than 250 vintage dolls, original fashions and historical memorabilia, the exhibition traces Barbie's evolution since her 1959 debut. Visitors can explore a recreated Barbie Dreamhouse, pose inside life-sized Barbie boxes and admire a full-sized pink Corvette.

A special Virginia-themed display celebrates historical figures including George Washington, NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson and legendary jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald.

Beyond childhood memories, the exhibition examines changing expectations for women, career opportunities, fashion and cultural representation.

The museum is located at 428 N. Arthur Ashe Boulevard in Richmond. Admission ranges from $10 to $15. For additional information, visit www.virginiahistory.org.

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

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DEAR READERS & FRIENDS:

As autumn arrives, November brings a welcome opportunity for reflection, gratitude, and community connection. I am pleased to share our latest edition of *The Oakton & Vienna Independent*.

This month, we highlight local elections, community developments, Veterans Day, and the people and businesses that make Fairfax special.

Thanks to one of our favorite Vienna readers, we went into mailboxes in Oakton with our October edition. I was blown away by how many donation checks came in from Oakton. Oakton is hungry for this paper! This being a month of giving, $50 from 1000 readers funds my paper for an entire year for either Oakton or the Town of Vienna. As such we have decided to alternate months to Oakton and to Town of Vienna mailboxes until I can get funding for our newspaper figured out.

Best pick up locations for the Town of Vienna are at the Giant, Town Hall, and the Vienna Community Center. Best pick up locations for Oakton are the Oakton Library, Bobby's Bagel, and at the Giant (which has been very difficult since they have limited space).

Securing ongoing funding and grants continues to be an essential focus for our publication. While navigating these financial efforts requires persistence, our commitment to delivering quality focused local news.

With Thanksgiving ahead, I want to express my sincere appreciation to our readers, advertisers, and contributors, as well as everyone who shares news tips and financial support.

Producing this newspaper is truly a labor of love. From our production team working across three time zones to local writers juggling careers and families, countless hours go into every edition. Your kindness and support make it worthwhile.

We are honored to serve our community and welcome your continued engagement and feedback. Thank you to the residents of Oakton and the Town of Vienna for your warm welcome and ongoing support—it is a privilege to publish this local newspaper for these two wonderful and supportive communities.

Wishing you a meaningful Veterans Day and a wonderful Thanksgiving!

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With gratitude, Tania Hossain
Editor & Publisher
The Independent News Press

Fairfax City Celebrates 10th Annual Holiday Market

Celebrate the holiday season at Fairfax City's 10th Annual Holiday Market, returning to Downtown Fairfax on December 4–6 and 11–13, 2026.

Discover unique handcrafted gifts from more than 30 local artisans and vendors, enjoy festive live entertainment and support small businesses. With rotating vendors each weekend, visitors will find something new to explore.

Market Hours:
Fridays, December 4 and 11: 5–8 p.m.
Saturdays, December 5 and 12: Noon–6 p.m.
Sundays, December 6 and 13: Noon–5 p.m.

Bring family and friends for holiday shopping, seasonal entertainment and community cheer!

Details: fairfaxva.gov Holiday Market

Thank you for your donation!

Hi, I've just finished reading my first edition of the Oakton and Vienna Independent that came in the post.
I realized how much I missed having a local community newspaper that is well written and independent. I would like to make a financial contribution of $200 to help you continue your good work.
Please let me know how I can do this.
Regards, John Kelly

Thank You To Our Donors

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Rising Gas Prices Hit Fairfax Drivers

BY ABBY DENNIS

FAIRFAX, VA — Gasoline prices across Fairfax County and Northern Virginia remain significantly higher than a year ago as tensions in the Middle East continue to affect global oil markets.

According to AAA, the average price of regular gasoline in Virginia stood at $4.12 per gallon on October 15, compared with $2.94 a year earlier. Nationally, the average was $4.33 per gallon. In Northern Virginia, drivers were paying approximately $4.20 per gallon, up from $2.99 in October 2025.

At the regional average, filling a 15-gallon tank costs approximately $63, compared with about $45 a year earlier. For a driver purchasing 15 gallons each week, the difference would amount to approximately $945 annually if prices remained unchanged.

The higher prices come amid uncertainty in international energy markets, including concerns about oil supplies and shipping routes in the Middle East. Brent crude oil, a major international benchmark, was trading near $106 per barrel on October 15.

Although the United States is a major oil producer, domestic gasoline prices are influenced by global supply and demand. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, crude oil prices account for the largest portion of gasoline costs, followed by refining, distribution, marketing and taxes.

Higher fuel prices also affect businesses that rely on transportation. Landscapers, delivery companies, construction contractors and other service providers face increased operating expenses when gasoline and diesel prices rise. Virginia's average diesel price stood at approximately $6.21 per gallon on October 15.

Gasoline prices also fluctuate within the region based on station location, competition, distribution costs and other market conditions. Individual stations may charge more or less than the regional average.

AAA reported that national gasoline prices had declined slightly over the preceding week, although they remained substantially higher than a year earlier.

The direction of future prices will depend on several factors, including international oil production, geopolitical developments, refinery operations and domestic gasoline demand.

For Northern Virginia households and businesses, the effects of global energy market fluctuations continue to be reflected in local fuel costs.

H-1B Visa Changes Could Affect Northern Virginia Job Market

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

FAIRFAX, VA — Federal immigration policy changes announced in September and October 2026 are creating uncertainty for Northern Virginia's technology industry, where major employers depend on highly skilled professionals in cybersecurity, engineering, artificial intelligence and information technology.

On Sept. 18, the Trump administration announced increased scrutiny of employers seeking to hire foreign workers through the H-1B visa program, particularly companies that had recently laid off American employees. The administration also extended a controversial $100,000 payment requirement for certain new H-1B petitions through September 2027. Originally announced in September 2025, the requirement has faced legal challenges.

The H-1B program allows American companies to employ foreign professionals in specialized occupations. It is widely used by technology companies, consulting firms and businesses seeking workers with advanced technical skills.

On Oct. 8, the administration announced additional restrictions involving federal labor certifications used by employers to sponsor foreign workers for permanent residency.

Companies identified in the action included Microsoft, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Cognizant Technology Solutions, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Capgemini and Adobe.

The labor certification restrictions concern employment-based permanent residency, commonly known as green cards, rather than the H-1B visa program itself. They do not automatically prohibit companies from retaining employees who already hold valid H-1B status.

Several of the companies have offices or documented operations in Northern Virginia.

Microsoft maintains a major presence in Reston, where it previously announced a $64 million investment in a software development and research hub, with plans to create 1,500 jobs.

HCL Technologies has an office on Freedom Drive in Reston, while Adobe maintains an office on Jones Branch Drive in McLean. Infosys has been listed at a Reston location, and Cognizant has documented business operations and employment connections throughout the region.

Tata Consultancy Services has also maintained employment connections in Ashburn, Herndon and McLean.

Capgemini previously operated a government consulting subsidiary headquartered in McLean but sold that business to ITC Federal in September 2026.

Northern Virginia's technology sector supports federal agencies, defense contractors, financial institutions and private businesses. Employers frequently compete for specialized workers, making changes to immigration requirements particularly relevant to the regional economy.

Supporters of the restrictions argue that tighter immigration policies could encourage companies to recruit American workers, increase wages and expand domestic training programs.

Opponents warn that additional costs and restrictions could make recruitment more difficult, delay projects and encourage businesses to relocate some operations overseas.

Smaller technology companies could face particular challenges because they have fewer resources to absorb higher hiring expenses.

International students graduating from Washington-area universities may also encounter greater uncertainty when seeking employment sponsorship.

For Fairfax, Loudoun and Arlington counties, the economic consequences remain unclear. No verified figures establish how many local jobs have been lost, created or left unfilled because of the new restrictions.

The long-term impact will depend on federal court decisions, employer hiring practices and continued demand for skilled technology professionals.

Spanberger Restored Voting Rights to 100,000 People

BY CAROLINE CHU

RICHMOND, VA — Since taking office in January, Governor Abigail Spanberger has restored voting rights to 100,000 formerly incarcerated Virginians. This announcement, delivered at the March on Washington commemoration in Washington, D.C., follows her administration's reported 66,000 restorations in July.

Spanberger framed voting rights restoration as a matter of principle. "The right to vote is about more than a ballot — it is about whether we believe every person should have a voice in our democracy, and I do," she said.

Under current law, individuals convicted of "certain common law

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Former CIA Official Pleads Guilty in $194 Million Fraud Scheme

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

ASHBURN, VA — A former senior CIA official from Ashburn pleaded guilty Oct. 6 to orchestrating a $194 million fraud scheme involving fabricated government programs, luxury real estate and hundreds of gold bars.

David J. Rush, 49, admitted to one count of wire fraud in federal court in Alexandria after investigators uncovered an elaborate operation that diverted taxpayer dollars for personal enrichment.

According to federal prosecutors, Rush created fictitious classified government programs to authorize expenditures, including approximately $145 million directed toward a company he established to purchase four luxury properties in Florida.

During a May search of his Ashburn residence, FBI agents recovered approximately 300 gold bars valued at $46 million, $2 million in cash and 35 luxury watches.

Investigators also determined Rush falsified his educational and military credentials, claiming degrees from universities he never attended and falsely identifying himself as a Navy pilot.

Federal authorities said Rush's scheme included more than $1.8 million in private charter flights charged to the government.

Court filings also revealed Rush admitted disclosing information identifying a confidential U.S. government source to a foreign official, raising additional national security concerns.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe said the agency referred the matter to the FBI after an internal investigation uncovered evidence of wrongdoing.

The case raises questions about financial oversight, security clearances and accountability within the nation's intelligence agencies.

Rush faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison. U.S. District Judge Michael Nachmanoff scheduled sentencing for Jan. 28, 2027, in Alexandria.

Virginia Dept of Veterans Services Opens New Fairfax Office

BY TANIA HOSSIAN

CITY OF FAIRFAX — On October 15, 2026, the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) celebrated the opening of its new Fairfax office at 9900 Main Street with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, expanding access to benefits and support services for veterans, military service members and their families throughout Northern Virginia.

The new location is part of a statewide network of 38 DVS benefits offices that help veterans navigate federal and state programs, including disability compensation, health care, education benefits, employment resources and other assistance.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony brought together state and local officials, including Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Military Affairs Timothy Williams, DVS Deputy Commissioner Sloane Rose, Del. Gretchen Bulova and Fairfax City Council Member Tom Peterson.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020–2024 American Community Survey estimates approximately 1,396 military veterans live in the City of Fairfax, representing about 7.4% of the city's adult civilian population.

Although the new office is located within Fairfax City, its services extend to veterans and military families throughout the surrounding region, including Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties, as well as the cities of Fairfax and Manassas and military communities associated with Fort Belvoir and the Pentagon.

The Fairfax location offers personalized, one-on-one assistance from trained representatives who help veterans understand eligibility requirements, prepare benefit applications and navigate the claims process. Services are available to veterans transitioning from military to civilian life, as well as those who completed their service years or decades ago.

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services reported nearly 90,000 client contacts statewide through its benefits offices in 2024, reflecting the demand for assistance across the Commonwealth.

For Northern Virginia's military community, the office provides another local point of access to programs and resources designed to support veterans and their families.

Veterans, service members and family members seeking assistance can contact the Fairfax office at 703-359-1210 or visit www.dvs.virginia.gov for information about available programs and services.

Virginia Tax Revenues Exceed Forecasts During First Quarter of Fiscal Year

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — Virginia's general fund revenues continued to exceed expectations in September, following stronger-than-anticipated tax collections during the first two months of fiscal year 2027.

Gov. Abigail Spanberger reported that August revenues increased 2.8%, or $58 million, compared with August 2025. Through August 31, cumulative collections rose 5.4%, or $236.5 million, exceeding the state's official forecast by $81.5 million, or 1.8%.

Sales and use tax collections helped drive the increase, growing 4% in August and 9.1% during the first two months of the fiscal year.

September brought additional growth. General fund revenues increased 11.5% compared with September 2025, bringing cumulative fiscal-year growth to 8% through the first quarter. Collections were 3.2% above forecast, supported

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felonies" must apply for the restoration of their voting rights if they wish to exercise them. This decision of restoration is under the sole discretion of the sitting governor. Virginians will decide on Election day whether to replace this process with automatic rights restoration for all individuals previously convicted of felonies. "If you believe — as I do — that someone who has paid their debt to society and is working hard to create a new life deserves the dignity of having their right to vote restored, vote yes on Virginia's constitutional amendment to ensure automatic voter restoration into the future," Spanberger said.

However, the administration's actions have drawn scrutiny from some. In recent weeks, deceased Virginians with prior felony convictions have received letters stating that their voting rights had been restored, in some cases years after their deaths. Spanberger said her administration is investigating and attributed the errors to multiple databases that do not have a consistent and accurate record of a person's death. She emphasized that the restoration of rights does not mean a person is automatically registered to vote, and noted that casting a ballot on behalf of another person, living or dead, is a felony.

In response, Virginia Republicans have labelled the error as a potential threat to Virginian elections. State Senator Glen Sturtevant (R-12) has called for accountability and an independent audit. "When you're talking about the security of our elections and how important that is, to have state agencies sending letters to dead people telling them to register to vote – that's a real problem," he said.

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A Taste of Peru, a Touch of Home: My Empanadas

BY AYA AMER

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — The holiday season has a special way of bringing people together, often around a table filled with favorite dishes, familiar aromas and recipes lovingly passed down through generations. In the heart of Fairfax City, one local business is sharing that same feeling of home, one empanada at a time.

Located at 10394 Willard Way, My Empanadas, owned by Shirley Stuva, brings the comforting flavors of Peru to the Fairfax community, with a story that begins not in a restaurant, but in a grandmother's kitchen.

For Stuva, the inspiration behind My Empanadas comes from treasured childhood memories of her grandmother


Best Peruvian Food in Fairfax

preparing homemade empanadas in Peru. Her grandmother's cooking philosophy was wonderfully simple: "A little bit of this and a little bit of that," said Stuva.

Those family recipes, prepared with love rather than precise measurements, became the inspiration for a business dedicated to sharing authentic Peruvian flavors with neighbors. You can just smell the love in the aroma coming from the kitchen as you enter the restaurant.

"Our story began in a small Peruvian kitchen, where our grandmother would lovingly prepare her empanadas," added Stuva.

Today, that tradition lives on through empanadas filled with seasoned beef, chicken, cheese and vegetables, wrapped in golden, flaky crusts. The restaurant also offers other Peruvian favorites, introducing customers to the rich culinary traditions of Stuva's homeland.

But My Empanadas is about more than its menu. Behind every recipe is a story of family, heritage and the memories that make food so meaningful - meant to be shared with everyone.

For many people, holiday food is about more than what is served. Recipes can carry memories of childhood, relatives and celebrations, connecting generations even as families grow and change. My Empanadas is a connection between food, family and cultural heritage.

As Fairfax residents prepare for the holidays, My Empanadas continues to share a piece of Peruvian culinary tradition with its neighbors. Through recipes rooted in family history, the business offers a reminder that sometimes the most meaningful part of a meal is the connection it creates.

MOSS Building & Design Celebrates Grand Opening of New Headquarters in Vienna

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

TOWN OF VIENNA, VA — The Town welcomed a new addition to its business community as MOSS Building & Design celebrated the grand opening of its headquarters at 108 Church Street NE on Thursday, October 22, 2026.

The celebration marked an exciting new chapter for the Northern Virginia remodeling company, which has spent 25 years helping homeowners transform their living spaces through renovations, additions and custom design projects.

The company's relocation from Chantilly brought approximately 50 employees to Vienna, along with a modern design center intended to help homeowners explore renovation possibilities, select materials and plan their projects.

Located along Vienna's historic Church Street, the new headquarters added another established business to one of the town's most recognizable commercial corridors, known for its locally owned shops, restaurants and professional services.

MOSS Building & Design specializes in residential remodeling, including kitchens, bathrooms, basements, home additions and whole-house renovations. Its design-build approach brings designers, project managers and construction professionals together to guide homeowners through the renovation process, from initial planning to completion.

The company's arrival represented more than a change of address. By establishing its headquarters in Vienna, MOSS became part of a close-knit business community that has long valued local entrepreneurship, professional services and the preservation of the town's distinctive character.

The new design center also offered homeowners an opportunity to explore ideas for their homes in a dedicated setting, with access to the company's design and construction expertise.

For MOSS, the move coincided with an important milestone: a quarter-century in the remodeling industry. For Vienna, the opening brought new employees, professional activity and another business investment to the Church Street corridor.

Elevated Wellness: A Personal Approach to Women's Health

BY JACQUELYN DONALD

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Women's healthcare is about more than annual checkups. It is about feeling heard, understanding changes in the body and having access to care that supports every stage of life. That philosophy is at the heart of Elevated Wellness, a new integrative women's healthcare practice in Fairfax that celebrated its ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 8, 2026.

Located at 12600 Fair Lakes Circle, Suite 110, Elevated Wellness offers a welcoming environment where women can explore a range of healthcare and wellness services, with an emphasis on personalized attention, preventive care and midlife health.

Led by CEO Dr. Melissa Delgado, MD, FACOG, the practice brings together traditional OB-GYN services and complementary wellness offerings, including red light therapy, body composition analysis, acoustic therapy, lymphatic drainage, IV treatments, ozone therapy and lactation consultations.

One of the practice's distinguishing features is the time devoted to each patient. Rather than rushing through appointments, Elevated Wellness emphasizes meaningful conversations about health concerns, lifestyle habits and individual wellness goals. Women's health examinations are scheduled for approximately 45 minutes, allowing time for questions and personalized guidance.

For women navigating midlife changes or using GLP-1 medications for weight management, the practice offers additional support, including body composition monitoring, discussions about preserving muscle mass, exercise habits and sustainable lifestyle changes.

Lois Collins, MSN, RN, the practice's chief operating officer, also encourages clients to explore its complementary wellness services, including combining acoustic therapy with lymphatic drainage treatments.

Elevated Wellness extends its services to younger women preparing for a new chapter in life. Its College Women's Readiness Exams are designed to help young women enter college feeling informed and confident about their health. These appointments address preventive examinations, personal hygiene, contraception, abstinence and healthy routines that can be maintained alongside demanding academic schedules.

From young women preparing for college to mothers, professionals and women navigating menopause and beyond, Elevated Wellness hopes to become a trusted partner through life's changing seasons.

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by individual estimated income taxes, corporate income taxes and sales taxes.

Estimated income taxes are generally paid by self-employed individuals, business owners and investors whose earnings are not subject to regular payroll withholding. September marks the first quarterly estimated payment deadline of Virginia's fiscal year.

Individual income taxes remain Virginia's largest general fund revenue source, accounting for approximately 70.1% of projected collections. The state anticipates $34.7 billion in general fund revenue for fiscal 2027.

Gov. Spanberger and Secretary of Finance Mark Sickles have cautioned that inflation, interest rates and uncertainty in the national economy remain concerns.

For Fairfax County, Fairfax City and Vienna, state revenue performance is important because Virginia helps fund public schools and other local services. However, higher collections do not automatically increase local appropriations.

The first-quarter results place Virginia ahead of its revenue forecast, with nine months remaining in the fiscal year.

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The companies have also pledged additional customer protections, including residential bill relief and measures intended to prevent households and small businesses from bearing inappropriate data center infrastructure costs.

An evidentiary hearing scheduled to start November 17 in Richmond marks the SCC's upcoming key step. In contrast to the public hearing in Fairfax, where community members offered personal accounts and viewpoints, this formal regulatory proceeding functions much like a courtroom.

During the session, attorneys, expert witnesses, corporate representatives, and other participating stakeholders can introduce sworn testimony, technical evaluations, and financial documents. Regulators will evaluate whether the proposed merger satisfies Virginia legal standards, with witnesses subject to questioning and cross-examination.

The SCC must determine whether the transaction would jeopardize adequate utility service at just and reasonable rates. Its review includes financial stability, reliability, customer affordability and potential risks associated with the combined companies.

Additional public testimony is scheduled for November 5 in Richmond and by telephone November 5, 9 and 10. Written comments may be submitted through November 12.

The SCC is expected to reach a decision by January 11, 2027, under the statutory review timetable, although the transaction also requires other regulatory approvals.

For Northern Virginia residents and businesses, the outcome could have lasting implications for electricity affordability, infrastructure development and the region's ability to meet growing energy demands, added on by the proliferation of data centers.

Residents can follow the proceedings and review public documents through the Virginia SCC's official merger information page, under case number PUR-2026-00112 - www.scc.virginia.gov/about-the-scc/dominion-nextera-merger-updates

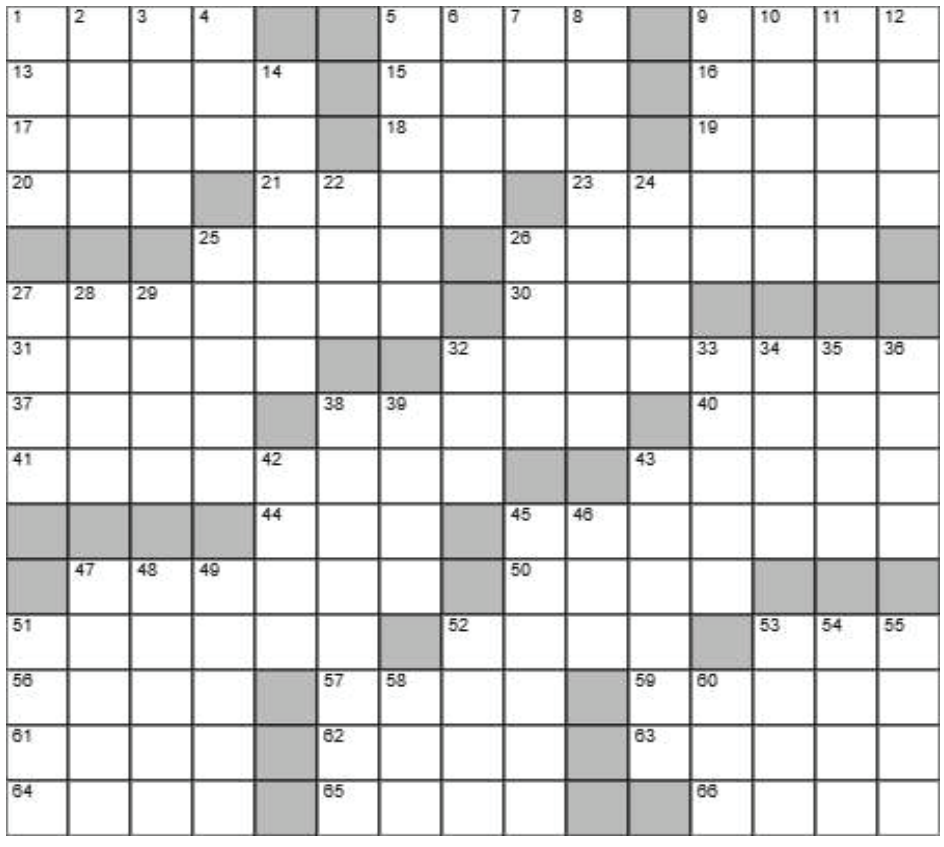
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BestCrosswords.com - Puzzle #1 on 10/13/2026 [easy]



Across

1- Common street name; 5- Baseball stats; 9- Killer whale; 13- Big name in foil; 15- Slippery; 16- First king of Israel; 17- Crockpot concoctions; 18- Scottish refusals; 19- Air-filled rubber hoop, become fatigued; 20- High craggy hill; 21- Hawaiian outdoor feast; 23- Deadly fly; 25- Microbe; 26- Distant; 27- Like some triangles; 30- Australian bird; 31- Lots; 32- Death notice; 37- Teri of "Tootsie"; 38- Of a pelvic bone; 40- Evening, informally; 41- Eastern; 43- Broaden; 44- Listening device; 45- Emily Dickinson, e.g.; 47- Takes by theft; 50- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 51- Shrimp dish; 52- Like some chocolate; 53- How Dry ___; 56- Foreign Legion cap; 57- Indigo source; 59- Overjoy; 61- Monogram ltr.; 62- Standard; 63- Severity; 64- Department store department; 65- Canonized Fr. women; 66- Area;

Down

1- Sail support; 2- Kind of sax; 3- Bakery worker; 4- Immediately; 5- Give a new title to; 6- Boyfriend; 7- ___-de-France; 8- Affecting the whole body; 9- Bony prefix; 10- Singer Bonnie; 11- Swearword; 12- Sheltered; 14- Not up; 22- Pot used to contain the ashes of a dead person; 24- Porn; 25- Stare angrily; 26- Singer McEntire; 27- Palm starch; 28- Blacken; 29- Ethereal: Prefix; 32- Petroleum; 33- Military groups; 34- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 35- Numbered rds.; 36- Itches; 38- Sicilians, e.g.; 39- Metallica drummer Ulrich; 42- Kind of tide; 43- Less strong; 45- Old Testament book; 46- Not 'neath; 47- Part of an act; 48- Golf gimme; 49- Sends out; 51- Milk choice; 52- Calamitous; 53- "Othello" villain; 54- Like ___ of bricks; 55- A ___ formality; 58- ___ a chance!; 60- Designer Claiborne;

Vienna Mourns Michael Amouri, Founder of Caffè Amouri



"Today is a fitting day for Michael's celebration of life. In 2023, he coached the VYI Select 6th-grade girls and took them to the championship. That's also the year we learned about his cancer. Today, as we celebrate our friend's life, I'll be following in his footsteps, coaching the VYI Select 6th-grade girls. Friend. Coach. Inspiration." - Jon Carr (courtesy Michael Amouri memorial post on Facebook dated October 6, 2026)

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

TOWN OF VIENNA, VA — Vienna lost more than a local business owner with the passing of Michael Amouri, founder of Caffè Amouri, who passed away on Sept. 11 at age 70 following a three-year battle with lung cancer. His legacy extends beyond coffee, reflecting a lifelong commitment to community, service and bringing people together.

Amouri opened Caffè Amouri at 107 Church St. NE in July 2010, transforming his vision of an independent coffeehouse into one of Vienna's most recognizable gathering places. For 16 years, the business served as a meeting place for residents, local organizations and community events.

A graduate of George Mason University, Amouri previously worked in television production, including positions with WETA and Discovery Communications, before pursuing his dream of opening a neighborhood coffeehouse.

His commitment to Vienna extended well beyond his business. Amouri coached youth sports, served on the Vienna Business Association board and organized charitable initiatives, including Vienna Idol, a community singing competition benefiting the Khristin Kyllo Memorial Fund.

Under his leadership, Caffè Amouri emphasized quality, community and sustainability, earning recognition as Virginia's Green Restaurant of the Year in 2016.

In August, Amouri announced plans to transfer ownership of the business to three longtime employees, including his daughter, Nicki, ensuring the coffeehouse would continue serving the community.

Amouri is survived by his life partner, Kathie Rawson; daughter, Nicki; daughter-in-law, Kristen; two granddaughters; and extended family.

His legacy remains visible along Church Street, where the coffeehouse he founded continues bringing neighbors together with lots of love - and that's Michael Amouri.

Garden Club of Fairfax Celebrates 100 Years of Beauty, Conservation and Community Service

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

VIENNA, VA — From planting gardens and preserving historic landscapes to inspiring young gardeners, the Garden Club of Fairfax marks a century of making Northern Virginia a greener, more beautiful place.

The Garden Club of Fairfax is celebrating a remarkable milestone in 2026 — its 100th birthday. For a century, generations of members have shared their love of flowers, gardening and nature while helping beautify neighborhoods, preserve historic landscapes and promote environmental conservation throughout Northern Virginia.

Founded on June 30, 1926, with just 20 charter members, the organization has grown into a lasting community institution. Its contributions have extended well beyond flower arranging and garden tours, touching schools, parks, historic properties and community organizations across Fairfax County.

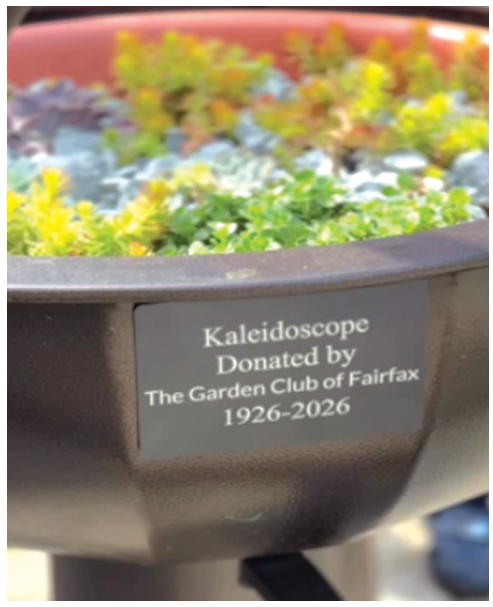
The club's centennial received official recognition on May 5, when the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors honored its century of service. Dranesville District Supervisor Jimmy Bierman sponsored the recognition and praised members for their contributions to the community.

"You make it a nice place to live, because you make it a beautiful place to live," Bierman said.

Among the highlights of the anniversary year was the April 14 dedication of a garden kaleidoscope sculpture at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna. Donated by the club, the interactive sculpture invites visitors to look through a viewing scope and turn a bowl of flowers, creating colorful, changing reflections.

Designed by sculptor Robert C. Anderson of Wisconsin, the installation symbolizes the creativity, individuality and shared experiences of the club's members over the past century.

The celebration continued April 21 during Virginia's Historic Garden Week, when the club featured three distinctive Fairfax County properties. Visitors had the opportunity to explore gardens



Dedication of the Kaleidoscope at Meadowlark Botanical Garden by The Garden Club of Fairfax during on April 14, 2026 (courtesy club's instagram post)

with century-old boxwoods, woodland landscaping, waterfalls and Zen-inspired designs, along with homes decorated with floral arrangements created by club members.

Historic Vale Church in Oakton served as tour headquarters, offering centennial displays and opportunities to learn about trees, native plants and gardening.

Turn to Page 13 → ***GARDEN CLUB...***



Circles Of Bureaucracy – How Fairfax Manufactures Public Art

OP-ED BY JOHN VON BERGEN

Assistant Professor of Sculpture and Expanded Fields at George Mason University, and a Fairfax resident. He recently completed the art commission "Wandlung" for The German Bundestag in Berlin, one of the world's tallest indoor reliefs made in concrete.

COVID forced us to reconsider something we had already been surrendering, willingly, to smartphones and private life: what does it mean to share public space? Fairfax County's new COVID memorial, Circles of Memory, offers a rather odd answer, especially with its more than $250,000 price tag and a location that serves the 800 office workers of the Heritty Fairfax County government office building.

I say this as a Fairfax resident (and taxpayer), Sculpture Professor, and professional artist who has worked on major public art commissions at a similar scale. I fully respect any artist willing to take on commissions like this, navigating budgets, engineering, bureaucracy and public reaction to make their projects happen. This process always involves immense challenges and is precisely why we should look carefully at the results.



Circles of Memory: Photo credit is John von Bergen

The artist team of Miriam Gusevich and Salvatore Pirrone describe their project Circles of Memory as a place where visitors may be "refreshed and restored". Sitting on its concrete benches, leaning against grandiose curved slabs of blue steel, I felt neither. I was reminded instead of so many restaurants in New York City, where furniture seemed intentionally uncomfortable just to keep patrons moving on.

Then there is their choice of blue, representing, what: The sky? The ocean? The region's ubiquitous INOVA logo? But at the center sits a large rusty brown stormwater grate, which is presumably an unavoidable infrastructure. Yet its prominence nevertheless made me wonder whether it might be an underground escape hatch from the artwork.

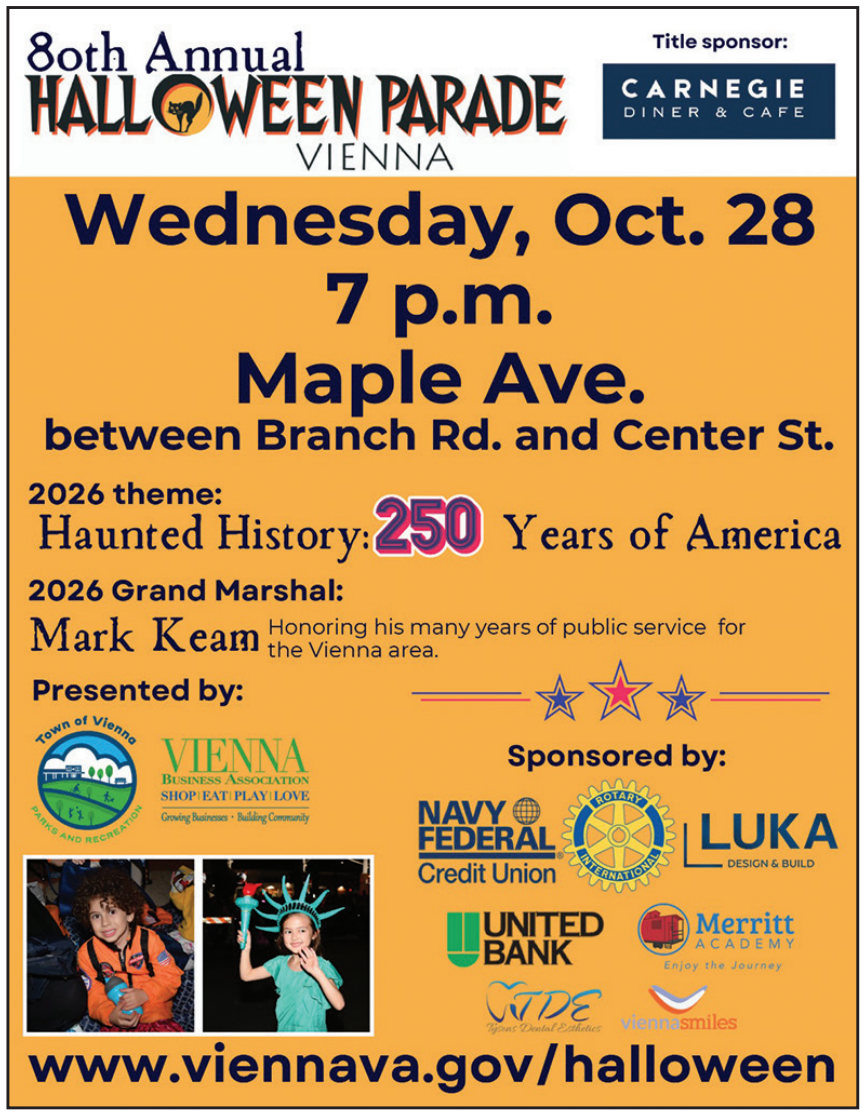
In addition, the questionable craftsmanship and failed technical planning for aligning the steel properly to the concrete bases is apparent to anyone who takes a moment from their healing to look at such details. There are clear planning mistakes that led to sloppy fixes that the artists and administrators seem to have been willing to overlook, perhaps for convenience's sake, or the deadline to call it finished.

But the problem is larger than aesthetics. The project asks us to accept that an arrangement of benches and circles somehow embodies collective grief because its plaque tells us so. Building a contemplative oasis and calling it a COVID remembrance seems as arbitrary as building a walkway through a forest and naming it a meditation site for global starvation. Context cannot simply be declared into existence.

The process behind the memorial selection deserves scrutiny too. County records provided to me by ArtsFairfax show that forty-one submissions were initially reduced to ten by just two people before the seven-member selection committee reviewed them. Only one committee member is identified in the county memorandum as a working artist. This practice of administrative filtering before the jury sees any proposals is unfortunately all too common – Lisa Mariam (Senior Director of Services for ArtsFairfax, Programs and Grant) and Leila Gordon (Chair, Fairfax County Arts Committee) removed thirty-one proposals before the jury even met.

Most importantly, the initial applicants performed speculative labor for proposing an idea, without compensation; only four finalists received $1,000 honoraria and the opportunity to refine their proposals. This all-too-common practice is not supporting the arts, as it is exploitative to expect artists to submit proposals without compensation, especially with budgets of this scale.

I am not arguing against public art. Quite the opposite. If Fairfax is willing to spend a quarter-million dollars, taxpayers should expect creative ambition, rigor, craftsmanship and genuine public relevance—not an artwork whose meaning depends upon administrative language telling them how it should make them feel. Public art should challenge bureaucracy, not simply become decoration for the employees of its building headquarters.





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County Seeks Public Input on Proposed Traffic Improvements Along Oakton's Chain Bridge Road Corridor

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Fairfax County is seeking community input on proposed transportation improvements along the Chain Bridge Road corridor in Oakton, where traffic congestion, intersection safety and neighborhood access have been longstanding concerns.

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) has developed three alternatives addressing several intersections, including Jermantown Road, Hunter Mill Road and Miller Road. The proposals include changes to turning lanes, traffic signals and intersection configurations intended to improve traffic flow and safety.

One of the most significant proposals, included in Alternative 1, is a quadrant intersection design at Chain Bridge Road (Route 123) and Jermantown Road. Under this configuration, left turns would be eliminated at the intersection, requiring motorists to use surrounding roads to reach their destinations.

A new traffic signal would be installed at Jermantown Road and Rose Haven Street. Drivers would be redirected through Rose Haven Street and Rose Forest Drive, while some motorists traveling on Chain Bridge Road would use Hibbard Street, Old Blake Lane or White Granite Court to access Jermantown Road.

The proposal also includes a yield-controlled slip lane at Rose Forest Drive and Route 123.

The design has raised questions about potential traffic diversion through residential neighborhoods, particularly near the Oakton fire station. According to information shared by community representatives, approximately 500 vehicles turn left onto Jermantown Road and Blake Lane during peak periods.



Legend listed: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/oakton-safety

Alternative 2 also proposes roadway modifications, although its potential effects on surrounding neighborhoods have generated concerns among some residents.

Alternative 3 focuses on improving existing intersections while retaining left-turn access at Jermantown Road and Route 123.

Among its proposed improvements are a new Miller Road entrance through the former PNC Bank property, relocation of the existing Miller Road traffic signal farther from Hunter Mill Road, and restrictions limiting the current Miller Road entrance to right turns in and out.

The alternative would also add a second northbound left-turn lane from Chain Bridge Road onto Hunter Mill Road and extend the westbound left-turn lane on Jermantown Road approaching Blake Lane.

According to traffic analysis figures shared by community representatives and attributed to consultant Kimley-Horn, extending the Jermantown left-turn lane could reduce average westbound intersection travel time during the afternoon peak from approximately 311 seconds to 84 seconds.

The extension would use existing median space rather than property belonging to the adjacent Tree Brooke townhome community.

However, Alternative 3 also includes removing the service road near Giant, raising concerns about access for Oakton Manor townhouse residents.

Additional suggestions raised during the community review include adjusting the Blake Lane traffic signal to operate differently during school hours and modifying the proposed Rose Forest slip lane to provide more vehicle storage space.

Community organizations, including the Greater Oakton Community Association, Miller Heights Community Association, Options for Oakton and Smart Growth for Oakton, have participated in discussions surrounding the corridor study.

The county's online survey allows participants to rank proposed alternatives, select no changes and provide written comments. Residents can review the transportation study and survey information through the Fairfax County Oakton transportation study website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/oakton-safety and participate in the October 5 presentation survey till October 30, 2026.

Three Flint Hill Redevelopment Projects Approved in Oakton, Bringing 581 New Homes

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

OAKTON, VA — Three major redevelopment projects in Oakton's Flint Hill area have received approval from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, clearing the way for 581 residential units on properties currently occupied by aging office buildings. Although the rezoning approvals were completed in 2025, construction schedules and final permitting remain unconfirmed as of October 2026.

The projects, known as Flint Hill 1 & 4, Flint Hill 3 and Redwood Plaza, are located along Jermantown Road, Rosehaven Street and Arrowhead Drive. Together, they represent a significant transition from commercial office space to residential neighborhoods in the Flint Hill Suburban Center.

Flint Hill 1 & 4, located at 3211 Jermantown Road and 10530 Rosehaven Street, received rezoning approval on February 18, 2025. The approximately 14.6-acre development, submitted by A&A Flint Hill Four LLC and A&A Flint Hill One LLC, was approved for 274 residential units, including townhouses and triplex-style housing.

Turn to Page 11 ➔ ***THREE FLINT...***

Vienna Town Council Faces Budget Planning and Spending Priorities Ahead of New Fiscal Year

TOWN OF VIENNA, VA — As the Town of Vienna approaches November, financial planning, infrastructure investments and legislative priorities are among the issues facing town officials as they prepare for the next budget cycle.

The town is entering the early stages of developing its fiscal year 2028 operating budget, which will cover July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028. Vienna's previous budget preparation calendar included a November work session for Town Council guidance, followed by additional financial reviews and budget discussions during the winter and spring.

A major financial consideration is the town's long-range Capital Improvement Plan. Council materials presented in September outlined approximately $107 million in proposed investments through 2042, including transportation improvements, public facilities, utilities, parks and other infrastructure.

One significant change was the indefinite deferral of the proposed Aquatics and Fitness Center, previously estimated at approximately $28 million. Town staff indicated that the funding capacity associated with the project would be redistributed among other capital priorities.

The Council has also considered spending related to Vienna250, the town's commemoration of the nation's 250th anniversary. A September proposal called for allocating $50,000 in interest earned on American Rescue Plan Act funds, including $20,000 for economic development, $15,000 for parks and recreation, and $15,000 for contingency expenses.

Another issue scheduled for potential November consideration is Vienna's proposed 2027 Legislative Agenda. Town staff recommended a November 9 public hearing to receive residents' comments on priorities for the upcoming Virginia General Assembly session.

The legislative program provides an opportunity for the town to seek state funding and pursue changes in state law affecting municipal operations.

Budget preparation will continue into 2027, when residents will have opportunities to review proposed spending, tax rates and utility charges before Council adoption.

Vienna's Town Council is responsible for approving the annual budget, establishing tax rates and authorizing major expenditures. Its decisions will determine how the town balances infrastructure improvements, municipal services and long-term financial commitments.

The full November meeting agendas, including any specific budget guidance session, remain subject to publication.

Residents can review meeting materials on the following Town of Vienna website at www.viennava.gov/Town-Government/Town-Clerk/Agendas-and-Minutes.

From Page 10 ➔ ***THREE FLINT...***

Redwood Plaza, located at 10600 Arrowhead Drive, also received approval on February 18, 2025. The redevelopment calls for replacing existing office buildings with 196 residential units.

Flint Hill 3, located at 3201 Jermantown Road, received approval on November 18, 2025. The seven-acre project, submitted by Flint Hill Propco LLC, was approved for 111 homes, consisting of 77 traditional townhouses and 34 stacked townhouses.

Collectively, the three developments include plans for approximately 4.5 acres of publicly accessible park space across 15 locations, pedestrian connections, sidewalks, trails and three new bus shelters. The projects are intended to create a more connected residential community while replacing underused commercial properties.

The approvals represent a major milestone, but rezoning does not automatically authorize construction. Developers must complete applicable site-plan reviews, engineering requirements and permitting before demolition and building activities can proceed. As of October 19, 2026, final construction permits and groundbreaking dates for the three developments are pending.

Transportation remains an important consideration as Oakton prepares for additional residential growth. Fairfax County is conducting an Oakton Congestion and Safety Study to evaluate roadway conditions, pedestrian access, traffic circulation and potential improvements. Residents may submit comments through October 30, 2026 - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/oakton-safety

Meanwhile, another substantial redevelopment proposal involving the former AT&T campus at 3033 Chain Bridge Road remains in the county's rezoning process, potentially bringing additional housing and commercial uses to the area.

With the three Flint Hill projects having secured rezoning approval, attention now turns to construction timelines, infrastructure improvements and how the addition of 581 homes will affect traffic, public services and the surrounding Oakton community.

Residents can follow permitting and development activity through Fairfax County's website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/lds-public-records.



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Virginia's U.S. Senate Race: Warner Faces Mizusawa in November

BY AYA AMER

Virginia voters will elect a U.S. senator in the November 3, 2026, general election. Democratic incumbent Mark Warner, seeking a fourth six-year term, faces Republican challenger Bert Mizusawa, a retired U.S. Army major general who won the Republican primary in August. Warner has emphasized healthcare, economic development and technology policy, while Mizusawa has focused on national security, military readiness, energy and federal spending. Nationwide, 35 Senate seats are being contested, with the results determining the chamber's partisan balance. The election will influence federal legislation, judicial confirmations and congressional oversight during the next two years.

Mark Warner: Democratic Candidate



Courtesy Mark Warner

Mark Warner is seeking a fourth term in the U.S. Senate, where he has represented Virginia since 2009. Before joining the Senate, he served as Virginia's governor from 2002 to 2006 and built a career in business and technology. His campaign presents that combination of government, business and technology experience as a qualification for another six-year term.

Warner has focused on economic development, infrastructure, cybersecurity and national security during his time in office. He is a key leader on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, where he works on issues involving U.S. intelligence agencies and foreign threats. His record also includes support for broadband access, domestic semiconductor manufacturing and technology investment.

Warner's campaign emphasizes lowering costs for families, creating good-paying jobs and supporting Virginia workers. He has argued that public investment in infrastructure and technology can strengthen the state's economy and prepare workers for changing industries. He has also called for federal safeguards and regulations surrounding artificial intelligence, citing concerns about employment, public safety, data centers, children and national security.

Health care and disability policy are also part of Warner's campaign message. At an October 8 virtual forum, he called for stronger health care funding and opposed Medicaid cuts. He supported increasing federal support for home- and community-based services so people with disabilities can receive care at home. Warner also supported broader access to telehealth and home-based care, arguing that hospitals and nursing homes are not the right option for every patient. His campaign is asking voters to extend his experience in elected office, technology policy and national security.

Bert Mizusawa: Republican Candidate



Courtesy Bert for Senate

Bert Mizusawa is a retired U.S. Army major general and attorney challenging Warner for Virginia's Senate seat. He commanded a Combined Joint Interagency Task Force in Afghanistan and served as a senior adviser to the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mizusawa graduated from West Point, Harvard Law School and the Harvard Kennedy School. He won the Republican nomination in the August 4 primary.

Mizusawa's campaign highlights his military leadership and national security experience. His priorities include reducing government spending, strengthening national defense, simplifying the tax code and making living costs more affordable. He has also emphasized fiscal responsibility, secure borders, constitutional government and stronger oversight of federal programs. Mizusawa has proposed expanding nuclear energy as one way to address energy costs.

Mizusawa's approach to artificial intelligence differs from Warner's. At the October disability-policy forum, he emphasized enforcing existing anti-discrimination laws and holding employers responsible when software produces discriminatory decisions. He described the Americans with Disabilities Act as an important law that should be enforced, but he did not explicitly endorse new federal AI regulations. His position places greater emphasis on existing legal protections, employer accountability and oversight.

On Medicaid, Mizusawa focused on reducing fraud, waste and abuse while acknowledging that oversight alone would not solve every funding problem. He said reforms should protect people who legitimately rely on federal assistance. Mizusawa also supported helping people receive care in their homes, improving voting access for people with disabilities and enforcing discrimination laws. His campaign is offering voters an alternative built on military service, fiscal restraint, limited government and national security experience.

Three Candidates Seek Virginia's 11th Congressional District Seat

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Three candidates are competing to represent Virginia's 11th Congressional District in the Nov. 3, 2026, general election. The district includes Fairfax City and much of Fairfax County.

Democratic incumbent James Walkinshaw is seeking reelection after winning a September 2025 special election following the death of longtime Congressman Gerry Connolly. Walkinshaw previously represented the Braddock District on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and served as Connolly's chief of staff.

Republican Arthur Purves, president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance, is campaigning on reducing government spending, lowering taxes and improving affordability.

Green Party candidate Dianne Blais, a former co-president of the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women, is emphasizing environmental protection, reducing military spending and addressing inflation.

The winner will serve a two-year term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing district residents on federal legislation, spending and national policy.

The Cottingley Fairies Come to Fairfax County!

BY MARK DREISONSTOK

It is one of those events of enormous charm and a little scandal from the early twentieth century. While people today in our scientific age encounter aliens and UFOs, people of the late 1800s and early 1900s had sightings of ghosts, and even fairies! Between 1917 and 1920, two young cousins showed the world photos they claimed to have taken of real fairies. In an era of world war, foxholes, and mustard gas, people desperately wanted to believe the world still contained magic.

While controversial even at the time, the photos deceived prominent men of letters, notably Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of that master of logic and deductive reasoning, the great detective Sherlock Holmes. Yet Holmes himself said in Conan Doyle's novel *The Sign of the Four*: "When you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth."



Olivia Wolfe as Mabel and Marina Clark as Lilli in The Curious Case of the Cottingley Fairies Photography courtesy of Nova Nightsky

These are the events portrayed recently in Falls Church by Nova Nightsky Theatre in the world premiere of *The Curious Case of the Cottingley Fairies* by Claire Wittman. Here the two cousins (played wonderfully by Marina Clark and Olivia Wolfe in the production we saw) have been renamed Lilli and Mabel, and a fictional American reporter, Frankie Canfield, is added as well, earnestly enacted by Julia Recko. Other characters, such as Conan Doyle (a charismatic Tom Flatt) and Houdini (referenced but not appearing), are named from real life.

The action swings back and forth between 1916 and 1966, with Mary Fettes as the older Lillian reflects back on the 1916 events to reporter Canfield (an inquisitive Micaela Procopio), who is also the granddaughter of Frankie. Marina Clark is excellent as young Lilli Barnes, recounting that she had hoped to photograph not people (and certainly not supernatural beings) but nature when she stumbled upon the fairies. An ensemble performs fairy dances during the proceedings—two wearing crowns are king and queen of the fairies, reminiscent of Oberon and Tatiana of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and suggest magic may in fact be afoot!

Costumes of a bygone era by Carol Pappas and ethereal music alternating with early jazz recordings of the Paul Whiteman orchestra lend the piece period atmosphere. A séance scene by the fraudulent Madam Spinoza (depicted with verve by Isha Raj-Silverman) was both exciting and humorous.

Historically, the fairy photographs were revealed to be a hoax, and the real story became how two girls pulled off such a fraud before a cynical world. However, *The Curious Case of the Cottingley Fairies* has a different take, aiming to preserve a bit of mystery behind the occurrences. As director and sound designer Hannah Ruth Blackwell notes in the program, the "tension between hope and reality is where this play sits…. It's never totally clear which aspects of [Lilli's] story are the truth and which are fabrications."

The Curious Case of the Cottingley Fairies—a play well worth seeing, both for its own merits and for re-introducing the Cottingley Fairies to a new generation.



From Page 8 → GARDEN CLUB...

The club's history also reflects a strong tradition of giving back. Members have supported garden improvements at the Woodburn Center for Community Mental Health, established a garden at the Embry Rucker Community Shelter in Reston and helped landscape the entrance to Mason Neck State Park's Visitor Center.

Its educational efforts have included a junior gardening program at Robinson Secondary School and support for school garden projects. During the COVID-19 pandemic, members contributed to food assistance and community gardening initiatives.

As a member of the Garden Club of Virginia, the Fairfax organization continues to promote horticultural education, conservation, flower arranging and the preservation of historic gardens.

One hundred years after its founding, the Garden Club of Fairfax's legacy can be seen in the gardens it has nurtured, the landscapes it has helped preserve and the generations it has encouraged to appreciate the natural world.

Its centennial celebrates not only a century of beautiful flowers, but also a century of friendship, volunteerism and community pride.



40th Annual Holiday Craft Show (Nov. 21-22)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2026 | 10:00 AM TO 05:00 PM

What started out in 1987 as a very small show has grown to become a premium arts and crafts festival. Artisans from all over the United States, including many local artists, are participating in this year's show and we are delighted to be able to offer so many wonderful, holiday gift choices.

We also invite you to enjoy a hot lunch from the concession stand and use our dining area to rest and recover before you continue shopping. There really is something for everyone on your shopping list, so please take your time and visit all the areas of the show- you won't want to miss a single one!

Engagement Ring Trends

BY TJ SHEA -
OWNER, FAIRFAX FINE JEWELRY

As we approach the Christmas Holiday, I want to remind the audience that Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are the two most popular days to "Pop the Question," aside from St. Valentine's Day of course. I'm writing this in November, so you have time to get your affairs in order before the big day.

So, the hard part is over, you found the girl of your dreams. Now comes a dizzying array of decisions to choose the perfect ring. In the current age, it is likely that you have done some casual ring shopping together in person or online and she has given you some subtle, or not so subtle, clues as to what she would prefer. If you feel that she hasn't given you these clues, let me be the first to tell you she has and you missed them! Here's the roadmap.

Choose the type of stone first.

Lab grown diamonds are very affordable in 3-5 carat sizes. If you choose a large center stone, you want to select a setting that complements it. If you are choosing a naturally mined diamond, you are likely in the half to two carat range and should select a setting that shows this diamond to its full potential.



Ever & Ever Collection courtesy Fairfax Fine Jewelry

Shapes.

Round brilliant cut and oval cut diamonds are half the market. Emerald cuts, marquise and pears are around 8% each. However, this is changing with high quality lab grown diamonds. This is really a matter of preference.

Settings.

The solitaire remains the most popular classic style. Large ovals and emerald cut Lab Gown Diamonds are taking center stage on these solitaire settings, along with the more traditional round brilliant. According to The Knot's 2026 survey, 61% of newlyweds chose a Lab Grown Diamond center stone because large diamonds in high grade are well within the budget of most.

Halo and hidden halo rings, where the center stone is surrounded by smaller diamonds, is also a popular choice, especially with natural diamonds as the halo augments the perceived size of the center stone. Three stone settings, which have a center stone alongside two side stones continue to be popular choices. Consider emerald or pear side stones for a classic look.

The Dark Horse - Bezel Set Diamonds. I have warmed up to this new style as bezel set diamond pendants and earrings also look great and are very popular. Bezel set rings look sleek and modern. They also protect the diamond for everyday wear and is far less likely to snag. Designers offer traditional bezel set designs along with east-west bezels and half-bezels.

Antique & Vintage Inspired Rings. Today's savvy buyer is looking for ways to make the engagement ring unique. True antique engagement rings are in low supply, so the time to buy a nice one is when you see one. Fortunately, many designers offer a vintage inspired line of engagement rings, which combine modern manufacturing standards with antique designs. Whatever you choose, she will cherish it for a lifetime because it is from you.

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Hump Pilot: A Book Review of American Heroes

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

During World War II, American military pilots faced one of aviation's most dangerous assignments: transporting vital supplies across the towering Himalayan mountains to support Allied forces in China. Their perilous route became known as "the Hump," and their extraordinary service is remembered in Hump Pilot, written by Nedda R. Thomas.

The book tells the story of the author's father, American pilot Ned Thomas, whose wartime experiences offer a personal perspective on a little-known chapter of military aviation history. Combining her father's recollections with the broader events of World War II, Thomas brings readers into the cockpits of aircraft navigating unpredictable weather, dangerous mountain passes and the constant possibility of disaster.



Cover of Hump Pilot (courtesy Nedda R. Thomas)

Flying the Hump required exceptional determination. Pilots operated in difficult conditions, often aboard heavily loaded aircraft, with limited navigational equipment and little margin for error. Yet these missions were essential to maintaining supply lines during the war.

What distinguishes Hump Pilot from a conventional military history is its deeply personal perspective. Through her father's experiences, Thomas explores not only the technical challenges of wartime aviation but also the courage, sacrifice and humanity of the men who carried out these missions. The narrative also includes a love story, offering a glimpse into the personal relationships that endured amid the uncertainty of war.

The book has received favorable attention from aviation historians and publications, including Aviation History Magazine and WWII History Magazine. Walter J. Boyne, former director of the National Air and Space Museum, praised its combination of firsthand aviation experience and historical context.

Thomas has also shared her father's story through public appearances at aviation museums and historical organizations, including the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly and Historic Vienna. Her work connects military history with the communities and families who continue to preserve veterans' stories.

As Americans observe Veterans Day on November 11, Hump Pilot offers an opportunity to recognize a group of World War II veterans whose contributions are sometimes overshadowed by more familiar accounts of battles on land and sea.

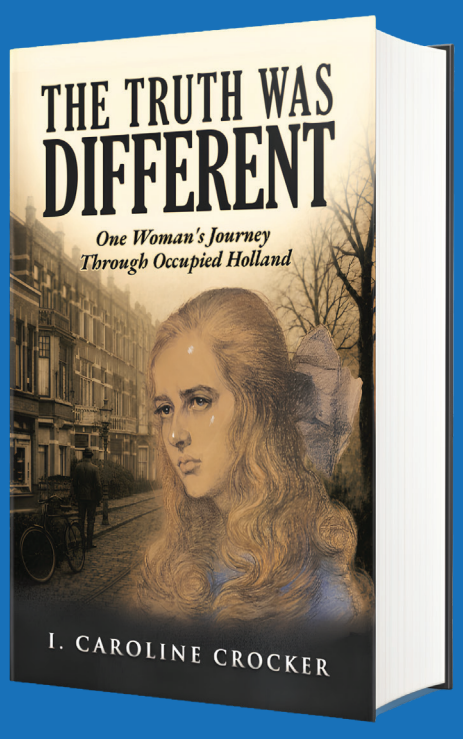
Their missions were flown far from home, over some of the world's most unforgiving terrain. Through one family's memories, the book preserves the extraordinary service of those who helped sustain the Allied war effort.

More information about the book and its author is available at www.humppilot.com.

Her family remembered Rita as cold-hearted and self-centered.

But what if they were wrong?

Decades later, her granddaughter uncovered the remarkable true story of a half-Jewish mother facing impossible choices in Nazi-occupied Holland.





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Stories of Service and Survival Honoring Veterans

COMPILED BY TANIA HOSSAIN

As Veterans Day approaches on November 11, books offer a way to honor U.S. Armed Forces veterans across various conflicts, highlighting their courage, sacrifice, and civilian transition. These books are available to readers at the Fairfax County Public Library and where books are sold.

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand: This bestselling biography tells the remarkable story of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner and World War II airman who survived a plane crash, weeks stranded at sea and imprisonment in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien: Drawing on the author's experiences as a soldier in Vietnam, this collection of interconnected fictional stories explores the emotional burdens carried by soldiers, including fear, grief, friendship and memories that remain long after the fighting ends.

With the Old Breed by E. B. Sledge: A firsthand account of a Marine's experiences during the brutal World War II battles of Peleliu and Okinawa. The memoir offers an unflinching look at combat and the extraordinary bonds formed among those who served together.

The Women by Kristin Hannah: This historical novel follows a young Army nurse serving in Vietnam and her struggle to rebuild her life after returning home. The story brings attention to the contributions and sacrifices of women whose military service has sometimes been overlooked.

Redeployment by Phil Klay: Written by a Marine Corps veteran, this National Book Award-winning collection of short stories examines the Iraq War and the challenges military personnel face both during deployment and after returning to civilian life.

The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers: Written by an Iraq War veteran, this novel follows two young American soldiers and explores friendship, loss, trauma and the lasting psychological consequences of combat.

You Are Worth It by Kyle Carpenter with Don Yaeger: Medal of Honor recipient Kyle Carpenter recounts his experiences as a Marine in Afghanistan, his recovery from life-threatening injuries and the lessons he learned about resilience, gratitude and purpose.

Homeschooling in Virginia Rises Over the Past Decade

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

RICHMOND, VA — The number of students receiving home instruction in Virginia has increased over the past decade, according to figures from the Virginia Department of Education.

During the 2016–2017 school year, Virginia reported 40,386 students receiving home instruction or religious exemptions. By 2025–2026, that number had reached 66,117, representing an increase of approximately 63.7%.

The largest single-year increase occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the statewide total rose from 44,226 in 2019–2020 to 65,571 in 2020–2021. Enrollment in home instruction and religious exemptions subsequently declined before increasing again in recent years.

In Fairfax County, the number of students receiving home instruction increased from approximately 3,062 in 2016–2017 to 3,968 in 2025–2026, an increase of 29.6%. An additional 211 Fairfax County students received religious exemptions during the 2025–2026 school year.

Across seven Northern Virginia school divisions, including Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church and Manassas, more than 9,100 students received home instruction during the 2025–2026 school year.

Meanwhile, Fairfax County Public Schools reported enrollment of approximately 185,979 students in fiscal year 2016, compared with 171,936 students in September 2026.

Fairfax City operates under a longstanding agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools to educate city students. Separate ten-year homeschooling figures specifically for Fairfax City residents were not available in the figures reviewed.

The Virginia Department of Education publishes annual home instruction and religious exemption statistics through its website.

Fairfax Schools Review Capital Improvement Priorities for 2028–2032

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA — Fairfax City school officials are reviewing potential capital improvement projects for fiscal years 2028 through 2032. A presentation dated September 28, 2026, outlines current projects, possible funding requests and the timeline for considering future investments in school facilities.

The presentation, led by Superintendent Dr. Dustin Wright, reviews the existing fiscal year 2027–2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Current projects include elementary school renovations, Fairfax High School roof repairs and maintenance work. The presentation lists approximately $166.4 million for elementary school renovations across the five-year period and approximately $41.6 million for the Fairfax High School roof project.

Three potential requests are identified for the next planning period. These include replacing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units at Katherine Johnson Middle School and Fairfax High School, with an estimated cost of $3 million; auditorium upgrades at both schools, estimated at $250,000; and a turf softball field at Fairfax High School, estimated at $2.5 million. These figures represent proposed requests rather than confirmed funding approvals.

The presentation also explains that several maintenance categories, including carpeting, concrete repairs, painting, paving, roof repairs and HVAC repairs, moved from the capital improvement plan to the operating budget beginning in fiscal year 2027.

The outlined timeline includes a presentation and public hearing in October 2026, followed by public hearing and board action scheduled for November 2. Additional steps include presenting the plan to city officials, a potential budget vote in spring 2027 and further public hearings in May 2027.

The proposed projects remain subject to the planning and approval process. Residents can review the presentation to learn more about projected costs and future school facility priorities.

Fairfax County Schools Begin FY 2028 Budget Discussions Amid Rising Costs

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

FALLS CHURCH, VA — Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is preparing for another challenging budget cycle as school officials examine rising operating costs, employee compensation commitments and projected revenues for fiscal year 2028, which begins July 1, 2027.

The discussions come as the school system evaluates how to balance educational priorities with financial constraints while maintaining services for students across Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax.

During preliminary budget discussions in September, school officials outlined potential financial pressures involving salaries, employee benefits, staffing and other operating expenses. The district must also account for contractual obligations and anticipated changes in funding from Fairfax County and the Commonwealth.

FCPS has identified approximately $153.9 million in reductions and avoided costs during its FY 2026 budget process, followed by approximately $117.6 million for FY 2027. Those figures provide context for the current discussions but do not represent an officially adopted FY 2028 budget shortfall.

One option discussed involves adjusting average class sizes. Preliminary estimates suggest that increasing average class sizes by one student could generate approximately $35 million in savings. Such a change would require consideration of staffing assignments, classroom capacity and educational needs.

Central office spending, administrative expenses and needs-based staffing allocations are also among the areas being examined. Departments have been asked to consider potential spending reductions, although no specific FY 2028 cuts have been approved.

Another major consideration is employee compensation. FCPS must account for collective bargaining commitments, salary adjustments and employee benefit expenses while determining how much funding will be available for classroom instruction and support services.

FCPS officials have indicated that existing commitments are likely to exceed anticipated revenue growth. Inflation, retirement and health care costs, and limited opportunities for additional state funding are contributing to the financial outlook.

According to FCPS, more than 85% of its budget is dedicated to instruction, and 92.7% of employees are school-based. The district has also indicated that it will not seek new initiatives during this budget cycle as it focuses on existing programs and financial obligations.

The School Board is scheduled to review the FY 2028 fiscal forecast on November 10, followed by a December 1 joint budget meeting with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

Superintendent Michelle Reid is scheduled to present the proposed budget on January 14, 2027. Public hearings and additional budget discussions will follow before the Board of Supervisors determines county funding in May. The School Board is scheduled to adopt its final budget May 27.

Residents can review budget documents, meeting materials and participation opportunities at www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/budget.

Oakton Cougars Charge Toward Fall Championships

BY ABBY DENNIS

OAKTON, VA — Championship season is heating up at Oakton High School as the Cougars prepare for district, regional and state competitions across several fall sports. From an undefeated football team to accomplished cross-country runners, field hockey players and competitive cheerleaders, Oakton's student-athletes are looking to finish the season strong.

Leading the excitement is Oakton's varsity football team, which improved to 7-0 following a 35-30 victory over Westfield on October 16. The Cougars have scored 291 points through seven games, establishing themselves as contenders in the Concorde District.

Senior quarterback Jack Martin and linebacker Sasha Zabavskiy are among the players helping lead Oakton's efforts. The Cougars will host Chantilly on October 23 at 7 p.m. for homecoming, followed by James Madison on October 30. Their regular season concludes November 6 at Centreville, with regional playoff opportunities on the horizon.

Oakton's cross-country program is also preparing for championship competition. Both the boys' and girls' teams are pursuing strong regional finishes and qualification for the Virginia High School League state championships.

The program has an impressive history. In 2025, Oakton's boys captured Concorde District and regional championships, while the girls won the district title. Caroline Sapperstein also earned an individual state championship.

This year's Concorde District Cross-Country Championships are scheduled for October 21 at Burke Lake Park, followed by the Northern Region 6D Championships on October 28. The Class 6 state meet is scheduled for November 7 at Oatlands.

Oakton's field hockey program brings its own championship tradition, having won four state titles, most recently in 2019, along with a regional championship in 2023. As postseason competition approaches, the Cougars will look to build on that history. Varsity field hockey activities are scheduled for October 20 and 22, although the tournament designations have not been confirmed.

Competitive cheer is another program to watch. Following a regional championship in 2024, Oakton's cheerleaders are preparing for another opportunity to showcase their athleticism, precision and teamwork in championship competition.

For Oakton's graduating seniors, the coming weeks represent some of their final opportunities to compete in Cougar uniforms. For younger athletes, the postseason offers valuable experience and a chance to continue the school's athletic traditions.

With football maintaining an undefeated record and several programs pursuing postseason success, excitement is building throughout the Oakton community.

The championship chase is underway, and the Cougars have plenty to cheer about as they pursue another memorable fall sports season.

Madison Warhawks Set Their Sights on Postseason Glory

BY ABBY DENNIS

Football, field hockey, volleyball and cross country programs prepare for a high-stakes finish to the fall season.

VIENNA, VA — October brings a familiar sense of anticipation to James Madison High School, where the Warhawks are preparing for the most demanding stretch of the fall athletic season. With district championships, regional tournaments and state competition approaching, Madison's athletes have their sights set on extending their seasons well into November.

For a school with a proud athletic tradition, the postseason represents more than another opportunity to win. It is the culmination of months of early practices, demanding workouts, close contests and teamwork.

On the football field, the Warhawks are looking to finish the regular season with authority before turning their attention to the Virginia High School League playoffs. Senior quarterback Lucas Vacaflor and running back William Helvey are among the players expected to play important roles as Madison prepares for its final regular-season matchups.

The Warhawks know that postseason football leaves little room for mistakes. Protecting the football, controlling the line of scrimmage and making critical defensive stops can determine whether a team's championship ambitions survive another week.

Madison's field hockey program is also approaching the postseason with high expectations. As district tournament competition intensifies, disciplined defense, ball movement and the ability to capitalize on scoring opportunities will become increasingly important. Every possession matters when a single goal can separate advancement from elimination.

On the volleyball court, Madison's athletes face a similarly demanding road. Consistent serving, precise passing and strong communication will be essential as the Warhawks compete for opportunities to advance through district and regional competition. The pressure of tournament play brings out both the challenges and excitement of a sport where momentum can shift with every rally.

Meanwhile, Madison's cross country runners are preparing for their own postseason tests. Unlike the head-to-head battles on the football field or volleyball court, cross country championships reward both individual endurance and collective performance. Every finishing position can influence a team's overall standing, making each runner's contribution important.

For the Warhawks, success will depend on maintaining their training, racing strategically and delivering strong performances when championship opportunities arrive.

Across all four programs, the coming weeks promise plenty of excitement for Madison students, families, alumni and the greater Vienna community.

Whether the decisive moment comes on a fourth-down conversion, a last-minute goal, a match-winning volleyball point or a sprint toward the finish line, the Warhawks are preparing to give their supporters plenty to cheer about.

The road to a championship is never easy, but at James Madison, the pursuit is part of the tradition.

The Warhawks have results to support that excitement. Through Oct. 9, Madison football had won five consecutive games following a season-opening loss to Stone Bridge. The streak included a 14-0 shutout of Marshall and a 20-6 homecoming victory over Westfield. The team's published schedule lists South Lakes on Oct. 23, Oakton on Oct. 30 and Chantilly on Nov. 6 among its remaining regular-season opponents.

The statewide championship calendar adds urgency: VHSL regional competition for field hockey and cross country begins Oct. 24, volleyball regionals begin Oct. 31, and football regional quarterfinals are scheduled for Nov. 14.

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Commanders Squander Opportunity to Climb NFC East Ladder in Tie

BY OWEN KORZAK

WASHINGTON, DC — The Washington Commanders missed an opportunity to gain ground in the NFC East after tying the New York Giants, 27-27, in overtime on Oct. 11.

Washington entered Week 5 looking to build momentum after a difficult start to the season. The Commanders opened with a 24-22 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles before falling 37-20 to the Dallas Cowboys in Week 2. The loss to Dallas dropped Washington to 0-2, as quarterback Jayden Daniels suffered an elbow injury, putting early pressure on the team to respond.

The Commanders answered in Week 3 with a 33-31 victory over the defending champion Seattle Seahawks. Filling in for the injured Daniels, Marcus Mariota threw three touchdown passes, while Kain Medrano returned an interception for a late touchdown to help Washington secure its first win of the season.

However, that momentum did not last. Washington suffered a 30-13 loss to the Indianapolis Colts in London in Week 4. Injuries continued to pile up, as Mariota exited with a knee injury, forcing third-string rookie quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis into action. Kaliakmanis showed some flashes, including a 47-yard touchdown pass to Treylon Burks, but ultimately struggled, completing less than half of his passes and recording a passer rating of just 60.9.

As Daniels returned against New York, Washington looked to get back on track in a struggling NFC East. Instead, the Commanders let a fourth-quarter lead slip away as the Giants rallied to force overtime.

However, Washington had a chance to win in the extra period. After the Giants failed to capitalize on their drive, Daniels led the Commanders into field-goal range. But with 12 seconds remaining and no timeouts, Daniels was tackled before Washington could attempt a potential game-winning kick. The sequence has been heavily criticized, with fans, analysts and media members calling for coaches Dan Quinn and David Blough to be fired.

The tie left Washington at 1-3-1 through five weeks, limiting its opportunity to climb the NFC East standings. With the division still relatively close, the Commanders have time to make up ground. However, missed opportunities like those could prove costly as the season progresses.

Capitals look to send Ovechkin off into the sunset in 2027



Image courtesy NHL Media

BY OWEN KORZAK

WASHINGTON, DC — The Washington Capitals' 2026-27 season carries added significance as captain Alex Ovechkin prepares to play his final year in the National Hockey League.

Ovechkin announced Oct. 5 that this season would be his last, putting an end to his 22-season NHL career that has made him one of hockey's most accomplished players.

Ovechkin, 41, enters his final season as the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer. After surpassing Wayne Gretzky's career goals record in 2025, Ovechkin now has another season to add to his trophy case while giving Capitals fans one final opportunity to watch him compete.

Washington has shown promising signs early in the season. The Capitals opened their campaign with a 5-2 victory over the Carolina Hurricanes before splitting their next two games. They followed that stretch with wins over the Pittsburgh Penguins and New York Rangers, improving to 3-1 through four games.

Ovechkin scored his first goal of the season and 930th of his career in a 5-3 loss to the Seattle Kraken on Oct. 11.

The Capitals' early results suggest the team can compete, but consistency will be important as the schedule continues. Washington will need contributions throughout their deep lineup to maintain its momentum and contend in a Metropolitan Division that features the reigning champion Carolina Hurricanes.

For Ovechkin, the season is about more than extending his goal record. The Capitals' captain has made it clear that he expects this to be a special season for the team and fans.

As the season progresses, Washington will attempt to balance the emotion surrounding Ovechkin's farewell with the goal of winning their second Stanley Cup.

George Mason Athletics Enters a New Season with High Expectations

BY OWEN KORZAK

FAIRFAX, VA — As November marks the return of college basketball, George Mason University athletics is entering a new season with momentum and expectations across its programs.

The Patriots men's basketball team opens its 2026-27 campaign on Nov. 2 against UMBC at EagleBank Arena in Fairfax, Virginia. Head coach Tony Skinn's team will look to build on its recent progress in the Atlantic 10 Conference and continue establishing itself among the conference's competitive programs.

George Mason finished the 2025-26 season with a strong conference record, and its home-court performance has become a key part of the program's identity. Under Skinn, the Patriots have recorded a 22-5 Atlantic 10 home record, giving fans reason to look forward to another season at EagleBank Arena.

The upcoming schedule also provides opportunities for the Patriots to make an early statement. George Mason is scheduled to host Coppin State on Nov. 6 before facing Kansas City and Bradley at a tournament in Florida. Additional nonconference games against North Carolina Central, South Florida and Longwood will test the team before conference play begins.

The men's team is not the only program drawing attention. George Mason's women's basketball program is coming off back-to-back successful seasons under head coach Vanessa Blair-Lewis. The Patriots won the Atlantic 10 tournament in 2025 and claimed the conference's regular-season title in 2026.

As the fall sports season continues, George Mason athletics is also investing in its future. The university broke ground on a new Basketball and Academic Performance Center, an investment to strengthen their basketball programs.

With basketball season beginning, the Patriots will look to translate recent success into another competitive year.

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D.C. Approves $305 Million for Commanders Stadium Transit Improvements

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

WASHINGTON, DC — The D.C. Council unanimously approved $305 million in transportation improvements surrounding the future Washington Commanders stadium, advancing preparations for the team's anticipated return to the District in 2030.

The Oct. 6 vote directs $300 million toward improvements at the Stadium-Armory Metro station, with another $5 million supporting planning and design of a proposed Gold Line bus service connecting the stadium area with Union Station.

The investment addresses concerns about accommodating thousands of additional passengers traveling to games, concerts and other events at the planned 65,000-seat stadium.

Metro officials estimate more than half of stadium attendees could use public transportation. Without significant station improvements, clearing crowds following major events could take more than two hours.

Proposed upgrades include expanding station capacity and addressing limitations involving escalators, elevators and fare gates.

The transportation funding follows the council's approval last year of a $3.7 billion redevelopment agreement to return the Commanders to the former RFK Stadium site along the Anacostia River.

The broader 180-acre redevelopment envisions up to 6,500 residential units, including approximately one-third designated as affordable housing, alongside retail, parks and recreational amenities.

Council member Charles Allen, who chairs the transportation committee, emphasized the importance of ensuring transit infrastructure can accommodate increased demand while remaining accessible to residents.

The $5 million Gold Line allocation funds preliminary planning rather than construction.

With the stadium scheduled to open in 2030, the transportation investments represent another step toward transforming the former RFK campus into a regional destination.

What Metro's Proposed Fare Increase Means for Commuters

BY ABBY DENNIS

Daily train commuters across Northern Virginia may soon need to adjust their transit budgets, as Metro leaders have proposed an 11% fare increase. The plan has ignited widespread discussion among local riders. If approved following public hearings scheduled for this winter, the new rates could take effect as early as July 2027.

The proposed changes mean that standard train rides would shift from the current $2.25–$6.75 range up to $2.50–$7.50 depending on distance for anyone heading into D.C. or Arlignton. As for bus fares, we would also witness a small bump to $2.50, which might not sound huge, but to long-distance commuters jumping on at Silver Line stops like Vienna, Reston, or Herndon, they will definitely feel the gradual stack on their monthly transit budgets.

Community members are already discussing how the bump could influence local travel, especially for those here who rely heavily on Metrorail to bypass the daily traffic jam on the I-66 and Route 263. Many are waiting to see if local bus systems align their pricing, while others hope employer commuter benefits will adjust to absorb the difference. With this proposal, Metro has surprisingly tossed out an initiative that could make transit free for area youth ages 5 to 18, which would offer welcome relief for local families.

While these plans remain subject to change, Fairfax commuters can gain a clearer understanding of how their future daily travels will be impacted by following the upcoming public hearings this winter.



The Life of John Mercer Langston

OP-ED BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLISHED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

A few weeks ago, I traveled down to rural Louisa County to walk a property which has been submitted for recognition to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The property is the birthplace of John Mercer Langston (1829 – 1897).

Who is John Mercer Langston? Glad you asked.

J.M. Langston was born to Ralph Quarles, a Louisa plantation owner, and his common-law wife, Jane Langston, who was of Pamunkey Indian and black parentage. Ralph had been Jane's owner but freed her about the time of John's birth (they had multiple children together).

Having mixed-race children was not unusual in ante-bellum Virginia, but this situation was unique: Mr. Quarles not only acknowledged his children with Jane but set aside a Trust for their education. Recognizing that this legacy would be challenged in Virginia, he also provided for his children to move north across the Ohio River, after he had died.

Langston grew up in Ohio and attended Oberlin College, where he studied law. During the Civil War, he advocated for Negro enlistment and actively recruited for the free black regiments which organized in Ohio. Many of these fought over the same ground where Langston's had been born and where his father was buried.



Portrait of John Mercer Langston

During the War, Langston worked on Capitol Hill, where he helped draft the language for the Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery. Years later, he assisted in writing the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1875, which was later adopted into today's Civil Rights Act of 1964.

After the War, Langston was appointed inspector general of the Freedman's Bureau which attempted to integrate former slaves into post-War American life. In that position, he traveled often to Virginia. His auto-biography, which I just finished reading, tells of his fearless meetings with prominent citizens and former Confederates in the Richmond area, as the South came to grips with the end of the War and of slavery. He had no issue dealing with white leadership; indeed, he was the son of one of the largest white landowners in the state.

An academic at heart, Langston became the first dean of the Howard University Law School in 1868. Later he returned (again) to Virginia to become the President of Virginia State University, the land grant university established for African-American students in Virginia.

In 1888, after completing his tenure at Virginia State, Langston stepped forward as the Republican Party candidate for the Fifth Congressional District. He initially lost the election to the Democratic candidate but challenged the result based on voter fraud and intimidation. After a lengthy Congressional investigation, he was declared the winner and seated in the U.S. Congress — the first black Congressman in Virginia history and only such Congressman until 1992, when Bobby Scott was elected to represent Virginia's Third Congressional District.

In the next cycle (1890), Langston was defeated by his Democratic opponent as the Democrats completed their recapture of Virginia's government and the return of the state to one-party rule.

Langston died in 1897. Unlike his contemporary Frederick Douglass, he did not ascend to legendary American status. Part of it was his academic style and weakness for using too many words when both talking and writing. His autobiography needed a good editor. (Hey I can relate). Having said all that, he was a ground-breaking figure in American history and in the history of Virginia. Born of an enslaved mother, he became one of the most influential men in America in his time.

Why do I mention all of this? Because Langston's birthplace in Louisa County is currently set to be demolished by The Valley Link transmission project, which is one of the high-voltage (500 kV) electrical lines cutting across Piedmont Virginia to feed the Data Center Alley in Prince William/Loudoun.

The Louisa Historical Society has petitioned to have the Quarles plantation house designated as a historic site so as to avoid demolition. That application is pending with DHR, and my clients — the current property owners — strongly support it.

Years ago, I said our society was living in an Age of Cowardice. Now perhaps that has shifted to an Age of Forgetfulness.

Either way, the life of John Mercer Langston is worth remembering.

America's 250th Passport at Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center

Get Your Passport:

https://virginiahistory.org/virginia-250-passport



Passports are available, free of charge and while supplies last, at Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Monticello, Mount Vernon, Virginia Museum of History & Culture, VA250's Mobile Museum, and Virginia Tourism's twelve Welcome Centers across the Commonwealth.

Civil War Survival Skills



Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Participants will practice the skills that soldiers used to survive long marches over rough terrain in different climates. Participants will learn how to pitch a civil war dog-tent, conduct 19th-century laundry, and drill like a Civil War soldier.

Registration required. All registered participants must be accompanied by an adult. Registration opens October 24: https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Events-directory

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Five Ways to Celebrate Thanksgiving Without the Stress



Thanksgiving stock photograph

BY MORGAN W. JAMESON

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time for family, friends and gathering around the dinner table. But preparing a holiday meal does not have to mean spending an entire day in the kitchen. Whether hosting a large family gathering, entertaining friends or enjoying a quiet holiday, there are plenty of ways to celebrate without sacrificing time together.

With Thanksgiving falling on Nov. 26 this year, now is the time to consider five different approaches to celebrating.

1. The Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner

For those who enjoy the familiar traditions, a roasted turkey surrounded by mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce and green bean casserole remains a holiday favorite.

The key to avoiding unnecessary stress is preparation. Make desserts, cranberry sauce and casseroles a day ahead, leaving Thanksgiving morning for the turkey and final touches.

A traditional meal also provides an opportunity to involve family members by assigning side dishes, desserts or beverages. Sharing responsibilities reduces expenses and allows everyone to contribute.

2. The Thanksgiving Buffet

A buffet offers flexibility, particularly when entertaining larger groups or guests arriving at different times.

Instead of preparing a formal seated dinner, arrange dishes along a serving table and allow guests to build their own plates.

Consider offering turkey alongside ham, roasted vegetables, macaroni and cheese and several seasonal sides. A buffet also accommodates guests with different dietary preferences.

Use slow cookers and warming trays to maintain appropriate serving temperatures while allowing guests to return for seconds.

3. Heavy Appetizers and Small Plates

Not every Thanksgiving celebration requires a full dinner.

A menu featuring substantial appetizers creates a relaxed atmosphere where guests can mingle rather than remain seated.

Consider turkey sliders with cranberry sauce, mini chicken pot pies, stuffed mushrooms, deviled eggs and baked brie. Add a vegetable platter and seasonal desserts for variety.

This approach works particularly well for Friendsgiving gatherings or smaller spaces where seating everyone around one table may be difficult.

4. Let Someone Else Do the Cooking

For those who prefer entertaining at home without preparing the entire meal, ordering a prepared Thanksgiving dinner offers a practical alternative.

Many grocery stores, caterers and restaurants offer holiday packages featuring turkey, traditional sides and desserts.

Options may include fully cooked meals requiring reheating or individual dishes that complement homemade favorites.

Order early, confirm pickup instructions and check whether the advertised package serves the expected number of guests.

5. Thanksgiving at a Restaurant

Sometimes the easiest way to celebrate is leaving the cooking and cleanup to someone else.

Restaurants throughout Northern Virginia traditionally offer Thanksgiving menus, including multicourse dinners, buffets and holiday specials.

Dining out can be particularly appealing for smaller families, couples or residents without access to a large kitchen.

Reservations should be made well in advance, especially for popular holiday dining times. Confirm pricing, children's options and whether gratuity is included.

Regardless of the approach, Thanksgiving does not have to be defined by an elaborate meal. The holiday offers an opportunity to reconnect, share traditions and enjoy time with the people who matter most.

Fun Game Ideas at the Dinner Table

BY JACQUELYN DONALD



Playing games and engaging in activities during the holiday season is always enjoyable. As Thanksgiving approaches, here are four distinct activity ideas for readers to enjoy.

Activity 1 includes creating thanksgiving conversation cards in which the host places a question on a card at each chair at the table and the three questions can be asked. What is one thing you're grateful for this year?, what is your happiest childhood memory during the holidays, what is something new you learned this year?, and what has inspired you the most this year? This activity is a great conversation starter to get people around the table to talk.

Activity 2 is to create a memory jar. With the memory jar, each person at the dinner table will write down on a piece of paper what they learned, a funny experience during the year, their favorite family moment during the year, what happened throughout the year that changed their life, something positive that happened during the year, something they accomplished the current year, and something that they want to work on in the new year. Then the host will read the notes aloud and the guests will have to guess who wrote the note. This is a great way to have fun at the dinner table, remember what happened during the year, and be strategic about what to work on in the new year.

Activity 3 suggestion is to create personalized place cards in which the host writes each guest name on a place card and add a compliment, a funny memory or a positive quality about them. This is a great exercise to make everyone feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

Activity 4 suggestion is to draw a picture of a tree on a paper on the wall and tape it on the wall. Each guest will write on a sticky note something they are grateful for this year and each person will put it on the tree and then the host will review the responses with everyone.

The Season of Giving

GUEST COLUMN BY NEHAL GANDHI

Around this time of the year, 'giving' finds its way into our calendars, shopping lists and family agendas. There are school and neighborhood drives for food, for winter wear, for toys. There are year-end appeals from organizations we may have supported before, and from those whose work we are just beginning to discover in our community. Between Thanksgiving and the holidays ahead, we find ways to help, and questions such as "What should I give?" and "Who should I give to?" become more prominent than ever.

After more than 25 years in the nonprofit sector, I have learned to ask another question alongside these: "Have I asked what is needed?"

That question feels more relevant when I volunteer annually on the Grants Review Committee for the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia's (CFNOVA) Community Investment Funds. CFNOVA, located in Fairfax County, supports local nonprofits and helps connect charitable giving with community needs. Each year, I review applications from various organizations with focus areas ranging from children and youth, education, to aging, mental health, and basic safety-net needs.

Reading those applications offers a different view of the place we call home. Northern Virginia is often associated with strong schools, economic opportunity and relative affluence. And within the same region are communities navigating food insecurity, older adults needing support, young people facing challenges, and organizations working quietly to meet needs across our community.

This season brings many ways to participate, and Northern Virginia has no shortage of generosity. We give because an issue touches our own lives, because someone we trust has asked, or because giving has become a family tradition. The holidays simply make much of it more visible. Sometimes our first instinct may be exactly what is helpful. Other times, listening may lead us somewhere different. Either way, giving begins with both generosity and a willingness to ask, "What is needed?"

-Nehal Gandhi is a Vienna-based nonprofit and philanthropy consultant with more than 25 years in the sector. She is the author of The Nonprofit Paradox: What We Don't Talk About, When We Talk About Giving. The views expressed here are her own and do not represent any organization.

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week Encourages Communities to Help Neighbors in Need

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

As the holiday season approaches, communities across the country are preparing to recognize Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, Nov. 15–21, 2026, a national initiative encouraging Americans to support individuals and families struggling with food insecurity and housing instability.

Founded in 1975 at Villanova University, the annual observance brings together more than 700 colleges, schools and community organizations nationwide. Sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, the campaign promotes education, volunteerism, fundraising and community action.

In Fairfax City and surrounding communities, homelessness remains an important concern, particularly as colder temperatures increase the need for safe shelter, warm clothing and nutritious meals.

Local organizations provide essential services, including emergency housing, food assistance, medical care, employment support and counseling. Their work also helps individuals and families move toward greater financial independence and permanent housing.

Residents can participate by donating food, clothing or financial contributions, volunteering at local shelters, or organizing neighborhood collection drives. Schools, businesses and faith communities can also help raise awareness and support organizations serving vulnerable residents.

The observance serves as a reminder that hunger and homelessness affect people from many backgrounds, including working families, seniors and individuals experiencing unexpected financial hardship.

For more information about the national campaign, visit www.hhweek.org.

Three Local Resources for People Experiencing Homelessness

1. The Lamb Center
3160 Campbell Dr, Fairfax

Offers meals, showers, laundry, healthcare referrals, case management and employment assistance. Call: 703-691-3178 · Website: www.thelambcenter.org

2. FACETS
10700 Page Ave Suite 160, Fairfax

Provides emergency food assistance, housing support, street outreach and winter hypothermia prevention services. Call: 703-352-5090

3. Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning
Connects residents with emergency shelter referrals, food assistance, rental support and other community resources.

Call: 703-222-0880 · Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

BestCrosswords.com - Puzzle #1 on 10/13/2026 [easy] (solution)



Across
1- Common street name; 5- Baseball stats; 9- Killer whale; 13- Big name in foil; 15- Slippery; 16- First king of Israel; 17- Crockpot concoctions; 18- Scottish refusals; 19- Air-filled rubber hoop, become fatigued; 20- High craggy hill; 21- Hawaiian outdoor feast; 23- Deadly fly; 25- Microbe; 26- Distant; 27- Like some triangles; 30- Australian bird; 31- Lots; 32- Death notice; 37- Teri of "Tootsie"; 38- Of a pelvic bone; 40- Evening, informally; 41- Eastern; 43- Broaden; 44- Listening device; 45- Emily Dickinson, e.g.; 47- Takes by theft; 50- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 51- Shrimp dish; 52- Like some chocolate; 53- How Dry ____; 56- Foreign Legion cap; 57- Indigo source; 59- Overjoy; 61- Monogram ltr.; 62- Standard; 63- Severity; 64- Department store department; 65- Canonized Fr. women; 66- Area;

Down
1- Sail support; 2- Kind of sax; 3- Bakery worker; 4- Immediately; 5- Give a new title to; 6- Boyfriend; 7- ____-de-France; 8- Affecting the whole body; 9- Bony prefix; 10- Singer Bonnie; 11- Swearword; 12- Sheltered; 14- Not up; 22- Pot used to contain the ashes of a dead person; 24- Porn; 25- Stare angrily; 26- Singer McEntire; 27- Palm starch; 28- Blacken; 29- Ethereal: Prefix; 32- Petroleum; 33- Military groups; 34- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 35- Numbered rds.; 36- Itches; 38- Sicilians, e.g.; 39- Metallica drummer Ulrich; 42- Kind of tide; 43- Less strong; 45- Old Testament book; 46- Not 'neath; 47- Part of an act; 48- Golf gimme; 49- Sends out; 51- Milk choice; 52- Calamitous; 53- "Othello" villain; 54- Like ____ of bricks; 55- A ____ formality; 58- ____ a chance!; 60- Designer Claiborne;

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