Height amendment deferred

Planning Commissioners allow time for additional community input
BY CATHERINE KANE

The Planning Commission voted to defer action on a controversial zoning amendment at its most recent meeting on June 23. The proposed amendment has garnered significant pushback, especially from residents in the Del Ray neighborhood.

The proposal comes as the city works to meet its affordable housing goals, which are aspirational and not binding. As part of a larger effort to increase affordable housing, the city introduced Zoning Ordinance 7-700 which, among other things, established a process by which developers can apply for up to 25-feet of bonus height in exchange for including affordable housing in their projects. Currently, this ordinance only applies to zones where buildings are already allowed above 50 feet.

The proposed amendment would decrease the height restriction eligibility from above 50-feet to above 45-feet. This small, seemingly innocuous change adds new neighborhoods and corridors in which developers could apply for additional height on their projects; most notably, and controversial, the Mount Vernon Avenue of the Del Ray neighborhood.

At the Planning Commission meeting, a large, vocal group of Del Ray residents spoke in opposition to the amendment. They argued that the proposal would take away from Del Ray’s character and put more stress on the city’s already-burdened infrastructure. Many of the citizens also testified that the commission was hastily pushing the amendment through without consulting residents and fully analyzing the impact of the change.

“This is civic activism at its best,” Yvonne Callahan, vice president of Old Town Civic Association, said in an interview. Callahan has been a proponent of historic preservation in the city for decades and opposes the bonus height amendment.

“There’s been very few issues in the city where Del Ray and Old Town teamed up and supported each other. This time I saw it as a little bit different: ‘We’ve been through what you’ve been through and we’re here to help you kind of a thing,’” she said.

Jane Baird, a longtime Del Ray resident and homeowner, spoke before the commission.

“I cannot see a better future,” she said.

SEE PLANNING

A name steeped in history

New Old Town eatery 1799 Prime references owner’s family legacy
BY KASSIDY MCDONALD

There are hundreds of years of American history behind the name 1799 Prime, an elegant steakhouse set to open on 110 S. Pitt Street in mid to late July, as 1799 was the year that restaurant founder Jahmond Quander’s enslaved ancestors were freed at Mount Vernon upon the death of George Washington.

“For me, 1799 was kind of the beginning of the promise of freedom for my ancestors and what have you,” Quander said. “So for me, it was very fitting for my flagship location, here in Old Town, which is where we arrived on slave ships, to call the restaurant 1799 Prime Steak and Seafood.”

Quander is one of the oldest documented African American family names of people who came to North America as slaves. Quander family records have been so meticulously kept that the family members can trace their lineage back almost 350 years to Colonial Maryland, according to the 1799 Prime website.

One of Quander’s ancestors, who arrived in America on a slave ship, was asked his name. The ancestor, who had been taken from Ghana, responded with a name that was misinterpreted as “Quando.” In the 18th century, the spelling was transposed to Kwando and then much later to Quander.

Quander ancestors wound up working as slaves on George Washington’s property in Mount Vernon. Jahmond Quander said one of his ancestors was a seamstress for the Washingtons. Nancy Carter Quander and her mother Sukey Bay were among the...
Christine Roland Garner

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Man indicted for vehicular manslaughter

Carlos Kami Adar McKethan, a 44-year old Fairfax County resident, was arrested after a Grand Jury indicted him on Aggravated Vehicular Manslaughter-Felony and Driving Under the Influence of Phencyclidine (PCP)-Misdemeanor charges on June 22, according to a press release. The charges come from a traffic collision on Duke St. that happened on February 22. McKethan's vehicle struck another and the driver of the struck vehicle was killed. Aggravated Vehicular Manslaughter is punishable by up to 20 years and Driving Under the Influence PCP is punishable by up to 12 months in jail.

No trial date has been set. The defendant is currently being held without bail in the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center awaiting trial.

Interim superintendent search update

With the announcement of Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.'s resignation as superintendent of Alexandria City Public Schools, the School Board and larger community will be involved in an intensive search for a new leader for the ACPS school system, according to an announcement from the ACPS website.

Their joint goal is to have a new interim superintendent by July 28. The announcement encourages staff, families and the community to provide their opinions and feedback as they search for an interim superintendent to ease the transition into the new school year, and while there is a search for Hutchings' permanent successor.

Community members should use the School Board Contact Form located on the ACPS website to provide commentary via email. The contact form can be found here: https://acpsweb.wufoo.com/forms/mi5hgzjlffvg9/.

Interested applicants should keep an eye out for a job posting here: https://www.acps.k12.va.us/domain/1625?fbclid=IwAR1Jrq4jOTnD7whHbw3TXGYj1b83uNPDA9jAxDGfAqhFo_l78Ilg8WY

Applications close on July 8 and interviews will be conducted July 18-21.

Nepenthe Gallery showcases local artists

Nepenthe Gallery announced “Summer Solstice,” a special exhibit that will showcase local artists that will run through July 29. The paintings and other artworks by six Alexandria artists will be showcased at the gallery as part of their ART+WINE+CHEESE series, according to a release.

The artists featured are: Maremi Andreozzi, Cornelia Atchley, Andreas Barrett, Debra Dartez, Tammey Laws and Shannon Lindblom. Nepenthe Gallery is located in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center.

-ckane@alextimes.com
Chinquapin Wahoos swim to victory

The Chinquapin Wahoos defeated the Saratoga Stingrays 323.5 to 103.5 at the Old Town Pool on Saturday during their home opener. The Wahoos led the meet from start to finish, advancing Alexandria’s only public swim team to a 2-0 record in the Colonial Swim League.

Here are a list of the winners: Jonathan Ramsdell, Jolan Foronda, Madison Schang and Isabel Matorana won the 200-yard mixed age/sex medley relay; Ramsdell won the boys 50-yard freestyle, 50-yard backstroke and breaststroke, Alex Wittmer won second in the 50-yard butterfly; Wilhelm Schultz placed third in the freestyle and joined Ramsdell, Wittmer and Eddy Paz to win the 200-yard medley relay; Bella McLemore won first in the 50-yard backstroke; Camila Zuniga turned in three third place finishes in 50-yard backstroke, butterfly, tied in freestyle and joined McLemore, Natasha Yoo and Jacari Jahi to place second in the medley relay; Ronan Lauinger won the 50-yard breaststroke with Foronda in second and Bodie Lauinger in third; Emil LaSida won the 50-yard freestyle backstroke and butterfly; LaSida, Foronda, Ronan and Bodie Lauiner won the 200-yard medley relay; Elisabeth Caroll also won the freestyle and breaststroke; Ryan Shaw won the he 25-yard backstroke and freestyle races; Max Kessler-Gowell won the 25-yard freestyle; Bennett Sherry won the 25-yard breaststroke; The team of Sherry, Kessler-Gowell, Daniel Frienburg and Mateo Lorenzen-Schmidt won the 100-yard medley relay; Tyler Turner won first place in the 50-yard freestyle, 50-yard breaststroke and 25-yard butterfly; Ridley Hearing won the 50-yard race; Micaela Zuinga won the 25-yard butterfly and was joined by Freya Montes de Oca, Isabel Matorana and Headding to win the 100-yard medley relay; Alex Guevara and Madison Schang both captured three first place finishes.

The Wahoos closed out the meet with two exciting mixed age freestyle relay wins. Boys Ethan Sherry, Alex Guevara, Eddie Paz and Emil LaSida pulled out another come-from-behind win, while girls Julia Davis, Micaela Zuinga, Bella McLemore and Elisabeth Carroll also won.

The Wahoos will face the Chase Club Sharks – the only other undefeated team in the CSL blue division – on Sunday in Fairfax.

Residential beautification awards

The Alexandria Beautification Commission accepted nominations from Alexandria residents and Commission members who nominated candidates whose properties showcased non-invasive plants, native plants, sustainable approaches, and landscape architecture within their gardens, according to a press release.

Residents from across Alexandria consistently demonstrated how utilizing different gardening techniques can deliver beauty, texture, and scale within a garden. The Commission hopes that this will inspire others to enhance the beauty of their own properties in an environmentally friendly way, and speaks to the future of a more liveable and healthier Alexandria.

Homes and residential communities were evaluated based on criteria including beautification of the City and neighborhoods through contextual landscaping, utilization of native plant materials and inclusion of environmentally sustainable design practices and maintenance, the press release stated.

The winners include: 605 N Columbus St., 518 N Alfred St. and 322 N Columbus St., 322 N Columbus St., 1316 Cleveland St., 414 St., 2207 Ivor Ln., 1007 Vassar Rd., 1316 Cleveland St., 414 Crown View Dr., 220 E. Custis Ave., 518 N Alfre St. and 322 N Columbus St.

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slaves who worked as spinners and cloth makers at River Farm, one of George Washington’s five farms that made up the Mount Vernon Plantation and Estate, according to the 1799 Prime website.

Jahmond Quander has personal ties to Mount Vernon, as he previously worked there as the Director of Food and Beverage Operations. Quander’s history is entwined with that of Alexandria, and various facets of the restaurant, from the layout to the artwork to the food, reflect that heritage.

Each of 1799 Prime’s dining rooms will have its own personality as well as a name that relates to the history behind the concept of the restaurant.

The Peacock Lounge will offer a one-of-a-kind bar experience that will have signature cocktails made with the restaurant’s own herbs growing outside. Foodies may want to sit in the Potomac room because the chef will send most of the menu items he is experimenting with there, or people may choose to sit in the George Washington room where the skylights offer an airy feel.

During the winter months the fireplaces inside the dining areas and bar will be turned on to provide guests with additional comfort and ambience. During warmer months from spring through fall, the outdoor patio will be open for dining.

The outdoor dining space will also feature a custom mural done by artist Sabrina Rupprecht that depicts scenes from Quander’s, and Alexandria’s, history – though the recruitment of the muralist was accidental.

When Quander and General Manager Jeremy Davis were out to lunch one day, they were startled by a commotion across the street. The pair went to go check it out and saw a young woman was painting a mural of a lion. Quander and Davis were so impressed with Rupprecht’s talent that Quander wanted her to paint his logo.

When Rupprecht saw the outdoor space where the logo would be, she was inspired by Quander’s family story and decided that the logo would not be a good fit for the space.

Artist Sabrina Rupprecht created a nine-panel mural to hang in the outdoor patio space of the restaurant.

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Instead, she had an idea to paint a nine-panel mural. Rupprecht began researching the Quander family’s history in preparation, and even read a book that Quander gave her that his uncle had written about their family tree.

Rupprecht wanted to tell the family’s story visually, but not make it so complex that diners could not understand their history without words. The nine panels she created act as a timeline and span from the 1600s to 2022.

The arrival of Quander’s ancestors to the United States from Ghana is the first big milestone that Rupprecht’s mural depicts. The second milestone is Mount Vernon, which is an important place for both Quander and many of his ancestors because they both have worked at this location.

The next image of the mural is a walnut tree, which holds significance to Quander’s ancestors. Rupprecht discovered that they used to gather around a walnut tree to eat meals and have meetings while she did her research. The next image includes Alexandria’s waterfront, where Rupprecht inserted historic landmarks, like the Torpedo Factory Art Center, to make it clear to 1799 Prime diners that this image is Alexandria.

The final panel of the mural depicts a present day Jahmond standing outside 1799 Prime’s front door.

“Sonny is the most talented chef I’ve worked with in my career. Chefs miss it, sometimes. Sometimes they have the culinary skill, but they don’t have the execution,” Quander said of the mural.

The restaurant as a whole will be a sort of “melting pot,” in terms of character, dining spaces and a menu created by Co-Founder and COO Sonny Tena that they hope will be exciting for patrons.

Tena met Quander while working together at The Blackwall Hitch on Alexandria’s waterfront. The two hit it off and became friends and eventually business partners. After more than four years working together, they knew it was time for the two of them to open a restaurant of their own.

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When 1799 Prime Steak and Seafood opens in Old Town at 110 S. Pitt St. next month, it will be the fourth restaurant to grace the historic building, which was built in 1815.

The previous three restaurants all had long tenures at the site. The most recent occupant was the acclaimed Restaurant Eve, which opened in 2004 and had a 14-year run before closing four years ago this month. Restaurant Eve was a chef-centric restaurant operated by Cathal and Meshelle Armstrong.

Long-time Alexandrians remember Santa Fe East, an eclectic restaurant offering mostly southwestern cuisine that garnered accolades when chef Alison Swope ran the kitchen for a few years in the late 1980s into the 90s.

Even longer-tenured residents may remember The Wayfarer restaurant, which was a city mainstay in the 1970s into the 80s. The Wayfarer had hearty fare and brick and beamed dining rooms reminiscent of an English pub.

Prior to becoming host to restaurants, 110 S. Pitt St. was owned by Wellie Goddin, and a series of other businesses were located in the building. Before being bought by Goddin, the house was owned by the great-grandmother, then grandmother, of current Alexandria resident Ann Hepburn Webb, who said her great-grandparents Emma and Joseph Armstrong bought the building in 1918.

Webb said her great-grandfather was a wallpaper hanger, and though he died of appendicitis in 1929, his widow and their children Robert – Webb’s grandfather – and Margaret remained in the house after Joseph’s death. Robert married and moved to Miami but returned after losing his job in the Great Depression.

“They moved in with his mother, my great-grandmother, at 110. So that’s how my mother ended up growing up here,” Webb said. “Around 1965 they sold it to Wellie Goddin.... I believe Mr. Goddin used it as his offices.”

There are several connections between 110 S. Pitt’s various occupants through the years. Webb’s great-grandparents had the same last name, Armstrong, as Restaurant Eve’s owners, though were apparently not related. In addition, 1799 Prime’s owner Jahmond Quander is a friend of Jay Ariail, son of John and Leslie Ariail, who played a leading role in Restaurant Eve’s ownership group and were also part owners of the building at 110 S. Pitt.”

Quander said he met Jay Ariail when they both were in high school, and it was Ariail who told him about the availability of the 110 S. Pitt location.

“I can’t begin to express how happy and grateful I am that Jay brought this to my attention. He was instrumental in helping me to bring my dream/goal to fruition,” Quander said. “Never give up on your dreams and goals because it’s a game of timing and sometimes you never know when it’s going to happen so stay ready.”

*(Disclosure: Alexandria Times co-owners Denise and Will Dunbar were also minority owners of Restaurant Eve and 110 S. Pitt St.)*

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Quander's extra cautious practices with food safety come from his mother, who worked in the Alexandria Health Department for more than 40 years. His experience watching his mom and hearing stories from health inspectors in the department made him aware of good food safety practices from a young age.

There will also be options for vegans and vegetarians, even though the restaurant is considered a steakhouse. Quander says the restaurant will strive to include menu items for all diners' personal preferences.

“We can cater to just about every palate, you know, so even vegetarians and vegans, we can take care of them as well. Usually they'll make the server aware that they're vegetarian and say, 'Hey, can you suggest anything?' It is always, 'We have salad.' But we'll [1799 Prime] have different options, whether it is an Impossible burger or veggie primavera,” Quander said.

With Quander, Tena and Davis having so much combined restaurant and hospitality experience, they have high hopes for the future of 1799 Prime in Old Town. They hope their dedication to hospitality and giving the customer a different dining experience will set them apart.

When describing his team, Quander said that the 1799 Prime team has become a family.

"What makes this restaurant special is the people that are involved," Quander said. "In being involved with Chef Sonny, with Jeremy, the entire management team, the synergy we all have with the employees that we’ve already hired. That is what sets us apart. Hospitality comes from the people that you surround yourself with."

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ture for Del Ray by adding 70-foot buildings and turning Mount Vernon [Avenue] and some of the side streets into cold, impersonal Route One corridors.”

Kim Gilliam, a resident and business owner in Del Ray, spoke about how few people seemed to know about the proposed changes to their neighborhood.

“I was passing out flyers and ran into a lot of people and not one of them knew about this. It’s the best kept secret in our area,” she said.

Del Ray citizens emphasized throughout the meeting that they were concerned the character of their neighborhood would be transformed by tall, multi-use developments. Many spoke of the community in the neighborhood and how it might change with new neighbors in new buildings.

“I can’t walk down the street and not see someone I know. You’re not going to get that with a seven-story building,” Gilliam said.

In a letter to the Planning Commission, Del Ray homeowner Dan Quigley raised concerns about the privacy and quality of his residence.

“This is not what we bought into when we moved in almost 20 years ago. If the [proposal] proceeds we will most likely have to move from our dream home. ... No one else should have to go through what we are going through,” he wrote.

Other residents see it differently. Elena Hutchison moved to Del Ray from Potomac Yard for the walkability and access to transit the neighborhood offers.

“I want other people to be able to enjoy that and a big part of the way you achieve that is by allowing for some reasonable amounts of density where it makes sense,” she said in an interview. “I feel like a lot of the people who are moving into the neighborhood do share this viewpoint and they are moving [to Del Ray] because of it.”

The Planning Commission meeting, which lasted nearly six hours and continued past midnight, ended in a deferral of action on the matter until the effects of the amendment could be studied further.

In supporting the deferral, Commissioner Melissa McMahon recognized that more discussion was needed on the issue.

“I feel it's very visceral. [This community] wants to hold it in their hands and turn it around and over backwards and talk about this side and that side – and I get it,” McMahon said.

In an interview, Planning Commission Chair Nate Macek said he was inclined to vote for the amendment, but after hearing the community’s concerns, he saw the need for the deferral and supported it.

“We wouldn’t have the community’s trust if we didn’t answer some of the questions they raised before we could confidently adopt this. That’s why the pause was important to me,” he said.

However, he emphasized the importance of building more housing to combat the city’s deficit of affordable housing.

“We have a housing crisis in the city, and we are trying to identify ways that we can make the most productive use of the land we have to provide additional housing opportunities,” he said.

Macek also responded to residents’ concerns that existing affordable housing would be torn down and replaced by larger developments that utilize the bonus height ordinance, but do not offer enough affordable housing to replace the units that were lost.

“I think it would be very unlikely that we would see this policy alone create an economic incentive to re-develop an existing structure” he said.

“It would be very unlikely you would see it be used in some of the cases that we heard about at our hearing the other night. But that is what we want some more information from [city] staff on.”

Macek described the bonus height amendment as one of many tools the city can use to increase the housing supply.

“We need to chip away at our housing needs one unit at a time,” he said.

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Donnell Rawlings thought he wanted to be a cop. It wasn’t until he started heckling comedians at stand-up shows that he realized he could be a great comedian. The Alexandria Times asked Donnell about his experience of previously living in Alexandria, as well as how he got his successful comedy career to where it is today.

**AT:** How was your experience in Alexandria while you attended T.C. Williams High School?

**DR:** I had a good experience and made some good friends in Alexandria and I’m still connected with the community. And I think what makes this show so special for me at The Birchmere, because it really feels like a class reunion for me: all my old school friends come through. And it’s those ones that I can’t lie to because they know me from like age 13. So, I gotta be truthful.

**AT:** How did you get your start in comedy?

**DR:** Well, I was waiting to be a D.C. police officer years ago. And I used to go to this comedy club with some colleagues of mine at a job I had. And I started heckling the comedians. And I went from being a heckler to the club owner daring me to go on stage. I went on stage and never looked back. So, it was never anything I wanted to do, but just so happened. I got into it just by being a heck of a loudmouth in the audience. ... I had no ambition to do stand-up. What it was just like one thing led to another. I started to stand up there, get excited about that. And then I started, kind of got a couple of monologue books, started practicing monologues and trying to train myself to be an actor that evolved into an acting career and everything was just by chance.

**AT:** Do you have a favorite role or part you’ve played on TV or as an actor?

**DR:** Well, no I wouldn’t say favorite role. But the role that I’m probably going to die with is a character Ashy Larry from the Chappelle Show. People would never ever let me live that down.

**AT:** Do you think that character was the most memorable or influential in your comedy career?

**DR:** I think that that show...
RAWLINGS

[the Chappelle Show] was just such a great platform for people to see what I’ve been doing for years. I’ve done some other stuff in regard to, you know, what I think will go down as one of the greatest things I’ve done, especially in the eyes of my son, when I played Dez the barber in the Pixar animated Oscar-winning movie, ‘Soul.’ It doesn’t matter what I do moving forward in my career, the fact that my son finally acknowledged what ‘Daddy does for a living’ through animation. That’s my favorite thing I’ve ever done.

AT: Do you have a specific person who influenced your career the most when you started comedy?

DR: I would probably say my mom. I remember one time, she said, ‘I don’t want to hear another joke or story until you go make some money.’ And we grew up not having much. But, even with the struggles that we dealt with, my mother always kept her sense of humor. It was always the lightest side of the situation and was always something to look forward to. So, I think my mom probably was my biggest inspiration, it never was like, I was like, I want to be like Richard Pryor or Eddie Murphy because I didn’t want to do stand up. You know, I wanted to be like my mom. I wanted to care about people like my mom. I fell in love with communities that I go to just like my mom. So that was my biggest inspiration.

DR: Oh, and I will say this. I had a teacher before I even started thinking about doing comedy. He had aspirations to do stand-up. This dude always had a joke. He was a king of the one-liners. I remember one time he said, ‘Donell was my outstanding student. He was always out standing in the hallway.’

AT: In creating your comedy, do you observe actual situations, or can you create comedy just in your head?

DR: No, it’s real life. My stuff is like, mostly observational. For me to really get into writing, I just have to be around people. And, you know, when you’re around people there’s always the person that makes you laugh on everything. Yeah. And I just take my comedy from life, life experiences. You know, I’m not really a joke writer. It’s just like, I let the jokes follow me, I’ll just start talking about something. And then the sooner the punchlines come in, the tags, the callbacks, all that stuff will come.

AT: What was the best night of your life in terms of comedy?

DR: I think one of the pivotal points was when I did Def Comedy Jam for the first time, because at that time there weren’t a lot of platforms for comics to perform. And that was like one of the biggest credits you can get. But for me to be able to say ‘go after that performance’ and ‘go on that stage’ and for people to say ‘you’ve seen him on Def Comedy Jam,’ that was like a real pivotal point. I knew okay, your hard work is paying off. And people are starting to acknowledge what you do.

AT: Do you have any future plans or exciting news you want to share with readers?

DR: Well, I’m just looking forward to my Netflix special coming up this fall. Snoop Dogg’s comedy special is streaming on Netflix right now and people seem to love that. And then I just encourage everybody to pay the cable bill because I will be on something...

AT: How is life in comedy and this art form difficult?

How is it great?

DR: Well, it’s difficult for people that don’t want to stay true to themselves, you know, people that kind of been through what they consider to be ‘cancel culture.’ I know we’re in a tough time, everybody’s overly sensitive about everything, but the people that are the true artists to this, they’re not going to waiver from their freedom to be able to say what they want. With that said, I still think you have a certain amount of responsibility. Just because you have the right to say what you want doesn’t mean you have to always say everything.

And also the question I get, ‘Is a joke too soon?’ In some cases, I think a joke could be too soon. But it’s never gonna be too soon for a funny observation. That’s when you’re gonna get funny observations that hit hard.

AT: Do you think you’ll do comedy for the rest of your life?

DR: Oh yeah. Comedians don’t retire. Their choice would be to die in the middle of a standing ovation. It is a job that’s so fun, so fulfilling, when I have my performance there are two people that come to the show. Somebody that wants to laugh, and somebody that needs to laugh. And when people come up to me, like, ‘Yo, I just lost somebody close to me. I wasn’t feeling up to it. I didn’t think I was gonna have a good time. But you removed me from that for 45 minutes or an hour on most days.’ That’s the biggest reward of doing my job.

Rawlings will be back in Alexandria to perform at The Birchmere Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at: https://www.ticketmaster.com/donnellrawlings-alexandria-virginia-07-02-2022/event/15005C47E7045222.

-kmcdonald@alextimes.com
How American women spies ‘gave the slip’ to the enemy (Part Two)
BY GAYLE CONVERSE
AND PAT MILLER

Due to the destruction of records and the clandestine nature of their work, the identities of most women spies remain unknown, including the former enslaved and free Black women bravely involved in Union espionage in and around Virginia during the American Civil War.

There were a few exceptions. Last month, we shared the story of former enslaved house maid Mary Elizabeth Bowser of Richmond, who was hired at the Confederate White House where Jefferson Davis and his guests reportedly openly discussed military plans. Bowser could secretly read and write. She spied during her time at the Richmond mansion and was never discovered. In 1995, the U.S. Army described Bowser as “...one of the highest placed and most productive espionage agents of the Civil War.”

In late 1861-early 1862, Mary Touvestre, a freed African American in Portsmouth, Virginia, overheard her employer discussing the refitting of the frigate “Merrimack” into the ironclad CSS “Virginia.” Touvestre stole a set of plans and fled to Washington, D.C. Her warning convinced the Navy to speed up construction of the Union’s own ironclad, the USS “Monitor.”

On March 8, 1862, in a Confederate effort to break the Union blockade of Southern ports, the “Virginia” was able to destroy two Union frigates, before the “Monitor” arrived the next day. Without Touvestre’s alert, the “Virginia” might have foiled the blockade, allowing the Confederacy to receive critical supplies from Europe.

Maryland’s Harriet Tubman, of Underground Railroad fame, was one of the Civil War’s most significant spies. Early in 1863, Union officers on the coast of South Carolina asked Tubman—who had escaped bondage in 1849—to work as a covert operative and military commander. In June 1863, she led a raid by guiding three U.S. gunboats carrying African American soldiers through the Confederate mine-infested Combahee River, rescuing 750 enslaved people and destroying Confederate estates. This success of the mission was due to a survey of the Confederate mines by Tubman’s espionage troops.

As Long Island’s Anna Smith had done almost 100 years before, a Fredericksburg, Virginia woman used her clothesline to provide intelligence to the Union in 1863. We know her married name was Dabney. She and her husband worked out their own signaling system using laundry that she hung out to dry. Whenever she saw troops moving through the area or overheard Confederate soldiers discussing plans, she would rush to the clothesline and hang items in particular formations, sending her husband a coded message, which he decoded for Union commanders. For example, a white shirt stood for General A. P. Hill, while pants hung upside down indicated the direction of troop movement.

Hoop skirts and petticoats proved to be effective hiding places for all manner of contraband. Confederate spy Belle Boyd smuggled guns and sabers out of Union camps in Virginia. In Washington, Confederate spy Rose O’Neal Greenhow often sewed secret messages into her petticoats, corset and underclothes.

Some spies on both sides of the Civil War quite literally cooked up ways to send covert messages: tucking written information inside empty eggshells, baking sections of handguns into bread loaves and hiding medicine in jars of jams and preserves.

World Wars I and II, the Cold War and recent conflicts have put women on the forefront of the spy game. Today, almost half of the CIA’s workforce are women.

Gina Haspel served as the first female director of the CIA from May 21, 2018 to Jan. 19, 2021. During Haspel’s tenure, Elizabeth Kimber served as the first female deputy director for Operations—the branch responsible for the agency’s worldwide spy network—and Dawn Meyerrieckks became the deputy director for Science and Technology, marking the first time the overall director and two of the primary directorates were headed by women.

To read part one of our spy series, which appeared in the May 26, 2022 edition of the Alexandria Times, please visit alexandria celebrates women Archives - Alexandria Times (alextimes.com)

The writers are founders of Alexandria Celebrates Women, a nonprofit that highlights influential women throughout the city’s history. Contact them at AlexandriaCelebratesWomen@gmail.com.
A&E documentary showcases comedians’ commentary
BY RICHARD ROEPER

“Do Black comedians have a right to offend? No, we have a job to offend.” – Alonzo Bodden

A prominent Black comedian is talking about police shootings of young Black men: “How do you accidentally shoot a n--- six times in the chest? ‘Well, my gun fell and just went crazy.’”

That could be Dave Chappelle or Chris Rock or any of other dozen modern-day comedic greats on stage in 2022 – but the comedian was Richard Pryor, and the observation was made a half-century ago, and the clip is from the two-part A&E documentary series “Right to Offend: The Black Comedy Revolution” that viewers can watch streaming starting Friday at aetv.com.

From executive producer Kevin Hart and co-directors Mario Diaz and Jessica Sherif, this is a timely, insightful, comprehensive and historically valuable chronicle of the Black comedy experience in America, from the minstrel acts of the early 20th century through the emergence of pioneers such as Redd Foxx and Dick Gregory and Slappy White in the 1950s and early 1960s, to the revolutionary comedy of Pryor in the 1970s, to Whoopi Goldberg and the rock-star ascension of Eddie Murphy in the 1980s, through breakthrough TV shows such as “In Living Color” and “Def Comedy Jam” in the 1990s, to present-day creative forces such as Issa Rae and Amanda Seales and Michael Che and Donald Glover.

This two-part series is a master class in Black comedy, but it never feels like a lecture, because it’s also friggin’ funny, as we’re treated to a bounty of brilliant archival footage from one Hall-of-Fame-level comedian after another, whether it’s stand-up routines or talk-show guest shots or audio snippets from classic comedy albums. Yes, of course, these trailblazing comics were commenting on race relations, oppression, poverty, violence, incendiary politics and other hot-button issues – but they made their points in flat-out hilarious fashion, with observational monologues and rapid-fire jokes that yielded huge laughs. Funny is funny is funny is funny.

Co-directors Diaz and Sherif wisely let the material – and the greats – do the talking, eschewing any unnecessary fluff or timeline hopping in favor of a mostly linear, straightforward approach to the material. We occasionally see news footage of relevant and revolutionary moments in American history, from the protests of the 1960s to the Black Lives Matter movement of the 2010s, providing context for the aforementioned archival footage, which is augmented by insightful interviews with academics and historians such as Todd Boyd, Michael Eric Dyson, Mark Anthony Neal, Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor – Richard’s daughter – and Bambi Haggins.

And we get frank and often laugh-inducing insights from generations of comedians, including Che, Tiffany Haddish, Steve Harvey, Sherri Shepherd, Rock, Tommy Davidson, Jimmie Walker, D.L.

SEE REVIEW
Hughley, Aisha Tyler, Kenan Thompson, Amber Ruffin and Seales. My only complaint would be that we’re left wanting to hear even more from the interview subjects.

“Your role is bigger than being funny,” Hart said, a sentiment echoed time and again by modern-day comics, as when Seales noted, “Out of crisis comes comedy.”

In “Part 1: The Revolutionaries,” we get a brief history of Black comedy in the early 20th century – I learned that Charlie Case finished off his jokes with a punching gesture, hence the phrase, “punchline” – before we’re reminded of how Dick Gregory was a massive crossover star who put his career on the back burner to be on the forefront of the civil rights movement. We also hear about the underground “party records” phenomenon, with Black comics doing not-safe-for-broadcast material on albums that would be played during parties. Redd Foxx did more than 50 such albums. Richard Pryor is, of course, a huge figure in the series, with Paul Mooney getting his due as a force of his own and a mentor-writer for Pryor.

There are some interesting detours into the world of sitcoms, as when we see how “Good Times” stars John Amos and Esther Rolle were concerned about Jimmie Walker’s “Dyn-O-Mite!” hamming it up, as they felt it distracted from the show’s larger goal of portraying a Black family in the Chicago housing projects in an authentic manner.

In Part 2, titled “The Contemporaries,” we’re reminded of how there was criticism of Eddie Murphy for not being more political, but it’s pointed out that Murphy did include social commentary in his comedy routines on “SNL,” and his rise to global superstardom was in and of itself pioneering. Black comedy clubs such as the Comedy Act Theatre in South Central L.A. and the Uptown Comedy Club in Harlem are recognized, followed by sections on Rock and Chappelle bringing social criticism back to the stage.

The latter sections of the series focus on the last 10 years, with the election of Donald Trump, the murder of George Floyd, the chilling rise in white supremacy and other events of monumental consequence giving rise to a whole new level of political and social commentary. Naomi Ekperigin, onstage: “Nazis are out! They’re out without hoods, getting haircuts!” It’s all terrifyingly sobering and yet grounds for fertile comedy, and we’re left remembering what Dick Gregory said more than a half-century ago: “If we don’t make massive changes, this country is doomed.”

Three-and-a-half stars.

‘Right to Offend: The Black Comedy Revolution’ is an A&E original series produced by Kevin Hart.
Whether it's summer camp, a hiking trip or an outdoor summer adventure, bringing along essential safety items is as important as remembering your camera or hiking boots. Being prepared can spare you from a painful bug bite or sunburn, or help you manage minor illness or exercise-related aches and pains. MedStar Health has a few basic items for your camp or vacation checklist.

**Bug spray**
You or your kids will most likely explore spaces occupied by creatures such as ants, spiders, flies, bees, mosquitoes and ticks, which can cause harmful rashes, or serious illness such as Lyme disease. Make sure to apply bug spray on exposed skin and clothes before venturing outdoors. Wear long pants and long sleeved, lightweight clothing options on hikes to help decrease the risk of insect bites. It is also important to teach your children how to check for ticks each night.

**Calamine lotion**
Bug bites are common during the summer months. When bites occur despite use of bug spray, calamine lotion can be applied to ease itchiness and irritation. Be sure your child knows to notify staff if there are any signs of infection, such as oozing, pain, increasing redness of the area affected, so they can be seen and treated for a possible infection.

**Sunscreen**
A sunburn can creep up on you, especially during a hike! Medical experts recommend the use of sunscreen lotion with an SPF of 30 or higher for any extended outdoor activity. It's also important to reapply sunscreen every two hours – or more frequently if you've been sweating or swimming.

**Sunglasses**
Sun exposure damages the eyes as well as the skin. The best way to protect your eyes is to wear sunglasses that provide 99% to 100% UVA and UVB protection. This will greatly reduce sun exposure that can lead to cataracts and other forms of eye damage.

**Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen**
Sunburn can be painful and uncomfortable so acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used to help alleviate the pain or discomfort. Sun poisoning can cause a range of symptoms including headache, fever, nausea and fatigue so young campers should know to reach out to an adult if they have these symptoms along with a significant sunburn, as they might need additional treatment.

**First aid kit**
Not only will a great first aid kit help you with injuries that commonly occur while out camping, but it can keep you prepared for survival situations that might arise while you are on your trip.

**Refillable water bottle**
Staying hydrated is extremely important, especially with increased outdoor activities over the summer. Be sure your child knows to drink at least three bottles per day. Help them get into the fun of having it with them all day by decorating it themselves with stickers and such.
Tips for building a ground-level deck
BY BRANDPOINT

Whether you want to create a picturesque setting for al fresco dining, establish the perfect outdoor entertainment destination, or simply want a place to enjoy relaxing weekends, building a ground-level deck is an ideal way to maximize any outdoor space. Also called a “floating” or “platform” deck, a ground-level deck is a relatively easy and affordable DIY project. Due to its low profile, this type of structure doesn’t typically require safety railings or stairs so the costs are comparatively lower than building an elevated deck in terms of both materials and labor.

If you’ve got the skills, time and ambition, the experts at Decks.com offer these helpful tips for how to build a ground-level deck that will transform your backyard into an outdoor oasis:

Planning and placement
A successful deck build starts with proper planning. While a ground-level deck typically does not require a permit, it is a good idea to check with the Alexandria city government to confirm the building codes before you get started.

Next, consider how you plan to use your deck to determine the best location for it. Will you be hosting friends and family? If so, you may want to position your deck near the house. Are you envisioning a quiet outdoor oasis? Then, a secluded area of your yard might be best.

Foundation and ventilation
Once you know where you plan to build, assess the terrain to ensure proper water run-off and ventilation. Sustained dampness on a deck can lead to mold, rot and decay. If you live in a location where the ground does not freeze, you could have the option to build the foundation with concrete deck blocks. Most areas where the ground freezes, you may need to use traditional concrete footings to build your deck foundation. It’s also recommended to install gravel under the structure to provide better drainage. Next, put stakes in the ground and string the perimeter to ensure the deck outline is level and square.

Installing the beams
At this stage, you should be able to see your deck starting to take shape. Lay the deck beams on top of the footings, and your ground-level deck will begin to take form.
Align the first length of decking with the outside edge. Once you’ve ensured that it’s even, install the remaining deck boards perpendicular to the joist. Make sure the boards are well-secured and gapped according to the decking manufacturer’s guidelines for proper ventilation. This is also important for preserving the warranty that may come with your decking material.

**Finishing and enjoying**

Once your decking is installed, use a circular saw to trim any overhang for clean, finished edges. After you’ve admired your hard work, make the space your own by adding plants, furniture and decorations to bring your outdoor oasis to life.

For more deck building ideas and information, or to find a professional deck builder near you, visit Decks.com.

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**HOME OF THE WEEK**

**Rare Carlyle Towers end unit with scenic views**

A lovely three-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath condominium in the sought-after Carlyle Towers with a garage parking space. Featuring cherry hardwood floors and new carpet in the bedrooms. All popcorn ceilings have been removed and the unit is freshly painted. This is a rare end unit location with scenic views. The floor plan is open and spacious with an enclosed sun room with French doors off the living room. This community has many sought-after amenities and is close to the King Street Metro, the new Wegmans, and many restaurants, shops, historic sites, parks and much more. This unit is well priced – check the comps.

**Top Left:** The end unit features scenic views of the George Washington Masonic Temple.
**Top Right:** The entryway to the Carlyle Towers Condominiums.
**Bottom:** The open floor plan features a living room that opens onto a sunroom with large windows.

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**AT A GLANCE**

**Address:**
2121 Jamieson Ave, Unit 1003, Alexandria 22314

**Neighborhood:**
Carlyle (Carlyle Towers Condominiums)

**Price:** $749,000

**Square feet:** 1,605

**Bedrooms:** 3

**Bathrooms:** 2.5

**Year built:** 1997

**Contact:**
Diane G. Murphy
Associate Broker
TTR Sotheby’s International Realty
dmurphy@ttrsir.com
703.408.1152
Our View

A welcome pause

It's refreshing when city leaders truly listen to residents. We'd love for it to happen more often, as what's commonplace isn't noteworthy.

But when the Planning Commission voted unanimously on June 23 to defer consideration of a bonus density amendment — which would allow for buildings of up to 70 feet along most of Mt. Vernon Avenue in the Del Ray neighborhood — they did so because residents strenuously pushed back and they listened.

The commissioners didn’t commit to voting against the amendment, and commission chair Nate Macek indicated that he was inclined to support it. But commission members nonetheless heeded resident concerns that this decision — which has the potential if enacted to completely alter the visage and character of Del Ray — needed further study and more time for affected parties to weigh in.

We commend commission members, particularly Macek and Melissa McMahon, for their words and actions at this meeting. We also encourage them, and their fellow commissioners, to remain open to persuasion on this issue.

There are other ways to gain more affordable housing in this city than destroying Del Ray, which is one of Alexandria's treasures.

To be very clear: this publication has long not just supported affordable housing innovation, we have prodded city leaders to act on this issue. But this bonus height amendment is foremost a gift to developers, who, from where we sit, have been presented with far too many favors already from Alexandria’s local government.

We have seen residents post on social media that no six-story buildings are yet planned on Mt. Vernon Avenue as justification that this variation wouldn't make much of a difference in Del Ray. This notion is ludicrous: the buildings are not yet in the planning stages because they’re not yet allowed. Make no mistake — if this amendment is passed, over time it will be heavily utilized, and residents will be unable to stop individual projects.

Equally ludicrous is the notion that those who oppose the bonus density gift to developers are in some fashion racist, and yet this nasty utilization of the race card is being trotted out by some. What many Del Ray residents oppose is six-story buildings which, by the way, will be filled with mostly market-rate housing anyway — towering over their homes and their beloved Avenue.

Furthermore, some research indicates that increasing density raises overall housing prices, resulting in less total affordable housing, not more.

We live in a complex era, in a multi-faceted, medium-sized city — 160,000 residents is not “small” by the way. Our leaders, and we consider Planning Commission members leaders, as theirs is arguably the most important non-elected body in Alexandria, have to make difficult decisions while considering numerous stakeholders and often competing priorities.

We commend Planning Commissioners for pausing to let residents and city leaders grapple a bit longer with the implications of this proposed bonus density amendment. We also hope that they, and ultimately City Council, make this pause permanent.

Opinion

“Where the press is free and every man is able to read, all is safe.”
- Thomas Jefferson

Photo of the Week

Progress continues on the Potomac Yard Metro station, as this recent photo shows.

Your Views

In defense of St. Rita’s

To the editor:

Every story has two sides. Yet for the past few weeks, Alexandrians have been told only one side of a critical local story.

In article after article in regional media outlets, we’ve been told that St. Rita’s Catholic Church is standing in the way of a major affordable housing complex. It’s true that St. Rita’s raised concerns with the city’s process over the massive development on the doorstep of the church and its associated elementary and middle school. Yet rather than hear what those concerns are, Alexandrians have been given the impression that St. Rita’s is simply standing in the way.

In fact, the church has constructively worked to improve the city’s proposal for the benefit of the whole neighborhood — a neighborhood that will be the center of a new downtown area just two miles from Amazon and one mile from the new Metro and Virginia Tech campus. The developer even redesigned its plans after St. Rita’s pointed out glaring flaws that needed to be addressed.

As a member of the parish, I know firsthand that St. Rita’s is fighting for its neighborhood. The church has been there for more than 75 years; today it is the spiritual center of the local El Salvadoran community.

The church and its parishioners give more than $100,000 a year to local families, helping them cover everything from rent to utilities to medical expenses to phone services. We feed the hungry with thousands of pounds of food donations, host clothing drives during the cold winter months and support Christ House and Carpenter's House, two local homeless shelters.

No private institution does more for those living in affordable housing that already dots the neighborhood. And no one will do more for the residents of the new housing complex, which St. Rita’s supports.

This community pillar deserves better than cheap headlines meant to create division and clicks. We deserve to be treated as an entity that collaborates and for residents to recognize that we all want to make Alexandria an even better place to live, work and worship. That kind of community focus guides St. Rita’s approach to the new affordable housing complex and its soon-to-be neighbors — and it always will.

-Stephen Ford, Alexandria

The opinions expressed in letters and columns are those of the writers only and do not reflect the views, nor receive the endorsement, of the Alexandria Times.
Proposed BID is unfair

To the editor:

Establishing a BID, a special tax district, is not consistent with City Council’s stated reason for doing it, that of encouraging an equitable recovery for all residents and businesses.

In its last incarnation, the method to determine who would govern the BID Board was one vote for each $1 million of commercial property owned. If it’s the same this time around, the alignment of a few large investment groups are sufficient to control the proposed BID board. Those investment groups rent their property to small businesses and sole proprietors. Their leases include a passthrough clause, in which increases in taxes, including the BID Tax, become increases in rent required of the commercial tenants.

Since many of the tenants’ additional rent will go through the city’s tax collection and back into the hands of those same landlords who control the BID board, the BID tax will be a de facto government mandated increase in those rents above and beyond what had been contracted. This is not helpful to the recovery of small businesses. Under the scheme of the creation of the BID, those renters who will be paying the taxes will have no say in its creation or how it spends the money.

In order to make it a fair deal for all, council would either have to mandate that each renter be given a vote as to whether they would like their rents raised to fund the scheme or that the BID tax should be paid by the landlords and investors who will control its expenditure and that the tax not be allowed to pass through to tenants. These last proposals are not in the current guidelines.

The BID’s funds will also come from increases in real estate taxes on small mom and pop businesses who own their commercial property. If those small businesses were made aware of the BID voting scheme, they would understand that the small business will have a miniscule influence in the board’s actions and they would rationally choose not to raise their own property taxes for this purpose. But the BID scheme does not require the assent of the mom and pop store owners, since 40% of the commercial properties in the BID may be incorporated and obligated to pay without their consent.

Lastly, all residents living in the area encompassed by a proposed BID would face a strange new local hierarchical political environment in which the character of their streetscape and the city services is defined and regulated by a government entity made up of sometimes remote investors whose offices can be literally bought and sold.

Council is directing ARPA recovery funds for the promotion of the scheme and is proposing to direct the city’s coercive power to collect taxes to be used at the behest of the most wealthy at the expense of small businesses— all while not adding a single penny to the city’s coffers to pay for the general well-being of its citizens.

Council is funding and endorsing an entity that would count votes by wealth and take money by fiat from renters and businesses to put in the controlling hands of the most wealthy investment groups in the city. This seems quite a departure from their presumed liberal democratic values of one person/one vote, historic concern for tenants and a wariness that disparity of wealth may have undue influence on government policy.

Creating a BID does not encourage an equitable recovery for all of Alexandria’s residents and businesses. I argue that the establishment of a BID will instead financially harm the recovery of small businesses and codify inequality.

—Robert Ray, Alexandria

Shared responsibility to Alexandria’s youth

By Heather Peeler

The recent tragic death of 18-year-old Alexandria City High School student Luis Mejia Hernandez put a spotlight on many challenges faced by Alexandria’s youth. What may appear to be an awful but isolated moment of youth violence is only one symptom of a larger concern that has become worse due to the pandemic.

Like the rest of us, young people in Alexandria and globally have had an unprecedented disruption in their lives. They’ve lost their connections with friends and teachers. Also, they’ve been subjected to erratic schedules and months of remote learning and the deaths of loved ones in their homes and communities. Many of them face food and housing insecurity as their families struggle to make ends meet.

The effects are clear to those who spend time with them. Educators are reporting increased behavioral challenges, significant learning loss and increased mental health needs. Systemic inequities that were present before COVID-19 have gotten worse. Data shows growth in test score gaps between low-poverty and high-poverty schools. Students who were already at a disadvantage have been pushed further away from the advantages of their wealthier counterparts, something that can be seen here in Alexandria.

At George Washington Middle School, Principal Jesse Mazur said while white students make up less than half of the student population, they account for the vast majority of honors class students. According to data presented by ExpandED-Schools, by the time a middle-class child reaches 6th grade, they have received 6,000 more hours of learning compared to a child in poverty.

It’s not wrong to say that the challenges faced by Alexandria’s youth, especially students of color and those who have been historically marginalized, are at a crisis level. These issues and challenges aren’t isolated to “some families,” they aren’t unique to “troubled kids.” These are deep, systemic issues that must be addressed by us together as a community.

There is no silver bullet that will eliminate all the challenges young people face. Together we need to take a comprehensive approach that taps into the strengths, expertise and creativity from across our community. Our schools, city government, community organizations, faith communities, local businesses and individual residents must all contribute to making Alexandria a place where every young person can thrive.

Here at ACT we’ve been looking to the youth themselves for leadership and guidance. Our Youth Council was designed for youth by youth to provide Alexandria students with the decision-making power and funding to address key issues they’ve identified. They recently presented their research findings to City Council and School Board members, and the students will be continuing their projects this fall.

During the pandemic, ACT launched the Youth Support Network to foster collaboration and provide coordinated support to a network of community organizations, government agencies, schools and other partners. The Network is prioritizing the social-emotional well-being of Alexandria’s youth as they recover from pandemic-caused traumas. The Network will offer professional development opportunities to youth-serving organizations to establish positive developmental relationships with youth. Investing in our young people and their support systems is a priority for ACT.

There are things you can do to help. Get involved. Let a City Council member know we need to invest in our youth. Donate to a youth-serving organization or serve as a mentor. And make sure you are supporting those, such as teachers and youth workers, who are already on the front lines. They need to know we are behind them and that we value their work. Investing in the youth of Alexandria today will not only strengthen their futures, but the future of our whole city.

The writer is president and CEO of ACT for Alexandria.
Densification is inequitable

To the editor:

My May 18 column in the Alexandria Times, “Misguided Approach to Single Family Zoning,” showed that as Alexandria has grown denser, it has become less affordable and less diverse, consistent with painstaking research and analysis from respected scholars. It recommended a book on the subject, “Moving Toward Integration,” as an outstanding work of research, analysis and recommendations.

The usual, pro-development crowd took to social media to defend the speculative theory, discounted by researchers, that eliminating single-family housing zones will lead to affordability and diversity. None contested the facts or point of my article. Instead, they continued to assert an unsupported belief that homeownership in 2022 in Alexandria is a reflection of systemic racism from the 19th to the mid-20th centuries, that we are permanently frozen in that era and that the solution is to turn our neighborhoods over to developers.

According to the Census Bureau, Federal Reserve and the city’s Annual Financial Reports, Alexandria’s current density spree was in full swing in 2013. A comparison of data from 2013 to present is informative:

1. From 2013 to 2022, the population of Alexandria increased by nearly 20,000 people. Single family residences – including detached, townhomes, semi-detached and row houses – remained about the same, while the amount of dense housing surged 22%.

2. The Federal Reserve calculated an increase in Alexandria’s Housing Price Index – which measures the cost of housing in a locality over time – from 210 to 291 during the same period, a 39% increase. Rents have similarly ballooned.

These numbers mean we are increasing population and housing new residents in dense developments, and the net result is skyrocketing housing costs. Considering that Alexandria is only 15 square miles near the center of a metropolitan area of seven million, the reality is that beyond infill options, we have little undeveloped land left.

For comparison, only 29% of Alexandria is zoned single family – and only 14% of the city has single-family homes, the remaining 15% is schools, parks and churches. Neighboring Arlington has 42% of its county land zoned for single-family housing, while Fairfax County is 406 square miles and has 77% of its land zoned single family.

Open space is worse. Only 6% of Alexandria is zoned open space, compared to 30% of Arlington. Plus, under the new definition of what counts as open space, Alexandria allows for rooftop pools, patios and other high-rise building amenities not openly accessible to the public to count toward this calculation. Talk about a real equity issue.

All the new luxury housing being built at this rapid clip takes a toll on current residents. Homeowners pay 37% of all city revenues, a steady rise during the last 10 years. Despite the promise that mass density will lower tax burdens, the opposite has happened – we grow denser, homeowners’ tax share increases.

We have all experienced this accelerated degradation in quality of life – flooding, power outages, crowded roads, insufficient police and sanitation services, school overcrowding and other facility failures. Current homeowners wind up paying for the infrastructure we never bothered installing or improving while we stack and pack at a red-hot rate.

Most new developments also have pathetically few affordable units and none prioritize our fellow Alexandrians, nor do they help diversity. These policies lead to gentrification, which is the poison of diversity and affordability. Instead of admitting that mass density is really about opportunity for profit at the expense of residents, the city and developers build million-dollar luxury units while demagoguing about affordability and diversity. In reality, current residents are displaced or taxed out of the city, affordability drops and diversity weakens. That is where we are, and where we are going.

Real leaders would seek to improve affordability and diversity in a thoughtful and non-divisive way. Before development does more damage, our city government should drop the polemics and educate itself on both the impact of their density efforts during the last decade and the challenges before us for the next one.

-Frank Putzu, Alexandria

Actions must match intentions

To the editor:

As the saying goes, “When the tide goes out, you can see who isn’t wearing swimming trunks.” Three years after City Council affirmed a 50% reduction goal of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, it is naked. It exposes itself most by its lack of accountability in addressing the nearly 60% GHG coming from private buildings.

A year after declaring a “Climate Emergency,” City Council approved the North Potomac Yard development with a goal to “strive to achieve carbon neutral buildings by 2030.” This isn’t happening because council required no metrics or specific actions for the developer to achieve. Similarly, Landmark Mall’s 50-acre development was approved without any requirement for energy efficiency levels in buildings, nor installation of renewable energy systems.

The Potomac River Generating Station development now comes in year three of council’s failure to achieve the 4% to 5% annual reduction required to cut GHG emissions in half by 2030. It, too, is without a requirement for a specific, measurable, time-bound plan to hold the developer accountable for decreasing GHG.

The developer only has proposals to increase energy efficiency and attain a meager 3% on-site renewable energy target, while exploring “how the site may achieve carbon neutrality.” And, if the developer shows “good faith and reasonable efforts ... modifications may be approved” to reduce even this paltry target.

When Ryan Zimmerman signed his last contract with the Nationals, his incentives were worth twice his base salary – none of which he achieved. But the Nationals didn’t “modify” them because of a “good faith” effort – they were firm requirements. How could council do less for a public agreement with a private developer?

Additionally, PRGS will be only “solar ready” – beyond the 5% solar proposed by the developer – because city staff concluded, “Future installation of solar panels and associated infrastructure ... shall be at the sole discretion of the owner.” Why would anyone believe that up to 2,000 individuals will invest in their own solar panels, if City Council won’t? As a result of all this, PRGS greatly increases GHG emissions due to its change from today’s use of that land.

In sum, the PRGS developer is asking council to give final approval to its Coordinated Development District proposal without a firm GHG reduction requirement.

Is the problem technology or financial viability, or is it too early in the planning process, as the developer claims? Thirteen years ago, the developer’s architect, Gensler Architects, signed a public pledge that by 2030 it would “eliminate all net emissions associated with our work.” So, the technical expertise is there. Elsewhere, financially and technology-proven, affordable housing units with high efficiency and low emissions are cutting energy bills by 75 to 90%. Too early in the planning process? It’s certainly too early for council to grant approval.

PRGS is one of the last opportunities for precious waterfront development in Alexandria. Council should either send the CDD back to do strong carbon-neutral requirements or, like Ryan Zimmerman, retire its climate change goal. PRGS would be council’s third called strike – after North Potomac Yard and Landmark Mall – in taking no action to achieve its stated goal.

Accountability is not for one’s intentions, but for the deed. People lose trust when deeds don’t match intentions. Is it any wonder we lose our trust in leaders when they fail to translate intentions into deeds?

-Joe Sestak, former U.S. Congressman, Alexandria
Spring Gardens and Alexandria’s First July 4th Celebration

Alexandria’s 1798 Independence Day celebration was memorable, both for the celebration and its participants and for a disagreement about its location almost 200 years later. Attacks on American ships by French privateers prompted President John Adams to recommission George Washington as the Commander of all Armies.

Washington took that commission during the Alexandria commemoration of July 4. This would be the second-to-last celebration that Washington would live to see. In 1989, an article in the Fireside Sentinel about the location of the celebration set off a dispute between two prominent Alexandria historians, Ruth Lincoln Kaye, and T. Michael Miller.

Three accounts of the 1798 Celebration remain. Claypole’s American Daily Advertiser reported: “The 23rd Anniversary of American Independence was celebrated by the inhabitants of this town…with the greatest harmony and conviviality. A dinner was prepared at Spring Gardens by Mr. John Stavel…Gen. Washington was escorted into town by a detachment from the troop of Dragoons.”

A second account comes from a letter written by the Alexandria merchant David Cook. Cook describes a mock battle in which he portrayed a Frenchman. Given the events of the time, Cook and his side inevitably lost the mock battle. The Alexandria Advertiser focused its attention on the military drill portion of the program, noting: “At Spring Garden, the military and a number of the citizens in all, between 4 and 500, partook Of a dinner provided for the occasion.”

But where was Spring Garden? T. Michael Miller pointed to a March 1806 Plat signed by George Gilpin saying that the property: “… begins at the intersection of Duke and Henry St running with the west side of Henry Street, west of Gibbon St., to the waters of Hunting Creek.”

Eagle-eyed readers will note that that description is close to the location of Douglas Cemetery today. Yates Garden, at the junction of Pitt and Franklin Streets was a pleasure ground with swings and other amusements.”

The Fireside Sentinel treated their readers that year to a disagreement with multiple perspectives giving different sources different degrees of importance. Pam Cressy’s conclusion seems to have settled the question about the location of one of Alexandria’s most memorable July 4th celebrations, 191 years after the celebration.

Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.

Weekly Poll

Last Week
What grade would you give the city for its handling of pollution flowing into the Potomac River?

43% C - Not enough nor fast enough.
33% D - Toxic chemicals have been outflowing since 1975.
16% B - They’re making slow progress.
7% A - They’re doing all they can.

This Week
Have high gasoline prices impacted your July 4 holiday weekend plans?

A) Yes, I normally travel but am staying put this year.
B) No, my holiday plans are the same as usual.
C) Independence Day celebrations are great here, why would I ever travel?
D) I’m not sure.
DUKE STREET IN MOTION ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
The Duke Street In Motion Advisory Group will meet on June 30, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at Alexandria Police Department headquarters, Room 106 to discuss the project to improve transit on Duke St.
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Location: 3600 Wheeler Ave.
Information: https://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail. aspx?si=44531

PRIDE MONTH LECTURE ONE-NIGHT IN PETERBOROUGH
Lisa Crooms-Robinson, Professor of Law at the Howard University School of Law, and internationally recognized scholar of race, gender, and human rights will lecture on the 1954 MacDowell Colony fellows, including Pauli Murray and James Baldwin as the Colony’s first two Black artists.
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: 201 S. Washington St.
Information: https://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail. aspx?si=44585

COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC
The Red Sea Homecare Agency will have a free vaccination clinic at Northern Virginia Community College in the Fine Arts Building. Moderna, Pfizer and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be available on-site.
Time: 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Location: 3301 Netherton Dr. (Room 234)
Information: https://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail. aspx?si=45601

‘A NIGHT AT THE THEATER’ FIRST NIGHT SUMMER BENEFIT
Time: 7 p.m. showtime
Location: 1108 Jefferson St.
Information: https://patch.com/virginia/oldtownalexandria/calendar/event/20220701/1872116/a-night-at-the-theater-first-night-summer-benefit

CREATIVE DANCE SERIES (AGES 3-4)
This independent class inspires creativity and imagination through exploration of the elements of dance at Local Motion Project.
Time: 10:00 to 10:45 a.m.
Location: 2377 South Dove St.
Information: https://localmotionproject.org/event/creative-dance-series-age-3-4/2022-07-02/

SOLO CUP SATURDAYS
Live country music is back in Alexandria for the first Saturday of the month at Village Brauhaus. Enjoy beer and drink specials while singing along to your favorite country songs.
Time: 10 p.m.
Location: 710 King St.
Information: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/solo-cup-saturdays-live-country-music-tickets-351321330557

DONNELL RAWLINGS COMEDY SHOW
Join comedian Donnell Rawlings for a night of laughs at the Birchmere. Tickets are available on ticketmaster.
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: 3701 Mt Vernon Ave

ALEXANDRIA PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY WALK
Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee has organized a free walk in which participants will be guided through a two mile route through Old Town walking to sites associated with the former presidents.
Time: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Location: 132 N. Royal Street
Information: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/alexandria-presidential-history-walk-registration-362935157827

AN AMERICAN CELEBRATION AT MOUNT VERNON
Visit Mount Vernon on Independence Day for celebratory fireworks, see a performance by the National Concert band, enjoy bread from an 18th century baking process and more.
Time: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., daytime fireworks at 1 p.m.
Time: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., daytime fireworks at 1 p.m.
Location: 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy.
Information: https://www.mountvernontour.org/event/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/an-american-celebration/

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
Special Public Hearing Meeting of the Alexandria City Council is being held in the Council Chamber and electronically. The meeting can be accessed by government channel 70, streaming on the City’s website and can be accessed via Zoom by the following link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9sOomme8RtanRE_KIC6StA
Time: 5:30 to 11:30 p.m.
Location: 301 King St.
Information: https://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail. aspx?si=37738
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### VABC


#### Part 2: Posting and Publishing

**PUBLISHING NOTICE**

Please publish the following item in the legal notice section of your newspaper. Please refer to the instructions provided on page 19.

Full name(s) of owner(s): Galactic Panther LLC

Trading as: Galactic Panther

1309 King St
(Downtown Alexandria)

Alexandria
(VA)

Telephone: (703) 739-3888

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Marketplace license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Erik Munro, partner

Date and time of notice (change notice/advertisement): 6/20/2022

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.vabc.org or (800) 952-3200.

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DATE RECEIVED: 6/20/2022

APPLICATION FOR: Retail License Application

PART 2: Retail License Application | 23
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