Wizards, Capitals to move to Potomac Yard

Dignitaries gather for Wednesday announcement of massive proposed complex
BY CAITLYN MEISNER

It’s official: A massive entertainment district, anchored by a new arena for the Washington Wizards and Washington Capitals, is slated for Alexandria’s Potomac Yard. The proposed complex will also include a performing arts venue and a headquarters building for Monumental Sports & Entertainment, whose CEO, Ted Leonsis, owns both the Wizards and Capitals.

A large group of elected officials and business leaders, including Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson, Leonsis and Alexandria Economic Development Partnership President and CEO Stephanie Landrum gathered Wednesday morning at the Potomac Yard Metro station to announce and celebrate the planned development.

On the cold, sunny morning, the tent was buzzing with JBG Smith, Monumental and AEDP executives, along with reporters, Alexandrians, politicians and event staff. As the ceremony was taking place, roughly two dozen protestors — who could be heard inside the tent — gathered outside. Many had signs stating their dis-

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Council to consider Old Town project

Proposal faced pushback from residents, Planning Commissioners at December 5 meeting
BY CAITLYN MEISNER

After a December 5 Planning Commission 4-3 vote in favor of a new multi-family development, the fate of 301 N. Fairfax St. is now in City Council’s hands at the Saturday public hearing.

The Planning Commission listened to a staff presentation, held more than an hour of public testimony, asked questions of staff and heard from the developer’s attorney, Catherine Puskar, at the meeting. There was also considerable resident pushback about the size of the proposed project, while several planning commissioners themselves expressed reservations about the plan.

Daniel Welles, an urban planner for the city, presented the recommendations by staff and an overview of the project.

The planned project at 301 N. Fairfax St. is a multi-family building with 48 for-sale units, two of which are set aside as affordable. There would be an underground parking garage with 67 spaces and more than 10,000 square feet of private open space. The building would be four stories tall with a main and garage entrance on Queen Street.

There are three requests for this project:
• A master plan amendment to allow for multi-family development on the site.
• Rezoning from a commercial downtown zone to a commercial residential mixed use high zone.
• A development special use permit to allow for...
Old Town | 117 N Peyton St. | $1,175,000

Rarely available brick row-home just blocks to King Street Metro, shops, restaurants and bike path! Welcomed by an inviting front porch this three level home has 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths and beautiful hardwood floors. Main level has a living room with a gas fireplace, formal dining room, half bath, kitchen addition with white cabinets, viking gas stove, vaulted ceilings with cove lighting and a walk-in pantry! The partially finished basement has a rec. room, full basement, laundry and storage rooms with outside entrance. HEATED patio, planting boxes with mature trees, secure parking with garage door and alley access!

Old Town | 507 Wilkes St. | $975,000

Historic 1840’s 3-story townhome in the SE Quadrant. Renovated 2 bedroom 1.5 bath, updated kitchen, SS appliances and new baths. Georgetown patio with alley access. Southern exposure, original working fireplaces, restored random width pine floors and sealed brick wall and floors. Dining room with brick arch and fireplace, living room and den with fireplace, powder room and French doors to patio. Two bedrooms—primary bedroom facing south has soaring ceilings and loft with access to additional storage under the eaves. Second bedroom has French doors overlooking gardens. Great location blocks to the River, shopping and restaurants.

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ROSEMONT | $1,750,000

Fabulous brick Rosemont colonial on a wide tree lined street. Expanded with approx 3,200 sq ft of living space on 3.5 levels, off street parking and an amazing 7,250 (sq ft) rear yard and detached garage. This home was renovated in 2000/01 and awaits your custom finishes! There are 4/5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, finished LL with recreation room and outside entrance. The family room with french doors to covered porch overlooks the yard with mature plantings, open green space and concrete drive pad. Bonus third level with oodles of space and potential! Blocks to 2 METROS, Shops & Restaurants in Del Ray and Old Town!!
City resident charged with murder

Bisrat Shaga, a 35-year-old Alexandria resident, has been charged with first-degree murder in the November 12 stabbing death of Emmanuel Negatu, 38, of Centerville, Virginia. The stabbing took place in the 2700 block of DeWitt Avenue, according to a release from the Alexandria Police Department.

At approximately 4:27 p.m. on November 12, APD responded to a call for service regarding a stabbing. Upon arrival, APD officers found a 38-year-old male who died inside the location.

This remains an active investigation and the Alexandria Police Department is asking that anyone with information regarding this incident please contact Detective Matthew Kramarik either at 703-746-6650, or Matthew.Kramarik@alexandriava.gov or call the APD non-emergency line at 703-746-4444. Tips can be anonymous.

Photos, video or audio files can be directly uploaded electronically by anyone within the community who has information about this case at alexandriapa.evidence.com/axon/community-request/public/23-105251.

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Early voting begins for School Board vacancy

Early voting began Monday for the District A School Board vacancy left by Willie F. Bailey Sr. on November 30. Whomever is elected will serve until Dec. 31, 2024. The deadline to vote early is January 6 at 5 p.m. and the deadline for regular voting is January 9. Eligible precincts include Old Town North, City Hall, Lyles-Crouch School, Durant Center, Lee Center, Cora Kelly, Mt. Vernon Center, George Washington School, Fire Department Headquarters, Charles Houston Center and Potomac Yard. The deadline to vote by mail is December 29 at 5 p.m. More information on mail-in ballots, in-person voting locations with hours and requirements can be found at alexandriava.gov/Elections.

There are two candidates on the ballot: Gina Baum, a managing broker with Keller Williams Metro Center, and Tim Beaty, formerly a global strategies director for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and currently an elementary school substitute.

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New restrictions for high-crash corridor

The city announced in a press release Monday to propose new No Turn on Red restrictions at several intersections on Duke Street between North Ripley and Jordan Streets. These intersections include Duke Street and South Reynolds, North Paxton, South Pickett Streets and the Shoppes at Foxchase entrance. This proposal is part of the Duke Street Turn Calming project to implement safety improvements in this high-crash corridor. According to the press release, the new signs will be accompanied by Leading Pedestrian Intervals, signaling a walking sign into the intersection. This proposal will be presented at a public hearing on January 22.

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Noah Lyles named World Athlete of the Year

Noah Lyles, a graduate of T.C. Williams High School, now known as Alexandria City High School, was named one of six World Athletics’ Athlete of the Year. Lyles, a sprinter, is the first American male to win this honor since 2015. He recently won the 100-meter, the 200-meter and the four-by-100-meter relay at the August World Athletics Championships held in Budapest, Hungary. Lyles, along with his brother Josephus, were inducted into ACHS’ Athletic Hall of Fame in October 2022. He also has a documentary series about him available on Peacock, “The Noah Lyles Project.”

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pleasure with Leonsis and the elected officials inside. Some of them even shouted at Democratic Senator Mark Warner’s motorcade as it left the event.

Rumors had been swirling for a couple of weeks that a major announcement was afoot, but didn’t seem concrete until Tuesday, when Youngkin’s office issued a press release stating that “a remarkable economic development project for the Commonwealth” would be unveiled in Alexandria the next day.

A couple of weeks prior, nearby residents claimed on social media they had been notified of a new planned arena at Potomac Yard. Then, the Washington Post reported on Monday the General Assembly Major Economic Investment Project Approval Commission unanimously approved a complex. Youngkin also mentioned this in the live announcement.

Landrum spoke first at the ceremony about this “pretty incredible opportunity” and introduced Youngkin, who made the move official.

“After many years of dreaming and many years of discussion, I am pleased to announce that right here in Alexandria’s Potomac Yard, we have a plan to unleash a brighter, more extraordinary future,” Youngkin said. “As part of this amazing project, we will build a spectacular $2 billion sports and entertainment district, [which] will be at the heart of the most vibrant innovation corridor in the world. The corridor that starts at Amazon HQ2 and stretches through the Virginia Tech Innovation campus and will find its anchor here in Alexandria with this amazing sports and entertainment district.”

In addition to a new arena for the Capitals and Wizards, Youngkin said there will be a new Monumental Sports Network media studio, a practice facility for the Wizards, a 6,000-seat performing arts venue, an expanded esports venue, new retail restaurants, a conference center, hotels and gathering spaces.

“This visionary sports and entertainment development district will bring together entertainment, sports and technology like nowhere in the world,” Youngkin said. “This once in a generation historic development will be the best place to live, work, raise a family and watch hockey and basketball.”

According to AEDP, the project – pending necessary approvals – is expected to break ground in 2025. The arena is expected to open in late 2028.

Youngkin then discussed the economic impact of this new complex.

“The city of Alexandria, the Commonwealth will all win together,” Youngkin said. “I pledged that any projects like this would first and foremost be good for the Virginia taxpayer and that’s exactly what this project represents. The upfront investments harnessing the financial horsepower of the future, incremental taxes and other revenues with an estimated $12 billion of economic contribution.”

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He said this signals a new chapter for the state as a whole. With a new partnership between the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus and Monumental, infrastructure, business-ready sites and world-class education, Youngkin said he is ready to christen the next chapter.

The governor also pointed to the bipartisanship that made this move happen.

“I want to thank our incoming House Majority leader [Charniele] Herring for her support. I also look forward to working together to make sure that all of the aspirations for this innovation district are fulfilled,” Youngkin said.

Mayor Justin Wilson spoke next, first thanking City Council for its partnership and City Manager Jim Parajohn for his leadership.

“We stand in a yard that used to have 136 miles of railroad track where they serviced over a hundred trains per day for over half a century,” Wilson said. “This area was the economic engine for our city. For most of our city’s history, we have thrived because of what we were close to: close to the river, close to the railroad, close to our nation’s capital.

“Fast forward to the spring of 2020, our economy has stopped. Our small businesses were on the brink. Every week, I was getting a new notification of thousands of residents that were losing their jobs, but in that experience we realized something as a community … something broader, something more intrinsic to the ethos of this place,” Wilson said.

Wilson recalled the ethos of Alexandria as a place for visitors, no matter if it’s for the arts or sports teams. He said the experience of bringing a child to their first sporting event is unforgettable, and he wants those memories to be made in Alexandria.

“It is in this yard, this very yard that serves a hundred trains a day that we will create those experiences for generations,” Wilson said. “We’ll do so in a way that is accountable to our taxpayers, respectful to our incredible neighborhood and helps us to create more housing, schools, transportation improvements and higher educational opportunities.”

Leonsis spoke next about his love for the area as a Georgetown University grad and helps us to create more opportunities the DMV offers.

“Our commitment will be to build really iconic fan-centric businesses, and we want to unite this community,” Leonsis said. “What we are about is putting unity in a community and really helping this region bring up to its full promise.”

Leonsis said the vision to expand Monumental Sports beyond Washington, D.C. came because his teams’ markets run from Richmond to Delaware.

“Our games, our brands really start in Richmond and go all the way past Baltimore,” Leonsis said. “So that notion of community and DMV really is what our business is about. That’s the higher calling for sports. That is the higher calling on everything that we do.”

In terms of economic development, Leonsis said he wants Monumental to leave a lasting impact on Alexandria and is focused on being a good neighbor.

“That is our commitment: create jobs, pay taxes, hire people from Virginia Tech and George Mason [University]. We want to leave much more than we take, and that is the promise that my family and everyone in our community will continue to do,” Leonsis said.

Along with the Wizards and Capitals, Leonsis also owns the Washington Mystics, the Women’s National Basketball Association team in the District. Leonsis said the Mystics will play at Capital One Arena, even though his two other teams will be departing for Virginia.

“We’ve invested $200 million in this district to ensure that our fans are well taken care of. And I will continue to do so in the future,” Leonsis said.
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Obituary

Michael M. Hadeed (Sr.)

Michael “Mitchell” Mitry Hadeed was born in Newark, New Jersey, on June 19, 1930. Following the tragic death of his father, Mitry Hadeed, when Michael was only three years old, he spent his childhood and adolescence living in Ramallah, Palestine, until age 16. Michael unconditionally loved his family and community, he lived each day demonstrating his humble, generous and kindhearted nature. He died peacefully surrounded by loved ones at his home on Dec. 7, 2023.

A successful entrepreneur and man of service to others, Michael was known for his sterling character, calm demeanor and dedication to helping people in need. Michael served overseas in the U.S. Military during the Korean War. Following his honorable discharge, he established Hadeed Carpet in 1955 at the age of 25 along with his late brother, Teddy Hadeed. He participated in many organizations including The American Legion, Knights of Columbus, Lions International and Chamber of Commerce.

Michael was also an early supporter and founder of Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church, his ancestral church, and an active member and supporter of the Washington, D.C. area Ramallah Club since its creation over 60 years ago.

In November 2011, Michael was an Alexandria Living Legends nominee in recognition of his lifetime of exemplary community service. Michael strongly lived by the Lions International motto, “You can’t get very far until you start doing something for somebody else.” During his years of service, he facilitated the implementation of the emergency 911 service call line in Alexandria. As president and board member of his Lions Club, he advocated and demonstrated to his family and community the importance of giving back a legacy of service to others.

Michael is survived by his children, Michael Hadeed Jr., Mary Hadeed Zaboli and Joseph Hadeed; his twelve grandchildren, John Hadeed, Michael Hadeed III, Teresa Hadeed Rago, Joan Hadeed Rolf, Catherine Hadeed, Thomas Hadeed, Samantha Zaboli, Alexander Zaboli, Adam Zaboli, Sarah Zaboli, Michael Frix and Samira L. Hadeed; his seven great-grandchildren, Samir and Jordy Minda, Elizabeth and Lilah Hadeed, Emma and Abigail Rago and Vivian Rolf; and his sister, Clair Saah. Michael was pre-deceased by his beloved wife, Samira.

NEW COMPLEX

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million in the last 10 years in keeping Capital One world-class as an arena, and our intention is to expand here and keep Capital One a great place,” Leonsis said.

The next speaker was the CEO of JBG Smith, a Chevy Chase-based real estate investment firm, W. Matthew Kelly, who thanked local and state partners in creating this new chapter.

Warner, who resides in Alexandria, spoke next and said this entertainment district will be a “proverbial game changer.”

“If we are here cheering on this announcement, we have to realize that this is simply day one in the process,” Warner said. “Our job is to make sure that the nation, the neighborhoods that are adjacent ... and other surrounding neighborhoods, feel engaged and know their quality of life will be protected so at the end of the day, their quality of life will actually be approved by this.”

Warner provided a cautionary celebration, recognizing there was a long journey ahead.

“We’re going to have to all go out and be missionaries into the community to make the case to hear people’s concerns – legitimate and otherwise – [then] come back and try to rectify those because with that effort, in a few short years, the kind of world class city ... will become a reality, right here in Alexandria,” Warner said.

As Warner finished, a loud protester outside could be heard, making some heads turn in confusion.

Herring, one of four delegates in the Virginia State Legislature who represent Alexandria, was the last speaker of the event. She said she was excited about the potential positive impact of this project.

“It can be a major economic boom that will bolster our local businesses, create jobs and can help address many funding concerns by broadening our commercial tax base,” Herring said. “I’m encouraged that the conversations have taken place, not only about the project being a valuable economic engine for us, but also prioritizing our values as a community.”

Leonsis wanted $600 million from the District to fund improvements to Capital One, which is among the oldest arenas housing an NBA or NHL franchise. Late Tuesday night, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser sent in an 11th-hour offer of $500 million if Monumental would agree to extend its lease at Capital One, which is due to expire in 2027.

What Alexandrians have to say

Many Alexandrians both online and outside the event, spoke their minds about the planned development.

10-year Potomac Yard resident and protestor at the event Moira Saucedo said she was frustrated the deal was agreed to quickly without local input.

“I think that’s part of the strategy. You shock, people are left there scrambling, and then you move in and change it,” Saucedo said.

Another 10-year resident and protestor, Adrien Lopez, said she was concerned about the noise the arena may create.

“We already have a huge amount of noise from the airplanes, right? All that noise pollution we're dealing with, and you add on noise from an arena, it’s just unlivable,” Lopez said.

Many protesting residents, including Lopez and Saucedo, felt blindsided by this announcement since no public comment period was held about this project.

“We are going to fight against this because this is our community,” Saucedo said.

“There was no advance notice, they hadn’t asked us. It’s not only that we don’t like having it in the community, it’s the lack of transparency.”

“This was Wilson,” Lopez said. “He represents our community. I know he’s into development, but he represents us. This is Del Ray, the community that he’s from. He’s selling them out.”

“It doesn’t sound all that bad to me,” Jennifer C. wrote on Facebook. “It’s by the Metro, not more townhomes and will bring in tax revenue to the city. I would like to know more, but that’s my initial impression. That area is being built up regardless.”

Lisa P. agreed with Jennifer, writing this could potentially “soften the burden” on residents’ taxes.

“If the biggest downside is traffic, that probably tells you it’s a no-brainer to bring the

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Residents making their disdain known for the new complex.
the multi-family building, an increase in the floor area ratio to 2.5 and a crown coverage modification.

Welles said this development would significantly improve water quality treatment, replace an obsolete office building from the 1970s and enhance both the streetscape and connectivity to the Waterfront.

Current tenants at the site include physical therapists, a real estate agency, a fitness center, an engineering consultant and a divorce lawyer.

Residents speak out

An almost hour and a half-long public hearing section ensued with more than 25 speakers expressing their concerns about and dislike for this project.

Many said the building as proposed would contribute to an already overflowing traffic pattern, overwhelm the neighborhood with new residents and not comply with the character of the Old Town neighborhood.

“The current building may not be architecturally important or commercially viable, but it has been a good background building for decades,” Allan Krinsman, a resident of North Fairfax Street, said. “Urban growth is vital, but I also believe that, from time-to-time, when appropriate, it’s up to the Planning Commission to tap on the brakes to consider both the benefits and harm of upzoning sites.”

Steve Davidson said he’s noticed the “supersizing” of construction projects since moving here.

“One of the reasons why my wife and I moved to Alexandria and not Arlington is we didn’t want to live in an area where there were urban canyons,” Davidson said. “This is a gigantic building. It doesn’t fit with the neighborhood…. Allowing this building is kind of like introducing a gorilla to a giraffe park.”

Will Nance, another resident of North Fairfax Street, said he was excited about the development at first because the current building is an eyesore. “The city made a big mistake by approving this building some 40 years ago,” Nance said. “Instead of building a building that deserved protection, the city approved something that may have looked trendy at the time… but clearly was a disposable building.”

Nance drew parallels between this decision in the 1970s to now, stating this same situation may happen in the future. He also said if the city were to approve this development, resident trust would dwindle in light of the fears many expressed about the “Zoning for Housing/Housing for All” initiative passed last month.

Many residents also spoke in opposition stating they believe this project would violate the 2012 WaterFront Plan, a blueprint to revitalize the area. Staff stated during the meeting that 301 N. Fairfax St. was determined not to
be a redevelopment site that falls under the Waterfront Plan, a perspective also noted in the 171-page full project report.

“The general objective of the Waterfront Plan is to promote public access and improve connectivity to the waterfront and its parks. A focus of the plan was the ability of the east-west streets to draw people to the waterfront,” page 11 of the report reads. “The proposed project includes elements to enhance the streetscape through the removal of a curb cut to provide the primary entrance on Queen Street, will enhance the public’s path to Founders Park and the City Marina directly to the east.” Much of the opposition coming from members of the Commission had to do with a solid brick wall along one of the sides of the building. Commissioner David Brown brought this up and many Commissioners echoed his hesitance to approve the construction.

The supporters
Several letters in support of the development were submitted to the public record.
Alex Goyette, the Alexandria lead of the YIMBYs of NoVA, wrote to the Planning Commission urging passage of the project.

“Alexandria has a long history of being a leader in providing the best possible environment for businesses and residents alike,” Goyette wrote. “The site itself is highly desirable so a significant cost is built in by that high land value, but when home builders have to hire expensive land use attorneys for a year of reviews just to build a handful of condos in our most urban neighborhood, that cost adds up!”

Danielle Romanetti, an Alexandria business owner, wrote that the current office building does not contribute to the business-centric community.

“This is an opportunity for a developer to add modern housing in our historic district with zero impact on the historic fabric of the community,” Romanetti wrote. “Given office vacancy rates and the changing work environment post-COVID, it is becoming increasingly important and logical for our outdated office buildings to be replaced by much needed housing.”

Jesse O’Connell echoed Romanetti and Goyette, stating this change is an example of what should be embraced in the city.

“Adapting the current built environment to be both nicer looking and more effective and efficient at meeting the needs of the city and its residents,” O’Connell said. “Cities change and evolve, neighborhoods grow and adapt and we should embrace opportunities and projects – like this one – that come along where there is a willingness to merge past and present in a respectful, appropriate and forward-looking way.”

The Planning Commission was divided on whether to approve the project as currently configured, but the narrow 4-3 endorsement means the project now rests in City Council’s hands.

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**Out of the classroom**

**Education section**

**Basilica of Saint Mary’s blesses new construction**

The Basilica School of Saint Mary’s blessed and celebrated the newly completed nearly $16 million construction project on December 8. The project included a new 8,000-square foot building connecting the lower school to the middle school and space for the new Saint James Library Media Center. The Most Rev. Michael F. Budge, bishop for the diocese of Arlington; the Very Rev. Edward Hathaway, rector for the school; Robert Loia, Saint Mary’s principal, staff, faculty and students attended the blessing and celebration.

**Blessed Sacrament holiday shopping**

The eighth grade class at Blessed Sacrament hosted Santa’s Secret Shop, an on-campus fundraiser so students can shop for Christmas presents for their families. Older students helped younger ones select and wrap their gifts. All items were donated by the community and sold for $1. The proceeds go towards the eighth grade class gift.

**St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes donates food to ALIVE!**

In collaboration with the fourth grade class of St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School and the Crenshaw Arcade food drive, the school raised 3,875 pounds of food for ALIVE!, the school’s partner nonprofit. This food was donated ahead of Thanksgiving.

**ACDS Robotics team takes home gold**

The Alexandria Country Day School Robotics Team – known as the Bobcat Builders – competed in the First Lego League Alexandria with nine other local teams. The team won first place in the innovation project, one of the four events at the competition. The Bobcat Builders chose to build interest in learning American Sign Language; the team brainstormed ideas, created prototypes and presented the judges with an open source app. Great job, Bobcats!

**VA Purple Star Award honors Lyles-Crouch**

Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy is among 110 public and private schools in the Commonwealth to earn a Purple Star Award from the Virginia Department of Education, a designation awarded to military-friendly schools. These schools have demonstrated a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation’s military.

“Receiving the Virginia Purple Star designation is an honor that highlights our school’s steadfast dedication to nurturing an inclusive environment, particularly for our military students and families. This recognition affirms our commitment to providing a supportive, enriching educational experience for every student,” Lyles-Crouch Principal Laura Burkart said.
Students across Immanuel Lutheran School have been experimenting with delicious holiday treats during the school’s new holiday baking club. Meeting weekly and trying out new recipes, the club will host a bake sale before Christmas for the Immanuel community. Several new clubs have opened up this year at Immanuel, including a running club, an art club, ballet and chess, which will start in January.

Grace Episcopal in Scottish Walk

For the first time, Grace Episcopal School students, parents and teachers participated in the 52nd annual Scottish Christmas Walk Parade on December 2. Students from the school’s preschool through fifth grade classes represented Grace waving flags and carrying a banner.

Fusion gives thanks

Family and friends alike were invited to celebrate Fusion’s annual Thanksgiving potluck. A highlight of the fall semester, the buffet tables were filled with dishes bearing homemade goods. This event kicked off a season of sharing: A cookie exchange soon followed with a giving tree.

Five ACHS student-athletes sign for collegiate sports

On November 8, five Alexandria City High School students signed Letters of Intent to play sports at the collegiate level. ACHS plans to host another signing day in the spring for students planning to play basketball and football. Students include Grace Metzler, who will play soccer at Hobart and William Smith Colleges; Gretta Anderson, rowing at University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Abigail Altenburg, rowing for Washington State University; Aidan O’Brien, baseball at Davidson College; and Niko Hales, volleyball for Brigham Young University.

Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School

In the historic Rosemont neighborhood of Alexandria, students learn to think critically and creatively, work cooperatively and communicate effectively at Naomi L. Brooks Elementary. Renamed in 2021 to honor the visionary educator Naomi L. Brooks, the school is dedicated to creating an inspiring and safe environment where students learn and meet high expectations. In addition to an engaging core curriculum, students at Brooks explore and develop their interests and talents through enriching electives, including band, orchestra and chorus.

The dedicated staff at Brooks nurture a love of learning in each child and work collaboratively with families, students and the wider community to foster a well-rounded educational experience and celebrate student social, emotional and academic progress. Strong family-school partnerships help students enjoy year-round literacy enrichment opportunities, community-building activities and innovative incentives like a new book vending machine as part of the school’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program.

This is advertorial content.
OK Cleaners to leave Commonwealth Avenue

Lease uncertainty casts shadow over businesses
BY WAFIR SALIH

OK Cleaners, a woman-owned dry cleaner on Commonwealth Avenue, is closing its doors on December 17 after more than a decade of service following notification from the landlord that their lease will not be renewed.

The sudden shutdown has sparked concerns among residents, with some questioning if the recent “Zoning for Housing/Housing for All” initiative is a contributing factor.

A note displayed prominently in the front window of OK Cleaners foreshadows the closure.

“Moving! After [the] middle of December,” the sign reads. “Please text me with your last name. I will send you a new address. Thank you.”

The shopping strip – home to a mix of businesses including OK Cleaners, Dos Hermanos Fine Tex Mex, Sugar Scrub Nail Spa, Colonial Market and Yang’s Taekwondo Academy – is facing an uncertain future, leaving both business owners and patrons in limbo.

Elmer Cruz, owner of Dos Hermanos Fine Tex Mex has been approached by customers in the past few weeks asking if his restaurant will remain open amid the news.

“One customer came in and she was trying to show me what she read on Nextdoor,” Cruz said. “Another guy came in asking the same thing.”

Despite the rumors, Cruz has assured customers that he hasn’t received any formal notice to vacate. He said he plans to remain in the area for the foreseeable future. The restaurant opened in Alexandria earlier this year on May 15 after relocating from Springfield.

However, Cruz said he’s observed an uptick in individuals surveying the property lately, a sign that developers could be engaging in site inspection, which is usually done to assess the feasibility of a potential future project.

“We see a lot of people walking around the building, pointing [and] measuring the ground,” Cruz said. “When that happens, usually they want to build something new.”

Cruz believes the landlord not wanting to renew the contract for OK Cleaners is strange, as it’s somewhat unusual for them not to renew.

“They’re always looking to renew, unless something’s going to happen,” Cruz said. “You just sign it again, [it] auto-renews.”

While Cruz is not worried

SEE OK CLEANERS
What to give the active crowd this season

By Kerry Boyd Anderson

Looking for the perfect gift for someone with an active lifestyle and an interest in wellness? Or maybe for yourself? Fortunately, Alexandria offers many options for active fun, both indoors and outdoors. There are many businesses that offer uncommon experiences, but there are additional options in the city for everything from a hardcore workout to yoga to activities in the great outdoors.

One of the fun things about visiting these stores, gyms and studios is that often the staff are enthusiasts themselves. Regardless of your level of experience, they are happy to help customers discover or progress in any physical activity. Their enthusiasm makes it fun to drop by and buy a gift for someone or something for yourself.

Washington Sailing Marina

Conveniently located on Daingerfield Island, the marina offers multiple options for fun on the Potomac River, including summer camp for kids and sailing lessons for adults. Camps start at age eight, known as the “Mini Mates,” followed by camps for children aged nine to 15 who are just starting out. Mini Mates runs all summer long and costs $610 for one week.

After these age categories, there are different pathways for skill development and prerequisite skills. There are several intermediate camps and a few advanced camps for children under 16. Prices vary.

Washington Sailing Marina also offers weeknight sessions for two- to three-hour spans for $470.

The marina, located at 1 Marina Drive, also offers rentals for sailboats, kayaks and paddleboards. Gift certificates are not available for rentals, but they are available for lessons.

You can buy gift certificates online on the marina’s website.

Row House

For an indoor workout experience, Row House offers classes that combine its rowing machines with other forms of resistance training. The workouts combine cardio with strength training.

For those just starting out or experts in rowing classes, Row House offers a wide variety of levels for everyone. There are six different class types: Whether you want to focus on mobility, use weights, increase endurance or work on active recovery, there is a great mixture of workouts and instructors to choose from.

There are different price ranges depending on a
purchased membership or package. If you just want to drop-in on a class, it costs $29. If you want to purchase just a few classes at a time, it costs $135 for a five-pack, $235 for a 10-pack and $405 for a 20-pack. If you’re looking for a membership, Row House has three options that auto-renew monthly. It’s $89 for four classes per month, $149 for eight classes and $179 for unlimited classes. For a limited time, your first class is free at the Old Town location. Gift options include class packages, memberships and gift cards, which you can find online. The gym is located at 917 N. Asaph St. and their daily schedule is accessible online.

**Pacers Running**

For the devoted runner – or someone looking to start running – Pacers Running in Old Town is the perfect place to go. Running socks are popular holiday gifts and great stocking stuffers. For this time of year, gloves and hats for runners also are popular items. And, don’t forget about safety; the store sells a wide variety of safety gear, from small lights to reflective outerwear.

Pacers is known for its

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**ACTIVE GIFTS FROM | 15**

Del Ray Artisans Gallery at the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center
2704 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301-1124
DelRayArtisans.org | 703-838-4827

Dates:
December 1 – 3
December 8 – 10
December 15 – 17

Regular Market Hours:
Fridays, 6 - 9 PM
Sat. & Sun., 11 AM - 6 PM

Bonus Market Days:
Fri., Dec. 22, 3 - 9 PM
Sat., Dec. 23, 11 AM - 6 PM

Hand-crafted artwork from different artists every weekend.

Del Ray Artisans Gallery at the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center
2704 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301-1124
DelRayArtisans.org | 703-838-4827
specialized shoe fitting process, so gift cards are a good option for someone who might want new shoes. The store’s friendly staff are ready to help customers find shoes that fit their unique feet and specific running needs.

You can visit Pacers Running at 1301 King St. You can purchase gift cards at the store and online.

**Big Wheel Bikes**

Located in Old Town near the Potomac River, Big Wheel Bikes sells bikes and accessories. The shop also offers rentals for several types of bikes. Popular gift items include helmets and other safety accessories – especially lights for gray winter days and dark winter nights.

Another great gift option are the shop’s bike locks. Bike theft is a growing problem, so strong locks are essential. Of course, a really great gift is a new bike, and

Big Wheel Bikes sells multiple types, including road bikes, mountain bikes, hybrid bikes, electric bikes and bikes for kids and commuters.

Big Wheel Bikes also sells gift cards, which can be used for purchases or rentals. They are available at the store or online. The store is located at 2 Prince St.

**Zen Yoga and Wellness Studio**

This yoga studio offers yoga classes and other wellness services. There are several types of group or private yoga classes for a range of needs and experience levels. To round out the experience, the studio also offers massage, nutrition counseling, a meditation class and more.

The class schedule is available online and classes can be booked there. Zen Yoga offers a variety of payment options for classes, including class packs – or buying multiple classes at once – a monthly rate and/or a drop-in rate of $30.

Gift ideas include memberships or class packs, as well as gift cards, which are available online, located at 309 S. Washington St.

**Serenity Day Spa**

After all that activity, the body needs some pampering! A great option for the calmer side of wellness is Serenity Day Spa. The spa offers symptom-specific massage, including one specifically for “Runner’s Relief.” Other popular holiday services include the Serenity Essentials spa package, the “Be Illuminating” facial that uses pumpkin enzymes, and the hot stone massage for some seasonal warmth. The Image Vital C skincare products are another great gift option.

The spa also sells gift cards online or at the spa, as well as packages for multiple services at a discounted rate. Visit or call the spa for more information, located at 209 Madison St. 

-kerry@kbaconsultant.com
Dos Hermanos Fine Tex-Mex Restaurant, which opened its doors on May 15, now faces an uncertain future as Commonwealth Avenue grapples with potential business closures.

OK CLEANERS  FROM  14

now – given that he just signed for a 10-year lease – he does acknowledge these types of arrangements are not set in stone and deals can always be made to buy the business owner out if the offer is good enough.

“We can say ‘No,’ but sometimes if they come with a good offer...that happened to us already in Springfield,” Cruz said. “Costco wanted to buy [our] building, so they bought the whole building and bought us out of our lease.”

Cruz urged, however, that the plan in coming to Alexandria was to stay long term.

“We said to the landlord that we wanted to get 10 years to start, and then we can extend it for another 10 years,” Cruz said. “The plan is to be here for a long time, but it seems to be different now.”

Another business owner in the area who spoke with the Times on a condition of anonymity, echoed similar sentiments.

“We’ve been here for more than a decade,” the owner said. “Clients are already hearing about [the news] and they’re devastated. This is a good location for us. I [have] family I [have] to deal with. I can’t relocate. Where would I take my business?”

The business owner spoke in detail about what made this area different compared to the other, more dense shopping districts in Alexandria.

“This is a hidden gem. The customers, they don’t have to deal with Mount Vernon Avenue, because it’s so crowded over there,” the owner said. “There’s parking on the street, it’s convenient for people, they don’t have to drive 10 miles to find a parking space.”

The Times has reached out to the property manager, Mark Stofko, for the property owned by Alperstein-Asner Partnership, with a series of questions but has yet to receive a response. These are the questions that were asked:

1. Could you provide specific reasons behind the decision not to renew the leases for the business on Commonwealth Avenue? Is this decision specific to OK Cleaners or will the other businesses be affected when their contracts are up?
2. Are these decisions influenced by recent changes in zoning laws or other regulatory factors?
3. Are there any plans for redevelopment or repurposing of the properties currently occupied by these businesses? If so, could you share the nature of these plans and the expected impact on the local community?

-wsalih@alextimes.com
Ireton boys’ hoops squad bests ACHS

Titans senior suffers leg injury in back-and-forth contest
BY RYAN HOPPER

Bishop Ireton defeated Alexandria City High School 66-53 in front of a packed crowd at Godley Gymnasium Saturday night. Ireton exacted revenge on ACHS, which beat the Cardinals 57-54 on the Titans’ home floor last December.

Both teams have high expectations for this season, despite facing schedules that feature many of the Washington, D.C. area’s best teams.

The experienced Titans were ranked 14th in the Washington Post’s preseason top 20, with almost all of its primary contributors returning, except for forward Finn O’Brien and guard Kullen Robinson. The latter now plays for Hood College, a Division III school in Frederick, Maryland.

ACHS is also the defending regular-season champion of the Patriot District, regarded as the most challenging in Virginia. The district has four teams currently ranked in this week’s NOVA Hoops “NOVA Nineteen,” with Fairfax High School also receiving votes in the poll.

The Titans, a promising young team with seven sophomores and a freshman, are looking to continue to develop while improving on their 15-15 record from last season, including a 5-12 record in the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference, widely regarded as one of the toughest basketball conferences in the nation.

With Ireton leading 15-11 following the first quarter, the teams matched each other’s talents in the second, especially in the backcourt. When Ireton guards Jamari Hodnett, Silas Devonish, and St. Joseph’s signee Mekai Johnson would make a play, the ACHS trio of sophomore Darious Bivins and seniors Kye Robinson and Sean Burbage would respond. This balance and good team defense from each side kept the game tight, with the Cardinals holding onto a 26-23 lead entering halftime.

ACHS opened the second half with its best stretch of the game, a 17-8 run in the first six minutes to take a 43-37 lead, with Bivins and Robinson consistently getting to their spots to score. Bivins, Robinson and Burbage largely carried the Titans’ offense throughout the game, contributing all but two of the team’s 53 points. Bivins and Robinson, touted as one of the area’s best backcourts, would finish with 22 and 19 points, respectively.

The Titans’ run would come to an end under devastating circumstances. Thomas Farrow, an ACHS senior who had just checked into the game, and Matthew Mena, a freshman center for Ireton, collided in midair, trying to catch a cross-court pass, sending Farrow to the floor. He landed awkwardly on his left leg, visibly producing a serious injury. The game was immediately halted as medical personnel from both sidelines rushed to treat Farrow, covering his lower leg with a towel.

Paramedics arrived at the scene minutes later and took steps to treat and wrap the injury while hundreds of spectators and both teams anxiously looked on. Farrow was then carefully lifted onto a stretcher as the Titan student section chanted “We love you Thomas,” which was subsequently matched by the Ireton student section. The entire delay lasted approximately 15 minutes.

The game resumed with ACHS up six with 1:44 left in the third quarter, and the Cardinals would cut the deficit to three by the end of the quarter. It remained tight until Ireton started to pull away with three minutes left in the game. After Burbage pulled down one of his seven defensive rebounds, Hodnett stripped him, and made the ensuing layup, giving the Cardinals a three-point lead.

Two minutes later, Devonish, who, along with Bivins, is ranked as one of the top five sophomores in the state by Prep Hoops, got a steal near half-court and accelerated to the rim, making the layup while drawing a foul, sending the Ireton student section into a frenzy. He would convert the three-point play to give BI a commanding nine-point lead, effectively closing the door on any Titans comeback.

A pair of free throws punctuated the Cardinals’ 26-10 run in the last 10 minutes of the game, handing the ACHS its first loss of the season. Ireton head coach Dwayne Bryant, who coached ACHS in the late 1990s, is encouraged by his young team’s start to the season.

“We’re feeling pretty good,” Bryant said. “To beat a quality team like that this early in the season obviously gives you a little bit of confidence. And they have terrific guards, and they play hard. I still don’t think we’ve played our best ball yet, but to be 5-0 at this point, we’re pretty satisfied with that.”

Bryant contends that one of the main reasons for Ireton’s win was good defensive play down the stretch, something he thinks will help his team achieve its goals this season.

“I’m really happy with this group,” Bryant said. “They believe in each other, and we believe in them as a coaching staff. It’s been fun this season so far, and we’re just hoping that we can continue to play together, can continue to play unselfishly, continue to play tough defense and we’ll let the chips fall where they may after that.”

The game was a philanthropic event for Hoops for the Heart, a program in which schools partner with the American Medical Association to raise money for education and research for heart disease. Following the game, it was announced that Bivins was the player of the game for ACHS and Hodnett was the player of the game for the victorious Cardinals.

Ireton is now 5-0, including wins over Flint Hill, which beat St. Joseph’s & St. Agnes School, and a convincing victory over two-time defending Virginia 6A state champions Hayfield. With this hot start, the Cardinals now sit at fourth in this week’s NOVA Hoops “NOVA Nineteen” rankings.

Ireton now looks forward to a trip to Philadelphia to play St. Joseph’s Prep and Roman Catholic this weekend before returning home next week for a rivalry game against SSSAS.

ACHS is now 1-1, having handily beaten Oakton by 25 points in its first contest. The Titans will go up King Street for a rivalry game at Wakefield Friday night before opening district play on December 18 at home against Fairfax.

“NOVA Nineteen” rankings.

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“All statistics are courtesy of maxpreps.com
Preparing for holiday travel

BY FAMILY FEATURES

The holiday season can be stressful enough before adding travel to the mix. Coordinating ground or air travel and planning accommodations, even if you’re simply staying with loved ones, is often just the beginning and health and safety concerns can fall by the wayside.

For example, the highest incidence rate of cardiac mortality for the entire year occurs between Christmas and New Year’s Day, according to the American Heart Association, and more than 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year in the United States.

Plan ahead
Proper planning can help ensure you’re prepared to handle any unexpected challenges or delays when you depart. Check the weather before heading out – including at your destination – and travel around any anticipated storms. Leave early to account for potentially heavy traffic and plot your path in advance to ensure you’re aware of any road closures or construction, which can allow you to find alternate routes, if necessary, rather than trying to adjust on the fly.

Vaccination updates
Routine vaccinations can help protect you from infectious diseases that can be easily spread when around a large group of people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the seasonal flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. Other vaccines, such as the COVID-19 vaccine or booster and measles vaccine, can help protect not only your health, but your loved ones.

Learn CPR
Only about 40% of people who suffer from cardiac arrest receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, from a bystander, according to the American Heart Association. However, immediate CPR can double or triple a cardiac arrest victim’s chance of survival.

Prepare your vehicle
Car trouble is a common culprit during holiday travel. To help avoid potential issues, have your vehicle checked before embarking on an extended trip. Check tires, the battery, headlights, windshield wipers and any other parts that may be adversely impacted by winter weather. Also, ensure your vehicle is equipped with essentials like a spare tire or inflation kit, jack, jumper cables, blankets, a first aid kit and a flashlight in case of an emergency.

Pack a health kit
If you take prescription or over-the-counter medications, it may be difficult to quickly get a refill at your destination, so be sure to pack enough to last your entire trip, plus extras in case you encounter any travel delays. It may also be helpful to pack other essentials including hand sanitizer, a first-aid kit, cold medicine, aspirin and your health insurance card in case of any unexpected injuries or illnesses while on the road.
New luxury Rosemont home

You’ll love everything about this newly constructed masterpiece in Rosemont! Boasting five bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms, this residence stands as a testament to impeccable craftsmanship and thoughtful design by the renowned Alexandria builder, Windmill Hill. From the home office, picturesque views unfold, offering glimpses of the playground and the allure of Rosemont. Retreat to the screened-in rear porch equipped with a strategically placed infrared heater for a cozy outdoor experience.

Quality construction is evident in every detail, from Brentwood hardwood floors to Marvin windows and doors and James Hardie siding. The cellulose-sprayed insulation ensures a quiet and energy-efficient living space, while Ipe decking graces the rear deck and side porch. Additional features include a dedicated home gym, a gas fireplace for chilly evenings in the sunlit family room and professional landscaping framing the front and backyard. Perfectly situated, this home is just blocks away from two metro stations, parks, restaurants, nearby schools, Del Ray and Old Town Alexandria. This show piece promises a luxurious and convenient lifestyle. Strategically located near metro stations, parks and acclaimed schools, Windmill Hill invites you to experience the pinnacle of refined living.

HOMES ADVERTORIAL

DECEMBER 15

SENIOR UGLY SWEATER PARTY
Put on your most outrageous holiday attire and indulge in holiday crafts, cookie decorating, games and music. This event is for ages 55 and up.
Time: Noon to 2 p.m.
Location: Patrick Henry Recreation Center, 4653 Taney Ave.
Information: 703-746-5557

CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS AT MOUNT VERNON
Join Mount Vernon for family-friendly fun to kick off the holiday season. Stroll through the estate and chat with reenactors before the 8 p.m. firework show. Shop the winter market for local, artisanal gifts. Event is held both December 15 and 16. Ticket prices vary by age and membership.

HOLIDAY CANDLELIGHT TOURS
Celebrate the holiday season with a candlelit tour at the Lee-Fendall House! Enjoy the museum decorated in Victorian-era holiday decorations and learn the origin of modern decor. Tours start every half hour until 8:30 p.m. Tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for children. Registration is required.
Time: 7 to 9 p.m. until December 16
Location: Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden, 614 Oronoco St.
Information: contact@leefendallhouse.org or 703-548-2789

DECEMBER 16

TEEN GO-KARTING TRIP
Buckle up for an unforgettable trip go-karting with friends aged 11 to 17. Compete and showcase driving skills at an action-packed day of racing. $75 per person.
Time: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Location: Patrick Henry Recreation Center, 4653 Taney Ave.
Information: 703-746-5557

CONCERT FOR KIDS
Hear the musical tales of Aesop’s Fables performed by the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra. Performed in both English at 4 p.m. and Spanish at 5 p.m. An instrument “petting zoo” will follow each performance.
Time: 4 to 6 p.m.
Location: 4652 Taney Ave., Patrick Henry Recreation Center
Information: contact@wmpamus.org or 703-799-8229

A VERY MERRY JAZZ FEST
Alexandria’s Office of the Arts is holding a holiday rendition of ALX Jazz Fest at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Jazz and spoken word performances from the Smithsonian, NPR’s Tiny Desk Concert Series and the Levine School of Music. Event is free to all and open to the public.
Time: 7 to 9 p.m.
Location: George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive
Information: arts@alexandriava.gov

DECEMBER 17

OLD TOWN GINGERBREAD DECORATING
Learn about local architecture with gingerbread façade decorating at Gadsby’s. $25 ticket includes one façade, decorating tools and admission to the museum. Start times begin at the top of each hour.
Time: 1 to 6 p.m.
Location: Gadsby’s Tavern Museum, 134 N Royal St.
Information: alexandriava.gov/GadsbysTavern

HOME OF THE WEEK

HOMES ADVERTORIAL

Left: Front elevation, designed by Kulinski Group Architects. Middle: Throughout the home, nine- to 13-foot ceilings complement stunning architectural details. Right: Captivating kitchen including a generous island seating six, Carrera marble and Bertazzoni stainless steel appliances.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Address: 803 Russell Road, Alexandria 22301</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood: Rosemont</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price: $2,225,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square feet: 3,880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedrooms: 5</td>
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<td>Bathrooms: 4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year built: 2023</td>
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<td>Contact: Shaun Murphy <a href="mailto:shaun.murphy@compass.com">shaun.murphy@compass.com</a> MrAlexandria.com 703-868-5999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PHOTOS/PETER PAPOULAKOS PHOTOGRAPHY

DECEMBER 18

FRIENDSHIP BRACELET TEEN WORKSHOP
Knot together some bracelets for friends and family at this friendship bracelet workshop. Learn multiple techniques and experiment with string and beads. For teenagers aged 13 to 18.
Time: 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Location: Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road Suite 104
Information: alexlibrary.va.org/events

AT A GLANCE

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HOMES ADVERTORIAL

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Editorial

A Monumental announcement

This is no longer Patsy Ticer’s Alexandria.

Wednesday’s game-changing announcement that the land most directly adjacent to Alexandria’s new Potomac Yard Metro station will be redeveloped into a large sports and entertainment complex brought back memories of our much-loved former mayor.

For the uninitiated – of which there are clearly many given Alexandria’s population growth in recent years – Ticer led the way in opposing the relocation of the Washington Redskins, now known as the Commanders, to Potomac Yard back in 1992.

Back in 1992, as now, Virginia’s governor and the team owner secretly negotiated a deal to build a new stadium for a professional sports team to relocate to Alexandria’s Potomac Yard. Then, it was Democratic Gov. Doug Wilder and Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke. Now, it’s Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin and Washington Capitals and Washington Wizards owner Ted Leonsis.

A major difference between events of 31 years ago and today is that Mayor Ticer opposed, worked against and defeated the project. Conversely, current Mayor Justin Wilson – who recently announced he won’t seek re-election next year – supports the initiative.

While there are similarities between the two initiatives, there are also major differences.

In 1992, a Metro station at Potomac Yard was desired but literally decades from fruition. Now it’s open and directly adjacent to the proposed site. It will be possible for not just people from around the region to ride Metro to watch the Wizards or Capitals play, but also Alexandrians to ride from the King Street, Braddock, Eisenhower or Huntington stops over to Potomac Yard.

And this project would bring not just the Wizards and Capitals to Potomac Yard, but also the headquarters for Leonsis’ Monumental Sports & Entertainment, along with a new performing arts venue and entertainment district. It will be a focal point for the whole region, not just Alexandria.

It’s important to note several key aspects of this project. The first is that this is a framework, not a done deal. There are many approval points where hurdles and opposition could still derail the initiative.

And the devil will definitely be in the details.

While the city of Alexandria’s official announcement about the project said taxes on local residents will not be used for this project, questions remain as to what tax revenues will flow to the city. In initiatives bargained at the state level, as this one was, tax enticements lure businesses to relocate from one state to another, often making the state and not the actual location site first in line for tax revenues.

And speaking of flows, how is Alexandria’s stormwater system going to handle a development project of this size?

As with the recently passed Zoning for Housing initiative, the Del Ray neighborhood is going to be disproportionately impacted by this project. While Del Ray residents will have the convenience of being able to walk to a concert or sporting event, how will that neighborhood be protected from the daily onslaught of people – and the motor vehicles that many of them will inevitably drive to Alexandria – who will converge in this entertainment district?

There’s also the fact that downtown sports arenas are almost always preferable to suburban ones. These are the Washington Wizards and the Washington Capitals, not the Alexandria Wizards or Virginia Capitals.

If this proposal comes to fruition, only half of the six “Washington” major sports teams – the Washington Nationals, D.C. United and the Washington Mystics – would actually play in the city, with the Commanders, Wizards and Capitals in the suburbs.

While this project looks like a significant win for Alexandria, it would be an equally large loss for the District.

Opinion

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

- Thomas Jefferson

Photo of the Week

The Woodrow Wilson bridge at sunrise.

Letters

City’s biodiversity faces uncertain future

To the editor:

Rod Simmons’ decision to retire this month after 27 years of public service means that the city’s biodiversity will no longer have a dedicated advocate for its stewardship in Alexandria.

As the city’s natural resources manager, Simmons has fought tirelessly to preserve the city’s native plants and their habitats.

His expertise comes from decades of practical experience as a conservation biologist. He is widely respected regionally for his knowledge and leadership positions as past president of the Botanical Society of Washington, the Maryland Native Plant Society and board member of the Virginia Native Plant Society. He has worked closely with both the Virginia and Maryland Natural Heritage programs, which focus on the science-based conservation of our natural heritage.

Simmons has led hundreds of public field trips to endangered natural areas. As a private citizen, he helped lead efforts to get the state of Maryland to purchase the biologically rich, old-growth Chapman Forest along the Potomac River near Matawoman Creek.

I first met Simmons in the mid-1990s when he was curator of plants and the plant ecologist at the Winkler Botanical Preserve, which was before the conservation battle that led to his current job with the Alexandria Times.

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.

SEE MACDONALD
The fact that the city had been abusing and neglecting its natural heritage for decades is not surprising. 

– Andrew Macdonald, Ph.D.; former vice mayor; chair, Environmental Council of Alexandria
Hanukkah in Alexandria

Before the mid-20th century, Hanukkah was not a major holiday for most Jewish Americans. By the time it became commonly observed in the United States, Jewish congregations had been established in Alexandria for almost a century.

The word “Hanukkah,” or Chanukkah or Hannukah, did not appear in the Alexandria Gazette until the early 20th century. That is not because there was not an active Jewish community in the city. In 1857, Alexandrians founded a Hebrew Benevolent Society to establish a Jewish burial ground.

By the early 20th century, Alexandria was home to two congregations: Beth El Hebrew Congregation, founded in 1859, and Agudas Achim, founded in 1914. Hanukkah’s absence in the newspaper record reflects the holiday’s position within the Jewish religious calendar.

The Alexandria Gazette reported on Purim balls and store closings during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the 1870s, but not on Hanukkah until the first decade of the 20th century. The newspaper’s first few local references in the 1910s describe the celebration as a half-holiday largely celebrated at home and not observed with synagogue services. At the time, Hanukkah was largely a children’s festival.

One Gazette article from December 1919 chronicled an “interesting program given by Congregation Agudas Achim.” This account was the most in-depth coverage of local Hanukkah celebrations that appeared in the Alexandria Gazette before the mid-20th century. The synagogue’s program included songs, recitations and lighting of the candles. Agudas Achim’s celebrations also included a raffle and a prayer book for each child.

According to legend, when the Maccabees, a small group of Jewish fighters, entered the Temple and reclaimed it from the Syrian Greeks in 168 B.C.E., they immediately relit the ner tamid – eternal light – but only had one jar of oil. The messenger sent to secure additional oil took eight days to complete his mission. Miraculously, the single jar of oil continued to burn until his return.

The Jewish community celebrates by bringing light and warmth into their homes, communities and the world around them during the coldest, darkest time of the year for many people. Many families spend time together during these eight days eating foods prepared in oil, such as latkes and sufganiyot, lighting a menorah and playing a game of dreidel.

After World War II, the story of the Maccabee resistance and ultimate triumph over their Greek oppressors felt more relevant and resonant to Jewish Americans, contributing to Hanukkah’s rise in popularity. The holiday’s proximity to Christmas in December also helped turn Hanukkah into a more widely celebrated and commercially successful holiday.

Today, Hanukkah is widely celebrated in the United States. Here in Alexandria, local synagogues, Jewish community centers and families commemorate the event with programs, traditional foods and lightings of the menorah.

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

Weekly Poll

Last Week

Do you prefer renaming or rededicating streets currently named for Confederates?

61% Rededicate so residents don’t have to change everything.
23% Rename to get a different name entirely.
13% I don’t understand the difference.
3% I’m not sure.

This Week

Are you excited about the planned relocation of the Capitals and Wizards to Alexandria?

A) Yes, it’s fun and/or good for the economy.
B) No, it’ll cause traffic and/or noise pollution.
C) I don’t really care.
D) I didn’t know about this move.
Weekly Words

ACROSS

1  Genius "Family Guy" baby
3  Badger
7  Tsai Ing-wen's country
13  Corn product for grits
19  Korean War site (old spelling)
21  Acting like a total hog?
22  *Tiny Tim, to Bob Cratchit
24  Crescent-shaped window
25  Sin city?
26  *Like the children shown by the Ghost of Christmas Present
28  Hawks, on scoreboards
31  BLT part
33  Pushover
34  "Here comes trouble!"
36  "Nailed It!" disaster
38  Pokemon with magical ability
42  Vaudeville offerings
44  SEA letters
46  One-fourth of a 4x400
47  Drums tuned with tuning paste
49  Like horses' hooves
50  *Come over the top," in poker
52  ...of Strength
53  Desmond of "Sunset Boulevard"
56  Dutch banking giant
57  Chase film?
59  Photo file type
61  *Getting a boss like Mr. Fezziwig vs. one like Scrooge, e.g.
66  Some WBA ends
68  Gut call?
69  Period of work
70  " ...words were never spoken"
71  shouts to a keeper
72  Cue offering
73  *The ghost of Jacob Marley, e.g.
75  Some chips, often
76  Casbah covers
77  Cube offerer
78  Cuneiform tool
79  Cali chica
80  Greek area in a common phobia
82  Some holey work?
83  Made some holey work?
84  Track regions that test cornering
85  Vesuvius spew
86  Track regions that test cornering
87  "Raiders of the Lost Ark" danger
88  "Monty Hall Problem" prop
89  "You had one ___ to do!"
90  "___ out!"
91  Crescendos
92  Asmaran's IOC code
93  "You had one ___ to do!"
94  Crescendos
95  "...of Strength (Festivus tradition)
96  Keatsian
97  "Come over the top," in poker
98  Car Talk, often derided on "Car Talk"
99  Irish or has Irish in it
100  "...of Strength (Festivus tradition)
101  Atop
102  Car Talk, often derided on "Car Talk"
103  Atop
104  Atop
105  Atop
106  Atop
107  Atop
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115  Atop
116  Atop
117  Atop
118  Atop
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120  Atop
121  Atop
122  Atop

DOWN

1  Hardly a company person?
2  "...bad, so sad!"
3  Australian bird
4  Prevails
5  Unit inside Fort Knox
6  They make you read the fine print, for short
7  Prolific musician
8  Mandel's party (Abrb.)
9  Bonehead
10  Actor LaBeouf
11  Kicks up one's feet
12  Academic addenda
13  Lonely Planet reader, often
14  Golfer Palmer, to fans
15  Seals a victory
16  "...pleasure!"
17  Some chips, often
18  Pressing requirement
19  Former planet
20  3x3x3 puzzle cube
21  Having to do "adulting"
22  Ghostly glow
23  Agender pronoun
24  *Bob Cratchit, to Tiny Tim
25  Place for a beret or toque
26  Sci-fi award
27  Be on the lookout, perhaps
28  "...backdrop for when the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come appears
29  Dirty quarters
30  Rotter
31  Noble title
32  "...of Strength (Festivus tradition)
33  Do the job of
34  Psychoanalyst Sigmund
35  Toon who collects human detritus
36  Be on the lookout, perhaps
37  Bird of old Celtic lore
38  "...out!"
39  Idris of "The Suicide Squad"
40  "...out!"
41  Idris of "The Suicide Squad"
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117  Idris of "The Suicide Squad"
118  Idris of "The Suicide Squad"

NOVEL CHARACTERS

MICHAEL M. HADEED (93), of Alexandria, Dec. 7, 2023
WILLIAM POWELL PARKER, formerly of Alexandria, Dec. 2, 2023
LYNNE JONES SIMPSON (86), of Alexandria, Nov. 30, 2023
ALBERT EARL TAVENNER JR. (78), of Alexandria, Dec. 7, 2023
LEE VANCE WALTER (62), of Alexandria, Nov. 30, 2023
GLENN DAVIES WILLIS (73), of Alexandria, Nov. 22, 2023

Solutions from last week

MICHAEL M. HADEED
WILLIAM POWELL PARKER
LYNNE JONES SIMPSON
ALBERT EARL TAVENNER JR.
LEE VANCE WALTER
GLENN DAVIES WILLIS

DEATH NOTICES

www.alextimes.com  December 14, 2023 | 25
Public Hearing will be held by the City Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, held at City Hall, 301 King Street, Council Chamber and on Zoom webinar on Saturday, December 16, 2023 at 9:30 a.m., or as soon as may be heard on the hereinafter described items.

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Section 5-8-77 (Parking Permits; issuance) of Chapter 8 (Parking and Traffic Regulations) of Title 5 (Transportation and Environmental Services) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Section 10-3-924 (FAILURE TO YIELD RIGHT-OF-WAY PEDESTRIANS) of Article B (RECKLESS DRIVING, SPEEDING, ETC.) of Chapter 3 (OPERATION OF VEHICLES) of Title 10 (MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Section 2-2-10 (establishment of election districts and voting places) by amending Subsections (p), (t), and (x), all of Chapter 2 (ELECTIONS), Title 2 (GENERAL GOVERNMENT) of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Articles I (GENERAL REGULATIONS), II (DEFINITIONS), III (RESIDENTIAL ZONE REGULATIONS), IV (COMMERCIAL, OFFICE AND INDUSTRIAL ZONES), V (MIXED USE ZONES), VI (SPECIAL AND OVERLAY ZONES), VII (SUPPLEMENTAL ZONE REGULATIONS), VIII (OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING), IX (SIGNS), XI (DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS AND PROCEDURES), XII (NONCONFORMANCE AND NONCONFORMITY), and XIII (ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT) of the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance, in accordance with the text amendment heretofore approved by city council as Text Amendment No. 2023-00007 (Implementation Ordinance for Text Amendment No. 2023-00007 associated with Zoning for Housing/Housing for All approved by City Council on November 28, 2023).

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Section 12-1-4 (Election of school board members; date and manner of election), all of Chapter 1 (SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL BOARD), Title 12 (EDUCATION, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELFARE) of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended, and to amend and reordain "The Official Map of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, Designated Election Districts and Voting Places," adopted by Section 2-2-13 (MAP OF ELECTION DISTRICTS AND VOTING PLACES), all of Chapter 2 (ELECTIONS), Title 2 (GENERAL GOVERNMENT) of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.


Public Hearing and adoption of proposed City Legislative Package for the 2024 General Assembly.

Public Hearing and Consideration of an Amendment to the Lease Between the City and WG Tavern Square Venture, LLC for office space at the Tavern Square Office Building Complex located at 421 King Street.

THE PUBLIC IS ADVISED THAT AMENDMENTS OR ADDITIONS MAY BE MADE TO PROPOSED ORDINANCES WITHOUT FURTHER PUBLICATION. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT PERSONS INTERESTED IN ANY OF THESE ORDINANCES OBTAIN FREE FULL-TEXT COPIES FROM THE CITY CLERK AT CITY HALL (LIMITED COPIES AVAILABLE). If the mayor finds and declares that weather or other conditions are such that it is hazardous for members to attend the meeting, this meeting will be continued to the following Saturday. GLORIA SITTON, CMC, CITY CLERK

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

Vong Nguyen / Owner
7696 B Richmond Hwy
Alexandria
VA - 22306

Total:
CBC fee:
License fee:

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.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 513-2020.

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