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“TRY TO SAVE SOME OPEN SPACE.”

COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT BUDDY HANCE IN SUPPORT OF CLUSTERING



LOCAL 5
Town center densities restricted



LOCAL 7
HOAs warned on stormwater facilities



ON THE COVER
CalvertHealth issues its strategic vision

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 25 Rain Hi: 63° Lo: 59°	FRI, JAN 26 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 69° Lo: 45°	SAT, JAN 27 Partly Cloudy Hi: 52° Lo: 41°	SUN, JAN 28 Rain Hi: 45° Lo: 36°
MON, JAN 29 AM Showers Hi: 42° Lo: 29°	TUE, JAN 30 Partly Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 32°	WED, JAN 31 Partly Cloudy Hi: 45° Lo: 35°	THU, FEB 01 Partly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 38°



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CalvertHealth Unveils New Strategic Plan

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

CalvertHealth unveiled an updated strategic plan to the community with presentations on Jan. 18 to the Chesapeake Beach Town Council and Jan. 23 to the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

At the BOCC meeting, CalvertHealth President & CEO Jeremy Bradford said, "I would be remiss if I did not touch on that over the past five years, we as an organization, the health system, spent more than \$65 million to add cutting edge technology, improve our facilities, over \$50 million to the new tower, With that renovation that our patients absolutely love having their own room, single room occupancy, as well as other expanding services that we've brought to the health system over the years."

Bradford cited some of the hospital's recent accomplishments:

- Attained accreditation from the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer, placing CalvertHealth among the top community cancer programs in the country.
- Recognized by US News & World Report as a High Performer for heart failure, kidney failure, hip fracture, back surgery (spinal fusion) and COPD.
- Earned the American Heart Association's highest honor for Outstanding Stroke Care, the Gold Plus Achievement Award, for 11 years in a row.
- Named one of America's Top 100 for Critical Care Health by Healthgrades for the third consecutive year.
- Listed as one of the Nation's Top Oncology Programs by Becker's Hospital Review.

Bradford said two agencies rate health care organizations, and CalvertHealth rates just below the top rating in each, with four stars and a B.

Being the best is the goal. "That's part of our strategic plan because when you set the goal high, that's what you work to achieve, and that's what we're going to achieve as a health system."

CalvertHealth began a year ago to revise their five-year strategic plan. Vice President, Strategy & Business Development, Kasia Sweeney explained the outcome to the two public bodies. She said, "We made a very conscientious effort to be as inclusive and proactive as possible so that this plan would really represent the needs and the insights of many different diverse areas of our community."

Sweeney said, "For many years we've had an important mission to serve the healthcare needs of our community, but we spent some time distilling our language around that so that it would be very clear to our employees and to everyone what we were here to do and what we plan to achieve in the future. We settled on a mission of improving the health and wellbeing of those we serve. So not just delivering acute hospital care, but really thinking about the health and the wellbeing of people across our community, whether they're turning to us for care inside the hospital, whether we're caring for them in the medical group through outreach activities, through our mobile health unit. We're just thinking about the needs of our community and making sure that we're working

with partners to deliver on the best value in healthcare we can.

"Our vision is to be the trusted healthcare leader delivering a lifetime of exceptional care. And I think that really represents the role of a community health system in a place like Calvert County."

Five values were identified: quality, compassion, teamwork, diversity, and integrity. She added, "There are six main areas of initiatives: culture and competence, primary care, outpatient services, clinical service lines, community, hospital care, and community partnerships. She explained each:

Culture and competency

"This is the area of our strategic plan where we will be focused on those core internal activities that we need to undertake to deliver our promise of excellence to the community. Our quality plans and our focus on achieving five star and A ratings for quality workforce development plans. As everyone knows, it's a challenging time from a workforce perspective, especially in healthcare. And we need to be innovative in our thinking about maintaining a pipeline of healthcare workers that are highly qualified, our diversity, equity, and inclusion plans, leadership development and process improvement and efficiency that will help us maintain financial stability and our ability to serve the community in the years ahead.

Primary care

"We call this the roots of the tree. So, while obviously the hospital building itself is the cornerstone of our healthcare system, really most people access care from a primary care standpoint. So, we believe it's very important for us to be focused on this access to care component, make sure that we're recruiting physicians and providers to meet the needs of our patients long before they need to access the hospital. Think about the overall population's health and support for our mission of wellbeing for a lifetime, and then also making sure that we have physicians and high-quality services positioned throughout the county so that no patient has to travel long distances for the care that they need.

Outpatient and ambulatory services:

"Connected to the primary care idea and the geography idea, not just where do we have physicians and providers located, but also what types of outpatient services do we provide. So many things increasingly can be provided safely in an outpatient environment. So making sure that our community has good access to ambulatory surgery, to many of the joint venture services that we already offer, such as weight management, diagnostic imaging, and continuing to focus on those outpatient services again, so that people do not have to travel long distances for the care that they need.

Clinical service lines

"While every condition we treat is obviously important, and acute care services are important, we did select four clinical service lines that we believe are important for our community in the years ahead, based on data and the unique needs of our population. So, the first (is) cancer care. We've already made significant investments in advancing

our oncology programs through our partnership with Duke Health. And we want to continue to build on that for the needs of the individuals in our area. The second area is women's health, making sure that we have a comprehensive and sustainable women's health service line to deliver care for women and families throughout their lifetime. So, whether that's childbearing years or aging population, making sure that we have physicians and services available for women. The third is digestive diseases and weight management. In line with our community health needs assessment and our understanding of weight management and obesity as an important controller or contributor to other types of illness, we want to make sure that we have strong programs to help individuals who are struggling in that area. We started a bariatric program about a year and a half ago, and we've seen great success with individuals who've gone through that program, but we want it to be comprehensive in nature and what we're able to deliver. And then also for an aging population, thinking about digestive diseases, reflux, other types of illnesses that are common in that population. And then finally, orthopedics. So, we've been fortunate to have strong orthopedic practices in our community over many years, but again, with more of an aging population, we know that's going to be a need going forward. And we want to make sure that we have a sustainable delivery system for orthopedic care and for sports medicine."

Community hospital care

"We've talked a lot about ambulatory efforts and things outside the hospital. Obviously, we still have a hospital to run, and we want to make sure that we're delivering excellent care when individuals need to turn to the hospital for services. So, in this area, we'll be focused on making sure that we have the specialists that are needed to cover the emergency department and to cover services inside the hospital, thinking about cardiology and vascular care and what resources we can apply in those areas to continue to expand and grow. Jeremy mentioned our robotic surgery program that we'll be embarking on, as well as behavioral health, which we know is an important community need. We've been fortunate to have a great partnership with Shepherd Pratt, who is a regional expert in behavioral health, but



we'd like to continue to advance that partnership and grow not only in the hospital, but in the community as well.

Community partnerships

"We understand that we cannot do everything alone. And our mission of meeting the needs of the community and improving the wellbeing and health requires partnerships. We already have great relationships with the health department and the College of Southern Maryland and many organizations throughout the community. But into the future, we want to make sure that we're being innovative and thinking about the partnership strategies that can be implemented to help us address needs across the community jointly."

After the presentation Commissioner President Buddy Hance said, "We're very blessed here in Calvert County to have CalvertHealth. You've got a great team, and that shows, and we've had great leadership with the administration and the board."

Hance added, "We get complaints about everything anybody can think about. And we never get complaints about CalvertHealth. So that's quite a tribute to you all because we hear them all. We hear complaints from other places, and we don't hear any about CalvertHealth."

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Town Center Densities to be Restricted

Planners Approve Second Solomons Condo

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has voted to limit the density in town centers to no more than seven units per acre. Currently higher densities are allowed: 14 per acre in Prince Frederick and 20 units per acre in some sections of Solomons. On Jan. 17, the planning commission gave approval for the second month in a row for a condominium project at 20 units per acre.

Commissioner Catherine Grasso made the proposal during a discussion of the update of the county's zoning ordinance. The change would occur during the rewrite of the zoning ordinance and the town center master plans and would become effective upon their adoption after public hearings by the planning commission and the county commissioners. The zoning ordinance update process is expected to be ready for public hearings later this year.

Grasso said part of her campaign platform was run against multi-family developments and she felt she so far hadn't been able to live up to that promise.

Director of Planning and Zoning Mary Beth Cook said a plan for grandfathering projects in the pipeline when the changes are ratified would be made during the update process. Commissioner Vice President Mike

Hart warned against a rush of projects to beat the deadline for changing the density. He said he would fight any such attempts.

At the Jan. 17 planning commission meeting, the Sunset Terrace Condominiums at 14474 and 14478 S. Solomons Island Road were approved. The project is in three buildings, with eight condominium units in two of them and retail or restaurant space in the third. There would be 16 underground parking spaces.

In December, the planners approved a similar project nearby, also with three buildings and eight condominium units. Each project used the maximum allowable density of 20 units per acre.

Planning commission member Chris Gadway, a former county commissioner, was the sole member to oppose the Sunset Terrace project. Gadway said, "I'm going to say the same thing I said last month. It's going to absolutely redefine and remake the entire view of the island and take away its current nature."

The planning commission's conceptual site plan approval of the project was subject to meeting six conditions stipulated by staff including answering concerns of the fire department. Those conditions will have to be met prior to final site plan approval.

dickmyers@countytimes.net



Sunset Terrace Condominiums site plan

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Proposal Tabled to Pay Ethics Commission Members

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

A motion by County Commissioner Mike Hart to create a stipend for members of the county ethics commission failed to garner a second at the Jan. 23 commissioner meeting, effectively tabling the discussion. But Commissioner President Buddy Hance promised future discussion on the proposal from the ethics commission.

Commission Chair Brian Fairweather and Vice-Chair Thomas McClarren appeared at the Jan. 23 meeting to state their case for the proposed \$600 per meeting stipend for the chairperson and \$500 per meeting for regular members and alternate, when applicable.

The lack of quorums has impeded the commission's timeliness in rendering opinions. The commission has struggled in recent years to get a quorum for meetings and the commissioners have struggled to find new members. Part of the problem could go back several years to the suit by then commissioner Kelly McConkey against the commission chairperson. Hance observed, "That issue occurred with Commissioner Kelly. And I think there were some issues with the chair of the Ethics Commission at that time.

And I think that all that it was very public. That created some issues for other ethics commission members that they felt like they just didn't want to have to deal with that. So, it was an unfortunate situation. You can't blame people for not being more engaged."

Hance added, "We have lots of boards and committees and we struggle to get people to volunteer. Even the planning commission that we pay the members, sometimes we're challenged to get applicants for. People just don't volunteer like they used to. I've volunteered my whole life, driven all over the state of Maryland on my dime because I felt it was my obligation. But people don't do that anymore."

Commissioner Catherine Grasso said during the discussion, "I'm not saying yea or nay, but I am saying it makes me wonder who we are appointing, that they're not upholding their end of the bargain and showing up for these meetings. I've been on committees all my adult life. This is the first time I've ever gotten paid. And I make a whopping \$48,000 a year for 40 plus hours a week. You know what I'm saying? Maybe we should re-look at who we are appointing and make sure that these people are serious about their commitment. Because you're

right, that does put you at a disadvantage when you don't have a quorum. And shame on them for not taking their appointments seriously."

Grasso questioned why the commission is still meeting by Zoom. Fairweather said he travels a lot so it's easier for him to attend meetings virtually.

Hart stood up for the commission and the job they do. He said, "There's no playbook on how to do this job. And people come at you from all walks of life and asking things that you think are just so innocent and you don't know."

Hart added, "There are times, and (county attorney) John (Norris) can attest to it; we need to send it to you guys. So, it's an extremely valuable tool, because I'm very protective of my name. Call me a lot of things, but once you start touching on that, hair comes up my neck and I come out swinging. So, when you say, I'm good, and if he (Norris) says, I'm good, I feel that I'm good."

Fairweather noted that being an ethics commission member is a big responsibility. Their duties, he said, include:

- Provide training for all new appointments and every two years thereafter

- Issue advisory opinions
- Investigate complaints if sufficient facts support the allegation
- Review and maintain financial disclosure statements
- Review and maintain the lobbying activity report
- Submit annual certification to the State Ethics Commission

He said, "The commission has responded to 38 advisory opinions in the last three-and-a-half years, primarily Conflict of Interest opinions regarding secondary employment. Approximately two hours are dedicated to each Advisory Opinion."

Hance said the issue of Zoom meetings needed to be addressed if members are going to be paid. He noted though, "It is important what you do. We just have to be careful. Speaking for me, I don't want to start and then they're all going to line up. Every board and commission that we have is going to line up and say, you're paying them now. We want to get paid too."

He told the ethics commission members, "We'll have some more discussion. Don't take this as a 'no', but we'll be in touch."

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Lusby Man Perishes in Pedestrian Accident

Deputies from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office Patrol Bureau responded on Jan. 19 at approximately 8 p.m. to the area of southbound Solomons Island Road (Rt. 4) and Broomes Island Road in Port Republic for the report of a serious motor vehicle crash involving a pedestrian. Upon arrival, deputies located an unresponsive pedestrian in the travel portion of the roadway. The CCSO Crash Reconstruction Team responded to investigate.

Preliminary investigation revealed that a 2020 Ford F350, operated by Martin Lynn Pitcher, 68, of Port Republic, was traveling south on Rt. 4 approaching Broomes Island Road. A pedestrian identified as Anthony Joseph Pessagno, Jr., 36, of Lusby, was walking in and out of the travel portion of the roadway per numerous calls to Calvert Control Center.

Statements from Pitcher indicate

Pessagno was in the middle of the roadway and Pitcher advised he never saw the pedestrian. This was supported by numerous witnesses on scene as well as additional individuals that contacted the sheriff's office.

Pessagno was pronounced deceased on scene by emergency medical personnel on scene.

Pitcher refused treatment and was released on scene.

Master DFC. Jeffrey Hardesty of the Crash Reconstruction Team is conducting the investigation of the crash. Anyone with who may have witnessed the crash or events leading up to the incident is asked to contact M/DFC Hardesty at 410-535-2800 or by email, JHardesty@CalvertCounty.md.gov. Please refer to case #24-4831.

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Northern Middle School Bidding Questioned

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has questioned the bidding for the new Northern Middle School. On Jan. 23, during the first of a series of work sessions on proposed capital budgets for the next fiscal year, the commissioners grilled the school system's Director of School Construction Shuchita Warner about the process.

The commissioners first wanted to know if renovation of Northern Middle School had been considered as an option for a new building.

Warner said, "The building envelope is very, very poor because it was designed in the seventies, built in 1976. So, we'd have to beef up the entire envelope. So basically, the brick, the insulation, the roofing. The shape of Northern Middle makes it extremely difficult to actually do the renovation within the building itself. You'd have classrooms that would have no type of day lighting, you wouldn't get the optimal circulation."

She added, "There are issues with the existing plumbing, so you'd pretty much have to take the building down to bare bones, just a structural steel and stud. And so, if you were to do a renovation in order to really meet all of the codes and the feasibility study requirements, it ends up being

significantly more expensive. The other problem is we've got students there, so we'd have to move them around. We looked at very detailed swing space. So, we thought, okay, if we could bring in several portables, we can do these swats of eight classrooms at a time and then swing these kids over into the portable space."

Warner was asked what was being done to prevent cost overruns as occurred for Northern High School. She said, "One of the things that we do is instead of going with a hard bid, we have decided to go a different delivery method so we can get cost estimates at every phase. So, with the schematic design phase for Beach (Elementary), and then same with Northern Middle, we've gotten two cost estimates and we do leveling meetings with those two cost estimates line by line. We go through for each and every single line to make sure that if we're thinking that we're high in this area, say for HVAC, we've got another cost estimate. And we're looking at where are the industry costs? What are the prices that are coming in? We're trying to do that during design versus getting ourselves in a situation where come bid day, we're surprised. Som we're able to do that for these large projects. And it's worked so far, touch wood, hopefully it'll continue working, but we're trying to be very proactive too."

To do that, she said a construction man-

ager (CM), Keller of Mt. Airy, Md., was hired through a bidding process and Keller will manage the bidding process for subcontractors for each and every step along the way.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance said he had been told by a local contractor that he wasn't allowed to bid on the project. Warner said that wasn't true.

"This is a CM, at-risk delivery model. And basically that's a quality-based selection with the RFP put out and essentially, there was a short listing in interviews. That process has completed. And that firm did bid, and they did interview. Yes," Warner said.

Hance questioned whether going that route was the best approach, that the construction manager once being awarded the contract wouldn't have any incentive to hold down costs for the subcontractors. Bur Warner insisted it was the best approach and more transparent, with bidding at every step of the process.

Capital Projects Analyst Veronica Atkinson, in a memo to the commissioners, said, "The Department of Finance & Budget has thoroughly reviewed the BOE's FY 2025-2030 six-year Staff Recommended Budget CIP amounting to \$139,739,711. This figure represents a substantial 24% increase compared to the FY 2024-2029 six-year Adopted Budget. The six-year CIP for the BOE prominently fea-

tures the ongoing replacement project for Northern Middle School, which commenced in FY 2024 with design costs, and encompasses the construction phase spanning FY 2025-2028. Moreover, the funding request extends to cover replacement or renovation with funding for a feasibility study of Calvert Elementary School, along with projects aimed at maintaining and enhancing the overall condition of multiple schools within the county. The comprehensive budgetary allocation underscores a commitment to both new infrastructure development and the ongoing upkeep of existing educational facilities."

She added, "The fiscal impact analysis of the BOE's six-year CIP Staff Recommended Budget reveals a contribution of \$71,086,155 from the State, leaving a remaining balance of \$68,653,556 to be covered by the county over the span of six years. The breakdown of the county funding portion is as follows: Paygo/General Fund \$ 443,300, Debt/Bond \$57,705,906, Excise Tax \$10,504,350 Total County Contribution is \$68,653,556"

Warner said the good news was a new state program which awards counties with good maintenance history with an extra five-percent state contribution for construction, pushing the state share to over 60 percent.

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Homeowners' Associations: Beware of Maintenance Responsibilities

Stormwater Structures Could be Costly for HOAs

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Homeowners' associations (HOAs) have been warned that if a stormwater management structure, often a pond, is on property they own, then they are responsible to maintain it. The issue arose during a Jan. 17 joint meeting of the county commissioners and the planning commission to review the latest round of proposed changes to the county's zoning ordinance.

The ordinance has sections with requirements for recreation areas in subdivisions. The proposed ordinance also has requirements for clustering subdivisions in rural areas.

Each scenario creates open space not owned by the property owners within the subdivision. Those tracts of land typically convey to a homeowner's association (HOA) after the developer walks away.

Planning Commission member Dr. Richard Holler observed, "Oftentimes permanent stormwater structures are built in open space areas and end up being conveyed to either homeowner association or a private individual who has no idea that they're taking on the responsibility of maintenance of the stormwater structure. The language (in the update) talks about being protected by legal arrangements sufficient to assure their maintenance and preservation for the intended purpose that cover the stormwater

structure. How does that work?"

Planner Will Hager said, "That's another good question. I believe that we, my memory is a little bit fuzzy on this, that we discussed stormwater and open space at some point, but I'm not sure if we included anything specifics to address what you are bringing up. So, I think that that's probably something that we're going to have to discuss."

Holler said, "Unfortunately, there's some history where (home)owner's associations have dissolved because of the liability of maintaining a broken stormwater system."

Planning commission member Wilson Freeland said, "I presented a paper at an EPA conference many years ago regarding the same matter. And, it's basically the same thing going on in situations where a stormwater structure is built on a private lot and somebody buys that lot thinking they've got a nice little pond to only find out 10 years later that there was a considerable amount of maintenance required to maintain the stormwater structure as designed that needs to be provided upfront so that folks know what they're taking on."

Director of Public Works J.R. Cosgrove said, "Commissioner Freeland, you're right. So currently the way the majority of the storm water for subdivisions are, or even commercial lots, they are built on open space, especially in subdivisions. There are maintenance agreements signed

by the developer that says they maintain it. Generally, they're usually given over to the homeowner association, like a lot of the open space with the documents. The county has a policy where we go out and basically inspect these devices if they're not functioning or have not been maintained, which we do find a lot, especially the ones with the homeowner association or even the ones that are private lots, that still have storm motor easements on them. We generally end up having to give them a letter and tell them they're basically non-compliance and they have to maintain it."

Cosgrove added, "We found basically it becomes an issue because one, they didn't know they had to maintain it, whether it be the homeowner association or the private. So, it is a concern that we probably need to address somehow. I know that other counties have found ways where sometimes they provide easements to the county to maintain them, but I don't know if we necessarily want to go down that path because now that increases our operating cost and everything for all taxpayers."

Cosgrove added, "When the subdivision's done, generally the developer is the one that creates and signs and records that maintenance agreement when the plat's recorded. So, in five years, when that open space is turned over to their homeowner association, if they're not made aware of that, they're not

going to know because they're not the ones signing the agreement." He said inspections are supposed to be done by the county every three years, but that sometimes hasn't happened because of staffing.

There was general agreement that something needed to be put in the regulations to address the problem, such as requiring the HOA to sign a maintenance agreement when they take over the property.

The clustering provisions of the ordinance update would require it in several zoning categories. For instance, a 200-acre farm could be subdivided into seven 25-acre lots. With clustering, those seven homes could be on three acres each, leaving 179 acres of open space that could be farmed or put to another use, but not developed.

Commissioner President Buddy Hance, a farmer, said the regulations should figure out a way to encourage clustering. "I don't think any of us would like to see seven 25-acre lots on those 200 acres. Understanding the real estate market and how things are, there's value to having large lots. And so, if we could maybe try to think about a way to incentivize that without hitting density would be an option, we could throw out there for people. Try to save some open space."

dickmyers@countytimes.net

CALVERT COUNTY CRIME BLOTTER

During the week of January 8 – January 14, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 1,748 calls for service throughout the community.

Burglary: 24-2187

On January 9, 2024, Deputy R. Jones responded to 155 Holiday Drive (formerly the Holiday Inn) in Solomons, for the report of a burglary that had already occurred. Investigation revealed unknown suspects had entered the locked building and caused extensive damage to the property. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$50,000.00.

Motor Vehicle Theft: 24-2334

On January 10, 2024, Deputy Smith responded to the 600 block of Santa Fe Trail in Lusby, for the report of a stolen vehicle. Contact was made with the complainant who stated her vehicle was stolen from the driveway of her residence sometime between 7 p.m. on Jan. 9 and 1:55 a.m. on Jan. 10. The vehicle was left unlocked with the keys inside. The estimated value of stolen property is \$27,295.00. On Jan. 12, 2024, the Hardy County Sheriff's Office recovered the stolen vehicle in West Virginia.

Theft: 24-2977

On January 12, 2024, Deputy Deinert responded to Jefferson Patterson Park located at 10515 Mackall Road in Saint Leonard, for the report of a theft. Contact was made with the complainant who advised a space heater was stolen from the Greenhouse sometime between 11 a.m. on Jan. 9 and 7 a.m. on Jan. 10. The heater is described as a Palma 110v box-shaped, mid-sized space heater. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$199.00.

Theft: 24-3037

On January 12, 2024, Deputy Deinert responded to the 6800 block of Mackall Road in St. Leonard, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised a trailer tag with a Maryland Registration was stolen from his trailer. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$180.00.

Theft: 24-2193

On January 9, 2024, at 12:50 p.m., Deputy Brown responded to Walgreens located at 355 Market Square Drive in Prince Frederick, for a reported theft. Investigation revealed an unknown male suspect and an unknown female suspect entered the store at 11:58 a.m. holding a large zebra print bag. The suspects began pulling items off the shelves and loading merchandise into the bag. The suspects proceeded past all final points of sale exiting the Walgreens on foot. The male suspect is described as wearing a dark blue coat over a black hooded sweat-shirt, dark-colored jeans, gray shoes, and a blue surgical mask. The female was wearing a black coat, dark-colored jeans, black shoes, and a white surgical mask. Both

suspects stole a large amount of personal hygiene items and beauty products. The estimated value of stolen property is \$744.79.

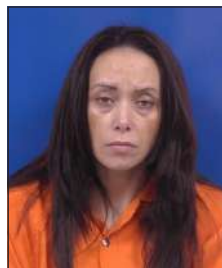
Theft: 24-2193

On January 9, 2024, at approximately 1:46 p.m., Deputy Zinn responded to the Walgreens Pharmacy located at 11745 Rousby Hall Road in Lusby, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed two unknown subjects entered the store at 12:42 p.m. with a blue reusable-style bag. The suspects placed stolen merchandise into the bag and fled the store. The suspects are described as a tall slender black male wearing a black parka-style jacket with the hood up, black pants, white shoes, and a surgical mask. The female suspect is described as wearing a black parka-style jacket with the hood up, black pants, black shoes, and a surgical mask. The estimated value of stolen property is \$804.81.

Theft: 24-3438

On January 14, 2024, DFC Dymond responded to the 3100 block of Holland Cliffs Road in Huntingtown, for a reported theft. Contact was made with the complainant who advised his 2014 blue Yamaha YZ250F Dirt Bike was stolen from a shed on his property sometime between 5 p.m. on Jan. 11 and 10 a.m. on Jan. 14. The estimated value of stolen property is \$3,000.00.

ARRESTS



Nicole Marie Fant

On January 8, 2024, Deputy Brown responded to the Calvert County Detention Center (CCDC) located at 325 Stafford Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of a controlled dangerous substance found on a female inmate. Investigation revealed during a strip search of **Nicole Marie Fant**, 38 of Chesapeake Beach, several pills of Alprazolam, 2 straws covered in a white powdery residue, and 7 metal spoons were found on Fant's person. The contraband was removed from the CCDC without further incident. Fant was charged with Possession of Contraband in a Place of Confinement and CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis.

Editor's Note: The above arrests are not an indication of guilt or innocence as the cases have not been adjudicated.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at (410) 535-2800 and reference the case number provided. Citizens may remain anonymous thru the 'Submit a Tip' feature on the Calvert County Sheriff's Office mobile app. To download, visit <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a39520678>. Tipsters may also email ccsotips@calvertcountymd.gov

Legal Notice

**TOWN OF CHESAPEAKE BEACH
PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Mayor and Town Council will hold a public hearing on the following ordinances and Charter Amendment Resolution at the Town Council meeting on February 15, 2024 beginning at 6:50 pm.

Charter Amendment Resolution CAR-24-1, a resolution of the Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, amending the Charter of the Town of Chesapeake Beach to provide for the clarification of a referendum of an ordinance.

Ordinance O-24-1, an ordinance of the Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, amending the annual budget for the General Fund of the Town of Chesapeake Beach for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 to reconcile expenses and ratify over expenditures.

Ordinance O-24-2, an ordinance of the Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, amending the annual budget for the Water Reclamation Treatment Plant of the Town of Chesapeake Beach for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 to reconcile expenses and ratify over expenditures.

Ordinance O-24-3, an ordinance of the Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, amending the annual budget for the Utility Fund of the Town of Chesapeake Beach for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 to reconcile expenses and ratify over expenditures.

Ordinance O-24-4, an ordinance of the Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, amending the annual budget for the Water Park Fund of the Town of Chesapeake Beach for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 to reconcile expenses and ratify over expenditures.

The complete Ordinances and Charter Amendment Resolution may be viewed upon request to shumm@chesapeakebeachmd.gov Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Calvert Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Jan 25

JobSource Mobile Career Center

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Rd, Solomons
10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Get job counseling and resume help, search for jobs and connect with Southern Maryland Jobsource. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Winter Reading Festival

Calvert Library Prince Frederick,
850 Costley Way
5:30-7:30 p.m.

We all know that reading is the foundation of learning. Join us to learn how to turn your child on to reading despite challenges. There will be fun for the whole family! Sponsored by CCPS Partners for Success and Calvert Library. Free book for every child! Snow date: February 1 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Anime Night

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings
6-7 p.m.

A fun night of anime! Tweens/Teens in grades 6-12 invited. Come hang out with friends and other fans of anime. We will watch anime, talk about our favorite manga and sample some books, use art supplies for anime creations, and try some Japanese snacks! 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Reading Buddies: Young Readers

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Rd, Solomons
6:30-7:30 p.m.

At this event, elementary aged children will do fun activities and read out loud to

teen volunteers. Teen volunteers can earn one service learning hour for participating. It's a great way to socialize and build reading confidence. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Fri, Jan 26

On Pins & Needles

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sat, Jan 27

Brain Games: Mahjongg

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
12-3 p.m.

Want to learn Mahjongg? Already know but want to play? Games are a great way to keep your brain sharp while having fun! Join us! Please register. Interested in reading about Mahjongg? Take a look at what the library has. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Dee of St. Mary's Dockside Tour

Calvert Marine Museum
1 - 4 p.m.

Step aboard the museum's sailing skipjack for an up-close tour of her 56 ft. deck with crew members during the off-season. Learn how watermen dredge for oysters, hoist the sails, and navigate the waterways of the Chesapeake. Included with museum admission.

Sun, Jan 28

Big Conversation

Middleham and St. Peter's Parish Hal
10210 H.G. Trueman Rd., Lusby
2-5 p.m.

Topic: The Racial Wealth Gap: Rooted in Land and Home Ownership. In-person expert panel presentation followed by small group discussions Must register to attend: <https://bit.ly/WealthGap24> For more information: www.dismantleracism.org The Big Conversation is sponsored by Middleham & St. Peter's Episcopal Church in partnership with: All Saints Episcopal Church, Calvert County Public Schools, Baltimore Mediation, CalvertHealth, Calvert Interfaith Council, Community Mediation Centers of Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties, Calvert Concepts Charitable Corporation (C4), College of Southern Maryland, Concerned Black Women of Calvert Co, Emmanuel SDA Church - St. Leonard, Historic Sotterley, Inc., Gray-Ray American Legion Post, League of Women Voters of Calvert Co., NAACP Branches of Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties, Patuxent Friends (Quaker) Meeting, Piscataway Park/Accoceek Foundation, Public Libraries of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties, Remnant Center of Excellence, Inc., St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's Co. Health Department, St. Mary's Co. Public Schools, Salisbury U. School of Social Work/

The Art of Drawing Birds

Calvert Marine Museum
2 - 4 p.m.

Learn about the lives and habits of our native birds of prey with a naturalist talk, followed by an art workshop where you can learn how to draw birds of prey! Beginner and experienced artists, 16 years and older, will enjoy this workshop! All supplies and instructions are included. Participants will be able to take home their original drawings. \$15 per person, and pre-registration is required.

Admission applies to visit museum exhibits.

Tue, Jan 30

THE BASICS: School Readiness Series

Barstow Elementary School
6-7:30 p.m.

Stop by to learn ways to boost your child's early learning skills in routines you already do! Explore ideas and hands-on activities for morning routines, mealtimes, shopping, bath time, play, car rides and bedtime for children birth - age 3. Each date has a different theme. Calvert Library, 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Wed, Jan 31

Grooving and Moving

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
9:30-10 a.m.

Join us for Grooving and Moving where we will use music and movement to start the day! Fans of Storytime will enjoy this music session as we move, play instruments and sing together. For ages Birth - 5. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Thu, Feb 1

Sea Squirts

Calvert Marine Museum
10:15 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

This month's theme is Chesapeake 1, 2, 3. Children 18 months to 3 years, with an adult, are invited to discover the museum together through music, stories, and special activities. Join us for story time and a craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25 - 40 minutes. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Included with museum admission.

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Dave Spigler

The County Times is a weekly newspaper providing news and information for the residents of St. Mary's and Calvert County. The County Times will be available on newsstands every Thursday. The paper is published by Southern Maryland Publishing Company, which is responsible for the form, content, and policies of the newspaper. The County Times does not espouse any political belief or endorse any product or service in its news coverage.

To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County Times will make every attempt possible to publish late content, but cannot guarantee so. Letters may be condensed/edited for clarity, although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. Copyright in material submitted to the newspaper and accepted for publication remains with the author, but the County Times and its licensees may freely reproduce it in print, electronic or other forms. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters. The County Times cannot guarantee that every letter or photo(s) submitted will be published, due to time or space constraints.



County Times

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636



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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Winged nut
- 7. ___ Humbug!
- 10. One who sets apart
- 12. Circle above a saint's head
- 13. Unpleasantly loud and harsh
- 14. Expressed pleasure
- 15. Feminine given name
- 16. Company of badgers
- 17. Popular Dodge pickup truck
- 18. Witty sayings
- 19. Leader
- 21. Autonomic nervous system
- 22. Premolar
- 27. Atomic #28
- 28. Holiday decorative item
- 33. Exclamation of surprise
- 34. Rusk or cracker
- 36. Returned material authorization (abbr.)
- 37. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
- 38. Eat
- 39. Marxist economics theory (abbr.)
- 40. Ceases to exist
- 41. Male Arabic name
- 44. Series of ridges on an organ wall
- 45. Places where bees are kept
- 48. One-time Yankees sensation Kevin
- 49. Church office
- 50. Single lens reflex
- 51. Pieces of fibrous tissue

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Classify
- 2. Dismounted
- 3. Produced
- 4. Consumed
- 5. Director Howard
- 6. The products of human creativity
- 7. Thai monetary units
- 8. Away from wind
- 9. Builder's trough
- 10. Relating to Islam
- 11. It can sometimes ache
- 12. Small quantities (Scot.)
- 14. Poisonous plant
- 17. Laugh at
- 18. Vogul
- 20. C. European river
- 23. Type of cat
- 24. Exclamation of disgust
- 25. Stephen King novel
- 26. Without armies
- 29. Expression of sympathy
- 30. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 31. Previously
- 32. Illegal drug
- 35. Kiloelectronvolt
- 36. Large, flightless birds
- 38. For smoking
- 40. Binary
- 41. Competition
- 42. Mark resembling an arrow
- 43. Containers
- 44. Root mean square (abbr.)
- 45. Commercials
- 46. I.M. ___, architect
- 47. 007's creator

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JANUARY 11 SOLUTIONS

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7	4	3	9	5	6	2	1	8
6	5	8	1	2	4	3	9	7
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St. Mary's Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Fri, Jan 26

Learn About Human Trafficking

Loffler Senior Activity Center
21905 Chancellors Run Rd., Great Mills
10a.m. to 11 a.m.
Cost: Free

Sgt. Chris Beyer and Detective Taylore Nauman from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office will be at the Loffler Senior Activity Center to discuss the growing problem of human trafficking. Is it happening here in St. Mary's County? Who is vulnerable? What are the red flags you should be on the lookout for? How does cell phone/social media safety help? Register for this presentation at www.stmaryscountymd.gov/aging, or leave a message on our reservation line at 301-475-4200, ext. 1660. Limited seating.

Sat, Jan 27

UCAC Meeting

Leonardtown Public Library
23630 Hayden Farm Ln., Leonardtown
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions (UCAC) will hold its Annual Members Meeting. The public is welcome to attend.

After a brief business meeting, which includes nominations and elections for the Board of Directors and reports on the work of UCAC Committees, guest speaker Dr. Travis Parno, Director of Research & Collections at Historic St. Mary's City will provide an update on the ongoing work of the Chancellor's Point Working Group. The group, which includes UCAC members, was formed in Spring 2023, when HSMC archaeologists' excavations rescued the remains of two individuals of African descent from eroding into the St. Mary's River following a major storm.

Non-members are welcome to come learn more about UCAC and share in celebrating the organization's accomplishments. Music will be provided by Roy Johnson, and light refreshments will be served.

Wicomico Shores Three Club Challenge

Wicomico Shores Golf Course
35794 Aviation Yacht Club Rd.,
Mechanicsville
8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

18-hole tournament where each player may only use three clubs! (Yes, a putter is a club). Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Multiple tees will be used to assure everyone has a fair chance. We will use the GHIN handicap system.

Call the golf shop to sign up or ask questions. 301-884-4601.

Appraiser Fair at St. Clement's Island Museum

St. Clement's Island Museum

38370 Point Breeze Rd., Coltons Point

You may have a hidden treasure in your attic or garage and not even know it! Visit with expert appraisers as they determine the value of your prized possessions at St. Clement's Island Museum.

Appraisers for various types of items will be available at the museum. Only items that can be hand-carried will be appraised. Space is limited and items will be viewed on a first come, first serve basis.

As of now, appraisers include those for fine arts, coins, jewelry and currency.

While admission is FREE, there are various small costs for item appraisals (Normally \$5 each; cash and check only). For the fine arts category, there is a two-item limit per person. This category may close early due to high attendance. Due to the popularity of this event, prepare for long waiting times.

Call 301-769-2222 for more info.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library UPCOMING EVENTS



St. Mary's County Library Strategic Plan Survey

St. Mary's County Library is updating our Strategic Plan! We are working with Library IQ to complete the planning process and will have an updated plan by mid-2024. Please take our survey to help us know what the community needs. <https://library-iq.mysocialpinpoint.com/st-marys-county-library-strategic-plan> or follow the link from the strategic plan page on www.stmalib.org.

The Growing Brain: Childcare Provider Workshop Series

FREE Core of Knowledge training for childcare providers. The Growing Brain is an innovative course from Zero to Three that provides a toolkit of how the brain develops step-by-step, neuron-by-neuron. Units 1 & 7 are in-person at Leonardtown Library on Saturdays from 9:15am-12:30pm; doors open at 9 a.m. Units 2-6 are on-line via Zoom on Monday nights from 6-9 p.m. The Zoom Room will open at

5:50 p.m. Licensed childcare providers will receive 3 Core of Knowledge Hours for each unit completed. Units 1-6 provide 3 hours in Child Development; Unit 7 provides 2 hours in Child Development & 1 hour in Curriculum.

Register for any or all of these unit on www.stmalib.org :

- Saturday, February 3, 9:15am-12:30pm at Leonardtown Library: Unit 1: The Basics*
- Monday, February 12, 6-9pm on Zoom: Unit 2- Factors Affecting Brain Growth & Development
- Monday, February 26, 6-9pm on Zoom: Unit 3- Communication and Language Development
- Monday, March 4, 6-9pm on Zoom: Unit 4- Cognition and Executive Function
- Monday, March 11, 6-9pm on Zoom: Unit 5- Social-Emotional Development
- Monday, March 18, 6-9pm on Zoom: Unit 6: Understanding Behavior
- Saturday, March 23, 9:15am-12:30pm at Leonardtown

Library: Unit 7-Play*

*If unable to attend Units 1 or 7 in person, contact jhutchison@stmalib.org to make arrangements for virtual participation.

Soul of Langston: Black History Month Performance

Daron P. Stewart reveals the bitter-sweet wit and wisdom of Langston's poetry; the tragedies and triumphs that constructed his life; and the worldwide impact of his literary accomplishments in a performance at Lexington Park Library on Saturday, February 3 from 2 - 3 p.m. Langston Hughes went from busboy and poet to becoming "Harlem's Wonder" helping establish the Civil Rights movement through the Harlem Renaissance. He is among the most eloquent American poets to have sung about the wounds caused by social and political injustice. Though he never sought to be all things to all people, he managed to create a body of work that epitomized the beauty and variety of the Black American experiences, as well as the diversity of emotions, thought, and dreams that

he saw common to all human beings. The St. Mary's County branch NAACP #7025 and the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions (UCAC) are partnering with the St. Mary's County Library to make this program possible and they will provide light refreshments.

Register on www.stmalib.org.

The Holocaust as Portrayed in Pop Culture

Paul Rose, a Research Historian at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will share how books, films, comics, and television have portrayed the Holocaust over the years in a virtual presentation on Wednesday, February 7 from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Register to receive the link on www.stmalib.org. Starting with media created during World War 2, to media made today, learn how pop culture's view of the Holocaust and how it is discussed has changed throughout history. After the presentation, there will be a short time for Q&A.

In Remembrance

To schedule an obituary in the County Times, submit text and picture to aldailey@countytimes.net by noon on Tuesdays for publication on Thursdays. Any submissions received after this deadline may run in the following week's edition.

Nancy Alvey, 73



Nancy Mazza Alvey, 73, of California, MD, formerly of Woodbridge, VA, passed away on January 13, 2024 in Callaway, MD. Born on February 20,

1950, she was the daughter of the late Allene Abel and the late Frank Mazza. She was the loving wife of the late George Ray Alvey, Jr., whom she married on October 17, 1986 in Leonardtown, MD, and who preceded her in death on April 17, 2016. Nancy is survived by her daughter, Gabrielle Alvey of California, MD, her siblings, Susan Leach (Howard) of Luray, VA and Michael Mazza (Theresa) of Woodbridge, VA, her nephews, Seth Mazza (Cassandra), Michael Mazza, Jr., and Frank Mazza (Helen), and her niece, Amanda Mazza.

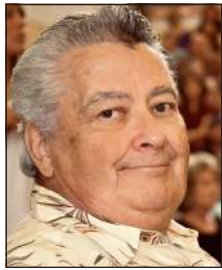
Nancy attended James Madison University and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Nancy was a French teacher at Ryken High School for over 30 years, retiring in 2009; she enjoyed teaching and loved her students. Nancy loved spending time with her family at cookouts and during holidays.

Our family would like to thank the team at Fresenius Kidney Care in Lexington Park for the excellent care and kindness that they showed Nancy during her years of treatment.

A private service will be held for friends and family at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you donate to any of the following charities in Nancy's name; Wounded Warriors, Food and Friends, and/or The National Kidney Foundation.

Thomas Warren, 76



Thomas Francis Warren, "Tom", 76, of Lexington, Park, MD, formerly of Washington, D.C., passed away on January 10, 2024 at his home. Born on January 13, 1947 in

Washington, D.C., he was the son of the late Kathryn Sarah Warren and the late Thomas Chester Warren. Thomas was the loving husband of the late Elizabeth Marie Warren, whom he married on February 10, 1966 in Washington, D.C., and who preceded him in death on March 29, 2023. He is survived by his children Joanne Smith (Matthew) of Alexandria, VA, Donna Warren (Mark Flaherty) of Lexington Park, MD, Victoria Laabs (Robert) of Lexington Park, MD, and Chris Contino of Essex, MD, his sisters, Suzanne Silva of Berlin, MD and Mary Ricketts of Mt. Airy, MD, and his grandchildren Jennifer Warren, Jacob Smith, Tyler Laabs, Luke Smith, Cole Contino, Lauren Laabs, and Thomas Laabs. Thomas was preceded in death by his sister, Anita Warren.

Thomas graduated from Chamberlain High School in 1965, and served in the United States Army for over two years, from 1966 to 1969, before his honorable discharge. During this time, he served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade and in Vietnam. Thomas worked in the HVAC industry, retiring in 1989. He was a member of the VFW 2632, the coordinator for the Leonardtown Veterans Day Parade for over 15 years alongside Clancy Lyall, and belonged to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church. Thomas enjoyed genealogy, Bible study, shopping, spending time with family, storytelling, and eating ice cream at 1 AM. In

addition to his family, he will also be dearly missed by his friends at the Lexington Park Adult Community. He will be remembered for his love of family, his kindness, his smile, his storytelling, and his faith.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, February 10, 2024 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Lexington Park Adult Community on Pegg Road in Lexington Park, MD.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

Alice Otis, 101



Alice Reid Otis passed away on January 17, 2024 in Potomac Falls, VA. She was born on January 26, 1922 in Bridgeport, CT. Both Alice and her late husband, Gordon, grew up in Fairfield, CT. In 1939, they met and fell in love at the University of Connecticut. Alice graduated in 1943 with a degree in Home Economics; they were married three days later, then moved to Key West where Gordon was stationed. For 20 years, she followed her husband in his Navy pilot career and devoted her life to raising their three children.

Alice then embarked on a 23-year career as a teacher. Her primary interest was always early childhood education, ranging from teaching preschool and early elementary to five years supervising student teachers and developing the early childhood program at St. Mary's College. Throughout her life, Alice was involved in volunteer, community, and church endeavors. She was active with the AAUW and a board member of the Pastoral Counseling Center of St. Mary's County. She was an avid amateur photographer. Alice will be remembered for her friendships, her love of learning, and her devotion to family. The Otis family spent fifty years at their Lexington Park, MD home. After Gordon passed away, in 2006 Alice moved to Falcon's Landing Retirement Community where she enjoyed many active years.

Alice is preceded in death by her husband, Gordon, and survived by her children, Terry (& Nancy) Otis, Richard (& Patricia) Otis, and Nancy Otis (& David) Chamness, niece Maureen Adams Otis and eight other nieces and nephews, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The funeral service and interment will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Mary's City, Maryland on Thursday, January 25 at 11:00 a.m. with a reception following the funeral. Questions may be directed to Brinsfield Funeral Home: <https://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com/>

The family invites those who wish to

make a memorial donation in Alice's name to consider contributing to the Church of the Ascension Resurrection Parish, 21641 Great Mills Road, Lexington Park, MD 20653.

Condolences may be made at www.brinsfieldfuneral.com

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home, P/A.

Charles Bean, 73



Charles Henry Bean, "Pop", 73, of Hollywood, MD, passed away on January 22, 2024 in Hollywood, MD. Born on March 26, 1950 in Leonardtown, MD,

he was the son of the late Henrietta Bean and the late W. Benjamin Bean. Charles was the loving husband of the late Linda Bean, whom he married on January 8, 1972 in St. Aloysius Catholic Church, Leonardtown, MD, and who preceded him in death on September 6, 2019. He is survived by his children, Charles Brian Bean of Leonardtown, MD, Sean Bean (Kelley) of Hollywood, MD, Jamie Bean of Hollywood, MD, and Stacy Hull (Jason) of Hollywood, MD, his siblings, William Bean of Hollywood, MD, E. Betty Peterson of GA, Eileen Lang of Hollywood, MD, Lois Russell of Hollywood, MD, Ernest Bean of Hollywood, MD, and Leo Bean of Hollywood, MD, Leonard Bean of Hollywood, MD, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Charles was preceded in death by his siblings, Mary Guy, Bert Bean, and Jack Bean.

Charles was a lifelong St. Mary's County, MD resident and was a Stone Mason for the Architect of the Capitol for 32 years, retiring on February 28, 2010. He served in the U.S. Army from October 1, 1969 to September 7, 1971, during which time he was stationed at Fort Sam in Houston, TX and served in the Vietnam War. Charles earned the Nation Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Air Medal, Bronze Star, and Expert Badge (Rifle).

The family will receive friends on Wednesday, January 31, 2024 from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM with prayers recited at 7:00 PM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held on Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 10:00 AM in the funeral home chapel with Deacon Ammon Ripple officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be C. Brian Bean, Sean Bean, Jamie Bean, Joshua Bean, Jason Hull, and Connor Bean. Honorary pallbearers will be Caden Hull, Harper Hull, Kristen Bean, Madelyn Bean, Maci Bean, Morgen Gadbois, and Stacy Hull.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.mgfh.com.

Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

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A View From The BLEACHERS



PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

By Ronald N. Guy Jr.
Contributing Writer

Greetings and salutations, fellow Southern Maryland dwellers. 2023 is drifting off in the rearview; 2024 is front and center. After a brief pause to celebrate the rotund, sleigh-driving dude in the red suit and pursue merriment, I'm back home, perched high in the bleachers looking out over the vast sports hinterland and pondering another year of "Views."

How the heck are you? Well, I hope. Cowboys fans aside, is 2024 suiting you? Contemplating any broken New Year's resolutions yet? Failed at maintaining a daily calorie deficit? Already dropped a few wrinkle words? Trips to the gym left...untraveled? Dry January already soaking wet? I feel you. This column is a safe space. No judgment. Tomorrow isn't just another day, it's another opportunity for your 2024 self.

Before the future stuff, let's time travel back to late 2023. Imagine driving west and climbing into the Shenandoah mountains just after Christmas for a three-week sabbatical from...everything. Politics. Sports. The internet. Consumerism. Egg nog and your neighbor's fruit cake.

After living the hobbit life, you return in mid-January - full beard and unique odor, craving a hot meal, a bed with a mattress, running water and elite toilet paper - to news that Bill Belichick, Pete Carroll and Nick Saban are no longer the head coaches of the New England Patriots, Seattle Seahawks and Alabama Crimson Tide, respectively. Keep those mental musings rolling. Imagine too that you're a fan of the Washington Huskies. You learn that the Huskies lost the national championship game and that your coach, Kalen DeBoer, was poached and will be Saban's successor at Alabama. Not good!

Keep imagining (with a Washington twist): You're a fan of the Washington professional football team and you discover that the prior coaching regime was whacked and Adam Peters, formally of the 49ers' front office, was hired as the new General Manager. The hire is not only solid, it indicates an apparent shift, for the first flipping time since 1999, to a traditional GM and head coach power structure, where the former builds the roster and the latter coaches up the compiled talent - you know, the approach that just about every elite NFL franchise follows. This...is good. Potentially very, very good.

This "View's" words are rifling across my screen on the 43rd anniversary of Joe Gibbs being introduced as the new head coach of the then Washington Redskins. The Twitter/X-verse has produced a few videos of the 1981 press conference - this is the kind of world history I would have thrived studying. It would have been impossible - unbounded optimism - to project then what played out over the next dozen years - four Super Bowls, three Lombardi trophies and six Hall of Famers (four players, one executive, and, of course, one coach). As Mark Twain once said, "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; truth isn't." Indeed. The reality between 1981 and 1992 exceeded any conceivable fairy tale.

Spend enough time in the workforce, in any field, and you will intersect with cringy coworkers, terrible leaders, disastrous supervisors and toxic professional cultures. The Commanders had it all in spades. Success in such scenarios is rare; in Washington, where it all coalesced into a foul cesspool, success proved impossible. New Commanders owner Josh Harris has received much goodwill just because he is the new guy and he ain't...that other guy. Very quickly the challenge will be this: prove that he is different, much, much different from his predecessor. What Peters's and the coach-to-be hirings ultimately mean on the field, on the scoreboard, in the win column and in the history of the franchise, only the future can answer.

As for Harris, so far, so good. His words indicate a mature professional with an understanding of the complexity of organizational development. In scoring a highly sought after GM, he's backed up his words and provided tangible evidence that Washington is again a desired NFL destination. Like the new year, this is starting to feel like a legitimate new beginning. Premature to party like it's 1999 (pre-Dan Snyder)? Sure, but get the beer on ice and music ready.

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com



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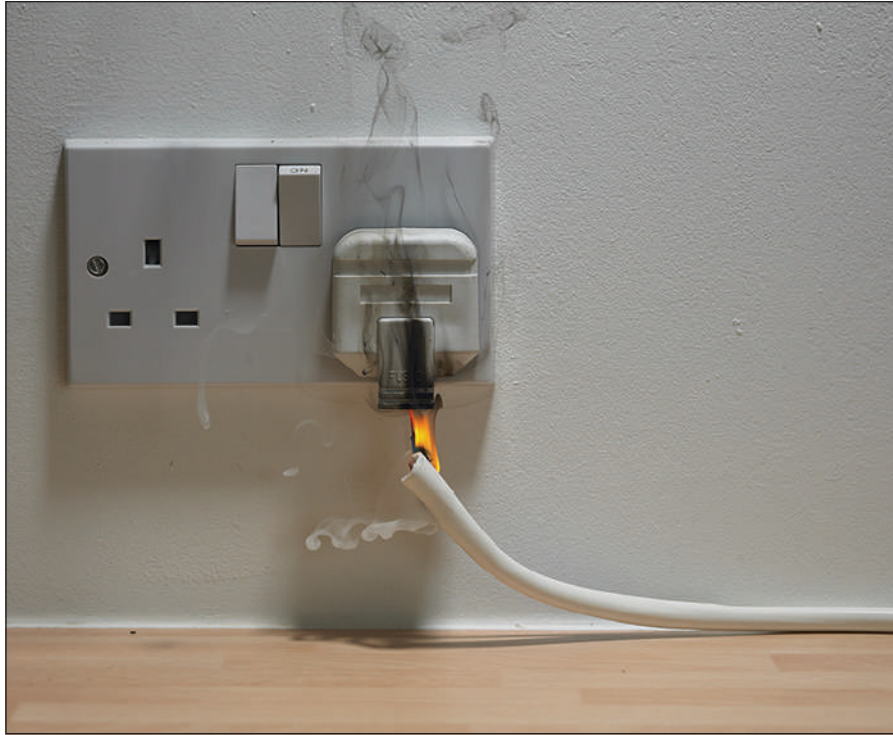
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Warning Signs of Electrical Problems

Homeowners know that owning a home provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Home ownership also can increase the chances individuals view their homes as a sanctuary where they can relax and enjoy creature comforts they've personally chosen.

The comfort people feel inside their homes can be compromised when they begin to suspect certain safety issues, including electrical problems. The Electrical Safety Foundation estimates that home electrical fires account for roughly 51,000 fires and 500 deaths each year. Electrical problems will not always cause home fires, but it's still wise for homeowners to learn the potential warning signs that something is amiss with their home electrical systems.

- Flickering lights: Flickering lights are more than a mere nuisance. Bulbs sometimes flicker because they become loose, which can be remedied by turning the fixture off, waiting for the bulb to cool down to the touch and then tightening it. However, if the bulb was already tight when it was flickering, then the ESFI warns this could be a sign of an overloaded circuit. The tech experts at CNET advise homeowners to contact a certified electrician if they suspect their home electrical circuit is overloaded.
- Frequently tripped circuits: In a day and age when people rely so heavily on electronic devices like routers, desk-



top computers, tablets, smartphones, and more, a tripped circuit that cuts power to a home can be a major nuisance. But frequently tripped circuits indicate the presence of an electrical problem that's greater than a suddenly shut down computer or disconnected router. Tripping is actually a safety net

that shuts down the electrical current of a home in order to let homeowners know something is wrong with their electrical system. Frequently tripped circuits should be brought to the attention of a licensed electrician, who can identify what's causing the system to alert homeowners something is amiss.

- Warm or discolored wall plates: It may not be common practice to touch wall plates, but the ESFI notes this can be a good way to determine if a home is having electrical issues. Discoloration on the wall plates should be enough to draw homeowners' attention. Some wall plates may even appear to be melting. Each of these issues could be a byproduct of various problems, including damaged wiring. A certified electrician can determine what's behind warm and/or discolored wall plates.
- Burning odor emanating from outlets: The unpleasantness of this warning sign of electrical problems is enough to compel an immediate investigation. Homeowners who detect a burning odor in their homes but aren't sure where it's coming from are urged to inspect their wall outlets. If the odor seems to be coming from an outlet, it could be due to various factors, including exposed wiring, poorly installed wiring, damaged wiring, or a foreign object in the outlet. Contact an electrician immediately if you detect a burning odor coming from an outlet.

Electrical issues in a home pose a serious safety risk. Homeowners should learn the warning signs of such issues and report their presence to a licensed electrician immediately.

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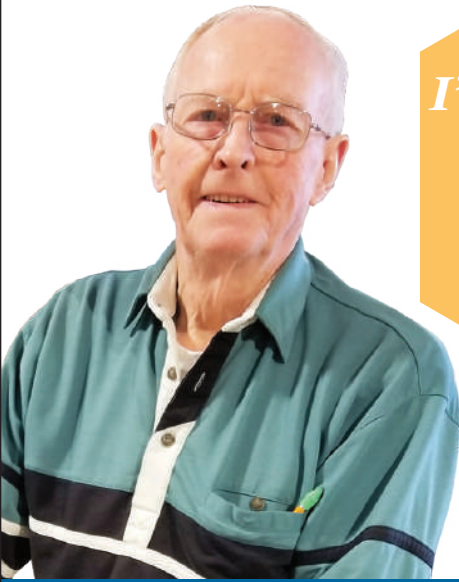
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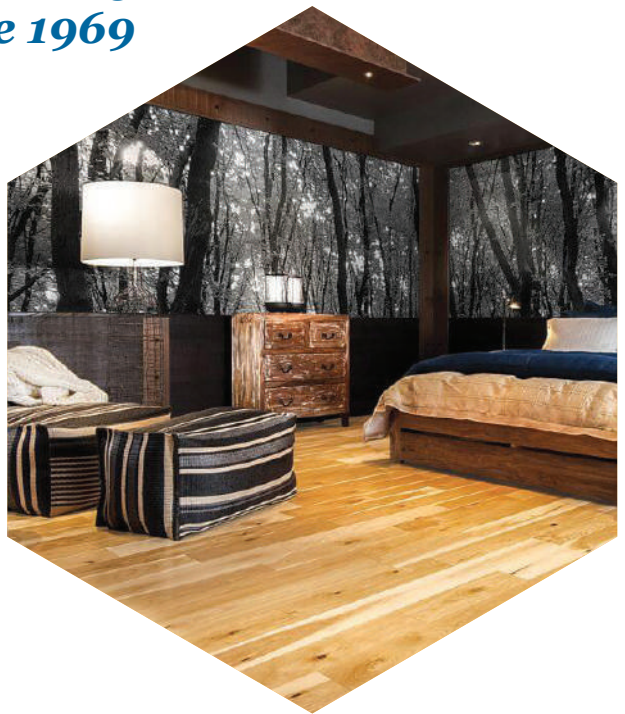
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The Benefits of Residential Solar Energy

Solar energy panels have gained visibility in neighborhoods across the country. Where it once was a rarity to see solar panels on the roofs of homes, today a stroll or drive around a given community is bound to reveal a number of homeowners have made the transition to solar power. You may be wondering if the investment is worth it.

Solar panels harvest energy from the sun through the use of photovoltaic cells. These semiconductor materials absorb photons from the sun, and the photons release electrons from the atoms of the semiconductor material. According to Forbes, the flow of these electrons within the cell creates an electric current directed to circuits. Solar panels can be placed anywhere there is abundant sunlight, such as in open fields. In residential areas, they're most often placed on roofs to get the most sun exposure.

Although having solar panels on the roof may affect the aesthetic of a home, many people find the benefits far outweigh such issues. Consider these perks to going solar.

- **Save money:** One of the draws of solar power is the ability to save money on your monthly utility bill. Electricity costs seemingly rise year after year. The Solar Energy Industries Association® says the cost of solar has decreased by more than 70 percent in the past decade compared to the cost of electricity, which has risen about five percent. Over the course of a solar panel life span, which is typically between 25 and 30 years, it's



possible to save \$25,500 to \$33,000 on electricity.

- **More affordable:** As noted, the cost of installing solar panels continues to drop. Investopedia says up-front cost of a residential solar power system is between \$3,500 and \$16,000, depending on the size of the system. Energy.gov says the United States has extended the federal residential solar tax credit, and you can save a 30 percent tax credit on the cost of solar systems through January 1, 2033. Options abound for financing to make solar more affordable.
- **Increased home value:** According

to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, homeowners can increase the value of their homes by \$20 for every \$1 in savings on electrical bills from solar energy. Homes with solar panels sell 4 percent higher than those that don't have them.

- **Get paid back:** Solar incentives in some areas may enable homeowners to turn profits in addition to generating electric bill savings. Solar renewable energy credits compensate you for the electricity that the solar panel system generates.
- **Avoid disruptions in power:** Strong storms or even accidents that affect

power lines can knock out traditional electricity for hours. Battery storage combined with solar energy can be beneficial during a disruption in power, and eliminate the need to purchase a backup generator.

- **Protect the planet:** Burning of fossil fuels to generate power contributes to carbon emissions. Switching to solar can reduce carbon emissions and help prevent air and water contamination.

Solar energy panels are becoming more visible in residential neighborhoods thanks in large parts to the many benefits such panels provide.



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Signs It's Time to Repair or Replace Your Deck



Spring is a season of rejuvenation that compels millions across the globe to quit hibernating and get back to enjoying the great outdoors. Spring also marks a great time to assess a home's exterior, namely those areas like a deck where people will spend a lot of time in the warmer months to come.

Assessing a deck after winter can be eye-opening. Harsh winter weather can take its toll on a deck, and the following are some telltale signs that a deck could be in need of repair or replacement.

- **Wobbly underfoot and in hand:** Wobbly planks and railings are one sign of a deteriorating deck homeowners won't recognize as they hide from winter weather indoors. But these tend to reveal themselves rather quickly when examining a deck after winter. Wobbly planks in the middle of the deck can be inconvenient, but wobbly steps and railings can be dangerous. According to the home improvement resource Angi, wobbly railings can be a byproduct of rot. A local decking professional can assess the extent of the rot in railings and elsewhere and determine the best course of action. If the rot is isolated to an area or two, a simple repair may be all that's necessary. Extensive rot may require a full replacement of the existing deck.
- **Faded paint:** Many homeowners paint their wood decks, and that paint will not last forever. Faded paint can turn an otherwise lovely deck into an eye-

sore, and paint can fade over the winter. Thankfully, a local painter can address a faded deck and may recommend some additional strategies to safeguard the deck against fading next winter and beyond.

- **Holes in the wood:** Many a homeowner has encountered curious-looking holes in their deck. This could be a sign of insect infestation. Termites, carpenter ants and carpenter bees are among the various types of insects that can bore holes through wood. Homeowners who notice holes throughout their deck are urged to call a deck professional and/or pest control firm to assess the holes and offer a solution. Though small issues may be addressed with repairs, a deck littered with holes caused by insects may need a full replacement.
- **Rust:** Wood decks may be made of wood, but they can still exhibit signs of rust, namely in the nails and metal connectors that hold the deck together. If screws have rusted to the point where they are no longer holding the deck together, a full-scale replacement could be in the cards, as the deck could have substantial structural damage. Like other issues that can reveal themselves during a springtime inspection of the deck, rust necessitates a thorough examination by an experienced decking professional.

Many people do not use their decks during winter, which only underscores the significance of a full deck inspection in spring.

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Factors to Consider When Mulling a Garage Renovation

Garages may rank below kitchens and bathrooms in the home renovation pecking order, but these unsung heroes of suburban dwellings deserve their day in the sun. It's easy for garages to become convenient, if crowded and disorganized, storage spaces, but scores of homeowners are embracing the idea that renovated garages can serve a more functional purpose.

Prior to beginning a garage renovation, homeowners can consider a host of factors that will guide the direction of the project and ultimately produce a more functional space.

- **Appeal:** Though many homeowners understandably want to ensure their homes are amenable to their own lifestyles without worrying about the effects a given project might have on resale value, it's best that they do not completely ignore the latter variable. A 2019 analysis from the National Association of Home Builders found that 65 percent of newly constructed homes included two-car garages. That suggests a traditional two-car garage remains widely appealing. However, it's worth noting that the NAHB analysis was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when fewer people were working from home. Now that more people work from home, some may see a garage converted into a home office space as more functional.



Homeowners can speak with a local real estate agent to learn more about local buyers' preferences before beginning a garage renovation project.

- **Function of the space:** It's important to consider why you want to renovate the garage. Is it to build a designated home office space? A fully outfitted home gym? A home theater? An extra bedroom? An in-laws suite? Each of these options are popular reasons to renovate a garage, and each may require a

different approach during the project. The desired function also may affect the cost, so it's best to identify precisely what the room will be used for post-renovation.

- **The existing space:** When mulling a garage renovation, contact a local garage conversion expert to audit the space. Such a professional can assess the existing space and determine what will need to be done beyond the design of the room. Will additional electrical

outlets need to be installed? Will the room require additional ventilation? Will a new doorway need to be created to allow for easier access? These are questions a qualified expert can answer. Some may estimate the cost as well, but it's likely the garage expert will defer estimates regarding electric and ventilation to contractors who specialize in those areas.

- **Storage:** The home renovation experts at Angi estimate that the average garage remodel costs around \$18,000. That's considerably less than a home addition project, which can easily exceed six figures. So a garage remodel might be more budget-friendly than a room addition. However, homeowners should consider what's currently in their garages and where those items will end up if the room is repurposed. If it's primarily lawn care items and kids' toys, a new shed with ample storage space might work. But if the garage currently holds more items than can reasonably fit in a shed, homeowners should determine where those items can be stored once the garage is repurposed.

Garage renovation projects can make these spaces more functional, making them worthy of consideration among homeowners who feel like they need some additional space at home.

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Features to Consider for a Relaxing Bathroom

Homeowners want to view their homes as a respite from all that goes on outside their doors. Indeed, turning a home into a residents-only retreat can ensure everyone looks forward to walking through the front door at the end of the day.

One of the more popular ways to turn a home into one's own personal retreat is to upgrade the bathroom. A renovated bathroom can completely transform how individuals feel about their homes. The following are some features to consider when remodeling a bathroom with relaxation in mind.

- **Open shower:** An open shower is a visually stunning addition to any bathroom. Such showers give a bathroom a more open look, thanks in part to the fact that these modern features do not feature a door or require the use of a shower curtain. The result is a clean look that many people associate with a luxury hotel. When speaking with a contractor about an open shower install, homeowners can ask about a half-wall to safeguard against water splashing out of the shower. In addition, a heat lamp can help ensure residents stay warm until they're ready to leave the bathroom.
- **Heated features:** Additional features to keep everyone calm and warm can be considered when upgrading the bathroom. Radiant flooring can ensure everyone's toes remain toasty, and the installation of such a feature can eliminate the need for floor mats and bath mats that some homeowners may



not like. Commit further to the heat theme with a heated towel rack, which is another feature associated with luxury hotels that can be just as enjoyable at home.

- **Soaking tub:** An open shower creates an instant feeling of luxury, but few things are more suggestive of relaxation than a soaking tub. A long day at school or the office or a day when winter winds are howling outside is made

much better with a good soak. The National Kitchen & Bath Association notes that luxury bathrooms featuring soaking tubs are wildly popular, and that vaunted status is undoubtedly due to the relaxing benefits of a good soak.

- **Skylight:** Even if the goal of a luxury bathroom is to leave the outside world outside, allowing some natural light inside is a great way to add a little extra calm to the room. Floor-to-ceiling win-

dows may seem appealing in brochures or advertisements, but such features do not create the sense of privacy many people prefer in their bathrooms. One or two skylights can create that sense of privacy and still allow for natural light to enter the room, making this an option that provides the best of both worlds.

These features and more can help homeowners transform their bathrooms into luxurious, relaxing respites from the outside world.

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How Homeowners Can Turn Attics Into Livable Spaces



Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally sound enough to walk in, that's not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum. Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic that was not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra "load" upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams, flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size staircase. Also, it

will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window, according to the home information site The Fill. Homeowners' budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules. Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a home down the line.

Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic, so ventilation and comfort should be considered. The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs.

Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners. This is no small undertaking and all of the right steps need to be followed to ensure a legal, safe and successful renovation.

A Rundown of Three Popular Flooring Materials



Even though it's underfoot, flooring can set the tone for how a room or even an entire home is viewed. Perhaps that's one reason why flooring generates such strong opinions when homeowners look to refurbish or replace their floors.

Homeowners now have more choices than ever when considering new flooring for their homes. The following rundown of three popular flooring options can help homeowners as they try to decide which material best suits their homes.

1. Hardwood floors

Hardwood floors might once have been a relatively straightforward option, but homeowners may now choose between solid wood flooring and engineered wood flooring. According to The Home Depot, engineered wood flooring provides the look of solid wood flooring without the high maintenance of such floors. Engineered wood is manmade and created with the use of wood strands, particles, fibers or veneers of wood that are forged together with adhesives. Each engineered wood flooring plank is composed of several layers of plywood or fiberboard with a solid wood veneer on top, which is how it can provide the look of solid wood flooring. Solid wood flooring planks are made from a single piece of hardwood. Each type of flooring has its pros and cons, and homeowners who prefer hardwood floors are urged to speak with a flooring professional about the features that make these options unique from one another.

2. Laminate floors

Laminate flooring is another engineered flooring product. But unlike engineered wood flooring, laminate flooring does not utilize real wood and many people can recognize that the moment they step on a laminate floor. Flooring is such a vital and heavily trafficked component of a home that it's typically best to leave installation to a qualified professional. However, homeowners who prefer the DIY route should know that laminate flooring is viewed as among the easiest types of flooring for DIYers to install.

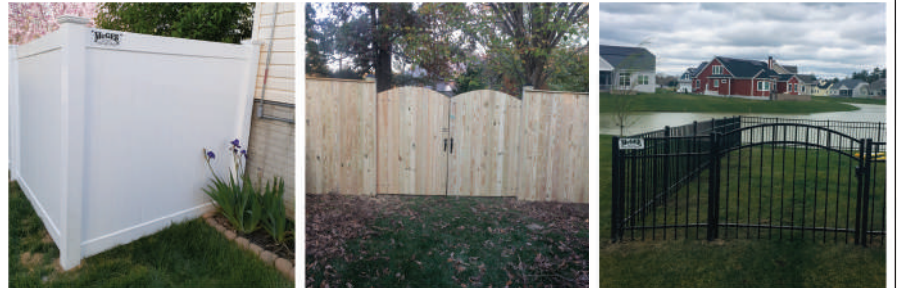
3. Vinyl flooring

The experts at Good Housekeeping report that vinyl flooring is the fastest-growing category of flooring. The Home Depot notes that vinyl flooring is made from plastic and usually consists of acrylic, PVC and similar polymers. Luxury vinyl tile is thick and durable, and it's often noted for its likeness to solid wood. Vinyl tile also is considered a versatile flooring option, as The Home Depot notes it can be purchased in planks, sheets or tiles. The Home Depot advises homeowners to consider the thickness range when mulling their vinyl flooring options. Thickness ranges between four and 40 millimeters, and a thicker layer is more resistant to water, scratches and stains.

Homeowners will be confronted with a variety of options when considering a flooring project for their homes. The right option for a given home may come down to a host of factors, including cost, look and durability.

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Give Your Living Room a New Vibe

An “out with the old, in with the new” mentality can extend to people’s visions for their homes. A home in need of repair or renovation can serve as a catalyst to take inventory of personal style and help make interior spaces reflect one’s unique vibe.

A living room can grow stale over time and often serves as a catch-call for clothing, blankets, gadgets, and other items. Upon recognizing a living room has seen better days, individuals may decide it’s time to give the space a new vibe. That transformation can start with these strategies.

Organize first

Clutter frequently is the culprit behind a living room that may not give off the vibe individuals desire. As families grow and people add belongings, space may be at a premium. Less is more has never been a more important concept. Remove extraneous items before purchasing new furniture or transitioning to a new design. You may even want to remove everything and start from scratch before reintroducing desirable elements to the space.

Seek the assistance of professionals

Some people are adept at decorating and designing spaces. But just as you wouldn’t perform your own medical procedures, you should leave jobs like interior design and renovations to the professionals. Hiring a professional interior designer and contractors can really bring a living room together in ways homeowners may have never imagined. These pros can build off of your ideas



and truly create a space that may be worthy of a magazine spread.

Promote wellness

You may want to consider adding natural materials in the design to promote well-being. Eco-friendly furnishings, raw fibers and organic textures will create an environment from sustainable choices. Plenty of plants also can create a welcoming environment that helps you surround yourself with positive energy and the items you love.

Light it up

One of the easiest ways to transform a room’s vibe is to utilize lighting. Change draperies to allow more natural light to shine in. Consider additional windows or skylights if yours is a particularly dark home. If you desire to create a more vivid or cozy ambiance, use a combination of accent, task and supplemental lighting in the space so there are no dim corners.

Create an industrial or urban vibe

Industrial-chic design celebrates the

bones of a building. It’s what makes city lofts so appealing, with their exposed beams and brick. Even those who live in suburbia or out in the country can give a living room this look with subtle nods to the style. Unadorned windows, clean lines on furniture, oversized, gallery-style art, and metal accents can add touches of this popular look to your home.

Revamping a living room doesn’t have to be difficult. With an idea in place and some professional touches, an entirely new vibe can be achieved.

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How to Furnish a Home for Comfort

The pandemic changed much about the way people live, including a propensity for spending more time at home. In 2020, people spent far less waking time, roughly an hour and a half less on average, with people outside of their own households.

Though restrictions that limited social interactions have long since been lifted, spending at home has remained popular. More than two-thirds of Americans are spending more time at home, according to the American Time Use Survey from the U.S. Department of Labor. Inflation and the looming threat of a possible recession are undoubtedly keeping more people at home. With all that extra time on their hands, respondents have been poring their energy into fixing up their homes. Lawns, kitchens and living rooms are popular spaces to renovate.

As people continue to fix up their homes, they may be interested in ways to make them more comfortable. Certain furnishings can ensure living spaces are comfortable places to pass the time.

- Ensure an abundance of light. One stark overhead light will not create a cozy environment. Introduce groupings of illumination where you hope residents and guests will congregate to engage in conversation. Utilize different lighting sources, such as task light-



ing, table and floor lamps, recessed or ambient lighting, and even candles. Warm temperature light bulbs will add to that comfortable feeling.

- Coordinate designs for each season. Crisp cotton and breezy linens are great for the warm weather, but when the colder temperatures arrive, it's time to swap for flannel or jersey. Folded

quilts or throws on the sofa also can be handy for chilly evenings. Make subtle changes to the home as the temperature changes to epitomize comfort in your spaces.

- Splurge on your sofa and bed. Much time will be spent lounging on the couch or sleeping in your bed. It's worthwhile to invest in pieces that are

durable and, above all else, comfortable. While these items may be more expensive up front, the comfort they provide will be well worth it.

- Soften harsh lines. Tricks like incorporating round area rugs or using oval or round pillows can break up the straight line of rooms and even modern furniture pieces. Opt for soft and inviting textiles as well. Textural elements, such as woven decor baskets, also can soften harsh lines.
- Introduce organic elements. Home entertaining expert Julie Blanner says plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables bring life to a space. Choose easy care plants if you do not have a green thumb, or swap out freshly cut blooms in vases as pops of color and fresh elements are needed.
- Utilize warm paint colors. Cool-toned paints can make a space seem colder and more utilitarian or clinical. When looking at swatches, select paints that have warm undertones. Eggshell and satin sheens will be more inviting and evoke a cozy feel more effectively than flat or matte finishes.

These are just a few ways to build a cozy and comfortable home. Working within these parameters, homeowners can customize their interior spaces to maximize comfort.

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Maryland Pursuing Actions to Control Invasive Catfish

Last month, the U.S. Department of Commerce notified Maryland Gov. Wes Moore that it has declined Maryland's request for a federal commercial fisheries disaster declaration that was sought to help address the economic and ecological damage caused by the spread of invasive catfish and snakeheads in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Maryland made the unique request in March as a way to highlight and mitigate the harm that invasive Chesapeake blue catfish, flathead catfish, and snakehead have on economically important Bay species such as blue crabs and menhaden, which the invasives eat. Under federal law, fishery disaster requests can be granted after a state experiences a large, sudden, and unexpected decrease in fish stock that causes a significant loss in a commercial fishery. Commerce ruled that blue catfish have not had sufficient impact on commercial fishery revenues to qualify for fisheries disaster aid.

In the letter notifying Maryland of its decision, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo wrote that NOAA Fisheries recognizes the challenges invasive species have created in the Bay ecosystem and offered to discuss potential opportunities in the future with Maryland.

"We're disappointed in the decision, but also understand the ruling due to the limits of federal law surrounding fisheries disasters," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. "We will continue to work with our federal partners to determine what form of federal assistance can help us mitigate the continued and pervasive spread of blue catfish and other invasive species impacting commercial fisheries in the Bay. However, this was just one of several efforts underway to tackle this issue. Maryland is taking proactive steps on its own to limit the spread of blue catfish and other invasive species."

In November, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hired a dedicated program manager to coordinate strategies across agencies and industries to reduce populations of invasive fish in Maryland.

DNR is also:

- Increasing blue catfish research and monitoring programs;
- Urging recreational and commercial anglers to increase their harvest of blue catfish and other invasives; and
- Working to educate the public about how invasive fish species affect the Bay ecosystem.

Maryland has no fishing limits on invasive fish, which means anglers can catch and keep any number of them, at any size, during any time of year.

At the same time, Maryland's Department of Agriculture (MDA) is ramping up marketing efforts to promote wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish to chefs, consumers, restaurants, grocery stores and distributors to



encourage more people to buy, eat, and sell wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish. The marketing and promotional campaign activities currently focus on media appearances, social media posts, and roadside billboards highlighting the culinary versatility of blue catfish and how eating more of the fish is an important way we can all help watermen, local businesses, and the health of the Bay. MDA also works closely with chefs to attend various events throughout the state to provide demonstrations and samplings of wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish.

Additionally, MDA has included more than \$1 million for Maryland-caught blue catfish filet purchases in its program supporting food bank purchases of local food. The agency is also promoting blue catfish as part of the state's goal of 20 percent local purchases by colleges and other state institutions through the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program.

Blue catfish were first introduced in Virginia in the 1970s as a target for recreational fishing. The catfish are native to the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Rio Grande river basins. Against expectations, the catfish expanded out of freshwater and into the higher salinity waters of the Bay, and from there began to spread into other rivers and tributaries in Maryland and Virginia. Blue catfish populations grow rapidly, and studies have found the invasive catfish making up 75% of the total biomass of fish in a Virginia river.

Blue catfish are voracious eaters and have been documented as preying on blue crabs, menhaden, white perch and other species. They out-compete the native species for habitat space and food and pose a threat to key commercial fisheries including blue crab, striped bass, white perch, yellow perch, and American eel.

Flathead catfish and snakehead are also known to prey on and out-compete native species. With few natural predators, these fish can spread quickly through Maryland waters.

Sheriff's Office Collects 1300 Pieces of Cold Weather Gear



In early January, members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Community Oriented Policing Unit (SMCSO COPs) kicked off a cold-weather gear clothing drive to generate donations for needy residents while drawing attention to National Poverty Awareness Month.

Donation boxes were generously provided by U-Haul Moving and Storage of Lexington Park and located at each of the four SMCSO District Stations. The clothing drive surpassed all expectations, collecting over 1300 adult and children's coats, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, and blankets. Sergeant Anthony Whipkey of the COPs Unit said, "I could not have imagined the outpouring of

generosity this clothing drive would create."

With help from U-Haul, the donated items have been delivered to individuals, charities, and schools all over the county.

The COPs Unit collection drive has concluded, but generous residents are encouraged to seek out other local charitable organizations to continue supporting those in need.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is committed to serving and protecting the residents of St. Mary's County through community-oriented policing and various outreach initiatives. For more information about the clothing drive or the SMCSO COPs Unit, please contact the Public Information office.

Eight Veterans Honored with Quilts of Valor



PAX Sound of Freedom awarded eight Quilts of Valor (QOV) to local veterans on Saturday, January 20, 2024, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lexington Park, MD. The members of the local QOV unit were pleased to honor two couples, Anthony & Adrina Allen and James & Felicia Cheatham. Additionally, two quilts were presented at veteran's homes earlier this month as the veterans were unable to attend the awards presentation.

Lexington Manor Arts Park Plan Announced



St. Mary's County Government's Department of Recreation & Parks has partnered with the St. Mary's County Arts Council (SMCAC) in the development of an Arts Park Plan which will enrich Lexington Manor Passive Park (LMPP). The concept of an Arts Park Plan arose from the 2019 Master Plan, which quantified public support for introducing community-based public art (e.g., murals, sculpture, artistic design, etc.) throughout LMPP.

"The St. Mary's County Arts Council is excited to share this roadmap for implementing art in Lexington Manor Passive Park," said Susie Glauner, Executive Director of SMCAC. "We want to thank Mahan Rykiel designers, Tom McGilloway, and Megan Oliver, who have delivered a plan based on extensive community feedback and resident input. SMCAC is also thankful for the continued, dedicated partnership with the Department of Recreation & Parks on the Lexington Manor Arts Park project. This plan allows SMCAC to continue its mission of providing access to art for all St. Mary's County residents and visitors."

LMPP is home to multiple events throughout the year, including the annual Juneteenth Festival, the Cherry Blossom Festival, 5k

Runs, and other community gatherings. The park is also home to the Southern Maryland Disc Golf Course; the U.S. Colored Troops Memorial, and Interpretive Center; and attracts many visitors that enjoy a picnic, walk, jog, stroll, or bike ride.

St. Mary's County Recreation & Parks Director, Arthur Shepherd stated, "It's exciting to know that this Arts Park Plan will provide on-going direction for the arts at Lexington Manor Passive Park. The St. Mary's County Arts Council continues to be a fantastic partner for the parks and other areas of community art offered by the department."

The Lexington Manor Art Park Plan is available at www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/LMAPP.pdf This plan was made possible by a Maryland State Arts Council Public Art Planning Grant.

For more information on the Arts Park Plan, please contact Arthur Shepherd at arthur.shepherd@stmaryscountymd.gov or Susie Glauner at director@smcart.org.

For more information on St. Mary's County Recreation & Parks, please visit: www.stmaryscountymd.gov/recreate or follow them Facebook for regular updates.

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Sustainment Group Creates Software Wizard to Improve Technical Directives

Fleet maintainers will soon have access to clearer technical directives (TDs) that tell them how to inspect or alter the configuration of aircraft, engines, training systems and support equipment thanks to a recently released software wizard developed by the Sustainment Group's Configuration Management/Data Management (CM/DM) Department.

"TDs serve as the primary method by which Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) engineers provide instruction to maintainers in the fleet who actually modify weapons systems or conduct repairs," said CM/DM Department Head Daniel Christensen. "Each year, between 1,000 and 1,500 TDs are generated by several hundred engineers throughout NAVAIR, and can range from one to hundreds of pages. They include all types of changes and bulletins and consist of information that cannot be disseminated satisfactorily by revisions to technical manuals. How a TD is written is an essential factor to how well aircraft are maintained. They are foundational to configuration and data management."

As the number of TDs grew over the last few years, the CM/DM team began to see the quality of TDs vary, according to Danny

Cowart, CM/DM Technical Directive/Bulletins lead and the TD wizard's developer. "We were seeing inputs that not only differed from user to user, but from submission to submission, such as dates and grammar. Submissions contained formats that deviated from ones specified in the standard operating procedure."

"This meant there were constant iterations of TDs which caused delays in the release of the TDs to the fleet," said Deputy CM/DM Department Head Edward Blackstone. "TDs could take one day, a week or longer, depending on the number and types of errors and how long it took the TD writer to respond."

Developed over the course of six months and released in November 2023, the tool standardizes inputs from all 34 program offices (PMA) and Fleet Support Teams.

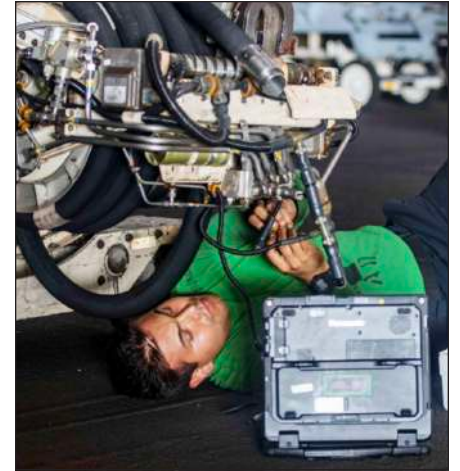
"It's intuitive, providing users with an option or action from a drop-down menu. It gives them the opportunity, where appropriate, to provide additional information and to print out the TDs in Word or PDF," Cowart explained.

"Eliminating the need for rework was our primary focus," Blackstone said. "An added

benefit is that the wizard reduced the need for specialized training when employees move to a different PMA."

The team also scaled success in the wizard's development by working with the DAiTA Group/Digital Network Applications Department, the same team that created the CM/DM Department's Enterprise Change Management (ECM) Tool, another effort-saving wizard released in 2020. ECM provides a collaborative environment across NAVAIR for change management, engineering change proposals, technical directive reviews and approvals, and Configuration Control Board requests and directives packages.

"We explained that the TD wizard would be part of the ECM Tool so we wanted it to look seamless, with the same look and feel. They were familiar with the workflows and our requirements for functionality," Blackstone said. "This relationship made the process of creating the TD wizard quicker." The team continues to look for opportunities to apply the same winning formula to other challenges. For instance, it is developing a similar tool for the Configuration Management Policy, called the 4130 wizard.



It will standardize the Configuration Change Board (CCB) requests/directive packages process, which ensures all configuration changes are fully documented, well thought out and addressed by all stakeholders for executability and supportability, and delineates realistic implementation schedules for CCBs.

"The TD wizard," Christensen said, "is a win-win for both the NAVAIR workforce and flight line Sailors and Marines."



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ST. MARY'S COUNTY CRIME BLOTTER

Deputies Recover Gun and Drugs While Serving Warrant



James Sylvester Ford

At approximately 8:21 p.m., on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Criminal Intelligence and Vice Narcotics Units, in collaboration with personnel from the Criminal Investigations Division, Special Operations Division, and Patrol Division, with assistance from the Emergency Services Team, executed a search and seizure warrant at a residence in the 21000 block of Windsor Drive, Lexington Park, MD.

During the execution of this search and seizure warrant, a juvenile, known to have an active arrest warrant, attempted to evade Deputies. The juvenile was apprehended outside of the residence, and a subsequent search of the individual revealed a loaded semi-automatic handgun, which was concealed within the waistband of the subject's pants.

Additionally, James Sylvester Ford, 48, of Lexington Park, MD, who was in the residence at the time of the warrant service, was found to have a quantity of Methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA).

Deputies transported both individuals to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center for charging.

Lexington Park Man Arrested for Possession Following Traffic Stop



Michael Wade Blackistone

At approximately 8:27 p.m. on Thursday, January 18, 2024, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputy First Class Travis Wimberly proactively initiated a traffic stop after witnessing an equipment violation on a 2005 Chevrolet Express van.

Following the stop, Corporal Phillip

Henry responded to the scene, and a K9 scan of the vehicle and occupants produced a positive alert for the detection of narcotics. A subsequent search resulted in the discovery of an amount of cocaine concealed in a wallet belonging to Michael Wade Blackistone, 41, of Lexington Park, MD.

Mr. Blackistone was arrested and transported to the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center to face a charge of CDS: Possession Not Marijuana; the second occupant of the vehicle was released.

Sheriff's Office Responds to Fight at Great Mills High

On Wednesday, January 17, 2024, while providing support for a basketball game at Great Mills High School, Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office issued a call for officer assistance for an active disturbance involving a large crowd.

Deputies from the Patrol Division, the Special Operations Division, and the Criminal Investigations Division responded to the scene involving multiple juveniles and adults. Preliminary reports indicate the incident involved multiple physical altercations between Great Mills High School and St. Charles High School fans and players. Deputies were able to quell the fights, and all individuals were cleared from the school

and the area.

The Sheriff's Office and the Board of Education for St. Mary's County Public Schools are conducting an ongoing investigation. Authorities urge anyone who witnessed the incidents to come forward with information. Corporal Gerard Muschette can be reached at Gerard.Muschette@stmaryscountymd.gov or by phone at 301-475-4200, extension 8121.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all community members and will take appropriate action based on the findings of the investigation.

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COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Rezoning Request 22675 Cedar Lane Court, Leonardtown, MD 20650

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 4:15 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, regarding Tax Map 040, Parcel 017. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to rezone the parcel located at 22675 Cedar Lane Court. from Residential Single Family (RSF) to Commercial Business (C-B). Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than February 12, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Franchise Agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, regarding the proposed franchise agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC and The Commissioners of Leonardtown. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to enter into a ten-year Franchise Agreement with Comcast Maryland, LLC. Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than February 12, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN INVITATION FOR BIDS

Open-End Contract Services for Line Striping, Signage, and Pavement Sealing Maintenance

Sealed bids, addressed to the Capital Projects Manager, and marked "BID FOR CONTRACT SERVICES FOR PUBLIC WORKS" will be received at the office of the Commissioners of Leonardtown, PO Box 1, 22670 Washington St. Leonardtown, Maryland 20650 no later than February 22, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

A pre-bid meeting will be held on Friday, February 9, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Leonardtown office conference room. The official bid opening is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 22, 2024. All potential bidders are invited to attend.

The work to be performed under the contract consists of furnishing labor, service, equipment, and materials for services for line striping, signage, and pavement sealing maintenance. Questions should be directed to Tony Wheatley, Capital Projects Manager, at (301) 475-9791.

The Commissioners of Leonardtown reserves the right to reject any bids and proposals, and to accept any proposal deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

By Authority: Laschelle McKay, Town Administrator

If you would like to publish a legal notice, please call 301-373-4125 or email aldailey@countytimes.net



Locally Produced Foods Could Get Special Brand

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Agricultural products grown or raised locally are so good that people who buy them should know exactly where they come from, or so say specialists with the county's Department of Economic Development.

Speaking on an initiative to bring locally produced meats and fruits and vegetables into the limelight, new seafood and agriculture division manager Priscilla Leitch told the county's Economic Development Commission said such a designation was long overdue.

"We're excited to be able to create a brand campaign for locally made products specifically to St. Mary's County," Leitch said at the Jan. 17 commission meeting. "We live in a county with so much diversity in agriculture and seafood... and we really want to showcase that."

Leitch said her division plans to partner with a consultant to work with focus groups locally on how best to craft a brand logo and marketing campaign.

"We're excited for that campaign... it doesn't currently exist for St. Mary's

County."

The branding effort is an addition to two others the agriculture and seafood division is pursuing: two separate studies are now underway, with one of them to assess the "food supply chain from local farms to consumers and highlight processing, aggregation and/or distribution challenges to achieving a fully functioning supply chain."

The county is partnering with a consultant and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission on this study, Leitch said, and is aimed at finding "the gaps and needs of the seafood and agricultural community."

The second study seeks to determine whether the invasive and destructive blue catfish species can be harvested sustainably to create economic growth and job opportunities locally.

"I'd like to applaud the effort on the branding," said Dr. Dale Moore, commission member. "Who is Southern Maryland? How can we represent externally and internally?"

"I think you're really on to something."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

State's Attorney Secures Grant to Expand Victim Services

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling is proud to announce that the State's Attorney's Office for St. Mary's County was awarded a \$302,338 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCOPYVS).

"We are grateful to receive the grant, which enables our office to expand the available victim services and provide crucial assistance to support and empower crime victims for a safer and more resilient community," said State's Attorney Sterling.

The grant funds will allow the Victim/Witness Advocate Division of the State's Attorney's Office to create opportunities for canine companion services and mental health services for crime victims; hire additional Victim/Witness Advocates; and provide Victim/Witness Advocate training.

Sterling created the Victim/Witness Advocate Division in 2023 for critical comprehensive support for crime victims and witnesses in St. Mary's County.

State's Attorney Sterling secured a total of \$643,843 in grants specifically dedicated to victim services for St. Mary's County, and in combination with other grants received, a grand total of \$842,393 for fiscal



State's Attorney for St. Mary's County Jaymi Sterling

year 2024. Grant funding has been essential to support the core functions and operations of the State's Attorney's Office, and further emphasizes Sterling's creative and strategic utilization of external resources to enhance the Office's vital initiatives.

Jessika Hall, Grant Coordinator for the State's Attorney's Office, successfully wrote and prepared the competitive VOCA grant on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.

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Commissioners Make Leonard Hall Lease Termination Official

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County say they do not want to see the Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy fade away but they officially voted to terminate the lease on the building the school occupies effective July 1 at their Jan. 23 meeting.

Three commissioners out of four voted to terminate the lease; Commissioner Eric Colvin opposed it while Commissioner Scott Ostrow was not present.

A majority of commissioners decided in executive session Jan. 9 to terminate the lease but did not hold an immediate public vote afterwards to make it official.

It was a move for which the commissioners were criticized.

"A decision was made and there was no planned public information on it afterward," said Commissioner Eric Colvin. "A decision was made that was acted on by going from our county administrator to the school."

Buffy Giddens, county attorney responded to Colvin, saying that the relaying of information to the school was based on a desire to "not leave them in a lurch" as to the direction the commissioners were going on the issue.

"It's pretty clear we made a mistake," interjected Commissioner President James "Randy" Guy. "We admit that, we made a mistake."

The lease agreement, according to county sources, put the maintenance of the facility under the responsibility of the school, which it was not able to afford.

One estimate showed the school would have to spend \$500,000 to complete the maintenance required.

While this was perhaps the most talked about issue, Commissioner Mike Hewitt

said that sharply declining enrollment, coupled with increasingly high costs of keeping the school open only added to its problems.

"They were having a difficult time in 2019," Hewitt said, noting the problem had been growing for some time. "It was once a thriving school, it's not that way anymore."

A plan the county received from the school on Dec. 22 did not meet the requirements for keeping the school in the building, Hewitt said.

The school also could not come up with enough grant money from the state designed to support parochial schools, he continued, though they asked for a 15-year lease.

"The key was, it wasn't a reasonable plan," Hewitt said. "The business plan is just not working."

Hewitt was also critical of details of the consensus made in executive session being made public.

After the public learned of the commissioners' decision on the lease, even before the official vote, members of the school leadership decided to close it down as of Jan. 18, not even allowing students to finish out the school year as the current lease would have allowed.

"I am so sorry to see this happening," said Colvin when he learned of the school closing its doors. "I'm sorry for the school, for the history, and for the families and students who found a positive place to grow and learn," Colvin said in a social media post. "Over the past 100 plus years, so many community members stepped up and supported this school. It was a part of our community. It should not have come to this."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

NAS Pax River Sets Noise Advisory Through Feb. 9

Communities surrounding NAS Patuxent River are advised that noise-generating testing events are scheduled to take place January 22 – February 9, 2024 from 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

Pilots at NAS Pax River will be conducting Field Carrier Landing Practices (FCLPs). FCLPs are simulated carrier landings conducted to prepare the pilot to land safely on an aircraft carrier. The practices consist of series of touch-and-go maneuvers where airspeed, altitude, and power are precisely choreographed in order for a pilot to approach a ship within an acceptable

window to land on the deck safely. FCLP training is essential for the precision and safety of our personnel and the success of their mission. Landing on an aircraft carrier is perhaps the most difficult task in military aviation. Residents may notice increased noise levels due to these operations.

As with all operations, NAS Patuxent River takes precautions to lessen the impact of testing activities on the community. For more information, call 1-866-819-9028. To view all current NAS PAX noise advisories please click the following link: <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/PaxRiverNoise>.

Parents Cry Foul Over Sudden Closure of Leonard Hall

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A group of parents are protesting the immediate closure of Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy as of Jan. 18 when they believed that their children would have at least the rest of the school year to find a new school home.

They say the board of directors at the school had no authority to take that action, according to their bylaws, without the approval of parents and may be seeking legal action to stop the closure.

"Per these bylaws, such a decision is not one to be made by the board, but rather by two-thirds majority vote of corporation [parents] members," a letter from concerned parents states, noting they were supposed to be notified of such a proposal by the leadership. "Such notice was not provided to us, another blatant violation of our rights according to our bylaws."

"All parents who signed a 2023-2024 tuition contract and are in good standing under its terms are corporation members, as are full-time teachers."

The headmistress and chair of the board of directors released a letter last week stating they were immediately closing the school as the Commissioners of St. Mary's County had made the decision to terminate the lease on the county-owned building the school had been using for decades.

"It is with a heavy heart that we are announcing the closure of Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy," the letter co-signed by headmistress Sarah Green and the board of trustees president Karlie Estrada read. "This institution has been a pillar in the community for over a century."

"We are deeply saddened and did not come to this decision lightly."

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County voted this week to officially terminate the lease with the school, though they encouraged the parents of the school to continue to work with the county to find the school a new home.

"While we take votes, decisions aren't final," said Commissioner Mike Hewitt. "Something can be worked out in the future."

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Washington, Allen File for Reelection

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The two longest serving members of the St. Mary's County Board of Education, Mary Washington and Cathy Allen, have filed for reelection.

Washington, who represents the school board District 4, filed Jan. 3, while Allen filed Jan. 24.

Allen, who has served on the board since being elected in 2000, said the challenges facing the public schools here are many and she wants to make sure that her institutional knowledge is available to put to good use.

"With the Blueprint for Education legislation and all else that is occurring we to advocate for the school system to be able to deliver a quality product to our students," Allen said. "Everyone thinks that the Blueprint is raining money down on us and that's not an accurate statement."

The Accountability and Implementation Board, created at the behest of the founding legislation for the Blueprint for Education, is one of the groups in authority that needs to be disabused of that notion, Allen said.

This group also expects the county to stop some of its successful programs for students, Allen said, and ensure funding goes to state-mandated programs.

The county had to stand up against such efforts, she said.



Cathy Allen (l) and Mary Washington (r)

"They're trying to take control from the locals," Allen said.

Washington said she wants to continue to work on ensuring students graduate on time and find ways to curb the chronic absenteeism that continues to pervade the school system.

"I bring experience, education, competency, empathy and love [to the position]," Washington said of what she contributes to the school board. "I love my job."

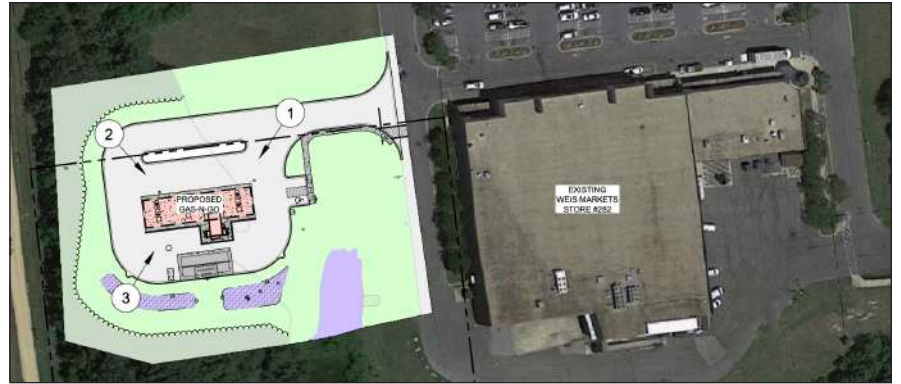
"It's my calling and my passion; I love working as a team."

Washington said she wants to continue to work collaboratively with the rest of the school board "so we can have a great, world-class school system."

"It takes the seven of us to do that; the five board members, the student member and the superintendent," Washington continued.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

New Callaway Gas Station Approved



By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The way has been cleared for the development of a fueling station to be built next to the Weis supermarket on Route 5 in Callaway after the county planning commission unanimously voted to approve its concept site plan.

The vote took place at their Jan. 22 meeting in Leonardtown; the meeting was a continuation of a prior hearing in November.

The concept site plan calls for a 2,295-square foot gas station canopy with an additional 204 square feet to accommodate a gas station attendant, according to county planning documents.

The project would be situated on 3.72 acres and allow for six fuel pumps.

County public works engineers report in planning documents that the addition of the gas station operation would generate approximately 50 more vehicle trips per hour and, as such, no traffic study was required to meet the level of service required for the intersection at Route 5 and Piney Point Road.

Original plans for the Callaway Marketplace, where the new gas station is proposed to go, called for 37,635 square feet for the supermarket, 11,000 square feet for a pharmacy, 4,000 square feet for a fast food restaurant and more than 43,000 square feet of additional retail space.

But only the supermarket and 6,000 square feet of space has been built at the site, planning documents show.

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Schools Budget Adjusts County Funds Request



Who is this?

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The latest budget proposal from the St. Mary's County Board of Education is asking for a little less than its prior request of \$14 million; this time the board has dropped its request to \$12.7 million.

School budget officials reporting to the school board at their Jan. 24 meeting in Leonardtown said slight increases in state funding in several different categories allowed them to decrease by about \$1.3 million their request from county coffers.

The school system was expecting a decrease in state funding since, according to prior budget documents, the system has declining enrollment, a decrease in applications for free and reduced meals (FARMS) among other conditions, including an increase in overall county wealth, said Tammy McCourt, assistant superintendent for finance.

But, according to the latest numbers from the state, released late last week in Gov. Wes Moore's budget, local schools will get a miniscule amount more in state funding, just \$102,045 more.

"That is positive," McCourt said. "Unfortunately, it's a zero percent increase."

Under the prior proposed fiscal 2025 budget the local contribution would be \$140 million and the state's contribution would be \$143.4 million.

McCourt said further analysis of the current fiscal 2024 budget showed that there would be end-of-year savings of about \$3.2 million, which the administration is recommending be folded back into the fiscal 2025 budget proposal to pay for \$1.2 million in budget driver retention bonuses and \$2 million for other post-employment benefits (OPEB).

Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith told board members if these savings hold, then the request for funding from the Commissioners of St. Mary's County could be reduced again to just \$9.5 million in additional monies for a total of \$136.9 million in local contributions.

Smith said his administration heard the county commissioners "loud and clear" that they would only have about \$5 million to \$6 million extra in property tax revenues in the coming year to help fund education.

"They're staring at a whole list of requests from everybody," Smith said. "We're no different than... all the county employees."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Commissioners to Host Public Forum on Jan. 30

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) will host a Public Forum on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the CSMC meeting room, located in the Chesapeake Building at 41770 Baldrige Street in Leonardtown.

Public Forums allow residents to speak directly to the Commissioners on topics of their choosing. Residents may offer appreciation, questions, or suggestions in a mutually respectful format. Those wishing to speak at the forum will receive up to three minutes to address the Commissioners.

Anyone wishing to provide more

detailed feedback to the CSMC can do so at any time via:

- Email to csmc@stmarysmd.com
- Mail to Commissioners of St. Mary's County, P.O. Box 653, Leonardtown, MD, 20650

CSMC County Public Forums are televised live on St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) TV Channel 95 and streamed live on our YouTube Channel.

For more information on SMCG, please visit: stmaryscountymd.gov or follow St. Mary's County Government on Facebook or Twitter (X) for regular updates.

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COMMERCIAL

Intruders at Great Mills High School Raise Security Concerns

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Despite spending millions of dollars to secure schools in St. Mary's over the past five years against intruders and possibly lethal threats, four juveniles were able to get into Great Mills High School during a class change with the high probability that one of them was armed with a handgun.

"It's a terrible situation," Sheriff Steve Hall said. "It's one of the things that keeps me up at night.

"I worry about it all the time."

In 2018 a student was shot to death by her ex-boyfriend at Great Mills High School who then turned the gun on himself and committed suicide just as the school resource officer — a sheriff's deputy — confronted him and opened fire on the perpetrator.

This time, students saw the four juvenile intruders and told school staff about them, who then confronted the quartet; they fled without incident.

That communication, which stems from a strong relationship between students, staff and security personnel, was what was supposed to happen in such a case as this.

"I'm thrilled that happened," Hall said. "Too late, I'll grant you that, because they already got into the building."

The principal of Great Mills High School, Beejay Dothard, sent a letter to parents of students there Jan. 22.

"This is a stark reminder that we all must continue to play our part to ensure our school is safe," Dothard wrote. "Report things immediately when you see someone who should not be in our school building or hear anything about a potential threat. "Do not open doors for individuals knocking on doors, even if you think they might be a student."

Sheriff's officials said there is no evidence so far to show that any students helped the four intruders get into Great Mills — the quartet who fled were identified as former students there — and were able to get in by blending in with students entering the school from portable classrooms on the open campus.

"As a result of this incident, we have made modifications to the process in which students and staff leave and reenter the building and to the duty stations in some areas of the building," Dothard said. "Additionally, the [School] Department of Safety & Security has requested an increase of support from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office."

School Board Member Cathy Allen said the students in this case did the right thing.

"It's deeply concerning," Allen said regarding the intrusion. "It shows that we can never completely relax."

She said she was confident in Dothard's changes to internal operations, which will

include a staff member at doors during class changes to guard against further trespass.

"I do not see this kind of thing happening again," Allen said. "This time there was not a staff member there, next time there will be."

Hall said securing Great Mills High School to ensure that no such incident ever happened again would take steps that would turn schools into military-style compounds.

"Hardening the high school and creating a police state-type environment is not conducive to the learning environment we want for our children," Hall said. "Safety efforts must focus on the genesis of this and other events; what is happening at home?"

"A failure to pay attention to the cause is a failure to prevent the next incident."

Hall also said he would not be able to spare anymore deputies from patrol to add to the school resource officer (SRO) already there.

"If I had them, they'd be there," Hall said. "If I had that luxury, I'd be the happiest sheriff in the country."

The SRO is not solely and primarily responsible for the safety and security of the school, Hall said, though they are tasked with assisting in that effort.

The school security personnel are primarily responsible for ensuring the safe environment there, Hall said.

The latest incident occurred the same day as a large fight broke out at Great Mills High School Jan. 17 during an evening sporting event, but Dothard said in his letter that the two events did not appear to be connected, nor did the intruders appear to intend to do anyone any harm.

Sheriff's deputies were able to track down one of the trespassing juveniles later and conduct a search of their home, where they found a revolver in their possession.

"As soon as we got information, we acted on it," Hall said.

Hall challenged parents to take action and make sure their children did not have access to or transport weapons to school.

"Look in your kid's bag," Hall said. "Find out what's up with them."

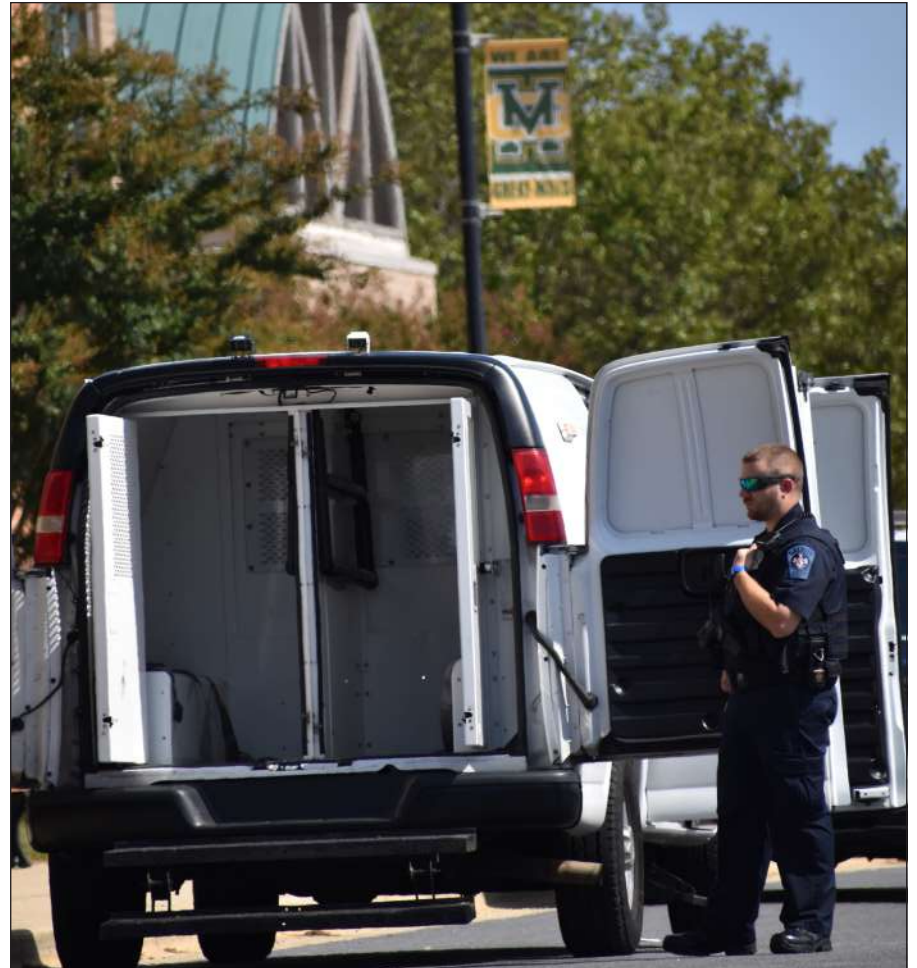
Hall said the investigation is continuing into the trespassing incident.

Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith declined to comment further for this story beyond transmitting the letter Dothard sent to parents to The County Times.

Allen praised the students who immediately went to school administrators, rather than force a confrontation, to tell them about the trespassers.

"It doesn't excuse the fact that they got in," Allen said. "We all have a responsibility and these students took it seriously."

guyleonard@countytimes.net



File photo of St. Mary's Sheriff's Office response to Great Mills High School

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“THERE WILL BE AN INVESTIGATION TO FIND OUT WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER.”

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER MARY WASHINGTON ON THE SECURITY BREACH AT GREAT MILLS HIGH SCHOOL



LOCAL 3
School Board members seek reelection



LOCAL 7
Questions persist over Leonard Hall school shut down



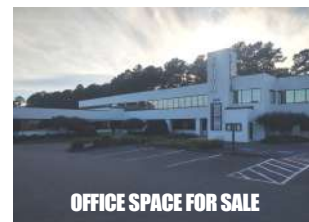
ON THE COVER
A security breach at Great Mills High School likely involved a gun.

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 25 Rain Hi: 63° Lo: 59°	FRI, JAN 26 Mostly Cloudy Hi: 68° Lo: 45°	SAT, JAN 27 Partly Cloudy Hi: 55° Lo: 42°	SUN, JAN 28 Rain Hi: 47° Lo: 35°
MON, JAN 29 AM Showers Hi: 42° Lo: 30°	TUE, JAN 30 Partly Cloudy Hi: 41° Lo: 32°	WED, JAN 31 Partly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 35°	THU, FEB 01 PM Showers Hi: 53° Lo: 37°

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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024



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Parents Question Leonard Hall Closure

Callaway Gas Station Approved

School Board Members Seek Relection

SECURITY BREACH RAISES ALARMS