

# Fauquier Times

February 27, 2019

Our 202nd year | Vol. 202, No. 9 | www.Fauquier.com | \$1.50



## What's with the water?

### Opal subdivision sees rainbow of colors coming from tap

By James Ivancic  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Pink, green and brown. The water from the taps in Mindy Gray's Opal house was all of those colors at different times last week.

She wasn't alone. Her neighbors in the Green Meadows subdivision were seeing colored rather than clear

water. Off-putting for sure, though safe to use and drink, according to the Fauquier Water and Sanitation Authority.

The WSA shut off the filtering system in the community's water system and is filling the storage tank serving the 92-home Green Meadows community daily with water

brought in by tanker from Bealeton while it works to replace the faulty equipment.

#### WSA: Not a health risk

Soon after discovering the strangely-colored tap water last week, Gray and her neighbors called the WSA and checked its website for

answers they felt were slow in coming. The first complaint was called in on Presidents Day, Monday, Feb. 18 at 9:30 p.m. The WSA office was closed for the holiday and an answering service took the call. The volume of calls to the WSA picked up on Tuesday, Feb. 19.

See WATER, Page 4

## More trails, more pools?

### Fauquier parks and rec begin first long-range plan in 26 years

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Fauquier County's Parks and Recreation Department is supposed to complete a long-range comprehensive plan every five years, but it hasn't happened since 1993.

Parks and Rec Director Larry Miller said the department has been completing projects and renovations but hasn't had funding to focus on a strategic plan for the future — until now.

In March 2018, the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors allocated \$75,000 to develop a "Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan." It will provide guidance for the capital-improvement projects staff submit each year to the county board for funding.

Funds to develop the comprehensive plan, dubbed "comp plan," will be available in fiscal 2020, which begins July 1. The plan will articulate recreational needs for fiscal 2020 to 2024, but Gary Rzepecki, assistant director of the department, said the planning document takes into account population and needs projections for the next 20 to 30 years.

The county's procurement department is currently reviewing the "request for proposals" document that will be used to solicit bids from qualified firms to update the plan. Rzepecki said that he hopes the RFP will be advertised in March or April.

Proposals will be evaluated to decide which company is best suited to do the work, Rzepecki said.

See PARKS, Page 6



## One-wheel wonders

The Unistars Unicycling Showtroupe demonstrated their feats of skill and balance Saturday during a demonstration at the Vint Hill gym. Riders, ages 10 to 18, navigated ramps and dazzled the crowd with their choreographed formations. The event was held in conjunction with Fauquier County Parks and Recreation. Above, Caroline Lawrence, Ryan Granche, Virginia Lawrence, and Noah Stubbs perform the flying turn. Left, Jackson Turner is helped by Michelle Carrico and Ellie Evans after the show when anyone was able to try a unicycle.

PHOTO BY RANDY LITZINGER

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## Opal subdivision sees rainbow of colors coming from tap

WATER, from Page 1

"We immediately went over, shut the removal system off, and began flushing the discolored water from the system," WSA Director Benjamin Shoemaker said. That was the morning of Feb. 19. "While not a health risk, it's unappealing, and flushing the discolored water from the water distribution system is time consuming due to the limited water supply in a small system like Green Meadows."

Shoemaker said a valve malfunctioned on an automated iron-and-manganese-removal system on one of three filters in a small building next to the community's water storage tank, which is located along a service road behind houses at Green Meadows.

The automated system uses potassium permanganate in the iron and manganese removal process, which turns water pink. Permanganate is one of the most common removal chemicals in the water industry because it's considered safe, Shoemaker said.

Clear water comes out of the tap when the filters are working as they should. But because of the malfunction, pink water emerged. The green and brown water some residents found coming from taps was caused by iron and manganese in the water, Shoemaker said.

WSA contacted Virginia Water Service, which handles preventive maintenance on its 16 groundwater systems. In January, the company performed annual maintenance on Green Meadows' two wells and its 20,000-gallon holding tank and filtering system. A WSA crew also did its daily check of the system on the afternoon of Monday, Feb. 18.

While Virginia Water System said the existing 18-year-old system installed by the subdivision's developer could be repaired, it couldn't assure WSA it would stay fixed. Now Shoemaker is looking for a new valve. He is also considering whether a "more manual approach" to add chemicals, rather than an automated system, would work better.

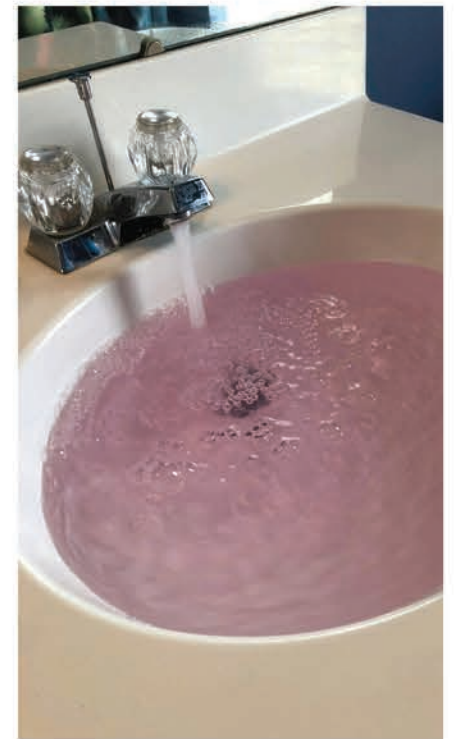
### High bills, hard water

The WSA was also doing damage control on another front. Shoemaker said a letter would be mailed out this week to residents that will explain what caused the discolored water and what's being done.

For Gray, the colored water "was the last straw."

"We're paying top dollar for water that we shouldn't even be drinking," Gray said, noting her monthly water and sewer bills total \$160 or more in Fauquier — much higher than the \$120 she paid quarterly in Fairfax County.

Gray said she wants a credit on her bill for the discolored water. Her family, which includes two boys and a German shepherd,



COURTESY PHOTO

Mindy Gray of Clarkes Meadow Road found pink water coming out of a water faucet in her Green Meadows subdivision home last week.

have lived at Green Meadows since 2014. This is the first time they've had a colored water problem.

She said she also doesn't like the "hard" water that comes from the tap and thus drinks bottled water. Some of their neighbors use a water purifier, but the Grays don't.

Shoemaker acknowledged Fauquier customers pay more due to the "economies of scale" that allow water and sewer systems in more populated areas to spread the cost among more customers. The average user in Fauquier pays \$55.98 for water and \$75.20 per month for sewer — roughly \$135 per month. There are 6,000 water connections in Fauquier.

The WSA board approved a rate increase over five years, starting July 1, 2016, with higher increases the first two years and 3-percent increases in each of the final three years. Every WSA customer pays the same rate no matter where they live.

A community meeting is also planned to hear other concerns about water hardness as well as water and sewer bills.

"We want to see how we can do a better job," Shoemaker in response to the complaints.

Fauquier County Supervisor Rick Gerhardt (Cedar Run) and Ray Graham, the district's representative on the WSA board, were in agreement that a community meeting is in order.

Shoemaker said he has talked to the homeowners association representative for Green Meadows about setting up the community meeting, which will likely be held in March. The date and place will be announced after arrangements are made.

Reach James Ivancic at [jivancic@fauquier.com](mailto:jivancic@fauquier.com).

# Planning underway for expected rush of early voters in 2020

By James Ivancic  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Fauquier Office of the General Registrar and electoral board are looking for help from the state and county to help handle an expected surge in early voters in 2020, when a one-week “no excuse” voting period will allow people to vote early without giving a reason.

The one-week period ends on the Saturday before Election Day. Voters can still vote absentee with a reason, as they do now during the 45 days before the election.

Registrar Alex Ables said the Virginia General Assembly needs to authorize funds to purchase voting equipment, meet technology and networking needs and help cover the cost of securing sites where voting equipment will be in place for days at a time.

He explained the scope of the task during a work session with county supervisors on Sept. 12.

Ables is looking for the county’s help finding satellite voting locations, since the registrar’s office on Waterloo Road in Warrenton can’t handle the number of early voters that are expected.

A crush of absentee voters for the 2016 general election “shut down Waterloo Road and our parking lot,” Ables said.

Satellite locations won’t be needed for special and town elections and primaries but Ables said the state needs to set uniform standards for the satellite sites, including minimum requirements for facilities, parking and staffing. There will also have to be safeguards so someone can’t vote in multiple satellite locations.

Ables asked the supervisors to talk to the state legislators representing Fauquier County to get their help in preparing for the 2020 change to “no excuse” voting.

Ables said the burden would also be eased if the state allows early voting by mail during the entire 45 days of the absentee voting period.

He suggested using as satellite voting locations the Marshall Community Center, the old depot at the Fauquier public library in Bealeton and unspecified locations at Vint Hill and in Warrenton in order to make it convenient for voters.

The Marshall Community Center would need work to make it disabled-access compliant. Other programs there may have to be reduced during the early voting period.

Access to facilities will be needed for two and a half weeks, including time for set up and take down.

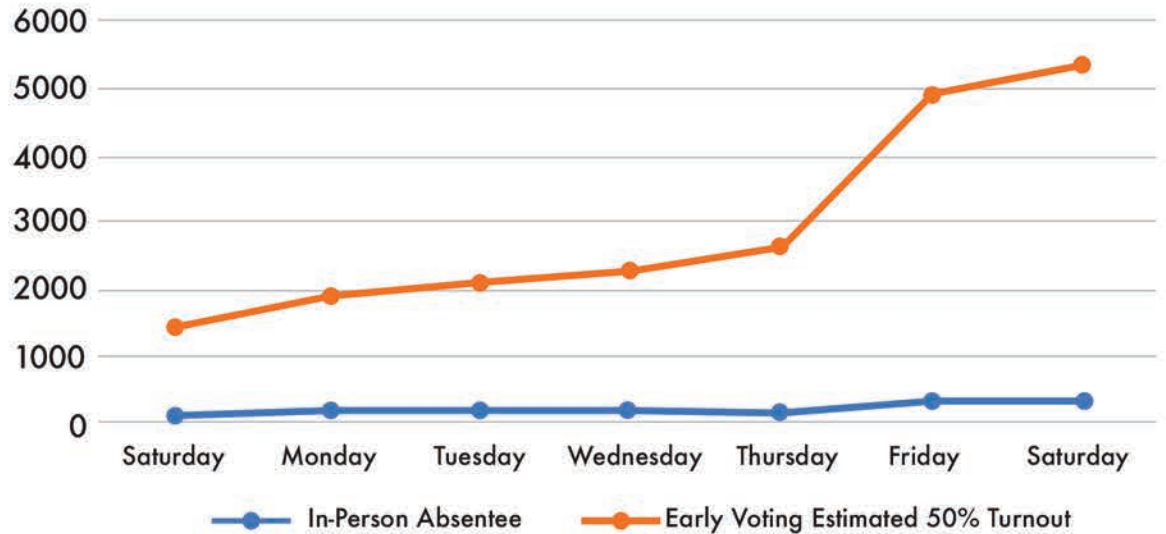
There will be staffing, training and storage needs, said Ables, who didn’t put a cost figure on the no excuse preparation needs.

No excuse voting will go into effect for the November 2020 general election when the presidency is on the ballot. If early voting had been in place in the latest presidential election year in 2016 and 20 percent of the registered voters cast a ballot early, that percentage translates to 7,625 voters, Ables said. The same percentage would have yielded 4,834 voters in 2017 when Virginia voters elected a governor. If the percentage of early voters increases, the number of voters go up as well, according to estimates Ables supplied to the supervisors.

He said a sampling of states already allowing early voting saw 52 to 65 percent of registered

## EARLY VOTING DAILY ESTIMATES BASED ON NOV 2016 DATA

Fauquier County Daily Estimates Based on 50% Early Voting Turnout vs. In-Person Absentee



voters voting in-person early.

Scott District Supervisor Holder Trumbo said that a single larger site for in-person would reduce the cost if there’s no requirement to have multiple dispersed sites, though he said he realized some voters would have to travel farther.

Deputy County Administrator Katie Heritage provided supervisors with additional information, including a suggestion that the office space at 98 Alexandria Pike in Warrenton that served as an office during the property reassessment process could be used as a voting site. At Vint Hill, the back portion of the building formerly used by the Economic Development Authority could be used as a satellite site.

In checking with other counties about no excuse voting preparations, she said that Culpeper County doesn’t plan to buy additional equipment, add staff or remote voting sites but will use its main library for the presidential election. August and Hanover counties have no plans to expand their main voting sites, add remote sites or staff or buy additional equipment. Madison County may expand or change its main voting site and will add staff. Frederick County will buy additional voting equipment but not add remote sites or staff. York County plans to use a larger main office and add one remote site plus buy additional equipment

and add staff. Albemarle County will buy equipment and add staff and hasn’t decided about remote sites. Rockingham County hasn’t decided what to do.

No action was taken by the Fauquier supervisors. Ables urged them to reach out to the state legislators for their help.

Reach James Ivancic at [jivancic@fauquier.com](mailto:jivancic@fauquier.com)

### Absentee voting begins Sept. 20

Absentee voting for this year’s general election on Nov. 5 begins Friday, Sept. 20. In-person voting takes place at the Office of the General Registrar at 528 Waterloo Road, Suite 200, Warrenton, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays and certain deadline days. The office will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the last two Saturdays before the election, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2. In-person absentee voting ends on Nov. 2.

Mail-in absentee ballot applications can also be obtained at the registrar’s office or through the Virginia Department of Elections website at [www.elections.virginia.gov](http://www.elections.virginia.gov).

Mailed ballots must be received by the registrar’s office by 7 p.m. on Election Day in order to be counted.

### Correction:

The issue of inFauquier in this week’s paper incorrectly refers to Lynn Medford as the author of “Hear the story of here: How it started.”

Medford edited the article, which is based on Hope Porter’s recently published history of the fight to preserve Fauquier’s rural lifestyle; it draws on the archives of The Fauquier Democrat.

Hope Wallach Burrage Porter, 95, grew up on Fauquier County’s Hopefield farm, which her parents, Robert and Feroline Wallach, named after her. She founded the Mid-Fauquier Association to preserve farmland in 1968, and the issue became a lifelong cause. In 2013, Porter was honored by the Land Trust of Virginia for her four decades of achievement in land conservation. In 1989, the Fauquier Times named her Citizen of the Year. She is author of the 2004 book “The Saga of North Wales,” about the struggle to save an historic estate near Warrenton from suburban development.



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# Fauquier Times

October 16, 2019

Our 202nd year | Vol. 202, No. 42 | www.Fauquier.com | \$1.50



## County considers consolidating courthouse space

By James Ivancic  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Fauquier County is undertaking a study of the space needs of the three county courts for the next 20 years and will look at placing them in a single building to make security easier and to cut costs.

The circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations courts are near each other but in separate buildings. The General District Court is at 6 Court St., next to Warrenton Town Hall. Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court is at 14 Main St. The Circuit Court is at 40 Culpeper St. The study will determine “whether they can fit

into the circuit court building and will look at potential growth over the next 20 years to see whether it can cover that growth,” said County Administrator Paul McCulla. “This will tell us whether the building can handle it or whether we need an See COURTHOUSE, page 4

### School nutrition workers could get mid-year pay boost

Proposals would increase salaries and benefits for cafeteria employees

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Fauquier County School Board will see details of a plan to hike pay and benefits for school nutrition workers at the school board meeting Oct. 15. (After press time. See Fauquier.com for updates.) The lowest-paid could see a mid-year increase in their hourly wage from \$10.31 to \$12.50. In addition, all food service associates would be able to work four-hour shifts instead of three-hour shifts, and therefore be able to access part-time health benefits. The increase would affect 69 workers, many of them dishwashers and cashiers.

In another change effecting this group, “Worker I” and “Worker II” classifications would be changed to the more inclusive “food service associate.”

The Personnel Committee of the Fauquier County School Board met See NUTRITION, page 7



Carolina Gomez and Deloris Yates at Gomez's house on Haiti Street.

PHOTO BY ALISA BOOZE TROETSCHEL/ONE BOAT MEDIA

## Fauquier Habitat makes a difference in Warrenton

By Alisa Booze Troetschel  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Fauquier Habitat for Humanity builds more than houses these days. It's building community on Haiti Street in Warrenton.

The change in focus began three

years ago, to empower residents — Habitat homeowners and others in the neighborhood. The goal is to envision and then create the community in which they want to live. Habitat embraces the principle that lasting change comes from the inside out, not from the outside in.

“Habitat for Humanity, we're the people pulling people together,” said Mary Correia, who arrived two years ago to serve as community development director. “It's not ‘Here's what we think you need, Neighborhood.’”

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# County considers consolidating courthouse space

**COURTHOUSE**, from page 1

addition or a new courthouse.”

He said the study will take three to four months to complete. This week, McCulla plans to hire a firm to do the study.

Putting all three courts into the current circuit court building, which has entrances off Ashby and Culpeper streets, would presumably require the relocation of county offices that are currently located in the building. Those offices include county administration, community development department, commonwealth’s attorney, county treasurer and commissioner of revenue.

Where a new courthouse can be built is currently limited by state law. Without the approval of voters at a referendum, any new site must be across the street from the current location. McCulla said there is space next to the Sheriff’s Office a short distance down from the circuit court, but that location is not adjacent to any of Fauquier County’s courthouses.

“We could potentially put a courthouse there,” McCulla said. “That would give us some flexibility.”

The county will pursue a legislative change to allow construction of a courthouse 500 feet away.

If a courthouse were to be moved out of Warrenton, that would be a concern for the Virginia General



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Fauquier County Circuit Court on Culpeper Street in Warrenton

Assembly, said Eldon James, who is a consultant for Fauquier County on legislative matters in Richmond. But the move Fauquier is considering shouldn’t be a concern.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Chris Butler, Lee District, said he’d like to talk to all of the judges to find out more about their needs. He noted a new judge is joining the circuit court and he wants to hear from him.

James Plowman, who has been Loudoun County’s commonwealth’s attorney, will replace Judge Jeffery W. Parker on Nov. 1. Parker is retiring.

## Security concerns

The Sheriff’s Office is in charge of security for the three courthouses.

“The courts are secure now. We’ll review any security we have at the Sheriff’s Office, courthouses and jail as part of the discussion to figure

out the space needs of the courts,” said Sheriff Bob Mosier.

The Sheriff’s Office has 26 full-time deputies and two part-time temporary deputies assigned to court security and serving papers. They are duly sworn officers who can be assigned to other duties as well.

Mosier said the number of deputies on duty at the three courthouses fluctuate depending on whether any of the courts are in session. Deputies are stationed inside courtrooms, they escort criminal defendants into the courthouses and stand watch at building entrances.

Visitors to the courthouse also walk through a scanner placed just inside the entrances.

A total of 194,451 people entering the courthouse were screened and deputies supervised the movement of 1,687 inmates for court appearances during 2018, according to the Sheriff’s Office annual report.

The county entered a bid of \$2.5 million late last year to buy the former BB&T building for use as office space, but the bid was rejected. The town of Warrenton this month purchased the building for \$2.2 million. It will be moving Town Hall offices there from the current location at 18 Court St.

McCulla said the county might be interested in using the 18 Court St. building for meeting space but not for offices.

Reach James Ivancic at [jivancic@fauquier.com](mailto:jivancic@fauquier.com)

# Fauquier Habitat makes a difference

**HABITAT**, from page 1

“It’s easy to see the house but it starts with the people,” said Darryl Neher, executive director of Fauquier Habitat For Humanity.

## The Haiti Street neighborhood

Fauquier Habitat for Humanity has a presence on Haiti Street, a section of town sandwiched between Old Town, High Street and Eva Walker Park. The organization has built 11 houses on Haiti Street in the last 30 years. Another house is under construction.

Habitat currently owns five dwellings on the street. One is informally used for neighborhood gatherings, two homes are uninhabitable and the remaining two are unavailable for rent at this time.

This past June, community development specialist James Johnson began to facilitate conversations with residents to identify goals for their Haiti Street neighborhood. Periodic cleanup days was one stated goal. Warrenton police officers lent a hand in sprucing the street up.

Residents also asked for financial education, so Habitat is lining up speakers.

A community garden was planted last year. With the help of the Piedmont Environmental Council, it was replanted this past growing season.

## Project Engagement

After listening to the issues and

concerns of residents, Habitat staff developed a curriculum for Project Engagement -- a series of training courses. The first class was in July, and the second in September. Community members learn leadership, organization and communication skills, and how to advocate for their goals. Warrenton government, Piedmont Dispute Resolution Center, Boys & Girls Club, and churches are ready to help as needed. Building social cohesion is an ongoing effort.

Haiti Street is very much a front-porch community. The connections are social, Correia said, but until now, residents weren’t working together to effect change.

Habitat brings Haiti Street residents together twice a month. Anywhere from a handful to 15 to 20 people attend, Neher said.

Alice Gibson was among the dozen or so residents who attended in September. She has lived on Haiti more than 25 years. Habitat built the house she lives in now. She sat at her oval oak kitchen table while a welcome breeze blew through the window on a baking autumn afternoon. She appreciates the support she receives from caring neighbors and Habitat staff during the bi-monthly meetings.

Gibson does have concerns about her neighborhood, though. She wants drivers to find their brake pedals going down the street. And, she would like loud music to end at a decent hour. “They play music late at night and disturb neighbors and the ones

## About Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is an international organization that builds homes for people who make 30 to 60 percent of average median income for the area.

Applicants qualify if they live in overcrowded or substandard housing or pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

Participants must contribute 250 hours of “sweat equity” to the project; usually, they help to build homes. They pay mortgage payments to Habitat.

Homes cost less than usual market value since much of the labor is performed by volunteers.

“Affordable housing is not poverty housing,” said Darryl Neher, executive director of Fauquier Habitat for Humanity.

who have to get up in the morning and go to work,” said Gibson. She said she talked to these neighbors, but “they paid no mind.”

Carolina Gomez regularly attends meetings that Habitat holds. A pleased expression crosses her face as she describes trusting her neighbors. She believes that what she leaves in her yard will stay there and not be taken.

But Gomez is concerned about some neighbors’ use of alcohol and drugs. She, her husband and their three offspring, who are 19, 12, and 11, moved into a Habitat-built house on Haiti Street two years ago. One very cold day she saw a woman lying on the ground. She walked to her and said, “You’re very important. How can I help you?”

Habitat’s end goal is to be out of a job. Residents will take over the role of convening, planning and putting their plans into action. Success, though, is measured in “relentless incrementalism,” Correia said.

## Community Impact Grant

Habitat’s efforts at community building just got a hefty boost. In late summer, Fauquier Habitat for Hu-

manity received a Community Impact Grant of \$100,000 from the Virginia Housing Development Authority. The money will fund a survey of the neighborhood to determine what options exist for creating affordable housing, including but not limited to single-family homes. Strategies will take zoning ordinances and the comprehensive plan into account. The objective is to maintain the ratio of occupant-owned to rental housing.

“We’re going to dream big,” Neher said.

Habitat will collaborate with an architect to develop design standards for modern housing models that reflect the area’s architectural past.

That’s in the future. But for the present, Deloris Yates gets excited about one component of Habitat’s efforts in her neighborhood – the cleanup days. She wants everyone’s yard to be tidy. Yates is Gibson’s daughter and has lived on Haiti for a dozen years.

“I ain’t lying,” Yates said. “It used to be bad down here -- the crowd and the activities.” Speaking of Habitat, she said, “They’re doing a good thing.”