

# Fauquier Times

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STANDING UP FOR  
CHEERLEADERS:  
DESPITE NEW RULES,  
CHEER SQUADS ARE IN.  
SPORTS, PAGE 15



## Warrenton neighbors launch effort to 'save the ginkgo tree'

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A towering ginkgo biloba tree spreads its branches high above a long-unoccupied house at 62 Washington St. at the corner of Green Street in Warrenton. Last week, it was covered with golden leaves, but neighbor Ron Ross said that each fall, the tree can be full of bright yellow leaves one day and bare the next. Ross, who lives next door to the tree, said, "It's been there since I was a young man. At least that's when I noticed it." Ross said he was 14 when he moved to Warrenton in 1951.

See GINKGO, page 4



PHOTO BY MOLLY WHITE

A golden yellow, the Washington Street ginkgo tree is at the peak of its fall color. It shades an unoccupied and dilapidated house beneath its boughs.

## Arrest made in connection with unsolved 2008 murder of monk

By Coy Ferrell  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Fauquier County Sheriff's Office announced Monday that an arrest has been made in connection with the 2008 stabbing death of a Buddhist monk who lived south of Marshall. Won Yong Jung, of Duluth, Georgia, was arrested Monday in connection with the murder. He is currently in custody in Georgia



WON YONG JUNG

awaiting extradition to Virginia. The Federal Bureau of Investigation -- its Atlanta, Georgia and Washington, D.C. field offices -- along with other law enforcement agencies, collaborated in the investigation, according to Fauquier County Sheriff Robert Mosier.

Du Chil Park, a 56-year-old South Korean national whose ordained name was Monk Mogu, was stabbed to death in his home -- which also served as a temple -- sometime in late June 2008. He was a Zen Buddhist monk who practiced acupuncture and other traditional healing techniques. His body was found

See MONK, page 8

## School board members look ahead to 50/50 learning model

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

At the Nov. 23 Fauquier County School Board meeting, administrators and school board members continued to wrestle with how to provide the best educational experience for students while the COVID-19 pandemic continues unabated. When schools first shifted to remote learning, there was discussion about possibly inviting children back into the classroom more than two days a week early in 2021, but with cases rising, that discussion is off the table for now.

School board members could vote on a shift to "50/50" learning at their Dec. 14 meeting. The plan aims to in-

**"When we opened the schools to the hybrid model, we had about 3,000 students in virtual. Now we have about 3,800."**

MAJOR WARNER  
Deputy superintendent of schools

crease the number of days -- from two to four -- that students learn "live" from teachers. Students who have enrolled in hybrid learning would still attend in-person classes two days a week but would attend classes remotely -- with

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POINT INSPECTION

FAMILY TIME

# Warrenton neighbors launch effort to ‘save the ginkgo tree’

GINKGO, from page 1

The tree has a circumference of 13.5 feet and has a DBH (diameter of tree at breast height) of 52 inches. A similarly majestic tree on the campus of the University of Virginia measures 59 inches; it was planted in 1860. That ginkgo biloba, named the Pratt Ginkgo, lives on the northwest side of UVA's Rotunda and is beloved by students and alumni alike.

Washington Street's ginkgo has a smaller fan base, but now that the tree appears to be under threat, residents are garnering support to find a way to save it. The tree in question is on a lot owned by Atkins Homes, a Warrenton firm operated by Daniel Atkins, who plans to build four houses there. If current plans were to move ahead for the by-right development, the tree would have to go.

Daniel Brewer, who has lived at 42 Washington St. for the last 10 years, said the tree is important to the neighborhood. He spoke during citizens time at the Nov. 10 town council meeting, asking for the town's help. He referred to the tree as a “hidden treasure.”

He said, “It's important that we find a way to keep the tree. It's important right now and it's important for the future. Please work with the builder to save the tree,” he asked the town council.

Since the meeting, a Facebook group – Save the Warrenton Ginkgo Tree – has attracted 199 followers. A petition with 416 signatures (as of Nov. 30). Go to [change.org](https://change.org) and search “ginkgo tree.”

The petition page says, “... This petition, originated by the neighbors of Warrenton's Bartenstein neighborhood, is asking the Town of Warrenton, Atkins Builders and the citizens of Warrenton to work

together to find a solution that allows the development of the lot while allowing the ginkgo tree to survive.

**“It's important that we find a way to keep the tree. It's important right now and it's important for the future. Please work with the builder to save the tree.”**

DANIEL BREWER



PHOTO BY MOLLY WHITE

The Washington Street ginkgo tree may have been planted in the late 1800s, according to one expert.

**“The town has long sought a park in that part of town. A quiet meditation park under that tree would be wonderful.”**

CARTER NEVILL  
Warrenton Mayor

This vibrant tree is the gateway to the community, reflects the personality of the neighborhood, and will continue to represent a historic and healthy Warrenton for generations to come.”

Warrenton resident Rita Hawes described the ginkgo tree as beautiful, attractive to birds and pest resistant. It is also known as an extremely hardy tree and resistant to air pollution.

Another plus in the tree's favor: it's a male tree. The female tree drops “smelly fruit,” but the male does not.

Hawes recommended her neighbor, botanist Marion Blois Lobstein for her expertise on ginkgo trees. Before her retirement, Lobstein was an associate professor of biology with Northern Virginia Community Col-

lege, and she is an adjunct professor with Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce, Virginia. Lobstein said that there is a grove of about 300 ginkgo trees at Blandy; it's the largest group of research plantings outside of China. The Blandy trees are about 80 years old.

Of the Washington Street ginkgo, Lobstein said, “This is large for an American ginkgo... I do hope the Green Street ginkgo can be preserved; it is a magnificent specimen.”

Lobstein said she believes the tree may go back to the late 1800s.

Brewer said, “When we look around this neighborhood, we see so many old trees. It's one of the reasons people move to Warrenton.” He pointed to the old house shaded by the ginkgo. “I think it was built in 1901, but it's definitely a tear-down.” He believes it has been unoccupied for about five years.

He has had conversations with councilmen James Hartman (Ward 4), Brett Hamby (Ward 3) and with Mayor Carter Nevill about the tree, although nothing concrete has been offered as a solution.

Hamby said, “I've spoken with the group of residents and have seen the tree. ... We have a lot of citizens participating in the effort and that's always a good thing. Nobody wants to lose this tree.” He said that the town is investigating what options might be available.

Hartman said, “I was not aware of the tree until Mr. Brewer spoke to council. I went to see the tree for myself and completely understand the neighbor's appreciation of this tree. ... The ginkgo in question is beautiful and appears to be quite old.”

Nevill said he hadn't noticed the tree until it was brought to his attention at the town council meeting. Although avenues and funding sources are being pursued, he believes that

## More about the ginkgo tree

“Ginkgo [biloba] trees are among the world's oldest species, having been around for about 200 million years; it was one of five dominant species of trees in North America about 150 million years ago... it disappeared from the North American fossil record about 7 million years ago, after a time of climate cooling.

“Modern humans found the tree in China and it was mentioned in 800-year-old records of trade between Japan and Korea. The Dutch introduced the tree to continental Europe in 1727, and a botanist named William Hamilton reintroduced the trees to North America in 1784, planting two near Philadelphia.”

Source: <https://news.virginia.edu/content/tree-see-history-behind-pratt-ginkgo>

“Male trees are usually planted because the female trees bear seeds whose fleshy outer coverings give off a foul odor that smells like rancid butter.

“Ginkgo has been an important medicinal plant for centuries and is still a common herbal remedy today. Extracts from the leaves may enhance neurological functioning by increasing blood flow to the brain ...”  
Source: “Biology,” by Eldra Solomon, Linda Berg, Diana W. Martin

the money will have to be raised to buy the land from Atkins if the tree is to be preserved. “The town has long sought a park in that part of town,” he said. “A quiet meditation park under that tree would be wonderful.”

Town Councilman Sean Polster (at large) said that he has asked town attorney Whit Robinson to look into a tree conservation ordinance in the Code of Virginia, 10.1-1127.1. It begins, “The governing body of any county, city or town may adopt a tree conservation ordinance regulating the preservation and removal of heritage, specimen, memorial and street trees ...”

A “heritage tree” is defined as a tree “that has been individually designated by the local governing body to have notable historic or cultural interest.”

A “specimen tree” “means any tree that has been individually designated by the local governing body to be notable by virtue of its outstanding size and quality for its particular species.”

Polster said that Robinson was expected to get back to council members next week with an opinion on whether the ordinance could be useful toward saving the tree.

Nevill said that his understanding “is even an ordinance would stop short of outright protection. The owner would still have to be compensated.”

Nevill said that the town received



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Some residents of Washington Street are banding together to try to save the ginkgo tree on their street. Caedmon Brewer, Kristin Brewer (holding Jesse Brewer), Ronald Ross, Daniel Brewer, Menzie Pittman, Noelle Brewer (front), Corban Brewer (front)

See GINKGO, page 5

**GINKGO**, from page 4

a couple of estimates for moving the tree; they came in at between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Because of the girth of the tree and complications of power lines, etc., he said, “the most cost-effective thing to do would be to raise the money to buy the lot.”

**Options**

The ginkgo tree’s would-be protectors emphasize that they understand the builder’s point of view and would like to find a solution that would be agreeable to all. Brewer said, “We really appreciate Mr. Atkins willingness to give us a chance to save the tree. I think with all of the support the ginkgo tree is getting, he will have a much easier time marketing his houses with a magnificent ginkgo tree!”

Brewer said that the builder wants to start construction at the beginning of 2021. Brewer said



PHOTO BY MOLLY WHITE

A view of the ginkgo tree looking out toward Green Street.

Atkins was willing to sell Lot #3 (after the lot is subdivided into four lots, Lot #3 is the lot with the ginkgo).

He added, “Because time is of the essence, we

need to start moving forward and I’m hoping the town can facilitate how we get from where we are now to the best path forward so that the ginkgo tree is saved and Mr. Atkins can build around the tree.”

Daniel Atkins confirmed that he has been in conversation with the residents of Washington Street and is willing to work toward a solution. A price for the lot – if the group wants to purchase it from Atkins – has not been determined, he said.

Brewer said, “The preservation of the lot with the ginkgo could happen in many different ways. For example, crowdsourcing, private funding, grants and CARES funds could be part of or all of the solution. If you look in the draft 2040 comprehensive plan, there is discussion of public/private ‘Park-nerships.’ Perhaps that has a place here. The town has an important role to help us focus in the right direction and hopefully we can have that conversation soon.”



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# Smell Gas? Act Fast!

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*¿Hay olor a gas? ¡Actué rápido! El gas natural es un combustible incoloro e inodoro. Por razones de seguridad, se le agrega un aromatizante químico llamado mercaptano para que se pueda detectar fácilmente. Este aromatizante tiene un olor característico a “huevo podrido.” Los olores a gas natural deben informarse de inmediato.*



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*No intente localizar la fuente del olor.*
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*Evite usar cualquier fuente de ignición, por ejemplo, teléfonos celulares, cigarrillos, fósforos, linternas, aparatos electrónicos, vehículos a motor, interruptores de luz o teléfonos fijos.*
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*Llame a Virginia Natural Gas at **1.877.572.3342** o al **911** una vez que esté fuera del área y en un lugar seguro.*

# Fauquier Times

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**SPORTS:**  
FAUQUIER COUNTY  
HIGH SCHOOL  
BASKETBALL  
SEASONS PUSHED  
BACK A WEEK.  
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## Builder cuts down ginkgo tree neighbors tried to save



PHOTO BY ROBIN EARL

The owner of four by-right home lots on Washington Street removed the ginkgo tree Saturday morning.

**By Robin Earl**  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Late in the afternoon on Nov. 30, Daniel Atkins of Atkins Homes, Inc. told the *Fauquier Times* that he was working with the town of Warrenton and Washington Street neighbors to see if a towering 200-year-old ginkgo tree on one of his properties – approved by-right for up to four houses -- could be saved. Atkins confirmed that he had been in conversation with the residents and was willing to work toward a solution, but that no price had yet been determined.

By 8:30 a.m. on Dec. 5, the Save the Warrenton Ginkgo Tree Facebook page posted “Mr. Atkins is cutting down the Ginkgo right now!!!”

By then, all of the branches had been cut from the tree and only part of its trunk remained.

“It was fast and furious,” said neighbor Elizabeth Rose, who helped create the Facebook page. “It was his way of telling us to be quiet.”

When Town Manager Brandie Schaeffer got a call Saturday morning that the tree was coming down, she said that she went there to see if she could get it postponed until at

See **GINKGO**, page 6

## After a challenging year, local retailers look to holiday season for hope

**By Coy Ferrell**  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Locally owned retail shops were severely impacted this spring as many categorized as “non-essential” were forced to close their physical storefronts in the early days of the pandemic. Some local retailers who were able to weather that storm, however, expressed cautious optimism that this holiday shopping season, when American consumers spend more money than at any other time of year, will be as good or even better than last year. Others are just trying to survive.

“It was just so sad to see my shop empty,” said Melissa Russell of Simply Pure Products in Vint Hill about the closure

of the physical storefront for two months this spring. The company, founded in 2010, was well-positioned to stay afloat while the physical store was closed; online sales already accounted for roughly half the company’s sales, she said. Until the physical storefront reopened in May, orders



MELISSA RUSSELL

See **RETAIL**, page 8



### Adapted events bring holiday cheer to Warrenton

Two Warrenton holiday traditions pressed on this year despite the pandemic. Adapted to public health protocols, Gumdrop Square began Saturday morning and will continue every Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday leading up to Christmas. And on Saturday evening, hundreds of vehicles lined up for a drive-thru parade at the WARF.

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FAMILY TIME

# Builder surprises town, neighbors, by cutting down ginkgo tree they were trying to save

GINKGO, from page 1

least Monday. But, she said, “it was too late.”

She said that she wanted to make sure the contractors had a valid license, but that Atkins and two other men took the tree down themselves. “There was nothing I could do,” she said.

Calls and messages to Atkins requesting comment were not returned.

Schaeffer said that the town was talking with Atkins last week about possible solutions. “He said he was willing to work with us, then cut the tree down at 7:30 on a Saturday morning. We reached out to Mr. Atkins as late as yesterday, but he did not respond.”

Schaeffer said the town had been working to see if the four home lots the developer had could be reconfigured to save the tree. The town’s community development department was working with the Piedmont Environmental Council to come up with workable options, she said.

Schaeffer explained that PEC had reached out to her, offering to be a partner in trying to save the tree, with fundraising and with engineering work expertise. “We had already been investigating to see if we could provide Mr. Atkins any waivers that might be necessary in reconfiguring the lots,” she said.

She emphasized, “We were not trying to take away any of the builder’s rights. If he was going to have to lose a lot, we were willing to compensate him. We were trying to pursue a solution in good faith. That didn’t happen. He did not give us that option.”

John McCarthy, senior advisor and director of strategic partnerships with the PEC, said that the PEC had committed up to \$20,000 toward the



Warrenton Town Manager Brandie Schaeffer and neighbor Rita Hawes lament losing the town’s largest ginkgo tree.

effort preliminarily. He said, “That wouldn’t have purchased a lot or other major expense but would’ve allowed attempts to reconfigure the subdivision to save the tree or partnered with others to acquire some portion of the property. Obviously and disappointingly, that door has closed.”

He said, though, “We are still committed, if the town pursues a tree protection inventory outside of the historic district, to support that effort to hopefully forestall similar sad results.”

A small group of neighbors gathered to watch the tree coming down. Rita Hawes, who has been active in the short-lived movement to save the tree, posted a video of the demolition on Facebook Live. She said she was sure that they could have raised the money to compensate the builder, even if it had been for the cost of two lots.

Daniel Brewer, who was leading

**“We were not trying to take away any of the builder’s rights. If he was going to have to lose a lot, we were willing to compensate him. We were trying to pursue a solution in good faith. That didn’t happen. He did not give us that option.”**

**BRANDIE SCHAEFFER**  
Warrenton Town Manager



the effort to save the tree, said, “This is devastating. It was amazing to see the community and town government unite for a good and righteous cause. I had 100% confidence we were going to save the tree and be fair to Mr. Atkins. There will probably still be good that comes out of this in



terms of protecting trees and neighborhood assets, but it doesn’t take away the sorrow caused by the vindictive destruction of God’s creation the neighborhood just witnessed.”

He added, “This has turned from a lesson in civics for my children, to a lesson in human nature. When Mr. Atkins sits down with buyers to customize each house, I’m sure other topics will come up like ‘how is the neighborhood?’ I don’t know how he gets around the elephant in the room.”

“In the end, Mr. Atkins is a member of our community and has value as a human being. I hope our community shows him grace and not the same vindictiveness he showed us.”

Schaeffer said, “It is just so sad, we were willing to work with him and private funds were willing to compensate him. In a small town we work together, and no one was trying to take any rights from him.”

Reach Robin Earl at [rearl@fauquier.com](mailto:rearl@fauquier.com)

## Supervisors to vote on transitional housing options at rural churches

Members of the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors are set to vote Thursday whether to allow transitional housing at some rural church properties; a public hearing on the issue will be held at the supervisors’ regular meeting Dec. 10. Last month, planning commissioners voted unanimously to recommend approval of the zoning ordinance amendment.

The ordinance amendment would allow “transitional family housing” at places of worship located at least 12 acres in areas zoned “rural – agricultural.” If the amendment is approved, religious organizations would still need to obtain a special exception permit to establish transitional housing on their properties.

The request to amend the county’s zoning ordinance came from Dayspring Mennonite Church, located on a 13-acre parcel in Midland. The church would “utilize part of the church property as a facility offering housing, counseling, educational and support services to

victims of human trafficking,” according to the staff report.

## Artisan farmers market open in Remington Thursdays

A new indoor/outdoor “Artisan Farmers Market” opened on Thursday, Dec. 3, at the American Legion Hall Post 247 (11420 James Madison Highway) in Remington. The market will continue every Thursday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Organizer Lauren Kargel said, “We have seven indoor spots filled and two food trucks. Eleven outdoor spots remain available. We are a group of vendors from area farmers markets and needed work for the winter.”

She added, “Our tables are spread out for COVID safety. Each vendor will offer curbside pick-up as well.”

Vendors include Great Harvest Bread, Laurel Woods Farm, LLC (selling The Traveling Goat goat milk soap -- for people, Pup Sudz for dogs and equestrian-themed soaps), Happy Mountain Crafts (selling signs), Cross Road Tea, Good Reverend Kombucha, Four

See **BRIEFS**, page 7



PHOTO BY MOLLY WHITE

The Washington Street ginkgo tree as it appeared last week.