



As Fauquier competes with other counties and the private sector for employees, recruiters struggle to fill vacancies



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Latham Penn handles litter control at the Fauquier County landfill. Director of Environmental Services Michael Kresse says it's a never-ending job.

They call it the Great Resignation. Up and down the Main Streets of America, "help wanted" signs dot storefront windows, and restaurants close early because they don't have enough staff. Workers are hard to find.

Government is suffering, too. Though the vacancies may not be so obvious, the effects on public service can be serious. The Fauquier Times, in an occasional series, is talking a look at how Fauquier is coping with the new rash of vacancies. There is bad news, not-so-bad news, and some surprises.

By Peter Cary

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

Janelle Downes has never seen anything like it. As the human resources director for Fauquier County government and schools, she oversees the hunt to fill job vacancies. The problem:

One hundred sixty-one people have left their county government jobs since the pandemic took hold in March 2020. In the schools division, 334 people left in the same time period.

"Currently I have 37 county vacancies and 76 schools vacancies," said Downes.



Separations are running about 10% higher in government than in past years and 25% higher in the schools. That may not sound significant, but Fauquier faces a very, very tight job market. "Since April of this year, we've seen

a huge decline [in job seekers]. I mean, it's not rare to come off a weekend and have eight applications for all the jobs we have open," Downes said.

See **RESIGNATION**, page 4

VETERANS DAY SPOTLIGHT

Retired Air Force Col. Richard Koehnke recalls Vietnam War exploits

By Aimee O'Grady

SPECIAL TO THE FAUQUIER TIMES

The year was 1967. Rick Koehnke was executing his ninth Air Force mission to take down the Paul Doumer bridge in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, which would off a major route for communist troops and supplies.

He remembered, "We were sent into the ring around Hanoi. There were 16 aircraft; I was third. After attacking the AAA [antiaircraft guns] sites at the end of the bridge, I was flying at 550 knots, 1,000 feet off the ground with antiaircraft missiles shooting at us. And all I kept thinking was, 'Their aim is off.'"

See **KOEHNKE**, page 11



PHOTO BY JUD MCCREHIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Col. Richard Koehnke's portrait is on display with the Hero's Bridge Guardians of Freedom exhibit at Fauquier Health. The display features aging veterans from three counties. A second set of portraits is displayed at The Bridge Community Church. Hero's Bridge welcomes volunteers to sit for future portraits.



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

THE THRILL OF VICTORY

Liberty's Noah Chinault exalts after Eagles edged county rival Fauquier 24-20 Friday in Bealeton. **STORIES, PHOTOS, PAGES 22, 26,27**

'Skeeter,' owner of New Baltimore tack shop, has died.
See page 33.



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As Fauquier competes with other counties and the private sector for employees, recruiters struggle to fill vacancies

RESIGNATION, from page 1

They leave for all sorts of reasons, but better jobs, retirement and relocations lead the list. The tight job market offers new opportunities. Baby boomers who approach retirement decide they like staying home. People discover they can move away and telework. They are changing professions. “This is the time where they’ve had enough time to rethink their employment. And they are trying other things,” Downes said.

The *Times* surveyed six county departments and the schools division and found more surprises:

- Some departments, such as Social Services, were hit with a double whammy. While the stresses of the pandemic increased domestic and economic strife – and therefore their workload -- some key employees departed, making their jobs ever harder.
- In the school district, some cited the stress of work as a reason for leaving. But their departures only create more stress, as colleagues have to take up their workloads -- potentially leading to more departures.
- One small agency, the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District, which runs programs to clean up local streams, lost half of its workforce in 2020-21. It stopped monitoring stream quality for months and gave up a grant designed to improve water quality.
- Some departments cited supply-chain slowdowns or disruptions as an even bigger problem than vacancies.
- The vacancies hit departments differently. Some have felt serious pain. But others have managed to cope well or have been affected hardly at all.

Public schools job fair

What: Job fairs

Who: School nutrition staff, substitute teachers, substitute instructional assistants, bus drivers and bus aides

When: Nov. 10 and 18; 4 to 6 p.m.

Where: Fauquier High School

What: Drive-a-bus event

Who: Prospective bus drivers and bus aides

When: Nov. 13; 9 a.m. to noon

Where: Liberty High School

Fauquier County Public Schools

In the county’s schools, less than 4% of the division’s 1,916 jobs are vacant, but the vacancies fall in critical areas: bus drivers, custodians, nutrition workers and teachers. In September, as the school year got underway, superintendent David Jeck said the district was short 20 bus drivers. Because of this, some drivers were making double runs, and students in the second run were arriving late to school. Teachers had to stay at school later because some children had to wait at school for the second run to bring them home.

The school board on Oct. 12 raised driver salaries from \$16.98 to \$20 an hour, hiked bus aides to \$15 an hour and agreed to pay bus drivers an additional \$10 per day attendance bonus to fight absenteeism. The move was necessary, the board members said, to make Fauquier more competitive with other Northern Virginia districts, which are also short of bus drivers. It was estimated the raises would cost the school district \$600,000 a year. A discussion on raising custodians’ pay is underway.

Human resources data shows 42 teacher vacancies, 18 in elementary schools. Some of the slots were filled with substitutes, Jeck said, but



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Brad Bladen runs a D6 bulldozer at the Fauquier County landfill. The county’s Department of Environmental Services has nine openings among a full-time staff of 108.

others have caused other teachers to take on larger classrooms. “Instead of four third grades, we have three, so those classes all have more kids,” he said as an example. In the high schools, he said, the district is paying teachers to teach an extra class.

Meanwhile, as the school year started, a team of custodians had to quarantine due to positive COVID-19 tests. (They are back now.) In another effect of the pandemic, school menu choices have been reduced due to supply chain shortages, said schools Public Information Officer Tara Helkowski.

Social Services

Like the county’s schools, the Department of Social Services’ 62 employees work directly with the public. When crises develop, like child or elder abuse, social services has to respond. More than two dozen of its employees are “direct contact workers” who deal face-to-face with the public, said social services director Shel Douglas.

During the pandemic, not only did they lose employees, but their workload spiked upward. More people needed public assistance, and there was a dramatic increase in calls for adult protective services. As they tried to fill their vacancies, they had to scramble to serve the public.

While the department has only one active vacancy now, until recently it had four more. At one point, two of its vacancies were the two key intake people for benefits applicants, so a program manager and other employees filled in. That worked for their clients, Douglas said, but it put an added workload on the remaining employees.

“So, that’s the real challenge, making sure you don’t burn out the people who do stay until you can get the recruitment done and get somebody in,” Douglas said. “Although we just have the one vacancy now, we’ve had several vacancies throughout the last year. So I feel like I’ve been through constant recruitment.”

JMSWCD

So does Melissa Allen, manager of the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District. Her tiny agency, slotted for six employees

including herself, runs conservation programs and projects to clean up the county’s streams. By last July, it had given \$12.4 million to Fauquier farmers to help pay for pollution-reduction projects.

This past year, the agency found itself in a manpower crisis. A conservation specialist left in October 2020; the district manager left in March 2021 and the education specialist left in April. That’s half the staff. Allen became acting manager, even though she expected to go on maternity leave in the fall.

When it lost its specialist who had been monitoring the quality of streams, the agency had to stop doing that for months. The then-director turned down a grant to improve Goose Creek because the agency did not have enough manpower to administer it. Some of its work in small conservation projects was taken up by the Friends of the Rappahannock, a Fredericksburg-based non-profit.

Filling the positions took some time, but now, said Allen, they are back on track. They re-applied for the Goose Creek grant they lost. Requests are coming in from schools for conservation education, and they are monitoring water quality again.

And Allen is thankful for how their new hires turned out. “People can look good on paper [but you don’t know] until you get them in the office and you see how the personalities are going to work out. I think when it does work out it’s just a huge sense of relief and accomplishment,” she said.

Community Development

Things are moving slower in the community development department, however, which has yet to fill four vacancies. The department is short two planners and two plans reviewers, positions critical for the approval of development applications. The planner jobs’ pay ranges from about \$50,000 to \$90,000 annually.

“With the vacancies, some application types are taking longer for review. As you can imagine, being short-staffed places burden on the employees we do have as they are picking up the extra workload,” said department director Holly Meade in an email.

See **RESIGNATION**, page 5



PHOTO BY MAUREEN CADLE

Katie Butler, nutrition services worker at Kettle Run High School, prepares lunch for students. Nine openings in the nutrition department are currently listed on the schools’ website.



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

Joined by Darlene Wagner, the school division's transportation director, human resources generalist Amanda Atwell addresses a livestreamed job fair event for Fauquier County Public Schools held Oct. 27.

As Fauquier competes with other counties and the private sector for employees, recruiters struggle to fill vacancies

RESIGNATION, from page 4

"I will tell you, we're definitely short-staffed in Holly's division. I know a lot of them are doing multiple jobs," said Downes.

Meade cited a variety of reasons for the departures, including people who found jobs closer to home, moved to the private sector or obtained higher salaries. "It has been extremely difficult finding qualified people that are a good fit with our team," she said.

Commissioner of the Revenue

On the other hand, Eric Maybach, the county's commissioner of the revenue, is in good shape. He has only one opening, created when a deputy commissioner decided to go back to school. The vacancy is for a skilled clerical worker dealing with office and tax matters. It pays between \$13.49 to \$23.88 per hour.

"I have about 36 applications for the job," he said.

Environmental Services and General Services

Michael Kresse is the director both of general services and environmental services, overseeing buildings and grounds, the county's fleet and the landfill and trash sites. The two departments employ 108 full-time people; as of last week, they had nine openings.

"During the height of the pandemic, it was difficult to fill open positions," he said. "But it definitely seems to be picking up again," he said. He said his departments promote a lot from within and from temporary to permanent positions, which helps.

That said, finding employees in the skilled trades is always a problem in Northern Virginia, as the applicant pool is small. A solid waste management operator's job, which is open now, requires a commercial truck driver's license, something that Kresse said can be in short supply. On the other hand, he is looking forward to filling a maintenance

supervisor job soon. Its pay range is \$55,536 to \$98,312. "We had dozens of applications for that," he said.

Kresse's departments did not lose people who decided they liked working at home and did not want to come back — his people cannot work from home. "Our ability to work remotely is not the same as a traditional, you know, office-type setting. So we really didn't see that," he said.

His biggest problem these days is not filling vacancies; it's getting parts and new equipment. "The supply chain has been the biggest issue. A far bigger issue than manpower for us," he said.

Human Resources

Over in HR, Downes is trying: She holds weekly jobs fairs. Her team calls back applicants immediately and schedules face-to-face interviews with those who look promising. They don't want to keep applicants dangling and lose them. She and her colleagues are trying social media, virtual jobs fairs, connecting with the community college, phoning applicants directly. They are trying to get students from college programs into government internships.

She says the county offers an attractive package — competitive pay; a pension plan; health benefits, including medical, dental and vision; a wellness center; and an individual retirement plan. Some departments allow employees to work at least part of the week from home. Still, job-seekers think that the private sector pays better than government, and affordable housing is scarce in Fauquier.

"We're trying to be creative and innovative. It's still a little bit hard just to source people, because I think we're all shopping the same set of people," she said. In the old days, she said, if her office held a job fair, she would see 200 to 300 people. "Last week, I had my biggest job fair. And it was nine people, and I high-fived our HR technician, saying, 'Way to go!'"

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IN FAUQUIER
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We Are Our Brothers' Keepers

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Location: John Barton Payne Building, Warrenton.

Hosts: First Baptist Church, Poplar Forks Baptist Church, True Deliverance Church of God Ministries, Warrenton United Methodist Church. Parking will be available in the Virginia National Bank lot.

For people who would prefer to participate via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83181725175>

Details

1 John 3: 16-18 (NIV)

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. **17** If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? **18** Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

As keepers of one another, we invite you to join a community conversation to better see and understand the face of poverty in our midst. We will hear from brothers and sisters who are dealing with the effects of poverty, including those who have found support and are working their way to financial stability - as well as Ed Jones, author of *Poverty in Fauquier County*.

This is an opportunity for the community to be educated, share our stories, and lend our voices to the possible solutions God may lead us to discover together in ending systemic poverty in our community. We will also enjoy worship and praise music.

We are grateful to Virginia National Bank for sponsoring this community event. A freewill offering will be collected to benefit Community Touch, the Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Advocacy Program, and Adult Protective Services at Fauquier County Social Services. We will adhere to CDC Guidelines for masking.

Wildcat Mountain neighbors want to know: Is new construction for a farm road or a racetrack?

By Peter Cary

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

On Wildcat Mountain, in an idyllic setting in Fauquier's horse country, a controversy is brewing. There a landowner obtained a county grading permit to build a paved road and a dirt trail on his property. He said the looping paved road was for access to a proposed barn, but the neighbors say it looks like a go-kart racetrack, which they don't want in their neighborhood. From such questions, a serious dispute has arisen.

The controversy has resulted in a rare kind of appeal to the county's zoning board, brought questions about the zoning permit process, and raised doubts about a land trust's ability to regulate what people can do on land held in conservation easements.

The parties involved in the dispute won't talk about it publicly, nor will some neighbors, or even the attorney enlisted by those neighbors for the zoning appeal. Najaf Husain, the property owner who secured the permit, did not respond to several requests for comment from the *Times*.

The basic facts of the issue are laid out in public documents. Last October, Husain applied for a grading permit for a "paved access road to a proposed barn, and [for] building a grassed/dirt trail" on his property. As part of the exhibits for the application, Husain displayed an email from the Land Trust of Virginia, which holds a conservation easement on his land. That email approved a "barn access loop, and dirt loop." On April 2, county zoning administrator Amy Rogers granted the permit.

In mid-April, a neighbor, Ralph "Bobby" Kirk, noticed several pieces of dirt-grading equipment on Husain's property, which he knew was under a conservation easement. Curious, he checked county records and found the permit application and engineering plans for the trail and paved road.

The paved road was of particular concern: On the plans, a half-mile long straight road, 12 feet wide, connects to a 20-foot-wide oval loop with connecting interior loops. It is labeled "paved access loop."

"The shape of the access road concerned me. I have done a bit of SCCA race car driving, so had suspicions about this so-called access road," said Kirk in an email.

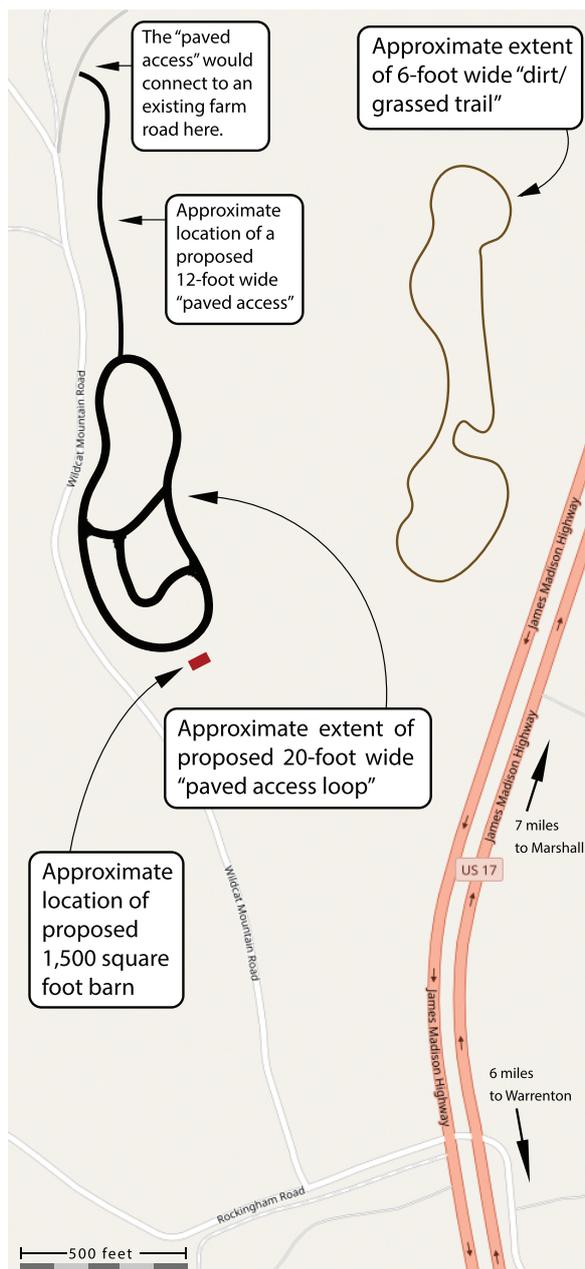
Suspicions were heightened because neighbors knew that Husain, a New Jersey native and software entrepreneur, was also an auto racer. Indeed, news stories about Husain, his unique 12,000-foot contemporary home on the property and his business ventures mention his penchant for international auto racing. A racing website lists his accomplishments: 20 races between 2017 and 2019 with two second places and a third at such fabled venues as Sebring, LeMans, Watkins Glen and Lime Rock.

"You just don't have to be a rocket scientist to see it," said Peter Arundel, whose family lives on Wildcat Mountain. "It's a curiously shaped access road, given that its owner is a Formula One guy."

According to the appeal documents, the neighbors came to believe the looping roads would be used for racing go-karts, miniature versions of Formula One type racers. If they have evidence to support that, however, they are not saying.

"How often do they [The Land Trust of Virginia] get something in for a 20-foot-wide road that's paved, that does look similar to a race-track? I mean, would that necessarily pop up in somebody's mind who works there?"

KEN ALM



Source: Wildcat Farms, LLC, Access Road, Barn and Trail Plan, Sept. 30, 2020/Base map: OpenStreetMap contributors

Arundel said that other landowners, plus "friends, family and lovers of the land," have coalesced to oppose the construction, but he declined to release their names. Generally, he said, their concerns – if a racetrack were built – would include potential noise, traffic, effects on wildlife effects on the watershed and property values.

Arundel lives in Middleburg, but his family has been on the mountain since his grandfather Russell Arundel bought the property in 1947. (Peter Arundel is a former owner of the *Fauquier Times*.) Over time, the family sold off about half of their lower pasture land and in 2014 Husain ended up with 250 acres of it. Two years earlier, he had bought from the Arundels a nearby leading horse-training center called Morning-side Training Farm with indoor and outdoor facilities -- a place for his son, an equestrian, to train. Arundel's mother and his cousin, Jocelyn Alexander, a county schoolteacher, still live on the family property.

On April 29, Alexander filed a notice appealing the issuance of Husain's permit; it will be considered at the June 3 Board of Zoning Appeals meeting. The appeal has put the construction of the access road on hold. In her notice, Alexander claims that the permit was issued based on "misrepresentations" by Husain that the road was for "personal and agricultural use only" when it is actually to be used for "motorized mini 'Formula-1' type go-kart" vehicles. She also claims that it would be used by others besides the owner, and that its use as a "training facility for Formula One drivers" is not permitted by the zoning ordinance. The appeal included no evidence to support her claims, but under BZA rules, Alexander will have 20 minutes to make her case.

"The shape of the access road concerned me. I have done a bit of SCCA race car driving, so had suspicions about this so-called access road."

RALPH "BOBBY" KIRK

County Attorney Tracy Gallehr said this appeal, by a third party, is highly unusual – most appeals are filed by landowners not granted a permit or by those hit with zoning violations. Also unusual is that Alexander's attorney David Konick asked the board to compel witnesses for their case. On May 12, Adam Shellenberger, the lead staffer at the BZA, sent a letter to Konick saying the BZA did not have procedures in place for compelling witnesses, that the chairman may or may not decide to do so, and that Konick should prepare to make his case without compelled witnesses at the June 3 meeting. Konick declined to comment, as did zoning administrator Amy Rogers.

The matter has raised questions among those who see a racetrack in the plans as to why Rogers' office and the Land Trust of Virginia approved them.

Ken Alm, the land use chairman at Citizens for Fauquier County and a former Fauquier planning commission member, has an answer: He said most farm road permits are treated routinely. "How often do they get something in for a 20-foot-wide road that's paved, that does look similar to a racetrack? I mean, would that necessarily pop up in somebody's mind who works there?" he asked.

Alm said he received a call in December from another neighbor complaining of ATVs being driven on Husain's proposed trail. (The permit retroactively approved the trail loop, which had already been built.) He referred them to the county's noise ordinance and the Land Trust of Virginia's easement.

Sally Price, executive director of the Land Trust of Virginia, which approved Husain's plan, said people think that conservation easements can prevent activities they don't like, but that often is not the case. Easements typically are designed to protect historic resources, scenic byways, forests, water and wetlands, agricultural soils and wildlife habitat, she said. "In this case there was nothing in his request to us that indicated that any of the values would be harmed."

Late Tuesday afternoon, Rogers provided to the *Times* a copy of what will be her office's response to the appeal. It says the permit states the paved access road and trail are for personal and agricultural use only, that "there was no evidence to support denial of the permit," and that the application met the requirements of the zoning ordinance and county code. It adds that the appeal provides no evidence that Husain misrepresented the intended use of the paved road, and that the zoning administrator must evaluate applications based on the documents provided and a staff review. It asks that the BZA uphold Rogers' decision.

Julie Bolthouse, the land-use field representative at the Piedmont Environmental Council, said, "To me, looking at the design, it looks like a racetrack, it doesn't look like an access road." But she noted that there is no language in the zoning ordinance that covers the shape of farm access roads.

She further noted there was nothing in the application that said Husain is going to be using it for racing cars, so the zoning office would have had no evidence that he was going to use it for anything other than farm access.

On the other hand, she said, the permit says the road is for personal and agricultural use. "I've told the neighbors, the second he starts allowing other people to use it as a racetrack, he's in violation. So, I mean, [if he does that] he's setting himself up for disaster," she said.



Family of COVID-19 patient wins legal battle, forcing Fauquier Hospital to allow use of unapproved drug

By Robin Earl

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Christopher Davies and his family, of Jeffersonton, were determined to try everything possible to help his mother Kathleen Davies survive a severe case of COVID-19. She has been in the intensive care unit at Fauquier Hospital in Warrenton since early October and has been breathing with the help of a ventilator since Nov. 3.

The Davies' family doctor prescribed Ivermectin, but Fauquier Hospital resisted administering the drug, citing medical, legal and practical concerns. Ivermectin is a drug used most often for parasitic infections; it has not been approved to treat COVID-19.

On Dec. 6, the Davies family took legal action to try to compel the hos-

pital to allow the treatment. After a week filled with four court hearings, the Davies family thought on Dec. 9 that they had won the right to compel the hospital to allow their family doctor to administer Ivermectin. But as of Dec. 13, the hospital still had not transferred treatment responsibility from their own intensivists to the family's doctor, who is not an ICU doctor or an emergency care physician.

The Davies family requested an emergency hearing and Circuit Judge James Fisher ruled Dec. 13 that Fauquier Hospital was in contempt of court for not following the Dec. 9 directive. Fisher also ruled that the hospital would incur \$10,000 a day fines until it complied.

See **IVERMECTIN**, page 2



COURTESY PHOTO

Grace Davies visits with her mother Kathleen Davies, who has been battling COVID-19 at Fauquier Hospital since October.

Warrenton seeks to expand town boundaries by 60%

By Peter Cary

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

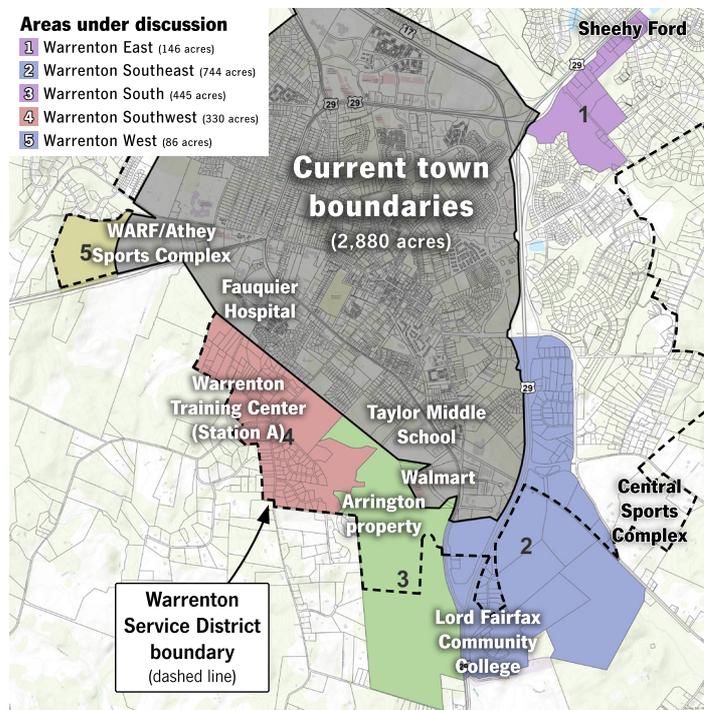
The town of Warrenton wants to absorb five parcels of county land totaling 1,750 acres on its perimeter that would expand the town's area by more than 60%. The targeted areas came to light at the Thursday, Dec. 9, Fauquier County Board of Supervisors meeting when the board agreed to respond in writing to the town's request and released maps that until now had been the subject of secret town-county meetings.

"We don't govern well when we do it on our own. It's much better when we have informed citizen input ... and this is obviously going to be significant to a lot of folks," said supervisor Holder Trumbo after the meeting.

See **BOUNDARY**, page 10

Areas under discussion

- 1 Warrenton East (146 acres)
- 2 Warrenton Southeast (744 acres)
- 3 Warrenton South (445 acres)
- 4 Warrenton Southwest (330 acres)
- 5 Warrenton West (86 acres)



State grant helps close Fauquier's broadband gap

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

A plan to subsidize fiber-optic internet connections to more than 10,000 Fauquier County homes has been awarded a \$15 million state grant, clearing the way for the project to move forward.

Fauquier supervisors have already committed \$10.5 million to the project from the county's allocation of federal stimulus funds. Leesburg-based All Points Broadband will provide an additional \$39 million in capital. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

"It's a damn good day for Fauquier County," Supervisor Rick Gerhardt (Cedar Run District) said Monday, noting that the project will mean nearly universal access to fiber-optic internet connections for residents and businesses in Fauquier County.

See **BROADBAND**, page 8

Craft & Crust
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See Page 3



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Warrenton seeks to expand town boundaries by 60%

BOUNDARY, from page 1

The five areas that would be absorbed surround the town's existing boundaries but are heavily weighted toward the southern end of town on both sides of U.S. 29, where 1,518 acres are targeted.

Warrenton Mayor Carter Nevill did not respond to several requests for comment. But Board of Supervisors Chairman Chris Granger (Center District), in an interview, guessed that the town's reasons for wanting to absorb the five parcels included giving the town a bigger voice in its future and improving its revenue stream.

Supervisors expressed hope that their response would launch discussions with the town over the pros and cons of the transfer of the various parcels, as well as stimulate input from affected parties and the public. The town is asking for a "boundary adjustment" to allow it to take in the properties; the town could also move to annex the parcels, but that legal process is more time-consuming and could be contentious.

Granger said the supervisors' letter includes the county's desire for more public conversations on potential revenue sharing arrangements, economic development opportunities, proffers for county services and establishment of a joint planning

group for the area surrounding the town's borders.

Background

Public discussions have taken place since 2019 regarding the town's interest in absorbing two parcels. One is the so-called panhandle along U.S. 15/29 north of town that includes numerous auto dealerships; the other is an area to the south between Meetze Road and the Eastern Bypass that includes Lord Fairfax Community College.

What wasn't publicly discussed was that the town is also targeting the 444-acre Arrington property where Van Metre Homes is planning a new development — approved six years ago by county supervisors — and another 330-acre parcel to the north of that.

These maps had been the subject of closed-door meetings between the town and county dating back at least two years, but one supervisor said they stopped during 2020 because of the pandemic. They took on some new urgency with their mention at the town-county liaison meeting on Nov. 16 and then a surprise move at a planning commission meeting on Nov. 18.

At that meeting's work session, the board was considering a request from Van Metre to move 28 acres adjacent to its planned development into the town's service district to

provide more space for sewer drain fields, when Commissioner Diane Roteman (Center District) asked for a 60-day postponement. She questioned making the town take on more drain fields and mentioned ongoing "boundary line discussions." Commissioner Bob Lee (Marshall District) objected, saying the county had approved an "exemplary" plan for this development in 2015 and the board needed to move things along.

On Thursday, when the maps were released, it became clear that the property was among those that were being discussed in closed sessions by the supervisors and town council.

Arrington property

A boundary line move may have significant impact on the Van Metre development. The property was approved for a 227-home development by Alwington Farm Developers, LLC in 2015. Under the arrangement, Warrenton would provide water but not sewer, and nearly all of the homes would be limited to owners 55 and older.

That plan stalled, the developer claimed, because financing was hard to obtain for an over-55 subdivision. In August 2019, Alwington's president Russell Marks asked the supervisors at a public meeting to change the over-55 requirement, but the board delayed action. Mary Leigh

McDaniel, the supervisor in whose Marshall District it rested, has said her constituents insist that the project remain over-55.

When the project stalled in 2020, Van Metre signed a contract with Alwington to take over development. Van Metre has not said publicly where it stands on reducing the over-55 requirement.

Granger said in an interview that the town's growth had stalled and that it needs more people. He said he was skeptical of the Arrington development as a whole, but said he was immediately opposed to adding drain fields to the town's service district. When he heard Van Metre needed 28 acres so it could improve its drain fields, he said, "I'm like, 'No way, you guys need to go back and talk to the town about getting sewer.'"

"If there's going to be 200 houses there, I would much prefer they're going to be on public water; I would much rather they be on public sewer. And we not have these drain fields out there that we all know are going to fail," he said. "In the end, if Arrington ends up in the town, it fixes a whole lot of stuff."

But he noted that the process for changing the boundary lines is a "long road." "There's a whole lot of stuff that has to be sorted out," he said.

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OVER POWER EMERGENCIES. CALL TODAY TO
SCHEDULE YOUR INSTALLATION.

POWER LOSS TAKES AWAY THE FOLLOWING:

- Heating - Furnace
- A/C
- Refrigerator
- Lights
- Laptop Charger
- Toaster
- Hair Dryer
- Washing Machine / Dryer
- Coffee Maker
- Home Security System
- Well Pump
- Electric Range
- Dishwasher
- And more!

AN EMERGENCY POWER LOSS
TAKES THESE AND YOUR
SAFETY AWAY.