

## **W13\_COY\_government**

# **COVERSHEET**

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1. **County Administrator Paul McCulla to retire next year** (June 15, Coy Ferrell)
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2. **Police pay was at stake in Warrenton budget debate** (June 22, Coy Ferrell)
3. **Remington set for competitive mayoral election** (July 13, Coy Ferrell)



**HIGH ACHIEVERS:**  
Updates on college athletes, all-district honorees and hiker Doug Harpole. **SPORTS, 23, 24, 25, 29**



PHOTO BY BETSY BURKE PARKER

**FANCY FOOTWORK:** Schuyler Riley and Robin de Ponthual jump to victory in the \$216,000 Upperville Jumper Classic on Sunday afternoon. The international four-star class headlined last week's 169th Upperville Colt and Horse Show. It was Fauquier County's richest sporting event at the nation's oldest horse show. **See page 27.**

## County Administrator Paul McCulla to retire next year

Career in Fauquier government has spanned three decades

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

County Administrator Paul McCulla, the highest-ranking staff member in Fauquier County's government for 16 years, announced Monday that he will retire effective July 1, 2023. "I wanted to give [supervisors] enough time that they could find the right person for the job," McCulla said in an interview Tuesday.

See **MCCULLA**, page 6



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
Paul McCulla in his office

## Warrenton Town Council has struggled to find consensus on budget

### Members split over meals tax increase

By Colleen LaMay

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Warrenton Town Council members wrangled Tuesday morning over whether to raise the meal taxes restaurant customers pay by 2% — \$1 on a \$50 tab — to help fund the town's \$18.2 million budget for fiscal year 2023, which starts July 1.

As of press time Tuesday, no decisions had been made, but the council was set to meet Tuesday night to try to close the distance between them. The council appeared split four to two over increasing the meals tax from 4% to 6% to balance the budget.

Heather Sutphin (Ward 1), William Semple (Ward 2), Brett Hamby (Ward 3) and James Hartman (Ward 4) supported raising the meals tax to 6%. Kevin Carter



**"I feel like we are defunding the town. We are going backward."**

**HEATHER SUTPHIN**

Warrenton Town Council (Ward 1)

(Ward 5) and Renard Carlos (at large) were leaning against a tax increase of any kind. Sean Polster (at large) was not present at the work session Tuesday morning. Mayor Carter Nevill joined Tuesday's meeting remotely.

See **BUDGET**, page 14

## Space-themed bowling center opens in September, fulfilling a lifelong dream

Entertainment complex with arcade and mini-golf comes to Warrenton

By Abby Zimmardi

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

An out-of-this-world bowling center is coming to Warrenton in September. Its debut will fulfill a Fauquier County native's 40-year dream. Brett Mills, 54, an avid bowler, and his wife, Patti Mills, 66, are partners in the venture, which has been in the works for five years.

See **BOWLING**, page 2



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Brett and Patti Mills stand inside their bowling alley, Galaxy Strikes Bowling Center, on June 8. The space-themed entertainment center will open in September.

The Marshall Streetscape project is progressing. See page 10.



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# County Administrator Paul McCulla to retire next year

MCCULLA, from page 1

Supervisors will contract an executive search firm to conduct a nationwide search for candidates to fill the position, according to Board Chairman Chris Granger (Center District).

McCulla, 63, holds a bachelor's degree and a law degree from the College of William and Mary and first moved to Fauquier in 1986, when Jim Donovan, then the county's part-time outside legal counsel, hired McCulla to work with his firm. McCulla was hired in 1989 as the temporary county attorney after supervisors decided to make the role a staff position instead of a contract arrangement. In 1991, McCulla was promoted to be the permanent, full-time county attorney. He continued to serve as the county's chief legal counsel until 2006, when supervisors chose him as the successor to the retiring county administrator, Bob Lee.

McCulla's tenure as the county's chief executive was soon interrupted by the first of two national recessions he would face on the job — the first caused by the 2008 financial crisis and the second by the ongoing pandemic. The latter crisis brought unprecedented administrative challenges, as McCulla declared a local state of emergency in 2020 to provide more flexibility in the county's response to the pandemic.

In addition to the direct response to the pandemic — including organizing testing resources, vaccine clinics and remote-work capabilities for many of the county's employees — McCulla has overseen the influx of millions in federal and state grants to assist with, among other priorities, the county's pandemic response and projects to expand rural internet access.

McCulla has overseen a local government that has needed to expand and adapt to a growing and

**“The county has been the benefactor of a dedicated, intellectual, knowledgeable and trustworthy individual for many years.”**

**SUPERVISOR RICK GERHARDT  
(CEDAR RUN DISTRICT)**

changing population. Since the late 1980s, Fauquier's population has increased by 50%, with some previously rural areas like Bealeton and New Baltimore becoming fast-growing suburban communities.

Some agencies have expanded rapidly to accommodate those changes. During McCulla's tenure in the county government, for instance, the county's roster of professional fire and rescue personnel has expanded from just three people to 125. Even in 2006, there were only 33 fire and rescue personnel on the county payroll.

McCulla pointed to the expansion of the department of fire, rescue and emergency management as an example of local government responding to the needs of residents. When the department was much smaller, he said, the fire and rescue response times were often too long to help people in critical situations like heart attacks and strokes. Now, he said, “we're providing quicker response times and saving more people.”

It all comes down to what McCulla said should be the purpose of the people serving in local government. “The county government wants to help people,” he said. “It wants to give them a better quality of life.”

‘I've been very lucky’

When addressing new employees, McCulla said that he tells them that three factors will determine whether they will do well: you need to like what you do, who you're working for and who you're working with. “If you find that, you're going to make a career here.” McCulla said that he's “extremely lucky” that all three things have proved true for him in the past three decades.

The county administrator position presents a particularly unique set of challenges. McCulla answers directly to the board of supervisors and is often asked to represent its interests in negotiations with outside entities. He is also responsible for overseeing the county's workforce and is the county's representative in dealings with the five constitutional officers, interest groups, nonprofits and, ultimately, with the 73,000 people who live in the county. And while he is responsible for presenting departments' requests for funding during each budget cycle, he is ultimately accountable to the supervisors — even when those funding requests go unmet.

Whoever replaces him, he said Tuesday, “has to be able to work with an incredibly diverse group of people and entities.” It's a delicate balance, he said. Achieving it requires taking one's own opinions and ego out of the equation. When working with supervisors, for instance, “It's your job to lay out all their options; give them the best advice you can,” he said. Sometimes he may disagree with a decision that they make, but that's not his job. “You've just got to understand that the hot button issues are not yours to make a decision on,” he emphasized. “You have to be willing to let go of the frustration and to what you need to do to do the job.”

Working for a group of five people elected to

See MCCULLA, page 7

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**Supervisors express appreciation**

“It is with deep respect and reluctance that we accept your notice of retirement,” Board of Supervisors Chairman Chris Granger (Center District) said in a letter to Paul McCulla on behalf of the board Monday. “Your contributions and service to Fauquier County are far reaching and have positioned our community for a successful future.”

Those sentiments were echoed by his fellow supervisors, who credited McCulla with mentoring other county staffers — and the supervisors themselves.

McCulla “help[ed] us to be much better supervisors,” Supervisor Mary Leigh McDaniel (Marshall District), who was first elected in 2016, told the *Fauquier Times*. She said that his willingness to stay on for a year while supervisors find a replacement will be especially beneficial to the county. “Very typical of Paul,” she said of his decision to help with the transition.

Supervisor Chris Butler (Lee District), also first elected in 2016, said that “I have learned a great deal from Paul. His years of service and wealth of knowledge have been instrumental in my work as a supervisor.” He also thanked McCulla for staying on in his role for another year.

Fauquier County “has been the benefactor of a dedicated, intellectual, knowledgeable and trustworthy individual for many years,” said Supervisor Rick Gerhardt (Cedar Run District), who has served on the board since 2016.

**County Administrator Paul McCulla to retire next year**

MCCULLA, from page 6

have strong opinions can also be fraught, as his job is to provide support to the board as a whole — not to any one supervisor over the other. He’s been fortunate, he said, that “I can honestly say I don’t think there’s a board member who doesn’t have the best interests of Fauquier County at heart.” Still, disagreements are inevitable. The key is to be always a professional and neutral party. He can only do an effective job, McCulla said, “as long as the board members understand that his office does not get involved in internal politics.”

McCulla said that he appreciates especially that supervisors throughout his tenure have handled disagreements in such a way that they do not devolve into partisan or personal conflicts that distract from the issue at hand. “If [supervisors] are fractured, then you have serious problems,” he said, adding he’s been “very lucky” not to have experienced that scenario very much.

After three decades in local government, McCulla said that he wants the public to know that the people working for the county have the best interests of the community at heart,

even when there are disagreements. “Citizens need to understand that government at this level, people who work for Fauquier County — we’re all trying to do what we believe is best for the citizens of Fauquier County,” he said. “No one gets up each day saying, ‘I want to screw the citizens. I want to do something that only benefits me.’” From fire and rescue to law enforcement to parks to social services, “Providing services to the citizens of the county — that’s what we try to do,” he said.

Even after his last day as county administrator, McCulla has no plans to leave the area. In fact, one of the reasons he and his wife moved here in the 1980s “was to establish roots and hopefully not have to move the family too much.” That plan certainly worked out — McCulla’s first grandchild lives a few minutes away — and he added that he may work for the county part time after he retires, maybe in the library.

He’ll also have more time to spend woodworking and volunteering with the Knights of Columbus. “I don’t think I’ll sit around at home,” he said.

Reach Coy Ferrell at [cferrell@fauquier.com](mailto:cferrell@fauquier.com)

**Wakefield School earns VAIS reaccreditation**

Wakefield School, an independent school in The Plains serving junior kindergarten through twelfth grade, has earned full reaccreditation from the Virginia Association of Independent Schools. The VAIS accreditation program is one of a select few recognized at the international level and also is recognized and approved by the Virginia Board of Education through the Virginia Council for Private Education.

Wakefield School serves nearly 400 students “through an inspiring and engaging liberal arts curriculum,” according to Wakefield Head of School Ashley Harper. “For more than a half a century, our school’s motto, *Virtus et Sapientia* (Virtue and Wisdom), has guided students on a clear, purposeful path.”

The voluntary accreditation pro-

cess, which occurs every ten years, is a rigorous undertaking involving a comprehensive self-study, including input from all school constituents. A team of peer evaluators from VAIS member schools spends several days on campus reviewing the accreditation report, documentation, and curriculum; meeting with administrators, trustees, students, parents and teachers; and observing campus life. The team concludes the in-depth visit with a detailed written assessment.

“Parents can be sure that when choosing a VAIS-accredited school for their children that the school has been through an intense period of self-reflection and evaluation which strengthens the entire institution,” said Betsy Hunroe, executive director of VAIS.

**Fauquier SPCA**

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## Warrenton High School Class of 1954 68th Reunion



PHOTO JOHN H. SINCLAIR

**Back row L to R:** Gilbert "Doc" Ashby, Peggy Yates Goff, Nancy Embrey Clark, Milton Thorpe, Murray Edwards, Sue Bowman Sutherland (Dave/Deceased), Delores Heflin Goff (Cecil/Deceased). **Seated:** Elwood "Apple" Gray, Tommy Hayes, Elizabeth J. "Betty" Sinclair Manning, Walter "Drew" Hitchcock.

**Front and center:** Rev. J. Richard Winter (teacher)

Not pictured and in attendance: Gerty Gray, Hazel and Jim Butler, Irene Ashby, Helen Murray, Julie Hayes and caregivers Mary Taylor (Nancy Clark) and Tish Mae Jenkins (Rev. Winter).

Our prayers go out to those who could not attend and many memories to those who have passed of the original 37.

It was my pleasure to attend with my sister Betty Sinclair Manning and my honor to present my step father-in-law Reverend J. Richard Winter known to me as "Papa" and many others as "The Rev" or "Dick." He will celebrate becoming a centenarian in August of this year.

**Many thanks go out to Peggy Goff for her continued dedication to organize this reunion annually (Covid exception) for the past 68 years.**

**Thanks to Foster's Grille for hosting this reunion on Saturday June 11, 2022.**



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

Warrenton police officers review budget documents during a May 10 Warrenton Town Council meeting.

## Police pay was at stake in Warrenton budget debate

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Sean McGowan, executive director of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association in Virginia, had a sharp message for the Warrenton Town Council as they approached the June 30 deadline to pass a budget. He noted that, if they were unable to work out their differences by then, town employees, including police officers, wouldn't be paid beginning July 1.

"The prospect of council failing to pass a budget has had a palpable negative impact on the loyal and hardworking members of the police department. The specter of not receiving a paycheck in July due to a failure to pass a budget has shaken those who protect you and your citizens," McGowan said in a June 14 letter to the council. Two days later, the council passed a budget that included a pay increase for the police and all other town employees.

But the issue was bigger than simply passing a budget, he wrote. Warrenton police officers, he claimed, are currently the lowest paid among "comparable jurisdictions." The town manager's proposed budget would fund 5% cost-of-living raises and 0-2% merit raises for town employees — including the police department. However, some council members had been reluctant to support tax increases to fund those raises, despite their vocal support for those raises in principle.

"We ask that you follow through with that support and adopt the budget that includes the personnel package," McGowan wrote in the June 14 letter.

In a separate interview with the *Fauquier Times*, McGowan said June 15 that local governments all face similar funding challenges to recruit and retain good police officers, especially at a time when some people are leaving law enforcement. McGowan attributed this dynamic almost entirely to left-wing activists.

But, he said, a failure by Warrenton's council to increase pay for the roughly 30 people employed by the police department would be the

equivalent of some left-wing groups' demands to "defund" police departments. "This is lack of support. This is the other side of that equation, and it's just as harmful," he said.

Regardless of the ideology espoused by legislators, law enforcement agencies across Virginia struggle to recruit and retain employees, McGowan said, especially at the entry level. "Most of the people who come in are coming in on the base salary," said McGowan, who added that localities are "scrambling" to hire and retain enough officers.

At \$45,500, the current starting salary for an entry-level police officer in Warrenton would be significantly less than nearby towns and counties had the council not funded the cost-of-living increase. By passing a budget June 16 that includes those raises, the minimum salary for police officers will increase to \$47,800 next month.

McGowan pointed out that Warrenton's police department is fully staffed, "which is pretty amazing." But failing to raise pay could have jeopardized that, he added. "The only thing you can address, as far as recruitment and retention, is pay and benefits," he said.

Warrenton Police Chief Mike Kochis declined to comment for this story, citing ongoing budget negotiations among council members. Unlike the county sheriff, the Warrenton police chief is not an elected position.

By the time the town council finally passed a budget, nearby localities had already used the current budget cycle to raise salaries for law enforcement officers. Beginning July 1, for instance, the minimum pay for Fauquier County sheriff's deputies will be \$48,000, up \$6,500 from the current level. The town of Culpeper will have a minimum salary of \$47,700 beginning July 1, a \$4,300 increase from the current fiscal year. (Entry-level officers hired by the Prince William County Police Department start at \$52,700, which will not change in the new fiscal year.)

See **POLICE**, page 9

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## County will pay family \$5 million to settle claim in deputy-involved fatal crash

CRASH, from page 1

The \$5 million payout “is the full extent of insurance available for those claims,” according to a joint statement issued June 16 by attorneys for the county and the Dangerfield family.

A special prosecutor, Culpeper Commonwealth’s Attorney Paul Walther, was appointed in March, but no criminal charges had been filed against Smith as of June 16. Walther said May 26 that “I can confirm that the investigation is ongoing,” but declined *Fauquier Times*’ requests for further comment.

The state police rejected a March 7 public records request from the *Fauquier Times* seeking more information about the crash, citing an “open/active criminal investigation.”

Fauquier Sheriff Jeremy Falls initially placed Smith on administrative leave after the incident; Smith had been hired by former Sheriff Bob Mosier in late 2019. Falls fired Smith on March 23. In response to inquiries from the *Fauquier Times*, Falls declined to say whether Smith broke any departmental policies.

Smith was driving on a section of highway between Morrisville and Goldvein when his vehicle struck a 2018 Toyota Camry with Mary and Brian Dangerfield inside, according to a state police crash report. Brian Dangerfield died at the scene, and Mary Dangerfield died later that day after being transported to a hospital.

“This tragedy was unfortunate and avoidable,” said Jeffrey Breit, an attorney for the Dangerfield family, as part of the June 16 joint statement.

The statement said that “the county and the Fauquier County Sheriff’s Office confirm retraining on policies for proper operation of vehicles has occurred with all sheriff’s office

personnel.” The statement added that “this and other policies that relate to the safety of law enforcement personnel and [the] general public have and will be ongoing in the future to help tragedies like this from ever being repeated.”

Kevin Biniazan, another attorney for the family, said in the joint statement that “the family is grateful that the claims were resolved quickly and without drawn-out litigation, but this money could never replace the loss of Mr. and Mrs. Dangerfield. Not a day goes by when the grandchildren don’t ask about their grandparents.”

Attorneys for the Dangerfield family first announced March 17 that they would pursue civil litigation, when Breit sent a letter to county officials informing them that “a claim is being made for personal injuries, wrongful death and other damages resulting from this incident.”

“This is a case that will be against an officer acting in a grossly negligent way,” Breit told the *Fauquier Times* in March. He said that there is video, GPS tracking data and a “black box” from Smith’s cruiser, all of which recorded evidence related to the crash.

Breit said that, based on his understanding, Smith was responding to a call for service without authorization. He also said Smith had been traveling at 100 mph “for a long period of time” before striking the Dangerfields’ vehicle. Smith had “voluntarily dispatched himself” to a call, adding that Smith was “told he was too far away ... and no longer needed,” Breit said.

“It was basically an accident waiting to happen,” Breit claimed.

Falls has declined to comment on these allegations.

Reach Coy Ferrell at [cferrell@fauquier.com](mailto:cferrell@fauquier.com)

## Police pay was at stake in Warrenton budget debate

POLICE, from page 8

Purcellville, a Loudoun County town with a population about the same as Warrenton’s, will start its police officers at \$51,700 beginning next month, up from \$48,800 currently.

Sharon Rauch, Purcellville’s human resources director, said that while the town council there has made yearly pay increases a priority, the police department still struggles to recruit and retain officers. Four of the 23 budgeted positions in the department are currently vacant, she said.

One of the main reasons for that, she explained, is that larger nearby agencies like the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office (minimum salary as of July 1: \$55,100) and the Leesburg

Police Department (minimum salary as of July 1: \$54,300) not only pay more, but also have more opportunities for training and advancement, putting smaller departments like Purcellville’s at a disadvantage.

McGowan emphasized that local governments shouldn’t take police officers for granted, explaining that he believes the nationwide shortage of good police officers will only become more acute in the coming years. Some officers “struggle through” in large part because they have already paid into the state retirement system. But, he said, “The system is breaking down.”

He concluded, “We hope people realize what’s important and they fund it – they spend the money.”

Reach Coy Ferrell at [cferrell@fauquier.com](mailto:cferrell@fauquier.com)

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Fauquier County Fair opens July 14. See page 13.

## For some long-suffering residents, the wait for Elon Musk's satellite internet is over

By Christopher Connell  
PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

For Marylyn and Michael Paige, internet service at their home in Delaplane near Little Cobbler Mountain “has always been awful,” even when they paid a premium for the fastest service satellite company Viasat offered, she said. “You’d get cut off if you were trying to stream a movie, especially on a weekend.”

That changed a few weeks ago when a FedEx truck delivered a box for which they’d waited more than a year. It contained a 19-inch, 9-lb. rectangular Starlink dish that cost them \$599, plus \$94 in shipping and taxes. The monthly charge for the service is \$110.

“It’s like magic. It’s wonderful,” said Paige, a real estate agent who hired a contractor to put the receiver on her roof. The dish has an unobstructed view of Elon Musk’s Starlink satellites passing overhead just



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
Marylyn and Michael Paige in their living room in rural Delaplane.

300 miles above the Earth.

That’s nearly 23,000 miles closer than the geostationary satellites that rivals Viasat and HughesNet rely

upon. They are “parked” in a fixed spot above the continent, moving in sync with the planet. Each Starlink satellite, by contrast, speeds across

the northern horizon above Fauquier in 10 minutes, transiting the globe in 90 minutes. It uses lasers to transmit signals to the next satellite behind it and delivers download speeds of 50 to 250 megabits per second to customers like the Paiges.

HughesNet offers 25 megabit service, and Viasat has packages that vary from 12 to 150 megabits, but both impose caps on how much data customers can download each month. Starlink has no caps.

Starlink, part of Musk’s SpaceX rocket company, boasts a constellation of nearly 2,000 small satellites. It has permission from the Federal Communications Commission to launch 3,000 more and aims eventually to put 42,000 in low earth orbit. It now claims 400,000 subscribers and reaches 36 countries.

See **STARLINK**, page 4

### Remington set for competitive mayoral election

Former Vice Mayor Devada Allison to challenge Interim Mayor Bill Polk

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Remington could be poised for the most competitive town election in recent memory. Two men with vastly different visions for the mayoral role are competing for the position in the first election since longtime Mayor Gerald Billingsley died early last year.

Bill Polk, whom the town council



Bill Polk



Devada Allison

appointed to complete Billingsley’s term, has since been an unabashedly outspoken advocate for a package of initiatives he calls a “revitalization for a destination” program. The initiatives are aimed at making the once-bustling railroad town of 630 people a “destination” for tourists and more pedestrian-friendly for visitors, residents and school-

See **REMINGTON**, page 8

### Magistrate’s clerical error derails case against man who allegedly possessed child sexual abuse material

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES  
STAFF WRITER

A clerical error that resulted in a single missing page from a court filing has torpedoed a years-long investigation into a Free State man’s alleged possession and distribution of material depicting child sexual abuse. Andrew Krueger, 43, was arrested in late 2019 and later indicted on 15 felony counts of possessing or distributing material depicting child sexual abuse. A judge ruled last week, however, that the evidence obtained against



Andrew David Krueger

him during a search of his home is inadmissible because the signature page is missing from the affidavit filed to obtain the search warrant.

See **KRUEGER** page 21

**SPORTS:** Meredith Wayland and John Bynaker are 2022 Fauquier Times Fauquier High Athletes of the Year.



PAGES 16-18.



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# Former kindergarten teacher reconnects with her students through reading

## Lisa Larkin shares baguettes and books at Rady Park

By Colleen LaMay  
FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

As her former students arrived at Rady Park, former P.B. Smith Elementary kindergarten teacher Lisa Larkin greeted them with hugs before they all settled into the grass to read a book together.

There was no special occasion. “I just missed them,” Larkin said Friday as she hugged Landen Fairchild, 11, a rising sixth-grader. “I’m their kindergarten teacher.” Larkin taught kindergarten at P.B. Smith Elementary School for 15 years before moving to Coleman Elementary School, where she is now a reading specialist.

About a dozen of her former P.B. Smith kindergarten students, now rising fourth, fifth and sixth graders, met up with Larkin after the teacher decided a week ago it would be fun to see the children again. “It gives my heart joy,” she said.

“This is what it’s about,” she said of teaching. “It’s the connections.” She sent word out to one parent and



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTOS/COLLEEN LAMAY  
Coleman Elementary School reading specialist Lisa Larkin reads to children she taught when they were in kindergarten at P.B. Smith Elementary School.

asked her to contact other parents for the Friday book day in the park.

Larkin read “Nanette’s Baguette,” by Mo Willems, about a child whose mother sends her to the bakery to buy a baguette. Larkin brought snacks for the kids — baguettes, of course.

Some of the students brought their own books. Landen brought “Twerp,” by Mark Goldblatt, a sto-

ry about bullying. His mother, Kira Fairchild, said her son couldn’t wait to see his former teacher and his old friends from kindergarten.

“Landen said, ‘You need to cancel all your meetings — we’re going,’” Kira Fairchild said. “So that’s what I did. I canceled all my meetings.”

Caroline Riley brought her rising fourth grader, Grant, to the park to see his former teacher. “I can’t re-



Lisa Larkin greets her former student Landen Fairchild.

member a teacher ever doing this,” she said. “She’s one of a kind. She’s got a very loving perspective as far as her approach to children.”

Larkin was happy to catch up with the children and their parents. “This was the best day ever,” Larkin said as the last parents left with their children.

Reach Colleen LaMay at [clamay@fauquier.com](mailto:clamay@fauquier.com)

## Remington set for competitive mayoral election

REMINGTON, from page 1

children. He wants the upcoming election to serve as a referendum on those initiatives.

Devada Allison, who until last year served on the town council and as the vice mayor, is challenging him. While he emphasized repeatedly that he is not opposed to beneficial changes to the town, Allison said that he is running, in part, because he feels that Polk has used his position to advocate for wide-ranging policy changes — changes that he argues should originate with the town council.

“Whoever is in that seat, whether it’s me or whether it’s him, they need to understand that position is one of representation of Remington, not one to push an agenda,” Allison said in a recent phone interview. He said that he has been strongly considering running since shortly after Billingsley’s death.

### Town council candidates

The six candidates with the most votes will be elected to a two-year term on the Remington Town Council. Incumbents are marked with an asterisk.

- Amanda Hart\*
- Stan Heaney, Sr.\*
- Richard Heflin, Jr.\*
- Morgan Lewis
- Van Loving\*
- Veronica Meadows
- Richard Moxley
- Luann Myatt
- Susan Tiffany\*

The mayor should follow the direction of the council, not the other way around, Allison added. “The biggest thing is, I’m coming in not pushing any kind of personal agenda. I want what’s best for the town and to have that transparency there that is currently lacking.”

Allison maintained that he is not necessarily opposed to Polk’s ideas about “revitalizing” the town. “It’s about how you ap-

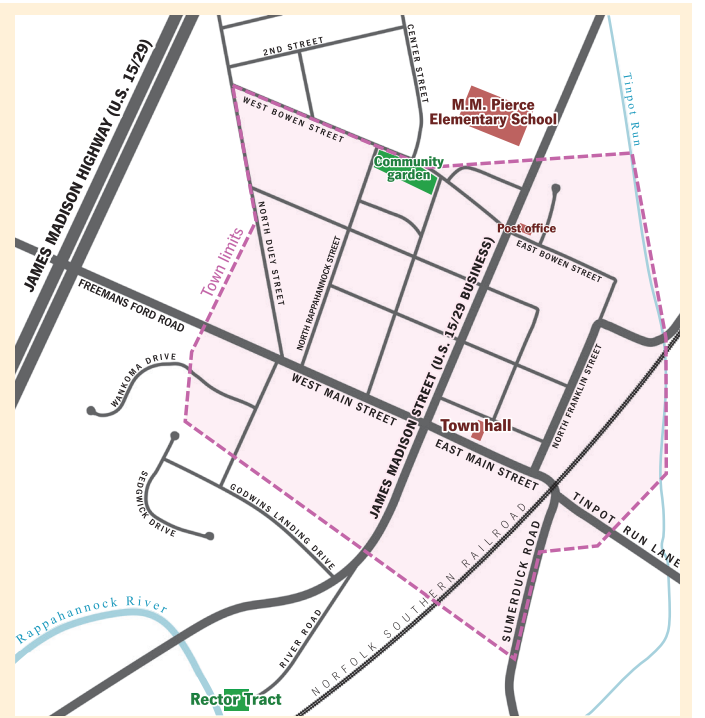
### Who can vote

The 2022 general election in Virginia is Tuesday, Nov. 8. Eligible U.S. citizens who are registered to vote by Oct. 17 may cast a ballot. In-person absentee balloting begins Sept. 23 at the Fauquier County registrar’s office in Warrenton.

Eligible Remington residents may vote for up to six candidates for the town council and one candidate for mayor. The polling place, Remington Town Hall, will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Only registered voters who live within town limits may participate in Remington Town Council and mayoral elections. Residing in the 22734-zip code does not necessarily qualify a voter to participate in town elections.

Residents may visit [vote.elections.virginia.gov](http://vote.elections.virginia.gov) or call the Fauquier County registrar’s office 540-422-8290 to inquire about registering to vote, updating an existing voter registration or learning about which elections a voter may cast a ballot.



proach things. I think the way you’re approaching things is rubbing people the wrong way,” he said.

Allison said that he wants to return the mayoral role to the model exemplified by Billingsley, a soft-spoken civics teacher who served as Remington’s mayor for most of three decades. “Gerry, before his passing, was great at that,” Allison said. “He always was willing to listen to anybody who had a concern. I had a lot of respect for him. ... He always did it with such grace.”

Allison was approached by some members of the town council who asked him to run, he said. “The biggest reason I’m running is because I’ve been asked by folks in town to do so,” Allison said, “because they’re not happy with the way things are going.”

In a separate interview, Polk argued that his brand of advocacy will help usher in what he

called a “course direction correction.” He acknowledged that the mayor in Remington has little formal power beyond chairing council meetings and breaking tie votes. But, “I’m not that type of mayor, as you well know,” he said.

“I forewarned the council when they appointed me mayor. I understand the definition of a ‘weak’ mayor [under Virginia law], but I’m not that kind of a person,” he elaborated. “I believe I have the power of persuasion and influence, and I will use that.”

Both men emphasized their concern for the wishes of residents, both those living within town limits and in the “community at large.” (There are several neighborhoods and subdivisions surrounding Remington that do not lie within town limits.)

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# Mold levels at oxygen therapy center are normal, new report shows

By Colleen LaMay

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

A West Shirley Avenue building that is the subject of two lawsuits alleging potentially unhealthy levels of mold received a clean bill of health after drywall was replaced and other mold remediation was completed.

A recent mold inspection conducted by Madison Taylor Indoor Environmental found “all visible mold growth has been removed” and, “Interior and exterior air samples using a spore trap indicates below ambient levels of airborne mold spores within the inspected portions of the building.”

Carriage Lane Complex LLC, is the landlord of the building at 170 W. Shirley Ave. Carriage Lane Complex, along with Warrenton Oxygen Wellness, a tenant in the building, both have paid Madison Taylor for mold inspections. Both also filed separate lawsuits against another tenant, Fresenius Kidney Care Warrenton in 2021. The lawsuits alleged that water leaks in the dialysis center caused potentially toxic molds, including black molds, to grow to unhealthy levels.

A co-owner of Warrenton Oxygen Wellness, which provides hyperbaric oxygen therapy, was happy with the results, but is not convinced the building will remain safe. “We don’t know if the landlord has taken steps to correct the mold issues that caused the problems in the first place,” said Ralph Crafts, co-owner of Warrenton Oxygen Wellness, 170 W. Shirley Ave., Suite 101.

“We certainly want periodic tests or inspections to make sure we don’t have to go through this again,” he added.

The report by Madison Taylor, which serves the greater Washington, D.C. area, recommends that if a “water event” occurs, the wet area must be properly dried to prevent additional growth of mold and bacteria. It recommends avoiding drastic changes in temperature inside the building and keeping the relative humidity below 50%.

Fresenius, one of the largest providers of dialysis in the United States, denied its dialysis center ever had a problem with leaking water or mold. Its own mold inspector found no evidence of excessive mold.

“Our independent experts never found any elevated levels of airborne mold and determined



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COLLEEN LAMAY  
Ralph Crafts at Warrenton Oxygen Wellness

there were no health concerns,” spokesperson Brad Puffer said in a statement July 5. “The water-impacted walls on the Fresenius Kidney Care side have been removed,” he said.

Dialysis is a treatment for people whose kidneys are failing, and water is a key component of the treatment. “Water is a critical part of delivering life-sustaining dialysis therapy to our patients, and we regularly inspect our equipment to identify problems before they become an issue,” said Puffer, who declined further comment.

The town of Warrenton will inspect areas that had required replacing drywall before closing a permit for work inside the building. Building inspectors for the town were made aware of possible mold issues in the summer of 2021.

“If there were high levels of fungal growth, we could have closed ... the entire building, but we didn’t want to do that,” said Bob Walton, director of community development for the town of Warrenton. Doing so would have created hardships for dialysis patients and others in the building, Walton said.

Both lawsuits remain in play as WOW and Carriage Lane Complex seek to recover monetary damages. “We haven’t waived any of our rights to proceed for any damages for it taking 14 months for this situation to be resolved,” Crafts said. The new business has spent \$20,000 a month on legal fees, Crafts said.

WOW provides hyperbaric oxygen therapy – breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized environment to treat a range of illnesses and injuries, including burns, injuries, long COVID and oth-

## How harmful is mold?

- No federal or state laws set “safe” levels of airborne mold or mold spores.
- The most common indoor molds are Cladosporium, Penicillium and Aspergillus.
- Exposure to damp and moldy spaces may cause a variety of health effects, or none.
- People most vulnerable to illness from mold are those with chronic lung conditions such as asthma and those with compromised immune systems.
- Chaetomium mold spores are among the most harmful to humans.
- All molds should be treated the same with respect to potential health risks and removal.

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er serious infections. All of WOW’s clients have compromised immune systems, Crafts said.

Carriage Lane Complex’s attorney is encouraged by the Madison Taylor report. “As far as we know, the leaks have been taken care of, and the tenant is actively dealing with any spills, but we are going to be requesting the tenant’s cooperation with voluntary follow-up testing,” said Fred Kruck, attorney for the property owners.

The trouble began in May 2021, after WOW moved into a suite that shares a wall with the dialysis center. WOW’s owners discovered that water had leaked through a shared wall with the back room of the dialysis center, according to the lawsuit.

A construction worker uncovered water leaking into Warrenton Oxygen Wellness from the Fresenius dialysis center, according to the lawsuits. That led to the discovery of extensive mold growth between the walls that separate the two businesses.

The landlord’s emergency inspection showed that water came from plumbing fixtures and storage tanks in the Fresenius center, WOW’s lawsuit against the dialysis center says.

WOW removed drywall and baseboard from the wall it shares with the dialysis center. “WOW discovered that the wall insulation and drywall on the defendant’s side of WOW’s wall were covered in black mold,” the lawsuit says.

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## Remington set for competitive mayoral election

REMINGTON, from page 8

According to Allison, that concern for residents should take the form of being a neutral sounding board for public input. “I want to make sure every voice is heard and everybody has a chance to speak about any kind of issue they have in town,” he said.

Polk’s tenure so far, Allison said, has involved “a lot of back-door politicking.” Even if intentions are good, such advocacy from the mayor sends the wrong message, Allison argued. “It doesn’t send a clear message that someone there has the best interest of the town. It turns into a ‘me, me, me’ mentality.”

For Polk, concern for fulfilling the vision of the people who call Remington home should mean that the mayor is an outspoken advocate for overcoming — as he characterized it — the lack of economic and administrative progress during the past three decades.

This election, he said, should act essentially as a referendum on his “revitalization for a destination” pro-

gram, which he has said would entail pursuing an aggressive grant application strategy to fund initiatives like redirecting traffic traveling through downtown and creating new and safer pedestrian routes — especially between residential areas and Grace Miller Elementary School, located just outside town limits. An engineering study to determine the feasibility of some of the proposals is scheduled to be completed next month, Polk said.

Polk also wants to capitalize on a newly opened park, the county-owned Rector Tract on the Rappahannock River, to invite visitors into town after a day on the water. One of his ideas to do that — recently approved by a close town council vote — is to allow golf carts on some streets to encourage river visitors to spend time and money downtown.

“I think [this election] sets the tone for: Do we continue to do the same thing we’ve done for the past 30 years, or do we do a course correction and move into a definable direction?” Polk said. “And it’s largely going to

be dependent on the outcome of this election,” he added, arguing that the “revitalization” programs would help invigorate one of the lowest-income parts of the county.

“I bring opportunities to the council. The revitalization for a destination is an example. And I brought the golf carts,” said Polk. “I bring something different to the table, and I think a lot of people think it’s refreshing.”

Polk also said that he plans to endorse a slate of six town council candidates who share his vision for Remington’s future, although he declined to specify which candidates he will endorse.

Allison said that the council and mayor should not intertwine their interests. “I don’t feel like there should be a mayor in office with his own council,” Allison argued. “I think that would be very detrimental to the town. I think that would corrupt the system and what it stands for.”

Reach Coy Ferrell at [cferrell@fauquier.com](mailto:cferrell@fauquier.com)

## Culpeper man dies in crash, ‘medical emergency’ a factor

Staff Report

A single-vehicle crash July 11 that killed a 41-year-old Culpeper man and seriously injured four others may have been caused by a “medical emergency,” according to a Virginia State Police statement Tuesday morning.

David Kirby died at the crash scene on Vint Hill Road near the intersection with Broad Run Church Road, just north of Vint Hill. A 36-year-old woman, a 19-year-old man, a 17-year-old boy and a 12-year-old boy were seriously injured, according to the state police. Neither Kirby nor any of the passengers were wearing seat belts.

Kirby was driving a 2000 F-350 east on Vint Hill Road when the truck “crossed a double solid centerline, ran off the left side of the roadway and collided with a tree,” the state police said.

The crash remains under investigation.