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Keeping up with the times

Schools surveying students, parents on significant bell time adjustments

» BY JARED FORETEK
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Prince William County Public Schools is starting to survey students, parents and other community members on an array of proposed start time changes aimed at helping adolescents get more sleep and increasing their academic performance.

In a presentation to the School Board

April 20, Jennifer Cassata, director of research, accountability and strategic planning, stressed the school division was not prepared to implement any bell time changes for the next school year. Extensive surveying and community engagement would still be needed before anything changes, she said, possibly by the start of the 2023-24 school year.

But the division has been researching several common models for delayed start times. Currently, county high schools start between 7:25 and 7:30 a.m., while middle schools begin between 8:10 and 8:20 a.m., and elementary schools start between 8:10 and 9:20 a.m. Cassata presented the School Board with four different models for possible new start times.

The first would invert the traditional schedule by having elementary school-

SCHOOL BELL » PAGE 4

WHAT'S NEXT?

- » Surveys currently being deployed to the community
- » Schools to communicate survey results
- » Awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagement
- » New start times for '23-'24 school year at earliest

More details, breakdown at
INSIDENOVA.COM.

FLYING INTO THE SUN



As the sun set on April 22, Brentsville's Dylan Sawyer cleared his winning height to capture the boys pole vault title at the annual Running Store City County Championship track and field meet. This year's event was held at Patriot High School. BILL KAMENJAR | FOR INSIDENOVA

SPORTS: More details and photos, Page 21

2 teens die from likely overdoses

Police suspect counterfeit drugs

» BY KARI PUGH
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Two teenage boys, a 15-year-old from Woodbridge and a 14-year-old from Dale City, died within 48 hours this week of drug overdoses involving apparent counterfeit prescription drugs, according to police.

The deaths prompted the Prince William County Police Department on Wednesday to issue a warning specifically to youth in the county about the tainted pills.

Both deaths appear to be connected to counterfeit forms of the drug Percocet, sometimes referred to as "Perc30," police said in a news release.

The counterfeit drugs in both deaths were preliminarily tested and confirmed to be laced with fentanyl, the release said. The 15-year-old Woodbridge boy died Sunday, and the 14-year-old Dale City

OVERDOSE » PAGE 8

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Input sought for vast county park

Disc golf, bike trail, canopy walk among initial ideas for Dove's Landing

» BY NOLAN STOUT
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Prince William County is seeking input from residents as it kicks off a new master planning process for what could become its biggest park.

County officials held an informational meeting last week to receive ideas about the future of the existing 308-acre Dove's Landing Park park and more than 170 acres that could be incorporated into it.

The park sits in the center of the county at the confluence of the Occoquan River and the Cedar Run and Broad Run tributaries near Bristow Road.

The county acquired the main parcels for the park in 1993 and 1996 and added 74 acres in 2018.

The county plans to receive 170 acres on the other side of the river as part of the controversial Preserve at Long Branch development.

Last year, the Board of Supervisors approved a plan to build 99 homes for the development in the county's rural crescent. The developer received additional density allowances by donating 170 acres to the county as parkland.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

» To provide feedback, visions for Dove's Landing Park, email the county at dprmasterplan@pwcgov.org.

The developer also provided an additional 19 acres as a natural and cultural resources preserve at Sinclair Mill, which is next to the river and would connect Dove's Landing to the parkland planned for The Preserve.

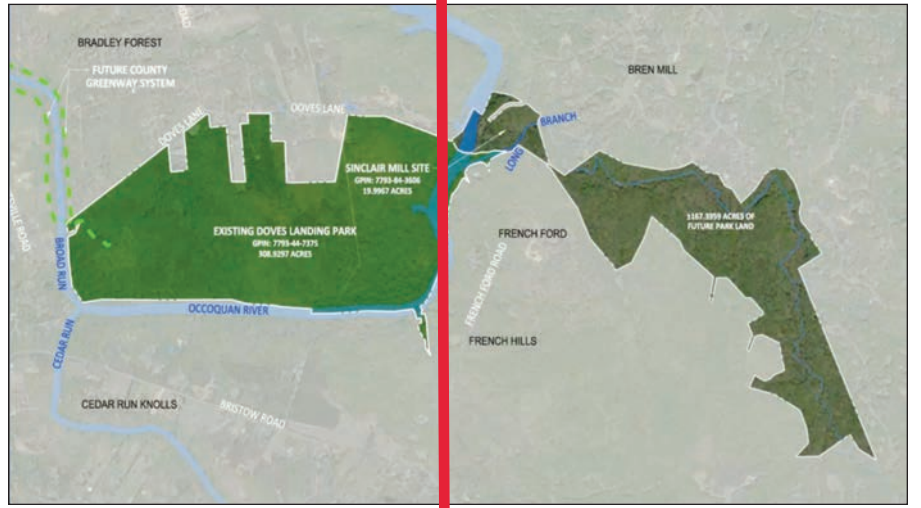
The additional area includes a residential structure, a mill site, former gold mine, Civil War earthworks and the route for an old colonial road. The county plans to construct 2.5 miles of trail on the property and 20 trailhead parking spaces.

An initial master plan for the park only included 234 acres. County officials are updating it because it did not include the land acquired in 2018 or the planned donation from The Preserve.

The county has allocated \$2.4 million to support enhancements at the park.

"Before we spend any of that funding, we want to make sure we have a plan that works for most everybody," said Brendon Hanafin, division director for planning and capital projects in the county's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

The county hasn't done much with



County officials held an informational meeting last week to receive ideas about the future of the existing 308-acre Dove's Landing Park park and more than 170 acres that could be incorporated into it.

the existing 308 acres. It has 18 parking spaces, access to the river and 4.5 miles of trails.

"We want it to be a great [park]," said Coles Planning Commissioner Joseph Fontanella Jr. "We're really excited about an opportunity to expand and preserve this area."

The county approved changes to its Comprehensive Plan in 2013 to start opening the Dove's Landing acreage to the public.

Speakers at last week's meeting reiterated the hopes they've had since 2013 to keep the land as undeveloped as possible.

Some of the initial possibilities for the park include a disc golf course, mountain bike trail, rental pavilions, overlook areas and a canopy walk.

Patti Pakkala, principal planner with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, said the county wants to minimize

development but "gain more access and really show [the park] off for the public."

"People want it to remain natural," said former Supervisor Marty Nohe, R-Coles, who was part of the 2013 master planning process.

Pakkala noted some residents have complained that people are using the trails for ATVs. She said the county wouldn't want those used in the park and "would have to find a way to curb that usage."

Nohe and others advocated for the county to put the land in a conservation easement, which would protect it from development.

"Whatever happens moving forward, you should absolutely insist on a conservation easement," said Elena Schlossberg. "You cannot protect a passive park unless you have a conservation easement."

OVERDOSE » FROM PAGE 1

boy on Tuesday, said county police 1st Sgt. Jonathan Perok.

Fentanyl is known to be extremely fatal even in the smallest doses if the effects of an overdose are not recognized and treated immediately, police said.

Authorities say if you suspect a loved one is overdosing, call 911 immediately and administer Narcan, which is publicly available.

The official cause of deaths for both boys is still pending toxicology results, police said, but detectives believe both died after consuming the fentanyl-laced narcotic. Detectives are still investigating how the boys obtained the pills.

"The Police Department recognizes our youth population as most susceptible to peer influence and pressures," the release said. "We implore parents and guardians to take immediate action to actively engage with their children and loved ones as soon as possible about the dangers of drug use and encourage constructive dialogue to prevent further deaths and illness. If suspected illegal narcotics are found, they should not be handled, call police."

Prince William County Community Services and Prince William County



A graphic showing the similarities between prescription drugs and counterfeit pills.

Public Schools offer resources to help families start a discussion about illicit drug use, and provide assistance if needed. Help is also available through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Drug Enforcement Agency provides information to help families understand what to look if someone suspects counterfeit narcotic use, the police department said.

Prince William police offer medication disposal boxes at each of the three district stations in the county for residents to dispose of narcotics safely, no questions asked.

Food Lion assault suspect had similar charges dropped

Woodbridge man charged with sexual battery, exposure

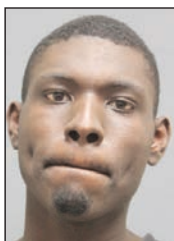
» BY KARI PUGH
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A Woodbridge man charged in an indecent exposure and sexual assault at the Hoadly Road Food Lion had been charged two years earlier in a similar crime, but the charges were dropped.

In the most recent case, June 24, a community tip led detectives to a suspect in the sexual assault of an employee at the supermarket in mid-Prince William County.

Police were called to the store at 6306 Hoadly Road at 9:45 a.m. after the employee, a 58-year-old woman, told police a stranger had followed her around the store that morning.

The man had been known to visit the location and had previous brief encounters with the employee in the past. This time, said Prince William County Police 1st Sgt. Jonathan Perok, the man approached her and had a brief interaction before walking away. But when she went back to work stocking aisles, he approached her from behind again and she felt “an unknown fluid on her pants,” Perok said in a news release.



MICHAEL EARL ALEXANDER

Based on the man’s behavior, the store contacted police, but the man had already left.

Officers reviewed video surveillance, which showed the man entering the store about 8:50 a.m. He was then seen watching the employee on multiple occasions from other aisles within the store, Perok said.

“At one point, the man approached the employee from behind while exposing himself and making obscene motions unbeknownst to the employee who was facing away from the man,” the release said.

The man is then seen quickly turning away from the employee and exiting the business about 9:35 a.m. He got into a dark-colored, four-door sedan with a missing rim on the rear passenger-side tire.

“Preliminarily, the liquid found on the employee is believed to be bodily fluid based on the man’s behavior and interactions after approaching the employee from behind,” Perok said.

The employee was not physically injured.

On June 25, officers made contact with the suspect after receiving the tip and met with him at the Central District Station, Perok said. He arrived at the station in the same vehicle he was driving at Food Lion, he said.

Michael Earl Alexander, 31, of Longhorn Drive in Woodbridge, was charged with sexual battery, indecent exposure and obscene sexual display, Perok said. He was held without bond at the Prince William-Manassas regional jail.

Two years ago, Alexander was arrested after a similar case at the Safeway in Merchant Plaza in Woodbridge. Police charged Alexander with indecent exposure, but the charge was later dropped.

On April 28, 2020, police said Alexander, a former employee of the store, approached a woman working at the counter, exposed himself and made obscene gestures on the other side, police said. Alexander was arrested after a store manager identified him as the suspect.

The indecent exposure charge was later nolle prossed, meaning the case is dismissed but prosecutors can refile charges at a later time.

Prince William Commonwealth’s Attorney Amy Ashworth told InsideNoVa the file on the 2020 crime was “destroyed by our office because it ended over a year ago.”

“I don’t have any notes to reflect why the matter was nolle prossed,” she said in an email. “It could have been because the witness did not appear or another problem with proving the case.”

Sheetz drops prices under \$4 on two special types of gas

Sheetz convenience stores that offer a higher-ethanol types of gas known as unleaded 88 and E85 have dropped prices for the July 4 holiday travel period.

Unleaded 88, a type of gas with 15% ethanol and 85% gasoline, is selling for \$3.99 a gallon while E85, made for flexible fuel vehicles, is \$3.49 a gallon, Sheetz said in a news release.

Unleaded 88 is approved by the EPA for use in vehicles for model years 2001 or newer as well as light-duty trucks, SUVs and flex fuel vehicles. Sheetz spokeswoman Harry Hammel said 349 of the company’s 650 stores carry Unleaded 88.

E85 contains more ethanol (51%-83%) and is not compatible with all vehicles. It is designed specifically for “flexible fuel vehicles” or FFVs. FFVs can use regular gasoline (E10), E15, or E85. When available, E85 is clearly designated as a different fuel



Unleaded 88 under \$4 at a Sheetz gas station in Northern Virginia. PAUL LARA | INSIDENOVA

type and should not be used in standard vehicles. Check your owner’s manual to see if your car is able to run with E85.



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ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS



Second-year Gainesville High School notched its first win in school history on Sept. 1, besting Osbourn Park 54-28. Pictured, Gainesville's James Kennedy (14) and Koven Smith (2) celebrate after Kennedy's touchdown reception. DOUG STROUD | FOR INSIDENOVA

GAME STORY AND PHOTOS, PAGE 26

PLUS: REVISITING THE STORIED 1974 WOODBRIDGE SQUAD, PAGE 24

INSIDE

Showstopper: Cinema chain exits deal with Manassas Park

» PAGE 8

Lawsuit alleges worker fired by CVS for abortion stance

» PAGE 9

Medical Missionaries still changing lives 25 years after founding

» PAGE 27



Some of the supplies that were donated to Medical Missionaries and delivered to areas of Kentucky after devastating tornadoes in December.

Digital Gateway receives staff support

» BY NOLAN STOUT
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Prince William County's planning staff is recommending the county approve the proposed PW Digital Gateway.

The recommendation represents the first official stance taken by county officials on the request to designate nearly 2,100 acres in western Prince William for data centers.

The staff report was prepared for the Planning Commission's Sept. 14 public hearing on the project and was uploaded Friday, ahead of the Labor Day weekend.

GATEWAY » PAGE 4

Police-involved shooting leaves 19-year-old dead

Undercover operation involved fentanyl, guns

» BY KARI PUGH
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Two men shot in "an exchange of gunfire" with officers in Dale City last week robbed an undercover detective trying to buy fentanyl and firearms before the deadly shooting, police said in a Wednesday morning news release.

Jaiden Malik Carter, 19, of Dale City, died Sunday after he was shot in the upper body during the Sept. 1 incident in



CARTER

SHOOTING » PAGE 8

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the 14700 block of Fox Glove Court, a townhouse community off Cloverdale Road.

A second man who was also shot, 30-year-old Shane Dareon Pollard of Ranger Loop in Woodbridge, remains hospitalized but is expected to survive. No officers were injured.

On the day of the shooting, a confidential informant and an undercover Manassas city detective assigned to a multi-agency narcotics task force arranged to purchase “a large quantity” of suspected fentanyl pills and at least one firearm, Prince William County Police 1st Sgt. Jonathan Perok said in the release.

Around 7 p.m., three men arrived in a separate vehicle to meet the detective. One of the three, identified as Jalil Michael Turner, 18, of no fixed address, exited and got into the detective’s vehicle.

After a brief encounter, Turner got out and returned a short time later with Carter, Perok said. Turner got into the front passenger seat and Carter in the backseat. Police allege Turner “produced a handgun” and demanded money and other property from the undercover detective.

Pollard, the third man, did not get out of the other vehicle, but repositioned it behind the detective’s car, Perok said.

According to police, Carter then ordered the detective to open the trunk to look for the money that was to be used in the fentanyl buy. Both Carter and Turner took property from the detective, police allege, including the money, before getting back into the other car with Pollard.

“All three men attempted to flee in the vehicle just as additional detectives were converging on the location to make the arrest,” Perok said. “These events led up to



Prince William County Assistant Police Chief Jarad Phelps, left, and Manassas Police Chief Doug Keen speak to reporters in Dale City after two men were wounded in a police-involved shooting Sept. 1. POLICE SCREENSHOT

the exchange of gunfire with police.”

Police released a 12-minute video of the incident, but any gunshots are difficult to hear. It includes a shorter video showing a portion of the incident that earlier was circulated on social media. That segment shows unmarked police vehicles swooping in on a black car, which quickly backs up and crashes into several parked cars.

Police found two handguns, one of them illegally modified to be fully automatic with an extended magazine, Perok said.

Arlington County Police, handling the investigation through a regional Critical Incident Response Team agreement, have charged Turner and Pollard in connection with the shooting. Turner is charged with

robbery resulting in a death and use of a firearm in a felony, Perok said. He was being held without bond at the Prince William-Manassas regional jail Wednesday.

Pollard is charged with robbery resulting in death and will also be served outstanding warrants in connection with an unrelated October carjacking, Perok said. He is in police custody at the hospital.

Family members of 19-year-old Carter say they are looking for answers in his death.

Carter’s mother, Sheila Garcia, told InsideNoVa she’s heard no updates and seen no videos where her son or the other man “had weapons of any sort.”

“This much force and wrongful shooting of my son was not necessary,” Garcia

said.

Carter’s family and supporters are planning a candlelight vigil at Cloverdale Park in Dale City on Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

Two Prince William and two Manassas police detectives were involved in the exchange of gunfire, according to authorities, and both have been placed on routine administrative leave pending the outcome of the criminal and internal investigations. No agency involved in the shooting will be a part of the criminal investigation, Perok said.

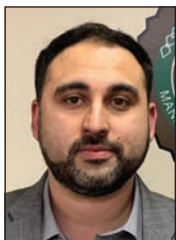
Police would like to talk to anyone who has information or witnessed the shooting, and they are asking residents in the area to check their surveillance cameras.

Movie theater backs out of Manassas Park deal

City searching for new tenant

» BY JARED FORETEK
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The movie chain intended to anchor the newest downtown development in Manassas Park has pulled out of a deal with the city to build and operate the proposed theater adjacent to the new city hall building.



PALKO

The original plan was for the city to transfer the downtown property to Cinema Cafe, a theater-restaurant hybrid chain with six locations across Virginia, free of charge. In return, the company would build the theater by 2023 or 2024 as part of an anchor for the downtown mixed-use development near city hall.

But City Manager Laszlo Palko said the chain cited inflation in backing out of the deal, leading the city to transfer the land to Norton Scott – the city’s selected private partner for the new city hall building

and the 300 downtown homes that are also part of the development – to build a new theater complex and lease it out.

“What we had looked at with Cinema Cafe was an ownership structure ... that usually was their business, but inflationary pressures are just changing that for theaters, where they’re not really developing brand new theaters. That’s not very common anymore, they’re just leasing them out,” Palko told InsideNoVa.

While inflation does remain high in terms of year-over-year price increases, the movie theater business also has still not recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and the proliferation of streaming services with new and old films. The box-office smash “Top Gun: Maverick” helped boost ticket sales earlier this year, but they still lag behind pre-pandemic levels, and some experts say the industry currently has too many theaters around the country and that large movie chains will need to shrink their footprints to stay viable.

According to the New York Times, Cineworld – the owner of Regal Cinemas, the second-biggest chain in the country – is preparing to file for Chapter 11 bank-

ruptcy, which would let the company break leases and downsize in general.

Manassas Park Mayor Jeanette Rishell said in a Facebook post that Cinema Cafe had retained the right to terminate the purchase and sale agreement with the city for any reason during its “study period.”

“There are ongoing negotiations to bring in the anchor in a manner that does not have them build the structure, but instead has the structure built by the current builder, and then the anchor rents from them,” she wrote.

Palko told InsideNoVa that the city and Norton Scott aren’t worried about filling the space, despite the bleaker-than-normal outlook for the theater business.

Cinema Cafe itself has even shown interest in leasing the theater, he said, but it’ll be up to the developer to find a tenant.

“Norton Scott’s now in the driver’s seat. They’re the ones who are going to construct it now and lease it out. We’re introducing them to different theater businesses, and we’re going to keep working with them to get the lease numbers structured correctly. Cinema Cafe

is not the only option,” Palko said.

The theater was always planned to open later than other components of the overall development, and now, Palko said, it likely won’t start selling tickets until 2024, once the new Virginia Railways Express parking garage is open nearby. Homes that are part of the development’s residential component continue to go up, city staff moved into the new city hall building earlier this summer and the new library on the ground floor of the city hall building is expected to open Sept. 11.

Leases with Jirani’s to open a new coffee shop in the building and a Mexican restaurant to open next door are still in place.

But some may see signs of another commercial development not panning out for the city. Storefronts built nearby over a decade ago in another city-led development plan are still empty, though the residential market in the area has remained strong.

“This is very worrisome,” former City Council member Donald Shuemaker wrote on Facebook about the news. “We need the anchor for this development to be successful.”