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Jefferson takes on Wheeler

Newcomer hopes to oust chair in Democratic primary

» BY BEN PETERS
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Incumbent Democratic chair of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors Ann Wheeler is facing a primary challenge from her left in the upcoming primary.

Communications professional and former journalist Deshundra Jefferson, who described herself as “the more progressive candidate,” will face Wheeler on June 20 for the Prince William County Democratic Committee’s nomination in the November General Election. The primary winner will face a Republican in the general election – either Brentsville District Supervi-



DESHUNDRA JEFFERSON



ANN WHEELER

DEMOCRATS » PAGE 10

INSIDE

Local leaders gather to discuss fentanyl crisis

» NEWS, PAGE 4

Several high schools heading to state finals

» SPORTS, PAGES 21-23

Congrats to the grads!

» SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE



ENGINES OF ENCHANTMENT

The Manassas Heritage Railway Festival drew plenty of oohs and ahhs from attendees on June 3. In its 29th annual running, the event featured elaborate displays, memorabilia and more. Pictured, Josefina Delatrinidad and her family -- Alex, 5, Angel, 8, and Brianna, 10 -- enjoy one of the models in Harris Pavilion.

DOUG STROUD | FOR INSIDENOVA

More Photos, Page 24

GOP candidates at odds over Gateway

Lawson, Knarr dueling for chair nomination

» BY BEN PETERS
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Two Republicans, county Supervisor Jeanine Lawson and Marine Corps veteran Kenn Knarr, are facing off in the upcoming June 20 primary to win the party’s nomination for chair of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors.

JEANINE LAWSON

Brentsville District Supervisor Lawson, who was first elected to the board in 2014

and remains its longest-serving sitting member, is running to “defend areas of the county against intense development,” she told InsideNoVa.

In the past two years, incumbent Chair Ann Wheeler has been the target of vocal criticism over the board’s direction, particularly around land-use decisions related to the data center industry. Wheeler faced an unsuccessful recall effort over financial ties to data center and technology companies.

The board’s most controversial decision



JEANINE LAWSON

has been in approving guidelines for the PW Digital Gateway, which calls for up to 27 million square feet of data centers on 2,100 acres in western Prince William that Lawson opposes.

“The data center industry has turned this county upside down,” said Lawson, who has lived in Gainesville for 20 years. “And I used to be somebody that worked with them and rezoned land for the



KENN KNARR

GOP » PAGE 10

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FROM BETS TO JETS

Trio of landmark projects may be coming to area



Bettors played historical horse-race machines during opening day at Rosie's Gaming Emporium in Dumfries in January 2021.

JAMES JARVIS | INSIDENOVA

Rosie's Gaming sets sights on Manassas Park

Voters would decide via fall referendum

» BY JARED FORETEK
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Rosie's Gaming Emporium is looking to make a push into Manassas Park.

Churchill Downs Inc., the operator of Rosie's, announced June 23 it is collecting signatures to initiate a voter referendum on whether the company could open a casino-like gambling operation in the Manassas Park Shopping Center on Centreville Road.

The company runs six "gaming empo-

GAMING » PAGE 6



A rendering of a possible expansion at Manassas Regional Airport that could include commercial flights.

Commercial flights out of Manassas?

City leaders roused by new proposal

» BY JARED FORETEK
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Commercial passenger flights could soon be taking off from Manassas.

The Manassas City Council is considering a proposal from airport management company Avports that would bring commercial flights to the city's general aviation airport within the next two years.

On Monday, representatives from the Dulles Airport-based company laid out their proposal to an eager City Council: The company would enter a 40-year lease for the airport's terminal and build a 35,000-square-foot addition, enough capacity for as many as 30 commercial passenger flights per day.

AIRPORT » PAGE 7



Sanders Lane, a four-mile road that runs between Sudley and Braddock roads near Gainesville, is located just north of Pageland Lane.

ROGER SNYDER | FOR INSIDENOVA

Is another Digital Gateway in the works?

Gainesville-area neighbors weighing possible land sale

» BY BEN PETERS
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Residents of rural Sanders Lane in western Prince William County are moving forward with an effort to assemble and sell their properties to a data center developer.

The effort is similar to what transpired on nearby Pageland Lane that led to the proposed and controversial PW Digital Gateway data center project.

An email obtained by InsideNoVa from the Catharpin Committee, a communi-

SANDERS LANE » PAGE 6



And the winners are...

Over 19,000 voters. About 155,000 individual votes. Over 5,000 local businesses, organizations and people nominated. Meet the 2023 Best of Prince William honorees in nearly 200 different categories.

>> 48-page Special Pullout Section Inside



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NOVEMBER 9 - 15, 2023

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HOW WE VOTED

| BOARD OF COUNTY SUPERVISORS CHAIR | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Deshundra Jefferson (D) | 60,431 (51.4%) |
| Jeanine Lawson (R) | 56,789 (48.3%) |
| SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Babur Lateef* | 57,397 (49.5%) |
| Carrie Rist | 47,409 (40.9%) |
| Kim Mehlman-Orozco | 10,650 (9.2%) |
| STATE SENATE: 30th District | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Danica Roem (D) | 29,730 (51.5%) |
| Bill Woolf (R) | 27,802 (48.2%) |
| HOUSE OF DELEGATES: 21st District | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Josh Thomas (D) | 13,572 (51.5%) |
| John Stirrup (R) | 12,737 (48.3%) |
| HOUSE OF DELEGATES: 22nd District | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Ian Lovejoy (R) | 15,814 (52.6%) |
| Travis Nembhard (D) | 14,189 (47.2%) |
| COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| Amy Ashworth* (D) | 68,453 (53.4%) |
| Matt Lowery (R) | 59,339 (46.3%) |
| MANASSAS PARK PARI-MUTUEL WAGERING | |
| | Votes (Pct.) |
| NO | 1,791 (58.9%) |
| YES | 1,251 (41.1%) |

* - Incumbent

Results as of Wednesday afternoon. Absentee ballots postmarked by Tuesday will be counted if received Monday, Nov. 13, by noon. See vote totals for more races on Pages 2-9 and visit InsideNoVa.com for updates.

DESHUNDRA'S DAY



Prince William County Board Chair-elect Deshundra Jefferson speaks to supporters during the county Democrats' victory party in Manassas on Tuesday night. TAVAN SMITH | FOR INSIDENOVA

Jefferson will be first Black woman to lead county board

» BY BEN PETERS
bpeters@insidenova.com

Democrat Deshundra Jefferson on Tuesday defeated Republican Supervisor Jeanine Lawson in the race for chair of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, becoming the first Black woman to hold the office.

Jefferson's rise from obscure political figure to leader of county government in less than a year underscores Prince William voters' dissatisfaction with current incumbents.

Through her primary win in June over Democratic incumbent Chair Ann Wheeler, who outtraded her by a 5-1 margin, and her defeat of Lawson, the most senior member of the board, Jefferson ousted two of the most powerful women in local politics. Wheeler and Lawson rarely saw eye to eye and their antagonistic exchanges were frequently the source of consternation in the board room.

Lawson's defeat means she will no

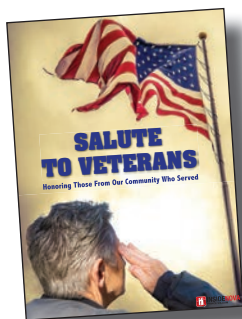


Potomac District Supervisor Andrea Bailey was one of six board incumbents who were reelected Tuesday. TAVAN SMITH | FOR INSIDENOVA

JEFFERSON » PAGE 17

INSIDE

A special pullout section honoring local veterans



Hundreds sign up for Gateway hearing

Commission begins review of contentious data centers

» BY BEN PETERS
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The Prince William County Planning Commission on Wednesday began its highly anticipated public hearing on the contentious PW Digital Gateway data center project, a meeting that officials were expecting to last more than 24 hours.

Commissioners will render recommendations on two rezoning requests by QTS Realty Trust Inc. and another by Compass Datacenters. The companies combined aim to build 23 million square feet of data centers on roughly 2,100 acres along Pageland Lane in western Prince William near Gainesville in what would become the largest data center corridor in the world.

GATEWAY » PAGE 19

HOW LONG CAN IT GO?

» Nearly 300 people signed up to speak at the county Planning Commission's Digital Gateway public hearings, which began at 2 p.m. Wednesday. If the speakers use all – or just most – of their allotted time, the hearing may well last more than 40 hours. Follow our coverage at InsideNoVa.com

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