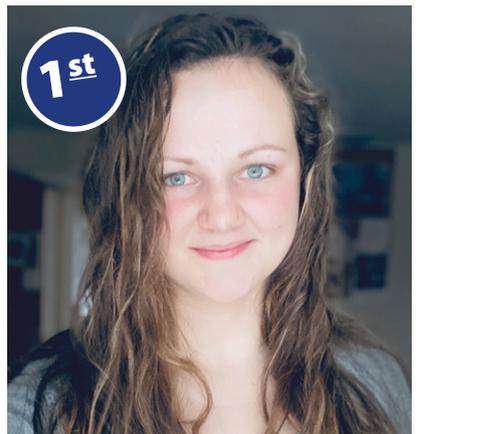


The Fluvanna Review wins three VPA awards



AWARD: FIRST PLACE
Category: Page Design
Winner: Amelia McConnell
Entry: Design and Presentation

Old Farm Day draws thousands

SUBMITTED BY TRICIA JOHNSON

Thousands of visitors enjoyed Old Farm Day Saturday (May 4) under sunny skies at Pleasant Grove Park in Palmyra. With over 140 exhibitors and vendors, there was definitely something for everyone to enjoy at this year's festival, said Old Farm Day Committee co-chair Tricia Johnson.

Familiar favorite activities for children, like horse-drawn hayrides, pony rides and the petting zoo, put smiles on the faces of little ones. Live music, vendors and exhibitors of all sorts, and a wide variety of food trucks made all generations happy.

The preview of the Farm Heritage Museum, where about one-third of exhibits are complete, drew crowds to see the antique and vintage agricultural equipment. The new tasting garden, where visitors could sample offerings from local vineyards, a local brewery, and a cidery under shade trees on the lawn of the historic Haden House was a particular favorite.



Ryleigh Kavanagh



Photos courtesy of Tricia Johnson, Theresa N. White and Valerie Ramos.

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Changing with the times: Fluvanna Review turns 40

BY CHRISTINA DIMMO

From simple beginnings as a one-page monthly newsletter for Lake Monticello residents, the Fluvanna Review has grown into a thriving weekly newspaper covering news throughout Fluvanna County.

In the years since the first edition was printed in July 1979, the world has changed. While print once dominated the market, now many people get their news from TV or online. This shift has affected advertising, and with online ads selling for pennies on the dollar, advertising has driven many once-free newspapers to sell subscriptions to remain in business.

Through it all, the Fluvanna Review has spent the last 40 years publishing news affecting Fluvanna residents' daily lives — for free. Its coverage of local government, schools, business, art, human interest and crime is unsurpassed.

As the paper turns 40, the Fluvanna Review took the opportunity to look back through the years.

Birth of the Bulletin

The first house at Lake Monticello was built in 1971, and four years later, 50 homes stood in the development — enough to necessitate a newsletter. So in April 1975, five Lake residents got together and started what would become the Fluvanna Review.

The first issue of the Residents' Association News Bulletin, a one-page monthly newsletter, championed the paving of Route 600, which was then a dirt road.

The newsletter hummed along for four years until one pivotal day in July 1979, when retiree Len Gardner, who had moved to the Lake a year earlier, volunteered to take over as Bulletin editor.

"There was a collective sigh of relief," Gardner said in a 2014 interview. "No one else wanted the job. And as it turned out, no one else got a chance at the job for the next 18 years."

The reason for the job's unpopularity, Gardner said, was the sheer amount of work involved in produc-

ing the Bulletin, which had grown to multiple legal-sized sheets. The editor had to collect all the news, do most of the writing, do the typing, run off 200 copies on the Xerox machine, collate and staple them, and then stuff the paper into the mailboxes," he said.

Becoming a newspaper

Four months after Gardner took over, the Lake Monticello Owners' Association decided it would no longer subsidize the Lake Monticello Newsletter, as Gardner now called it, either financially or through use of its typewriter and Xerox machine. Faced with the expense of printing in Charlottesville and loath to ask for donations, Gardner decided to sell advertising in the Newsletter to defray its cost.

"I had no trouble getting advertisers," Gardner said. "The advertisers came to me because advertising in the Newsletter was the best and surest way to get their message to the growing population at the Lake."

The Newsletter played an important role in Lake affairs, helping to secure individual mailboxes for homeowners rather than clusters at the gates, and assisting in having Lake roads declared fit for school bus travel.

In 1981 Gardner changed the name of the paper to the Lake Monticello Review, joking later that he selected the title because the monthly publication schedule made it impossible to do anything other than "review" the news.

But Gardner made a more important change from the moment he took over including Fluvanna County news, not just Lake Monticello happenings. After years of reporting on county Board of Supervisors meetings, Gardner decided to adjust the publication's name yet again to reflect its wider reach. And so, in 1988, the Lake Monticello and Fluvanna County Review was born.

Throughout the early years, Gardner relied on volunteers to get the paper thriving. "More than 100 volunteers served with me in many

roles: typing, advertising, layout, editing, reporting, special columns, bill paying, photography and distribution," he said. "My wife, Doris, backed me up on almost all the jobs at the paper at one time or another."

Though the volunteers received no salary, the money generated by the ads was more than enough to cover the paper's expenses. So at the end of the year, Gardner would give his volunteers a share of what the paper had made.

Over time, Gardner's life grew busier. Once a mayor of a small town in Maryland, Gardner felt his political interest return. In 1992 he won election to a seat on the Board of Supervisors.

Passing the torch

"By 1995 the paper was running 56 pages monthly in magazine format," Gardner said. "It had become too big an enterprise to run by volunteers. The Lake and Fluvanna County as well, had grown into a significant market. A monthly publication was no longer adequate for news coverage or to serve the needs of the business community. There was so much going on — if we didn't go to a weekly paper, someone else was going to come in and do it. I was just too busy at that point in time. I was the chair of the Board of Supervisors, and I couldn't handle a weekly paper. So that when I recruited someone else to do it."

Eric Allen, a Lake resident, graphic artist and former newspaper advertising manager, joined the staff in 1995, and when Gardner offered to sell the paper, Allen agreed. He took over as publisher in 1997 while Gardner stayed on as a silent partner.

"The 18 years that ran the paper were among the most satisfying years of my life," Gardner said. "I learned on the job how to run a paper. I learned that sometimes it can be difficult and unpopular, but necessary. I learned to stand up for ethical and accurate reporting, to edit out poorly thought-out commentary and unfounded accusations."

Now 97 years old, Gardner stays in touch with Fluvanna Review staff and still occasionally attends Board of Supervisors meetings. "I'm really pleased to be associated with the Review," he said last week. "It has developed into a real county newspaper. It does a great job for the county."

Allen made several changes when he took over, but three stood out with lasting impact. He switched the paper to a tabloid format, which the Review still uses today. He began publishing every other week rather than once a month. But most significant of all, he changed the name of the paper one final time: to the Fluvanna Review.

Over the next two years, Allen's responsibilities began to take a toll. "I was getting burned out," he said in a 2014 interview. "I was the ad salesman, the editor, the designer and the delivery guy." Plus, he had never seen himself as a lifelong newspaperman. So when an opportunity arose for Allen to join the computer business with a friend in Lynchburg, he decided to sell the paper.

Dismal days

In 1999 Allen sold the Review to a man who lived in Martinsville. "He planned to move up here, but it wasn't working out," Allen said. "He tried to run it from Martinsville. The task proved too difficult, and the paper started unraveling. Advertisers grew angry with mistakes in their ads and began dropping out. The Review's situation turned serious. "It had more debts than it had assets," Allen said. "When Gardner and I worked out, and I needed a year after he sold the paper, he decided to return. I bought it back for \$1 and assumed all that debt," he said.

Allen immediately got to work. "When people heard that I had come back, the advertisers who had dropped out jumped back in. I mended fences and put creditors at ease," he said, noting that Gardner

Growing the business

Then in 2006 Allen decided to go

into Louisa, again using a magazine format for Louisa Life so as not to compete with the county's existing newspaper. News looked to Greene County, but the Great Recession halted his plans. "I decided to batten down the hatches," he said. "That was the only way it was going to grow, because one person can only do so much. Over time I hired an office manager, a designer, an editor and additional salespeople."

In 2009 Allen also made the long-anticipated jump into weekly production. "We needed to be timelier with the news," he said. "Our competitors at the time were the Central Virginia out of Louisa, which had a Fluvanna section, and the Rural Virginian, which still uses today. He began publishing every other week rather than once a month. But most significant of all, he changed the name of the paper one final time: to the Fluvanna Review.

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One competitor, the Rural Virginian, "started coming really hard after us in Fluvanna, trying to compete," Allen said. "I thought the best defense might be a good offense." So in 2002 he began the Scottsville Monthly. "The Scottsville Monthly was literally an overnight success," he said. "On my first day selling advertising, I sold enough to cover the first year of expenses. People in Fluvanna loved having their own paper."

In 2003 Allen started another monthly, this time in Buckingham. "Buckingham was the one county in Virginia that didn't have a newspaper," Allen said. "So I started the Buckingham Beacon. The people embraced it with open arms."

Allen's success of his two monthly papers led to his taking over Orange County, and in 2005 started O.C. Magazine. "There was already a weekly paper there and I didn't want to compete head-to-head, so we went with more of a magazine feel," he said. "Then in 2006 Allen decided to go

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SPORTS IN REVIEW

BY BLAKE BERRY AND TYLER HARRIS
 FLUVANNA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM PROGRAM

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN WITH THE OVERSIGHT OF JOURNALISM TEACHER ELIZABETH PELLICANE

Tennis

The Lady Fluocs' match against Louisa was part of a complete sweep of opposing teams across all varsity sports April 23. Girls' tennis beat Louisa by an overall score of 7-2, with wins in singles from senior Adora Gamage (9-7), junior Sarah White (9-7), freshman Anna Big (8-2), senior Lydia Napier (8-2), and sophomore Mollie White (8-3). In doubles, Sarah White and Nika Ackerson took second (8-5), and White and Big took third (8-4).

The boys' team also took a win against Louisa April 23, with big singles wins from senior Eugene Chow and sophomore Billy Ruffa. The match ended in dramatic fashion with the team having to win a doubles match from a 3-0, which the Fluocs took in the end, reaching seven points first. "This definitely shows that we're getting better this season. Multiple comeback wins have shown that we're learning and going to be successful," said Coach Mitchell Pace.

The girls' tennis team hosted rival Monticello April 23. According to Coach Fode Morton, it was a "historic day for the Lady Fluocs as they won three matches, the first they have won in recent years against Monticello." The final score was 3-4. Monticello's Morton noted that "two very close matches could have easily gone our way."

In singles, number one seed White and number three seed Napier won 8-0 and 8-6, respectively. Sixth seed White tied at 8-8 and lost the tiebreaker 7-2. In doubles, Napier and White won 8-4, while White and Big dropped a very close match 6-8 in the end. The team's overall record is 6-4.

Softball

The JV softball team took a loss during their game against Louisa April 23, going 2-11. Freshman Shelby Clements said, "I think we need to pick ourselves up when we get that loss, and need to keep going."

In another game held April 26, the JV team lost 1-5. "We didn't play like we normally do. We just had an off day. Personally, I was a little off. Mistakes are like a chain reaction," said freshman Laci Kelley.

The varsity Lady Fluocs won at Louisa 2-2. At the third inning, the team was losing 0-2.

Boys' soccer

Varsity's game against Louisa April 22 brought the team a major win, with a 6-0 victory. "We never going in that we were the better team, and that we just needed to play hard," said senior Finn McLaughlin. The first half of the game brought one goal for the Fluocs, but the real success came in the second. "The first half didn't go as planned, but we worked for what we were going to do in the second half," McLaughlin said.

Baseball

The JV team took a loss at Louisa April 23. At the third inning, the team was losing 0-2.

Track

The track meet held April 24 was more of an informal dual between Orange and Fluvanna since the Fluocs have Districts coming up next week. Still, the Fluocs came out on top of Orange in the throwing events, junior Eli Harzog got first in shot put and discus, senior Joshua Elliott got second in shot put, and sophomore Jaydon Dumas got fourth in shot put. "Personally, it's been a rough season, but I'm glad I'm still able to compete," said Dumas.

Boys' lacrosse

Investigation of the away game against Monticello April 25, sophomore Jacob Collier said, "Going into this game we had some doubts about Monticello, but our energy is incredible and I think we can take a win!" Really, however, struck hard as the team took another devastating loss to the Monticello team, with a score of 2-19. "The JV team also played an away game against Monticello, which they lost with a score of 1-6. "We played well, but we need to work on defense," said freshman Joseph Sawyer.

Girls' lacrosse

The Lady Fluocs' game against Orange went sour April 24, with a loss of 8-17. "We got outmanned, and we just need to come together as a team to win in the future," said senior Sadie Connor.

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Entry: First Virginia Homes

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AWARD: THIRD PLACE Category: Government writing Winner: Christina Dimeo

Entry:

- Supervisor frustrations take center stage at budget vote
- CIP funding reveals difficulty in elected official dynamics
- Recapping the 10 biggest stories of 2018

Judge's comments: Reporting is solid and the writer grasps the issues important to the community.

Supervisor frustrations take center stage at budget vote

By Christina Dimeo

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO EDITOR

In unexpected display of passion, four of the five Fluvanna County supervisors debated and ultimately questioned voting their frustrations at the Board prepared Wednesday (April 26) to vote on the new budget and tax rates.

The vote to raise taxes to 92.5 cents, up 3.6 percent, barely squeaked by with a 3-2 margin. Supervisor Don Weaver and Tony O'Brien voted against the decision for opposite reasons.

Sheridan: Ask - don't preach
Before the vote, Chair Mike Sheridan begged rumors he said were swirling throughout the county that supervisors ignore core services, such as fire and police, schools and law enforcement. Actually, Sheridan said each budget increase will go directly toward a core service.

"There's a different focus and they like to talk about half-souls. And they're not doing a lot of positive things and cheerleading," he declared. "Everything we've added [to the budget] is the anything that you see there that we don't need? These are the only things we're going to do. Every one of them has been a core service to our county to our people."

"Sometimes I make an argument when people like to talk in half-souls and act like we're going out here... saying and spending just giving money to somebody and everybody feels good," he said. "We'd never want."

Sheridan pointed out that 30 cents of the 92.5-cent tax rate, or nearly one-third, goes directly to the county's debt. Fluvanna therefore effectively finances its own rate of 62.5 cents, he said.

Don forward, Sheridan finished his speech. "Really, what I'm asking you to do is where we're spending our money, ask - don't preach."

Booker: School staffing and scrambling is criminal
The schools need four new buses but are willing to delay buying two so that they can upgrade their services instead. They will buy the remaining two buses by the end of the school year if enough money is left over - a situation that's "really about just questioning and everybody's frustrated," he said.

"I don't think that's fair to the schools," Supervisor Board Booker said with evident frustration. "The last couple of years it's about the

superintendent is coming and saying, 'I promise you I'm going to save this and you're going to get this back.' I don't think he should have to do that."

"Let's be finished," she said after several interruptions.

Last Wednesday supervisors debated whether to raise \$20,000 into the general fund, which is also in the county's savings account, or lower the proposed tax rate increase by a penny. On the penny on the tax rate being in about \$100,000.

"Anybody who's got questions about where we're spending our money, ask - don't preach."

—Mike Sheridan, chair of the Board of Supervisors

Board talk, saying how they - just like we do - go through every penny to make sure that things are in the right place." Booker said. "I would just rather see the \$200,000 go to the schools."

"The school system is our core service. We need to be looking after our children," Booker said emphatically. "Technology cannot fail behind. I think it's critical they're surfing and scrambling to keep up with data with technology."

Weaver: "Just raise taxes mentality leads to debt"
"I'm not opposed to raising taxes but government turns too frequently to raising taxes to solve a problem," he said.

"The best in private business most of my life, and government certainly doesn't run the way private business does," Weaver said. "Private businesses work from the top down, in other words, they know at the beginning of the year approximately how much they're going to have in sales and so, they have the amount set up to get going with it. They work the budget to fit the sales, not the sales to fit the budget."

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"With government, it starts with the bottom and works up, and when it gets to the top - if you need another penny, read another penny, just throw it on. I have a problem with that," he continued. "That's the reason of our governments are in such debt. It's not just Fluvanna. It's the state and the federal government."

O'Brien: Save in advance or pay with debt
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CIP funding reveals difficulty in elected official dynamics

BY CHRISTINA DIMEO EDITOR

A detailed discussion over a seemingly mundane issue - whether technology money should go into the school board or the capital improvement project (CIP) - revealed tensions between the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors and School Board.

The respectful conversation between the boards Wednesday afternoon Feb. 29 plainly demonstrated the unshared albeit struggle when one elected board holds the purse strings of another.

The schools are asking the Board of Supervisors to up their funding by almost \$1 million, for a total of \$18.4 million. With the application of one penny on the real estate tax rate bringing in about \$300,000, this request represents a 3.2-cent tax increase for Fluvanna residents before any other budget considerations come into play.

In Fluvanna, the Board of Supervisors doesn't have control over how the School Board spends its money. School Board members allocate dollars, and then the School Board takes over.

Booker said the didn't want to raise taxes higher than 92.5 cents. "School Board," he said. "The budget allows \$17,863,937 for the school for FY20, or \$42,018 from FY19."

"The budget is too high as far as in comparison to other counties," he said.

O'Brien wanted to put more money into the general fund. "We are now working with budget that an extremely tight, and we are wiping out our capital improvement plan and our general fund budget, and we are eliminating it," he said.

The 2019 tax rates are:

- Residential personal property: \$10.100 valuation
- Residential personal property: \$4.35 per \$100 valuation
- Machinery and tools: \$1.90 per \$100 valuation

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ments plan indicates that the projects belonging to it should be substantial one-time investments. The CIP contains items like new ambulances and buses, or roof replacements and building renovations. It also contains improvements such as community pools and spray parks, though these are presently under way later this year and next year, if not earlier.

Some school technology items in the CIP as well, and of Wednesday, both boards agreed that there are things that you're going to do as a community when you have a lower per-pupil expenditure. That's just the fact."

Once the county gets money to the school system, the assumptions that the following year the school will receive at least the same amount of money. One year's funding level becomes the next year's "baseline funding" and the school typically asks for more on top of that.

"This is why school funding requests are usually spoken about in terms of additional dollars sought. While the school CIP request is for \$1.8 million, both boards will mostly focus on the almost \$1 million figure, as that is the amount of new money sought."

If school technology dollars are allocated in the regular budget, they become part of the baseline funding for the following year.

Money allocated in the budget for a Chromoblock replacement cycle would therefore replace the following year's CIP. Both boards agreed that the school CIP request is for \$1.8 million, but neither would request additional money for the request. Both boards agreed that the school CIP request is for \$1.8 million, but neither would request additional money for the request.

"That's the problem. Here's where this is going to be a problem. Does it actually happen? Does it? That's an example of where we're struggling with our dynamics."

A bigger question, such as the \$250,000 sewer upgrade, should be dealt with through the CIP because it is a one-time significant expense and should be moved into the regular budget.

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