

Fluvanna REVIEW

High Voltage, High Stakes

Fluvanna in Path of Multibillion-Dollar 765 kV Grid Expansion

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as Schools Eye “Needs-Based” Budget**

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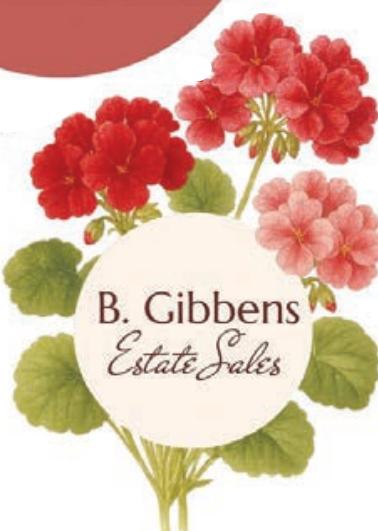
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Feb 22nd



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The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

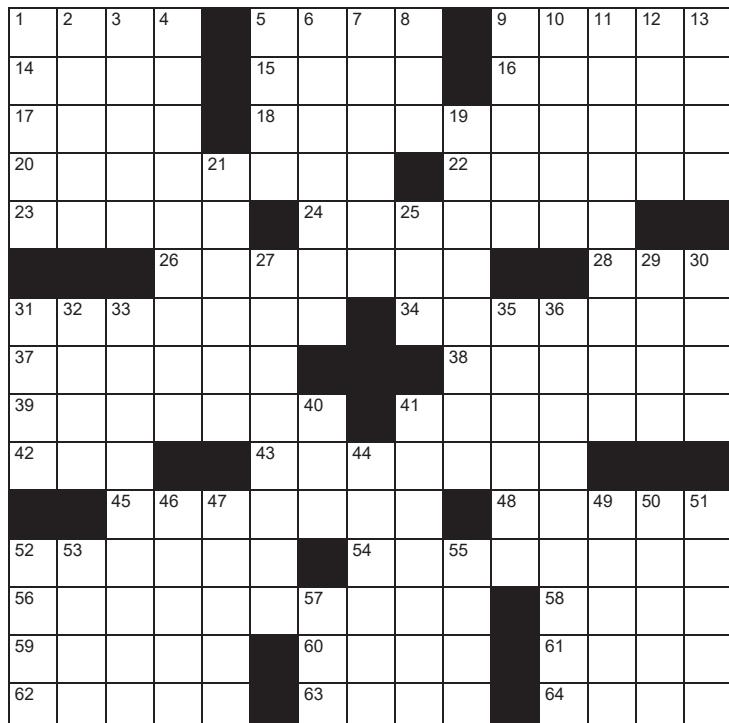
ACROSS

1 Highest point
5 Sandler or Scott
9 Bodies of
organisms
14 Heart of the
matter
15 Runner's
distance
16 Music exec
Davis
17 Softest mineral
18 Supporter
20 Over again
22 Plaza Hotel girl
of kid-lit
23 Nostalgia-
inducing
24 Means of entry
26 Media event,
informally
28 Tiny amount
31 Most expansive
34 Grand theft, e.g.
37 Objective

38 Movie Guy?
39 Bugs Bunny
creator Freeling
41 Handled badly
42 Junior's junior
43 Finds one's
bearings
45 Lab chemical
48 Devour eagerly
52 Waste
54 Editor's concern
56 Oscar night VIPs
58 Ancient Andean
59 Edmonton skater
60 Pay period, for
some
61 Furniture wood
62 Reveals
63 Two-to-one, e.g.
64 Puppy noises

DOWN

1 Someone in a
cast
2 "Frasier"
surname
3 Punish with a
fine
4 Selected, as
from text
5 Shots, for short
6 Anne Frank, for
one
7 "Star Trek"
extras
8 People in a
Steinbeck title
9 Justice symbol
10 Spiced stews
11 Sunday
speakers
12 They're num-
bered in NYC
13 Moistureless
19 Aquatic turtle
21 Oscar-winning
Rita
25 Hair raiser?
27 Female hormone
29 Ending to avoid?
30 Like Easter eggs
31 Caesar's eight
32 Standards org.
33 Evacuation
route, often
35 Took a breather



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36 Reason for a
result
40 Before, before
41 Like most taxi
fares
44 "You don't say!"
46 Artist's
implement
47 Teen—

49 Skin problem
50 Pop a bottle top
51 Range tops?
52 Munsters' pet
dragon
53 NY canal
55 Inquires
57 Number in a
Dickens title

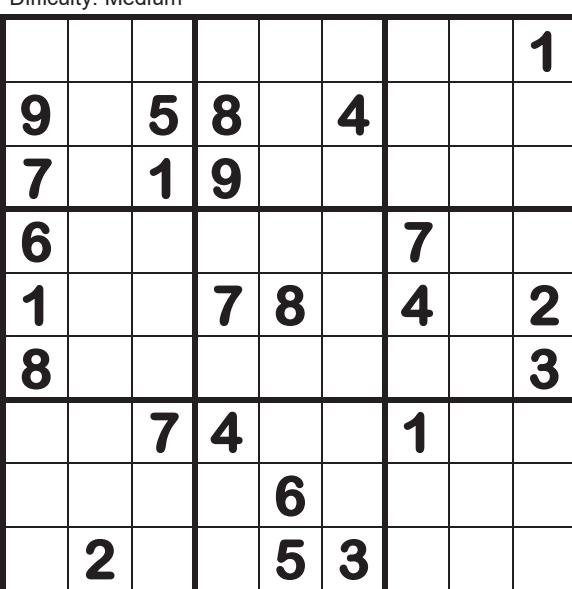
Answers to Previous Crossword:



SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

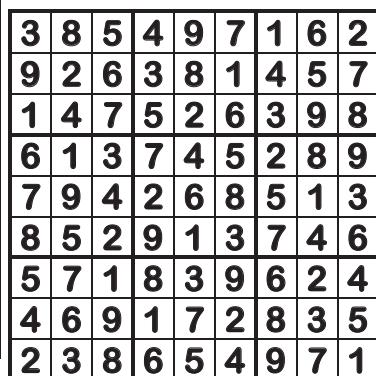


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HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:



Obituary



Marjorie Adams Bigelow

Marjorie Adams Bigelow (age 69) passed away peacefully on February 8th, surrounded by her beloved husband, Alden, and faithful dog, Elvis.

Born at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland on March 29, 1957, to Eleanor & Paul Adams, Marjorie was known for her amazing intellect, love of sports, and her generous caring spirit for her many nieces and nephews. She was raised in Arlington, VA and after graduation from Yorktown High School, she graduated as an Echols Scholar from the University of Virginia with a degree in Mathematics. She received a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Chicago, and after working in the private sector as a consultant for Booz Allen she returned to academics to complete a PhD in marketing at the University of Pennsylvania. She continued her love of marketing and teaching at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia where she was a student favorite because of her keen insights and thoughtful coaching.

Marjorie loved cheering for all UVa sports, the Washington Nationals, and the Washington Commanders (known then as the Redskins). She could keep up with her husband on the tennis court. She was not one to sit back and rest on her laurels, and after she left the academic world she continued a life of service serving on

several women's scholarships committees and volunteering at Caring for Creatures.

Marjorie's greatest joy was her family. She was the beloved wife of Alden Bigelow for 22 years. Together, they built a life on peaceful lake Monticello, centered on quiet faith, good humor, and daily dog walks.

She is survived by her siblings: Paul Adams, Mary Ferguson, Thomas Adams, and David Adams.

Her nieces and nephews: Kim Thompson, Stephanie Reding, Kevin Ferguson, Kelly Levy, Kathleen DuRoss, Eleanor Adams, Nicholas Adams, Benjamin Adams, and Laura Adams.

Her stepson Coleman (wife Maura) and her step-grandchildren: Molly, Ian and Maeve.

She was preceded in death by her parents Eleanor and Paul and her nephew Paul Adams.

A celebration of Marjorie's life will be held on February 28th at 11:00am at Grace Episcopal Church, 5607 Gordonsville Road, Keswick, VA.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to CaringforCreatures.org, an organization dear to Marjorie's heart.

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As power demand grows, Valley Link eyes Fluvanna corridor

Community meeting scheduled for March 10

BY HEATHER MICHON
EDITOR

A multibillion-dollar transmission line project known as Valley Link could reshape parts of Fluvanna County in the years ahead, and its developers are launching a series of community meetings across Central Virginia in March.

In total, the project would construct more than 400 miles of

765-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines across West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland, in part to carry electricity from the Ohio River Valley to energy-hungry data centers in Northern Virginia.

Valley Link is a joint venture of Dominion Energy, FirstEnergy, and Transource Energy and is part of a broader grid modernization effort overseen by

PJM Interconnection, a Pennsylvania-based regional transmission organization that manages the electric grid and wholesale power market across 13 states and the District of Columbia.

PJM has also identified Tenaska's proposed Expedition Generation plant as a project that could help meet the region's growing electricity demand.

Power superhighway

Most transmission lines in the United States operate at 230 kilovolts (kV) to 500 kV and are capable of moving large amounts of electricity over long distances.

By comparison, a 765 kV transmission line can carry roughly six times the electricity of a 345 kV line, while losing less energy in transit and requiring fewer parallel lines to deliver the same capacity – creating what some call

Valley Link, continues on page 6.

Letters to the Editor

County planning process

In an article here following the January county Planning Commission meeting, I noted comments by the planning commissioners that the comprehensive plan was vague, while Tenaska power plant reps said they meet the standards, and staff checked off the Comp Plan goals as if they are a score. So I wanted to remind them and us of some important considerations:

County planning commissioners are there to make a judgment call, guided by a comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans not are prescriptions. The goals in the Comp Plan are developed through a public process, involving the county citizens. They are called living documents, because they are always in flux to some extent, but are a record of the desires of the population for this particular place into the future.

This decision point provides the great opportunity to make a judgment that reflects the county's residents desires for the place's character into the

future, knowing that each decision tends to push future decisions one way or the other.

Once a development gets past this stage, it has to comply with permitting, state and federal standards. But know that those standards are always compromises, and they are changeable, with industrial lobbyists heavily involved in setting pollution and contaminations limits, and what is officially considered "healthy." The National Environmental Policy Act was passed in 1969, and somehow, air and water and land is still being polluted. Even more threatening -this administration can be safely assumed to be more interested in dismantling the US EPA than to enforce environmental protections.

We do not have to allow another petro industry development here. We can actually put our comprehensive plan to use, to hold to our vision and goals, and decide: that development does not fit in the future we want.

-Rebecca Smith, Palmyra

Vote NO in November

I feel the expansion of abortion rights in our state is unwise. Voters should be aware of the open-ended language of the proposed state amendment. It will allow abortion at any point in a pregnancy. Parental notification for minors will be threatened. Standards for who can perform abortions and for a safe clinic environment will be

lowered. Virginia will probably become the abortion destination of the South if this passes.

Please, citizens of Virginia, educate yourselves. Vote NO in November on the proposed amendment to the state constitution that makes it a "RIGHT" to terminate even more innocent human lives.

-Catherine Heffley, Palmyra

RUDY TALKS TAXES

BY RUDY GARCIA, OWNER, RIVANNA WOODS FINANCIAL / TAX SERVICES

Simple Ideas to Help Your Small Business

Here are several ideas to help your business grow and thrive.

• **Understand your cash flow.** One of the biggest causes of business failure is lack of understanding cash flow. At the end of the day, you need enough cash to pay your vendors and your employees. If you run a seasonal business you understand this challenge. The high season sales harvest needs to be ample enough to support you during the slow non-seasonal periods.

Recommendation: Create a 12-month rolling forecast of revenue and expenses to help understand your cash needs.

• **Know your pressure points.** When looking at your business, there are a few big items that drive your business success. Do you know the top four drivers of your financial success or failure? By staying focused on the key drivers of your business, success will be easier to come by.

Recommendation: Look at last year's tax return and identify the key financial drivers of your business. Do the same thing with your day-to-day operations and staffing.

• **Inventory matters.** If your business sells physical product, you need a good inventory management system. This system doesn't have to be complex, it just needs to help you keep control of your inventory. Cash turned into inventory that becomes stuck as inventory can create a major cash flow problem.

Recommendation: Develop an inventory system with periodic counts to ensure you do not have shrink or theft issues, and that can help identify when you need to take action to liquidate old inventory.

• **Know your customers.** Who are your current customers? Are there enough of them? Where can you get more of them? How loyal are they? Are they happy? Several large customers can drive your company's growth or create tremendous risk should they take their business to a competitor.



Recommendation: Know who your target audience is and then cater your business toward them and what they are looking for in your offerings.

• **Know your point of difference.** Once you know who your target customer is, understand why they buy your product or service. What makes you different from other businesses selling a similar item?

Recommendation: If you don't know what makes your business better than others, ask your key customers. They will tell you. Then take advantage of this information to generate new customers.

• **Develop a great support team.** Successful small business owners know they cannot do it all themselves. Do you have a good group of support professionals helping you? You need accounting, tax, legal, insurance, and employment help along with your traditional suppliers.

Recommendation: Conduct an annual review of your resources. Be prepared to review your suppliers and make improvements where necessary.

Sometimes focusing on a few basic ideas can help improve your business's outlook. Please call if you wish to discuss your situation.

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Valley Link
continued from page 5.

a "power superhighway."

Energy experts say the United States has lagged behind other nations in developing ultra-high-voltage transmission infrastructure. For example, in the 2020s, China completed more than 8,200 miles of ultra-high-voltage lines, compared with about 375 miles added in the United States during the same period.

The lag has been attributed to a range of factors, including high costs and lengthy permitting processes. Transmission projects can take five years or more to move from planning to construction, in part because they must navigate complex state and federal regulatory reviews.

Path uncertain

Valley Link is divided into three project segments in Virginia. Fluvanna County falls within the 115-mile Joshua Falls-to-Yeat segment, which would run from Campbell County to Culpeper County.

On its website, the company describes the segment as "one of the most important energy projects in Virginia's history," forming a "critical backbone" of the state's electric grid.

However, the exact path the line would take across Fluvanna County remains unclear. A map on the company's website shows two primary route options, along with two or more "route corridor variations."

How much the project affects residents may ultimately depend on how much land Valley Link needs to make its plans a reality.

Even if the new line generally follows existing transmission corridors, 765 kV lines typically require slightly wider rights-of-way than lower-voltage lines. If portions of the route extend beyond those existing corridors, the company would need to acquire additional property.

Large transmission projects in Virginia must receive approval from the Virginia State Corporation Commission before construction can begin.

If a certificate of public convenience and necessity is granted, utilities are generally authorized to use eminent domain to acquire easements when negotiations with landowners fail. Until such approval is issued, developers must rely on voluntary agreements with property owners.

An email seeking comment from project leadership about potential impacts and timelines was not returned before press time.

Residents will have three opportunities in March to learn more about the project. Valley Link has scheduled two virtual meetings on March 5 and March 16, both from noon to 1 p.m. Company representatives will also host an in-person presentation on March 10 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Fluvanna Community Center in Fork Union.

For more information about the project or to register for a virtual session, visit vltransmission.com/joshua-falls-to-yeat/

Fluvanna swimmers, divers advance to Region 3C

BY DUNCAN NIXON
CORRESPONDENT

On Feb. 2, the Fluco swim and dive team looked to secure final Region 3C qualifying times ahead of the Feb. 10 meet. Coach Michael DiFazio noted that swimmers and divers who had already posted Region-qualifying times or diving scores during the season did not compete in the qualifier.

The Flucos delivered a strong showing. Nine swimmers qualified across 12 events. In diving, three athletes had already surpassed the higher standard required for state qualification, automatically clearing the bar for Region competition.

At the qualifier, Riley Eubanks earned spots in the 100 free and

100 back. James Johnson qualified in the 200 IM and 100 breast, while Levi Rensch secured Region times in the 200 free and 500 free.

Single-event qualifiers included Madison Clark (200 free), Maya Hernandez (200 IM), Lexie Grey (500 free), Annika Potter (200 free), Reese Yowell (50 free), and Sean Brown (100 breast).

Clark and Potter had previously qualified in the 500 free and 100 free, respectively. Three Fluco swimmers qualified in two or more events during the season: Sophie Pace (50 free, 100 free), Josie Causo (100 breast, 500 free), and standout Abby Caruso, who posted Region times in six events — 50 free, 100 free, 200 free, 100 back, 100 fly, and 200 IM.

In diving, state-qualified athletes are Kayleigh Herring, Cash Johnson, and James Johnson.

As a team, the Flucos did not post top overall scores at the Feb. 10 Region meet, which featured 16

schools, including several perennial powerhouses. Still, the sheer number of qualifiers underscored the program's depth and steady progress this season.

THIS WEEK'S PET Tigger

Meet Tigger! Tigger is a charming, affectionate boy with a big heart and a little head tilt that makes him extra special. Due to a previous ear injury before entering our care, Tigger will likely have a permanent head tilt but don't worry, it doesn't slow him down or stop him from enjoying life to the fullest. What Tigger does is love people. He's incredibly affectionate and eager for attention, always happy to lean in for pets or curl up nearby. He's also quite the talker, a true chirper who will greet you with sweet little sounds and keep you company with his gentle commentary. Tigger is looking for a loving home that will appreciate his unique look and give him the affection he craves. If you're searching for a devoted, loving companion with tons of personality, Tigger is ready to steal your heart.

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EVENTS

CENTRAL VIRGINIA VETERANS holding their monthly 'G.I. style' breakfast on Saturday, February 28. Time 8:15 a.m. at Wahoo BBQ & Grill, Slice Road Gate, Lake Monticello. Cost \$12 per person (cash only please). Veterans and spouses/friends are welcome. Questions? Contact Paul Bethke (703) 965-8363.

3rd. ANNUAL ADULT PROM NIGHT: at the Fluvanna County High School on Saturday, March 21, from 7:00 to 11:00 PM. We're transforming the space into a dreamy springtime escape, Enchanted Garden theme with twinkle light, florals, think Whimsical. Music all night by DJ Breezy Brown. Photo Booth ! Questions? amandapdickinson@gmail.com

BINGO IS BACK ! at Lake Monticello Volunteer Fire & Rescue Squad, 10 Slice Road, every Friday night. Doors open at 5 p.m. First game at 6:30 p.m. Progressives, pull tabs, and a \$1000 jackpot every week! Cash only. No one under 16 allowed. All others welcome!! Join us for a fun & friendly night out.

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School Board eyes \$530K increase in FY27 budget

BY HEATHER MICHON
EDITOR

The Fluvanna County School Board moved a step closer Monday night to approving a proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget

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MACAA FOOD PANTRY NEW HOURS: Monday: 1 to 6 pm., Tuesday: NO food pick-up, Wednesday: 10 am to 2 pm., Thursday: 1 to 6 pm., Friday: 10 am to 2 pm., Saturday: Every 3rd Saturday of the Month from 10 am to 2 pm. Location: 8878 James Madison Hwy., Fork Union, VA. Phone (434) 842-2521.

VIRGINIA DEPT. OF VETERANS SERVICES: Need Help? Attention Veterans and Dependents! Visit us at the Fluvanna Community Center, 5725 James Madison Highway > by appointment only. Call Jeannette

that would increase the local funding request by \$530,727 — a 2.48% bump over the current year — while investing heavily in employee compensation, student supports, and long-dis-

Flint at (434) 529-6431 to schedule your appointment. www.dvs.virginia.gov

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2026 FSPCA SPONSORS: If you would like to sponsor a Pet of the Week photo, email edee@fluvannareview.com or call (434) 207-0221 no texts accepted. The pet photos are sent to us from the Fluvanna shelter each week. The photos help find forever homes for our four legged furry friends. You may place your business, special occasion, memorial narrative, etc. at the bottom of each pet picture.

VOLUNTEERS FOR MACAA FOOD PANTRY: We are seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help support MACAA's work in the Fluvanna community. Tasks: food pickups, sorting donations, stocking, packing boxes, checking in visitors, and other minor tasks. Volunteer hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., M-F. No prior experience needed – training will be provided. Call (434) 842-2521 or email foodpantry@macaa.org.

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cussed staffing needs.

Superintendent Dr. Peter Gretz described the proposal as a "needs-based budget," focused not simply on maintaining operations but on advancing the division's strategic goals.

"This is not what it takes to survive," Gretz told the board. "This is what we need in order to continue to move the division forward."

Compensation takes center stage

The largest portion of the proposed increase would go toward employee pay and benefits.

The budget calls for a 3% salary increase across all scales and pay bands. It also proposes that the division absorb a projected 9% increase in health insurance premiums rather than passing those costs on to employees.

Gretz presented side-by-side pay scenarios showing that without absorbing the insurance increase, some employees' take-home pay would actually decrease, even with a 3% raise.

Total investment in compensation and benefits is projected at \$1.79 million.

Several board members signaled strong support for that approach.

"I would support the schools absorbing the insurance for the employees," said Charles Rittenhouse (Cunningham). "We'll make a cut somewhere else."

The proposal also includes a series of staffing additions and contract adjustments, many of which have been discussed in prior years but not funded.

Gretz acknowledged that some requests were scaled back to part-time roles to remain fiscally conservative.

Still, he emphasized that the division's maintenance department remains lean compared to peer divisions and that growing case-loads in areas such as speech-language services have required costly outside contracting.

Cafeteria deficit addressed

One of the more substantial line items in the operating budget is a proposed \$300,000 placeholder to address ongoing cafeteria losses.



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Despite participating in the federal Community Eligibility Provision program, which provides free meals in certain schools, the division has seen its nutrition program operate at a deficit, driven in part by rising food costs and reimbursement rates that do not cover the full cost of meals.

Board members said the division has historically written checks at the end of the year to cover meal debt, and budgeting for that expense transparently is more responsible than absorbing it after the fact.

"If you're routinely writing a big check and you don't have it in your budget line, you're doing yourself a disservice," said James Kelley (Palmyra).

Offsets and state funding

The proposed spending increases are partially offset by higher projected state revenue and a reduction in the employer contribution rate to the Virginia Retirement System.

In total, the budget includes

\$4.44 million in new investments, offset by approximately \$3.9 million in savings and additional state funds, leaving the \$530,727 net increase in local funding.

Only one community member spoke during the public comment period, urging the board not to under-ask out of caution.

"Please ask for what you actually need," said Georgianna Joslin. "Pass a budget that reflects what is truly needed, not what feels safest to ask for. Our kids are worth it."

Board reaction largely supportive

Board members praised the budget comprehensiveness and the level of detail provided by staff.

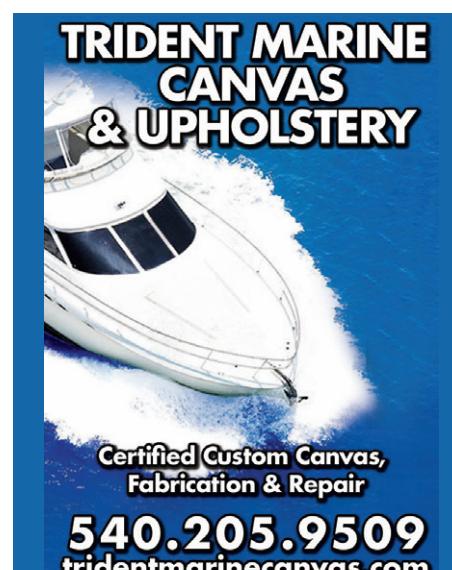
One member described the proposal as a "robust encapsulation of needs," while another noted that it represents the largest annual increase requested since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The board is scheduled to vote on the budget Feb. 18 before

presenting it to the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 25.

While the discussion on Monday centered largely on refining priorities — including whether to revisit funding for student attendance support or activities staffing — no member signaled opposition to the core proposal.

The next phase of the process, however, will shift the conversation from internal alignment to negotiations with county supervisors, who ultimately determine the local funding allocation.





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Supervisors consider policy change after Tenaska town hall is canceled

BY HEATHER MICHON
EDITOR

The cancellation of a Lake Monticello town hall on Tenaska's proposed second natural gas plant has exposed differing interpretations of Virginia's open-meeting law and prompted the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors to consider adding a policy to its bylaws limiting how many members may attend community events together.

The Lake Monticello Owners Association (LMOA) announced Feb. 10 that it was canceling a Feb. 12 town hall, where residents would have had the opportunity to question supervisors Tony O'Brien (Rivanna) and Tim Hodge (Palmyra), along with Tenaska representatives, about the proposed Expedition Generation project.

The cancellation was prompted by word that a third supervisor, Chris Fairchild of the Cunningham District, was also planning to attend.

"Under Virginia public meeting requirements, this would constitute a special session of the Board of Supervisors, which must be fully open and accessible to the public," LMOA said in an announcement Tuesday evening.

Fairchild said in a Facebook post Tuesday that he wanted to be there "merely as an audience member," and wrote that "Fluvanna's attorney advised that as long as I would not have participated in formal conversations my attendance as a citizen and LMOA member would not have been in violation, and the BOS would not have had to call a special meeting."

But LMOA Communications Director Marieke Henry said County Attorney Dan Whitten advised the association against holding the meeting if three supervisors were in attendance.

"The bottom line was his advice was not to have it," Henry said.

Open meeting law at issue

Megan Rhyne, executive director of the Virginia Coalition

for Open Government, said the Virginia Freedom of Information Act does not automatically treat the presence of three members of a public body at an event as a meeting.

"FOIA says that it is a meeting if three or more gather to talk about public business," Rhyne said. "The key is 'talk about' more than what is or isn't 'public business.'"

She said supervisors may attend forums or community gatherings so long as they do not discuss public business among themselves without proper notice.

"They can all go to the meeting, but they shouldn't be talking among themselves — even through a facilitator or mediator," she said. "Better still, they should sit apart from each other to remove the temptation and the perception that they're talking about public business."

However, if three or more members plan to discuss public business among themselves, notice must be given, and the meeting must be open to the public.

The differing interpretations hinge on whether the mere presence of three supervisors at a public forum constitutes a meeting under FOIA, or whether a meeting occurs only if they discuss public business among themselves.

Fluvanna County has long taken a stricter interpretation of FOIA.

"Since I have served on the Board, it has been the long-established practice that the presence of three members — regardless of whether one member remains silent — requires the calling of a special meeting," O'Brien said. "This practice originated under Fred Payne and was reaffirmed by Whitten in 2023."

In a Feb. 12 statement, the county said Whitten advised that if three or more supervisors attended and public business was discussed, the gathering would qualify as a "meeting" under Virginia Code § 2.2-3701 and would

Supervisors, continues on page 14.

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VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE COUNTY OF FLUVANNA

EDNA M. SMITH

Plaintiff,

v.

ALL PARTIES UNKNOWN, CLAIMING ANY LEGAL
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Defendants.

ORDER OF PUBLICATION

THIS MATTER is before the Court on the Plaintiffs Motion Seeking Order of Publication. This is an action wherein Plaintiff seeks to quiet title to a property located at Tax Map 51 (A) Parcel 58, a 20.904-acre parcel of undeveloped land in Fluvanna County (the "Property").

It appearing to the Court that the Complaint in this action (i) states that there are or may be persons, whose names are unknown, interested in the subject to be divided or disposed of; (ii) briefly describes the nature of such interest; and (iii) makes such persons defendants by the general description of "parties unknown," and for good cause shown and in accordance with Va. Code §§ 8.01-316 and 8.01-317, it is hereby

ORDERED that any parties unknown claiming an interest in the Property must make a written appearance within fifty (50) days of this Order if he or she wishes to assert or protect any interest he may have in this matter, and it is furthermore

ORDERED that the Clerk shall cause copies of this Order of Publication to be posted, mailed, and transmitted to the Fluvanna Review within twenty (20) days after the entry of this Order of Publication pursuant to Va. Code § 8.01-317, and it is furthermore

ORDERED that the above paragraphs be published once a week for four successive weeks in the Fluvanna Review, and it is furthermore

ORDERED that the Clerk shall file a certificate in the papers of this case that the requirements of Va. Code§ 8.01-317 have been complied with.

The Clerk of this Court shall post this Order at the front door of the courthouse pursuant to Va. Code § 8.01-317.

I ASKED FOR THIS:


Christopher Janszky, Esq. (VSB #99069)

MichieHamlett PLLC
310 4th St. NE, 2nd Floor • Charlottesville, VA 22902
P: (434) 951-7285 • F: (434) 951-7245 • cjanszky@michiehamlett.com • *Counsel for Edna M. Smith*

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Circuit Court Judge

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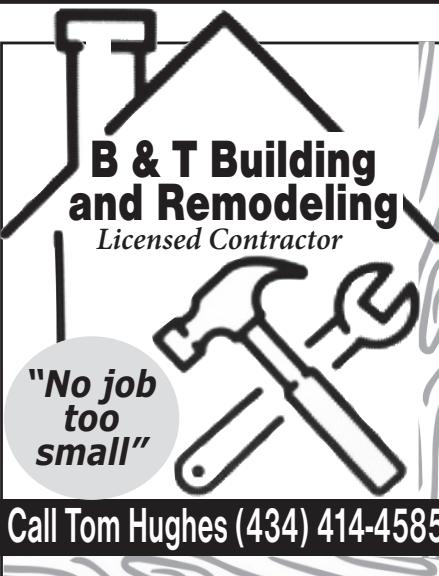
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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF A JOINT PETITION BY AMERICAN WATER WORKS COMPANY, INC., ALPHA MERGER SUB, INC., ESSENTIAL UTILITIES, INC., AND AQUA VIRGINIA, INC., FOR APPROVAL OF AN ACQUISITION OF CONTROL OF A PUBLIC UTILITY PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 5 OF TITLE 56 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA CASE NO. PUR-2025-00229

On December 22, 2025, American Water Works Company, Inc. ("American Water"), Alpha Merger Sub, Inc. ("Merger Sub"), Essential Utilities, Inc. ("Essential"), and Aqua Virginia, Inc. ("Aqua VA") (collectively, the "Joint Petitioners"), filed with the State Corporation Commission ("Commission") a joint petition ("Joint Petition") for approval of the indirect acquisition of control of Aqua VA by American Water, to be effected by the merger ("Merger") of Merger Sub with and into Essential, with Essential as the surviving corporation becoming a wholly-owned subsidiary of American Water. The Joint Petitioners seek approval pursuant to the Utility Transfers Act, Chapter 5 of Title 56 of the Code of Virginia ("Code"), which provides, in part, that "[n]o person . . . shall, directly or indirectly, acquire or dispose of control of . . . [a] public utility within the meaning of this chapter, or all of the assets thereof, without the prior approval of the Commission."

The Joint Petitioners represent that Aqua VA is a public service corporation that provides water and wastewater service to over 35,000 connections, or approximately 100,000 people, within its certificated service territories throughout Virginia. The Joint Petition further reflects that: (a) Aqua VA is a wholly owned subsidiary of Essential; (b) Essential is a publicly traded public utility holding company incorporated and headquartered in Pennsylvania, providing water, wastewater, and natural gas service to approximately 5.5 million people through subsidiaries in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois, Kentucky, Texas and Virginia; (c) American Water is a public utility holding company organized and existing under the laws of Delaware and headquartered in New Jersey, providing water and wastewater services to approximately 14 million people with regulated operations in 14 states and on 18 military installations; (d) American Water's subsidiary Virginia-American Water Company ("VAWC") currently provides water and wastewater services to over 84,000 customer connections, or over 350,000 people in Virginia; and (e) Merger Sub is a Pennsylvania corporation and a wholly owned subsidiary of American Water that was formed for the sole purpose of effecting the Merger.

According to the Joint Petitioners, on October 26, 2025, American Water, Merger Sub, and Essential entered into a Merger Agreement providing that, upon the terms and subject to the conditions set forth in the Merger Agreement, Merger Sub would merge with and into Essential, with Essential surviving the Merger as a wholly owned subsidiary of American Water. Following consummation of the Merger, Aqua VA would become an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of American Water and American Water would remain the ultimate corporate parent of VAWC. The Joint Petition states that the Merger would be an allequity transaction, with Essential shareholders receiving 0.305 shares of American Water common stock for each share of Essential common stock that they hold.

The Joint Petitioners assert that following the Merger, Aqua VA's utility business would remain unchanged and day-to-day operations of Aqua VA would continue to be locally managed by dedicated local employees. Joint Petitioners state that they are not seeking a change of rates in this proceeding and that Aqua VA's Commission-approved rates and tariffs in effect at the close of the Merger would remain unchanged as a result of the Merger. Additionally, Joint Petitioners commit that Aqua VA would not seek recovery in rates of any transaction costs incurred in connection with the Merger or any acquisition adjustment (i.e., goodwill) associated with the Merger. Joint Petitioners assert that the Merger would enable Joint Petitioners to achieve efficiencies in the future, the benefits of which would accrue to Aqua VA and ultimately flow to customers in future rate cases. According to the Joint Petition, those economies would help offset future increases in the costs of providing regulated water and wastewater service and are expected to give rise, over time, to lower rates than otherwise would be the case. In support of the Merger, the Joint Petitioners assert that the combined expertise, experience, and resources of American Water and Essential would permit the sharing of best practices and lead to operational efficiency and a long-term capital investment profile to support continued investment in critical infrastructure and solutions to infrastructure challenges across the combined company's expanded footprint, including in the territories served by Aqua VA in the Commonwealth.

Additional details are set forth in the Joint Petition. Interested persons are encouraged to review the Joint Petition and supporting exhibits.

The Commission entered an Order for Notice and Comment that, among other things, directed the Joint Petitioners to provide notice of their Joint Petition and provided interested persons an opportunity to comment or request a hearing on the Joint Petition.

To promote administrative efficiency and timely service of filings upon participants, the Commission will, among other things, direct that all pleadings, briefs, or other documents required to be served in this matter be submitted electronically to the extent authorized by 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, 5 VAC 5-20-10 *et seq.* ("Rules of Practice"). Confidential and Extraordinarily Sensitive Information shall not be submitted electronically and should comply with 5 VAC 5-20-170, *Confidential information*, of the Rules of Practice. At this time, any person seeking to hand deliver and physically file or submit any pleading or other document shall contact the Clerk's Office Document Control Center at (804) 371-9838 to arrange delivery.

Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice, the Commission directs that service on parties and the Commission Staff ("Staff") in this matter shall be accomplished by electronic means. Concerning Confidential or Extraordinarily Sensitive Information, the parties and Staff are instructed to work together to agree upon the manner in which documents containing such information shall be served upon one another, to the extent practicable, in an electronically protected manner, even if such information is unable to be filed in the Office of the Clerk, so that no party or the Staff is impeded from preparing its case.

Electronic copies of the public version of the Joint Petition and the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment may be obtained by submitting a written request to counsel for Joint Petitioners: Timothy E. Biller, Esq., Andrea D. Gardner, Esq., Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, Riverfront Plaza, East Tower, 951 East Byrd Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, tbiller@hunton.com, agardner@hunton.com and John K. Byrum, Jr., Esq., Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black PLC, 901 E. Byrd Street, Suite 1600, Richmond, Virginia 23219, john.byrum@woodsrogers.com. Interested persons also may download unofficial copies from the Commission's website: scc.virginia.gov/case-information.

On or before March 24, 2026, any interested person may file comments on the Joint Petition by following the instructions found on the Commission's website: scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submit-public-comments or by filing such comments with the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2025-00229.

On or before March 24, 2026, any interested person or entity wishing to participate as a respondent in this proceeding may do so by filing a notice of participation with the Clerk of the Commission at the address above or at: scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel. Pursuant to Rule 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice, any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation, or governmental body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by Rule 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2025-00229.

On or before March 24, 2026, any interested person or entity may file with the Clerk of the Commission at scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling a request that the Commission convene a hearing on the Joint Petition. Those unable, as a practical matter, to file the hearing request electronically may file such hearing request by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Requests for a hearing shall include: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent known; (iii) a statement of the legal basis for such action; and (iv) a precise statement why a hearing should be conducted in this matter. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2025-00229.

Copies of any notices of participation and requests for hearing shall be served electronically on counsel for Joint Petitioners, Staff and any respondents.

Any documents filed in paper form with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission in this docket may use both sides of the paper. In all other respects, except as modified by the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment, all filings shall comply fully with the requirements of 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice.

The public version of the Joint Petition, the Commission's Rules of Practice, and the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment may be viewed at the Commission's website: scc.virginia.gov/case-information.

**AMERICAN WATER WORKS COMPANY, INC.,
ALPHA MERGER SUB, INC., ESSENTIAL UTILITIES, INC.,
AND AQUA VIRGINIA, INC.**

Supervisors, continued from page 10.

require formal notice as a special meeting open to the public.

The county cited the 2023 Virginia Supreme Court decision in *Gloss v. Wheeler*. In that case, the court held that a gathering of four Prince William County supervisors to discuss public

business constituted a meeting subject to FOIA notice requirements.

After reviewing the county's statement, Rhyne said the county attorney appeared to be taking a cautious approach.

"It sounds like the county attorney is erring on the side of caution," she said. "While I think there is a little more wiggle room — that they can attend without calling a special meeting, so long as they don't talk amongst themselves — the attorney seems to want to remove the temptation for them to even be in a position where they might have that group conversation. As a citizen, I would appreciate that caution."

Fallout and next steps

O'Brien said he requested that LMOA cancel the meeting after discussions arose about whether a third supervisor's at-

tendance would trigger FOIA requirements and create potential legal exposure.

He said a last-minute alternative format had been proposed but that, in his view, it still introduced "unnecessary legal risk." He added that a closed session was scheduled Feb. 11 to further evaluate the issue, making it impractical to proceed on Feb. 12.

"At no point was I under the impression that Tony O'Brien didn't want to have this meeting," said Marieke Henry. She said LMOA's decision to cancel was ultimately based on the county's legal guidance and practical considerations.

A special meeting open to the public could have strained the association's security resources and physical capacity. Henry noted that Lake Monticello's main meeting room holds about 50 people, with limited space for

overflow.

At its Feb. 18 meeting, the Board is scheduled to consider codifying new language in its bylaws addressing community engagement.

The proposed policy would allow individual supervisors to hold or participate in town halls and other community gatherings at their discretion, but limit attendance to no more than two board members at any such event.

Because FOIA defines a meeting as a gathering of three or more members to discuss public business, the two-member limit would prevent such events from triggering special meeting requirements in the future.

Depending on the outcome of the Feb. 18 vote, O'Brien said a new town hall may be scheduled in early March.



Innisfree Painters bring color to library walls

Exhibit runs through Feb. 27

BY PAIGE H. GIFFORD
CORRESPONDENT

Work by students of the Innisfree Painters watercolor group is currently on display at the Fluvanna County Public Library.

The exhibit features pieces created under the guidance of Linda Bethke, a Fluvanna Art Association member, founder of the Innisfree Painters, and a longtime watercolor instructor. Students worked within set themes, choosing either landscapes or still life.

The collection is light and inviting overall, showcasing a confi-

dent grasp of watercolor technique. In several pieces, artists push further, hinting at deeper emotion and atmosphere.

Trish Dalkin's *Fanciful* pairs bold color with a softness that keeps the composition grounded. Debbie Morrow's *Where the Moon Rests* leans impressionistic, evoking an ethereal, dreamlike mood.

Diane Kerr presents two works, *Stillness in Balance* and *Stillness in Motion*, both notable for their rich color and careful precision. In *Stillness in Balance*, polished stones arranged in a column serve as the focal point, rendered with striking detail and harmonious complementary

tones. In *Stillness in Motion*, delicate yet confident brushstrokes suggest subtle movement in koi fish gliding beneath the surface.

Jeni Flathers adds a touch of surprise in her rustic barn scene by placing a bright yellow plane in the foreground, shifting the viewer's attention and adding an unexpected narrative element.

Fluvanna Art Association member Nancy Shaffer continues her artistic evolution from decorative arts to acrylic and now watercolor. Her *Flowers for Sarah* blends strong and soft washes with crisp detail, while *Ocean Mysteries* conveys turbulence and emotion, waves crashing in dark, clear tones against

the rocks, softened by a distant glimmer of light.

"My favorite moments teaching watercolor are when students begin to see the purple shadows beneath the trees, the quiet textures of bark, and the way light moves in the world," Bethke said. "Capturing that on paper is not easy. Watercolor asks us to plan ahead and protect the light, for its glow doesn't come from paint but the paper itself."

Bethke said she is grateful for her talented students and enjoys guiding them as they develop their craft.

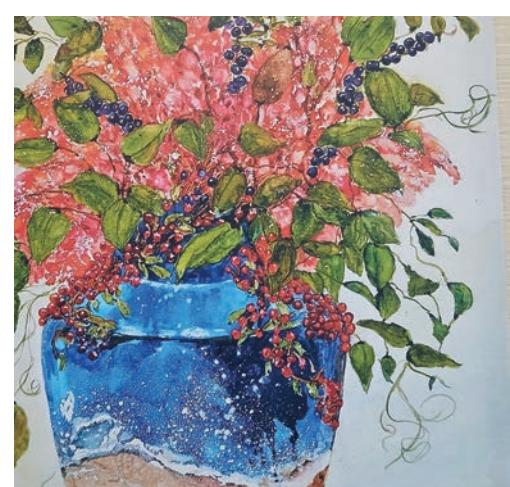
The exhibit runs through Feb. 27.



Debbie Morrow - Where The Moon Rests



Diane Kerr - Stillness in Motion



Flowers For Sarah by Nancy Shaffer



LAKE VIEWS

NEWS FROM YOUR LAKE MONTICELLO NEIGHBORS



LMOA Holds 4th of July T-Shirt Design Contest

Lake Monticello Owners' Association (LMOA) is looking for three t-shirt designs to help celebrate America's 250th Birthday during LMOA's annual Independence Day celebrations. Submit designs by March 1, 2026, online or by dropping them off at Member Services (41 Ashlawn Blvd.). Designs should be patriotic in nature and represent Lake Monticello in an appropriate and respectful manner. The three categories are:

- 5K Spirit Run
- Swim Across the Lake
- 250th at Lake Monticello

Staff will narrow designs down to the top 5, and voting will be open to the community on March 4th. The winner will be announced on April 6, 2026 and will receive a T-shirt with their design as well as an LMOA "swag bag". The shirt and corresponding merchandise will be available for residents to purchase online starting in the spring. **Please note:** Participants must be 18 or older and understand that the rights to the winning design will become the property of LMOA.

Run For the LMOA Board!

If you live at the Lake, be on the lookout for Members in good standing who are petitioning to run for the board or propose a policy change. Currently, there are six Candidate Petitions and one Member Proposal Petition in circulation at Lake Monticello! To qualify by March 30, 2026, those petitioning will need at least 150 signatures from fellow Members in good standing. If you are interested in picking up a packet, there's still

plenty of time! Your participation is welcome, as there are four LMOA Board of Directors positions to fill. Visit Member Services at 41 Ashlawn Blvd. or email Executive Assistant Megan Fitzgerald for info at mfitzgerald@lmoa.org.

Laughter Yoga with Hygeia Wellness Park

Join instructor Marge Thompson for Laughter Yoga in the Ashlawn Clubhouse Lake Room on February 21, 2026, at 2 PM. When you laugh, you burn calories and all your body systems are affected in a positive manner! No special equipment needed. Confirm your spot with Cynthia Moore at cynhygeia145@gmail.com.

Lake Job Opportunities

Golf Course Mechanic: Lake Monticello Golf Course is looking for a dependable and experienced Golf Course Mechanic to help keep our course and equipment in top condition. For more information, call the Golf Pro Shop at 434-589-3075.

Police Officer: The Lake Monticello Police Department (LMPD) is seeking qualified individuals who have been Virginia-certified police officers in good standing within the past 5 years and are eligible to be re-certified. LMPD is one of 9 authorized Private Police Departments in Virginia. This is a unique opportunity to serve a non-traditional police agency and is ideal for a recently retired police officer. If you are interested, please visit CAREERS at lmoa.org.

Pool Positions: Our pool is hiring for several exciting summer positions, including Front Desk Attendants, Lifeguards, and an Assistant Manager. Please email questions to lakemonticellopool@gmail.com.

FLOC Shares a Helpful Tip About Storm Water

This tip about stormwater management is brought to you by the LMOA Facilities & Lake Operations Committee: As the snow and ice begin to melt and we look ahead towards spring, now is a great time to consider implementing a Stormwater Best Management Practice (BMP) on your property. A Stormwater BMP is a method used to manage and treat rainwater runoff in a way that protects the environment. Examples include rain gardens, native plantings, or rainwater harvesting systems, all designed to reduce pollution and improve water quality. For tips and opportunities, visit the Thomas Jefferson Soil & Water Conservation District website and check out the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP).

Sign up for a Free Virginia Safe Boating Course

Are you ready for spring and getting back out on the water? Boating season is just around the corner, and now is the perfect time to prepare! Join the Volunteer Water Safety Team for a FREE Virginia Safe Boating Course on February 28 from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM at the Ashlawn Clubhouse. This interactive course fulfills the Virginia State boating

safety requirement for PWC and motorboat operators ages 14 and up. Upon completion, participants will receive a boating safety card that is recognized throughout the state and country, and it never expires. Topics include: Safe Boating Practices, Navigation Rules, Virginia Boating Laws, and Emergency Procedures. Register for the course at www.register-ed.com/events/view/241280

Ladies Learn About Golf Leagues Over Breakfast

Spring is right around the corner, and so is the Lake Monticello Ladies Golf Association's (LMLGA) annual breakfast meeting. It is Open to all women interested in learning more about the women's leagues at Lake Monticello that start in April 2026. Join them for breakfast downstairs in the Ashlawn Clubhouse, on Tuesday, March 10, from 9:30 - 11:30 AM. The cost is \$5 for former players signing up for a league, but FREE for new interested players seeking information! The Ashlawn Clubhouse is located at 41 Ashlawn Blvd.

Registration OPEN for Senior Men's Golf Group

The Gray Foxes have opened registration for thire upcoming season, which will start on Tuesday, March 24 for 9-hole players and Thursday, March 26 for the 18-hole players. The registration form is available at the Pro Shop at 51 Bunker Blvd. Please complete the form clearly and submit it with the \$75 fee by March 17 to secure your spot for the new season.

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2515 Ducks lake Ridge Fluvanna \$539,900

- 13.9 Acres
- 4 Bedrooms 3.5 Baths
- Two Primary Suites

Gunnels Group 434-361-4987
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NEW LISTING



503 Jefferson Dr. Lake Monticello \$374,900

- 4 Bedrooms 2.5 Bathst
- Fresh Paint and Carpet
- Formal Dining Room

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NEW LISTING



15 Smokewood Dr. Lake Monticello \$359,000

- Newly Remodeled
- New HVAC, Roof, Water Heater
- Partially Finished Basement

Diane Miller 434-960-5856
DianeMiller@earthlink.net



NEW PRICE



NEW PRICE



42 Cliftwood Rd. Fluvanna \$695,000



- Amazing Views
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DianeMiller@earthlink.net

NEW PRICE



340 Jefferson Dr. Lake Monticello \$342,000



- Freshly Painted
- Updated Kitchen
- Formal Dining Room

Peggy Shanklin 434-962-2762
Peggy.Shanklin@lnf.com

NEW LISTING



28 Out Of Bounds Lake Monticello \$469,000

- Golf Front
- Single Level Living
- Workshop

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NEW LISTING



22 Villa Ave Spring Creek \$524,950

- Formal Dining Room
- Vaulted Morning Room
- First Floor Office

Gunnels Group 434-361-4987
Maggie@GunnelsGroup.com



NEW PRICE



281 Manor Blvd Fluvanna \$569,900



- Single Level Living
- 3,300 Sq Ft of Living Space
- Partially Finished basement

Peggy Shanklin 434-962-2762
Peggy.Shanklin@lnf.com

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