



# Mount Vernon Civic Association, Inc.

Late Spring 2021

[www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org](http://www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org)

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear MVCA Members:

There are three projects that have a direct impact on our MVCA community. I write to bring them to your attention.

**First**, Fairfax County recently approved significant changes in zoning rules, known as **zMOD**. In my letter to you in our Spring MVCA Newsletter, I raised concerns that the proposed zMOD zoning changes would no longer require informing us or allow input when a neighbor planned to make changes to their property, add an Accessible Living Unit, or put up a sign and provide parking for two businesses. They also proposed limiting the number and size of American flags we might want to fly. Many of you heeded my request to oppose these zoning changes by raising your concerns with our Supervisors. Thank you. While the Supervisors modified a few of the zMOD requirements, they approved zMOD as a whole.

The reason I raise this issue again is my concern that Fairfax County's overall intent continues to be not allowing us to provide input before an adjacent property is changed. Worse, only the developer and a Fairfax County employee will make that decision. I am not an expert on zoning issues – far from it – but I invite those who are concerned about this issue to join together, divide up the 700-page zMOD document, and determine if in fact we have lost the right to be informed. If so, I propose that we join with other associations and contest this issue. If you are interested in participating in this effort, or are willing to lead the group, please contact me.

Why is this issue so important?

- Our right to speak on our behalf has been abrogated. We should at least be able to be heard.
- For the more than 416,000 homeowners in Fairfax County, our homes are often our greatest financial asset and we need the right to protect that asset.
- A recent zoning proposal demonstrates my concerns. Fairfax County is now proposing to build on the old Hybla Valley Nursery site (across from Lowes) a new fire station, with five-stories of affordable apartments built above the fire station and a homeless shelter. While there may be a need for a homeless shelter, this plan makes absolutely no sense and community members are very concerned that it is “a done deal.”

Some have argued, when we raise concerns about these zoning changes, that we are trying to limit affordable housing. That is not the case. In the Mount Vernon District, we currently have 1,368 affordable rental homes and 404 more are being built (125 in The Arden and 279 in North Hill). There are also 3,064 market-affordable homes in the Mount Vernon District for a total of 4,832 affordable homes.

Yes, more affordable housing is needed. But such homes are most successful when placed on main thoroughfares, with affordable transportation options, accessible stores and community service organizations located close by.

*Continued on Page 2*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*Continued from Page 1*

**Second**, the United States National Park Service has just released their plan to make the **George Washington Parkway** safer by re-stripping the road down to three lanes in what is called "traffic calming." Our Public Safety, Zoning and Transportation Chairmen are just starting to review the proposal. We welcome you to review it and give us your insights. With some of the fast speeds being traveled on that road, I am not sure how reducing the lanes to three makes it any safer. The following is the information from the Park Service:

On Monday, May 10, the National Park Service (NPS), George Washington Memorial Parkway, will hold a virtual Neighborhood Educational Event that focuses on the recently released George Washington Memorial Parkway Traffic and Safety Context Sensitive Solutions Assessment. The study makes recommendations for improvements based on the 3E's (Enforcement, Education and Engineering) model for improved traffic safety.

During the meeting, NPS:

- Provided an overview of the study,
- Shared their plans to implement the study's recommendations,
- Answered questions about the study.

You can access the meeting by clicking on the link above or by visiting our website at [go.nps.gov/SouthGWMPNextSteps](http://go.nps.gov/SouthGWMPNextSteps)

**Third** and finally, we are very pleased that **Washington Mill Elementary School (WMES)** is being totally remodeled. It has been needed for a long time. But this is also the largest construction project in our community for the next few years and our MVCA residents living on Continental and Cherrytree are most affected by the noise, debris, traffic, etc. We are working with our homeowners, WMES principal, and those doing the construction to anticipate and mitigate problems before they occur. In this Newsletter is a schedule of proposed projects and whom to contact if you have concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 703-360-0257.

**Tom Russell**  
*President, MVCA*

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MATT MATHES

## UPDATE ON SALE OF RIVER FARM

On April 13, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of Wellington at River Farm Historic Overlay District (WHOD). The vote was 9-0 with one abstention. WHOD was in response to the actions of the property owner, the American Horticultural Society (AHS), which announced that they were listing the property for \$32.9 million.

According to a staff presentation on the proposed WHOD, it would serve as a zoning tool that would promote “the general welfare... through the identifications, preservation, and enhancement of those building, structures, neighborhoods, landscapes, places, and area that have historical, cultural, architectural and archaeological significance.”

River Farm remains on the market. AHS declined a purchase offer from NOVA Parks and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. The property at 7931 East Boulevard Drive has served as AHS headquarters since the 1970's, when local philanthropist, Enid A. Haupt, donated \$1 million to help them purchase the property.

The latest news is that a split in the American Horticultural Society's leadership could complicate the nonprofit organization's plan to sell George Washington's historic River Farm property.

Five members of the nonprofit's board of directors in late April issued a statement stating their opposition to the sale. They also called on other AHS members, donors, government officials and members of the public to take action to preserve the 27.6-acre site and its public access.

Board members said they could no longer remain silent about their opposition as they had been directed to do by fellow board members.

AHS board chair Terry Hayes said in an email that the sale would proceed based on a majority vote that occurred before several members left the board, leaving 10 members who are now evenly divided.

None of the five dissenting board members could be reached for comment. But Virginia Sen. Scott A. Surovell (D-Fairfax), who successfully sponsored legislation to protect the historical resources at the property and ensure public access, confirmed the statement's authenticity. “The wheels are coming off,” Surovell said in an interview, citing the mounting opposition to AHS's putting the site up for sale and what now appears to be a 50-50 split on the organization's 10-member board.

The development comes as state and local officials have entered negotiations to acquire the land as a park and preserve its historic value and public access. Earlier this month, Fairfax County modified the zoning regulations of the property to protect its historic resources by creating a “historic overlay district” around River Farm. The regulations cannot stop development, but it gives local officials more say in how the property can be used.

The foundation that made AHS's purchase possible nearly 50 years ago also has voiced opposition to the sale. And attorneys general in Virginia and the District of Columbia have opened an investigation into its legality considering AHS's nonprofit status and because the granting of the land called for the preservation of River Farm as green space for public use. Meanwhile, a coalition of conservationists, led by the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and the NOVA Parks, has been in talks with AHS about buying the land.

AHS stunned neighbors last year by putting River Farm on the market for \$32.9 million, saying the proceeds would help create an endowment that would allow the gardening society to widen its mission. The society was able to purchase the historic manor and gardens in 1973 only with the help of a \$1 million gift from Enid Annenberg Haupt, a philanthropist who gave widely to public botanical gardens.

## EDUCATION REPORT

Beginning April 27, Mount Vernon High School (MVHS) began bringing in-person students for four days of instruction, with a priority on students with the greatest academic and social emotional challenges.

MVHS, a Virginia Purple Star designee, has more than 20% of its students being part of a military family. The month of April was designated as Month of the Military Child, in which MVHS acknowledged and celebrated our military connected students.

In 2017, a report by the Center on Society and Health at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), commissioned by the Northern Virginia Health Foundation (NVHF), found 15 “islands of disadvantage” where people face multiple, serious challenges, interspersed among the region’s wealthy communities.

Our community along the Route 1 corridor is one of the "15 islands of disadvantage." Many of these students attend MVHS, and have been severely impacted by the pandemic. In 2019, MVHS had over 60% of its population on free and reduced lunch.

We anticipate even more students to be eligible for this program in 2021-2022. MVHS staff, MVHS PTSA and MVHS’ student-led Rotary Interact Club are working directly and indirectly with the Capital Area Food Bank to provide food resources to our hungry students.

One way the community can help is by contributing to the MVHS Rotary Interact Club's Digital Food Drive: <https://give.capitalareafoodbank.org/team/351385> , or contact Sherry Nachnani, MVHS PTSA President: [sherrynachnani@gmail.com](mailto:sherrynachnani@gmail.com) for more information.

### *Washington Mill Elementary School Renovation Update*

#### **Summer 2021**

The following construction projects will be completed: Main Office, Gym, Library, SAAC rooms and starting the new addition.

#### **Fall 2021 thru Spring 2022**

Complete the new addition, move grades 3-6 inside, move grades K-2 outside to quads and trailers, and complete classrooms on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of older part of the main building.

#### **2022**

Complete playground.

If you have concerns or questions please call, Brad Bennink, WMES Principal, at 703-619-2500 or Tom Russell at 703- 360-0257.



## Public Safety

New FCPD Chief Kevin Davis has been selected by the County Board of Supervisors to lead and manage the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) in its many law enforcement and related missions.

He is a law enforcement professional and has held key posts in Baltimore City (Police Commissioner), and in the Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County Police Departments.

### **National Park Service (NPS) Proposals to Improve Safety on the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP)**

The Superintendent of the GWMP briefed a joint Zoom meeting of the MVCCA Public Safety and Transportation Committees with an extensive array of proposals to reduce speeds, limit left hand turns, improve pavement markings, etc.

The Superintendent answered queries in the Q & A period and noted that he and his staff would like to have a follow-up meeting in a few months. John Reiser (Transportation) and John Hurley (Public Safety) were your reps at the meeting.

The Study was aimed particularly at the portion of the GWMP from the City/County line to Stratford Landing and has not yet released any information re: the adjoining Mount Vernon Trail (pedestrians, bicyclists) nor on the Mount Vernon Circle. The portion of the study that attracted the most attention (pro and con) was to limit the number of traffic lanes at certain points.

It appears that 2020 and 2021 to the present were very light regarding tourist buses/coaches and work commuter auto trips so the proposed lane reductions may prove to be ineffective when full



traffic returns particularly since there are few medians and almost no shoulders. The proposals from attendees to limit left-hand turns such as at Morningside also had both pro and con advocates.

### **Spring-Early Summer PS Reminders**

Please:

- Be alert to school-buses and their passengers-when in doubt stop
- Large construction vehicles are active on 235 and Cherrytree en route to and from the WMES project
- Try to keep garages and parked cars locked
- Be alert to preventing BBQ-fires and accidents
- Do not pour BBQ-fire starter onto a lit fire nor on to ashes
- Keep BBQ rigs away from under porch decks and away from vinyl siding
- Use exterior lighting and motion-sensitive sensors
- Call 911 for help in an emergency

Your Neighbor,

**John Hurley**

# HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

## COVID-19 Hospitalizations Among Younger Age Groups

As a university professor, I am frequently among students within the age groups of 18-25. This year, I had to substitute for a professor who is on medical leave, teaching her undergraduate courses (I teach MA and PhD courses). During one of my classes, students excitedly shared with me their spring break plans which included: going to popular beach towns and to “hot spot” COVID states for vacation. As I reminded them of COVID-19 and being safe, the responses were even more surprising: assuming they are young, healthy with no underlying medical issues, they will never get COVID-19.

Fast forward to two weeks after spring break, I received numerous copies of COVID-19 positive test results from hospitals within the DMV area. I also received updates on my students being on ventilators. One of the nurses who is treating two of my students at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital kept me updated on their status. During one of our phone calls, she stated since March 15, 2021 a sharp increase of COVID-19 cases has been witnessed

and feels the hospitals are going back to the beginning of the pandemic in 2020.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has been tracking data and it aligns with the COVID-19 hospital notes I have received for my students, approximately 6,300 young people between the ages of 15-29 within the U.S. have tested positive for COVID-19. The after-effects of COVID-19 are of greater concern. While there’s no confirmed data currently, doctors are reporting their young patients recovering from COVID-19 with underlying health concerns that was never present – e.g., memory loss, fatigue, heart murmurs, asthma, difficulty breathing and emerging signs of developing type 2 diabetes.

As the semester is ending, my computer’s Zoom screen is showing less and less students with a grim possibility that they will not finish the semester. In the coming weeks, I look forward to receiving information from the CDC on the after-effects of COVID-19 among individuals ages 18-29.

**Danielle Thompson**  
*Health & Human Services Chair*

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**Chris.White@LNF.com | 703.283.9028**



We love the Mount Vernon community and have appreciated the support now and through the years. We hope everyone is staying healthy and safe. We hope to reopen our doors soon and look forward to seeing you all again. In the meantime, we are open for carryout Tuesday through Sunday. See our website for full hours and menus.

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Mount Vernon Civic Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 61, Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121

**Save the Date!**  
MVCA Picnic  
**Saturday, September 11, 2021**

### Mount Vernon Civic Association, Inc.

#### Officers

President: Tom Russell.....703-360-0257  
1st Vice President: Jason Leaver .....703-799-6739  
2nd Vice President: Karan Cerutti .....703-778-4442  
Secretary: Lisa Faustlin.....303-396-5164  
Treasurer: Sarah Fidd .....703-772-3688

#### Directors

John Hurley .....703-799-9353  
Dan Rinzel .....703-360-4627  
Sean McCarthy .....703-360-0372

#### Committee Chairs

Air Traffic: Poul Hertel.....703-780-1909  
Block Captain: Jorie ODonnell.....703-765-6470  
Budget: Kirsten Quackenbush.....kirsten.quackenbush@gmail.com  
Education: Sarah Fidd .....703-772-3688  
Environment & Recreation: Gale Curcio.....703-360-3621  
Health: Danielle Thompson .....danielletnthawaii@gmail.com  
Membership/Directory: Luigi Tenore .....703-861-7041  
Neighborhood Watch: Ted Thompson .....703-780-1972  
Picnic: Mary Jo Jensen.....248-245-7224  
Planning & Zoning: Karan Cerutti .....703-778-4442  
Public Safety: John Hurley .....703-799-9353  
Transportation: John Reiser .....703-780-4824  
Web: Jess Mazur .....www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org

### MVCA Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 12, 2021; 7:30 p.m.

Our next MVCA Membership Meeting will be held virtually, Wednesday, May 12 starting at 7:30 pm. Our special speaker will be Tammy Mannarino, who will talk to us about the latest developments at River Farm, as well as the background of the house and the property. Mannarino is a member of the Fairfax County History Commission representing the Mount Vernon area. Time permitting, she will also touch on some of the other major historical properties in the county that are in danger of being developed and take your questions.

**Using the Internet:** Go to Zoom, put in meeting number **634 598 1220** and passcode **#743225** if requested.

**From your phone:** Dial (301) 715-8592, when asked use **634 598 1220#** and then passcode **743225**.

**Zoom Link:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6345981220?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6345981220?pwd=NjhLSHM2MTJ0eEMyN3NZOXZjbjZOUT09)  
pwd=NjhLSHM2MTJ0eEMyN3NZOXZjbjZOUT09