

SPRING 2024

# Mount Vernon Civic Association



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## March Association Meeting

*Please join us on March 13, 2024, 7:00 PM at Washington Mill Elementary School Library for our MVCA Association meeting. Pizza at 7, followed by a presentation on Fraud Basics, and MVCA updates.*

*Mr. Martin Bailey, an AARP Community Ambassador, will teach us how to spot and stop the most common fraud scams. Bring your questions!*

*Save the dates for the future 2024 MVCA Association Meetings: May 8 and October 9.*

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE!**

## 2024 MVCA ANNUAL PICNIC!

Save the date of May 13, from 1-5! It will be held again at the St James Episcopal Church at 5614 Old Mill Rd.

The picnic is free for any MVCA resident! Please drop by anytime for food, conversation, and games. We will have live music, pickle ball, cornhole, bounce house, kid's games, food, and soft drinks. We will have catering again from Mission BBQ. Don't be too late or the BBQ may be gone! Our local First Responders normally come, and you will have an opportunity to thank them for all that they do. Dan Storck, our Mount Vernon District Supervisor, typically comes and provides an update on local issues. Our other elected officials will be invited as well. We hope to see you there!

## 2024 MVCA Dues

*Our Membership Application was mailed in early February, with a request to have one's annual dues submitted February 29th. As of that date, we had received about two thirds of the number paid last year. Please consider submitting your renewal or first time payment. The big outlays are for our annual picnic, and our quarterly newsletters. We hope you enjoy this edition, and recommend you read Dr. Bernad's article for some fascinating local history!*

*If you paid your dues in 2023 or 2024, and did not receive a 2023-2024 Directory, please reach out to your Block Captain, if known. If unknown, you may reach out to our new Block Captain Committee Chair, Hannah Wolf, whose contact information is on the last page.*

## 2024 Officer Election

*The following Officers and Directors were voted in at the January Membership Meeting:*

President: **Alison Huffstetler**

Vice President: **Jason Leaver**

Second Vice President: **Karan Cerruti**

Treasurer: **Amy Reitz**

Secretary: Vacant (**Alexis Waters** has stepped up to fill this position, and we plan to vote her in in March!)

Directors: **John Hurley, Dan Rinzel, Sean McCarthy**

## New Committee Volunteers!

*The following MVCA residents have stepped up to serve as the following committee chairs. Thank you to both!*

**Brian Paro**, on Neptune Dr, as the  
**Budget and Finance Committee Chair.**  
**Hannah Wolf**, on Great Neck Ct, as the  
**Block Captain Committee Chair.**



On February 20 the Fairfax County Executive released the county Advertised Budget for fiscal year 2025 (which begins July 1), with a proposed four cent increase to the real estate tax, setting it at \$1.135 per \$100 of assessed value. They note the average real estate tax bill would increase by just over \$524. The release of the Advertised Budget is one of the earlier steps in the budget process, with presentations and hearings in March and April, followed by adoption of the budget in May. Fairfax County Public Schools released their proposed budget in January.

In the Advertised Budget, the real estate tax remains by far the largest source of revenue for the county, and they are projecting a growth of 6.8% in that category in FY25. Personal property tax revenue, the second largest category, is expected to grow 8.8% in FY25, though it has been volatile in recent years with both substantial increases and two years of decline. Overall, County resources are projected to increase by \$363 million for FY25.

For expenditures, of the new revenue 49% is proposed to be allocated to FCPS, and 42% to compensation. The county would provide \$165 million towards the school operating transfer request in the FCPS budget request. The budget also proposes \$2.15 million for Fairfax County Connector and \$10 million for Metro. State support for Metro is not yet known, and Metro funding has become entangled with the proposed Alexandria stadium debate in the current legislative session.

In general economic and real estate updates, the County Executive noted the Washington area economy performed well in 2023 though it lagged peer metropolitan areas in job growth, and the unemployment rate in the County was unchanged in 2023 at 2.5%. The average price of homes sold last year increased 3.8% and the number of home sales decreased 22.5% versus the year before. Residential property makes up over three fourths of the county tax base.



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The very recent phone system outages bring to the forefront the need to refresh suggested guidelines for requesting POLICE, FIRE and RESCUE/AMBULANCE assistance.

**In an Emergency: STEP ONE- PICK UP PHONE or CELL PHONE and DIAL 911.**

STEP TWO-The 911 Operator will probably ask quickly WHAT IS YOUR ADDRESS ? and WHAT IS YOUR EMERGENCY ? She or he may then say "We have it. Thanks" or MAY request more information. You MAY be asked to stay at the phone but if it is a worsening situation (flames, smoke, smell of gas, gunshots, etc) advise 911 and move to SAFETY such as your pre-chosen family outside gathering point on your block. The 911 operator should be told of special factors such as: involvement of fuel trucks, spilled loads, mass casualties ,such as a porch collapse, train wreck/derailment, boating accident, bus accident, trapped elders and infants etc. If the emergency is criminal in nature the responding Police will want information such as descriptions of persons, vehicles, etc.

In non-emergency situations, call the Mount Vernon Police Station at 703-360-8400. The PCA (Police Communications Aide) on duty at the Station can assist you in reaching the various phone extensions such as: Neighborhood Patrol, Traffic Enforcement and Criminal Investigations. You can also be provided information on finger-printing, parking regulations, and obtaining a Police report.

It is useful to keep a list of other EMERGENCY-related numbers for: Washington Gas, Dominion Energy, Verizon, Cox, Fairfax Water, VDOT, Animal Protection, and Virginia State Police. Many of these numbers are available in your MVCA Directory.

It is useful to keep a 3x5 card with your address near your phone for guests and children.

Mobile phones are often available during a power outage.



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## **Changes Coming to GW Memorial Parkway South and Mount Vernon Trail**

The National Park Service (NPS) announced 26 January a preferred course of action for the southern George Washington Memorial Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail. The NPS plans for GWMParkway South include replacing the Parkway's deteriorated concrete road surfaces, and to rehabilitate 4 bridges/overpasses based on Federal Highway Administration recommendations.

**A road diet is also part of the plan.** To help improve safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, NPS plans to **reduce the Parkway to one lane southbound from Belle View Boulevard to the Mount Vernon Estate, and one lane northbound from the estate to Tulane Drive.** The excess pavement area will be used to create shoulders or dedicated right-turn lanes at southbound intersections, and a striped median or center turn lane. The NPS plans to conduct the improvements to the Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail in phases, subject to funding availability, with initial **design work and planning slated to begin this year.**

In the Mount Vernon District, the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA) Transportation Committee Chair Jason Zaragoza (speaking on behalf of many neighborhood civic associations) said. "...As for the road diet, we have some concerns about speeding on both the approach to and exit from the road diet area as drivers will try to get ahead of other cars; however, we don't have any comments on the specifics until we see the actual design plans."

### **From MVCA Public Safety and Transportation Chairs:**

#### **Cherrytree Traffic Calming Task Force meeting with FFxCo DOT and MV District Supervisor's Office.**

A group of neighbors began an effort a year ago to explore the options for speed mitigation measures along Cherrytree Drive. That effort was supported by the Fairfax County's Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP), and a Cherrytree Traffic Calming Task Force initiated to examine the Traffic Calming measures proposed, and worked to witness the neighborhoods representation in the plan. The RTAP Staff will approve and adopt that plan, when it is submitted for approval to the residents.

This plan and proposal will be presented in a virtual meeting, March 14, 2024 at 6:30PM, to discuss the placement of 3 Speed Tables and 1 Speed Hump. The purpose of the meeting is to explain the proposal, receive feedback, and answer any questions or concerns that citizens may have. Representatives of the Mount Vernon District Supervisor's Office and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation will attend and answer any questions during the Q&A Session. Once the public forum is complete there will be a community vote, before bringing the proposal to the Board of Supervisors for a vote, and device installation.

MVCA Public Safety and Transportation Chairpersons have been invited to attend and witness this county-community and neighborhood meeting.

Those interested in joining can do so online or by phone:

Any questions, please call/ email: Steve Miller - [smiller770@gmail.com](mailto:smiller770@gmail.com)

Meeting Link: <https://tinyurl.com/CherrytreeDrive-Meeting> Meeting ID: 285 204 091 886

Passcode: UNnWw8

To join by phone, call the number below then when prompted, enter Phone Conference ID:

Call: 571-429-5982

Phone Conference ID: 645 199 458#

This time of year, as schools begin to focus on preparing students to be ready for the annual standardized testing cycle, the County, Commonwealth and school systems are equally focused on the annual budget cycle. Taxpayers—particularly homeowners—are awaiting annual property assessments and County fiscal decisions on tax rate and the balanced distribution of revenue among various responsibilities. Commonwealth budget priorities remain in flux and will likely not be finalized until summer.

Those of us who do not have children in FCPS may wonder why so much of the County budget (which means our property taxes) goes to support FCPS even as we recognize that a well-educated workforce is critical to the economic success of the County in the ability to attract business and new residents, among other benefits. While funding alone may not improve student outcomes it is equally apparent that inadequate funding will not have the desired outcome.

Unfortunately, Virginia, despite being one of the “wealthier” states, ranks in the bottom rank of education funding and does not even meet its own legislated requirements. This combined with the Local Composite Index (Wealth Index) which reduces FCPS’ share of already limited funds, puts the burden on local homeowners to assure schools are funded or suffer the consequences economically and socially. While there are some positive signs that the Commonwealth will improve support (including teacher salary increases), details will not be known until after the local budget process.

More information is readily available on the FCPS website <https://www.fcps.edu/budget/budget-documents>  
Some useful highlights from the Superintendent’s FY2025 Proposed Budget:

- 92.7% of employees are school-based (teachers, principals, etc)
- 7.3% of employees are non-school based (bus drivers, facilities and bus maintenance, Human Resources, Accounting etc as well as central office)
- 90% of the budget goes to salaries and benefits
- market scale adjustment increase of 6% is proposed and accounts for the largest single request
- cost per pupil continues to be in the lower half of surrounding jurisdictions
- some small additional funds are requested to enhance preschool, add 2 more Middle School sports, and add sports trainers
- full funding would require a 10.5% increase over the FY24 County transfer.

Citizens have several opportunities to comment on the school and County budget and there will likely be some public budget town halls but details are not known at this time.

On a lighter note, the MVHS senior class mulch sale offers 1-10 bags at \$7.25 per bag and 11+ at \$7.00 with curbside delivery. Part is tax deductible and curbside delivery is free. Contact M. Runkle by March 7 with delivery March 16: [ryaane73@gmail.com](mailto:ryaane73@gmail.com).

# W<sup>9</sup> CHRIS WHITE

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I have been asked and indeed it is my great honor to announce Sherwood Hall Medical Center's Golden Anniversary! Sherwood Hall Medical Center along with Mount Vernon Hospital, will both be celebrating their 50th Anniversaries in 2026. Roughly two years from now spectators will be enjoying fanfare and excitement in recognition of our combined success in healthcare and service to the community.

While we reflect, let us recall the history of our wonderful area in Fairfax County, Virginia. This locality has been called or known as Gum Springs for longer than you may have guessed. The history of our slice of pie in Fairfax County is both fascinating and rich and has played a role in several aspects of US History. In 1753, the land called Piscataway Neck was patented by the British Crown and deeded to one by the name of Giles Brent who was of both Indian and English heritage as well as a noted participant of Bacon's Rebellion. Within 50 years, an English Aristocrat by the name of Humphrey Peake purchased the land and changed its name to Willow Springs. A successful farm was built, and the land was cultivated.

The Peake family located their main farm where the Gum Springs Community Center stands today. Regarding the origin of the name "Gum Springs", it is historically attributed to the sweet gum trees on the Peake family farm. Near where George Washington watered his horses on his way to and from his Mount Vernon plantation. It was President George Washington who referred to this land as Gum Springs. President George Washington identified the base of a gum tree, which was located at the intersection of Mount Vernon Highway and Richmond Highway. There was a natural spring there and this was a landmark or well-known watering hole to travelers from all over the country.

Much of this history is available to the fellow curious, wishing to explore or research the history more in depth at the Gum Springs Historical Society, chartered in 1984. This particularly well-regarded society has worked continuously, without pause and tirelessly for the past 40 years to preserve the history of Gum Springs in Fairfax County, Virginia.

It is to be emphasized and lauded that this society receives no funding from the state, the county, or federal government. It is only through the continued loyalty and generosity of its members, volunteers, donations, contributions and fundraisers that they have been fortunate in meeting goals towards the preservation of the local history and services provided to the community. To all those whose loyalty and generosity has or continues to this day to support this effort, we thank your kindness.

I have been blessed to establish my roots 40 years ago and have always been interested to study at some extent the local history as I have always admired President George Washington. I have been greatly helped in my endeavors after having been acquainted with and befriending Ronald L. Chase, the President of the Gum Springs Historical

## Health and Welfare (continued)

Society. He has been very helpful to me, always knowing how to peak my interest with the history of this special area in Fairfax County. Ronald L. Chase has been essential if not indispensable in the preservation of Gum Springs History.

In 1996 the Gum Springs Museum opened its doors to the public. Offering historical programs, lectures, exhibits, and access to genealogical research to the community. The museum has been featured in both local and national news agencies as well as TV programming. The entire area of Gum Springs is rich in history with African Americans.

The museum experience is well noted for its African American experience. Most notably, the turbulent period of school desegregation. It is important

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to point out that throughout the history, the community of Gum Springs is noted for; welcomed a succession of new citizens, freed men looking for homes after the Civil War, soldiers denied equal access to housing in the early days of Fort Belvoir, as well as other various families or new generations of established residents. Who also began with attributed Gum Springs founder and iconic leader of two centuries ago, West Ford.

It this short historical note of our county, I hasten to highlight the founder of the community, West Ford. West Ford was born at Bushfield Plantation in West Moreland County. His mother was known as Venus who was a slave. It is poignant that Hannah Washington's will mentions the various relatives of West Ford but leaves out the name of the father. By 1801, West Ford was freed from slavery in this will. In 1812, West Ford married Priscilla Bell and by 1816, West Ford moved to Mount Vernon working as a carpenter fore-

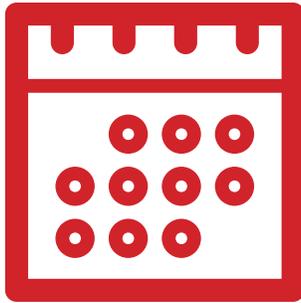
## Health and Welfare (continued)

man, manager of the estate and was also guarding the tomb of the Washington's. In 1829, the Washington family, the remnants of George Washington, willed 160 acres to West Ford. Mr. Ford was an astute businessman as well as excellent manager of the estate. He sold land in 1830 for \$350 and then he had the good sense to pay \$500 for 214 acres from a neighbor, the very famous Humphrey Peake, Jr. family, which was north of the George Washington estate, known as "Muddy Hole Farm". Thus, West Ford turned a nice profit. Mr. Ford's farm came to be known as Gum Springs, which is the area of the Sherwood Hall Medical Center and the Mount Vernon Hospital. By 1855 Gum Springs established a school and by 1863 West Ford died at Mount Vernon. A copy of the obituary was published in the Alexandria newspaper and was well worth the read.

It is important we pause to note that it was also in 1863 the historically famous and important church, Bethlehem Baptist Church was established. A church as well as a school, it was also a gathering place, and it was an extremely important landmark that both kept the community and families together where meetings took place.

By the 1890's, railroad and trolley lines connected Washington with Alexandria and Mount Vernon helping to begin the industrialization of the locality. By 1900, the Woodlawn Black population moved to Gum Springs. There was a consolidation of the brick Bethlehem Baptist Church which was built next to the old church at West Ford Avenue, now known as Fordson Road. In 1939, Freedman School closed and the new Booker T. Washington Rosenwald Forum School on Fordson road was opened. There was also the Odd Fellows Fraternal Order and Woodlawn United Methodist Church moved from Woodlawn to Gum Springs. In 1951, a new Drew Smith School opened, this school was named after Dr. Drew, an undergraduate of Howard University and a graduate of McGill University Medical School. Dr. Drew became internationally famous because of his studies and experiments on blood banking and preservation of blood which saved hundreds of thousands of lives throughout that period in World War II. Dr. Drew has become internationally renowned and was recognized by sharing his name with the Drew Smith School. In 1954, the Luther P. Jackson High School opened which was the only high school for African American residents in Fairfax County. In 1984, Fairfax County sought to build West Ford Public Housing Project with rental townhouses instead of cooperative development. In 1991, Gum Springs Historical Society submitted the proposal for Virginia State Historical Road Marker and a marker was awarded.

Now in its 191st anniversary, the Gum Springs community and the Gum Springs Historical Society Museum serve as a reminder on the importance of history. Of those who have come before us, who they were, where they came from, and what they stood for. That it is vital to study history and imperative to remember the great men and women who have preceded us. Let us never forget the hard-fought lessons of these brave men and woman. Upon whose shoulders the ground we stand upon today guides us even now. As we step into the next century, it is only with the utilization of our full depth of knowledge viewed through a truthful lens that we will prosper. Through which to lead us honorable and virtuous futures. Not only the inhabitants of our locality, Gum Springs but for that of all Americans.



## Mark Your Calendar!

### Join Us For Association Meetings

All meetings will take place at Washington Mill Elementary School  
March 13, 2024  
May 8, 2024 • October 9, 2024  
7:30 pm • Pizza and drinks served

### Mount Vernon Civic Association, Inc.

#### Officers

President: Alison Huffstetler .....757-303-2254  
1st Vice President: Jason Leaver .....703-799-6739  
2nd Vice President: Karan Cerutti .....703-778-4442  
Secretary: Alexis Waters.....703-780-8910  
Treasurer: Amy Reitz .....202-735-6710

#### Directors

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

#### Committee Chairs

Block Captain: Hannah Wolf .....Hannahwolf@gmail.com  
Budget and Finance: Brian Paro .....parobrian@gmail.com  
Education: Judy Harbeck .....703-780-1883  
Environment & Recreation: Christina Reitz.....812-618-8524  
Health and Welfare: Peter Bernad .....202-437-6874  
Membership/Directory: Marcelle Brown .....703-371-7552  
Neighborhood Watch: Bryan Wood ..mvcneighborhoodwatch@gmail.com  
Newsletter: Alison Huffstetler .....757-303-2254  
Picnic: Mary Jo Jensen .....248-245-7224  
Planning & Zoning: Karan Cerutti .....703-778-4442  
Public Safety: John Hurley .....703-799-9353  
Transportation: Mark Yonchak .....703-283-7224  
Web: The Hollands.....www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org