

Mount Vernon Civic Association

SUMMER 2026



www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org

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It's that time of year again! The Mount Vernon Civic Association is hosting its annual picnic at St. James Episcopal Church on 30 May from 1 to 4 pm. Please stop by to say hello to fellow members, neighbors and friends, as we gather with good food and live music!

Mount Vernon Civic
Association



NEIGHBORHOOD



ANNUAL PICNIC

MAY 30,
2026

1- 4 PM

ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL
CHURCH
5614 OLD MILL RD.

BBQ from Chalkboard Wings and BBQ -
Live Music - Kids' Activities and Games -
Community Raffle

Come together with friends, family, and neighbors to celebrate our community!

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We are pleased to announce that this year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Sherwood Hall Medical Center and the Mount Vernon Hospital Inova. Both of these facilities were built in 1976 to initiate and provide excellent medical and health care to the neighborhood of Gum Springs, Hybla Valley, and beyond.

In 1805, President George Washington's family and specifically Bushrod Washington (George Washington's nephew and heir) freed the future founder of this particular area. His name was West Ford (1784-1863). West Ford was a biracial 21-year-old who had the dream to develop this particular land around Mount Vernon, previously owned by the Washington family. The specific area had been designated as Gum Springs, a historical black community which was founded in 1833. West Ford was an American hero and a visionary entrepreneur of the 19th century here in the state of Virginia.

His mother was a woman by the name of Venus, who worked on the Washington estate that was a relative of George Washington. The father of West Ford is unknown, although there has been speculation that it may have been one of the nephews or one of the Washington males, possibly the Bushrod Washington line. George Washington's nephew was Bushrod Washington, who inherited the family Mount Vernon Plantation after Martha Washington died in 1802. Bushrod Washington sought out West Ford and brought him to the Mount Vernon estate as the estate manager, as it was well known West Ford was a distinguished and reliable carpenter as well as having the ability to manage individuals and people. He turned out to be quite successful in the Mount Vernon estate, taking care of daily issues and helping to maintain the quality of the home.

At the time of his death in 1829, Bushrod bequeathed West Ford 119 acres of land on Hunting Creek. He later sold that land to purchase a large parcel of land just adjacent to Mount Vernon, 214 acres, which were 2-1/2 miles to the North. According to research conducted by Mount Vernon staff members, there is no documentary evidence to demonstrate that George Washington ever met West Ford nor did West Ford live at Mount Vernon during George Washington's lifetime.

Obviously, there is some controversy regarding the period. Since West Ford was held in high regard, he was given land by Bushrod Washington in his will, who was then the owner of Mount Vernon. The area of Gum Springs gradually became a community which has grown from the former enslaved people and continues to be an



West Ford in 1859, by Benson John Lossing

African American community. By way of the area, Gum Springs is centered around the intersection of Fordson Road (named after West Ford) and Sherwood Hall Lane just east of US Route 1. There is a very lovely, small Gum Springs Museum and it is located at 8100 Fordson Road (703-375-9825.) The president of the museum is Ron Chase. By way of historical documentation and as was the situation with most large 18th century Virginia plantations, those who worked in fields were enslaved people. George Washington enslaved as many as 300 individuals of African descent at his five farms by the late 1790s. Many of the men and women who worked the farms were the "inherited property" of Martha Washington and her children from the estate of her first husband, Daniel Parke Custis. It is clear from reading George Washington's many biographies that he was not free to manumit the enslaved people as he did with his 123 enslaved individuals in his will, the only slave-owning President to ever do so. By the end of his life, he came to oppose this cruel institution of slavery as he wrote, "I wish my soul that the legislature of Virginia could see a policy of gradual abolishment of slavery." He wrote this in frustration to a kinsman in 1797.

Some of the Mount Vernon enslaved lived near the mansion in the greenhouse building, reconstructed in 1951, while others lived in cabins closer to the fields they worked. Gum Springs is the remnant or the residual documentation of those periods from the 18th century. I should hasten to add that after President George Washington's death in 1799, the farms and buildings of Mount Vernon began to deteriorate. The work to restore Mount Vernon from its state of decline began before the Civil War. It is important to point out the Mount Vernon Ladies Association came into being in 1853 in reaction to the dilapidated state of the Washington home. The Association's founder was Anne Pamela Cunningham of South Carolina. She and others started an effort to restore the Mount Vernon home. In 1858, the organization bought the house and 200 acres for \$200,000 from George Washington's great-grandnephew, John Augustine Washington, III, who had owned the estate since 1829. The ladies began allowing the public to visit the house in 1860 and have worked tirelessly and successfully to restore the houses, buildings, gardens, and farm.

Over the ensuing years, Gum Springs residents gradually developed the area and at times struggled to maintain their identity, their unique history, and independence. Fairfax County had grown very successful and had been in the forefront of great prosperity and economic boom.



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Budget & Finance

Budget Updates for 2027 and Implications for Mount Vernon

The fiscal year 2027 budget was approved in early May. The fiscal year begins on July 1. Main budget changes for the fiscal year include a decrease in real estate tax, improved opportunities for affordable housing, and investment in FCPS schools.

For our community residents, a small decrease in real estate taxes may provide some financial relief. The board approved a decrease from \$1.1225 to \$1.12 per \$100 of assessed value. Real estate taxes will increase next year, but more modestly than anticipated: the change in real estate tax still results in a ~\$330-\$350 increase in real estate tax, overall, saving residents between \$20-\$100.

The final budget is not yet available on the county website, but the advertised budget can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget.

Health

Alison Huffstetler, President

Hantavirus and Ebola- where my concerns fall

Outside of my MVCA hat, I'm a family doctor and population health researcher. I have heard a lot of talk about the cruise ship Hantavirus outbreak, but far less about the recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

Hantavirus is exceedingly unlikely to spread at this time infection control protocols have been followed to reduce the threat of further infections. This is good news, but devastating for the families affected.

There are 750 cases and over 170 deaths due to the current Ebola outbreak as of May 22. There are no current vaccines for the virus causing this Ebola outbreak. The outbreak has impacted both remote and urban centers in the DRC. Importantly, health care workers have been infected showing lack of equipment and protection. The World Health Organization has designated the outbreak as Very High for the current areas of infection (global threat is Low). While I don't anticipate that this will spread to the US, the cut to USAID and withdraw of the US from WHO makes us less likely to be able to slow the spread of Ebola. The rapid spread in Africa is concerning as systematic failures of infection control continue to take place. Further, due to ongoing conflicts in the area, contact tracing and safe burials are not taking place.



Residential Speed Limit Changes Proposed

The Board of Supervisors is holding a public hearing on a statewide initiative to consider decreasing the speed limits in residential areas. In 2024, the state passed Virginia Code §46.2-1300 which allows localities to reduce speed limits from 25 mph to no less than 15 mph in residential areas. The public hearing will be held on June 9th at 4:00 PM. Currently, a pilot study is proposed. Supervisor District for MtVernon will identify one area (yet to be determined) where that County Executive and Board of Supervisors (BOS) may ask for the Pilot Study to be implemented by Engineering Traffic Section. The County Ordinance Amendment, that amends the Fairfax County Code by adopting a new Section numbered 82-2-10, relating to changing speed limits on certain highways, allows for Changing speed limits on certain highways within business or residence districts, and authorizes the County Executive or Designee to reduce or restore the speed limit of any highway within the County that is located in a business district or residence district pursuant to the authority set forth in Va. Code.



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Mark Your Calendar!

Join Us For Association Meetings

October 14th, 2026 @ Washington Mill Elementary School

January 13, 2027, Location TBD

Mount Vernon Civic Association, Inc.

Officers

President: Alison Huffstetler757-303-2254,
alison.n.huffstetler@gmail.com
1st Vice President: Jason Leaver703-799-6739
2nd Vice President: Hannah Wolf..... Hannahwolf@gmail.com
Secretary: Alexis Waters.....703-780-8910
Treasurer: Amy Reitz202-735-6710

Directors

Sean McCarthy703-360-0372
Jed Bullock703-360-1095
Open

Committee Chairs

Block Captain: Hannah WolfHannahwolf@gmail.com
Budget and Finance: Brian Paroparobrian@gmail.com
Communication: David McCarthy.....mccartdj@gmail.com
Education: Shane Morris.. Shane@beautifulmajesticdolphin.com
Environment & Recreation: Christina Reitz.....812-618-8524
Health and Welfare: Peter Bernad202-437-6874
Membership/Directory: Marcelle Brown703-371-7552
Neighborhood Watch: Bryan Wood ..mvcaneighborhoodwatch@gmail.com
Picnic: Mary Jo Jensen248-245-7224
Planning & Zoning: OPEN
Public Safety & Transportation: Mark Yonchak703-283-7224
Web: The Hollands.....www.MountVernonCivicAssociation.org