

The Virginia Hills Echo



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Lee District Transportation Projects Update

Mulligan Road

This is the four-lane connector between Telegraph Road and Richmond Highway through Fort Belvoir. Completion is now scheduled for June 2014 with the possibility that the road will open a bit sooner while minor work is completed. The delay in the completion schedule is due to utility relocation. The project may decrease traffic on Telegraph Road and South Kings Highway that was created when Woodlawn Road was closed in 2001.

Telegraph Road, South Kings, and South Van Dorn

This is the project to reduce congestion and speed traffic flow where these three roads come together. Estimated construction completion is now November 2014. Currently, work is being done on utility relocation and stormwater drainage. Work is being done during the day after morning rush hour and before evening rush hour, with frequent stoppages due to traffic being reduced to one lane through the area. *The Echo* advises avoiding this area during the day because of the unpredictability of the stoppages. Delays will sometimes last 10-15 minutes.

Telegraph Road Trails

Approved bond funding will allow a six-foot wide asphalt trail and a four-foot wide asphalt bike lane running from 600 yards north of the South Kings intersection with Telegraph to Lee District Park. The trail and bike lane will be on the Virginia Hills side of Telegraph. Work will involve utility relocation and is estimated to be complete in April 2015. No other trails work on Telegraph Road is currently funded, and it will still not be possible to walk the length of Telegraph from the Beltway to South Kings on sidewalk or trail.

(continued on Page 6)

Penn Daw Development Approved by Land Use Committee

At the November 18th meeting of the Land Use Committee, the Penn Daw development proposed by the developer, Combined Properties, was approved and will go before the County's Planning Commission.

After various issues with possible tenants, the developer proposed 41 townhomes at the back of the property and 400 apartments in the middle in a five-story u-shaped building which will include parking. In the front of the space there will be retail space which will possibly include a restaurant and a 25,000 square foot grocery store on the ground floor. There are currently no longer plans for a CVS drug store.

Egress from the development will be onto Poag Street, and the developer is asking VDOT to install a signal where Poag intersects with North Kings Highway. There will be a right-in turn available off of North Kings.

The developer will also create a small dog park in the left rear corner of the development.

Much of the discussion centered on the traffic problems that would be made worse as a result of the several developments in the area—the Insight development across Poag Street on North Kings, and "the Grand" which will be on the old Fast Eddies site (which is in the Mount Vernon District). Together, the three sites will add about 1000 apartments to this stretch of North Kings, and only minor traffic improvements will be made.

The Virginia Hills member of the Land Use Committee abstained and several members voted no because of the traffic issues. It is likely that the development will be approved by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

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Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

Tuesday, December 10th – 7:30 PM
Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane

Speaker: Elizabeth Obester
Rose Hill ES Principal (tentative)

The President's Corner

Comment from VHCA President Ralph Zecca

For many of the old timers this is not news, but I have found that the longer my family and I live in Virginia Hills, the more I realize how fortunate we are to have chosen this great neighborhood. In my last column, I asked everyone for help in revitalizing the sense of neighborhood pride and community spirit. I am humbled by the response of many of you who rose to the call. In one instance, a very kind person volunteered to help set up a movie night. Another established a parents' listserv. These are just two examples of the new and great things happening in our neighborhood and I hope you join in! There will be more about the movie night in my next column, but I want to take a moment to talk about the listserv. It was established by Ms. Christine Gettings. Please see her message in the next paragraph to all of you out there who have kids and are looking for kindred spirits in other beleaguered parents:

Calling Virginia Hills Parents and Families: Are you interested in meeting other parents in our neighborhood and staying up to date with information on local events and family friendly activities? Perhaps you're looking for a fantastic sitter or preschool and need a few leads? Interested in organizing a playgroup meet-up at a local park or have a gently-used baby items to sell? This is the group for you!

To join, please send an e-mail to: virginia-hills-parents+subscribe@googlegroups.com.

Or send an email to Christine Gettings at Christine.Gettings@gmail.com, and she will add you to the group.

So keep the ideas coming and please join the listserv set up by Ms. Gettings. In the meantime, I wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season and much health, happiness, and love in 2014.

With sincerest respect,
- Ralph Zecca

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For yearly discount rate, see www.VirginiaHills.org/Echo.html

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Santa's Ride 2013

As Christmas approaches, children everywhere will be watching the skies for Santa Claus. In Fairfax County some very special children won't have to wait until Christmas Eve. Santa and his elves will be rumbling down the streets of Fairfax County on motorcycles to gather presents donated by our wonderful citizens.

The toys will be delivered by Santa and his helpers to children at INOVA Fairfax Hospital Child Life Center, Georgetown Hospital and the Lombardi Cancer Center. Toys will also go to various local charities including the Ronald McDonald House and the Reston F.I.S.H. (For Immediate Sympathetic Help).

Toy collection boxes should be delivered to Police District Stations now and Santa and his helpers will be by to collect all of these generous donations on December 9th. Anyone wishing to make a donation should bring a new, unwrapped toy, game, book, or other gift to the Mount Vernon Police station. All donations should be made before 9 a.m. Monday, December 9. You do not have to wait until the boxes are set out . . . just drop off the gifts at the front desk and tell the desk officer that they are for Santa's Ride.

Location - Mount Vernon Governmental Center - 2511 Parkers Ln, Alexandria, VA 22306 (the lobby is open 24 hours a day).

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**Join the Virginia Hills Citizens Association
for the new membership year that began on
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2013-2014 Membership

**Mail to: VHCA, P.O. Box 10837,
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I'd (We'd) like to join / renew my (our) membership in the Virginia Hills Citizens Association. Enclosed are the annual membership dues of \$7.00 per household. I am also including a contribution in the amount of

\$ _____.

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip Code _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Comments: _____

**Checks for dues may be made payable to VHCA or
the Virginia Hills Citizens Association.**

Secure Your Wireless Network!

Many Virginia Hills Residents are still using the WEP encryption system on their wireless network. WEP is old and is trivial to break into. You should be using WPA2 or, on an older router, WPA. Most routers come with WEP as the default, and this is very unsafe.

Those of you using Actiontec routers that you got with your FiOS service can change to WPA in the Wireless Network setting, Advanced Settings.

If you did not change the user name and password to access the router, you should do this immediately. The default name and password that came set on the router are widely available on the internet.

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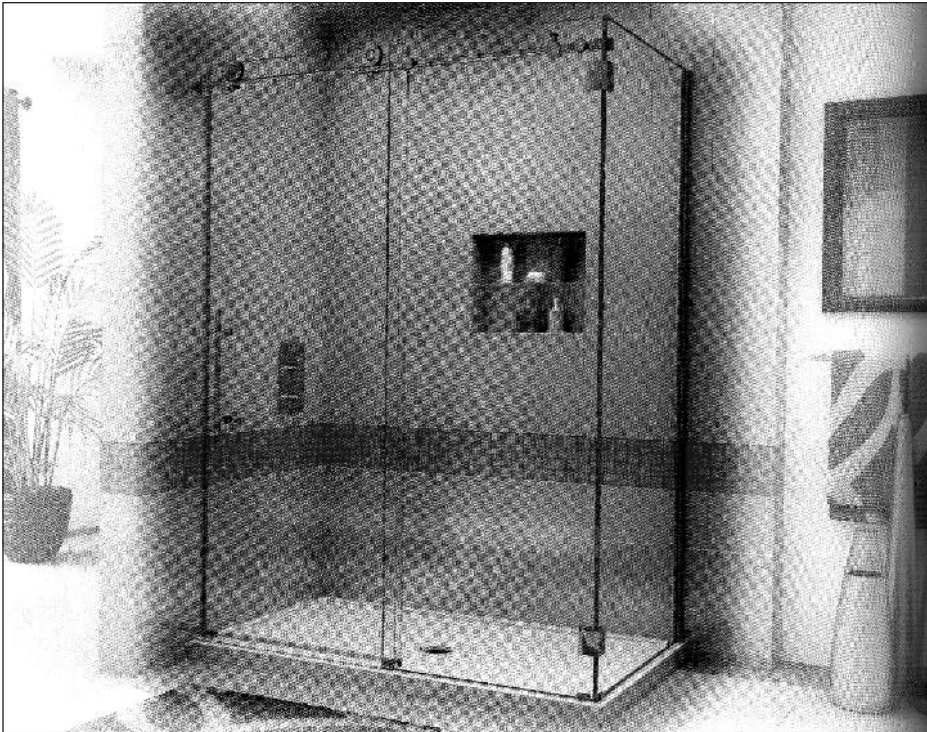
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Transportation Project Status

(continued from Page1)

Richmond Highway Widening

This is part of the BRAC (Base Re-Alignment and Closure) funding and will widen Richmond Highway from four lanes to six lanes from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway north of Fort Belvoir south to Telegraph Road. The project includes bike, pedestrian, and future transit accommodations. Work is estimated to be complete in February 2016.

I-95/395 Express Lanes

If you use I-95 south from just above the Beltway, you are familiar with the frequent delays that accompany this work. Transurban is building and will operate two express lanes north and two south between Edsall Road and Garrisonville Road in Stafford County, a distance of 29 miles. HOV-3 vehicles may use the lanes for free, and others with an E-ZPass may use the lanes by paying a toll. Work is estimated to be complete by early 2015.

Currently, work often blocks off a lane on regular I-95 in each direction at some locations during the day outside of rush hours and the same during the night. The complete closures of I-95 for overhead bridge beam

installation are mostly complete, but I-95 is expected to be problematic for the next year—and best avoided when possible.

Information on lane closures and alerts is available on www.95expresslanes.com/closures-newsalerts or you can receive this information in a weekly e-mail.

Utility relocation is a major part of any project in a developed area as readers will recall from the construction on South Kings Highway at Harrison Lane. Getting the various utilities (power, cable, gas) to work quickly is very difficult and must be done first. As a result, it takes a very long time before the actual building of road takes place. The road itself can usually be done very quickly.

While the delays caused by each of these projects are often annoying at best and often cause major disruptions, the end result is usually worth the wait. With the new sources of state transportation funding approved a year ago, in the short term residents of Northern Virginia and Lee District are likely to see more construction than less.

***Best wishes to our readers
for the holiday season!***

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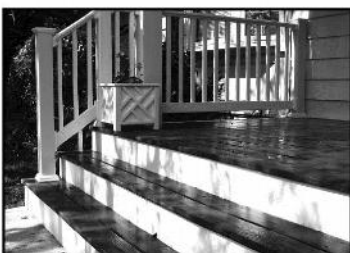
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View from the Hills

Doug Boulter's Advice on Home Repair:

Exterior Painting



Fall is a prime time for painting. But as the days and nights grow colder, and possibly wetter, how long can you still paint outside? What's new with paint? And what will be different if you hire a professional rather than doing it yourself? These are the topics this article will address. Most of what I'm going to say applies to latex (water-based) paint. Unless you have a particular problem or situation, latex is the way to go these days.

When to Paint and When Not to Paint

The most common sense rule for when not to paint is when it's raining. The paint needs time to dry. How long does it need? It depends on the paint, but it needs to be dry to the touch, and I'd really like there to be 24 hours before it might get rained on. Somewhat surprisingly, if has recently rained and the surface you're painting isn't soaked, but still a bit damp, you can paint that surface if you're using a latex paint. It will thin the paint somewhat, so I wouldn't make a habit of it, but you could do it if you really needed the paint on ASAP.

Another issue is the humidity of the air, and particularly fog. A humid or foggy day will both increase time for paint to dry, sometimes by a large amount. If you can, avoid painting on a humid day.

Temperature is also important. While you can get specialty paints that will cure at 35 degrees, most latex paints want a minimum temperature of 50 degrees. It should not only be above 50 degrees when you paint, but also when the paint is drying. Dew may form on the paint at night and ruin the paint job if there's a sudden drop in temperature. Really, really try to paint when it will be above 50 degrees for 24 hours.

And here's the obvious hard and fast rule. Read the label on the paint can and follow the rules it gives you. Better still, read the label before you buy the paint so you'll know what conditions you'll need to apply it.

What's New with Paint?

A big change over the past few years is that many paints now come with primer in them. As a result, it may be hard to find anything marked as a primer in the same brand as your finish paint. Don't despair! Kilz and Zinsser both continue to make very good latex primers. I regularly use both and like both.

And while this isn't new for paint, much siding and trim now comes primed. Hardiplank siding is just one example. It's well worth buying siding and trim pre-

primed, especially if it will be a while before you can get the finish coats on.

Preparation is Still Critically Important

Painting over new pre-primed trim and siding requires the least work, but that's not to say no work at all. It's a good idea to vacuum the dust off the surface to be painted, or wipe it down with a damp cloth.

Of course nail and screw holes should be filled if you care about the final appearance. Be sure you use a filler that's recommended for exterior use, not just interior.

If you're like 99% of the people out there, you'll wait to repaint until you can wait no longer. Prep work will be more important. You'll not only need to clean off dust, but also mold and mildew. If the old paint has become chalky, you'll need to scrub or sand it until it no longer comes off on your hand. If the paint is peeling, it will have to be sanded or removed with a heat gun.

You may have noticed that I haven't mentioned power washing. In skilled hands, a power washer is a very useful tool. Blasting away at old siding may be counterproductive, however, if you get a lot of water behind the siding or take off too much of the old paint. I leave power washing to the pros.

You vs. the Pros

I learned to paint with a brush outside, so that's what I do. But it takes longer and is harder work. Pros will want to spray. That's fine. However, understand that under many circumstances just spraying exterior surfaces will give you a lesser quality job. In a good job, the pro will spray the surface and then back brush or roll it to even out the paint, particularly if it's a rough or heavily grained surface. You should insist that your pro do that. You may not notice a difference if it's not back brushed, but other pros will.

What can a pro do better than you can besides the prep? One thing is painting with a sash brush when two colors meet (trim with siding, for example). You might want to mask all edges if you're doing it yourself.

Unless you do mountain climbing as your hobby, the pro will be better and safer working in high places.

Painting is almost always a rewarding job when it's done right. Don't be afraid of it. It's not rocket science, but it does take some skill.

The Fall Housing Market

This home pricing data for Fairfax County is provided by Spike and Julie Williams of Williams Realty as of October 28th:

Single Family home under \$1M

Average List Price \$643,367
Median List Price \$620,000
Average Days on Market 64.

Condo/Townhome under \$600K

Average List Price \$333,974
Median List Price \$325,000
Average Days on Market 54.

Sales data for Virginia Hills provided in Jimmy Tucker's ad (see back page) shows that fall house sales in Virginia Hills remain strong, with prices holding steady between about \$370K to \$420K for homes in good condition. It is difficult, however, to compare prices because houses of different sizes and qualities are on the market at different times.

Not surprisingly, homes are taking slightly longer to sell, both in Virginia Hills and across the County. Much of this may be due to the decline in the number of buyers and sellers (see the reduced number of homes for sale in Virginia Hills) that is typical of the fall season.

Package Delivery—Protect from Purloiners (from MPO Greg Kotterman, Mount Vernon Police Station)

Back in the day, if you got a package delivered to your home, the driver was required to leave the package with an actual person. With the advent of internet and catalog shopping, packages now just get left on doorsteps throughout the day. Their contents are, more and more, becoming juicy targets of opportunity. And the more success thieves have in our community, the more they will return time and time again.

With most sellers sending shipping notification and tracking numbers, planning for your deliveries is much easier.

- You can make arrangements with a neighbor to be on the lookout for the delivery. Give them the date and approximate time—but this still leaves the package exposed for a short period.
- Set up a notification request with the shipper on their web site and get real-time tracking information on your packages.
- Contact the shipper and have them hold your package at their local shipping hub for personal pickup.
- Select an alternate shipping location (office/work) where the package can be delivered directly to you.
- Create a secure box or area in which your regular delivery person can place your package and lock it up.

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Message from Supervisor McKay

Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that parents eliminate screen time for toddlers, citing concerns about language delays and disrupted sleep. When I was my kids' age, television was the monster that threatened children's development. Who would have predicted that a short generation later, preschoolers would be iPod-literate?

I was thinking about this the other day as I reflected on two issues that have touched a communal nerve: the proposed changes to the County's library system (now on hold) and the high cost of K-12 education. When my kids step into the adult world, Fairfax County will, in some ways, be a very different place. I do believe that however technology changes how we do things, it won't change why we do them. I fully expect that our County values of community engagement, excellent education, and a library system rich in offerings will be as strong as they are today. The trappings, so to speak, will be different; the values will endure.

It would be great if time machines and crystal balls were standard issue: a time machine to see how things really were and a crystal ball to see how today's decisions play out. Change keeps its own clock, one that runs fast or

slow driven by events we don't always control. Almost twenty years ago when I began my career in Lee District as chief of staff to then-supervisor Dana Kauffman, constituent contact was a much slower process. Letters (remember those?) were the usual way of communicating and e-mails were scarce. Now, almost all of my communication with constituents is by e-mail or when I run into them someplace like Costco. E-mail has been a game changer and more than anything else has changed expectations. In many ways, this is a good thing—when you have a question or problem, your elected officials and County employees should be able to respond quickly. Facebook and Twitter are new ways for me to communicate with you in real time.

I'd welcome your thoughts on what our County and district will be twenty years from now.

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Active	Rambler	3607 Austin Ave	3	2	0	\$396,000		Yes	0
Active	Colonial	6210 Hillview Ave	4	2	0	\$414,500		Yes	0
Active	Rambler	3602 Oakwood Ln	4	2	0	\$375,000		Yes	0
Active	Rambler	6405 Wilcox Ct	3	1	0	\$345,000		Yes	0
Active	Rambler	4107 Ronson Dr	3	2	0	\$415,000		Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	3912 Spect Ct	3	2	0	\$399,950	\$390,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	3701 Austin Ave	3	1	0	\$293,999	\$280,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6309 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$370,000	\$367,500	Yes	0
Sold	Bungalow	6608 Berkshire Dr	2	1	0	\$340,000	\$314,475	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6109 Houston Ct	3	1	1	\$377,000	\$370,000	Yes	0
Sold	Bilevel	6508 Berkshire Dr	4	2	0	\$350,000	\$310,000	Yes	0
Sold	Raised Rmblr	4108 Ronson Dr	4	2	0	\$418,000	\$416,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6408 Hillview Ave	4	2	0	\$419,888	\$419,000	Yes	0
Sold	Bilevel	6209 Sandlin Ct	4	2	0	\$369,900	\$380,000	Yes	0
Sold	Bilevel	6229 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$245,000	\$230,000	No	0
Sold	Rambler	6423 Virginia Hills Ave	4	2	0	\$399,900	\$399,900	Yes	0

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