

# The Virginia Hills Echo



Circulation 875

Volume 23, No. 2

April 2013

## 6505 Hillview Avenue to Become a Group Home for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled?

On the Sunday before the February general membership meeting, VHCA learned that the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) had, on July 30, 2012, purchased the home at 6505 Hillview Ave, for potential use as a group home. FCRHA is a semi-independent agency that manages federal grants to establish group homes under the federal Fair Housing Act. These homes include shelters for battered women, group homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism, and homes for people with substance use disorders.

FCRHA does not manage such homes. In conjunction with the County's Community Services Board, FCRHA engages private agencies to run the homes. In October 2012, FCRHA put out a request for proposals to the non-profit community. In January 2013, FCRHA selected the non-profit Resources for Independence of Virginia (RIVA) to manage the property on Hillview as a to group home for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There is a particular need for this kind of group home due to the growing consensus that in some ways they provide the best environment for care of individuals with these disabilities.

Because of legal restrictions, Fairfax County could not provide any information on this process until the contract had been awarded and signed. This is why VHCA had no information of what was happening to the home on Hillview until early February.

VHCA has learned that RIVA intends to operate the group home for 4-6 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There will be 1-2 staff members present in the home at all times.

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## Virginia Hills Real Estate Assessments

Property owners in Virginia Hills should have received the assessments of their properties about a month ago. For the 12th year in a row, VHCA has reviewed the assessments done by the County Department of Tax Administration (DTA) for correctness. VHCA found no major problems with this year's assessments. Homeowners should see their assessments increase roughly 8.5%, give or take about a half percent, over the assessment for 2012.

The Board of Supervisors has advertised a rate of \$1.095 per \$1000 of assessed value, an increase of 2 cents over last year's rate. That means that the actual rate that the Board will pass as part of the budget cannot be more than \$1.095. At that rate, and including the 8.5% increase in the assessed value, most Virginia Hills homeowners can expect to see a real estate tax increase of about 17%, very close to last year's increase. For a house assessed last year at \$330,000, that would amount to a tax increase of about \$373.

VHCA conducted a sample of 40 homes in the neighborhood to insure that the new assessments all fell within the range shown above. This year, VHCA found that almost all of the 40 homes fell in that range.

Given that there are 850 homes in Virginia Hills, VHCA advises all homeowners to check their individual assessments. Homeowners can go to <http://icare.fairfaxcounty.gov/Main/Home.aspx> to access the County's real estate data base. Search for your property by providing its address, then go to the "Values" page of the data using the links on the left. That will give you this year's and last year's assessments. To check, subtract your 2012 assessment from your 2011

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### Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

**Tuesday, April 9th – 7:30 PM**  
**Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane**

**Speaker: TBA**

## The President's Corner

### Comment from VHCA President Ralph Zecca

I often write about how Virginia Hills is a wonderful community and a wonderful place to raise a family. Well, one of our long time members, Mr. Jim Gillespie of Ronson Drive passed away on February 23; prior to his death he wrote a letter to all of us. I would like to pass on to you the beautiful words Jim wrote and ask that we keep his spirit alive by loving our neighbors.

With sincerest respect,

- Ralph Zecca

### A Thanks and Goodbye from Jim Gillespie

When Anne Marie and I brought our family here in 1967, we rented a home at 6405 Gentile Court. Before a year was out, we decided that this was the place we wanted to raise our children, and we never for a moment regretted that decision. We bought our current home at 3906 Ronson Drive on October 1968. I have often referred to Virginia Hills as Northern Virginia's Best Kept Secret, and I still believe that. We were so fortunate to spend our middle and later years with y'all.

The times were good to us. The house grew in value and the kids did well in school and in their daily lives. We were truly blessed. Most importantly, we were blessed by having such great friends and neighbors. Through Anne Marie's decline and her death in 1994, you were there for us. As my own health took a bad turn in 2009, I came to appreciate the community even more. You have been caring and considerate, truly loving thy neighbor. I couldn't possibly have stayed in the house as long as I did without all the fine things you did for me.

- Jim Gillespie

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Publisher

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John Drummond  
The Print Shop

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### Virginia Hills Citizens Association Officers 2010-2012

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## Members Joining Since February

Since February 2013, the following have joined the Association for the 2012-2013 year:

Paul Adams & Bob Rourke, Robert & Mildred Barrett, Don Blasl, James & Marlene Bondurant, Mike & Esther Broderick, Ed & Sandra Conrad, Ray & Vivian Frantz, Woody & Norma Henson, Aaron & Laura Kahn, Constan & Annik Kanellos, Jim Lieb, Stephan Menne & Astrid Csida, George & Judith Stone.

## Rose Hill Elementary to Present Annual Play

This year the students of Rose Hill Elementary will present "The Enchantment of Beauty and the Beast."

After a powerful witch is rejected by a selfish prince, she places a curse on him and condemns him to be a "beast" until he learns to love. Years later, a poor widow plucks a forbidden rose and though Beast sentences the woman to death, he allows her to say good-bye to her family. Her daughter, Beauty, goes to the Beast and promises to stay if her mother's life is spared. Beast falls in love with Beauty; she is like a princess to him. In a hilarious and thrilling scene, not only is there a battle with the Beast, but also with the furniture! Can Beauty ever love Beast? Come see for yourself!

Performances will be held at Edison High School at 5801 Franconia Rd. on Friday, May 17th and Saturday, May 18th at 7:00 PM. Tickets will be available at the door (\$5 for adults, \$3 for children).

## Membership Cards

VHCA has decided as an economy measure not to automatically issue membership cards to members, saving the printing and postage costs. However, VHCA can print an individual membership card for any member who wants one and is willing to pick it up.

To get a card, please contact President Ralph Zecca (contact information on page two of this *Echo*).

You will need a membership card to obtain the discount at the Royal Restaurant.

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## 2012-2013 Membership

**Mail to: VHCA, P.O. Box 10837,  
Alexandria, VA 22310**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

## Charlotte Drummond Passes Away

The *Echo* has learned of the death of Charlotte Drummond, formerly of Trigger Court, on March 8th. Charlotte and her husband John moved from Virginia Hills, where they resided for 30 years, to The Villages, Florida in 2008.

John Drummond does the graphics work for the *Echo*.

A memorial service will be held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2701 Cameron Mills Road in the City of Alexandria on April 13th at 11:00 AM.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made to Senior Services of Alexandria where Charlotte worked for many years.

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## Virginia Hills Real Estate Assessments

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assessment. Divide that number by the 2011 assessment. Multiply by 100. That should give you a change of approximately 8.5%.

To learn in-depth how DTA conducts assessments, you can read a detailed article at <http://www.dougboulter.com/policy/assessments1.html>.

For the purposes of determining the change in assessments, there were 55 sales of land with improvements (homes) and 2 foreclosures in 2012. Foreclosures are recorded at the amount of the loan outstanding and are not related to the market value of the home. The 2 foreclosures in Virginia Hills are down from 5 in 2011, 10 in 2010, and 12 in 2008. If the home is re-sold after foreclosure, that sale may be counted. All 10 sales by lenders were not counted as valid sales for the purpose of the assessments.

DTA determined that 29 of the 55 sales were at arms-length fair market value as private party sales.

You can provide feedback in writing on the tax rate and/or the County budget. Do so on the internet at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/fy14-advertised-input.htm> or by mail.

## Lee Districts Concerts in the Park for June

June 5	The Pietasters (Ska)
June 12	U.S. Air Force Band (Big Band Jazz)
June 19	Robin & Linda Williams (Country)
June 26	Daryl Davis (Swing)

Concerts take place in the Lee District Park amphitheater at 7:30 PM. Admission is free. If there is a threat of bad weather, call 703-324-7469 after 6:00 PM for cancellation updates.

The concert schedule for the remainder of the summer will appear in the June *Echo*.

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## 6505 Hillview Avenue to Become a Group Home for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled? (continued from Page 1)

RIVA is a signatory of the Good Neighbor Policy. This policy clearly outlines the rights and responsibilities of the non-profit managing the home.

In this policy, RIVA promises

- to operate a home that is well maintained, presentable and in keeping with community standards for landscaping, painting, and trash disposal. We will strive to maintain and even enhance the positive character of the community.
- to expect everyone in our homes to show respect for their neighbors by obeying all laws and community standards and to endeavor to take neighbors' individual needs into consideration, as would be expected of any neighbor.
- respond quickly to any questions or concerns from neighbors and provide contact information whenever requested, so neighbors know who to call. We will strive to ensure that individuals providing support in the home will focus on the safety and well-being of everyone in the community.
- to welcome opportunities for neighbors to get to know our residents and staff as they would other neighbors -- for example, while attending a neighborhood event, doing yard work, or enjoying a break on the porch.

In return, RIVA asks neighbors to welcome us as they would other neighbors, let us know directly and promptly of any questions or concerns, and understand and respect our residents' needs for privacy and confidentiality of their personal health information.

VHCA has invited RIVA to speak at the April meeting. VHCA has invited Supervisor McKay and FCRHA to speak at the June 11, 2013 meeting to discuss the way ahead.

Supervisor McKay has asked for a study (to be completed in March 2013) of the distribution of group homes throughout Fairfax County with the hope of ensuring that no one particular district or neighborhood is being targeted for this type of home. In the course of this study, it turns out that it is very difficult for the County to identify homes that do not receive County funding, and that, due to Fair Housing Act issues, Fairfax County may not have the legal ability to dictate where such homes may be located. The study is continuing.

**Note:** As the *Echo* went to press, there were some questions not yet answered and it was not known whether RIVA would be providing a speaker for the meeting. Check on [www.VirginiaHills.org](http://www.VirginiaHills.org) for an update before the meeting.

## View from the Hills: Setback Thermostats Home Repair Advice by Doug Boulter

I recently re-read an article I wrote on setback thermostats 15 years ago. Much of the article is still good, but there have been substantial changes. Setback thermostats have been with us for over 30 years.

One change has to do with the heating system itself. Heating systems have gotten much more complex. A fairly recent change is the change on upper end systems from single stage to multistage. A single stage system has a single level of heating and cooling and a single speed fan. A multistage system may have three levels of heating and two of cooling. Instead of off-on, think high-medium-low (or high-low). High end setback thermostats can handle this complexity. Low end ones can't.

Most setback thermostats can't handle electric baseboard heat, but many can manage electric or gas backup heat for heat pump systems.

In short, you'll need to know what kind of heating/cooling system you have to make sure your new thermostat will work with it. A good idea might be to call the manufacturer's hotline (they all have a hotline) to see if they think the thermostat you want will work with your system. And they can also talk you through the installation if you get stuck.

A second change involves the number of programs on setback thermostats. Thirteen years ago, your choice was every-day-the-same, or a 5-2 program if you wanted different program from the weekday program on Saturday and Sunday. Now, you can get a 5-1-1 program to allow different programs on Saturday and Sunday, or you can get a 7 day program to make each day different.

Most thermostats now come with a filter change reminder. The thermostat calculates how many hours the system has been running and, based on that, let you know when to change your furnace filter.

The latest thing, of course, is Wi-fi. If you have a wireless network at home, you can talk to your thermostat with a smartphone, laptop, or computer when you're away from home.

Of course, the more heating systems your thermostat serves, the more programming options it has, and having wi-fi will substantially increase the price. There are thermostats (the Nest being the most famous) that cost about \$300. There are also some at a tenth that price.

Still, a setback thermostat can save you 33% on your heating and cooling bills. Well worth considering.



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## Message from Supervisor McKay

I was in the supermarket the other day when I ran into a constituent who asked me what I thought of sequestration. I couldn't answer because I had my young children in tow and couldn't use the language I wanted. I can tell you, though, that what happens with sequestration matters a lot to Fairfax County. We saw that on February 26 when the county executive released his proposed fiscal year 2014 budget. Now, it's my colleagues and my job to listen to you and crunch the numbers as we look into a cloudy crystal ball.

A year ago, that crystal ball was clearer, our budget reflected improving economic trends, and our economy was one of the strongest in the nation. Then, along came the federal fiscal cliff and sequester. Why is our County budget affected by decisions made (or not) a few miles down the road in Washington, DC? Over the past decade we've worked hard at diversifying our County economy, but between 10 and 20 percent of our local economy is related to defense or federal contracting to the tune of about \$25 billion. With a substantial amount of the county's workforce involved in some way with

what happens on the federal side, that's a lot of potential drop in retail sales, car purchases, and the like.

The proposed County budget covers two fiscal years, FY2014 and FY2015. This is a new approach for Fairfax County, intended to give us more flexibility in responding to economic conditions. The budget continues our commitment to education (52.6% of the General Fund) with the next largest amount going to public safety at 12.3%. There are no salary increases for County employees. The county executive has recommended a 2 cent increase in the residential property tax—whether that will be the actual tax rate I couldn't say right now.

My colleagues and I will be paying close attention to what we hear about community needs and priorities. Personally, in a time of economic uncertainty my preference is to keep the tax rate as low as possible while still providing essential services.

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Status	Style	Address	BR	FB	HB	List Price	Close Price	Bsmt	Gar
Active	Rambler	6501 Virginia Hills Ave	4	2	0	\$419,000		Yes	0
Active	Rambler	6125 Hillview Ave	3	1	0	\$385,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Rambler	3515 Pike Rd	4	2	0	\$240,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Rambler	6110 Paulonia Rd	4	1	0	\$300,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Rambler	6409 Gentele Ct	3	3	0	\$429,900		Yes	0
Cnko	Colonial	6408 Hillview Ave	4	2	0	\$429,999		Yes	0
Sold	Bilevel	6141 Telegraph Rd	3	2	0	\$369,000	\$362,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6600 Berkshire Dr	4	2	0	\$429,500	\$429,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6329 Gentele Ct	4	2	0	\$250,000	\$275,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6538 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$360,000	\$350,000	Yes	0

All Information Deemed Reliable, Not Guaranteed. Derived from Metropolitan Regional Information System for the period of 2/1/2013 - 3/30/2013

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