

The Virginia Hills Echo



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Changes Proposed for Penn Daw

When Shoppers Food Warehouse closed its store at the Penn Daw Plaza, it was inevitable that the property owner, Combined Properties, having lost its anchor tenant, would want to make major changes to the property. Combined Properties is proposing changes to the County's comprehensive plan for the land area occupied by the shopping center, the triangle on which the Rite Aid drugstore sits across North Kings Highway, and the block across Poag Street known as Poag Heights. This total area is approximately 17.25 acres.

A marketing study done for County discusses the viability of retail on that site. The study concludes that replacement of the former anchor tenant, Shoppers, would be extremely difficult, and in the absence of an anchor, several other of the larger businesses might depart as well, leaving the center to fill up with much smaller tenants. The study concludes that, due to the lack of frontage on Richmond Highway and the difficulty of site access for vehicles, retail may not be viable on that site.

Based on the lack of office space in the Richmond Highway corridor, the study concludes that significant office use would not be viable for the site.

Consequently, the study suggests that the best use of the site would be residential at a fairly high density.

Combined Properties is proposing a development with approximately 735 apartments (larger than 800 square feet each) and 36 townhomes on the parcels on both sides of Poag Street, leaving the Rite Aid triangle as it currently is. The proposal reduces on-site retail to 70,000 square feet. The community task force has offered a split recommendation. The majority approves
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VHCA Meeting This Month On Wednesday

For the first time in many years, the VHCA meeting this month will be held on a Wednesday, February 15th, not the usual Tuesday.

The printer for the Virginia Hills *Echo* was not available to print the paper in time for the meeting on February 8th. The VHCA Executive Committee agreed that it was important to get the *Echo* out before the meeting, and considered the next Tuesday as an alternative. However, even the most dedicated Virginia Hills resident would probably agree at February 14th, Valentine's Day, is not the best day to hold a meeting.

Consequently, the Executive Committee and the membership concurred at the December meeting that the February meeting should be held on **Wednesday**, February 15th.

If It Snows

While it's been a mild winter with not more than two dustings of snow, long time residents will remember another such winter in the early 1990s when a late March snowstorm shut down the region for an entire weekend and several days thereafter. So if it snows. . .

Fairfax County is not responsible for plowing public roads. That's a state (VDOT) job. You can reach VDOT directly to report streets needing plowing or sanding by calling 1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623) or by email at novainfo@vdot.virginia.gov. (1-800-367-76243 replaces the 703-383-VDOT number you may have called in the past. This is also the number to call to report potholes or other road problems.)

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Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

Wednesday, February 15th – 7:30 PM
Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane

Speaker: TBA

The President's Corner

Comment from VHCA President Ralph Zecca

The holidays are behind us and the new year lies ahead of us. There is a lot we would like to do this year to make our neighborhood a place to which everyone would like to move. However, most of these activities require participation. As I have mentioned before, we would like to start a family movie night. Unfortunately, we do not have anyone to coordinate the event. If you are interested, please feel free to give me a call. Anyone who volunteers will be provided the support needed. No one is ever left to fumble along on their own! So if you think you have it in you to create civic pride and draw people together to form a community, we are looking for you.

Also Mother Nature seems to say spring is on the way, but Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow and we are destined for another six weeks of winter. If so, I would like to take a moment and ask everyone to keep their fellow neighbors in mind during the remainder of the winter. Here are a few suggestions that go a long way to making Virginia Hills more of a community:

- Shovel your sidewalk after the snow falls. This makes it easier for those who need to walk to bus stops and school, or are just walking their dog. It also helps our mail delivery personnel and ensures that they do not slip!
- Clean snow and ice off your car off before leaving. I do not mean just the windshield, but your entire car. This is not only a courtesy to other drivers, but is also a safety issue for yourself. The less snow on your car, the lower the chance of snow flying off your hood or roof and hitting your windshield or someone else's!
- Look out for your elderly neighbors. If you have the time, offer to shovel their sidewalk or ask if they need something from the store.

And finally, on behalf of myself and the rest of the VHCA's Executive Committee, I wish you a Happy New Year!

- Ralph Zecca

**Visit the Virginia Hills web site at
www.VirginiaHills.org**

Scams: One Old, One New

(from the Fairfax County Police Department)

Here is a new scam that seems to have started in the last year or so:

A grandparent gets a call, purportedly from a grandchild, who states that he or she is in jail in another state/country and needs bail money to get out. Some victims have said the person even sounds like their grandchild. They are told the child is embarrassed and does not want to tell mom and dad, but needs a few thousand dollars wired to Western Union at such and such a place.

Of course it's not really the grandchild, and the money is never seen again. This is a variant of an e-mail scam in which you get an e-mail apparently from a friend who is purportedly traveling in another country, has had a wallet or purse stolen, and needs money desperately. Please wire the money via Western Union and they'll pay you back when they get home.

(continued on Page 3)



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Members Joining Since the December Meeting

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If you are on this list or paid your dues prior to or at the December meeting, you are already a member for this year. If you have not received your membership card and want one, please contact Membership Director Warren Suyderhoud.

Scams

(continued from Page 2)

The bottom line is that you should never wire funds to someone you don't know or can't verify. Once the money is wired, Western Union and other wire transfer companies can't help you, and there is very little the police can do about scammers in other countries.

The older scam needs no explanation – it has been reported in The Echo several times. However, it was run against homeowners in this part of the County as recently as last month:

The scammer contacts homeowners, generally seniors, saying they have worked for the homeowner in the past and have noticed all this new work that needs to be done on their home. They cajole/convince the victim that it is imperative to have this work done on their home, yard, roof, chimney, trees, etc. They write up a contract or verbally agree on an exorbitant rate, then do very minor or cosmetic work and take the cash. If the cash is not on hand, they take what they can get at the time and continue to return to the home trying to get more, or even drive the victim to a bank to withdraw funds.

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\$ _____.

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.

Note:

Discounts at the restaurants below are only available to VHCA members upon presentation of a valid VHCA membership card.

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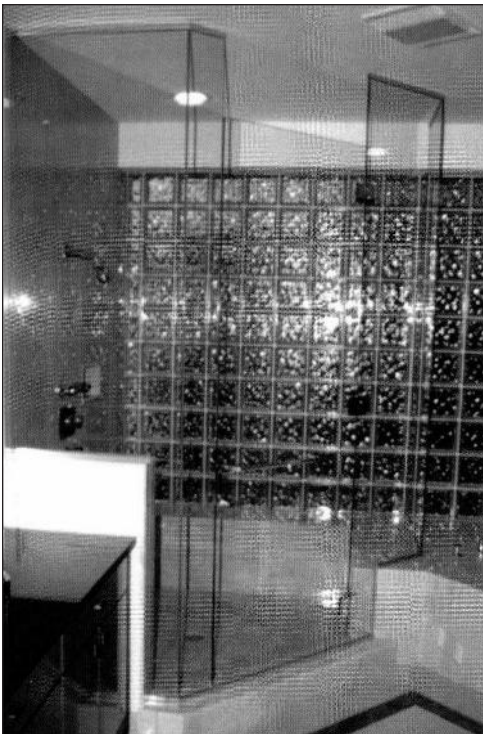
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Changes Proposed for Penn Daw

(continued from Page 1)

the property owner's plan, but the minority, composed of residents of Wilton Woods, the closest community, propose only 500 apartments.

The site presents an opportunity for higher density residential development because of its proximity to the Huntington Metro Station. On the other hand, because of the road network and site access issues, the heavier traffic higher density would generate has the potential to create serious problems for North and South Kings Highways and access at Penn Daw to Richmond Highway. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation has done a study on the area and determined that any fixes would be expensive and might have little overall ability to mitigate the problem.

The proposal to change the comprehensive plan is scheduled to come before the Lee District Land Use Committee for the first time as an informational briefing in March. Virginia Hills Land Use Member Doug Boulter will discuss more details of the Penn Daw proposal at the VHCA meeting on Wednesday, February 15th.

Power Outages? Contact Dominion Power

At the December VHCA meeting, the Dominion Power speaker described Dominion's program to reduce power outages by determining, based on your reports, where the most frequent causes occur and then applying long-term fixes to those problems. These might be new equipment, such as a transformer, or might be more aggressive tree trimming near overhead power lines.

Don't assume your neighbors have already called to report an outage. Call Dominion at **1-866-366-4357**.

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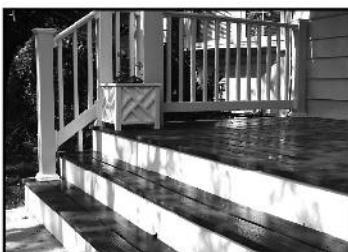
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View from the Hills

Doug Boulter's Advice on Home Repair:

What to Do to Your House When You Go On Vacation

Most of us take vacations for a week or two, and sometimes longer. While in theory you could just pack your bags and go, in practice you should give some thought to your home. How can you help it take care of itself while you're gone?

Security

One of the things that people do think about is the security of their homes while they're away. The obvious things that come to mind are making sure doors and windows are locked, newspapers and mail are stopped so they won't be a sign that no one is home, and perhaps a neighbor is alerted to watch the house. Those are all important things to do.

A usual recommendation is to have some lights on at night. If you haven't purchased a timer for lights lately, you'll be surprised what they can now do. Once you input the date and your location, timers can determine when the sun rises and sets. You can program lights to go on at sunset or some interval thereafter, and go off at some time after that, or at sunrise. You can set a different on-off program for weekdays and weekends, or for each day of the week. Or you can click the vacation mode and the timer will turn a light on and off at a random time ahead or after your preset times until you turn the vacation mode off. With two or more timers, you can create random patterns that would convince any observer that your home is occupied. And if the power goes off, the timer's internal battery will keep accurate time for several days at least.

If you have a security system, you'll want to notify the alarm company that you'll be away and whether anyone will be checking your house while you're gone. Knowing that the house should be empty will allow the alarm company to dispatch the police sooner without having to make multiple calls to attempt to reach you.

The House Itself

The biggest concern that most people have is that a pipe will burst while they're away and do serious damage before anyone notices. Shutting off the water will allow at most only the water in the pipes to leak out, and is always a good idea. However, if you do shut the water off, turn off the breaker for an electric water heater or switch to pilot only for a gas water heater. If the thermostat on the water heater should go bad while you're away and not stop heating the water, bad things could happen ranging from super-heated water being released through the temperature and pressure relief

valve to the water heater exploding. And while leaving the water heater off might mean you wouldn't have hot water immediately when you return, you will save on your energy bills with it off.

The weakest links in your water supply system are the lines attached to your washer. If you have a shutoff for those lines, it's best to leave them off when you aren't washing clothes, but absolutely shut them off when you go on vacation. If you can, shut off the water supply to the icemaker in your refrigerator.

If you're away in the winter, you don't want any water still left in the pipes to freeze. If you won't be gone for more than a few weeks, it's a good idea to leave the heat on but turn it down to 55-60 degrees. At that temperature pipes shouldn't freeze. However, it is also a good idea to open the doors to your cabinets under sinks in the bathrooms and kitchen. Those spaces can get substantially colder than the rest of the house if the heat is set to 55 and the warmer air can't circulate around the pipes when the outside temperature is below freezing.

If there are openings into your house (either pet doors or accidental openings), make sure you've closed them off before you leave. Animals and birds inside your house can do a lot of damage in a short time if they can get in. Don't leave anything edible where it would attract rats, mice, or other animals.

Unplug any electronics not attached to a surge strip. And even then, you might want to unplug the surge strip to keep standby systems from using power needlessly while you're gone.

Clean things that will spoil during your absence out of the refrigerator.

Try to leave your gutters as clean as possible to prevent them from backing up and overflowing. Have any large dead tree limbs removed if they might fall on the house.

One of the best things you can do is make and keep a checklist of what to do before you leave. When you're in a hurry to catch that plane or get on the road, it's very easy to forget key things. There's a reason that pilots always work off checklists.

A longer version of this article that discusses what to do when your house will sit empty for a long time (moved, but the house hasn't sold, 6 months at your second home in a cold/warm climate) will be available on my web site at www.DougBoulter.com.

From the Zoning Ordinance: Things *The Echo* Has Been Asked to Print

Fences

The county's Zoning Ordinance regulates the location of fences and walls on a lot based on the height of the fence or wall. On most residential lots, the Zoning Ordinance only allows a fence or wall of 4 feet or less in the front yard. Remember that on corner lots, the two yards which lie between the principle building and the intersecting streets are both deemed to be front yards. In a side or rear yard, a fence or wall of not more than 7 feet is generally allowed. There are some limited exceptions to these rules for particular types of lots that abut or are in close proximity to major thoroughfares.

Sheds

No accessory structure (such as a shed), except a statue, basketball standard, or flagpole, shall be located (a) in any minimum required front yard on any lot or (b) in any front yard on any lot containing 36,000 square feet or less. When located in a front yard, basketball standards shall not be located closer than fifteen feet to a front lot line or twelve feet to a side lot line, and shall not be used between the hours of 8:00 PM and 8:00 AM.

A shed that is 8 ½ feet or less in total height may be located anywhere in a side or rear yard. Any shed that exceeds 8 ½ feet in height shall meet the minimum required side yard setbacks, and shall be located no closer than a distance equal to its height to the rear lot line.

The total height of the accessory structure is measured from grade to the highest point of the structure. In instances where there is a slope in grade, height is measured from the lowest point of the slope.

Additions and Decks

The distance from any proposed addition to the property lines is regulated by the minimum yard requirements (setback requirements) set forth in the zoning district regulations in the Zoning Ordinance.

In the R-3 portion of Virginia Hills, minimum front yard is 35', minimum side yard is 15', and minimum rear yard is 25'. In the R-4 portion of Virginia Hills, minimum front yard is 30', minimum side yard is 10', and minimum rear yard is 25'.

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Message from Supervisor McKay

A month into the new year, it's good to reflect on what we accomplished together in 2011. Please contact my office or subscribe to my e-newsletter at Leedist@fairfaxcounty.gov if you'd like more details.

County Budget: A better economic climate, and the work we've done over the past several years to maintain core services and trim non-essential ones, leaves us in a far better position than many other localities. We've reduced spending by more than \$220 million over the past two years, held school spending steady, preserved public safety, protected vital human services and held the line on property taxes. My citizen budget committee continues to provide valuable input and I'd also welcome your thoughts on budget priorities.

Transportation: This has been a year for safety improvements, especially in the Franconia Road area. Pedestrian improvements include sidewalks along sections of Franconia Road and Florence Lane, safety medians, and crosswalks. BRAC is now reality so our success in working with Congressman Moran and other federal elected officials to get \$180 million is welcome. That will fund the widening of Route 1 from Telegraph Road at the southern end to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway at the northern end.

We're moving ahead with improvements to one of our worst bottlenecks—the intersection of Van Dorn/Telegraph/South Kings is on track. We've held public hearings, designed the improvements, and expect construction to begin in 2013.

Parks and Recreation: In May, we opened *Our Special Harbor* sprayground at Lee District Park. This zero-water-depth sprayground and adjacent tree house is fully accessible and was funded through a public-private partnership.

We've added 75 acres to Huntley Meadows Park, enhancing this wildlife sanctuary and urban oasis.

Redistricting: As chair of the Board's Legislative Committee, I served as liaison to the bipartisan citizen committee that developed new supervisor district lines to reflect the population changes of the last census. The Board adopted a plan that ensured fair representation for each resident with minimal disruption to communities, moving only 7 of the County's precincts. Lee District did not lose or gain any full precincts, only picking up a small piece of the Woodlawn precinct in Mount Vernon along Frye Road.

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Recent Virginia Hills Real Estate Market Activity

Status	Style	Address	BR	FB	HB	List Price	Close Price	Bsmt	Gar
ACTIVE	Rambler	6607 DORSET DR	3	2	0	\$319,900		No	1
ACTIVE	Rambler	3914 SPECT CT	3	2	0	\$419,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	6608 BERKSHIRE DR	2	1	0	\$330,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	6516 BERKSHIRE DR	3	2	0	\$328,555		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	6106 PIKE CT	3	2	0	\$319,900		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	3712 LOGAN CT	4	2	0	\$300,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	3515 PIKE RD	4	2	0	\$270,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Raised Rambler	6602 BERKSHIRE DR	3	2	0	\$369,900		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	6309 THE PKWY	3	1	0	\$324,900		No	
CNTG/KO	Colonial	6309 GENTELE CT	3	1	1	\$220,000		Yes	
CONTRACT	Rambler	6408 HILLVIEW AVE	4	2	0	\$245,000		Yes	
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6520 BERKSHIRE DR	4	2	0	\$364,950	\$355,000	Yes	
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6311 GENTELE CT	4	2	0	\$295,000	\$290,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6316 VIRGINIA HILLS AVE	5	2	0	\$389,990	\$375,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6211 HOUSTON CT	2	3	0	\$349,900	\$342,000	Yes	
EXPIRED	Rambler	6516 BERKSHIRE DR	3	2	0	\$328,888		Yes	

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