

*News from...*

## SUPERVISOR PENNY GROSS



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**January 2018**

A few items of information for you or your association newsletter:

**The Board Corner: Perspectives from Penny** – Happy New Year! Fairfax County begins the New Year with a new County Executive. Bryan Hill, formerly the county manager for James City County, in the Williamsburg area, begins his tenure this month. Mr. Hill stopped by the Mason District Holiday Town Gathering last month, and got just a taste of the activities that happen in Mason District all year long. I look forward to acquainting Mr. Hill with Mason District and the interests and concerns of its residents.

First on Mr. Hill's list is the FY 2019 county budget, which he will unveil in mid-February. But winter is upon us, and snowstorms, hypothermia, and navigating Fairfax County's 6,000 miles of roadways, hundreds of neighborhoods, and 24,000 acres of county parkland will confirm that he's not in James City County anymore!

The Board of Supervisors meets most Tuesdays, either in full session in the Board auditorium, or as a committee of the whole in Room 11 of the Fairfax County Government Center. All of the meetings can be viewed live on cable Channel 16, or on demand at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov). Items on the Board's agenda for 2018 include short-term rentals, an updated sign ordinance, and a variety of land use applications. The Board's agenda is published on line at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/) about a week prior to a scheduled meeting.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find more information about snow removal, which is the responsibility of the Virginia Department of Transportation, a state agency, as well as some tips about preparing for driving in the white stuff. Please don't be a statistic. Check your preparation now, especially windshield wiper fluid, and a good sturdy snow scraper. Driving in snow is easier when you can see out your vehicle's windows!

**Fairfax County's Hypothermia Prevention Program in Progress** – Because of the successful public-private partnerships that serve the critical needs of chronically homeless persons, the 2017-2018 Fairfax-Falls Church emergency hypothermia shelters are open under a "**no turn-away**" status from now **until March 31, 2018** at all emergency shelters, based on freezing

temperatures. A list of locations is available at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/emergency-shelters](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/emergency-shelters). If you see someone at night who is unsheltered and could be at risk of hypothermia, call the county's non-emergency phone line at 703-691-2131 (TTY 711). Information about the Hypothermia Prevention Program is available at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/hypothermia-prevention-program](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/hypothermia-prevention-program). Contact the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness at 703-324-9492, or via e-mail at [opehgeneralmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:opehgeneralmail@fairfaxcounty.gov).

**Help Feed Fairfax County Families by Stuffing the Bus** – Although shelves are full during the holidays, after the New Year, most community food pantries are depleted. To help fill the need, Fairfax County operates "Stuff the Bus," a food pantry giving program that partners with nonprofit organizations, grocery stores, and MV Transportation to restock depleted food pantry shelves. In its eighth year, Fairfax County will host 14 separate "Stuff the Bus" events, beginning **Saturday, January 13 through Saturday, February 24, 2018, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** at local grocery stores. Each week a Fastran bus, staffed by MV Transportation personnel, will park at a different location and collect food donations. Volunteers for local non-profit food pantries will be available at each store to collect donated food from local shoppers. On **Saturday, February 10**, the "Stuff the Bus" program will be at the **Annandale Giant, 7137 Columbia Pike**, and will benefit the **Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA)**. For more information about the "Stuff the Bus" program and a list of donation sites, collection dates, and times, call 703-222-9764; TTY 711, or visit the Web site [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/stuff-the-bus](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/stuff-the-bus).

**Winter 2018 Leadership Series for Civic and HOA Leaders Scheduled** – For the past 10 years, Supervisor Penny Gross has hosted a series of meetings for Mason District Civic Association and Home Owner Association leaders. These meetings covered presentations from the departments of Zoning, Health, Police, Fire and Rescue, and Code Compliance. Because they are so popular, Supervisor Gross will be offering them again. Topics and presenters may be subject to change because of staff availability. The Winter 2018 Leadership Series schedule is as follows:

- **Saturday, January 13, 2018** – Meet the Commanders and Assistant Commanders from the Mason, Franconia, and West Springfield Police Stations.
- **Saturday, February 10, 2018** – Personal and Community Resilience, featuring personnel from the Fairfax County Animal Control Division/Animal Shelter.
- **Saturday, March 10, 2018** – Learn about the Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance, and Hoarding.

The meetings will be held at **the Mason District Governmental Center, 6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale, from 10 a.m. to noon**. If you can't make one of the meetings, please invite another member of your board. Reserve your seat by e-mail to [Fran.Tunick@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Fran.Tunick@fairfaxcounty.gov), or call 703-256-7717.

**Dog License Renewal Deadline is January 31, 2018** – If you have not done so already, renew all dog licenses no later than **Wednesday, January 31, 2018**, to be compliant. Penalties for an unlicensed dog are Class IV Misdemeanors. Visit the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, located at 4500 West Ox Road in Fairfax, to renew and receive the license tags in person. Proof of current rabies vaccination certification and \$10 per license renewal (cost is the same for altered and unaltered dogs) is required. Cash, checks, or credit cards are accepted for payment if licenses are

renewed in person at the Animal Shelter. The Animal Shelter is open Tuesday through Friday, 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 703-830-1100, or visit the Fairfax County Animal Services Division Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/).

**AARP Volunteers Bring Tax Preparation to Mason District** – Free tax assistance will be available beginning **Monday, January 29 through Tuesday, April 17, 2018 (federal tax returns)**, thanks to AARP volunteers, who will be at the Mason District Governmental Center, 6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale. File Virginia taxes before the deadline on **Tuesday, May 1**. AARP volunteers will provide walk-in service from **January 29 through April 17: Mondays and Thursdays from 1 to 8 p.m.; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.; Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.** Please note: **No Tax-Aide service on President's Day, Monday, February 19, 2018.** All returns are filed electronically. Bring documents, such as last year's tax return, a photo ID, and all Social Security cards. Residents with illnesses or infirmities, which confine them to their homes, may schedule appointments with AARP for tax preparation services by calling 571-766-6268. For more information about AARP Tax-Aide, visit [www.aarp.org/taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/taxaide), or call 1-888-227-7669.

**Volunteers Needed for DFS VITA Program** – The Fairfax County Department of Family Services (DFS) coordinates a regional, volunteer-run Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, which provides free tax assistance to individuals and families with low incomes. Volunteers are needed from late January to April 2018 for three to five hours, once or twice a week, at multiple locations throughout Northern Virginia. No tax experience is necessary for interpreters and greeters. Tax preparers and screeners should have experience preparing a tax return, and additional training will be provided. Classroom and/or online training available, and all tax preparers must pass an IRS certification test. For more information about the VITA program, or to register as a volunteer, please visit [www.nvacash.org](http://www.nvacash.org) and click on the "Volunteers" tab, or call Tatyana Chambers, volunteer coordinator, at 703-533-5702.

**VDOT is Ready for Snow this Winter** – The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is ready for snow season with plow-tracking technology, expanded monitor programs, and a one-stop shop for online resources that is available for residents to use. VDOT has budgeted \$84.9 million for snow removal in Northern Virginia this winter, and the agency's state and contracted fleet is ready with 120,000 tons of salt; 250,000 gallons of brine; 25,000 tons of sand; and 4,500 vehicles (97 percent of fleet is contracted).

**Highlights for Snow Season 2017-2018**

- **One stop-shop for resources:** Visit [www.virginiadot.org/novaemergency](http://www.virginiadot.org/novaemergency) to access all of VDOT's online information resources, including important messages and updates, news releases, and links to the [customer service center, 511](#), and [vdotplows.org](http://vdotplows.org).
- **Monitor program:** This year, 180 VDOT employees will ride the roads to monitor road conditions and snowplow progress, and more than 30 employees will monitor remotely via the automatic vehicle locator (AVL) equipment.

**How You Can Help and Resources:**

- Monitor forecasts frequently;
- Adjust commutes, telework, and avoid driving if possible;
- Park in driveways or park on the odd-numbered side of the street.

- Do not shovel driveways until plows have come through;
- Have enough fuel, wiper fluid, proper tires, medication, and an emergency car kit;
- Be patient: crews need time and room to work.

**Stay Informed:**

- [@vadotnova](#) on Twitter;
- [virginiadot.org/novaemergency](http://virginiadot.org/novaemergency) for status updates, FAQs, and other resources;
- [511virginia.org](http://511virginia.org) for road conditions and traffic cameras;
- [vdotplows.org](http://vdotplows.org) for neighborhood status and locations of plows; and
- [my.vdot.virginia.gov](http://my.vdot.virginia.gov) or 800-FOR-ROAD (367-7623) to report issues.

**Senior Citizen Tax Relief 2018 Workshops Coming to the Mason District Governmental Center**

- Supervisor Penny Gross, in collaboration with the Department of Tax Administration (DTA), is hosting free tax relief workshops on **March 7 and 9, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon both days**, at the Mason District Governmental Center, 6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale. DTA staff will be on-site to assist residents with completing the 2018 Tax Relief application form and answer questions. No appointment is necessary. Bring your 2017 tax returns or proof of 2017 gross income from all sources, and all asset information as of December 31, 2017. **Real estate tax relief is available for older adults and people with disabilities who meet certain qualifications.** Qualified residents also may be eligible for car tax and rent relief. For more information, visit the Web site [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/), or call 703-222-8234; TTY 703-222-7594.

**What You Need to Know about Panhandling in Fairfax County**

– In 2017, The Fairfax County Police Department received **approximately 2,100 calls related to panhandlers** in our county, an increase from calls received in 2016. The calls ranged from traffic issues to concerns about the panhandler, and fears about a suspicious person at an intersection. Panhandling happens in most areas of our county, generating many questions and complaints from our residents. While we may get a good feeling by providing money to a panhandler, the **reality is that panhandlers who are truly in need require more resources than small amounts of money.** The good news is that our **county has many services and staff dedicated to help those in need.** But we **need your help: We encourage you to not give money to panhandlers.** Why? Because **giving money to panhandlers encourages more panhandling.** Donations of cash will not help solve the underlying reasons why someone panhandles. To learn about Fairfax County's approach to this issue, laws, public safety, and what you can do to help panhandlers, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/what-you-need-to-know-about-panhandling-in-fairfax-county/#prettyPhoto](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/what-you-need-to-know-about-panhandling-in-fairfax-county/#prettyPhoto).

**Mason Matters! The Television Show**

– Fairfax County has a lot to offer its residents and visitors within its 395 square miles. There are eclectic offerings in shopping, dining, hotel accommodations, parks, and Fairfax County is home to flourishing business centers, outstanding public schools and universities, and provides its residents with plentiful quality of life assets. In addition to present and future offerings, our county also provides a bountiful glimpse into the past. History buffs and the generally curious have great opportunities to learn about numerous historical figures, events, and places, throughout Fairfax County. Woven into our county's rich history are historic houses. Some of these properties may be well known to you, while others may come as a surprise. In either case, historic houses are peppered throughout Fairfax County

and in the Mason District for you to discover, or if it has been a long time since you visited, to re-discover! The **January** edition of ***Mason Matters!***, the television show that brings you news and information about our Mason District community, hosted by Supervisor Penny Gross, features Susan Hellman, Director of the Carlyle House Historic Park, and David Buchta, Heritage Conservation Branch Manager, Resource Management Division of the Fairfax County Park Authority. ***Mason Matters!*** airs on Cable Channel 16 every **Thursday at 7 p.m.**, and every **Friday and Sunday at 6:30 p.m.**, and daily on-line at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mason](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mason).

**Need a Notary?** – Notarial services are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Office of Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross, located in the Mason District Governmental Center, 6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale. **Please call 703-256-7717 in advance to ensure the notary is available to assist you when you arrive.**

**Mason News and Updates** – If you know individuals who would like to receive news and updates about Fairfax County services and events in Mason District, ask them to send an e-mail to [masonbosinfo@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:masonbosinfo@fairfaxcounty.gov) to subscribe. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, or the news and updates, please send an e-mail and include unsubscribe in the subject line to remove your e-mail address from the subscription list.

**The Quick 411** – The Fairfax County website looks different, did it get revamped? Yes. After nearly 20 months of work, the new county website recently went live. The new site has been rebuilt from the ground up - the design, the information structure, the back-end core web content management system, the search engine. Take a look to see what is new, find services, pay fees, report concerns, and more, at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov).

***Happy New Year!***