

# BBHCA

Summer 2024

## **BROOKLAND - BUSH HILL NEWS**

A newsletter for the Residents of Brookland-Bush Hill and Gunnell Estates in Alexandria, VA.



# DEAR NEIGHBORS

## **Franconia Government Center Update**

Monday, May 6th was the third and final community meeting to discuss the future of the current Governmental Center on Franconia Road and BBHCA leaders attended all three meetings to represent the 800+ households in our area. Supervisor Rodney Lusk is proposing to transfer the site to the Housing Authority to be re-developed with 120 units of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom affordable income rental apartments.

## **Background**

The current governmental center, which houses Rodney Lusk's office, the Franconia Police Station, the Franconia Museum, and a community meeting room is being relocated to a new site near Lane Elementary School in Kingstowne. Now under construction and slated to open in 2025, the 90,000-square-foot facility will combine those services with an expanded Kingstowne library and a senior center.

In January, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted to defer its decision to transfer the property after a public hearing in which many residents expressed opposition to plans to build multifamily affordable housing at the site and suggested that the 3 acres should be used for other purposes. The Board deferred the decision due to inadequate community outreach and to give residents more time to provide comments.

Two community meetings were held in April and residents had a limited opportunity to participate in sessions where facilitated groups provided input on additional uses for the property, future amenities should the County's plan for housing move forward, and what specific area improvements are needed.

## **May 6 Meeting**

The third meeting was slated as a feedback session where the County reported what they heard during the previous two meetings. In total, over a thousand comments were submitted. The meeting was conducted by an independent facilitator and included:

1. Review by the facilitator of the feedback from the two meetings with over 300 participants and 900+ online comments.
2. Remarks by Supervisor Lusk on existing and planned uses within Franconia District focusing on the items that residents had remarked on as possible uses other than housing.
3. Presentations by the County officials including the Fairfax County Fire & Rescue, Housing, Dept. of Neighborhood & Community Services, and the Dept. of Planning & Development. A representative of the Volunteer Fire Department currently located on Beulah Street was not asked to participate. Following an hour and 15-minute series of presentations, there was 15 minutes set aside for Q&A. Attendees submitted 100 questions on cards which were collected during the meeting presentations. After significant push back by a number of vocal residents who felt their questions were not being addressed, this part of the agenda was expanded to 35 minutes with the facilitator reviewing and selecting the questions to ask. Finally, the meeting wrapped up with a discussion of next steps.

## **Supervisor Lusk's Comments**

Supervisor Lusk stated that there are already many facilities in this district that have youth programs, recreation, and senior services and that there is no funding available to improve the existing Franconia facilities and therefore no new projects can

be started on the existing government site. Additionally, he mentioned that some of the community suggestions including senior services and meeting space will be absorbed by the new government center. During the Q&A portion, he did acknowledge the Koinonia Foundation needed more space to support the existing community.

Supervisor Lusk also conceded that many people recommended that the site be transferred to the volunteer fire department and recognized that as a potential alternate use. However, it is one that requires much research and study, and he did not agree to push back the decision to transfer the property to Housing to give sufficient time to study that option or others.

### Community Input Summary

The “what we heard” presentation was conducted by the facilitators and grouped the community feedback into three major categories: mobility, community amenities and recreation. These categories were related to questions discussed in the first two community meeting specifically the amenities that would improve quality of life for residents if housing were built on this site.

- Alternative Uses to Housing: Expand/relocate fire and police stations, women’s shelter, rec center, arts center, sports facility, health facility, educational facility, farmer’s market, spaces for nonprofits, food bank, and other essential services and social support.
- Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility: Safe pathways and continuous corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists and people with disabilities, safe pedestrian crossings, additional sidewalks, pedestrian accommodations at intersections.
- Public Transportation and Connectivity: Additional public transport options, shuttle services to metro stations, bus transit services.
- Placemaking Elements and Neighborhood: Livability Green or open spaces, parks, dog parks, public art, and cultural spaces.
- Traffic Congestion: Timing and operation of traffic lights and signals, additional roads and lanes Alternative Modes of Transport Van pools, biking and walking along additional lanes, sidewalks, and paths.
- Recreational Spaces: Playgrounds, fitness stations, bike paths, walking trails
- Human Services Facilities: Community center, senior center, teen center, spaces for people with disabilities.
- Mixed-Use Development: Town squares, retail and grocery stores, recreational spaces, businesses, mixed income, housing for public servants and first responders.
- Health and Environmental Risks: Proximity to gas stations, land contamination.
- Comprehensive Planning: Align sustainability with future planning, especially around more eco-friendly transportation; more holistic and integrated planning in the community to address transportation, infrastructure needs and density and multi-family facilities, including the impact of development on schools.

During the Q&A period a number of residents voiced their frustration and some expressed outrage at the process itself and the lack of transparency. There were others that were not satisfied at the answers which Supervisor Lusk and the County representatives provided. That feedback included:

- Not enough public comment opportunities,
- Not enough time to study alternative uses before the decision meeting,
- Environmental concerns were not addressed, specifically the risk of benzene from underground fuel storage tank vents and at the pump increasing the risk of Cancer
- No time to fully investigate the expansion of the Volunteer Fire Station or police substation, and
- Absence of any discussion of the Koinonia space needs even though it was brought up in both previous meetings.

### Next Steps

The decision to transfer the property to the Housing Bureau will be made on May 21, 2024. If you are interested in receiving updates on the status of the Franconia Government Center, send your name, address, and email to [bbhca2022@gmail.com](mailto:bbhca2022@gmail.com) and BBHCA will add you to our email alerts.

# LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT BEST FRIEND?

## LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE GERMAN SHEPHERD!

You've heard the old saying, if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog! If you are looking for your next 4-legged friend, consider fostering or adopting a dog through All-Shepherd Rescue (ASR). ASR is an all-volunteer led 501c3 organization serving Virginia, Maryland, DC, Delaware and Pennsylvania, with a mission to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome German Shepherd dogs and mixes.

### Why a German Shepherd?

If you have ever had a German Shepherd, you know that they are great family dogs, providing companionship, security, loyalty, with superior intelligence. If you have not had a German Shepherd, now is a great time to learn more about this wonderful breed and consider whether you could provide a great home for a wonderful dog. You could consider fostering, adopting, and/or volunteering.

What is Involved in Fostering?

Fostering a German Shepherd includes providing a loving foundation for a dog between rescue and adoption, working with the dog on training, and getting the dog acclimated to a routine. ASR covers all vet related expenses for the foster dog. The dog will be actively showcased on the ASR website and in social media, as well as at adoption events around the Washington, DC metro area. The goal is to find a loving family wishing to adopt your foster.

### How Can I Adopt?

If you are interested in adopting a German Shepherd through ASR, please check out the ASR website at <https://www.allshepherdrescue.com>. Here you will find information about ASR, as well as everything about adoption. You will also find the online form to be considered for adoption. There is nothing more satisfying than adopting a wonderful German Shepherd rescue.

### Volunteering

Beyond fostering and adopting, ASR is always looking for volunteers who have an affinity for the German Shepherd dog and would be willing to give their time and talents to benefit ASR and the German Shepherds. Volunteer opportunities include applications, adoptions, intake, events, fostering, fundraising, marketing, social media, website and more. You can learn more about service to ASR online at [www.allshepherdrescue.com](http://www.allshepherdrescue.com).

So, whether you are interested in fostering, adoption, and/or volunteering, reach out to ASR and find your next best friend today!



**FREE Summer Concerts**

Summer is here and Northern Virginia hosts a range of free concerts and events for kids and adults both in the Franconia District as well as all around the NOVA area. Below are the concert series closest to the BBHCA area. For a full schedule, go to: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances>.

**Friday Night Outdoor Concerts in the Area**

Mount Vernon Nights  
Grist Mill Park, Alexandria  
June 7 – August 30 / 7:30 – 8:30 PM  
4710 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria

**Spotlight by Starlight**

Mason District Park, Annandale  
June 14 – August 18 / Starting at 7:30 PM  
6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale

**Music on the Mill**

River Mill Park, Occoquan  
July 20, August 17 + festival days / 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM  
458 Mill Street, Occoquan

**Braddock Nights**

Lake Accotink Park, Springfield  
July 5 – August 16 / 7:30 – 8:30 PM  
7500 Accotink Park Rd, Springfield

**Summer on the Green**

Vienna Town Green, Vienna  
June 7 – September 20 / Starting at 6:30 PM  
144 Maple Avenue

**Chillin on Church**

Church Street, Vienna  
July 19, August 16, September 20 / 6:30 – 9:30 PM  
Church Street, Vienna

**Saturday Night Outdoor Concerts**

Spotlight by Starlight  
Ossian Hill Park, Annandale

**StoryCorps**

StoryCorps gives people the chance to record interviews about their lives, to pass wisdom from one generation to the next, and to leave a legacy for the future. The idea is everyone has an important story to tell and they all matter. It records, preserves, and amplifies the voices of all groups. It tries to share stories from people with different backgrounds and experiences.

Nearly 700,000 people have recorded their experiences since it was founded in 2003. The online archive is now the single largest collection of human voices ever collected. These stories are shared through their podcast, animated shorts, digital platforms, and best-selling books all available at the Library of Congress.

Do you have a story to tell? You can record a conversation either using StoryCorps’ self-directed recording tool or at one of the StoryCorps recording sites.

Learn more at [www.storycorps.org](http://www.storycorps.org).

June 14 – August 18 / starting at 7:30 PM  
7900 Heritage Drive, Annandale  
Mosaic District, Fairfax

**Spotlight by Starlight**

Mason District Park, Annandale  
Jun 14 – August 18 / Starting at 7:30 PM  
6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale

**For Children:**

The area’s free morning concerts are some of the best things to do with kids on weekends in Northern Virginia. Check the schedule to see a list of family-friendly entertainers are performing each week. Arts in the Park (Multiple Parks) / Wednesday and Saturday / 10:00 – 11:00 AM through August 24th.

Mason District Park, Annandale, 6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale  
Wakefield Park, Annandale, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale  
Burke Lake Park, Fairfax Station. 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station



SAVE THE DATE  
SPRING MEETING

25 JUNE 2024 | 7:30 PM  
BUSH HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
CAFETERIA  
5927 WESTCHESTER STREET

FEATURED SPEAKER:  
JIM FLETCHER, OWNER  
SQUARE ONE HOME INSPECTIONS

*We look forward to seeing you there*

**BBHCA Community Meeting Minutes**  
**April 17, 2024**  
**730pm**

**Meeting Opening**

Elise opened the meeting and greeted attendees reviewing new Board is focusing on publishing four newsletters, planning four neighborhood meetings, working on the BBHCA webpage and Facebook. She also announced that we are currently dealing with the pressing Government Center situation and introduced Carol Aim who gave an update and answered questions.

**Government Center**

Prior to the first community session, Elise and Carol represented BBHCA in a meeting with other civic associations and HOAs. The goal was a unified approach and strength in numbers. There has been one community meeting so far with another this Monday night and a final meeting on May 3rd. All BBHCA residents are encouraged to attend and make their voice heard. The meeting format includes residents broken up into tables with a facilitator and scribe. It opens with a presentation by Supervisor Lusk and Steve Brigham from the housing followed by a short film on affordable housing and then facilitated discussions and report out.

Supervisor Lusk spoke about the process, iterating that we were at the beginning of the process, what the steps were and that there would be plenty of **opportunity** for public input as we progress through the planning and zoning phases. What he didn't mention was that the RFP, issued several years ago, mentioned that the comp plan changes, and the rezoning needed would be done concurrently. Also, the next board meeting to approve the transfer of the site to housing is "decision only" meaning no public input to the board. He also spoke about the affordable

housing need, who would be eligible, benefits to the surrounding community. He pointed out that current county employees: entry-level police, fire, teachers, medical staff fit into the middle-income range: 60% of AMI. Not discussed is that county documents, RFP response indicates that 20% of units would be reserved for these employees. No discussion of who would be renting the units.

Mr. Brigham spoke about need for affordable housing in the county, explained the process, role of county facilitators at each table, discussions should be respectful, facilitators will ensure everyone has a chance to speak, scribe to document what was said. Below are notes from the meeting:

Q1: Alternative Uses: Overall the sentiment from the first meeting was this site should be re-purposed for community use: community center with police sub-station, expansion for the fire station; fire station and police sub-station; food bank; community center with food bank, community park with skateboard park, pickle ball, dog park, trail with exercise station: all things desired by surrounding communities. All at both tables Elise and I sat at were opposed to housing, especially family's: too close to Franconia Road making it dangerous to children; surrounded by gas stations and other commercial/industrial uses; not enough parking; too small (2.5 acres) for 120; access in/out from Franconia would be difficult; green space would be small; toxicity of the land.

Q2: Amenities to improve lifestyle of residents: All expressed opposition to housing on this site but recommended: significant green space/park; food market; space for Koinineia, community center with space for young people; support for the arts.

Q3: Mobility Improvements: maintain/

improve sidewalks and bike trails; improve road especially Franconia/Van Dorn intersection; more frequent and reliable public transportation; improve Van Dorn tail to metro.

Q4: Recreation: farmers market; outdoor gazebo for concerts; dog park; skateboard park; more option for disabled; community garden; concern about safety of any use until toxicity studies completed.

During the table (24 tables +) sharing discussions (quick feedback from each table) the responses were similar to our table: this is county owned land that should be used to benefit the community: multi-purpose community center: fire station; food bank; improved transportation; more green space, recreational activities.

There is a 2nd Meeting on Monday from 6-8:00 p.m. County feedback will be on 6 May, 6:00-8:00pm at John Lewis HS.

**Treasurer Report**

Katie reported that all bills are paid related to insurance, printing, taxes, etc. Katie announced that we have lowered our advertising rates this year. She spoke about the new Neighborhood Youth Committee she is starting. The new committee will be an ad hoc youth committee and Carter Wask will be doing a study beforehand. He will be writing the mission, goals, etc. More to come on that mission.

**Board Secretary Voted In**

Jess Jones was voted in as board secretary. Jess introduced herself explaining that she is a Bush Hill Estates neighbor who has lived in the neighborhood for 18 plus years. She has two children that attend the nearby schools. She is very invested in the community and is excited to be a part of the Civic Association.

## Membership Report

The membership stats as of April 16th are:

2024 total paid members = 135  
New members this year = 63  
Renewed Paid Members = 72  
37 of all Members paid online this year

## Franconia Recreation Center Speaker

Next up to speak was the volunteer Speaker Julie Margolis Volunteer Coordinator, to discuss the Franconia Recreation Center. She spoke about the Updated walking trails that the Rec center has. They have started cleaning up the trails at the center. They have 5 miles of trails and 80% of them are marked. High school student volunteers are helping to clean up the trails and with the entire Beautification project. Dominion Power has also worked to improve the trails and the amphitheater area. Chessie's Park – the larger of the 2 playgrounds at the Rec Center – is rated the #2 park nationally.

The concert series start in June this year and includes the military band. The schedule for that concert series will be out May 1st.

Inside the Rec center are the following:

- All types of courts
- Drop in fitness classes
- Camps/snow day camps
- Roller skating rink (bring your own skates/roller blades)
  - Sat. night “glow night” for all ages
- Soft playrooms

The rec center has no budget; however, they have FREE

- Aquatic safety classes
- Free concerts
- Free splash park

Rec center Memberships on sale May 1st.

## Farmers Market

Next up to speak was the wonderful speaker Liza Moore about the Kingstowne Farmers Market. The market is Fridays from 3-7pm and is open from May 3-October 25th with 19 Vendors. A reminder to qualifying seniors (60+) the USDA Farm Market Fresh \$50 check is available to spend on fruits, veggies and herbs. The Farmers Market really needs volunteers to set up tents, manage the market on Fridays and answer questions.

Meeting was adjourned.

## Neighbor profile – Bonnie Wood

Hidden among our neighbors are some extremely accomplished and interesting people, like Bonnie Wood. She is the Community and Public Affairs Director at 7News On Your Side. A graduate of Emory & Henry College, Bonnie got her start in television as a student intern at the ABC affiliate in Richmond even though her first job after college was at the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Bonnie has worked at 7News (WJLA) for more than 25 years. In that time, she has received five Emmys, numerous ABC Alpha and Virginia Association of Broadcasters awards, and two prestigious awards for her community service work! As accomplished as Bonnie's journalism career has been, it is Bonnie's community service efforts of late that have kept her really busy.

In her role at 7News, Bonnie serves as liaison in the community in both the public and private sectors to facilitate engagement with the local nonprofit community as well as assist in creating and organizing special events and special programs.

One of Bonnie's favorite efforts is Working with Toys for Tots every year. Bonnie and her team collect approximately 25,000 toys every year to be distributed throughout Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland.

When it became clear that the pandemic's effect would be far greater than expected, Bonnie began to see more opportunities for service. The Capital Area Food Bank came to the station for help: they were overwhelmed by the number of people needing food assistance during Covid. Initially, they reached out to see if they could get some pro bono spots for the food bank. But seeing there was a chance to make a bigger impact, Bonnie came up with the Feeding The DMV concept. Bonnie says it was mostly about creating awareness, so she organized “Food Bank Fridays” and for six straight weeks the station news crew visited food banks in the region to bring attention to the long waiting lines and to hear some of the stories of those in need. Bonnie said “People were desperate and really needed food. I heard about a mother who hadn't eaten for a couple of days in order to feed her child. When you go to these events and see who's in the line you realize it's everybody.”

Mindful of the impact her student internship had on her career, Bonnie works with the local schools and universities to provide a firsthand understanding of the broadcast news business by coordinating tours to watch the anchors deliver the news, see the production from inside the Control Room and meeting with journalists and directors for career advice.

(Material for this profile came from many sources including an alumni profile written by Monic Hoel for Emory & Henry College.)

# MEET MY PET

## A Poem For My Dogs

By Carla Murillo-Gonzalez

Meet my dogs, Bruno Bear and Shamsi  
They turn my world around.  
With love and curls that grow out loud  
Oh, how I love them!  
Even when they bark.  
At every lad walking in the park  
Bruno Bear, our 2017 Christmas pup  
Was born in an Amish farm in Maryland.  
He was the cutest pup in Oakland!  
While Shamsi was sick and operated  
AWLA gave him a safe shelter.  
We could not leave him there; he is a belter!  
We brought him home one Friday of May  
On 2023 Shamsi and Bruno meet  
Suddenly this pack was complete!  
They bark, they cuddle, and ask for treats.  
Daily walks down Mayfair and Old Rolling Road  
Complete a mile when Sumner is strolled.  
Alicia, Dave, Dane, Wesli, and Kate  
All good people that they love.  
Oh, my dogs! I can't live without.

Do you have pet(s) and feel inspired to write about him/her/ them? Send us your story to **BBHCA2022@gmail.com** and we will showcase him/her/them in "Meet my pet". We can't wait to hear about them! Please include pictures too!





## Don't get your real estate updates from the media.

**Get them from your trusted real estate advisor.**

**Median home price at near record high despite more inventory on the market.** Active listings at the end of the month were 4.0% higher than last year across the Washington, D.C. metro; however, not all buyers have more choices, specifically those looking in Alexandria City, Arlington County or Fairfax County, VA.

New listings declined 11.4% year-over-year in the Washington, D.C. metro, though new pending sales were down by a smaller percentage. New listings outpaced new pending sales in March, which is what led to growing month-end inventory.

Despite the inventory increase, the median sold price was \$599,990, up by 10.1% in March, the fastest pace of home price growth since February 2022.

Homes continue to sell quickly in the competitive Washington, D.C. metro area market. Half of all homes sold in March were on the market a week or less.

Call, text, or email me with any questions you may have or for insight that isn't public information.

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## **Protect Yourself Against Financial Crimes**

Newly released Federal Trade Commission data show that consumers reported losing more than \$10 billion to fraud in 2023, marking the first time that fraud losses have reached that benchmark. This marks a 14% increase over reported losses in 2022. There are some simple steps you can take to reduce your risk including:

- Regularly check your bank and credit card accounts for fraud
- Freeze your credit (then 'thaw' it for a short amount of time when you need it)
- Sign new credit/debit cards as soon as you get them
- Don't keep your PIN written down and near your credit or debit card
- Destroy old cards after expiration
- Diligently review all bank statements every month
- Never give your account information over the phone to someone you don't know
- Never provide your PIN to anyone. Your bank or credit card company will never request it on the phone, in an email, or in a mailed letter
- Make sure your credit/debit card is returned after each use
- Do not include your Social Security Number on your checks
- Do not write your credit card number on your check
- Get in the habit of inspecting to see whether any checks are missing from your checkbook or your check order
- Immediately notify your bank if a check is missing or if checks you ordered are not received
- Criminals who use scams for financial gain can be great con-artists. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is
- Never allow anyone to work on your home/business until you have a signed contract outlining the specific work to be done and a specific start and finish date
- Always get several estimates before accepting a contract for work on your home/business
- Set up your phone to decline calls from people you don't know

If you become a victim of financial crime, immediately contact your bank, the Fairfax County Police Department, and the three major Credit Reporting Agencies.

## **Neighborhood Watch Report**

By John Dudley

Summary of incidents reported in Bush Hill by the Franconia Police Department from 6 Dec 2023 to 15 Apr 2024

Approximately 20 incidents were reported in Bush Hill over the last four months. This is a slight increase over the same rate per month from previous reports and with a longer time frame. The incidents consist of assaults, vandalism, auto thefts, destruction of private property, road rage, sexual assault, and shoplifting. Many of the incidents seem to have occurred in the stretch of Franconia Road between the McDonald's and the 7-11 in the Shell gas station.

Please know that this only includes Bush Hill although police reports reflect many incidents in the surrounding communities. So, always be aware of your surroundings and be sure to lock your vehicle or park in your garage when possible.

# THANK YOU

# DBH



**SAVE THE DATE**

# **NATIONAL NIGHT OUT**

**6:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, Aug. 6th  
Bush Hill Elementary School  
Parking Lot**



**Want to volunteer organizing the event?  
Email [BBHCA2022@gmail.com](mailto:BBHCA2022@gmail.com)**

**BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL NEWS**

A newsletter for the Residents of Brookland-Bush Hill  
and Gunnell Estates in Alexandria, VA 22310

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