

# The Virginia Hills Echo



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## Virginia Hills Assessments for 2012

Property owners in Virginia Hills should have received their assessments of their properties several weeks ago. For the 11th year in a row, VHCA has reviewed the assessments done by the County Department of Tax Administration for correctness. VHCA found no major problems with this year's assessments. Homeowners should see their assessments increase from 16% to 18% over the assessment for 2011.

The Board of Supervisors has a rate of \$1.08 per \$1000 of assessed value. That means that the actual rate that the Board will pass as part of the budget cannot be more than \$1.08. It is not clear whether the Board will retain last year's rate of \$1.07 or increase it to \$1.08. If the latter, most Virginia Hills homeowners can expect to see a real estate tax increase of 17-19%.

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, while most homes fall in that range, in a few cases DTA has corrected errors of past years by reducing that rate for the affected homeowners or actually lowering the rate. It also appears that DTA used a smaller increase for the homes on South Kings Highway that lost land to the intersection improvement at Harrison Lane.

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.  
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## Land Use Committee Approves Comprehensive Plan Amendment for Penn Daw

After an initial FYI meeting on March 5th, the Lee District Land Use Committee voted on March 19th to adopt revised plan text for the Penn Daw Plaza area and the area next to it between Poag and School Streets.

In meetings heavily attended by members of the Wilton Woods community, the main issues of contention were the number of apartments to be constructed in the area (the developers proposed 735 and the community wanted either 300 or 500), and the height of the buildings (5 stories tapering down to three vs. four stories tapering down to three).

Based on comments from the first meeting, County Planning and Zoning staff added significant language intended to address concerns raised by the Land Use Committee and the community. In particular, this language was added to the proposed plan amendment:

*Development should be phased in such a way that effective transportation measures are in place concurrent with the development.*

That ensures that road, sidewalk, and mass transit improvements are in place before tenants move into the apartments. The language can be used during the zoning process to stop development if the impact would worsen traffic in the vicinity.

Plan language also addresses access to North/South Kings Highways in the interim period before the connection to Richmond Highway is severed and re-aligned (in the vicinity of the current Krispy Kreme).

In the final vote, the Land Use Committee did not  
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### Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

**Wednesday, April 3 – 7:30 PM**  
**Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane**

**Speaker: TBA**

## The President's Corner

### Comment from VHCA President Ralph Zecca

Spring is here and the flowers are in full bloom. What better time to stop, smell the flowers, and spend time with your neighbors? With that, I would like to take a moment to make a few community announcements:

The St. Mark's Episcopal Church at 6744 South Kings Highway is opening up a community garden for those interested in joining in growing flowers and/or vegetables in the company of fellow gardeners. Each plot is 100 square feet and cost \$40 for the 2012 season. Deer fencing and water barrels are provided. For more information, please contact Ms. Deborah Clay-Mendez at 703-960-4925.

On May 19, 2012, the Rose Hill Elementary School will hold the Rocket Run for Autism. This charity event will include a five kilometer run/walk at 8:30 AM and a one mile fun run at 8:00 AM at the Rose Hill Elementary School. If you register before May 11, the registration fee is \$20.00. After that date, the registration fee is \$25.00. Come out and join our community as we raise awareness on the issues of autism. For registration forms, please visit: <http://www.fcps.edu/RoseHillIES/>

If you have community announcements, please send them our way. And again, if there is anyone out there who would like to help with or set up community events for our neighborhood, please feel free to contact me. In the mean time, I hope you take a moment and enjoy this wonderful weather in our beautiful neighborhood.

- Ralph Zecca

## New Route Numbers for the Fairfax County Parkway

The Commonwealth Transportation Board has voted to convert the Fairfax County Parkway and Franconia Springfield Parkway to primary routes. As a result, the former, now Route 7100, will become Route 286. The latter, now Route 7900, will become Route 289. For the next year, route signs on both roads will reflect both numbers.

VDOT will be doing major repaving work on the Parkway beginning in June and continuing during the summer months when school is not in session

## Rose Hill Elementary Presents "Aladdin and His Wonderful Magical Lamp"

Hop on a flying carpet to visit the exciting city of Shammar in Old Arabia! Meet the adventurous Aladdin and his mischievous monkey, Alakazam. Aladdin will encounter the magician, Jammal, and his wicked sister, Halima, who need Aladdin for their evil plan involving a magic lamp with a strange genie inside. And, of course, watch as Aladdin meets his love, Princess Jasmine, and has to save her from the evil magician.

Performances will be held at Hayfield Secondary School (7630 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria) on Friday, April 13th at 7:00 PM and Saturday, April 14th at 12:00 and 7:00 PM. Tickets will be available at the door (\$5 for adults, \$3 for children).

**Visit the Virginia Hills web site at**  
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Editor	Doug Boulter
Graphic Assistance	John Drummond
Publisher	The Print Shop

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Half page	\$45		

*For yearly discount rate, see [www.virginiahills.org/Echo.html](http://www.virginiahills.org/Echo.html)*

### Virginia Hills Citizens Association Officers 2010-2012

President	Ralph Zecca	President@virginiahills.org
Vice President	Vacant	VP@virginiahills.org
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Secretary	Vacant	Secretary@virginiahills.org
Membership	Warren Suyderhoud	Membership@virginiahills.org
Echo Editor	Doug Boulter	Echo@virginiahills.org

## Members Joining Since the February Meeting

Dorothy & Ray Crabtree, Stephan Crandall, Astrid Csida, Brian Fiore, Ray Frantz, Caitlin Irvin, Mark Mereand, Brenda Santiago.

If you are on this list or paid your dues prior to or at the February 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.

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## Criminal Activity in Virginia Hills on the Weekend of March 23-24

Police report six incidents of destruction of private property on Houston Court, Paulonia Road, and The Parkway on Friday night and/or early Saturday morning. They were all BB gun shots into windows of parked vehicles.

During the same time period, there were three vehicle entries in Kings Landing, including one on the Austin Avenue portion of Kings Landing. Apparently all vehicles were unlocked at the time.

Officers canvassed the area and no one has reported seeing or hearing anything over the time period. They have no suspects at this time.

Remember to keep your vehicles locked, even if they are in front of your house or in your driveway and you anticipate being away from them for only a few minutes. Be alert for strange activity, particularly during the hours of darkness. Well lit areas only deter crime if someone is watching them.

If you observe a crime in progress, call 911. If you see activity of a suspicious nature, call the non-emergency police number 703-691-2131.

## 2011-2012 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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Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

## Richmond Highway Developments (from SFDC)

**Fast Eddie's Site** – A partnership has been formed between the current property owner and a local developer to redevelop the "Fast Eddie's" site at the northwest corner of Richmond Highway and North Kings Highway. The development team has created preliminary plans for a mixed-use retail and residential project and is planning to request a Comprehensive Plan amendment in early 2012.

**Kings Crossing** – Leasing has been completed for Phase II of Kings Crossing, which will include 20,000 SF of pad (stand alone) retail space. Developer JBG/R has begun construction on the sites, and delivery is anticipated for Summer 2012. Phase III plans call for a mixed-use development with multi-family housing and retail.

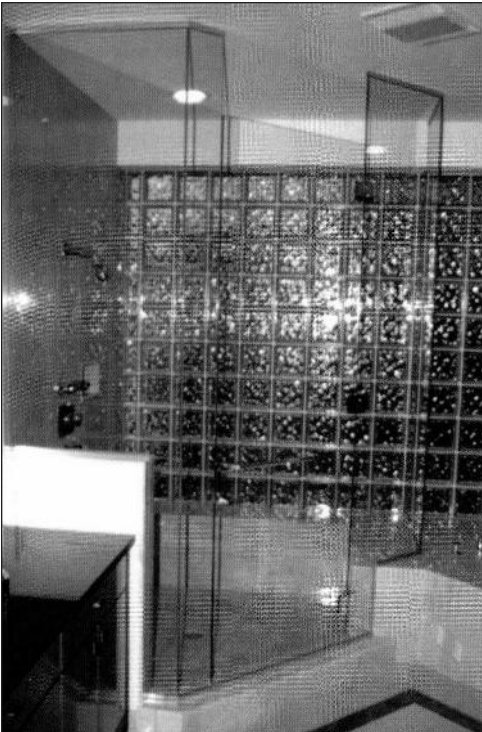
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## Virginia Hills Assessments for 2012

(continued from Page 1)

That will give you this year's and last year's assessments. To check, subtract your 2012 assessment from your 2011 assessment. Divide that number by the 2011 assessment. Multiply by 100. That should give you a change of 16-18%.

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 42 property sales and 5 foreclosures in 2011. Foreclosures are recorded at the amount of the loan outstanding and are not related to the market value of the home. The 5 foreclosures in Virginia Hills is down from 10 in 2010 and 12 in 2008. If the home is re-sold after foreclosure, that sale may be counted. Unlike in previous years, all 9 sales by lenders were not counted as valid sales for the purpose of the assessments.

DTA determined that 28 of the 42 sales were at arms-length fair market value as private party sales.

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## **View from the Hills**

### **Doug Boulter's Advice on Home Repair:**



#### **Should You Buy a Hot Tub/Spa?**

It looks so inviting. Lounging in a steaming hot tub on a cold winter's night with the family or with friends. Feeling the tub's jets massaging your back, legs, and shoulders as water bubbles up around you or a mini-waterfall pours from the top of the tub. Unless you know someone with a hot tub, however, that's not going to happen unless you buy one for yourself. So should you?

First, let's clear up some terminology. A hot tub is actually a wooden tub, while the colored plastic tub you're thinking of is really called a spa. While hot tubs are more a West Coast phenomenon, here in the East spas are the big sellers. I'm going to talk about spas.

#### **Price**

First you'll want to know what a spa will cost you. A basic spa with room for six people starts in the area of \$4000 to \$5000. That's for the shell, the enclosure, the pipes and pumps, the heater, and the insulation. What that doesn't include is the installation.

First, spas have to sit on something. That's usually a deck or a concrete pad. If you have a pool and the concrete deck is big enough, the spa might be able to sit on the deck. More than likely you will either need to get a concrete pad poured or your wood deck reinforced to hold the weight. Figure at least \$1000 for this work.

Then you'll need an electrical hook up for the tub. This will have to be a 220 volt line with a special circuit breaker (GFCI). If the spa will be close to your electrical panel and the electrical line won't have to be buried, you might get away with \$500. If it's a long run of buried wire, \$1000 might cover it. If there's no room in your electrical panel for the circuit and you need a new panel, that may run you \$800 to \$1500 (in this area, plan on the higher figure). You may also need a GFCI-protected outlet near the tub and GFCI protection for outdoor lights near the tub. For better figures, consult with an electrician who routinely installs tubs.

Of course you can get very fancy. You can get a larger spa or one with more features (more jets, built in stereo, etc.) And do you want an enclosure for the spa, like a gazebo? Do you want to bury it in the ground like a pool? All these things will add significantly to the cost.

#### **Operating Costs**

There are three main costs of operating a spa – the water, the energy to heat the water, and the chemicals to keep the water clean and safe to be in.

Water is probably the least expensive item. A typical six-person spa holds about 300 gallons of water. In this area, water and sewer charges are less than a cent a gallon. How often you should change the water depends on how often you use the tub and how many different (i.e. strange) people use it. Showering before getting into the spa will help extend the life of the water. Two to four months is what most owners do, but you might want to change it more frequently.

Chemicals and test strips may cost you \$120 per year, but that really depends on how diligent you are keeping the spa clean and how often you use it.

Electricity to heat the spa will vary, but spa manufacturers claim that their spas will use about \$10 of electricity per month when the outside temperature averages about 60 degrees. Figure \$20-\$50 for at least six months of the year when the average temperature will be less than that.

For long term expenses, think filters and spa covers every 3-4 years, and an initial cost of some spa tools (skimmer, siphon cleaner, etc.).

Finally, expect to use a small amount of your time twice a week to check the chemicals and keep the spa clean.

#### **Other Considerations**

The six-person spas we've been talking about measure about 7' x7'. You really need at least 24", and 30" is better, to walk around three sides of the spa, and 18" on the other side. Be sure you have that much, or you'll need additional construction.

Given the low prices of gas these days, and probably low prices in the future, you might consider using gas to heat the water in the spa if you have gas coming into your house. Anticipate a higher cost of equipment and installation yielding significant savings on ongoing energy usage.

Should you put your spa inside? While there are advantages to doing that, you will have to protect the walls, ceiling, and floor from water (think tile or waterproof paint) and add a fan on a humidistat.

Finally, if you have health issues, you should ask your doctor about spa use. And despite the party atmosphere of a spa, it's not a good idea to drink and soak.



## Comprehensive Plan for Penn Daw

(continued from Page 1)

accept the community's proposed changes to density and building height by a margin of about 60% to 40% and adopted the text with the new staff changes.

The next step in the development will be the change to the zoning, at which time the ultimate density (at or below the 735 units) and required transportation measures will be set, as well as proffers required of the developers on such things as stormwater measures, green space, and contributions to schools and parks.

While the nearby residents were not happy with the higher density requirements, they understood that they had gained the tool with the new phasing language to minimize the traffic impact on the surrounding communities.

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	Drain Snaking	
Main Drains	Ben or Steve	Outside Drains

## Richmond Highway Developments

(continued from Page 3)

**The Beacon of Groveton** (formerly the Heights of Groveton) - Construction on Phase I of this project next to Beacon Mall, which will consist of 290 upscale apartments and 10,000 SF of ground-level retail, is expected to be ready for initial lease-up by June 2012. Retail spaces are being actively marketed and will be ready for occupancy by November 2012. Phase II will include additional retail and a 50,000 SF office building, but no start date for Phase II has been announced.

**North Hill Site** - The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) owns a vacant 33-acre parcel on the east side of Richmond Highway near the intersection with Lockheed Boulevard. The site was planned for use as a 67-unit manufactured housing development and a county park, but FCRHA has not proceeded for a variety of reasons. In January 2012 Fairfax County received an unsolicited proposal from a developer to develop the site as a multi-use development containing a mixed-use component along Richmond Highway, a 204-unit multifamily apartment complex, and some parkland. Fairfax County is considering how to respond.

**Costco** - Costco has closed on the purchase of property, has obtained most of the permits it needs to commence demolition of the existing structure, and expects to begin site work in March 2012. The store is set to open in 2013.

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## Message from Supervisor McKay

Last October in a Washington Post editorial we read that "Even after three years of budget cuts and plummeting revenue, Fairfax County remains the economic wunderkind of Virginia and in many ways of the Washington area ... It is poised for further growth and prosperity even as neighboring jurisdictions scramble to retrench and regroup." The County Executive's recently released budget reflects that and sets the stage for discussion on how—and how much—we fund the services that the County provides. We've been through some tough years and through careful management we've kept steady our support for our school system, public safety, zoning enforcement, and human services while holding the line on property taxes. However, by law, we must have a balanced budget and so something had to give somewhere. That something was parks and libraries—both of which have sustained large cuts over the past several years. I am hopeful that as the economy continues to improve we'll be able to restore some funding to parks and libraries—key elements of our County's quality of life.

The County Executive's proposed budget recommends a one cent increase in the stormwater fee each homeowner pays in order to meet federal and state requirements for clean water and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. (The current rate is one and a half cents.) The County Board has advertised a real estate

rate of \$1.08 per \$100 of assessed value even though the County Executive recommended \$1.09. This means that while the final rate may be lower, it may not be any higher. This is not the final budget. My colleagues on the Board and I will do an in depth review and listen carefully to our residents' priorities before adopting the final budget on May 1. I'll also be listening to the recommendations of my Lee District citizen budget advisory group—now in its third year. (The group's FY2012 report is on my website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/lee/>.) There's more budget information at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/>.

The Lee District budget town meeting is on March 28 at 7:30 pm in the community room of the Franconia Governmental Center.

Public hearings for the County will be on April 10, 11, and 12 at the Fairfax County Government Center. To testify at a budget public hearing, contact the Clerk to the Board at 703-324-3151 to put your name on the speakers list. You can also sign up online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speaker\\_bos.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speaker_bos.htm).

Our citizens have high expectations for their local government. Please let me know what is important to you by calling my office at 703-971-6262 or sending an email to [Leedist@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Leedist@fairfaxcounty.gov).



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### Recent Virginia Hills Real Estate Market Activity

Status	Style	Address	BR	FB	HB	List Price	Close Price	Bsmt	Gar
ACTIVE	Contemporary	6320 GENTELE CT	5	3	1	\$505,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Colonial	6417 PROSPECT TER	4	2	0	\$399,900		Yes	1
ACTIVE	Rambler	6549 VIRGINIA HILLS AVE	3	2	0	\$399,900		No	
ACTIVE	Rancher	6610 THE PKWY	5	2	0	\$399,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	6608 BERKSHIRE DR	2	1	0	\$317,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	3712 LOGAN CT	4	2	0	\$300,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Other	6211 SANDLIN CT	3	4	0	\$250,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	6607 DORSET DR	3	2	0	\$304,900		No	1
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	3515 PIKE RD	4	2	0	\$270,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	6516 BERKSHIRE DR	3	2	0	\$319,900		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	
SOLD	Rambler	3914 SPECT CT	3	2	0	\$419,000	\$410,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6106 PIKE CT	3	2	0	\$310,000	\$310,000	Yes	
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6602 BERKSHIRE DR	3	2	0	\$369,900	\$363,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6500 HILLVIEW AVE	3	2	0	\$299,900	\$261,000	No	

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