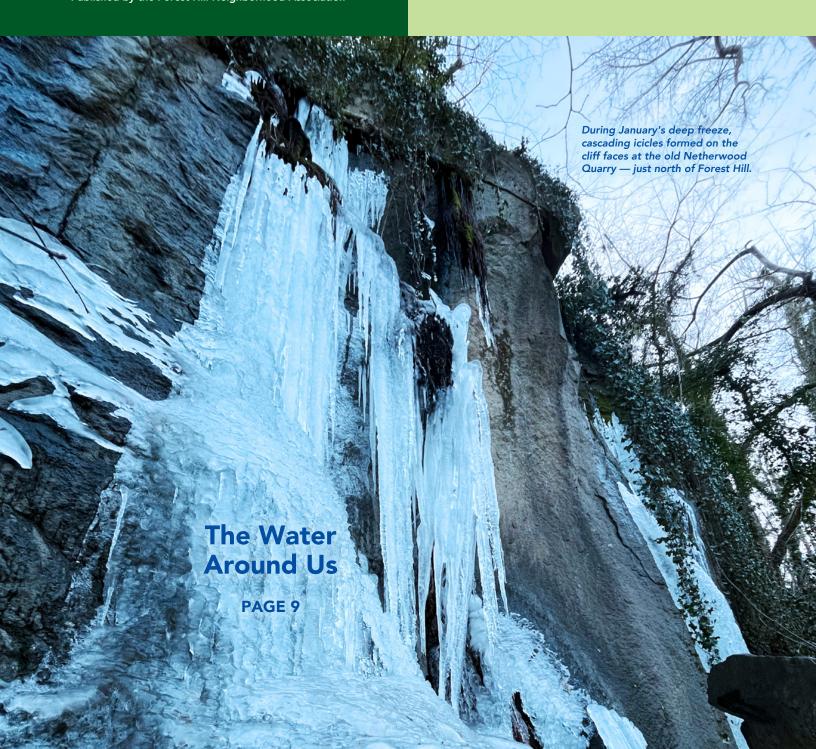


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Spring 2025 Issue

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President's Column

A Great Place to Burst Your Bubble by Greg Somerville

In a society that keeps fracturing into "Us" and "Them," Forest Hill gives us a beautiful opportunity to be "We."

I need that. For much of my life I have lived in bubbles. My communities have mirrored my values. Whether consciously or unconsciously, I have pitched my tent among those who thought like me, voted like me, or worshipped like me.

And though bad for my health (like a plate of loaded nachos), these bubbles have felt wonderful! Conflict-free conversations with like-minded friends. Shared indignation against common threats and enemies. Swaddled in the cozy, comfortable folds of homogenous community, I have sorted life's big questions into neat, symmetrical rows. I have found black and white answers to cultural dilemmas. And with the smug confidence that such enlightenment brings, I have slept well at night.

There have been exceptions along the way. Going off to boarding school at age 14 was a shock to my sheltered system, where for the first time someone ridiculed my faith. College plunged me into a delightfully diverse community. While I affiliated with certain groups that shared my values and convictions, I could not ignore the fact that many others were charting their course using different maps, a different compass. And when I lived in North Africa for a year, stark reminders of my minority status slapped me in the face every day. It was like a cold shower – not something I will ever enjoy, but invigorating.

Life is better outside the bubble – less comfortable, more complete. But getting there isn't easy. It takes determined effort to step through that sticky, restraining wall and into a new space with new people who may or may not be our tribe. Often that begins by identifying shared values and interests that we may have minimized or overlooked. And living in Forest Hill gives us so many opportunities to practice.

Do you appreciate art? Drop by the 43rd Street Studios and chat with owner Joanna Gragnani or founder Robin Cage. Ask them about their passion for pottery and the thriving arts community in Richmond. Take home a mug or a serving dish and call it an investment in personal wellness.

Do you love great music? Enjoy the eclectic mix of styles and sounds featured at "Music in the Park," Forest Hill's annual summer concert series. Held on Sunday afternoons beside



◄ Sign up for FHNA email updates using the QR code or at foresthillneighborhood.com/about/email-updates/ the Stone House, these six free monthly concerts provide a perfect opportunity to mix and mingle with neighbors. The first show will be held on Mother's Day, May 11. Bring your lawn chair or blanket and come ready to dance!

Do you like pitching in for a good cause? Forest Hill is ripe with opportunities to volunteer! You can serve on the Board, write articles for the newsletter, register participants for the Forest Hill 5K, organize the annual Community Yard Sale, pick up trash along Reedy Creek, or initiate something brand new. Email me at iseenoalps@gmail.com and I'll be glad to connect you with the right people.

Stepping out of the bubble can be as simple as saying hi to the couple walking their dog around the lake; attending a Forest Hill Neighborhood Association meeting (Third Tuesday of each month, 7-8 PM at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church); introducing yourself to another parent watching kids at the playground; or talking to someone in line at Blanchards.

Here we are, privileged to live in one of Richmond's best neighborhoods, sharing the same park and sidewalks and schools and restaurants. We may not vote the same way or listen to the same news, but we are blessed to have Forest Hill in common. Maybe we can burst a few bubbles this spring! 🛖

Forest Hill Neighborhood Association 2025 Calendar

Run for the Hills 5K	Sat. March 15	9am
FHNA Meeting	Tue. March 18	7pm
FHNA Meeting	Tue. April 15	7pm
Music in the Park	Sun. May 11	6pm
FHNA Meeting	Tue. May 20	7pm
Music in the Park	Sun. June 1	6pm
Neighborhood Yard Sale	Sat. June 7	8am
FHNA Meeting	Tue. June 17	7pm
Music in the Park	Sun. July 13	6pm
FHNA Meeting	Tue. July 15	7pm
Music in the Park	Sun. Aug. 3	6pm
Music in the Park	Sun. Sept. 7	3pm
43 rd St. Festival of the Arts	Sat. Sept. 13	10am
FHNA Meeting	Tue. Sept. 16	7pm
Music in the Park	Sun. Oct. 5	3pm
FHNA Meeting	Tue. Oct. 21	7pm
FHNA Meeting	Tue. Nov. 18	7pm
Holiday Party & Food Drive	Tue. Dec. 16	7pm

Rain dates for Music in the Park: Aug. 10, Sept. 14, and Sept. 28

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10am - 1pm in Forest Hill Park (New Kent Ave & 42nd St)

Run For the Hills! The 5K is back! by the 5K Planning Committee

Come enjoy the park with us on Saturday, March 15th as we Run for the Hills! Our 13th annual neighborhood 5K welcomes all runners, joggers, and walkers. This fun run is stroller and dog friendly (dogs, please keep your humans leashed).

Start time is 9am at the Stone House in Forest Hill Park. You can pick up your packet at the Stone House on Friday, the 14th, from 4–6:30pm or before the race, on Saturday, from 8–9am. You can find event and registration details at tinyurl.com/RunForTheHills2025. Register by March 6th to get a snazzy long-sleeve tee.

Rather participate from the sidewalk? Cheer the runners along the course or at the finish line, host a dog or human water station along the route, invite friends over to host a cheer station, hang your Forest Hill flag, or volunteer to help out. The more the merrier. Prizes will be awarded to the fastest male, female, and human/dog duo. We also have prizes for the first occupied stroller to cross the finish line, for the fastest younger runners (ages 9 and under, 10-14, and 15-18), and for the most festive cheer station. We're bringing back the best dressed dog contest this year. Enter your canine running buddy to win a prize.

Our sponsors and donors make this event possible. Help us say thank you to:

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Westover Hills Neighborhood Association

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And yell a big thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers on race day. They make this race a fun experience for all!



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South Richmond's Local Newsman by Riley D. Champine

"RICHMOND BIKE POLO HOSTING TOURNAMENT THIS WEEKEND"

"LIST OF PHARMACY DESERTS IN VIRGINIA INCLUDES MANCHESTER"

"COUNCIL TO CONSIDER FIVE-STORY
APARTMENT BUILDING FOR HULL STREET"

These are just a few of the hundreds of headlines that have been published on *South Richmond News* — a local news website that's been keeping tabs on this side of the James for the past year. The independent journalism project is run by Forest Hill resident (and *Forest Hill Flyer* distribution coordinator) John Murden.

"Southside's got something to say."

That's the response you'll get if you ask John why he started the endeavor. In his view, the big outlets report narrowly on this part of the city by mainly focusing on crime. South Richmond News goes well beyond the police beat, with a range of topics including Arts & Music, Housing, Schools, Environment, Sports, and History.

When it comes to writing about Richmond, this isn't John's first rodeo. He helped found *Churchill People's News* back in 2004 and was one its top contributors while working as a teacher at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School until 2017 — before he moved to Forest Hill. The site flourished in the heyday of the blogging era before social media giants took hold of the Internet. *CHPN* spawned a host of hyperlocal blogs such as *Hills and Heights*, which continues to cover Forest Hill, Westover Hills, and Woodland Heights on *RVAHub*. But for South Richmond News, John makes a concerted effort to find stories from all corners of the region — especially south of Forest Hill Avenue.

"I feel like I'm just scraping the surface."

"It's more challenging to figure out what's going on," John says of the sprawling Southside compared to the East End, which has many more civic associations in close proximity. It's been a process for him to build networks and make connections, but his efforts have been paying off.

John describes a feeling of "instant credibility", especially from Reva Trammell and Nicole Jones, council members of the Eight and Ninth Districts, who have treated him as legitimate and have linked to his site.

"I was surprised at how seriously people take me."

As his biggest win of 2024, John talks about getting Richmond Public Schools "super parent" Tisha Erby into the *Style Weekly* 40 under 40 list.

Erby was nominated by John and recognized for her tireless work at Broad Rock Elementary School and Richmond High School for the Arts. "She's a one person [Parent Teacher Assocation]," he says.

To John, Erby is the kind of community builder who would receive more attention if she was in one of Richmond's whiter and wealthier neighborhoods north of the James.



John Murden, South Richmond News founder and Forest Hill resident

On the subject of attention, if you ask John for hard numbers on readership he offers this instead, "My metrics are people sending me stories, asking me questions, and connecting them with people like [4th District councilmember] Sarah Abubaker." John is focused on quality engagement in the real world where people actually show up, rather than clicks and pageviews.

"I want to find more voices that aren't just mine."

Being present where meetings and events take place is key for John, and he wants to seek out new spaces. He mentions how the Southside's burgeoning Latino population has been off his radar so far — something he'd like to change in year two for South Richmond News.

Visit <u>southrichmondnews.com</u> for John's local coverage. There's an email newsletter to sign up for and you can also follow along via Instagram and BlueSky. The site welcomes contributions from the community and can be contacted at <u>southrichmondnews@gmail.com</u>.









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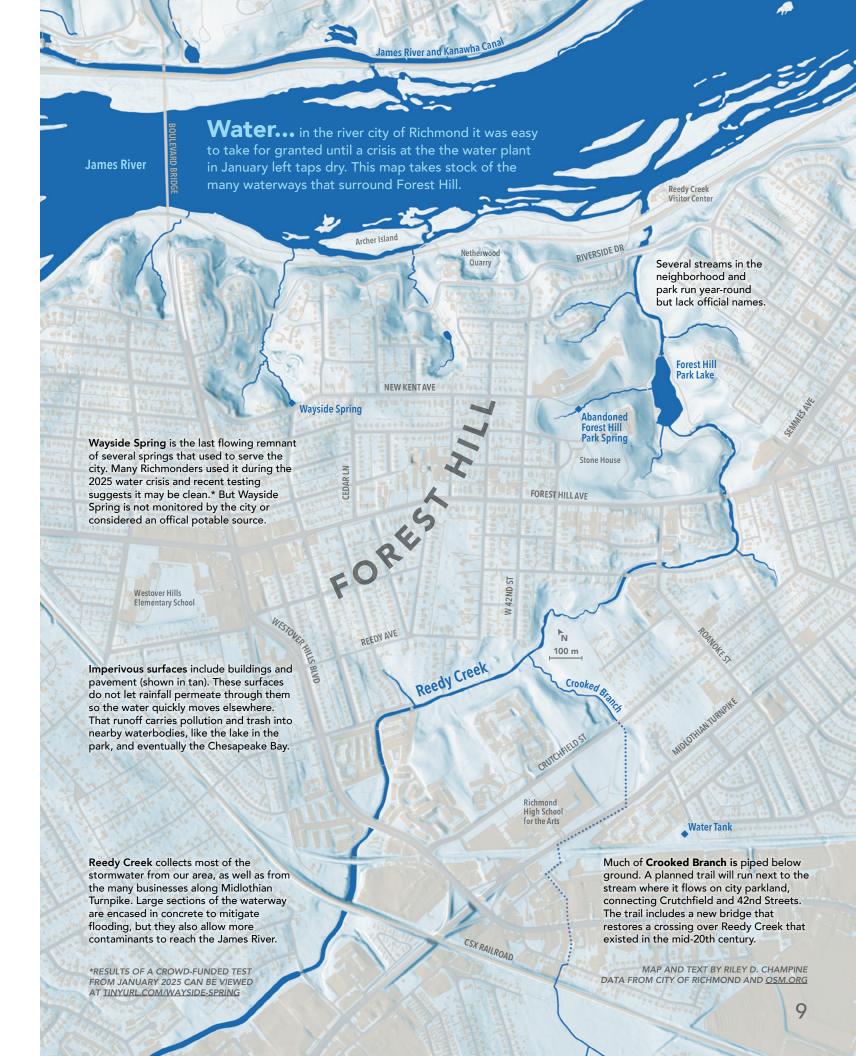


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"Birdwatching"



"Adoptable"

ARTIST Foust

by Andrew Beckman

Our featured artist this month is a multitalented, 34-year Forest Hill resident who goes only by Foust. You can find more work (but not any more names) at foustfoustfoust.com. Her upcoming shows include Arts in the Park (May 3-4) and she's literally never missed our very own 43rd Street Festival.

How long have you been an artist?

All my life. Not sure what got me started—I've just always made art. When I was about 5, my father brought home a big box of old-school printer paper (the kind with holes all along the sides, this being the mid-sixties) and I remember how much I loved having that seemingly unlimited amount of paper to use.

I'm a writer and cartoonist as well. I got an MFA in Fiction a few years ago. Most of my work would be considered flash fiction. I also draw a daily cartoon on my Facebook page "Six of One, Half-dozen of the Other." That's been going for almost 10 years. Yikes. My story collection "Sins of Omission" and my cartoon collection "Six of One, Half-dozen of the Other" were published by Tidal Press.

Any favorite artists?

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, Kathe Kollwitz—most of the German Expressionists. Francis Bacon, Anselm Kiefer, Andy Goldsworthy, Sue Coe, Lynd Ward. I don't really have a favorite piece it really depends upon what day it is. I do like to hang out in the German Expressionist room at VMFA, though.

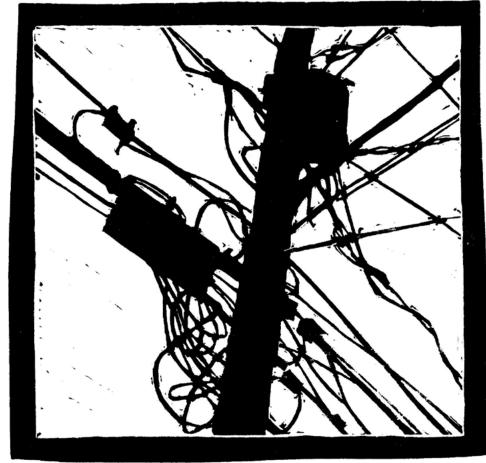
What inspires your work? Any artists you draw inspiration from?

I do listen to music—Wire, Radiohead, John Foxx—when I'm working on a block print. Usually moody stuff. When I'm pulling prints, it needs to be noisier and rowdier—The Ramones, XTC, The Clash. Lately, I've really liked Fontaines DC. For writing, Amy Hempel is always a good way to get me going with words. Also, Elizabeth Strout and Lorrie Moore.

Why linoleum block? And I hear a kitchen spoon factors in?

It just clicked for me straight away. I like the physicalness of it and the way what I cut on the block is not what will show in the print—also the whole image is reversed. It's always a surprise when I roll ink on the block the first time.

I like my prints to be irregular shapes, so I buy large sheets of linoleum and hack off a piece with a mat knife. Then I sketch a loose idea on the lino with a pencil. I make most of my decisions when I start cutting the block. Then I roll oil-based ink on it and



"Convergence"

place a piece of paper over the inked surface. And here's where the spoon comes in—I use it to burnish the back surface of the paper to transfer the image. Each print is done by hand. I've been using the same spoon since 1982. I work in our upstairs bedroom that faces onto New Kent Ave. But there are linoleum shards all over the house . . .

You gotta tell me about the name...

Well, my mother always wanted to have a nickname, but her name (Mary Alice) didn't have any. So she gave me two names that have many nicknames. Unfortunately, from the time I could talk, I made it clear that I do not like nicknames. Eventually, I just got rid of my first and middle names—my friends started calling me Foust when I was in high school. My husband calls me Foust and even my mom calls me Foust. If I tell you those other two names, I will have to kill you . . . •



"Evermore"

We're on the lookout for our next artist to spotlight.

Writers and musicians are welcome too!

To be featured or to nominate an artist, email us at fhnaflyer@gmail.com.

The Forest Hill Flyer Spring 2025

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Wesley Hedgepeth's Update from the School Board



Wesley Hedgepeth 4th District School Board Rep.

Greetings! I am Wesley Hedgepeth, the new 4th District Representative to the Richmond School Board. Originally from Hopewell, I live in Stratford Hills and am proud to call Richmond home since 2009. Perhaps most importantly, I am the only current K-12 educator on the RPS School Board.

Please find some updates below. Feel free to email me at whedgepeth@rvaschools.net or call/text me at 804-901-6671.

A Dedication to Improvement

On Tuesday, January 28th, all five new board members and our new chair attended the Virginia School Boards Association's (VSBA) Orientation for New Board Members, Superintendents, Chairs and Vice-Chairs at Richmond's Downtown Hilton. At the conference, we met new school board members from all over the Commonwealth and learned about the plethora of resources VSBA has to offer. We also learned more about parliamentary procedure, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the budget process.



Pictured left to right: Richmond School Board Members Emmett Jafari (8th), Ali Faruk (3rd), Board Chair Shavonda Fernandez (9th), Wesley Hedgepeth (4th), Kathryn Ricard (2nd), and Vice Chair Matthew Percival (1st)

Recent School Board Actions

I. New Board Meeting Protocols were adopted to make meetings run more efficiently.

II. Adopted/Amended Policies

- School Safety Threat Assessments
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Staff Contracts
- Bullying
- Planning and Lunch Periods

III. Board Committees

- We agreed on board committee membership and meeting dates. These will be uploaded to BoardDocs (go.boarddocs.com/vsba/ richmond/Board.nsf/Public)
- I have been appointed to the Evaluation, Legislative, and Policy Committees. In addition, all board members are expected to serve on the Discipline Committee.

IV. Budget

- Mr. Kamras has shared his proposal.
- We heard feedback during public comment at our last meeting and continue to accept
- Due to snow closures, we are rescheduling our next meeting. For updates, please check out www.rvaschools.net/leadership/rps-schoolboard

Upcoming Meetings

At our January 13th meeting, we voted to change our upcoming meeting schedule to allow for backto-back work sessions and business meetings. Going forward, we will meet on the first Monday and Tuesday of each month.



◀ Scan this QR code to subscribe to The Chalkboard Chronicles, the 4th District School Board monthly newsletter!



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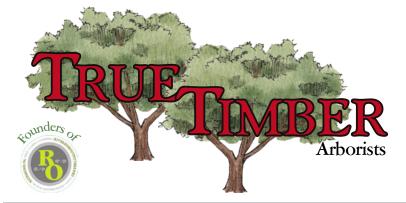
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Sarah Abubaker's Update from City Council



Sarah Abubaker 4th District Councilmember

Greetings, Forest
Hill Neighborhood
Association! I am
thrilled to have my first
note to the Forest Hill
Flyer as your new City
Councilmember! While
it has been wonderful
engaging with all the 4th
District neighborhoods
during my first month
in office, this message
is particularly special

since I'm a proud resident of Forest Hill! First and foremost, I want to make sure you know how to communicate with my office as well as with me personally. Here are the ways to stay in touch:

Councilmember Sarah Abubaker

sarah.abubaker@rva.gov 804-418-5963 (cell)

Liaison Timmy Siverd

timmy.siverd@rva.gov 804-646-5646 (office) 804-767-0841 (cell)

Newsletter: I am sending a weekly newsletter called "Fourth District Fridays" every Friday afternoon. If you were on Councilmember Nye's mailing list, you were automatically transferred over to my mailing list; if you are not currently receiving the newsletter and would like to be added, please email Timmy.

Transparency and communication are paramount to me, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us whenever you have feedback, questions, or need us to escalate a 311 ticket.

I know the biggest issue on many of your minds is the water crisis from the beginning of this year. By the time this hits your mailboxes, I am hopeful the City will have been able to share some additional information, but at the time I'm writing this update, we are still a few weeks out from receiving the after-action report from

I can say is that I am committed to getting a full picture of what happened, and how to prevent another calamity, and I am dedicated to obtaining the necessary resources to invest for our aging infrastructure. This will be a tough upcoming budget season as there are always so many competing priorities but ensuring that our infrastructure is safe and reliable must be paramount.

On a lighter note, I recently co-patroned my first piece of legislation into City law in my first month in office. At our January 27th Council meeting, Council unanimously passed legislation to accept the transfer of the land located behind Westover Hills Elementary School into the City's parks portfolio. You may be thinking "the 4th District doesn't need another park," but for as much natural parks space as we have, we are lacking in recreational space. The new Westover Park will eventually have first-rate recreational facilities that will be open to the public – such as a walking path, sports fields, courts, and more - to benefit the whole community. We will hold more community engagement sessions as we look to Phase 2 of design and planning.

While a water outage was not on my bingo card for my first week in office, I hope that the frequency of communication and my commitment to transparency proved that the things I spoke about on the campaign trail were not empty words. I have lived in this city for most of my life and in the 4th District for almost two decades. I am deeply committed to making this a better place for all of us. I cannot do it alone, so please contact my office, attend my district meetings, and engage with me at one of the many Forest Hill events I attend (like the Run for the Hills 5K – can't wait!). Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve you on Council, and I look forward to our shared work together.

Sincerely, Sarah

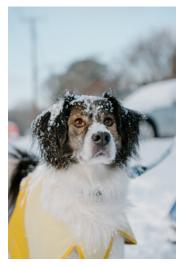
Spring 2025 15

Flashback: A perfect snow day at Forest Hill Park

January 11, 2025 — a rare bluebird Saturday made for ideal sledding conditions. Woodland Heights neighbor Berkley Nestler grabbed her camera and captured the action. She says, "the kids were fearless and I swear it seemed like they were intentionally bowling for each other, which even the kids getting run down seemed to enjoy. The adults were also cracking me up — nobody seemed to realize the extra momentum they'd get from being a full-sized human meant they'd go soaring when they hit the little ramp. And the landings were much more painful than I remembered them being 25 years ago!"









Forest Hill Neighborhood Association 2025

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Join the FHNA and become part of a friendly and active group that works for the good of the neighborhood. Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7pm at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church.

■ Sign up for FHNA email updates with the QR code or at foresthillneighborhood.com/about/email-updates/