

## *A memo to the Board of Directors*

### **Additional information to FAQs about fiber optic and wireless data networks**

*Note: This article is in response to the March 11 Montebello email bulletin, Fiber Optics Questions and Answers (FAQs), emailed to the residents. The entire document is on the Montebello website under Proposed Replacement Data Communications Network FAQ's. You need to log in to view it.*

**By John Trimmings**

In regard to the Board's invitation to seek residents' input, I would like to respond to the Board's FAQs of wireless data and fiber optic transmission technologies in regard to upgrades and new hardware additions to Montebello's facilities and utility equipment.

Although I am not an expert in building/facilities engineering, I have over 30 years' experience in computer and data technologies. I recognize and understand data technologies broadly enough to apply my knowledge to this particular matter.

***Why do we need more bandwidth?***

In A3 of page 1 of the FAQs, it was stated that "Cox updated their wiring" when they delivered HD to the public. Not exactly. As we all know, no inside wiring to any units was updated by Cox in their conversion to HD, rather

*Continued on page 3*

### **Board discusses new gym equipment, contracts, in-unit service changes**

**By Mikhailina Karina**

In another instance of "you get what you pay for," three pieces of exercise equipment in the new Fitness Center need to be replaced because of the potential injury risk.

At the March 22 work session, the Board of Directors approved spending nearly \$10,000 to replace the leg press, the chest press, and the rear deltoid/pectoral fly machines with Nautilus Star LA machines that work the same muscle groups. The recommendation to replace the machines came from the Fitness Center ad hoc committee, which culled through numerous resident complaints and suggestions.

*Continued on page 12*

## ***Nancy and Vince get "Mauied"***

### **Our own real-life love story**

**By Nancy Vogt**

**T**hink about it, love themes are all around us, from the popular bachelor/bachelorette TV series to romantic novels to advertised lovers' dinners and getaways. We all enjoy these feel-good stories, some are fortunate enough to be living their own love story, or we see family or friends in an idealistic relationship.

As fate would have it, I never found myself in an 'I can't live without this person' kind of love. At 58 years of age I made a conscious decision to stop looking for what obviously wasn't meant to be for me. It had happened for some of my friends but it hadn't come my way. My life was full, wasn't

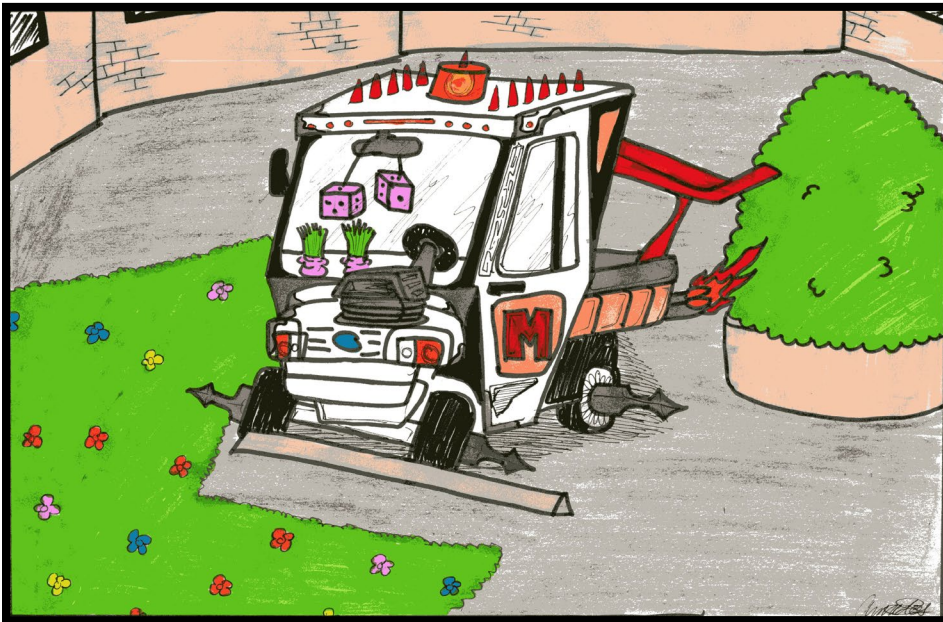


***Vince and Nancy Vogt after tying the knot in Hawaii this February***

it? With work, two adult children, care of an elderly mother, friends and all the entertainment and attractions the D.C. area has to offer, I didn't feel I had the right to ask for more.

Then I met Vince through a friend. It wasn't love at first sight. In fact, the first holiday party we met, he talked to his coworkers and friends on the balcony; I was with mine in the living room. We said a brief "nice to meet you" greeting and went our separate ways. That next spring several of us decided to visit the National Arboretum. I was exhausted after traveling that week for work and almost canceled, but since I owned the largest car, I was committed to driving.

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#FarfegnugenMontebello

## Voices on the 37

### Not a fan

Yes, the Board did receive at least one complaint about the Big Ass logo, and that was from me. I am not a prude about language. I'm an English teacher; I know all the words; I use them when I need to, and I've probably talked about all of them in class. What I've said to those classes is that, with all language, you pick your time and your audience, and you don't spray just anybody just any time with crude expressions, no matter how funny they might be. Our pool is a public area, and good judgment suggests that it's not the place for BIG ASS. – Noel Sipple

### Elevator etiquette

Finally, a place to voice my frustration! I have a small chihuahua. I cannot understand why folks insist on pushing the button for both the passenger and freight elevators when departing the building. I realize that those going to work or to catch the shuttle may be in a hurry, but they should not do this for many reasons. It is a waste of electricity and time to summon both elevators then use one. And, those in wheelchairs, with shopping carts, and pets are often forced to use the passen-

ger elevators. I have been scolded (or given dirty looks!) more than once for taking my 7-pound dog on the passenger elevator even though I carry him. And while I am at it, it would be great if people would look first before rushing into the elevator when the elevator stops, especially at the basement levels, so people, carts, wheelchairs, etc., can exit first. – Jo Weber

### Another antechamber idea

Regarding the new space near the bowling alley.....what about a coffee spot? I don't know if it would be possible, but this area could be made cozy with an electric fireplace and a coffee/tea vending machine and seating. Possibly the AiM café exhibit could rotate to this area when it leaves the café? A great gathering spot to meet with friends. – Channing Huhn

### A great read

The evening book club met on Monday, March 14th to discuss *The Road from Coorain*, the autobiography of Jill Ker Conway. Ms. Conway tells of her isolated childhood growing up in New South Wales, Australia, on her

*The Montebello Voice* wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, and free ads

*A publication for the residents and by the residents*

family's 32,000-acre sheep farm; her years of schooling in Sydney – from local public schools, to a prestigious private girls' school followed by college at the University of Sydney and why she made the decision to strike out on her own to America. Our discussion delved into many aspects of Ms. Conway's life and the decisions she and her family made as they endured the challenges of living in such a difficult and unforgiving setting.

Our consensus:



The next meeting of the Montebello Evening Book club is Thursday, April 21 in Party Room 1 at 7:30 p.m. We will be discussing *The Paris Architect* by Charles Belfoure. – Anne Corridan

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an independent publication

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the modem and set-top box technologies were updated to increase the data carrying capabilities of the data medium (the old Cox cable in our condos). Capacity was simply improved as a result of innovation. It is possible that Cox improved their delivery bandwidth with fiber optics but the 1980s-era Cox cables originally installed at Montebello are now fully capable of carrying hundreds of HD channels on one single cable into each condo – providing Giga bps bandwidth not previously available.

A3 cites a need for a “fire protection and warning system.” A system may be added “in the next couple of years,” but that would not drastically add to our bandwidth requirements. A new system controller installed in each building would probably be fed from the current on/off alarm wiring presently in each condo unit/controller. Data transfer to and from the buildings would be in the range of a few bps (bits per second) for each building unit – a very insignificant load on bandwidth. Giga bps bandwidth using a fiber optics link is overkill for control systems such as fire, switching, systems, FOBs, locks, and more because data messaging only occurs during an activity such as status and action queries.

I refer to two attached files (“Wireless Controls.pdf” at [www.esteem.com/files/files/Fairfax.pdf](http://www.esteem.com/files/files/Fairfax.pdf) and “Esteem Wireless Modem Transceiver” at [www.esteem.com/products/195ea-58-ghz-54-mbps.html](http://www.esteem.com/products/195ea-58-ghz-54-mbps.html)), showing the use of a simple 9600 Bps (a very low bandwidth) modem to carry data and to control many remote nodes without any overload of a link between nodes and the source. These referenced publications describe very critical functions being controlled remotely and at minimum risk of failure of any kind, and at a very low data rate (bandwidth).

As a matter of fact, all contemplated upgrades to all system automation in every building would probably not come close to the average condo owner’s present lowest cost Cox Internet service at 5Mbps. It is my opinion

that the only need for high bandwidth comes from bandwidth required for outside security cameras (not yet installed) and not building controls. In regard to the equipment used in “Wireless Controls,” up to 54Mega bps bandwidth is available to support all of our control needs – a data rate more than we need.

*Fiber optics is an excellent mass data medium, probably overrated for the relatively low bandwidth required here, and it could be a nightmare maintaining, training, and supporting the underground cables.*

*Wireless bandwidth innovation in the recent years has improved wireless service to a considerable extent, reliability has been addressed, and operation and support is low cost. We should choose wireless.*

### ***Why not a wireless network?***

In A5, many wireless deficiencies were cited. These deficiencies don’t appear to apply to any contemporary industrial strength systems. The Board equated “wireless” only to a typical residential router based on a 10/100 Router with very low range and low speed, and failed to point out the availability of >1 mile range 200Mbps wireless transceivers/modems. The particular wireless transceivers cited in the attached “Wireless Controls” have high power ratings and have a range of up to 10 miles! This high-power technology, suited for building automation and controls, is not susceptible to interference plus it is designed with redundancy (fail-over) for super reliability (see “Wireless Controls”). And we don’t have to dig 3-foot trenches to protect

the fiber cable from self-destructing in frozen moist soil (see [www.polywater.com/icefree3.html](http://www.polywater.com/icefree3.html)).

Since I see no need for speedy bandwidth for automation controls, it leaves us with high bandwidth needs for outside security video (which has not been installed yet). There are hundreds of security companies nearby that would be happy to compete for this new security system should the owners approve (see <https://multi-link.net/much-bandwidth-need-ip-video-surveillance-application/> for a typical supplier and a video installation). Multi-link can provide a wireless transceiver with a 1-3 mile range at 200 Mega bps. A 200Mbps link can power up to 20 4Mbps (HD quality) cameras and 10 10Mbps Internet PC connections. 10 Mbps is a high bandwidth that should serve the limited needs of the Montebello staff and security posts. Any more bandwidth over 10Mbps would only be needed if the staff and security users begin to download videos, songs, or photos and other streaming data such as live music. Otherwise, 10Mbps per PC is perfectly suitable.

I would not be surprised if a 54Mbps system (Esteem for example) controlling all buildings’ automation, and a 200Mbps system (Multi-link for example) providing 20 outside cameras and 10 PC Internet connections, together would provide all the Board’s needs for improvements to our older systems. And if we need to upgrade the data requirements in the future then we simply would add another transceiver setup for an additional 200Mbps of bandwidth. And as innovation progresses, the next generation of hardware may reach Giga bps (Gbps) bandwidth, precluding any installation of an overrated and hugely expensive fiber optic system.

Simply by separating the control needs from security needs and negotiating the two systems separately, Montebello owners can cut their costs by hundreds of thousands. For exam-

*Continued on page 7*

*A fond farewell to Vicki Hill*

## A Woman of Impact, Initiative, Innovation

*By Dian McDonald*



*Dian McDonald photo*

“I have had a great ride, but it’s time for me to move home where most of my family resides,” she said. “The urge to initiate this big change hit me awhile ago, and, as the song goes, ‘You’ve got to know when to hold ‘em...know when to fold ‘em...’”

A former member of the Montebello Board of Directors, Vicki has been active in a broad range of clubs and committees and leaves an unforgettable and impressive volunteer legacy. Her activities over the years have included the Music Club, Garden Club, Bowling League, Meditation Club, Stretchnastics, Water Aerobics, and the Activities Committee.

Serving as Chair of the Activities Committee for three years, Vicki spearheaded a varied program of indoor and outdoor activities to delight and entertain Montebello residents. “During my tenure as Chair,” she recalled, “I tried to host programs that would include all residents, especially expanding the involvement of families.” The Montebello activities calendar under Vicki’s leadership included “Music on Picnic Hill,” pool parties during summer months, gatherings during the holidays, and events showcasing a variety of musical genres: big band, jazz, rock ‘n roll, country western, salsa, calypso and steel drum.

Montebello’s annual 4th of July Parade is indeed one of Vicki’s noteworthy contributions.

When she first suggested the event, some residents said it could never be done because the initiative was too ambitious and involved too many participants. But, true to her style



Montebello without Vicki Hill? That scenario is hard to imagine for many who know the longtime Montebello volunteer and activist.

But it will be a reality in the near future because Vicki has decided to return to Cincinnati – the town of her birth and home to many members of her very large extended family that includes 34 nieces and nephews.

Vicki has lived in a colorfully and tastefully decorated apartment in Building 2 for more than 23 years, longer than she has lived any other place. But she believes the time is now “right for change,” even though the transition is being made with “mixed feelings.”





and motivated spirit, Vicki successfully pulled it off with flair, bringing together groups inside and outside Montebello to stage the first July 4th parade in 2012.

Reflecting on her volunteer roles at Montebello, Vicki said she is proud of the leadership part she played in the initiative to transform Montebello into a smoke-free facility. She recalled that while serving as chair of the former Covenants Advisory Committee, she was “very instrumental” in the successful effort to ban smoking in the community areas of Montebello.



Vicki leaves with poignant and happy memories of her life here, as well as high praise for what Montebello offers residents.

“This is a self-contained community that has just about anything anyone could want,” she said. “There is a diverse group of residents of all ages and representing many backgrounds and interests and professions. There are activities for all tastes and ages. In summer, it is like living in a resort with many amenities. There are hiking trails extending over many acres. It is like be-

ing in another world when you are out there in our woodland areas.

“There is no other condo development in northern Virginia that offers what Montebello has,” Vicki added. “The location is excellent – near the highway and metro. A full-service restaurant is on the premises, and many types of apartment floor plans are available.”

And what does life hold in store

for Vicki after Montebello?

It won't be full retirement, but quasi-retirement, Vicki said. In Cincinnati, she plans to continue her independent personal assistance business, but perhaps on a smaller scale than in the past. As a personal assistant, Vicki helps individuals do what they “no longer want to do or are no longer able to do.”

That covers a gamut of tasks and responsibilities; for instance, grocery shopping, helping to organize and declutter, coordinating medical and other appointments, paying bills and keeping fiscal affairs in order, Vicki explained.

The personal assistant is often involved in “companionship visiting” and “lending a listening ear,” Vicki noted, because “a client sometimes wants someone to talk to.”

When Vicki returns to Cincinnati, she will continue to be involved in a range of personal interests and hobbies. Known for her energy and athleticism, Vicki loves to play golf, walk, travel, sing, dance, and attend



musical events and theatrical performances. And she finally will have time to indulge her interest in genealogy and launch an in-depth research into her own family heritage.

“I am really into family relationships,” Vicki

*Vicki leaves with poignant and happy memories of her life here, as well as high praise for what Montebello offers residents.*

mused. In Cincinnati, she will be able to satisfy that desire to spend time with relatives. And she will be able to learn about

the lives of family members from the past.

Vicki will leave Montebello after she sells her apartment, which is now on the market “for sale by owner.”

“I expect to be around for a little while longer,” she said. “And I hope to have a chance to visit with long-time friends and neighbors in the interim.”







*Jeanne Tift photos and collage*

## Montebello Villanelle

*By Kelva Frailey*



Every season has a tale to tell  
To me, in my house upon the hill.  
Listen to a Montebello Villanelle.

In spring the leaves begin to swell,  
The river runs, I see it still.  
Soft sounds it makes, I know them well.

Humid heat, in summer, lasts a spell,  
Yet relief is found, if I stand still.  
Oblige me, Montebello Villanelle.

Is the River there? I cannot tell  
Though it must rush on, as water will.  
Listen! It's a Montebello Villanelle.

The Autumn leaves, their colors tell  
Of nature's beauty. What joy I feel.  
Enjoy it all, Montebello Villanelle.

Winter comes, I know it well,  
I see it on my window sill.  
Has it frozen over, down in hell?

I'll need a coat to get my mail,  
The power's out, the cold I feel  
I see an icy Mountain Belle.

I think that I shall sit a spell,  
And watch cars sliding down the hill.  
It's frozen over, down in hell!  
Shiver, Skitter, Montebello Villanelle.

*Villanelle is one of the most fascinating and difficult poetic forms, quirky and edgy, structured through repetition and surprise. Villanelles have been composed over the past several centuries and are currently enjoying a post-modern blossoming – Jean Smith*

ple, with companies like the Square D vendor and Esteem electronics and Multi-link, Inc., instead of spending what would probably end up to be one million dollars with Honeywell, we would separate the two as independent systems and benefit from two vendors who will install, service and expertly support their own specialized technology. The control part can probably be handled by one contractor, possibly Schneider Electric (at [cic-commercial@schneider-electric.com](mailto:cic-commercial@schneider-electric.com)) or their partners. Multi-link, Inc., could handle a video security installation so support and costs should be competitive for the security video.

***What data would fiber optic network provide?***

A7: Most or all of these building automation features can be controlled with very little bandwidth, within up to the 54Mbps available.

***Are there other condos adopting this technology?***

A8: This is a mistake to state that Rotunda is comparable to the proposed Montebello system – Rotunda is a simple security video system. Building facilities automation at Montebello is in a different category and is very expensive and complex. The FAQ does not refer to any other condo owner with building automation systems installed.

***What process authorized this project?***

A9: I wonder if I could have a copy of the latest Reserve Study? I may be completely wrong, so a copy of the RPRC members’ findings that led them to fiber optics would help me to understand the justification for a million dollar buried fiber cable system. Since the technology improves yearly, including bandwidth, it may be that the study is too old and the study’s hardware may be obsolete. Wireless is becoming the best data transmission medium as the innovations accumulate over time.

***Where will fiber optic go and what will it connect?***

A13: Unless fiber cables are buried 3 feet underground, a failure near the damp surface during the winter is a possibility. Finding a frozen cable underground is very expensive (see [www.polywater.com/icefree3.html](http://www.polywater.com/icefree3.html)). If a wireless transceiver goes bad then we can quickly buy a replacement.

***Simply by separating the control needs from security needs and negotiating the two systems separately, Montebello owners can cut their costs by hundreds of thousands of dollars.***

***More about fiber optic cables.***

A17: I don’t think that burying about a mile of fiber optics 3 feet under across Montebello is cheaper than aiming one transceiver on one roof at another transceiver on another roof to complete a building link. The present copper cables, if they are in conduits near the ground surface, and if they get wet, may short out. But copper will not break if frozen. Fiber could probably break if frozen and if the conduits are not below the freezing depth. This means that if the present conduits are near the surface, we should dig down to install fiber below the freeze line, and we cannot use the existing conduits – so another huge expense may entail new conduit installation.

***Does the Board need owners’ approval for authorization?***

A21: Existing systems replaced are not “enhancements,” but an outside security video system does presently NOT exist, thus installing outside security cameras should be an enhancement. Also, FOBs at the doors supplement existing equipment and may be considered enhancements because the original locks should remain for emer-

gency use, and anything else that supplements an original system may also be an enhancement. At the least, the cost of a new outside security video system should be capital (an enhancement) and should not be considered as overall improvements to facilities systems presently existing, because it doesn’t presently exist, and therefore would be subject to an owner vote based on a greater than \$75K (1% of budget) capital cost.

The bottom line as I see it is that fiber optics is an excellent mass data medium, probably overrated for the relatively low bandwidth required here, and it could be a nightmare maintaining, training, and supporting the underground cables. Wireless bandwidth innovation in the recent years has improved wireless service to a considerable extent, reliability has been addressed, and operation and support is low cost. We should choose wireless. 📡

*Building 3 resident John Trimmings has worked in the computer and semiconductor technology business for over 35 years for Honeywell, IBM, Micron, and the U.S. Patent Office. He holds degrees from RIT, Strayer University, and a master’s designation from the U.S. Patent Office.*

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# Where have all the flowers gone? Long time passing...

By Mary Tjeerdsma

Since moving here more than four years ago, I have heard from many that Montebello used to have beautiful flowers and flowering bushes. I wonder and say to myself and whoever will listen, "Where have all the flowers gone?"

I have heard that there "used to be" a Garden Club that tended these delightful flowers. I was also told about an enchanted "secret garden" and I say to myself, "If it was a secret garden... who saw it? Secret means secret, right?" Was there ever a secret flower garden or a Garden Club and if so, "Where have all the flowers gone?"

As I walk about the Montebello trails this spring, I see only 10 or so small clumps of daffodils, a small batch of snow-

drops, and a few tiny little crocuses. When I gaze across the woodland grounds so void of any color as the trees have not yet budded out, I wonder why are there not a 100 or so daffo-



Mary Tjeerdsma photo

dils, snowdrops, and purple and yellow crocuses? I then sigh, "Where have all

these flowers gone? Were they ever here as I have been told by many folks?"

I have seen with my own eyes a couple of delightful flower beds between Building One and Building Two! Also, I think at some point there might have been flowers by the Community Center where now there are only a few flowers fighting with the grass to survive. Wouldn't it be divine if that entire hillside by the Community Center were a burst of color from spring through fall?

My heart and mind need to know if at some point in time, did Montebello really have splendid flowers and flowering bushes? If any of you know of this magic and have some photos, can you share so I can see where flowers once were in this wonderful place I call home. 📷

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## Animal Magnetism



## All about Phantom

By Elizabeth Card

My name is Phantom Khat McGee, A Blue Abyssinian with pedigree. I'm a former Grand Champion (retiree) Who's found my forever home.

My Mom & Dad adopted me ...  
And give me toys and hugs for free!  
This past November I turned three,  
I'm Phantom Khat McGee.

They say I'm sweet – as sweet can be;  
I love each person that I see!  
Want to come over and play with me?



# Coffee – just what I need

By Joe de Angelis

**O**n the first Saturday of each month residents of Montebello gather at the Community Center to meet friends, make new friends, engage in interesting conversations, and enjoy a Cup of Joe. A Cup of Joe, what an odd expression, yet everyone seems to know that it means a cup of coffee. However, most people are at a loss to explain why a cup of coffee is called a Cup of Joe. Well, there are many theories about the origin of this phrase, some or none of which may be true. The following are some of the most popular theories:

A Cup of Joe is short for the phrase a Cup of Jamoke. The term Jamoke comes from a blend of java + mocha: Java being an Indonesian island known for a particular blend of coffee. Mocha is a seaport on the Red Sea coast of Yemen that was once a major marketplace for coffee.

Joe was a term used to describe the average man: For example, the expression “He’s just an average Joe,” meaning he’s just an every day, ordinary kind of guy. Therefore a Cup of Joe could

signify that coffee is the drink of the common man.

**D**uring WWI, American soldiers were provided instant coffee with their rations. The instant coffee was made by the George Washington Coffee Refining Company and the soldiers often referred to it as a “Cup of George” but using the common abbreviation “Geo” for the name “George.” As you can imagine the pronunciation of “Geo” quickly evolved to “Joe:” hence, a Cup of Joe.

In June of 1914, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, in an effort to imbue the Navy with a strict code of morality, increased the number of chaplains, discouraged prostitution at Naval bases, and, most controversially, banned the consumption of alcohol on-board ship. The ban on alcohol



Nancy Vogel photo

*A monthly Cup of Joe in the Community Center*

meant that the strongest drink that a sailor could get on-board ship was coffee. Since Josephus Daniels was responsible for the ban on alcohol, disgruntled sailors, out of spite, began calling coffee a Cup of Joe. Joe, of course is short for Josephus.

These are just some of the possible origins for the phrase a Cup of Joe. But whether you subscribe to any or none of them is not important. The important thing is to continue enjoying your Cup of Joe with family and friends. ☞

## Lack of communication is communication

On March 17, *The Montebello Voice* sent an email to the Montebello Unit Owners Association on behalf of two residents who were seeking further clarification about the gravel in the woodlands and the fiber optic proposal. The query requested a response by March 22. A few moments after the email went out, an auto-reply acknowledgment stated, “Thank you for your input. If a response is required it may take up to 5 business days.” At this writing on March 23, five days after the email, no response from the Association has arrived. – *Mikhailina Karina*

Q: What is the composition of the material on the Montebello nature trail?

Q: Why is it blueish in color?

Q: Does the material contain any toxic or potentially toxic ingredients?

Q: Distributors indicate that this material, called CR#6, is used as a foundation for driveways, sheds and patios. Why did the Board and Management select this material for our trail?

Below are follow-up questions to the FAQs on the Montebello website regarding the fiber optic proposal:

“We have been looking at this problem over the past six years...”

Q: I’d like to hear more about why the owners did not hear about this emerging problem when the BOD seems to have been aware of it long ago.

Q: With respect to Q& A7, I’d like to know more about the quality of the proposed bandwidth and quality of

any security camera recording.

Q: What kind of security video camera quality and recording are we getting for our investment? Can the recorded data be retrieved if needed?

Q: What sort of longevity and obsolescence time line do we expect from the constellation of new digital cameras that were recently installed and what sort of expenses are we expecting to replace the current system when it becomes obsolete?

Q: Was this replacement programmed as a planned replacement in our reserve funds or are we going to need a condo fee increase to cover this? If it was planned, when was the first time that it appeared in the reserve fund schedule? ☞

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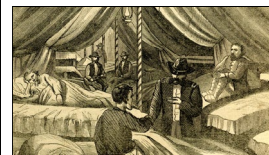
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### Civil War Medical Living History Program at Fort Ward

Saturday, April 23  
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Civil War army field hospital display and presentation featuring medical historian and surgeon interpreter Von Barron.
- View a variety of original and reproduction medical equipment and instruments of the period.
- Meet Civil War African-American nurse Susie King Taylor, portrayed by Heather Butts, author of *African-American Medicine in Washington, D.C.*
- View the Museum exhibit, "Medical Care for the Civil War Soldier."

Follow-up watching the PBS series "Mercy Street" by learning more about Civil War surgical practices & medical care!



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Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site  
4301 West Braddock Road  
Alexandria, VA

703-746-4848 [www.fortward.org](http://www.fortward.org)

Fort Ward complies with ADA guidelines. To request an accommodation, please notify the Museum at least seven business days in advance.



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We had an enjoyable afternoon, end of story – or at least I thought. But I found out later my making a simple statement that I liked the West and had lived in Utah had stuck in his mind. He had lived many years in the West, especially Colorado and he loved that part of the country.

**I**n the upcoming months we started seeing more of each other at group gatherings. I like to think he noticed me first since he admitted later that he would wait to see if I accepted an invitation before he decided. I had to admit I would be a little more excited that evening knowing he was going to be there. The more we talked, the more we realized just how much we had in common. Later we would say, and still do, that on occasion one of us will be thinking what the other person stated. We also would finish each other's sentences (as crazy as that sounds.) But in the beginning, neither of us would have admitted this was happening. After a few months, we considered each other good friends. Someone we could call on for help, but dating didn't cross either of our minds.

Then on one of our Saturday group outings several friends canceled and we found ourselves alone. This was awkward at first and later we would joke that we didn't know how to act with one another without our friends around. But it must have gone well enough, we started to see each other without the support and camaraderie of the group. You might say we were dating.

**B**ut seeing each other as more than friends lead to a dilemma. Would this change the dynamics of the group? What if this was a short-lived relationship that would result in both or one of

*He made my bad days better and my good days even better.*



us leaving the group that had become an important part in both of our lives? Was a relationship worth sacrificing these friends that had become our D.C. family? Before our relationship could move forward we had to answer some serious questions.

**A**fter considerable soul searching we decided this was worth taking a risk. Slowly we shared our situation with friends and were relieved to see it didn't impact the group dynamics. Now it was more a question if we would remain a couple. As the relationship matured, it only got better. But there were mental hurdles to overcome. I had been divorced 18 years and had several unhappy relationships since; Vince had divorced seven years ago and had not been in a serious relationship after. You

could say we were both gun-shy. But the more we started to trust each other, the more we knew we were building a solid foundation and we grew closer.

After years of saying I would not marry again, I started thinking if I were entertaining the idea of marrying, Vince would be the person for me. Let's face it: he made my bad days better and my good days even better. After 3 ½ years into the relationship, I shared these intimate thoughts with him. After a few months, he agreed and the subject of marriage was open. We started to discuss it over the next one-and one-half years. Yes, the idea was planted but the initiative to act on it was not there yet. Don't get me wrong, I can be spontaneous but not when it comes to life-changing actions such as marriage.

**T**hen almost like a thunderbolt it hit me, the perfect time and place to marry was an upcoming trip to Hawaii in February of this year. There wouldn't be a more beautiful setting, we were traveling with good friends to share it with and I admit, I liked the idea of surprising family and friends although we shared our plans beforehand with our children and Vince's father.

Now that we are married, I look back on this chain of events and realize how fortunate we are to live our own real love story. We are old enough and been though enough to know this type of mutual respect and love for each other is a rare and precious gift. It took me 59 years to find my soul mate but thank goodness I found him and he found me. The interesting fact is that we can now better relate to other love stories, both real and fiction, because we are living our own. And we enjoyed bringing our story to you. ■

According to the committee report, “These three have been the recipients of extensive negative comments and the Committee... strongly recommend their replacement. We have a proposal that has generous discounts for returning the machines we have now and replacing them with very good commercial machines that will last for a total cost of \$9,868.90. The Committee tested them and rated them excellent. These are not, however, top-of-the-line machines that would have cost considerably more.”

The three-member committee made up of avid exercisers and fitness professionals tested the machines at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office gym. “We tried out the machines and they were excellent,” said committee chair John Powers.

Specifically, the committee’s report concluded that the leg press is “extremely difficult for anyone over 5’9” to get into even with the max leg setting and even then the angle at the knee is less than 90 degrees (anathema for anyone with any sort of knee problem).”

On the chest press, “the zero setting has the elbows well behind the shoulders (anathema for anyone with shoulder or rotator cuff issues).”

And the rear deltoid/pectoral fly “is an injury waiting to happen because of the weird (non-standard) configuration.”

One question on the minds of many residents in attendance was why the faulty machines were bought in the first place. “Didn’t we pay an expert to pick the machines?” asked Jacqueline Woodle. Donald Barnes echoed her sentiments that “the decision-making process seemed opaque.”

According to Powers, a task force had identified the machines for the Fitness Center, “but the actual selection was done from the bottom tier of Life Fitness. I don’t know who made the selection. But we saved a huge amount of money.”

The three faulty machines will be traded in for partial credit on the original price.

### ***Landscape maintenance contract***

Board president Doug Kennett said that seven landscape management companies originally submitted bids, but one was not acceptable because it only provided a one-year proposal instead of the requested five years. The bids ranged from \$394,657 to \$986,762.

The new contract will include additional stipulations, such as “transition to the use of organic material to control weed/undesirable plants,” which means an option to move toward herbicide-free weed control. “We use a minimum amount now,” said Kennett, “and want to see how much it would cost if the community wants to go green.”

In addition, the contract requires an on-site, full-time supervisor three days a week. This cost will add about \$7,000 annually to the current contract because of the increased scope and requirements.

The Board directed the management to enter negotiations with the two lowest bidders.

### ***In-unit service program changes***

After more than 20 years, the page-and-a-half document describing the services of the In-Unit Service Program have been vague and open to interpretation, said Peter Ng, facilities program manager. With the assistance of Montebello’s legal counsel, “to ensure compliance with all legal requirements and minimize risk liability for the Association,” the new, detailed four-page document clarifies what the association can and can’t do, he said.

The document, which is available on the Montebello website, includes categories such as plumbing, electrical, mechanical, as well as windows and glass sliding doors.

In the past, some residents called the association for handyman services. Under the new rules, association employees cannot hang mirrors, pictures, shelves, or drapery, nor can they repair walls, locks, sliding screens, or floor coverings.

Board member Guido Zanni added that the rules are “explicit that our employees can’t moonlight” to provide any handyman services.

### ***New light fixtures and railings (or how many consultants does it take to change a light bulb?)***

After seemingly vanishing without a trace last year following the much-criticized Landscape Master Plan ideas, Trace, Inc. is back with proposals to make recommendations to improve Montebello’s light fixtures and railings.

Lately, numerous residents on the lower floors have complained about the street lights shining into their units at night. General manager Liz Foltin said frosted bulbs were mounted and caps to deflect the light down were installed behind Building 2. She said she had not received complaints from Building 1.

Kennett said the light fixtures were “a quality of life issue for people who feel the light is invading their homes and for those who need to feel safe while walking around.”

For a fee of \$2,800, Trace would “visit the property at night to review existing fixtures and observe general light levels.” As a result of these observations, Trace would then provide recommendations and any additional expert services.

Furthermore, for \$1,500, Trace will “review locations where railings are required and make a recommendation for a railing system that can be used throughout the property.” This includes railings along retaining walls and in the woodlands.

Board member Greg Bender said one of the main criteria for light fixture and railing changes was making them “safe, low-maintenance, and attractive.” 🏠

*Life is like riding a bicycle.  
To keep your balance you  
must keep moving.  
– Albert Einstein*