

the monitor



THE NEWSLETTER OF CITIZENS FOR FAUQUIER COUNTY

JANUARY 2024

Focused on Fauquier

By Kevin Ramundo
CFFC President



In 2023, CFFC became a stronger organization and more capable than ever to preserve Fauquier County and our rural traditions.

Mitigating the proliferation

of data centers in Fauquier was job one, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. It's hard to believe how neighboring counties continue to favor new tax revenues from data centers over the well-being of their communities, environmental priorities and protecting open space and historical resources. Who would have ever thought two or three years ago that almost 2,000 acres adjacent to the Manassas National Battlefield would be rezoned to allow over 30 data centers, and that Prince William and Loudoun could have more data centers than anywhere in the world.

CFFC's efforts to oppose data centers include: educating the public; reviewing all related proposals and zoning issues; and, engaging with developers and officials regarding how and where data centers should be built. We initiated lawsuits to overturn the approval of Amazon's data center in Warrenton and to hold the town accountable for failing to live up to its responsibility for transparency under Virginia's Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA). We were encouraged last year when twenty-four organizations joined us in Amicus briefs in our VFOIA case appeal; and separately, when a judge decided that our legal arguments asserting that the Amazon permit was improperly granted were valid. We intend to add to these successes in 2024.


Since data centers require massive amounts of electricity, it was no surprise that last Fall, the regional power grid authority proposed five high-voltage transmission line routes that would crisscross Fauquier County to supply electricity to data centers in Loudoun and Prince William counties. One route that would impact southern

Fauquier was ultimately recommended, and CFFC believes it's just a matter of time before more power lines try to invade our scenic landscape.

In light of these and other daunting challenges, we have undertaken major fundraising efforts and are very appreciative of the unprecedented support from existing and new members so we can increase CFFC's capabilities. We have also recruited four new board members (see story on p. 2,) adding to the five board members who joined us in 2022, and hired a part-time administrative assistant. Most of what CFFC accomplishes is based on the hard work of its volunteer board.

Our successes in 2023 also included a record turnout for our annual Kitty P.

Smith Conservation Award event (see p. 2); our participation with other conservation organizations to publish a Rural Lands Manual to inspire land owners to treasure their properties; and, sponsorship of a public forum for candidates running for the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors.

Looking ahead to 2024, we will remain focused on the data center threat, the most consequential one in our county's history, and on other un-wise developments. We are dedicated exclusively to preserving Fauquier County and are counting on your continued generosity to help us preserve our treasured county for future generations. Thank you and to learn more, visit citizensforfaquier.org. 



Data Centers/Power lines Dominating the Landscape and Neighborhoods.
Photo credit: Washington Post/Xiaomei Chen

the monitor

THE NEWSLETTER OF CITIZENS FOR FAUQUIER COUNTY

Board of Directors

Kevin Ramundo*, *President*

Susan Russell*, *Secretary*

Sam Mitchell*, *Treasurer*

Chris Bonner*

Yak Lubowsky*

Amy Trotto*

Ken Alm

Leslie Cheek – *President Emeritus*

Steve Dahlloff

Patricia Ewing

Dave Gibson

Sophie Langenberg

Lori Keenan McGuinness

David Norden

Mary Page

Jean Perin

Jim Rich

Mary Root

Ben Smith

Jim Stone

Ali Zarabi

**Executive Committee*

Land Use Advisor

Kevin Kask

Board Advisors

Harry Atherton

Julie Broaddus

Jeb Hannum

Feroline Higginson

Hope Porter

Sue Scheer

Mimi Abel Smith

Communications and Administrative Manager

Lasso Communications

Atherton Recognized with Kitty P. Smith Award

By Sophie Langenberg
CFFC Board Member

On the evening of October 26th, CFFC hosted its 9th annual Kitty P. Smith Conservation Award ceremony, honoring Henry F. 'Harry' Atherton III at Hopefield, the historic home of Hope Porter, who founded CFFC in 1968. The award is given to recognize outstanding conservationists who have contributed greatly to preserving Fauquier's rural landscape, historical resources and agricultural economy throughout their lifetime.

Atherton, a lifelong resident of Fauquier County, decided to become a farmer after serving his country in Vietnam and completing degrees at Harvard and Columbus School of Law. He donated a conservation easement on his farm; and, served 18 years on the Fauquier County Planning Commission followed by eight years on the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors, chairing both organizations at times during his tenure. Later he served on the Board of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, having been appointed by Governor Tim Kaine. Currently he is a member of the Fauquier's Conservation Easements Committee and serves as an advisor to CFFC after serving for many years on its board.

Nearly 100 people attended the event, including Atherton's wife, Anne Douglas, their

two daughters and three grandchildren. Kevin Ramundo, CFFC's President, and later Bob Lee, a member of Fauquier County's Planning Commission and former Fauquier County administrator, spoke on behalf of Atherton's many contributions to conservation. Harry was presented a \$1,000 check to the Piedmont Journalism Foundation, the organization he selected to receive his monetary award. 🇺🇸

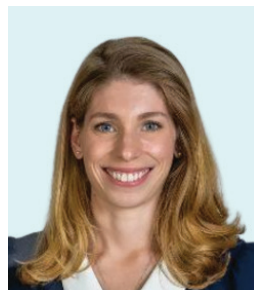


Kevin Ramundo congratulating Harry Atherton

CFFC Adds to Its Board

By Sophie Langenberg
CFFC Board Member

During the second half of 2023, Citizens for Fauquier County elected four new directors to expand the board's skills and experience. Since most of what CFFC accomplishes reflects the work of its volunteer board, constantly building and refreshing it is vital especially as development threats increase. Five board members joined CFFC's board in 2022.



Sophie Langenberg

a Middleburg-based public relations firm; and, became Land Trust of Virginia's first communications staff member in 2021, with

Sophie Langenberg grew up in Fauquier County before earning a degree at the University of Virginia in 2014. As a communications professional, she wrote for several area publications; joined

responsibility for promoting land conservation across the state. Sophie is also involved with Virginia United Land Trusts, the Piedmont Symphony Orchestra, the MOC Beagles, and is a Master Gardener of Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties.



Steve Dahlloff

branding and marketing communications efforts for numerous business clients and other organizations including Nestle, LG Electronics, and Sun Microsystems. Steve also helped develop public health communications

Steve Dahlloff spent 26 years with Ogilvy PR, a leading worldwide public relations firm as the Global Head of Strategy and Planning before assuming responsibility for the Asia Pacific region. He directed

see CFFC Board page 4

Data Centers Spawn New Transmission Lines (and the Need for More Power)

By Dave Gibson
CFFC Board Member

In July 2022, Dominion Energy disclosed that its previous forecasts of no growth in electrical power demand for Northern Virginia did not include the vast requirements from newly approved data centers in Loudoun and Prince William counties. Dominion Energy is now projecting a total need for 10 gigawatts of power by 2035, representing a four-fold increase in the demand from data centers alone. This increase in power, equivalent to what 8.2 million people consume (about the population of Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey combined), will ultimately require additional sources of electric power generation. This increase jeopardizes the achievement of Virginia's renewable energy goals and could encourage the expansion of utility-scale solar beyond what makes sense, particularly as relates to the loss of agricultural lands.

Late last year, PJM, the regional grid authority, responded quickly to the revised forecasts by requesting proposals for additional high-voltage transmission lines exceeding 120 feet in height and requiring at least 150-foot wide right-of-ways. On December 11, PJM approved up to \$5 billion in possible transmission projects.

Five routes were identified crossing Fauquier County from west to east, including:

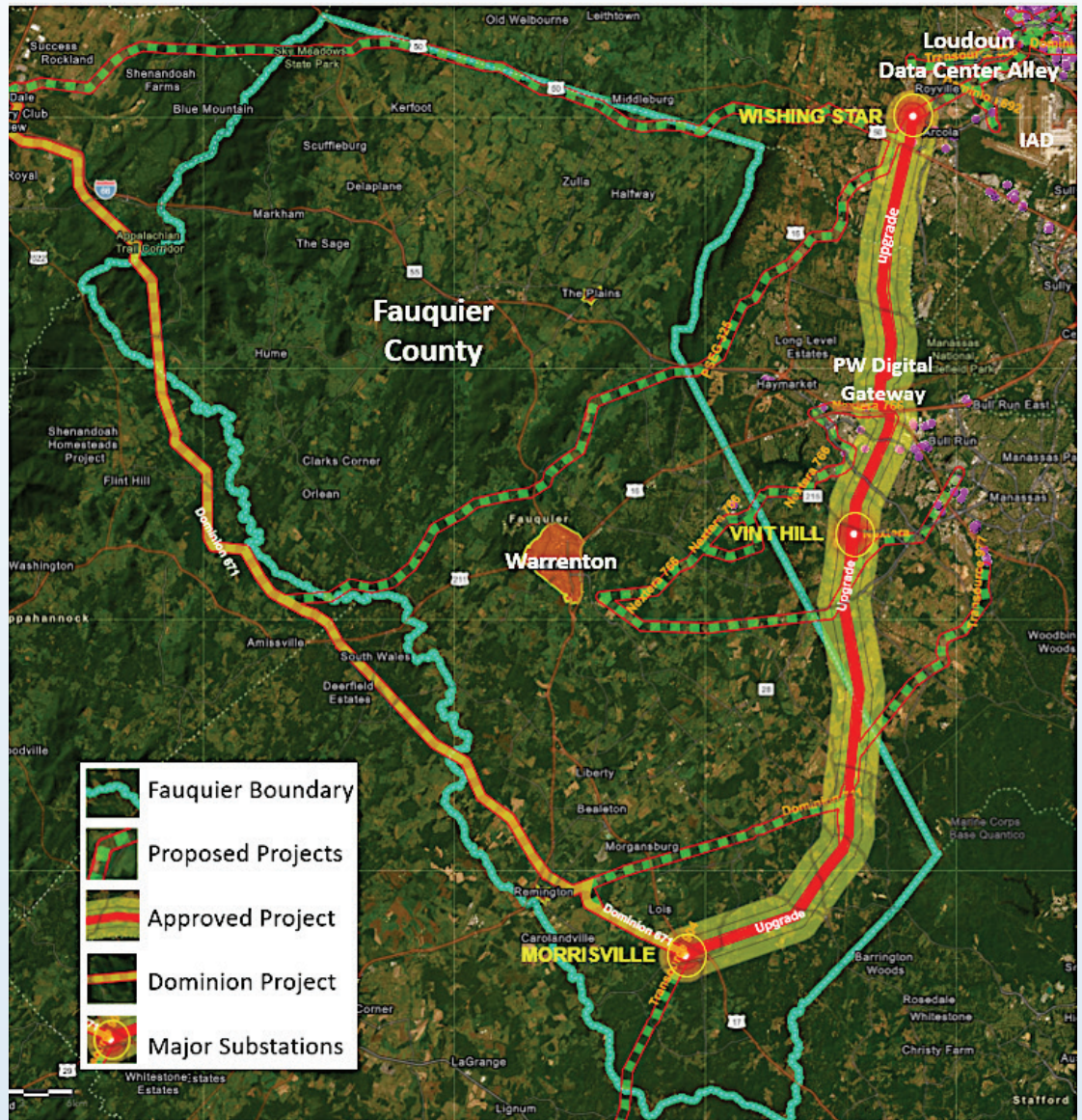
- Along Route 50 through Upperville, Middleburg, and Aldie (new);
- From Amissville through Broad Run (new);
- Two lines from the Warrenton substation to the Wheeler substation (new); and,
- A significant upgrading of the existing lines from Morrisville through Vint Hill (see map) and ending in Wishing Star.

These five proposed routes would cross 80 miles of countryside and impact over 700 properties, including more than 300 properties in conservation easement. Only the Morrisville to Wishing Star project has been selected currently for two reasons: it is the most suitable way to get power to data centers in Prince William and Loudoun, and the Morrisville substation could connect with a very high capacity 765 kV transmission line served by coal and gas-fired power generated along the Ohio River.

Another concern is a planned upgrade of Dominion's Front Royal to the Morrisville line,

which runs some 47 miles along the Rappahannock River and parts of Fauquier County. Upgrading that line could open a pathway to the east-west transmission lines previously mentioned along Route 50 and the Amissville to Broad Run alignment. And it could reopen the possibility of a Route 66 alignment proposed 15 years ago.

With data center power requirements constantly increasing, CFFC believes that more and more transmission lines will be required and will cut through thousands of acres of preserved land and scenic areas. Virginia's State Corporation Commission will ultimately decide what lines get built, and CFFC and other conservation organizations are working to educate the public about the threat and mitigate it. Apart from the impact on open space, it is essential for everyone to know that the costs of these transmission lines, necessitated solely by the data center industry, are covered by all the ratepayers, yet another example of how this industry is being subsidized.



CFFC Board from page 2



Jean Perin

programs for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH.) Prior to Ogilvy PR, Steve held leadership positions in the food service industry. He lives near Middleburg and is on the board of directors of Piedmont Environmental Council.

Jean Perin was born and raised in Cincinnati but fell in love with the Virginia Piedmont region in college. Perin worked with a number of conservation organizations until she was introduced to the Piedmont Environmental Council in the 1990's. She joined the board in 2000, and later became co-chair from 2014 until this past fall. Her conservation accomplishments include being a valued member of the Route 50 Traffic Task Force which successfully implemented traffic calming measures on this scenic roadway and through Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville. Jean



Ali Zarabi

also was a leader in saving Gilbert's Corner and permanently protecting the gateway to rural western Loudoun and northern Fauquier.

Ali Zarabi immigrated to the United States from Iran in 1978. After attending schools in the Tidewater and Richmond areas, Ali began a successful career in the beauty industry in Washington, D.C., and has owned and operated his salon in Old Town Warrenton for over twenty-eight years.

Ali was the senior member of the Warrenton Planning Commission for twenty-two years and retired at the end of 2022 having served as the Vice Chair for three years. Ali previously served as a Board Member and Secretary on the Mental Health Association of Fauquier County and is currently completing his sixth year on the Board of Trustees at Highland School in Warrenton. 🏠



PLEASE JOIN US

Please support Fauquier County's oldest conservation nonprofit dedicated exclusively to preserving the county's rural character. CFFC is a strong advocate for open space, historic preservation and a healthy agricultural economy. We track every land use rezoning or special exception before the Planning Commission and are quick to engage when inappropriate development threatens to bring Northern Virginia sprawl to Fauquier.

Fauquier County is under tremendous pressure to grow as regional population soars and residents flee neighboring, built-out counties. Help protect Fauquier's future by joining CFFC, a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Visit citizensforfauquier.org and become involved.