The Village News

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF CABIN JOHN AND BEYOND

FEBUARY 2026 | VOLUME 60 | ISSUE 02

'SCHITT'S CREEK' COMES TO CABIN JOHN

Not the Beloved TV Show, But A Much Less Pleasant Spectacle

by Scott Lewis, Burr Gray, Joe Saliunas, Heidi Lewis

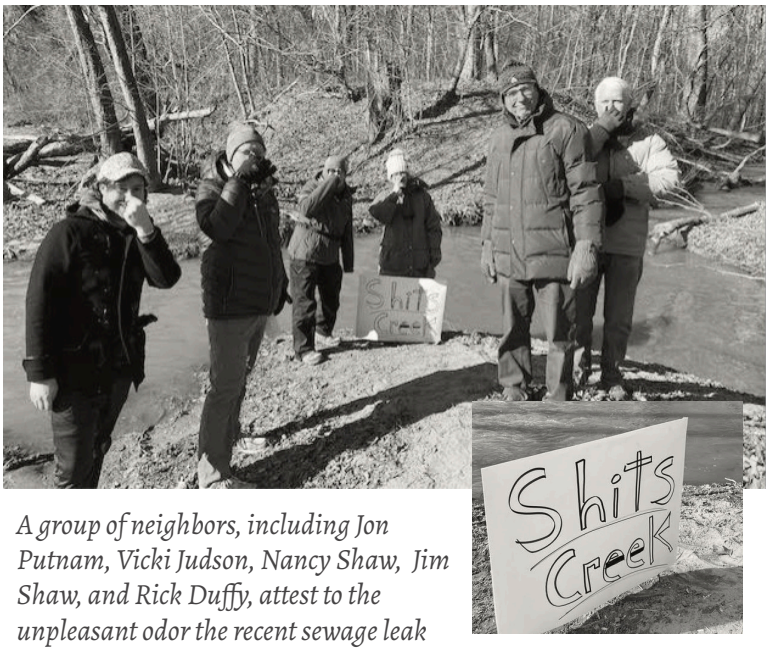
The emails, texts, and phone calls started just after 5:00 pm on Monday, January 19, 2026. Woodrow Place residents **Bob Ward** and **Dana Sands** had been taking an early evening walk along the towpath when they saw "what looked like at least 100 cubic feet per second of raw sewage flowing along the Clara Barton Parkway, then under the canal between locks 11 and 12, then into the Potomac. It was like a big sluice. Water was flowing fast. We could hear it, and smell it, from the towpath." They saw a police car and utility truck nearby, just observing.

Bob and Dana alerted **Mac Thornton** of Wishbone Terrace, a founder of the Potomac Conservancy who also served for 18 years on the Board of Potomac Riverkeeper Network. Mac alerted his contacts at the Potomac Riverkeeper Network and other neighbors, including CJCA co-presidents **Scott and Heidi Lewis** and chair of Friends of Cabin John Creek **Burr Gray**. At some point on January 19, DC water posted a notice on their website stating they were "investigating a Sanitary Sewer Overflow from the Potomac Interceptor sewer line," noting that "overflow is expected to reach the Potomac River."

By 11:00 am on January 20, Mac was on camera with an NBC4 reporter on the scene describing the flow and making clear that a cause must be established to help prevent future catastrophic overflows: https://tinyurl.com/art7w6wn. Burr also got out to the spill site on the morning of January 20 to get pictures of the situation, images used by Dean Naujoks of Potomac Riverkeepers to get the attention of a reporter with WUSA9, who toured the spill area with Burr midday on the 20th and posted a video story showing the full extent of the torrential flow of untreated wastewater: https://tinyurl.com/37av52pw.

Over the next couple of days a full phalanx of CJ-based and/or CJ-related people and organizations connected to the river, the canal, the people who live nearby, and the natural and historical resources therein, pitched in to document, report, and urge

See SPILL on pg. 3



A group of neighbors, including Jon Putnam, Vicki Judson, Nancy Shaw, Jim Shaw, and Rick Duffy, attest to the unpleasant odor the recent sewage leak left in our area. Photo by Burr Gray

KATEY BOERNER FROM GLEN ECHO PARK PARTNERSHIP AT FEB. CJCA MEETING

Katey Boerner, Chief Executive Officer of the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture will speak at the February CJCA meeting, **February 25 at 7:30 pm** at the CBNRC. Ms. Boerner will give an update on all things Glen Echo Park - the Partnership, current activities, and strategic direction.

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Neighborly News

Send your news -- births, events, milestones, trips, new neighbors, etc. to vneditorial @gmail.com

The **Clara Barton Center for Children** has openings for the 2026-2027 school year. We are fully accredited and licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education (#33118) and offer a safe and nurturing environment that encourages learning through play for children ages 2-PreK. For over 50 years, we have provided a varied, developmentally appropriate program that nurtures creativity, individuality and exploration and fosters children's physical, cognitive and social development. For further information and to arrange a private tour, contact Paula Curran at 301-320-4565 or email info@clarabartoncenter.org.

"Snowcrete" blankets Cabin John

A remarkable and unusal winter storm on January 25 left Cabin John with a foot of snow and ice that quickly hardened to "snowcrete." The unusual structure of the precipitation and low temperatures in the region closed schools for over a week and offered the opportunity to help neighbors, build igloos, and launch watercraft on the canal. Here are just a few images from the week:



Cabin John Gardens resident Jack Mandel launched his Wisconsin-made ice sailboat on the iced-over Potomac River at Riley's Lock one week after the biggest ice-snow storm to hit CJ in a decade.





[L-R]Good Samaritans help clear the walking/bike path. A teepee igloo.



"Neighborhoods along the canal are my specialty - I live there and love it!"



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By Cory Lewis, Professional Chef



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SPILL *Continued from pg. 1*

efforts to diminish the impact. Citizens checked the site frequently to verify or dispute DC Water statements regarding the progress of efforts to redirect and limit the flow of sewage. Groups including Minnie's Island Community Conservancy, Sycamore Island Club, Cabin John Citizens Association, and Friends of Cabin John Creek, joined with the Potomac Conservancy and Potomac Riverkeeper Network to keep pressure on DC Water to stop the sewage overflow, request testing and monitoring of the river and canal downstream of the spill, and inquire regarding ongoing mitigation efforts. Those efforts will continue as the full effects of the release of hundreds of millions of gallons of sewage into the river and canal will not be fully understood for many months.

What Actually Happened?

On January 19, 2026, a section of the Potomac Interceptor, a 72-inch sewer pipe owned and managed by DC Water, collapsed, sending untreated wastewater above ground near the American Legion Bridge.



Map from DC Water January 19, 2026 website post

The effluent created a new "stream" just uphill from the C&O Canal where it ultimately flowed into the canal and the Potomac River. It is now one of the largest sewage spills in U.S. history. An estimated 400 million gallons of raw sewage spewed forth into our waterways between January 19 and January 29 at a rate of about 40 million gallons per day. An Olympic-sized swimming pool holds around 660,000 gallons of water so the break spilled the equivalent of 60 Olympic-sized pools of untreated wastewater into the Potomac every day.

The Potomac Interceptor was built in the 1960s and carries 60 million gallons per day of wastewater from Loudoun and Fairfax counties in Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland, to the Blue Plains treatment plant in Washington, D.C. The pipe has been under rehabilitation work since September 2025.

DC Water crews quickly mobilized after the collapse to set up a temporary bypass system, using industrial pumps to divert flow into the C&O Canal and back into the sewer system

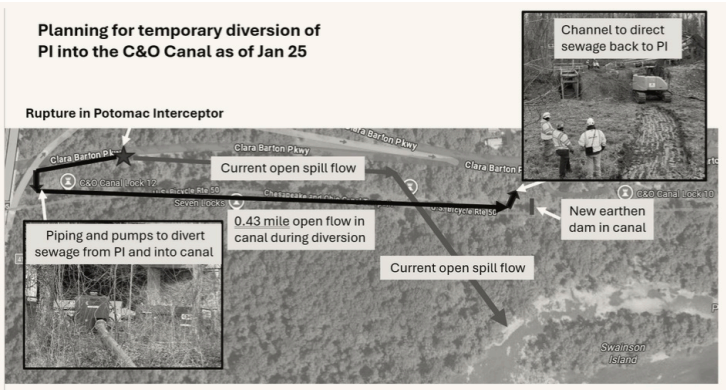


Illustration by Joe Saliunas, Board Chair of Minnie's Island Community Conservancy

downstream of the break. On January 23, DC Water began installing multiple high-powered industrial pumps, each capable of pumping seven million gallons a day, to divert the sewage into a section of the C & O Canal and then direct it back into the sewer line further downstream. Six of the pumps were turned on January 24, with additional pumps added on January 26. By January 29 DC Water reported "no sewer overflows" from the broken pipe for the first time since the incident, although local citizens questioned the full veracity of that claim.



Photo by Burr Gray

On February 5 DC Water posted that "overnight CCTV inspection of the Potomac Interceptor revealed the blockage inside the collapsed sewer line is far more significant, showing a large rock dam stretching approximately 30 feet downstream of the original failure. The unexpected discovery exposed the severity of the obstruction and prompted an immediate reassessment that will extend the timeline for cleaning and repairs.

"It is expected to take an estimated 4-6 weeks of additional time to get a system in place that will add more, larger bypass pumps in a new location and stabilize the site for heavy machinery to safely begin removing the large rocks and boulders inside the sewer line. While the existing bypass system

See SPILL on pg. 5



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SPILL *Continued from pg. 3*

has mostly contained overflows, more pumps are needed to further reduce the remaining flow getting through the pipe. A bulkhead will then be installed upstream of the failure to block the pipe and limit the wastewater reaching the collapse site."

Repairs are expected to be complex and time-intensive, and there is no firm timeline for full restoration.



Industrial hoses carrying wastewater pumped from the break site into the canal bed. Photo by DC Water

Water Quality Effects

Researchers from the University of Maryland's School of Public Health performed testing that revealed alarming contamination levels. Fecal indicator bacteria, E. coli and enterococci, were 10,000 times over the recreational water quality limit according to Rachel Goldstein, who leads the UMD team. Some fish kills have been observed downstream, and the Maryland Department of the Environment has already issued an emergency closure for shellfish harvesting 60-70 miles downstream as a precaution. [https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/dc/unsafe-level-ecoli-umd-researchers-testing-potomac-raw-sewage-spill/65-d3308377-b04c-4753-b449-1faebcd4ad52]

DC Water officials have consistently emphasized that drinking water supplies are not affected by the spill, but warn that contact with the river water, shoreline, or canal could pose health risks to people and pets. Naturally, there are concerns about long-term ecological effects on fish, wildlife, shellfish harvesting zones, and water quality, though research is ongoing.

Cabin Johners are reminded that Montgomery County health and environmental authorities have warned that all should avoid touching the water or shorelines in impacted areas.

Resources to stay informed:
DC Water website: http://www.dcwater.com/
Potomac Conservancy website:
https://potomac.org/blog/2026/1/30/potomac-interceptor-sewage-spill-updates

The Spill Makes National News

The sewer overflow was widely covered, somehow encapsulating the ***zeitgeist*** of our current times. Thankfully most stories located the spill in "Maryland" or "D.C." -- this is one time Cabin John is very glad to have escaped the limelight!

WASHINGTONIAN

So There's 300 Million Gallons of Poop Water in the Potomac River. Now What?

The sewage spill is largely contained, but there are a few public health risks you should know about. (Hopefully you're not hungry for shellfish.) WRITTEN BY KATE CORLISS | PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 30, 2026

The New York Times

Millions of Gallons of Raw Sewage Spill Into the Potomac River

About 40 million gallons of untreated sewage a day has spilled into the river since a pipeline ruptured in Montgomery County, Md., on Monday, according to a utility company.

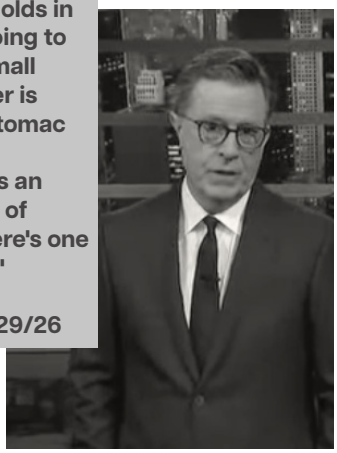


Raw sewage flowing into the Potomac River in Maryland on Friday after a break in a major sewer line earlier in the week. Credit...Cliff Owen/Associated Press



By Mark Walker Published Jan. 24, 2026 Updated Jan. 25, 2026

"A warning about this next story for any 8 year olds in the room - you're going to love it! Because a small geyser of poop water is flooding into the Potomac River. That's right, Washington D.C. has an unstoppable geyser of poop.... and now there's one in the Potomac too."
The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, 1/29/26



~vn

View From Minnie's Island

by Joe Saliunas

SPRING EPHEMERAL TIME!

Joe Saliunas is certified as a Maryland Master Naturalist and is Board Chair of Minnie's Island Community Conservancy.

If you are walking along the canal or river in late February, you will likely see some of our first spring ephemeral wildflowers in bloom. The word "ephemeral" means "short lived." Applied to wildflowers, the term means plants that emerge prior to the leaf-out of trees and shrubs that complete their lifecycle (emerging, flowering, seed production, and drying out) once they become shaded out. While it looks like they disappear, their bulbs and roots remain alive, but out of sight and dormant underground.

Some of the first ephemerals to bloom in our area are spring beauty, cutleaf toothwort, Dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, and trout lily. These are in peak bloom in March and early April. Later ephemerals include Virginia bluebells, wild blue phlox, and star chickweed, which peak in late April and May. These are incomplete lists–there are many more less common ephemerals. There are also other wildflowers that bloom in spring, such as golden ragwort, bloodroot, and wild ginger, but these are not considered ephemerals since they can remain evergreen through the summer and even sometimes through the year.

Spring ephemerals have an important role in our ecosystem, with their large, showy blooms providing some of the first food (nectar/pollen) to many pollinators. Many bumblebees, miner bees, and various flies, ants, beetles, and butterflies rely on ephemerals as their food source. Many plants have a special relationship with a particular species of insect for pollination, such as the spring beauty miner bee and the trout lily miner bee. Bloodroot plants also have a close relationship with ants, which carry the seed to an underground nest, eat the seed enclosure, and leave viable seeds already planted underground.

The best viewing locations for spring ephemerals are typically rich woodlands and flood plains. Some of my favorite spots include the social trail system on Cabin John Island (park at Lock 7), the lower and upper segments of Billy Goat Trail B, and the floodplain around Lockhouse 8. The highlight for me of these areas are the stands of Virginia bluebells that create an extensive blue carpet. I recommend taking a walk in early May along the river from below the lower end of Minnie's Island to the mouth of Cabin John Creek. On this walk, you can see not only the typical blue/pink flowers of the Virginia bluebell but also the rarer white form, which can be found in the beach area closer to Cabin John Creek.

Intermixed with our local spring ephemerals, you often see a sea of glossy, yellow flowers with 8 to 12 petals. These are the flowers of lesser celandine, and while it can be photogenic, it is an extremely invasive non-native plant that has little ecological value and displaces our native wildflowers. Their abundance can diminish the enjoyment of a wildflower walk, but the native wildflowers more than make up for it. Spring is coming – I hope you can get out to enjoy it! ~vn



[L-R] Bloodroot, Squirrel Corn, Spring Beauty, Cut-leaf Toothwort

DID YOU KNOW?

Buyers don't need a lot of time or a full tour to form an opinion about a property. Most decisions form within the first few steps inside.

Once a buyer walks through the door or scrolls past a few listing photos, they decide it is either worth exploring or better to move on. According to the National Association of Realtors, over 80% of buyers say it's easier to visualize a property as their future home when it is staged. Buyers aren't analyzing finishes or square footage at first. They react to how the home "feels." Does it feel welcoming? Does it make sense? Does it feel easy to live in?

Staged homes remove the mental work of asking buyers to imagine. Staged homes spend 33%-50% less time on the market, not because they're trendier, but because buyers understand them faster.

"Living in Cabin John for over 30 years I'm invested in the success of selling homes here."

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Clara Barton Neighborhood Recreation Center

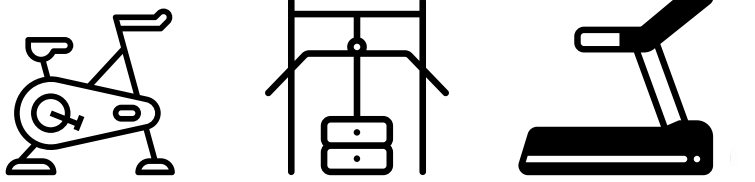
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Local History

by Rachel Donnan

A MASSIVE 1959 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL COULD HAVE RAZED CABIN JOHN

The community of Cabin John has evolved since its earliest days in 1913, when J.S. Tomlinson's American Land Company began offering lots to intrepid folks searching for a bucolic place outside of the city to call home. He advertised his new development in the "splendid location" of Cabin John Park, with its "refreshing breezes, running streams, fertile land and abundant shade trees." Yet while many houses have changed in the growing neighborhood, together with the addition of MacArthur Plaza, that pastoral vision has remained.

In the September 2024 ***Village News***, I wrote about the 1971 Cabin John Community Plan, born out of the potential loss of the neighborhood's semi-rural character as developers seized on its location and unused tracts of land. One developer, the Bogley & Co. real estate brokerage, proposed a large scale project in 1959, which was ultimately stopped due to community pushback. I recently came across several more newspaper articles in the Montgomery County ***Sentinel*** in 1959-60 that detailed just how enormous a project this was—it would have ultimately obliterated Cabin John as we know it.

Bogley & Co., headed by the "soft spoken young man" Robert W. Lebling, proposed a nearly $100 million plan that covered some 420 acres and included "luxury apartments with a river view....a 50 or 60 acre shopping area on the order of Prince George's Plaza, an office and research park for 'clean' industry on about 100 acres, a motel and supper club on about 40 acres and a 20 acre site hopefully set aside for a federal agency of some sort." It was rumored that Lebling had made a direct offer to purchase Cabin John Gardens, which had only just been turned into a cooperative several years earlier.

In attempts to woo residents to sell, Lebling sent out a letter and his own "confidential" petition to property owners about his plan to rezone the Cabin John Triangle, so called because of the anticipated completion of the beltway and GW Parkway. The citizens association, which had initially "offered to cooperate in an open and unbiased polling of community opinion after due consideration" of Lebling's proposal, was not pleased, and its president, John Jessup, urged residents not to participate in Lebling's survey.

One resident noted that Lebling's petition was "so worded that an indication favoring a restudy of the Cabin John Watershed Master Plan would also constitute a recommendation that Lebling's plan be adopted in its stead." Morris Fradin, who had been a resident of Cabin John since the early 1940s, called the "'cloud No. 9 project an attempt to spur panic selling so that the residents would sell out and get out" and warned fellow residents "to be alert to more such psychological pressures designed to speed sales."

The citizens association meetings with Lebling and his associate, Buford M. Hayden, were contentious. Mrs. Wilson Frazier quipped, to great applause, "I don't think anyone has our personal interests at heart. You speak of ideal sites for riverside apartments; well, I like the view too, and I like to take my children down there to see it." Mother of two and PTA officer Mrs. Jerry Shaw stated, "I'm willing to hang on forever. This may be a community of individuals, but one thing we all have in common is our desire to stay."

Perhaps Mrs. Don Iglehart best summed up community opinion on Lebling's proposal: "These people keep talking about progress and feel sorry for us. They say we're five miles away from where we can buy a loaf of bread. Well, we like it that way. That's why we came."

Nearly three-quarters of Cabin John residents were against the shockingly massive plan, and passionate community opposition effectively put an end to it. A decade later, the community shared their vision of Cabin John's future: a quiet atmosphere, small town friendliness, many trees and a diversity of homes, people and cultures. This vision formed the basis of the Cabin John Community Plan, later incorporated into the 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan. While residents no longer need to go five miles for a loaf of bread, community engagement has allowed Cabin John to retain its unique character and small town charm.

~vn

LISAN MARTIN THERAPY



Lisan Martin, a psychotherapist with 35 years of experience, provides counseling to individuals, couples, and families. A Cabin John resident, Lisan is licensed in DC, MD, and VA and sees clients virtually and in person at her Cabin John office.

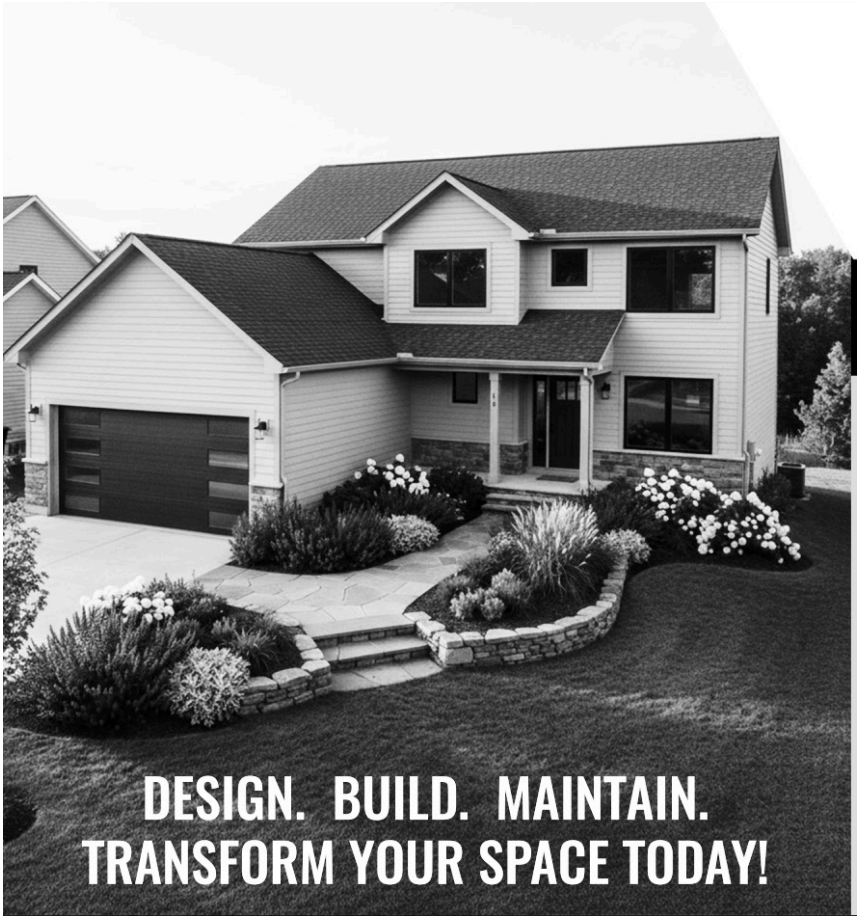
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1:1 Hosted Visits for first time guests
Monthly **Volunteer Work Days** 3rd Saturdays
-June 6th **Isle-Fest**
-**Scout Meetings** and Overnights
-DC Summercamp Programs
-**Music on Minnie's**
-**Octoberfest** Fundraiser- Oct 4th

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Poems For Passersby

Presented by Meredith Griggs

Those Winter Sundays

By Robert Hayden
(1913-1980)

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

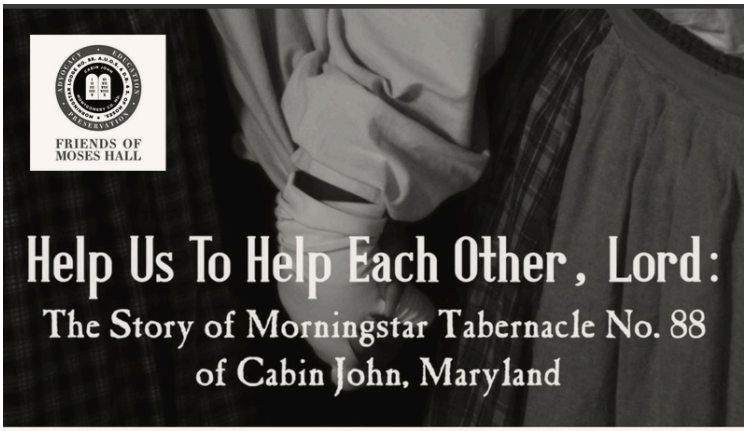
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering,
breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Ritch Kepler of MacArthur Boulevard, who has recently produced a volume of his own poetry, reads one of the poems posted weekly on upper 78th Street.



Robert Hayden was the first African-American faculty member of the University of Michigan English Department and the first Black Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT

Please Join Us for a Special Screening of ***Help Us to Help Each Other, Lord: The Story of Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 of Cabin John, Maryland*** – A Documentary Short Film Written and Directed by L. Paige Whitley and Produced by Friends of Moses Hall, Inc.

VIRTUAL DOCUMENTARY SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION - FRIDAY, 2/27 AT 7PM

Registration is free and limited to 300 attendees. Pre-registration is required - use QR code or visit:

https://www.friendsofmoseshall.org/helpustohelpeachother-docfilm

REAL ESTATE ACTIVITY IN CABIN JOHN

Courtesy of Cabin John Realtor Rachelle Cherol

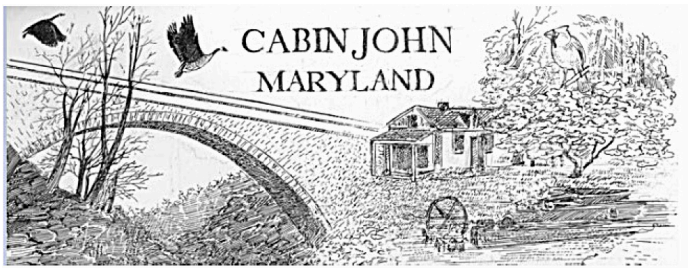
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2,922 sq. ft.

4 Russell Road
List Price $599,000
2 BD, 1 BA, 0 GAR
934 sq. ft.

CLOSED
7864 Archbold Terrace
Sold Price $725,000
3 BD, 2/1 BA, 0 GAR
1,218 sq. ft.

7809 Archbold Terrace
Sold Price $849,000
3 BD, 2/1 BA, 0 GAR
1,518 sq. ft.



The Village News is a monthly newsletter published since 1967 by the Cabin John Citizens Association. Ten issues are published a year and mailed free to every household in Cabin John. Others may subscribe for $12 per year. Send news, articles, and letters to: VNeditorial@gmail.com. Send advertising inquiries and subscription requests to: VNbusinessmanager@gmail.com. Reach CJCA leadership at cjcapresidents@gmail.com. You can contact *The Village News* by mail at Village News, P.O. Box 31, Cabin John, MD 20818.

Volunteers who make *The Village News* possible:
Shelly McKenzie, editor; **Heidi Lewis**, layout designer (interim); and **Marcy Harrison**, business manager.

Regular contributors: Sarah Craven, Rachel Donnan, Annemarie Economou Gormley, Burr Gray, Meredith Griggs, Heidi Lewis, Scott Lewis, Charlotte Troup Leighton, Joe Saliunas, and Susan Shipp. Illustrations by Trudy Nicholson.

NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE:
5 pm, March 25, 2026
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Because your pets deserve care that feels like home. Daily Dog Walking; Daycare; Boarding; In-home Pet Sitting. Our **daycare and boarding are provided in my home**, offering a comfortable, home-style environment rather than a large facility—so pets can settle in and receive attentive care throughout their stay. We also offer **convenient pick-up and drop-off** for daycare and boarding. Locally owned and operated by **Lauren Nicholas**, Licks & Leashes is built on dependable, reliable, and trustworthy care for your furry family members. Always accepting new clients. Contact us to learn more. **www.licksandleashes.net** Call: 808-286-6556.

Classified ads are 30¢/word. Please email ads to vnbusinessmanager@gmail.com

NEW TO CABIN JOHN? EMAIL US TO RECEIVE A WELCOME KIT:
cjcapresidents@gmail.com

Community Calendar

FEBRUARY	*All events at Clara Barton Neighborhood Rec Center unless otherwise noted*
26	CJCA Meeting, 7:30 pm Topic: Glen Echo Park Partn.
27	Virtual Screening - Friends of Moses Hall Documentary (see page 11), 7:00 pm
MARCH	
21	Bike Maintenance Clinic, 10:00 am
22	Spring Egg Hunt, 4:00 pm field below/behind CBNRC