

# CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Entries now being accepted for Firemen's Parade on May 28 this year, **A2, LOCAL**



Task force raids Bealeton Tobacco Hut, **A2, LOCAL**

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

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## Today is redistricting referendum

Polls open 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on question of redrawing congressional lines

**ELLE COTA**  
Capital News Service

RICHMOND—Today, Tuesday, April 21 is the day for in-person voters to weigh in on if the state will redraw its congressional districts outside the normal census cycle, an effort that has sparked debate and criticism.

A “yes” vote would allow the General Assembly to redraw Virginia’s congressional districts ahead

of the 2026 election, in response to actions taken in other states. Authority would be returned to the Virginia Redistricting Commission in 2031, according to the Virginia Department of Elections.

A “no” vote would keep map-making authority with the Virginia Redistricting Commission on its standard 10-year cycle and leave the current map in place.

People who support the effort

often call it redistricting. Those in opposition often use term gerrymandering to represent when electoral district boundaries are drawn in a way that creates political advantage for one party.

It originates from Gov. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, whose 1812 redistricting plan favored his party.

Officials can gerrymander by “cracking,” which is the spreading of opposing voters across multiple

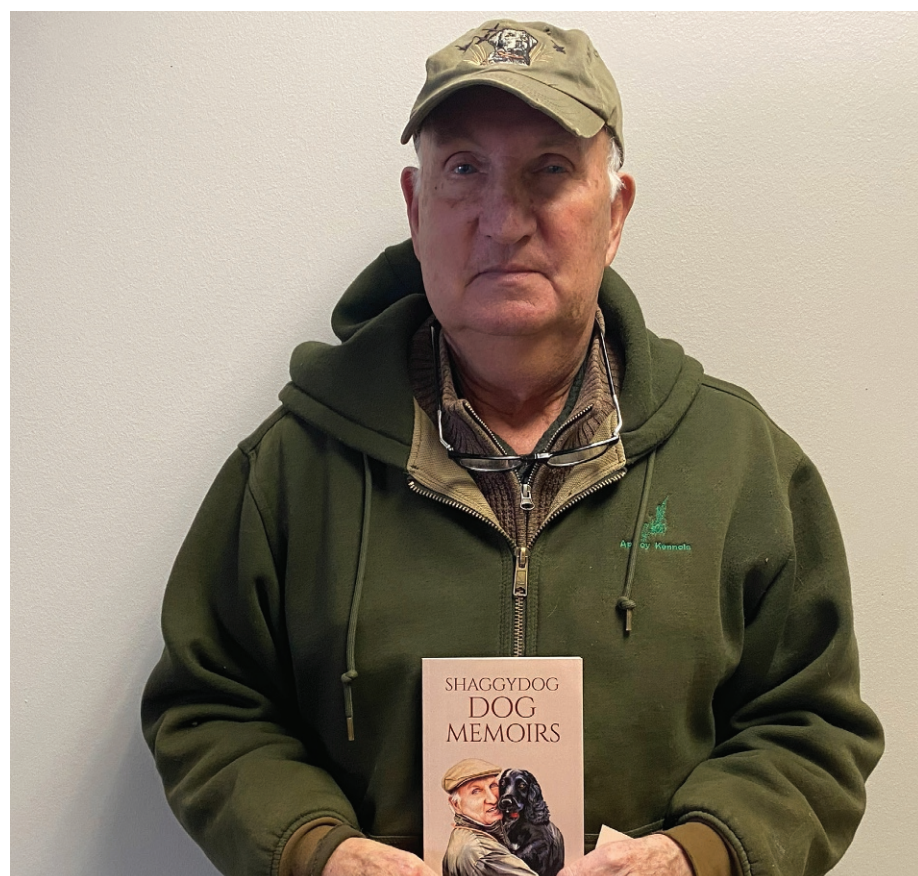
districts to reduce their influence. “Packing,” or concentrating voters into a smaller number of districts, limits representation while strengthening the dominant party’s position elsewhere.

Gerrymandering remains debated due to concerns about its reduced competitiveness, impact on fair representation and equal population sizes across electoral districts.

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CULPEPER AUTHOR

## Canine adoration in ‘Shaggydog Dog Memoirs’



LEWIS FAMILY PHOTO

John Lewis when he served in the British Army, with his pup, Rebel.

Local author John Lewis recently penned “Shaggy Dog Memoirs” about his years as a dog trainer.

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION,**  
CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

### John Lewis shares love letter to canines following years of bird hunting, training

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

A new light-hearted book by a local author shares vignettes regaling the fun, dedication, adoration and unpredictability of being a devoted dog trainer.

“Shaggydog Dog Memoirs” by John Lewis is a howling good read and humorous too, especially for people enamored with man’s best friend. The book is wonderfully illustrated by Fredericksburg artist Sonja Petersen and includes archival photos of the author and his many dogs.

A Culpeper County resident, Lewis, 80, was born in Plymouth, England, into a Royal Air Force family and educated at a public boarding school. The world traveler served in the British Army in his youth and spent 50 years in the corporate world.

He eventually permanently moved to Virginia, opening Apsley Kennels in Sperryville 20 years ago, serving primarily clients from around the Beltway. He brought five dogs from England with him and joined various AKC hunt clubs when making the commonwealth his home. Lewis is an avid bird hunter and has had several favorite dogs by his side through the decades.

### The BrightSide

The Bright Side highlights uplifting moments across our community. Visit our website to read more and share your ideas.

**The Bright Side:**  
Where good news lives.

His love for dogs is unmistakable in his debut book, long in the making.

“A passion for breeding and training sporting dogs as a hobby became serious when word of mouth brought people knocking on the door,” he writes in the introductory biography section in the 131-page “Shaggydog Dog Memoirs,” published in 2025 by Austin Macauley Publishers.

#### Passionate for dogs

“Gentlemen hunters want their family pet to be trained for hunting trips,” Lewis said in an interview earlier this year at the

Please see **AUTHOR**, Page A4

HIGH VOLTAGE LINE

## Culpeper doubles down against Valley Link

Richardsville residents mobilizing to fight substation in their backyard

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

Culpeper County is doubling down in opposition to the proposed high-voltage Valley Link project.

“The Board (of Supervisors) has heard the concerns voiced by the rural communities along the proposed route that would bear disproportionate visual, environmental, and economic harm,” according to a county release on Friday.

“The project would cause damage to farms and forestland, reduce property values, and disrupt the county’s rural character, while most of the project’s benefits would serve rapidly growing energy demand from data centers in Northern Virginia and, according to Valley Link, the energy needs of the greater Mid-Atlantic. The Board also shares concerns regarding the potential use of eminent domain and possible health effects from ultra-high-voltage lines located near homes,” according to the release.

To protect residents from the “Joshua Falls to Yeat” 765-kilovolt overhead transmission line and associated substation in Richardsville, the board directed county staff to seek formal participation in State Corporation Commission proceedings on the project and engage with relevant federal regulators, according to the release.

The resolution the board adopted on April 7 further calls for Valley Link to consider alternatives to the massive towers, including underground transmission lines and instructs that copies of the resolution be transmitted to state and federal officials, Valley Link and its partners and neighboring localities.

The vote to adopt the resolution was 6-1, with Board Chairman Tom Underwood voting no, as he felt including the substation in the resolution was premature.

According to the county, its comprehensive plan states, “The development of future electrical transmission lines should be limited while meeting the electrical demands of the County. Expansion within existing transmission line corridors must be the first option pursued.”

“Over the coming months, the Board will be evaluating a Comprehensive Plan amendment to reinforce using the existing rights-of-way and undergrounding of transmission lines, and to engage with other affected counties to

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Maxwell Rechkemmer and Lincoln Stuart are in this week’s Academic Spotlight, **PAGE A3**

**Weather**  
Mostly sunny  
**High 65 • Low 46**  
**Forecast • A6**

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