



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 12, 2024

TO: Consumer Protection Commission

FROM: Rebecca L. Makely, Director ^{DS}
Department of Cable and Consumer Services *RLM*

SUBJECT: Consumer Protection Commission Meeting for March 19, 2024

Please find attached the Consumer Protection Commission meeting packet. The next scheduled meeting is **Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Room 232** of the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia.

Please RSVP with your attendance to Susan Jones by **COB on Monday, March 18, 2024**, at Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-5877.

cc: Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive

Amanda K. Kastl, Director, Consumer Services Division
Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch



**FAIRFAX COUNTY
CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION
March 19, 2024 AGENDA**

Call to Order by the Chairperson (7:30 PM)

Remote Participation Motions

Minutes

- Approval of the draft February 20, 2024, meeting minutes

Report of the Director

Old Business

-

New Business

- Communications Policy and Regulation Division Presentation

Commissioner Matters

Report of the Chairperson

General Interest

- Consumer Protection Commission Calendar
- Consumer Protection Commission Membership
- Consumer Affairs Statistics
- Community Outreach
- Consumer Resources

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

February 20, 2024

7:30 PM

Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Chairperson Kratovil, presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners: Belkowitz, Gasimov, Gulakowski,
Kirk, Kharat, Kratovil, Rosier, Svab

Remote Participation:

Commissioners: Springer

Absent:

Commissioners: Roark

Staff:

Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Cable and Consumer Services
Amanda K. Kastl, Director
Consumer Services Division
Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch

Guests:

Second Lieutenant Richard A. Barron
Fairfax County Police Department
Detective Adam Armstrong
Fairfax County Police Department

Public:

Mary Othrot, RN-BSN
Statewide Policy Advocate for
Mental Health Child Welfare

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairperson Kratovil.

Chairperson Kratovil notified the Commission that Commissioner Springer requested to participate in the meeting remotely.

Commissioner Gulakowski made the motion to approve that Chairperson Kratovil's decision to approve Commissioner Springer's request to participate from a remote location was in conformance with the Consumer Protection Commission's Remote Participation Policy. Commissioner Kirk seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0-0, with Commissioner Belkowitz not present for the vote.

Chairperson Kratovil made the motion that Commissioner Springer's voice can be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location. Commissioner Kirk seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 8-0-0, with Commissioner Belkowitz joining the meeting. Commissioner Springer participated remotely from Fairfax, VA due to his daughter's medical appointment.

Minutes

Chairperson Kratovil moved to accept the January 16, 2024, minutes. Commissioner Gulakowski seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted unanimously, 9-0-0.

Report of the Chairperson

Chairperson Kratovil had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Old Business

Commissioner Kratovil reminded the Commissioners to continue offering topic suggestions for upcoming meetings.

New Business

1. Fraud Presentation. Second Lieutenant Barron and Detective Armstrong provided an overview of the Fairfax County Police (FCPD) Financial Crimes Unit online complaint process, staff make-up, 6,000 cases handled by four detectives, types of crimes, along with information on the partnerships with state and federal agencies, and ongoing work with victims.

A discussion ensued on a lottery scam, victims' reluctance to report crimes, identity theft, elder crime, repeat offenders, volume of warrants and court cases, and education and prevention.

Public Comment: Is there a list of banks that could be provided to consumers that work best with Fairfax County on financial fraud cases? Detective Armstrong responded that every bank has anti-banking laws and invests in detecting and avoiding fraudulent transactions.

Director Makely inquired if there are any metrics or case data on the FCPD website for the public to review. Second Lieutenant Barron responded that there is some information on the Financial Crimes website.

Report of the Director

Director Makely introduced Amanda Kastl, Director, Consumer Services Division who joined the Department of Cable and Consumer Services on January 29, 2024.

Director Makely stated the County Executive presented the FY 2025 Advertised Budget to the Board of Supervisors on February 20, 2024. Town meetings will be scheduled in magisterial districts, and public hearings will be held in April. The final budget will be adopted in May 2024.

Director Makely said staff has currently reviewed approximately 140 legislative bills with the most discussion and interest on trespass towing bills.

Director Makely stated the request for Authorization to Advertise a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established will now take place at the April 16, 2024, meeting. Director Makely stated a taxicab certificate holder requested the rate increase. Staff reviewed the ordinance and more information and data must be provided.

Susan Jones, Branch Manager, Consumer Affairs spoke about the upcoming National Consumer Protection Week, March 3 – 9, 2024, with emphasis on Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Day on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at the Government Center Board Auditorium.

Commissioner Matters

Commissioner Rosier requested information to provide to the public on the functions of the CPC.

Commissioner Gasimov suggested a one-page document with bullets. He stated the Community Engagement Committee will plan to meet in early March.

Commissioner Kirk had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kharat had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Belkowitz mentioned clicking on his phone settings and was shocked to see over 150 warnings about scams and being susceptible to data breaches.

Commissioner Gulakowski had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Svab had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Springer had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kratovil had several issues to bring before the Commission.

1. Provided information on identity theft crimes observed by 60 years or older by zip code in Northern Virginia and in Virginia.
2. Thanked staff for their support as the CPC committees begin their planning sessions.
3. Inquired about status of appointments to the CPC. Director Makely indicated no new appointments to the CPC.
4. The Federal Reserve Working Group is working to develop a common system to help financial institutions classify scams.

Chairperson Kratovil made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gulakowski seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

CPC Calendar

Consumer Protection Commission

2024 Planning Calendar

March 19, 2024

- January 23
 - Election of Officers
 - 2024 Items of Interest
 - Committees' Resolution

- February 20
 - Authorization to Advertise A Public Hearing to be held in March 19 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.
 - Fraud Presentation by Fairfax County Police Department Financial Crime Unit

- March 19
 - Communications Policy and Regulation Division Presentation

- April 16
 - Authorization to Advertise A Public Hearing to be held in May 21 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.

- May 21
 - Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.

- June 18
 - Office of Public Affairs Presentation

- July 16
 -

- August 20
 -

- September 17
 -

- October 15
 -

- November 19
 - Nominations of Officers

- December 17
 -

CPC Membership

Commissioners

Fairfax County Resident #1
Jacqueline Rosier (Secretary)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2025

Fairfax County Resident #2
Michael J. Roark
Appt. Expires 7/31/2026

Fairfax County Resident #3
Jason J. Kratovil (Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #4
Dennis D. Kirk
Appt. Expires 7/31/2025

Fairfax County Resident #5
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #6
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #7
Pratik J. Kharat
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #8
Harold G. Belkowitz
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #9
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #10
Josef Gasimov
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #11
Paul Svab
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #12
Denis Gulakowski (Vice-Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/ 2024

Fairfax County Resident #13
Maurice B. Springer
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Staff

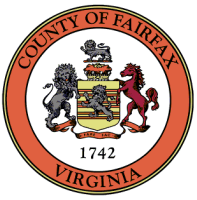
Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Department of Cable and Consumer Services
703-324-5947
Rebecca.Makely@fairfaxcounty.gov

Amanda K. Kastl, Director
Consumer Services Division
703-324-2639
Amanda.Kastl@fairfaxcounty.gov

Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch
703-324-5877
Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov

Main Number 703-222-8435, TTY 711
Fax Number 703-653-1310
consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov

Consumer Affairs Statistics



Department of Cable and Consumer Services
Consumer Affairs Branch
Monthly Summary Statistics

2/1/2024 Through 2/29/2024

	Current Month		Fiscal YR to Date	
Cases Received	62		510	
Cases Closed	63		481	
Resolved	44	69%	328	68%
Unresolved	0	0%	34	7%
Referred	1	2%	26	5%
Legal	3	5%	7	1%
Other	15	24%	86	19%
Advice Inquiries Closed	336		2825	
Amount Reclaimed	\$28,977.79		\$372,585.74	

Top Complaint Types

Tenant-Landlord	50%
Automotive	16%
Home Improvement	8%
Internet Sales	5%
Utilities	5%
Others	16%

Community Outreach

Outreach Event Calendar March 2024

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
3/4/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Sully Community Center 12809 Wall Road Herndon, VA 20171	55	9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	PNB AB
3/5/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Gerry Hyland Government Center 8350 Richmond Highway Alexandria, VA 22312	45	12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP SW
3/6/2024	NCPW Consumer 101 Medical Billing Your Smart TV and Privacy	Lincolnia Senior Center 4710 N. Chambliss Street Alexandria, VA 22312	15	12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	SCJ CH
3/6/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Lincolnia Senior Center 4710 N. Chambliss Street Alexandria, VA 22312	50	10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	MDP SCJ
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Welcome/Consumer Affairs 101	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	34	9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	AK SCJ
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Tenant-Landlord Leases	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	22	9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	SW
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Tenant-Landlord-Maintenance	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	22	10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	MDP
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Medical Billing	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	16	10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	CH
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Vehicle Purchase and Maintenance Issues	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	10	11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	AB
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Scams	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16	13	11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	PNB
3/7/2024	NPCW Consumer Affairs Day Consumer Booth	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035	60	8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	CS
3/8/2024	Scam Slam Consumer Booth	Greenspring 7430 Sping Village Drive Springfield, VA 22150	75	11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	SCJ SW
3/14/2024	Tenant-Landlord Presentation	George Mason University 4400 University Drive Fairfax, VA		2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	MDP
3/18/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Edison High School 5801 Franonia Road Alexandria, VA		1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	MDP
3/19/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Edison High School 5801 Franonia Road Alexandria, VA		8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	MDP
3/23/2024	Northern Virginia Housing Expo Consumer Booth	Charles Colgan High School 13833 Dumfries Road Manassas, VA 20112		10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	CH SW

Outreach Event Calendar April 2024

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
4/16/2024	Consumer Affairs 101 Virtual	Vitrual Center for Active Adults 4400 Legato Road, Suite 1100 Fairfax, VA		10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	SCJ
4/18/2024	Tenant-Landlord Presentation	George Mason University 4400 University Drive Fairfax, VA		2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	SW
4/19/2024	Scam Jam	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax, VA Live on Channel 16		9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	SCJ
4/25/2024	Fair Housing Summitt	Fairfax County Board Auditorium 12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax, VA Live on Channel 16		9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	SW MDP

Consumer Resources

Resource Items

Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/consumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyconsumer/>

***Consumer Connection: Romance Scam/National Consumer Protection Week
(February 26, 2024)***

<https://fb.watch/qxBEXthjGV/>

Information Items

It's everywhere: Police warn against driveway repaving scam ([more](#))

Data Shows EVs are less of a Fire Risk than Conventional Cars ([more](#))

Two Individuals Convicted for \$11M Covid-19 Relief Fraud Scheme ([more](#))

Fairfax looking to extend break for EV-charging installation ([more](#))

'It's everywhere:' Police warn against driveway repaving scam

By Homa Bash

Published March 4

FOX 5 DC

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. - As the weather warms up, a lot of us start thinking about spring cleaning - and sprucing up around and outside the house. Turns out, scammers think this is the time to cash in.

Fairfax County Police sent out a warning Monday about a simple scam that keeps racking up victims.

A fake contractor knocks on your door, offers you a deal to repave your driveway, gets a deposit, starts the work – and then disappears.

Police said that oftentimes, these people will leave the driveway in even worse condition than before. And those deposits range from a few hundred bucks to thousands of dollars, according to Fairfax County Police Officer Daniel Goldman.

"It's everywhere. They're generally looking for higher-end neighborhoods, but we're seeing it countywide," Officer Goldman added.

We spoke to one homeowner who wanted to share her story of falling victim as a warning to others. She paid \$2,000 for the driveway and nearly \$4,000 for the walkway and in front of the home.

"I wish I never did it," Bedir Kamaran said. "My advice is, check it out. We didn't check it out."

Here's how to protect yourself:

Ask for the contractor's business license - they are required to have one in Virginia.

Consider getting multiple quotes - as always, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

And finally, keep records of all texts, emails, and communication so you can make a police report if something goes wrong.

Police also said the best advice is not to feel pressured into making any decisions when you're first approached.

Google the contractor's name, their business, and look up their license before exchanging any money.

Data Shows EVs are Less of a Fire Risk than Conventional Cars

February 12, 2024

Post written by Gina Weil, Project Manager for the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination

Are electric vehicles (EVs) more prone to fires than gasoline-powered vehicles?

Recent news reports of fires involving lithium-ion batteries, as well as some high-profile recalls related to fire risks, have sounded an alarm with some potential EV buyers. But when you look at the evidence, the notion that electric vehicles pose a greater fire risk than other vehicles can be quickly doused.



Kelly Blue Book reported on findings from a **study that shows EV are actually less likely to cause or be involved in fires than gasoline-powered or hybrid vehicles.**¹ Data from the National Transportation Safety Board showed that

EVs were involved in approximately 25 fires for every 100,000 sold. Comparatively, approximately 1,530 gasoline-powered vehicles and 3,475 hybrid vehicles were involved in fires for every 100,000 sold.

Reporting from other countries supports the assertion that EVs are less fire-prone than gas-powered vehicles.² Data from Norway, Sweden, and Australia is consistent with findings in the U.S., showing that the prevalence of EV fires remains relatively low.

So why the concern? There are two main reasons, according to those who have looked at the issue:

1. Because EVs are still relatively novel, media may have a tendency to highlight fires that involve lithium-ion batteries.³ Increased media coverage can lead to a public perception of increased risk, even when the opposite is true.
2. While EV fires are not as common as gas-powered vehicle fires, they are more difficult to extinguish, due to how the batteries are protected from the elements.⁴ Batteries take a long time to cool, creating a risk of reignition, so EVs that have caught on fire must be handled differently. The battery chemistry itself also poses challenges to firefighters during extinguishment.

The [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) has published resources for first responders, including safety trainings and emergency response materials from automobile manufacturers to close this knowledge gap. NFPA also supports [National Electrical Safety Month](#), an annual campaign sponsored by Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), to raise awareness about electrical fire safety⁵. Just as emergency responders have learned to address battery and internal combustion engine fires differently, consumers must also learn about new technologies they bring into their lives.

Two Individuals Convicted for \$11M COVID-19 Relief Fraud Scheme

Friday, February 16, 2024

Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Department of Justice

A federal jury in Atlanta convicted a Georgia man and woman yesterday for their roles in an over \$11 million Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) fraud scheme.

Teldrin Foster, 42, of Decatur, was convicted of bank fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and wire fraud, false statements to a federally insured financial institution, and money laundering in connection with 14 loan applications.

Carla Jackson, 55, of Tucker, was convicted of two counts of money laundering in connection with laundering the proceeds of a PPP loan.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, between April and August 2020, Foster and co-conspirators submitted, or assisted in the submission of, PPP loan applications on behalf of 14 businesses seeking loans of approximately \$800,000 for each company. In the loan applications, the co-conspirators certified that each applicant business was in operation on Feb. 15, 2020, and had employees for whom it paid salaries and payroll taxes or that it paid independent contractors; that the funds would be used to retain workers and maintain payroll or to make mortgage interest payments, lease payments, and utility payments; and that the information provided in the application and in all supporting documents was true and accurate in all material respects. The co-conspirators reported that each business had approximately 60 employees and approximately \$300,000 in average monthly payroll expenses. To support these payroll figures, each business's loan application was accompanied by an IRS Form 941, which employers use to report payroll taxes. In reality, each Form 941 was fraudulent.

After the PPP loan proceeds were deposited into the businesses' accounts, Jackson and others laundered certain of the funds through a series of transactions that were devised to disguise the origins of the funds and how the funds were spent.

The defendants face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on each of the wire fraud and money laundering charges and a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison on each of

the bank fraud and false statement to a federally insured bank charges. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan for the Northern District of Georgia, Assistant Director Michael D. Nordwall of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division, Acting Special Agent in Charge Demetrius Hardeman of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Atlanta Field Office, and Special Agent in Charge Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite of the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General (SBA-OIG) Eastern Region made the announcement.

The FBI, IRS-CI, and SBA-OIG investigated the case.

Trial Attorney Siji Moore of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Tal Chaiken and Samir Kaushal for the Northern District of Georgia are prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Justice Department in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The task force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the department's response to the pandemic, please visit www.justice.gov/coronavirus.

Fairfax looking to extend break for EV-charging installation

Upcoming public hearing will determine whether to keep policy in place through October '25

Brian Trompeter about 5 hours ago



In an effort to encourage the public to switch to electric vehicles (EVs), Fairfax County since October 2022 has exempted the installation of EV-charging equipment from building- and electrical-permit fees.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on March 5 set a March 19 public hearing to consider extending that exemption, which otherwise will expire May 1, through October 2025.

According to county staff, during the first year of the exemption period, Fairfax County issued 856 residential permits for installation of EV-charging equipment and another 38 for commercial sites. (New parking garages, which require a more general type of electrical permit, were not included in that total.)

The number of commercial permits issued during the 12-month trial period was twice that of the 19 recorded in 2021. County officials do not have similar comparative data for residential EV-charging installation permits because those were not tracked before implementation of the Planning and Land Use tracking system.

The average permit fee for EV-charging installations at commercial sites is about \$421; for residential installations, it's \$127. The county in the first 12 months of the exemption period lost an estimated \$124,968 in revenue and officials expect those losses to increase in coming years.

If supervisors approve the extended exemption period, county staff would collect and analyze more data and report back to the board on the installation of EV-charging equipment in garages and parking lots of apartments, condominiums, and office buildings, as well as on homeowner-association property in single-family attached and detached developments.