

How Assessments Work

Beginning this year, Fairfax County assessors will be assisted by three computer programs which develop probable market prices for residential properties, eliminating much of the calculation which formerly had to be carried out manually for each property.

The three computer models, developed jointly by the Office of Assessments and the Office of Research and Statistics during 1976, use different mathematical procedures to arrive at three separate estimates of market value. The appraiser has the option of selecting whichever of the three he believes to be the most accurate, or he may override the system and set a value based on his own judgement and personal knowledge of the property.

The system will be used this year to assist in the appraisal of approximately 140,000 residential properties. It will not be used in assessing vacant acreage, properties which are unusual or unique, or commercial or industrial properties. A program is being developed to cover commercial and industrial properties for future assessments.

The objective of the computer-assist program is to obtain the maximum assistance to the assessor from the computer, while both improving assessment equity and making it possible to set the value of all properties in the county and town on an annual basis.

In developing the computer system the Office of Assessments first recorded a detailed description of each residential property in a computer file, using such characteristics as location, lot size, floor area, number of stories, number of bedrooms and baths, kind of construction, age, existence or absence of basement and whether the basement, if any, is rough or finished. As many as 114 such characteristics can be used to describe any one property. They will be changed in future years if the property is modified.

The three mathematical models then were developed. One computes the cost of reconstructing the home at current prices and deducts depreciation based on actual age and condition of the property. One is based on an analysis of sales trends. The third uses a statistical technique called multiple regression analysis to compute sales values on the basis of property characteristics. In prior years, assessors manually computed values using the cost technique and a comparable market analysis, but could not use the multiple regression technique because its mathematical complexity requires the use of a computer.

Using the computer-assist system, each appraiser now can determine in minutes values which formerly took an hour or more to compute. In addition to saving time, the computer is less prone to error than manual computation. It also has built-in checks to catch errors and identify cases in which the formulas are not appropriate. The system this increases the productivity of individual appraisers, as to both quantity and quality of work.

Appraisers still must visit large numbers of properties personally, however, and must manually compute some assessments. In every case, the appraised value actually is set by an appraiser, not by the computer.

Computer programs were thoroughly validated by checking generated values against actual sales prices during the development process. More than 10,000 actual sales were used, for example, in developing the multiple regression model. At the end of the annual assessment process, the computer will carry out additional analysis to determine the ratio of assessments to actual sales prices and the Russell Index or coefficient of equity, as a final check on the accuracy and fairness of the assessment process.

Notices of assessment will be mailed to property owners during a period of about 10 weeks beginning in late February.

Automobile Tag Time Again

The Finance Department is sending out applications for 1977 town auto registrations. The fee remains the same as last year's rate: \$20 for vehicles 4,000 pounds or more and \$15 for lighter vehicles. Motorcycles are \$8.

Applications are different this year. The application you receive (only those with town registered vehicles will receive an application in the mail) will include on it, pre-printed by the town's computer, the owners' names, address, make and year of the vehicle. Applicants must fill out on the application the body style, vehicle identification number and the empty weight of the vehicle. All the information needed on the application can be obtained from your state registration card.

Residents will also be given a choice of either a windshield sticker-type registration or a metal plate to place below the front state tag.

The registrations will go on sale at Town Hall on March 15. Deadline for vehicles to display a new 1977 sticker or tag is April 15. (The fine for not displaying a town tag after April 15 is \$10.)

In most cases owners will be

able to register their automobile by mail. Those who purchased a new car will have to come to Town Hall and pick up another registration.

Council Results

(Cont'd from inside.)

Sterling, Va., to replace a portion of the roof of the Community Center for \$3,156.22.

* Requested sidewalks on both sides of the proposed improved Park Street on the easterly side of Park Street from Maple Avenue to the corporate limits at Fardale Street, and on the westerly side from Maple Avenue to Cedar Lane. Council requested the highway department to clearly state in the plans and specifications that the contractor is directed to meander, or narrow, the sidewalks as necessary to save as many trees as possible. The town will be working with adjacent property owners in an effort to save as many trees as possible.

* Agreed to set up a meeting with Centreville Supervisor Martha Pennino to discuss traffic and transportation problems in Vienna and the immediate area.

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Vienna, Virginia 22180

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NEWSLETTER

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Town of Vienna

NEWSLETTER

Vol. LXXXVII, No. 3

Vienna, Virginia

March 1977

Assessments Will Look Different This Year

Real estate assessment notices will look different this year, but owners should read the fine print before they panic.

Fairfax County is shifting its assessment base from 40 percent of fair market value, the assessment ratio for real estate since 1946, to 100 percent of market value. (Fairfax County assesses all real property in the Town of Vienna.)

The change is required in 1977 by state law.

The shift will have little or no effect on individual tax bills, however the state law also requires that the tax rate automatically be shifted downward the same time to \$1.74 per \$100. That figure is 40 percent of the 1976 tax rate of \$4.35 per \$100. Forty percent of Vienna's 1976 tax rate is

How Is Your Property Assessed?

Take a Look Inside and See!

36 cents.

The new county tax rate may be adjusted either upward or downward by the Board of Supervisors and the town rate may also be adjusted by the Vienna Town Council at budget time this spring, but only after advertisement and public hearings.

Property owners will begin receiving 1977 assessment notices about March 1. To ascertain whether the true assessment has changed, a property owner should multiply the previous assessment by 2.5 to convert it to a 100 percent base. Comparing that product to this year's assessment will show whether or not there has been a change in value.

According to the new state law, all property is to be reassessed annually.

A detailed explanation of the new system is printed on the back of this year's assessment notices.

Spring Cleanup Set April 18

Beginning April 18, the Town of Vienna will begin its Spring Cleanup Program--a project in which town forces will remove debris piled at the curb side.

Pickup will begin in the northwest corner of town and will proceed clockwise around the town. Once a street has been covered the crews will not double back. Late debris will be picked up only on payment of a special pickup fee of \$10.

Residents are requested to pile debris at the curb between April 11 and 17. Debris piled at the curb prior to the 11th would clutter the town during the Easter holiday.

The cleanup is conducted twice a year (Spring and Fall) and enables residents to clean out their garages, attics and sheds free of charge. Common debris thrown away during these programs are old pieces of furniture, old household appliances, unsalvageable playground equipment and brush.

Debris is collected by town employees in large trucks. The debris is then taken to the landfill. The only requirement made is that brush, leaves and branches must be segregated from the other types of debris. None of the debris should be covering fire plugs or water meters.

Old clothes, furniture that can be salvaged and appliances that still work should be donated to any one of the many area charitable organizations in lieu of throwing them away.

Comment from the Council Table:

House Bill 855

By Charles A. Robinson, Jr.
Vienna Town Mayor

I have frequently expressed the view that the right of Vienna to become a city in the future must be preserved notwithstanding the fact that its present status as a Town is working very well. Of course, any such transition would have to be based on tax savings, and be supported by community public opinion. However, the option for future transition to a city is important in my view not only to assure our citizens of the opportunity to minimize taxes, but also to stabilize the intergovernmental relationship between Town and County.

Until recently, any town in Virginia could become a city on its own initiative by simply demonstrating to the circuit court of its county that its population was at least 5,000 and about half of the cities in Virginia have less population than does the Town of Vienna.

This town-city transition procedure, however, is in process of change. The Virginia General Assembly (Legislative) is completely rewriting the State laws governing annexation, town-to-city transition, consolidation of local government, and the transformation of counties into cities.

The Legislature's concern arises from some very bitter annexation proceeding involving the City of Richmond and neighboring Henrico County, and from the actions of certain towns in rural areas of the State, which, upon becoming cities, removed from the county tax rolls a very major portion of their area's population and real estate values. When the Legislature began its study of the problem several years ago, it imposed a moratorium on all annexation and town-city transition in the State--a moratorium which remains in effect today.

The Legislature's total effort to date is embodied in H.B. 855, which passed the House on February 3, and, at this writing, lies before the State Senate's Committee on Local Government. Under H.B.



Charles A. Robinson, Jr.
Vienna Town Mayor

855, Fairfax County could remain as it is, or move in one of several different directions. If the County does nothing, then in order to become a city Vienna would have to achieve a population of 20,000, hold a referendum, prove to a court of law that it has the fiscal capability to supply all city services, and further prove that the transition would not impair the ability of the County to serve the remainder of its population, and would be in the best interest of the Town, the County, and the State--an exceedingly difficult and subjective test to meet. During floor debate on H.B. 855, an amendment was offered to reduce the population test for city status from 20,000 to 10,000. This amendment was lost, as was a subsequent one suggesting a figure of 15,000. Vienna's population is now 17,500 and it would require a great deal of intensive land development to achieve 20,000, a prospect wholly at variance with established Town policy.

If, by contrast, Fairfax County desires to become an "immune county" under H.B. 855, which would give it a large measure of protection against annexation of its territory by neighboring jurisdictions, it may do so if a majority of county voters so decide at a referendum held on that question. In exchange for immunity, Fairfax County would be required to share a portion of its tax income with neighboring cities which are thus denied annexation opportunities. If Fairfax County would be required to share a portion of its tax income with neighboring cities which are thus denied annexation opportunities. If Fairfax County became "immune," then, under H.B. 855, Vienna could become a city at any time by showing the Circuit Court that it had a population of at least 5,000 as of the time H.B. 855 becomes law.

Another option open to Fairfax County under H.B. 855 would be to become a city itself--a county-wide city. This would require a favorable response by County voters in a referendum on that question. The Virginia Constitution is interpreted to prohibit towns within cities. Therefore, to avoid wiping out Vienna as a unit of local government, H.B. 855 provides that, in the event Fairfax County becomes one big city, towns within the county would become "townships," a new concept in Virginia local government, with all of the same powers held by the preexisting towns. However, this would be possible only if at a second referendum held in Vienna, a majority voted for township status. In addition, H.B. 855 would permit Vienna to subsequently transition from such "township" status to a city. These provisions which protect Vienna's future right to a city status under some circumstances were added to the bill after I, along with several members of the Town Council, and other Virginia municipal officials, testified for a full afternoon in January before a joint session of the House Committee on Cities, Counties and Towns; and the Senate Committee Local Government.

The curious fact is that during those hearings the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Municipal League, and numerous representatives of many units of local government appeared in strong opposition to the Bill. Fairfax County is adamantly opposed to H.B. 855, because, in addition to requiring the County to share revenue with adjacent cities if it should become "immune," it partially repeals the present prohibition against incorporation of new towns. Not one wit-

ness appeared in support of the legislation; yet, after adding a few more amendments which, among other things, would postpone its effective date to 1979, the House Committee voted the bill out and, shortly thereafter, it passed the House.

By the time you receive this Newsletter, the Senate will have acted and H.B. 855 will either be dead or on the statute books. It is the most far-reaching piece of legislation on local government to be placed before the General Assembly in 20 years. The tragedy is that only a handful of interested citizens and local government officials around the State are aware of its existence and significance.

Town Council Results

Results of Town Council's meeting of February 7, 1977:

* Council approved, in principle, plans for the development of Northside Park set forth by the Vienna Jaycees. The Jaycees hope other organizations will join them in helping to complete the project. All future plans, construction work and financing are subject to final Council approval.

* Approved removing approximately 150 feet of the median strip on the west end of Maple Avenue at an estimated cost of \$2,200.

* Appointed Lt. Col. George Lovelace to the Planning Commission to a term ending January 17, 1980 and approved a request by Planning Commission member Col. Arthur Kimberly to serve without pay.

* Approved site plan for Vienna Square, a proposed medical arts building, on the 500 block of Church Street NE.

* Directed Mayor Robinson to write a letter to Calder Loth, Architectural Historian of the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission, indicating to him that if the Moorefield House is approved as a historic landmark, that it will be the intent of the Council, if and when it restores the Moorefield House, to do it in a manner consistent with the external and internal character of the Moorefield House when it was constructed in about 1794 and that all materials presently in the building will be used to the fullest, consistent with their usability. (It was not Council's intent to immediately restore the building. Council wants the building registered by the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission so that Federal grants will be made

possible for restoration of the building.)

* Denied a request by P. Danie Orlich that Council, on its own motion, rezone property at Church and East Street NE from RTH to RS-16. Council suggested that Mr. Orlich follow the normal procedures of the Town Code and submit his rezoning application in accordance with the Code.

* Adopted ordinance making it unlawful to use abusive language and being disorderly in public places.

* Outlined the mechanics to appoint a grievance panel for town employees.

* Denied a request by Fairfax County tax officials for information relating to business license taxes in the Town of Vienna. Fairfax officials were advised that in the opinion of the Town Attorney, the State Code prohibits the releasing of such information.

* Took no action on establishing minimum bills for sewer service only customers.

* It was moved to defer any action on building a \$7,000 pedestrian bridge near Locust and Hine Streets for a period of 90 days, and during that time, the Town Manager proceed to obtain the necessary right-of-way to complete the bicycle path to Maple Avenue without the need to cross Wolftrap Creek.

* Employed the firm of Christian, Barton, Epps, Brent and Chapel to represent the town in its negotiations with C&P Telephone Company concerning the renewal of the town's franchise with the phone company.

* Accepted bid submitted by Accredited Roofing Services of (Cont'd on address panel.)

(Cont'd from Front)

apply within the corporate limits of Vienna.) The fine for having a dog running-at-large is the same as the fine for an unlicensed dog.

A special agreement was reached with Fairfax County for the use of its dog pound facilities. The agreement enables the town to implement its own dog control program without the costly expense of maintaining its own dog pound. Fees to redeem impounded animals will be the same charged to all Fairfax County residents: \$8 fee plus \$3 for each day the animal is retained. Animals not claimed after seven days will be humanely destroyed.

The success of the town's dog control ordinance depends largely on the cooperation of Vienna's residents. The town is more interested in successfully working with dog owners than it is impounding dogs and issuing summons and warrants.

The town is particularly concerned with the dogs that regularly scatter garbage along the trash pick-up routes. Any information on such dogs should be given to the Police Department by calling 938-4900. The caller's identity need not be given.

The animal code, in its references to dogs, is lengthy and includes many other violations that town residents should be aware of, among them:

* Vicious or dangerous dogs shall not be allowed in town. Upon proof to a court that a dog is vicious or dangerous the dog may be ordered removed from the town or humanely destroyed.

* Owners are prohibited from having any female dog leaving the premises when the dog is in season, except when the dog is restrained by leash, cord or chain.

* It is unlawful for any owner to permit his dog to urinate or defecate on the privately owned property of other persons or on public property except curbs, streets, alleys and parks.

* It is unlawful to keep a dog which by loud and persistent noises, disturbs the peace of the surrounding neighborhood.

* Owners are prohibited from keeping a dog, in such a manner as to cause offensive odors beyond the confines of his property.

* It is unlawful to keep a dog that frequently and habitually destroys property and turns over garbage cans.

(Cont'd on Back Side)

(Cont'd from Inside)

The animal ordinance also covers cruelty to animals and incidents involving dog bites, rabid or otherwise.

When "dog bites man" the owner of a dog which has bitten a person shall immediately notify the town dog warden or police. The dog warden or county health official shall immediately examine the dog and at the owners discretion:

(a) impound the dog in the county pound for a period of 10 days, at a cost to the owner, unless the animal develops symptoms of rabies,

(b) place the dog in the custody of a licensed veterinarian or a licensed veterinary hospital for a period of 10 days, if requested by the owner and at the owners expense,

(c) chain or confine the dog in a strong enclosure on the owner's premises and isolated from all other animals and persons for a period of ten days.

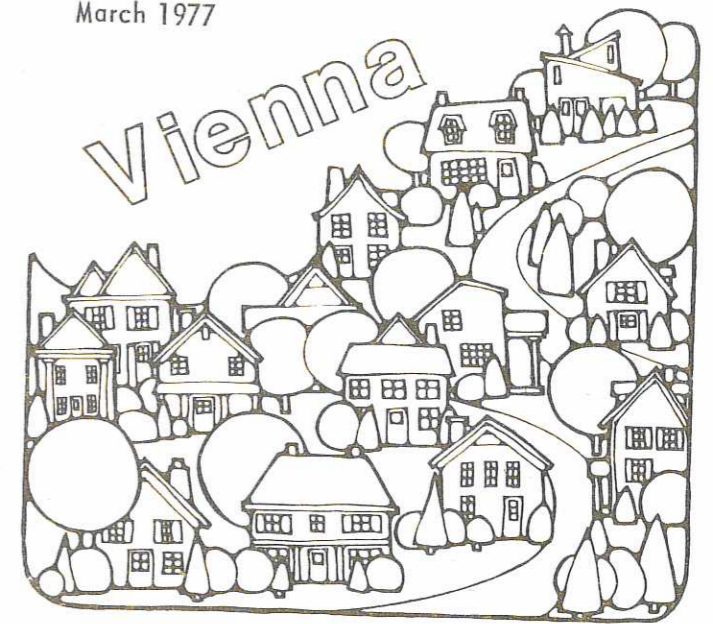
When "dog bites dog" the owner of any animal known to have been bitten by a rabid animal or dog, or by an animal suspected of being rabid, shall immediately notify the dog warden or police department. The animal shall be destroyed immediately or confined at the owner's expense in the pound, a licensed veterinary hospital or enclosure approved by the health officer of the county, for a period of six months. If the animal has been vaccinated within the time prescribed by law with a rabies vaccine approved by the state department of health, the animal shall be revaccinated and confined in a like manner for a period of 30 days.

Any person killing an animal that is rabid or suspected of being rabid, or any person having knowledge that an animal has died of rabies shall immediately notify the town dog warden or the police department and the location of the dead animal.

It is also unlawful to treat animals cruelty, either by beating, torturing or depriving them of the necessary food and drink.

Citizen complaints concerning the violation of the laws outlined above may be made to the town's dog warden by calling the Vienna Police Department at 938-4900. Messages and complaints will be forwarded to the dog warden daily.

March 1977



Events and Happenings in the Town of Vienna

Dog Ordinance Now Effective

Owners who do not have their dog vaccinated and licensed or let their dog run-at-large may be in for a stiff fine. The Town Council recently adopted amendments to the animal control ordinance providing for the town to handle its own dog control program. (Previously, dog control was under the jurisdiction of Fairfax County.)

A town dog warden--who will also serve as a park patrolman--has been hired. The warden will be working with the town's 27-man police force to enforce the animal control ordinance and to combat vandalism in the parks. The program will be partially funded by the sale of dog licenses. The fine for not having a dog properly licensed is \$5 to \$25 plus court costs (presently \$18).

One of the prime objectives of the dog warden will be the elimination of dogs running-at-large. The Town Code prohibits any dog running-at-large at any time. (The "leash-law" recently adopted in Fairfax County does not

(Cont'd on Inside Flap)

Town Gets Good Interest Rate

The Vienna Town Council unanimously approved February 2 the low bid by Horner-Barksdale and Co., of Lynchburg, of a 4.82378 percent interest rate for the sale of \$1 million in public improvement bonds.

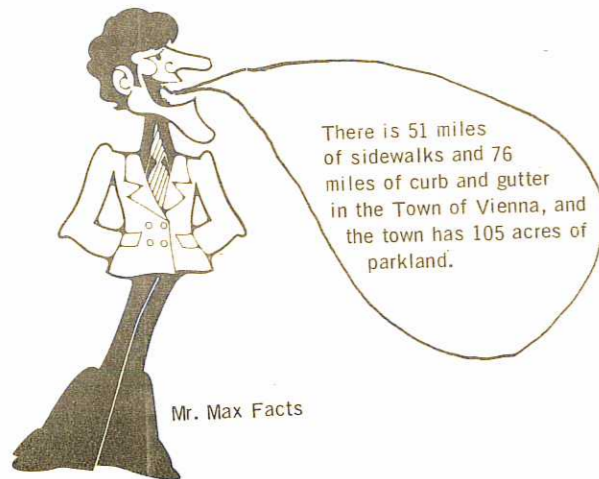
Nine bids were received. The highest bid received came from Ferris and Co., of Washington, D.C., of 5.063243 percent interest.

Town Council said it considers the interest on the issue as very good.

Several factors contributed to the favorable interest rate, among them the town's strong fiscal condition and a recent upgrading of the town's bond rating from Baa-1 to A-1 by Moody's.

Payment on the bonds will begin in 1978 and continue until 1992. No increase in taxes is anticipated to retire the bonds--the first issue by Vienna since 1966. The total net interest will be \$446,200.

The bonds will cover several public improvement projects over the next 10 years. Projected breakdown in expenditures of the bond funds include: \$420,000 for improvements to the storm drainage system; \$388,000 for street improvements; \$94,000 for parkland acquisition; \$58,000 for two new water wells, and \$40,000 for upgrading the town's northwest Vienna property yard.



There is 51 miles of sidewalks and 76 miles of curb and gutter in the Town of Vienna, and the town has 105 acres of parkland.

Mr. Max Facts

Calendar

March 1977

- 2--Newspaper Pickup Day.
- 4-6--Antique Show at Community Center.
- 6--Kite Flying Contest.
- 7--Town Council meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m. (For update on the agenda items call the Vienna Newsline at 938-4499 the weekend prior to the meeting.)
- 8--Mayor's Advisory meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m.
- 9--Planning Commission meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m.
- 12--Super Shooters Contest at the Community Center.
- 13--Rain date for kite flying contest.
- 16--Board of Zoning Appeals meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m. Also Newspaper Pickup Day.
- 17--Board of Architectural Review meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m. Also St. Patrick's Day.
- 21--Town Council meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m. (For update on the agenda items call the Vienna Newsline at 938-4499 the weekend prior to the meeting.)
- 23--Planning Commission meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m.
- 28--Town Council date for Public Hearings at Town Hall. (At publication date no hearings had been scheduled. For update call the Vienna Newsline at 938-4499 the weekend prior to the scheduled hearing.)
- 29--Highway Safety Commission meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m.
- 30--Newspaper Pickup Day

April 1977

- 1--Registration for Community Center Photography Show between 2 and 7 p.m.
- 2-3--Photography Show at Community Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and noon to 3 p.m. Sunday.
- 4--Town Council meeting at Town Hall, 8 p.m. (For update on the agenda items call the Vienna Newsline at 938-4499 the weekend prior to the meeting.)

The French Club, Les Compagnons of Vienna, will be making its annual trip to Ceret, France, this year between April 7 and 15. Ceret is Vienna's twin city.

Residents interested in making the journey should contact Robert Mercader at 938-7142 (after 6 p.m.) before March 15.

The cost will be approximately \$475 per person for air fare and transportation. Lodging will be provided free by the citizens of Ceret.

Antique Show

The Vienna Parks and Recreation Department will hold its annual Spring Antique Show and Sale March 4-6, at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE. Show hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday March 4, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, March 5, and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday March, 6.

The show, featuring 40 quality dealers from all over the eastern seaboard, will have books, porcelain, furniture, and, according to its organizers, "eclectic whimsies."

Admission is \$2 a person, or \$1.50 with this article.

Daily door prizes will be awarded and refreshments will be available. There will be ample free parking.

Looking for Musical Performers

The Community Center is looking for musical groups and solo performers available to perform in the town's Mini-Park Summer Concert Program for 1977.

There are nine open dates for performances during June, July and August. The Kingsmen and the Vienna Community Band have already been booked for four performances.

The Mini-Park concerts are conducted every Summer Sunday at 7 p.m. For details contact the Center at 938-8000 during business hours.

Super Shooter Tourney March 12

If you are between 8 and 12-years of age and have a fairly good eye for the basketball hoop the town's annual Super Shooter Tournament may be right down your lane. The event, in which both boys and girls try to sink as many of 15 free throws as possible, will be at the Community Center on March 12.

Entry blanks are available at the Center. There is no entry charge. There are 10 different divisions--one for each age group and sex.

More details about the contest and the times of the events are printed on the entry form. This is a nationally run contest.

Kite Flying Contest Next Week

Start making your kites because the Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a kite flying contest at Thoreau Intermediate School March 6. (Rain date is March 13.)

Awards will be given to the prettiest kite, the most unusual kite, the most original, the highest flying and "fastest up" kite. The contest is open to people of all ages. It begins at 1 p.m.