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Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Budget Public Hearing (CY 25 Tax Rate), Wednesday, April 30, 2025

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[00:00:01] Good evening. I am pleased to call to order this meeting of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors on the 30th of April at 6 p.m. in Lane Auditorium. I'd like to note at the table, dais, we have Supervisor Mike Pruitt of the Scottsville District, Supervisor Bilaquisto-Kirtley of the Ravana District, Supervisor Diantha McKeel of the Jack Jewett District, Supervisor Ned Galloway of the Ryo District, Supervisor Ann Malick of the Whitehall District, and myself, Jim Andrews, representing the Samuel Miller District. The quorum is present.

[00:00:27] We're also joined by our County Executive, Mr. Jeff Richardson, our County Attorney, Mr. Andy Herrick and our clerk, Ms. Claudette Borgerson. Also, let me please welcome Albemarle County Police Officers present, Master Police Officer Lauren Daly, and Lieutenant Angela Jamerson. Thank you for your service today and every day on behalf of the resident citizens visitors to Albemarle County for our safety and security. Our main item on the agenda this evening is a public hearing to receive comments on the calendar year 2025 real property and personal

[00:01:01] property tax rates. Before opening the public hearing, I'll look to Mr. Richardson to ask if there are any comments. Ask the board also whether there are any questions from the last presentation on the budget. Yes, sir. Mr. Chair, members of the board, I've also got with me this evening, Mr. Jacob Sumner to my left, our chief finance officer, and also Mr. Andy Bowman, who's our assistant chief finance officer as

the board knows last week we went through about 15 to 20 minutes of board presentation to kind of tee up a summary

[00:01:37] of the budget and where we were we are prepared tonight to go back into that to the degree that the board has questions or after the public hearing if there are specific questions that the board would like for us to pull any or all portions of that summary up we'll be happy to do so so we really look for you in the board's direction. If you want to go ahead and do the public hearing or if you have any questions or any of the slides that you'd like for us to put back up, we're happy to do that. Thank you. I will look to my right and left and see if the board wants to make any comments. We can go through our

[00:02:11] order, but I think in this case I'll just look to see. Then in that case, Mr. Bowman, Mr. Sumner, thank you, but are we ready to open a public hearing? Yes, I would say, and just to clarify, there is no action tonight. That would be requested on the 7th on the tax rates, and the budget is one total package.

[00:02:29] And to clarify, there are two public hearings tonight, one on the real property tax rates and one on the personal property tax rates. I'll be happy to turn it back over to the Chair. Thank you. And so at this time, I will open the public hearing, and we have some sign-ups, and the sheet is coming.

[00:02:46] Mr. Chair, just to clarify, you would be opening the public hearing on the real property tax rates. Yes, sir. Thank you. Thank you. There are two public hearings tonight this is the calendar year 2025 real property texture public hearing yes public hearing so we have one person online and one person in person so i am going to read the rules during public comment hearings the board will acknowledge speakers addressing the item listed for public hearing speakers are limited one parents of three minutes per public hearing

[00:03:22] item community members physically present for the meeting will speak first and then those who are attending the meeting electronically will speak. For those attending electronically, the clerk will announce each speaker before it is their turn to speak. For in-person speakers, timekeeping is conducted through a timer and light system at the podium. The green light will go on when you begin speaking, which begins your allotted time. The yellow light indicates you have one minute to finish speaking. The red light indicates your time has expired and you will be asked to end your comments. In order to give all speakers equal treatment and courtesy, the board requests that

[00:04:00] speakers adhere to the following guidelines. When addressing the board, state your name, and if you live in Almar County, your magisterial district, address comments directly to the board as a whole. Any written statements or other supporting material may be given to the clerk. If representing a group or organization, you may ask others present to raise their hands in recognition. Speakers may not share any unused time with another speaker. Back and forth debate is not permitted, and do not speak from your seat or out of turn. All comments are live-streamed,

[00:04:31] recorded, and published on the Almaro County website. And with that, our first speaker tonight is Gary Grant. Welcome, Mr. Grant. Please adjust the microphone, which seems to be pointed in the wrong direction right now. Thank you. I should know that by now. Gary Grant, Rio District. Back again

[00:05:09] because of your four-cent real estate tax rate increase on top of an average 5.1 percent real estate assessment increase. Actually, my assessment went up 15% on my 47-year-old house with no improvements. Because of your unanimous party vote advertising your 89.4% tax rate, and also because of some of your colleagues who still want an even higher rate. Not really sure, though,

[00:05:44] why I'm here waiting for your red light to glare in three minutes. I'm certainly not deeply professional like your Scottsville supervisor, Esquire, who boasts about your party and your workers? What's the point of public hearings when your Rivanda supervisor says that she and most of you already know how you're going to vote by the time you get here and how to cut

[00:06:17] your unanimous four-cent tax rate increase anyway, while your RIO supervisor fails to loop back as promised and scolds, come on, Gary, when questioned. Ah, yes, how to cut.

[00:06:36] Perhaps with a two-and-a-half percent social security level COLA instead of the budgeted three-and-a-half percent raise for your workers. Maybe by cutting a penny from your four-cent tax rate hike by reducing your \$40 million general fund increase by just 8 tenths percent. Or possibly by cutting three cents out of your four cent tax rate hike for free and reduced housing taken from your subjects who pay for their own housing responsibly and personally rather than through

[00:07:15] some faux governmental right to housing. My apologies for being here and of being no impact. I'm just not deeply professional enough, looped in enough, nor all-knowing enough in your business.

[00:07:33] However, you'll of course get my higher tax check. I still prefer to keep living in what I chose and pay for every year. Thank you. And our next speaker, Claudette, I'm going to look to you is rob myers it is correct mr myers you can begin speaking welcome mr myers i don't know if you can see me i see my name coming up there but that's about it can you hear me yes we can hear you thank

[00:08:11] you okay um all right so uh to perhaps reiterate a little bit what mr grant was saying a little different perspective uh my real estate uh assessment was up 10 percent uh and i noticed we also have a personal property tax proposal up 8%. But leaving that alone, there's a couple of things I wanted to mention. Some statistics I just recently read on a comment. Yale University's budget lab expects the tariffs to cost the average American household an additional \$3,800 this year.

[00:08:48] That's all on top of the 2.25% roughly inflation rate we've got already. According to the Federal Reserve, Americans had a total of 1.21 trade and credit card debt outstanding as the end of 2024.

[00:09:09] More and more folks are falling behind on their credit card payments. They're also choosing to buy now and pay later. If you're not familiar with buy now, pay later, those are a way for folks to break up their purchases and installments.

[00:09:28] What's noteworthy there, more users are using this buy now, pay later to buy their groceries. That's not what it was sort of designed for. It was designed for one-time, larger expenditures. Twenty-five percent of Buy Now, Pay Later users say they use loans to pay their groceries.

[00:09:49] One-third of Generation Z BNPL users say they've done so, making the fourth most common purchase for the age group. Obviously, that's not sustainable. Lending Tree showed that 41 percent of respondents have made late payments on their BNPL loans in the past year.

[00:10:08] So not only are they borrowing to buy their groceries, they're substantially late on those payments as well. I'm not sure how all this is justifiable and sustainable. If we're paying, if we're going to be paying 5% more inflation, roughly adding tariff costs plus existing inflation.

[00:10:30] If people aren't, if credit card debts or people are way behind in those and where they're using buy now, pay later to try to just keep going for groceries. and everyday expenses, how are they going to sustain double-digit increases in real estate taxes, not to mention the personal property tax? And I guess

those are my points. So I have the figures all here and, you know, audited numbers, but whatever that's worth, please take it into account. Thank you. Thank you. That's it. Then I will close the public hearing and bring this

[00:11:10] matter back before the board in case there are any additional comments. We'll go through our order for today. Supervisor McHugh. I don't have any comments right now. Supervisor Malik. No comments in general, because I assume that we will have a more further form of discussion next week. But it does remind me that the same, I feel like I'm back in 2008, 9, and 10 again, and yes, the pain is real for people, but if we allow ourselves to fall in the same rabbit hole

[00:11:45] that was goddess then that starts the whole getting behind cycle on the capital and the services and everything so it's so it is very painful for people i do understand that but it is a perfect storm that's for sure thank you thank you supervisor lupisto currently no comments at this time thank you supervisor galloway no just to thank mr grant mr myers for being here to give comment, but there might be a few more tonight. Supervisor Perley.

[00:12:17] Before I was elected, I remember I attended one of these hearings, and there was a very pithy and I thought very effective thing that was said by one of the supervisors. It was you, Mr. Chair. It came to you in the order, and you said, you know, the budget drives the tax rate, and we have already agreed on the budget, and I think we agree on the things that are in it, and therefore I support the tax rate.

[00:12:44] And that was your whole statement on it. And I was like, oh, that communicates the whole ballgame. So I would also like to reference, you know, what Mr. Grant said, right? There are discrete things in this budget that we could identify as sources of tax cuts. And those represent policy choices.

[00:13:01] The ones that he brought up are actually policy choices that I think we have, like, seriously grappled with. What does it mean to have a less compensated workforce that does not stay ahead of the curve of our peers? So this tax rate, I see, is the culmination of those policy decisions.

[00:13:18] It represents what we believe on those items in the budget, and I stand by those beliefs. Thank you. Thank you. And I concur. We have had our 33 hours of meetings with public comments and a lot of feedback informally, also a lot of emails about additional things to be put in the budget, but also about concerns about the tax rate, which is somewhat painful to have to increase the tax rate, but it is driven by the budget. So we visit those together. They always have to be ultimately put together and we

[00:13:56] will act formally on May 7th. So at this point, appreciate that. If there are any other comments, if not, then I will turn to the next item, which is the calendar year 2025 personal property tax rates and open the public hearing on that matter do anyone additional signed up okay anybody wants to make additional comments uh otherwise i will close the public hearing and back before the board and go through our order one more time in case there's any additional comments supervisor mckee

[00:14:31] i would just it's not really so much a comment but andy could you just briefly you or jacob i'm not sure. I've seen in emails coming in some references to, of course, the personal property tax rate.

[00:14:47] Could you explain the history, just briefly, of why we are where we are and how this particular rate came about? Sure, and I'm going to pull up a slide that speaks to this as well. This is one that the Board of Supervisors has seen before.

[00:15:05] We're really talking through the history of where that rate has been for the last several years. I'm not seeing it projected just yet she's getting it I think thank you about that there you go I saw a flicker there you go yeah so this is the five-year history of where the personal property tax rate has been uh the majority approximately about 87 or 80 percent of this come from personal vehicle values it really is since the 1990s till 2021 that rebate had remained at four dollars and

[00:15:41] 28 cents in the after the onset of the pandemic there was a dramatic change in the price of vehicles particularly used vehicles due to supply chain and everything else so there was a dramatic surge and at that time the board decided to drop the tax rate by about 20 20 or 86 cents down to three dollars and four twenty three dollars and forty two cents other roommate remained there for two years over the last two years that has been phased in to return to the prior rate of fiscal completed in \$24.28.

[00:16:15] So everyone's individual experience based on the car you own, the value of that can certainly vary. But overall, that's sort of the trend we've seen in the market and how the board has arrived at this proposal. Thank you. I just think it's helpful for people to understand the history of how we are, where we are now, and how we got here.

[00:16:33] So we're back to where we were pre-pandemic and based on values. That's correct. That's right. Thank you very much. And that's all I have. Thank you. Supervisor Malek. I will just add how grateful I am for the staff person or whoever came up with the idea of the tremendous market imbalance that brought about the reduction.

[00:16:53] Because there were many communities that did not cut the tax rate at all for those vehicles that were then 40% more expensive. So I really appreciate all of that that facilitated the amount of reduction that was appropriate at the right time.

[00:17:09] Thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Lupisto-Kirkley. Yes, I will say that our community, and I think it's been expressed by our county executive, Jeff Richardson, but our community really does demand a lot. They want a lot of services, and with those services comes a price tag.

[00:17:29] I mean, they want the best people that we can hire. They want the best fire. They want the best police. They want the best schools. They want the best parks and recreation. I've actually had people tell me, invest more in the schools, we'll pay even higher taxes.

[00:17:46] We didn't do that, you know, higher taxes than what we're proposing. People want these things. There's a large expectation in our community that we will provide these services.

[00:18:02] And I would say for the most part, because I've responded to my constituents that have emailed me or called me, I've responded to each one of them, but there is an expectation that we will do what is best for the community. And it was mentioned before, but I will say this board is very professional and we do not know how, I never know how anyone's going to vote on anything until I get here, because sometimes we change our minds depending on what some of us say, we can change our minds.

[00:18:39] So I wanted to put that to rest. But it's a wealthy community, and there are a lot of expectations. And I think we're meeting those expectations. And believe me, I really do wish we didn't have to raise taxes in order to meet those obligations.

[00:18:57] But that is the reality of being here. Thank you. Thank you. Professor Galloway. I think the second speaker should be noting the tariffs on new cars. I think it's something we should watch this year.

[00:19:12] I think it's not necessarily the same thing that spiked the values during the pandemic because you had such a supply issue with new cars that used cars was really all that people could buy. And then the spike in federal money being giving cash infusions to people, giving them basically down payments that the car business didn't even know they were going to run out and use those monies to put those monies down on cars.

[00:19:37] So then used cars started flying off the lot because there was no new car market to speak of. But I think it's something that we should watch over the next 12 months because if tariffs, who knows what's going to happen with this tariff situation. I mean, it really does seem to change every day.

[00:19:53] But right now, if the current piece is that the new car market gets some reprieve from the tariffs, then that may help kind of keep people from pushing to used cars because all of a sudden new cars are 5%, 10%, 15% more.

[00:20:09] But I think it's good for us to know, I just looked it up, the average used car listing price right now is \$25,100. It's absurd. So even the used car market, and I think I had shared this the last month, where the average used car payment was \$520, \$530.

[00:20:28] And the average new car payment's over \$700. It's like \$750. So it's something that we do have to be mindful of and just watch, I think, for similar reason of why we made the adjustment in the past. I appreciate Mr. Myers pointing that particular aspect of it out.

[00:20:44] Thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Pruitt. I don't believe I have any further comments. Thank you. Thank you. I certainly agree that tariff uncertainty and many different uncertainties today are complicating the picture. They also complicate the picture of what services may be needed from local governments.

[00:21:04] Regardless of what tax rates are adopted on May 7th by us, I know this board will continue to look for ways to diversify revenue sources, not just trying to rely solely on especially residential real estate, and look for efficiencies in how we provide essential services.

[00:21:23] So that is something I think we take very seriously throughout the year, not just during the budget time. So if there are no additional comments, we have already closed the public hearing, so So we will move on to the next item.

[00:21:41] Unless there is anything further for Mr. Bowman, Mr. Sumner? No, we'll just be back next week at the May 7th meeting to adopt the budget, the tax rates, and all the related actions to conclude the fiscal year 26 development process. Thank you to the board for your time and attention. Thank you.

[00:21:57] And Mr. Richardson, anything further? Okay. Board, this brings us to, from the board, committee reports and matters not listed on the agenda. and we have one that is important to start out with. I don't have an actual physical copy, but I think we've all received it, is a form of a proclamation to recognize our community's salutes, which is the ceremony for families who have offspring going into the military.

[00:22:25] That's this Saturday. This is a proclamation that we've seen and has been proposed to be read, I believe by Supervisor Pruitt at the ceremony. Do we need to read it here? Can we just simply refer to it? It's up to the board.

[00:22:41] It's up to the board. Okay. Then in that case, I would just look for a motion to adopt a proclamation and authorize it to be read at that meeting. I would like to move that the board adopt the proclamation for our community salutes, recognizing new entrants into the military.

[00:22:56] Second. We have a motion from Supervisor Pruitt, a second from Supervisor Lapisto Curdley, without objection. if the clerk will call the roll. Ms. Mallett? Yes. Ms. McKeel? Yes. Mr. Pruitt? Aye. Mr. Andrews? Yes. Mr. Galloway? Yes. Ms. Lupisto-Kirtley? Aye. Thank you. Board, of course, there may be other matters that are not listed on the agenda, so we'll go through an order for those, starting with Supervisor McKeel. I just would caution, I just want to caution people to be very careful with cigarette disposals right now, tossing cigarettes out windows. We are so dry, and our fire season

[00:23:33] continues and i've been absolutely astounded at the number of fire calls that our fire departments have been responding to and the amount of acreage this year that we've lost or you know that has been burned so i just wanted to caution people it is really i think we're what is it six to eight inches somehow yeah i mean it's astounding how dry and it's the whole state it's not just us it is the state. And we all remember, was it two years ago when we had a fire in this county and

[00:24:09] we were calling for help to other fire departments in other communities to help us because we didn't have enough. Our firemen were overwhelmed with the urgency of the fire. So just wanted to make a comment. I've been very concerned. Senator Malik. Nothing for me. Thank you. Supervisor of pistol currently yes i wanted to warn everybody because evidently fire ants are being found in the area and uh they bite and sting repeatedly their venom can cause severe allergic reaction in some

[00:24:48] individuals so uh kind of warning everyone to be make sure that uh they're aware of that v dax has just completed a survey that the area in northern Albemarle near Coles on 29 north they found 70 mounds in a 60 acre area that included both sides of route 29 and suspect that there are more so we need to keep you know an eye out for them because they will attack when disturbed their

[00:25:21] Their mounds, going into more detail, their mounds may appear as flat areas or dirt raised with no visible openings, so just a dirt pile. So if you see, if you find fire ants in Virginia, do not disturb the mounds.

[00:25:38] Disturbing them can trigger attacks or cause the colony to relocate. Report ant sightings to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. So be on the lookout for that. And I'll give my airport report at the next meeting.

[00:25:59] Thank you. Supervisor Calloway. Nothing this evening. Thank you. Supervisor Prout. I have nothing. Thank you. And I have nothing, although I will add to the comment about fire. We were walking our dogs at 6 in the morning, and we saw a wet spot. This is in town in the mulch.

[00:26:16] And then we realized it was smoking. And we proceeded to put it out. Somebody had just thrown a cigarette and it was already burning on the ground very quietly with no one attending it at 6 in the morning. Be vigilant. Then next question is whether there's anything up from the county executive.

[00:26:36] Yes, sir. Okay. Thank you. In that case, board, we will adjourn to May 7th, 1 p.m. here in Lane Auditorium. Opportunities for the public to access and participate in this meeting are posted on the Albemarle County website, on the Board of Supervisors homepage, and on the Albemarle County calendar.

[00:26:53] Participation will include the opportunity to comment on those matters for which comments from the public will be received. Thank you.



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