



MACHINE TRANSCRIPT • CORAGGIO CONSULTING

City of Fairfax City Council Meeting, Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Date Tuesday, March 11, 2025
Place City Hall, City of Fairfax, Virginia
Length 5h 28m (video)

- Official meeting video (city, Granicus): https://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4131
- Agenda: https://fairfax.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4131
- Minutes: https://fairfax.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4131&doc_id=a620c69d-ff5a-11ef-ab6a-005056a89546

Machine transcript (speech-to-text) produced by Coraggio Consulting. Not an official county record. Names and numbers may be misspelled; check the video at the timestamp before quoting.

Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-13. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:14] good evening. I would like to call the regular meeting of March 11th, 2025 to order. I see we have some people filtering in, but I would like to ask that if you are able and so choose, please rise to join us in the Pledge of Allegiance. I'm going to ask the Commission for Women to come down

[00:00:49] for the first proclamation. Okay, we're good. I shall now proclaim to you ladies. Whereas, in March

[00:01:29] of each year, we commemorate Women's History Month by reflecting upon the numerous achievements of women who have improved and strengthened our community and our nation with special recognition of those voices who have been historically marginalized, including black, indigenous, other women of color, LGBTQ women, immigrant women, and women with disabilities.

[00:01:52] And whereas the 2025 theme for National Women's History Month is Moving Forward Together: Women Educating and Inspiring Generations, we recognize women, past and present, who have dedicated their lives to education, mentorship, and leadership. We acknowledge women who have been at the forefront of movements for equality, racial justice, and social change. And whereas throughout history

the process of information sharing has been a powerful catalyst for change, examining new insights and knowledge creates a framework for collaboration and promotes the well-being of

[00:02:25] groups, businesses, communities, and societies as a whole. We honor women from all walks of life who have used their platforms to foster collective growth, empowerment, and transformation. And whereas from classrooms to boardrooms and from grassroots movements to global initiatives, women educators and leaders have played a pivotal role in nurturing minds and inspiring transformative action. And whereas the 2025 Women's History Month theme spotlights the contributions that women have made to the American educational system, the free marketplace of ideas, and the very fabric of our democracy.

[00:03:02] We acknowledge the intersectionality of women's experiences and contributions, uplifting the work of those who have faced numerous challenges while continuing to pave the way for future generations of women leaders. And whereas women serve as educators and leaders and changemakers in a multitude of fields ranging from business and medicine to government and the arts, women made significant scientific contributions to the early space program, the modernization of computer programming, and serving in positions of power in boardrooms, the education system, medicine, politics, and the military.

[00:03:36] As we honor women this month, we celebrate their perseverance, courage, and determination as the backbone of progress in this nation. And now, therefore, I, Catherine S. Reed, Mayor of the City of Fairfax, do hereby proclaim the month of March 2025 as Women's History Month, and celebrating the spirit, courage, and contributions of women in the city of Fairfax, and I encourage everyone to attend the panel discussion at City Hall on March 23, 2025, moderated by Councilmember Stacey Hardy-Chandler.

[00:04:10] Thank you, and is there anyone who would like to make remarks? Hello, my name is Jonnell Brown. I'm serving as the chair for the Commission of Women. We want to thank you, Mayor Reed and members of the City Council. It's an honor to accept this proclamation, recognizing March as Women's History Month.

[00:04:28] behalf of fairfax city commission for women women's history month is a time to reflect on the tremendous contributions women have made to our personal lives the local community our nation in the world we stand on the shoulders of generations of women as you mentioned just a few minutes ago all kinds of women who have fought for equality justice and the freedom to lead this month we not only honor their achievements and sacrifice but also commit to uplifting their voices and experiences of all women from all walks of life in every corner of the community once again we thank you for your continued support we are excited to move forward

[00:05:03] together with you and celebrating and advancing the work of women in our city all right a photograph

[00:05:16] dawn mcgruder and the new chapter president of nabo dawn are you there so this proclamation

[00:06:03] is for NAWBO, which is the National Association of Women Business Owners, and this is a 50th anniversary proclamation. NAWBO has been around for a very long time, and a lot of women entrepreneurs have been served by the fact that they had support from an organization like this. As we mentioned previously tonight, women have not always had access or been welcomed in places that have been traditionally dominated by men. So having organizations that specifically support women in

different facets, whether it's politics or it's business or it's education, has made a difference in the progress that women have made. So I'm going to proclaim.

[00:06:40] Whereas the National Association of Women Business Owners, NABO, of Greater D.C., was founded in 1975 as the inaugural chapter of NABO, launching a national movement dedicated to supporting and advocating for women entrepreneurs. And whereas for five decades, NABO Greater D.C. has been a powerful force for advocacy, education, mentorship, and networking, empowering women entrepreneurs across Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia to start, grow, and scale their businesses. And whereas NABO has played a critical role in shaping public

[00:07:18] policy and advancing economic opportunities for women business owners, including its advocacy for the Women's Business Ownership Act of 1988, HR 5050, which eliminated discriminatory lending practices and established key federal resources for women-owned businesses. And whereas NABO Greater D.C. continues to be a leader in economic development and entrepreneurship, contributing to the growth of Virginia's small business community and fostering a more inclusive and prosperous business environment for all. And whereas NABO Greater D.C. will commemorate this

[00:07:54] milestone 50th anniversary at the nabo dc women of excellence gala on march 14th 2025 at sequoia dc and nabo national will further recognize this achievement at the nabo nabo women's business conference from june 5th to 8th 2025 at the omni shoren in washington dc and whereas it is fitting that the city of fairfax recognize nabo's greater dc's half century of leadership impact and unwavering commitment to advancing women in business now therefore i katherine s reed mayor of the city of fairfax do hereby recognize and celebrate the 50 50th anniversary of nabo greater

[00:08:33] dc and commend its continued efforts to empower when women entrepreneurs and encourage all virginians to support and uplift women-owned businesses as they drive innovation economic growth and community development thank you very much and would you like to say a few words yes hi my name is soccer juvia panning um i would like to thank sorry i would like to thank the mayor katherine reed and city council for this amazing proclamation also don magruder for submitting on our behalf we are

[00:09:09] an organization that we view as a sisterhood and we are still fighting for and will advocate always for our fellow sister women business owners in the metro dc area we believe that we are the foundation and we are helped building this economy of this country and we will continue to do so and we will continue to highlight the wonderful and amazing accomplishments of women business owners and push for more equality when it comes to be the awards of contracts and other business

[00:09:42] opportunities for female business owners. We have been here, we will be here, and we continue to be

[00:09:50] here. Thank you. My friends from Save Soil, I see your t-shirts. Come on down and let's do some

[00:10:26] proclaiming about the value of soil, which is so important. You guys gave me a plant last year. It's thriving in my office. Anyone who's been in my office can attest that that plant is growing.

[00:10:41] clearly likes the city of Fairfax. Thank you. All right, come on around, come on around. All right, come on, come on. All right, then. Whereas, Save Soil is a global movement launched by Sadhguru, uniting world leaders, visionaries, influencers, and citizens of all nations behind a common purpose, to

restore and safeguard the world's soil. And whereas, Save Soil aims to address the global soil crisis, recognizing that 52% of the world's agricultural soils are already

[00:11:18] degraded, and by 2050, 90% of earth soil could be degraded. And whereas addressing soil degradation issues would bring solutions for the loss of biodiversity, nutritional deficiencies, food security, water scarcity, climate change, and mass migration. And whereas the proposed solution is to advocate policies across all nations towards soil restoration and aim to increase organic matter in agricultural soil to a minimum of three to 6%.

[00:11:50] And whereas in an effort to raise awareness and activate support from leaders and citizens alike, Sadhguru was on a 30,000 kilometer journey as a lone motorcyclist covering 27 nations over 100 days since March 21st, 2022.

[00:12:09] Now therefore I, Catherine S. Reed, Mayor of the City of Fairfax, do hereby declare March 21st, 2025 as Save Soil Day in the City of Fairfax. As soil is vital to all life and urge all residents to be part of the Save Soil movement to support national policies towards soil restoration and aim to raise the organic matter of soil to a minimum of 3 to 6%.

[00:12:31] I urge all residents to participate in creating bright futures for our children and the future of our planet. Thank you all so much for being here. Thank you, Mayor Reed, for proclaiming March 21st as the Safe Soil Day here in Fairfax again this year.

[00:12:54] And that was the day, as Mayor mentioned, the day that Sadhguru, he's a yogi and a mystic, he launched the global Safe Soil Movement. My name is Renuka Iyer, and I'm here, a resident of Fairfax. I've been here for 13 years, and I'm a volunteer with the Safe Soil Movement.

[00:13:13] It's a nonprofit organization called Conscious Planet. So if you ever wanted to take a look at it, it's on the Internet, and you can look at it. And since the launching of the Safe Soil Movement, we've been active in raising awareness among community regarding the current crisis of soil degradation.

[00:13:30] And over half of the world's agricultural soil is already degraded. And if current practices continue, by the year 2045, we could lose up to 90%. And in the year 2020, the UN predicted that we have roughly 50 to 60 years of harvest left on the planet.

[00:13:49] And this life-giving material that we call soil is only about 5 to 10 inches deep. It's teeming with insects and worms and fungi, bacteria and microorganisms that, like other life forms, can too go extinct. So about 40% of the Earth's soil is in agricultural use.

[00:14:08] The way in which we practice agriculture is key to protecting and revitalizing soil and thereby ensuring a secure future for generations to come. By creating policies that support the increase of organic content in soil, we can prevent the loss of nutrients in food, flooding, drought, and the loss of biodiversity and mitigate greenhouse gases.

[00:14:30] So the Safe Soil, we've also been actively working with hundreds and thousands of farmers in the transition to a regenerative practice of agriculture, and that serves as a model of successful union of ecology and economy.

[00:14:46] This is backed by the UN Environment Program, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, the UN Convention to Combat Diversification, and the World Food Program, among others. And it's also had a large presence in this year, both in the COP 29 and COP 15.

[00:15:05] So thank you, Mayor Reed, just once again, for showing your support towards this initiative. And it's really an honor to receive this proclamation. And I hope that in some way it will contribute to the vital steps needed to save our soil. Thank you.

[00:15:55] Okay.

[00:16:21] We'll move on to the adoption of the agenda. Yes. Is there a motion to approve the agenda? Council Member Hardy Chandler. Thank you, Mayor. I move to adopt the agenda as presented. Is there a second? Second. The motion has been made and seconded. A roll call vote.

[00:16:37] Council Member Amos? Aye. Council Member Hall? Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler? Aye. Council Member Peterson? Aye. Council Member Bates? Aye. Council Member McQuillan? Aye. Motion passed unanimously. We'll go to the initial general public comment. Since we have new faces in the room, just to let you know the initial general public comment is for any speakers who signed up with the clerk's office by 5 o'clock p.m. today. We will have a second general public comment. It's item number eight after the public hearings. So it'll be an opportunity if you didn't sign up prior to the start of the meeting, you'll have an opportunity to speak then. So I will go ahead and call the

[00:17:15] first speaker who signed up by the end of today, and that's Mariana Fournier. Good evening, all.

[00:17:38] I'm Mariana Fournier, and as this coming April 1st, I will have lived in Fairfax City for 47 years. As a community and country, we are sailing into uncharted waters.

[00:17:56] Many of our neighbors have been unjustly fired and need our support. I strongly suggest we limit our spending to only what is absolutely necessary. I support totally dropping the GST and the CC connector.

[00:18:17] The city has not maintained the trails that already exist. I'm concerned that we will not have the funds to cover our school bond. The former councils have allowed the cost of the GSP to balloon to a ridiculous amount that we simply cannot afford.

[00:18:39] Let us know that the present council has actually heard us. It's time for the council to stand up for our city instead of yielding to outside influences. In closing, I want to thank all those city employees who've worked so hard to make our city a wonderful place to live.

[00:19:05] And I applaud the way you all have greatly improved communications with our citizens. I thank you very much. Our next speaker is Cezanne Zayada.

[00:19:25] On to the next speaker. Tom Ross. Hey. David Geller. Hello. I'm David Geller. I have met and talked to a lot of you, not everybody. And I don't really have much to say except this.

[00:19:57] I've lived in this town for like 12 years, actually 14 years. There were two years we rented a house on Country Hill, and now we have a house on Darby Street. And I've really enjoyed living here. It's a great place. It satisfies all my needs. It's quiet. It's safe. It's clean.

[00:20:17] I enjoy the parks. I go hiking all the time. I like the university. And, you know, it's been a great deal. So I have really no complaints. It's been very well run, in my impression. You know, I haven't really kept up with details, but I feel like the place has been well run and I'm really appreciative of that.

[00:20:37] You know, it's been a fairly conservatively, you know, as far as, you know, spending money, it's been very, very careful of how you spend money and everything like that. So that's my original

proclamation.

[00:20:54] However, I mean, I've known that there's this huge school bond, which I voted against, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars to borrow. And then, you know, I get this letter about our assessments. And, I mean, frankly, you know, while we lived here, our taxes maybe would go up, I don't know, a few percent a year, okay?

[00:21:17] Mostly due to the rising assessments, not the rate. The rate has changed a little bit, but very small. But then I get this little, you know, yellow bill, which I guess we all got, not a bill, but, and my taxes, the total amount I'm going to end up paying in 2025, if this is all approved, has gone up 20% in one single year.

[00:21:41] I mean, I hope everybody, I mean, and I'm just flabbergasted, because until now, nothing like this has ever happened. Everything has been very regular, very small. Obviously, I think, you know, you have to live within your means.

[00:21:59] Now, our assessments rose. That's always happened so far. I mean, it doesn't mean it always will, but it has. And that's really helped keep the budget, you know, the amount of money that you get with inflation. But to actually increase the rate from \$1.03 to \$1.1250, and then I understand it's really not \$1.1250.

[00:22:22] Actually, there's talk about raising it to \$1.15. I mean, I just don't understand this at all. I think it's way, you know, like somebody said, you know, we're living in a very tough time. We need to live within our means.

[00:22:38] I'm against this completely, against raising the rate, totally. And my proposal would be, why not just live on the increased assessments? So I guess my little red light is on.

[00:22:53] Yes, thank you. Okay, that's all I really have to say. I'm totally against this. Thank you. Our next speaker is Bill Batassa. I speak tonight representing the Friends of Accutane Creek.

[00:23:12] The George Schneider Trail would be a laudable and welcome addition to the amenities of this city. But we must ask, is it so laudable that we would build it at the cost of removing a row of houses and relocating their inhabitants? Is it so laudable that we would bear the cost of closing even one lane of vehicular traffic to make room for it?

[00:23:30] The Friends of Aquitaine Creek maintain that the George Schneider Trail is not so laudable that it justifies the cost of clearing away a swath of our few remaining forests and wetland habitats. nor does it justify the Panama Canal-like level of engineering that would be required in this difficult terrain, engineering that would make even greater the eternal loss of precious habitats.

[00:23:52] Let's not love our wild places to death. Our forests are not improved by pavement. Our wetlands are not improved by pavement. Alternatives employing existing paved infrastructure are there. Let's make our streets safe for people before we make our forests safe for asphalt. It is time to cut our losses.

[00:24:10] We implore the city to forego this George Schneider Trail, the Pickett Road Connector Trail, and all other trees-to-asphalt conversion projects. Thank you. Our next speaker is Susan Kyler. And I'm just going to ask you, please, you know, we are listening to you all attentively.

[00:24:28] This is a chamber, and we're conducting a meeting. So I would appreciate it if we all gave everyone our full attention and maintained a quorum in the chamber. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Susan Kyler, 9742 Cardinal Road.

[00:24:44] For at least two years, residents, environmental groups, and bicyclists from surrounding jurisdictions have spoken eloquently about the environmental damage and unnecessary financial costs of the staff-proposed George Snyder Trail, which will benefit only a few recreational bicyclists.

[00:25:01] Tonight is no exception. So rather than reiterate what these concerned citizens like Phil have said, and others that will do it again so eloquently tonight, I want to highlight the eerie responsibility of throwing good money after bad. To paraphrase one council member, sunk costs are sunk costs, and if the plan is bad, why continue with it? I have contacted VDOT about whether the city must reimburse VDOT or CBT for the I-66 concessionaire funds that have already been spent on the GST if the GST is canceled.

[00:25:36] I'm talking about the GST. I'm not talking about the GST extension because the funds for the extension can, with a bit of creativity, be used within Project Scope to make Fairfax Boulevard safer for pedestrians and bicycles. I also asked VDOT about whether the city can modify its proposed plan for use of the I-66 six concessionaire funds, as long as the modifications are within project scope and will accomplish the same objectives using existing roads and minimizing destruction of our green spaces.

[00:26:06] I'm referring primarily to using Cardinal Road, a portion of which is already part of GST, Draper Drive Park and Draper Drive in the east, and all of the western part of the GST to Route 123. I have not heard back yet from VDOT, but I was told that they were preparing answers to the questions.

[00:26:25] However, it really doesn't matter at this point. Even if I-66 concessionaire fund money already spent must be returned to VDOT, the point is that throwing good money after bad is not good policy, particularly when residents have been hit with double-chip increases in real estate taxes, and particularly when Fairfax Boulevard will be modified within the next five years to provide safe passage for bicyclists.

[00:26:51] So I urge you to either cancel the GST or direct staff, and I mean direct staff, to develop an alternative that makes use of the existing road network and makes it safer for bicyclists and minimizes damages to our scarce green spaces, and also to develop a plan for community outreach.

[00:27:13] Thank you. Our next speaker is Sophie McNeil.

[00:27:30] Hello. My name is Sophie McNeil, 3417 Newbury Road. I am an environmental studies student studying at VCU down in Richmond, and I will be graduating in the fall of this year. I also worked for the country's largest environmental consulting organization called RES, Resource Environmental Solutions, and I learned a lot along with my degree.

[00:27:57] And I just wanted to come out here saying from a personal perspective that I do not support the George Snyder Trail plans along with the Country Club Hills Connector. I live in that neighborhood, and I personally, along with a lot of my friends that grew up in that neighborhood, grew up playing in there, and that's kind of where I got the basis for what I want to do in the world, why I want to be an environmental studies major, why I want to go into repairing our ecosystems, because how are kids supposed to learn to care about something if it's not there? You know, we don't need a bike path. We have, as other people have mentioned, renewing

[00:28:36] infrastructure within the next five years. We have already existing trail plans that need to be attended to. And we don't need another 625 foot bike path straight through my backyard, to put it frank. I think there's much better uses of the money and could be used to help other people as opposed to a bike path that would provide a little pretty view for the few cyclists. And coming from the youth, a lot of people that I've spoken to, a lot of VCU students in particular, have reached out to me saying that they've emailed, speaking out against this plan. It's just not something that

[00:29:13] in the best interest of the youth, you know, high school students, college students, just younger people as well. We don't need this. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Judy Frazier. Hi, good evening, y'all. Glad to be here tonight and appreciate your attention to the George Snyder Trail tonight and your work session.

[00:29:41] I wanted to make a couple comments about it. First of all, I am surprised that we're at this point where there are apparently permits already in hand because this is the NEPA programmatic categorical exclusion, which says, get this, there has been no public opposition to this project. I'm leaving room to laugh here. Yes, there's been substantial public opposition to this project. This is outdated and should not be part of this permit. Also, it says no substantial controversy on environmental grounds is anticipated. That is also very outdated at this point. This

[00:30:21] project should not go forward with these documents in its in its portfolio. So also I'd like to mention that G-STAG is noted here as a citizen committee involved with project planning. That is also interesting. I was a member of the G-STAG and I can tell you we had nothing to do with planning of the project. When we were formed it was already more than 30 percent complete design drawings so we were not involved in planning. And it was not public. We were handpicked. We were invited by Kathy Salgado, Director of Parks and Rec, to join this group. It was not public. We met in the

[00:31:00] city manager's office. It was not advertised. It was not official. It was not a format. There were no, you know, we didn't have a chair. We didn't take minutes, have an agenda. It was very informal. staff limited our discussion very narrowly to things that were tweaks. You probably have heard this already. You know, we're too far along in this project. We can't do major realignments. We can do tweaks. So we were allowed to do tweaks. I think you will hear that kind of thing tonight. So we were not involved in the planning of the project. And we did actually do a couple good things, I

[00:31:37] think to make a bad project better, but it's still a bad project. So I will say again, it was not public involvement. There was no public engagement. It was not public outreach. None of that happened. People didn't know this project existed when this document was created. So secondly, in the presentation tonight, you're going to be given three lousy options. And I say they're lousy because nothing is very well thought out. You either cancel with really not having the information about what that means or you agree to a partial build which also don't really know what that means it hasn't

[00:32:15] really been fully explored or you go ahead with the whole thing which well we all know what that is a bad idea so ask questions it's demand answers you have some colleagues who want to explore more creative options for this for connecting these two locations in our city so demand answers

[00:32:38] please. Thanks. All right, our next speaker is Don Pitchford. Good evening, Mayor and City Council.

[00:32:58] My name is Don Pitchford. I live at 4123 Virginia Street. I'm a homeowner and concerned citizen. I'm speaking tonight to share my thoughts on the proposed property tax increase. Over the past two years, my property tax has increased by 32%. Many of my neighbors are over 40%. These are significant increases that place immense financial pressure on families, seniors, retirees. The very people who built this city and have invested their lives here. Historically, Fairfax City has been one of

[00:33:35] the lowest tax rates in Northern Virginia, reflecting the council, diligence, and responsible financial management. This diligence traditionally made our city attractive and affordable. However, now is not the time to emulate our neighboring jurisdictions whose property taxes have steadily increased and whose residents are now experiencing greater financial burdens. Today, Loudoun County has one of the lowest tax rates of 86.5 cents per \$100 of such value because they have a strong

[00:34:13] commercial sector. Similar with Prince William County is at 99.2 percent or 99.2 cents per \$100 and Arlington is a dollar and 3.3 cents per hundred. Through Fairfax City proposed rates remains competitive regionally. We must not use our neighboring rising tax rates as justification for raising our own. Instead, Fairfax City should continue leading by example, prioritizing careful fiscal management and prudent spending. They are a clear alternative to continually increasing

[00:34:51] resident tax rates, strengthening our central business district with strategic commercial development that can significantly ease the tax burden on us. I encourage this council in its early stage of budget deliberation to be brave enough to scrutinize spending thoroughly, question special program rigorously and limit reliance on expensive external consultants our community future depends on responsible fiscal stewardship not simple following the example our neighboring jurisdiction whose fiscal

[00:35:31] strategies are differ and significantly from Fairfax City successful approach thank you our next speakers Ellen Pence good evening my name is Ellen Pence I I own a condo in Mosby Woods Condos, and my home at 3211 Adams Court is in Cambridge Station.

[00:36:03] As always, I have to apologize to you for my repetition of my message about the George Snyder Trail. I don't enjoy it either. We are fighting to save the same trees that we fought to save in 2007.

[00:36:25] Back then, Parks and Recreation was in charge of Stafford Park, not transportation. PRAB wanted to extend the ball fields all the way over to the creek bank. And some of you who walked the trail the other day know how that area looks now, thereby taking out all the urban forests.

[00:36:48] I mean, those ball fields would have gone right over to the creek, and all the trees would have been gone. Instead, we had a compromise, and the city council decided to reduce the number of ball fields and build us a lovely walking path through the forest.

[00:37:09] Somehow, the transportation department took over and have been pushing for this wide paved roadway in an area where there is no room for it. The George Snyder Trail currently runs along Cardinal Road, which has no through traffic on it.

[00:37:31] We welcome bicycles along it. You can do whatever you want to to it or just leave it as it is with little signs for bicycles. You can paint the bicycle paths on the road itself or if you want to take out the sidewalks on either side or whatever you want to do.

[00:37:53] I don't think the Transportation Department should have control over Stafford Park. I think you should give it back to Parks and Recreation. A park should not be controlled by transportation. Okay, our

next speaker is Shelley Vance.

[00:38:17] Hi, Shelley Vance, Cambridge Court in Cambridge Station. I'm speaking this evening regarding the failure of the previous city councils to consider the public objection to the George Snyder Trail that has been ongoing since at least March 2020, some five years ago.

[00:38:41] Today, I sent the six council members the same handout that I compiled and sent to the 2024 city council and current mayor and presented a year ago at the Tuesday, Jan 23, 2024 city council meeting.

[00:38:57] It documents the repeated pushback and objections city residents have had to this project. The repeated communication goes back more than five years. Over these past years, we kept hearing the design is 65% complete, The design is 90% complete, and now the design is 100% complete.

[00:39:20] I heard this last excuse from both the mayor and Ms. Wendy Sanford on February 28 when I walked with most of the council, some city staff, and the mayor along the proposed B1 and C1 sections of the proposed trail through the woods.

[00:39:38] Both the mayor and Ms. Sanford stated that the project was now 100%, suggesting that as a reason why the trail in its current proposed location cannot be changed. At various times over the years, I have pointed out the city council's lack of public outreach for this project.

[00:39:59] No door flyers to affected households, which the city has used before. No outreach to residents other than to overly busy HOA presidents. No sandwich boards on the sidewalks, like the city did for the new corners at the intersection of Cardinal Road and Fairwoods Parkway, or on Stafford Drive for tax due dates.

[00:40:22] Pushback began at least five years ago and likely earlier than that, but the city just kept bulldozing forward without a serious consideration for the concerns of city residents. The blame for this lack of consideration belongs at the feet of the previous councils, but this council needs to step up and listen to the majority of city citizens who want an alternative that preserves the woods.

[00:40:48] Thank you. Our next speaker is Haban Abdi. Good evening, everyone. I'm a city of Fairfax residence.

[00:41:07] You've helped me, by the way. I remember you well. I've lived here for the last 14 years. as a single woman, I feel safe, and I love my home, and I love my life here. But I'm also a numbers person. It's what I do for a living. This tax assessment, and I have my neighbors here with me, they chose not to speak, so I said I would speak up. The first gentleman indicated

[00:41:39] the tax rate going up and the assessment going up. The sentiment is pretty real, given the fact that We're all dealing with the price of eggs. Sorry for abusing that one. Inflation. Our adjusted incomes are not going up to support this, by the way.

[00:42:01] We live on a private road, aside from recycling and trash pickup. We really are independent and just maintain our own road. We don't enjoy snow removal. We do not enjoy any other parts of the city that we love.

[00:42:18] Our lots are adjacent to a VDOT-owned strip of land. Imagine the challenge we go through, which you've helped me, by the way, thank you, that when a tree falls, nobody knows.

[00:42:33] If we have an ambulance, it can't come through. We had a sick elderly neighbor. Every time we call VDOT, call the city. We call the city, call VDOT. So that ping pong ball has basically silenced us, and we cut our own trees when they fall, and VDOT's trees when they fall.

[00:42:55] So I feel we're actually taking things off your plate. Please reconsider this. \$1,300 is untenable. That's net dollars. It's difficult to support it. And for me, I'm feeling as though I'm getting pushed out.

[00:43:15] Thank you. Our next speaker is Lynn McPherson. Good evening, everybody.

[00:43:37] I'm Lynn McPherson. I live at 3259 Cambridge Court. My home is right across the street. from Stafford Drive East, or if you're familiar with this map, C1.

[00:44:00] I look out on C1. Lived here since 2002. I remember the day I drove into the neighborhood. It was fall. The trees were bursting with colors, and I thought, I'm home.

[00:44:19] I hadn't even looked at the house, but I was home. Right now, contractors hired by the city are destroying over 500 trees across the street from our homes as a result of the stream restoration project.

[00:44:42] This is the same area that's planned for the George Schneider Trail, which will result in the destruction of 500 additional trees. I really can't describe the level of despair that I feel when I drive into my neighborhood and see the destruction that's already occurred.

[00:45:10] And I can't fathom what it's going to feel like when you take another 500 trees from us. It's unbelievable to me. And this group, this group of concerned citizens has been writing letters, talking to the press, coming to city council meetings, walking the trails with the city council, and I really don't feel like our words have made any difference to anybody because we keep hearing the same thing over and over.

[00:45:47] we're too far down the path we're too you know this project has gone too far but we've been talking about it for five years that's the thing so instead of talking more i brought something to

[00:46:04] show you so to more instruction of our environment thank you thank you our last speaker for this

[00:47:04] agenda item is katie johnson katie johnson spring lake terrace i'd like to start out by pointing out that the safe soil is organization that we just heard about and how important soil is has testified on behalf of the soil that would be disturbed and destroyed by the proposed George Schneider Trail and asked the city not to. So they sent letters and spoke to the previous council.

[00:47:39] We have spoken at length about our forest. At this time, I'd like to share a few important facts about our wetlands, especially now as our wetlands are starting to wake up with the sounds of spring peepers, which if you go and listen now, you will hear them singing.

[00:47:57] The wetlands are considered the kidneys of the earth. Wetlands are often referred to as the kidneys of the earth because of their ability to filter and purify water. The vegetation in wetlands helps trap and remove pollutants, making them crucial for maintaining water quality.

[00:48:14] They are critical carbon sinks. They are critical for water storage. During periods of heavy rainfall, wetlands act as natural sponges absorbing excess water and preventing flooding in downstream areas, and we all know how important that is.

[00:48:30] We all pay for it in our stormwater management fee, which is also going up 6%. I think it's a third time in its existence that it has gone up, and it shows that everything we do is going to affect and continue to affect that. And I'm not against it.

[00:48:46] It's provided an opportunity for us to hire urban foresters, but it's recognized that it is not ever going to go down, and with the removal of the wetlands and the forest, it's going to get worse. There are also large-scale losses of our wetlands. According to WWT, 87% of our world wetlands have been lost during the last 300 years, 87%.

[00:49:09] We cannot continue to view our remaining wild areas solely for our recreation. This George Snyder Trail, if you look at it, it is a recreational trail. All the trails in Fairfax County, 80% are recreational users.

[00:49:27] They don't take cars off the road. They're not for commuters. Our commuters from the bike Fairfax workshop that I sat on said they wouldn't use it. We must preserve and protect these special places and ensure that the ecosystem services that they provide now little to no cost to the city continue we must preserve and protect these special places thank you you can move to the consent agenda is there a motion to approve the consent agenda council member hardy chandler i move adoption of a consent agenda for agenda item

[00:50:06] number 6a consideration of the february 18th 2025 special meeting minutes agenda item number 6b consideration of the february 25th 2025 regular meeting minutes i move to approve the consent agenda items number a through b and the motion accompanying the consent agenda item as printed a motion been made by council member stacy hardy chandler is there a second a motion has been made and seconded by council member peterson are there any items council would like pulled for additional

[00:50:38] discussion seeing none a roll call vote council member mcquillan aye council member bates aye councilmember Peterson councilmember Hardy Chandler aye councilmember Hall aye councilmember Amos aye motion passed unanimously we will go to the public hearing we only have one public hearing which is on the proposed FY 26 budget this is the first public hearing of the proposed FY 26 budget the city manager had presented on February 25th 2025 I will open the public hearing Ms. Shinneberry has the public hearing been advertised yes it has I had nobody sign up to speak

[00:51:18] prior to the meeting. Is there anybody who would like to speak? You can come forward, sir. If there's anybody else that would like to speak on the budget, you can line up on the side by the window. My name is Giuseppe Ricciardi. I own the building at 10426 Main Street. It was a decrepit building that we put a lot of money into it to make it what it is today. The question is, you want a vibrant, resilient business to bring income to the city. I assume that's your goal. The problem

[00:51:56] is how you do it. It's not really correct. I've been getting a 10 business point increase on the rate and 20% increase on the valuation. But this year, they decided to go 150%, which is something that is insane. How is it possible that I could bring that bill to the tenants? I mean, the idea is for them to survive. The idea is for them to grow. The idea is for them to make money so they can pay you money, you know. And these are all restaurants, which means another, you know,

[00:52:31] percentage as far as meal tax is concerned. I don't understand how this is possible. So I think that this is something that you really have to consider and look into it because you're going to kill the

business and you're going to kill yourself because there's no revenue coming in. You know, if these guys don't make it, I don't make it, you guys don't make it, you know. So I don't know how you feel about it, but I will certainly hope you consider and really think hard on this. Thank you.

[00:53:02] Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak towards the budget? This public hearing will stay open until April 8th of 2025. So there will be other opportunities for people to come forward and speak as we continue to discuss the budget.

[00:53:23] We will move to the second general public comment. I had four people sign up prior to the start of the meeting. And after I have the four speakers come, if there's anybody else that would like to speak, they could speak under this item. So I'll call the first speaker, which is Avril Garland.

[00:53:42] My name is Abel Garland. I live in the town of Vienna, and I very much appreciate you letting me speak today. This is about the tree loss in the George Snyder Trail. In the town of Vienna, the W-O-N-D trail goes through it, and a huge, a large swathe of trees were cut, and we were all sickened and horrified by it, but it was Dominion.

[00:54:09] And we contacted our mayor. Our mayor said she can't do anything about it. Dominion said, well, this is our property, and we can cut whatever we like, and there's absolutely nothing we can do about it. However, in this city, when I went through the forest there two weeks ago to see where the trail would go, it was just sickening to me, the loss of these beautiful trees.

[00:54:37] And to think that the town of Vienna, Dominion did it to us, that the city of Fairfax would actually destroy part of their own forest, to me, is incomprehensible. It's like punching yourself in the face. And for a cyclist, I am a cyclist, and I have gone from Arlington Route 50 to 123 along Draper Drive, along Cardinal Road, and then there's a little iffy bit where you can get off the bike and walk.

[00:55:07] There's a small little bit through a housing estate. I mean, as a cyclist, that's how I get around. I don't own a car, and I still don't see the necessity of this trail. And the other advantage to it is that it's soft.

[00:55:23] I mean, a lot of people can't walk on hard trails. My sister comes to our house. We have a little walking trail in Vienna, and that's the only place she can go. There are a lot of people. They have plantar fasciitis, and they cannot walk on hard surfaces. I'm one of these people.

[00:55:39] I can only walk on soft surfaces. The other thing about the... I have a grandson, and I've taken him on... He's just learning to walk. And he fell, the trails get cracked. There's a lot of maintenance to do with a paved trail.

[00:55:56] And his face was bloodied. It happened three times, his knee was in a mess. So I love to be able to take him to a soft trail. There's a lot of value. And I went to Hidden Oaks in Annandale. And they have a beautiful amenity with little signs up about Barry the Box Turtle.

[00:56:15] And there's little signs of fun facts. And it was a very enjoyable little amenity, and I thought maybe it's something that you could do if you wanted to develop the George Snyder Trail or any of those other trails. You have already a lovely amenity. So, well, thank you.

[00:56:34] Our next speaker is Dorothy Storm. Good evening. My name is Dorothy Storm, and I live on Cardinal Road, the west end of Cardinal Road in Mosby Woods.

[00:56:56] And I cannot tell you the level of disgust that I feel when I drive down Fairwoods Parkway and I see what has been done to the eastern side of Fairwoods Parkway with the destruction of these trees and

the habitat.

[00:57:14] I find it hard to believe that this is called stream remediation. And I would urge any of you, if you have not been down there, to go down there and see what has been done to this habitat. And I would urge any citizen in this city to drive down Fairwoods Parkway and get a preview of what will be done to the west side when that George Snyder Trail goes through if you approve it.

[00:57:42] I strongly urge you to vote no on this project, and I strongly urge citizens of Fairfax City who have not paid attention to this issue to pay attention. I don't know how sterile the city council wants to make this city look, but if this project goes through, it will be to the detriment of something that these areas will never recover, not in my lifetime, not in my grandchildren's lifetime.

[00:58:15] I strongly urge you to cancel this project. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Douglas Stewart. Good evening.

[00:58:33] Mayor, members of the council, Douglas Stewart, 10822 Maple Street. I'm speaking tonight for Fairfax City citizens for smarter growth we are a group of city residents that promotes mixed mixed use walkable communities with a diverse range of housing options we have fully supported the George Snyder Trail since its inception publicly in 2020 because of the connectivity and because it provides regional access for bicyclists coming from the now 66 trail connecting to the Wilcox and Cross County Trail it also provides connectivity

[00:59:07] within Fairfax City to emerging areas Willowood and the shopping center at Point 50 as well as the shopping center further west on 50. and it provides this connectivity is lacking on the eastern side of the city the transportation plan really laid that bare there's only one way way to get out of Mosby Woods. And when we talk about traffic, that's a big reason why we have traffic is there's no redundancy, there's no grid. And when you have just one source of traffic

[00:59:44] going in and out, you're going to have more traffic. So we recognize that there's been a lot input and a lot of the concerns we heard tonight and have heard for many nights about especially the eastern portion of the trail and we appreciate that you've been evaluating it and you're looking you're going to be looking at options later tonight in your work session we do we do support moving

[01:00:18] forward with the western end of the trail that has fewer impacts. And it's also going to connect to Willowood, which had a redevelopment that's designed to connect to the George Snyder Trail. And we have a member who lives at Cambridge Station who has two kids who wants to be able to ride to the Amazon Fresh Shopping Center with her kids. She can't do it. This trail will make that possible. So we hope you'll evaluate these options and we hope you will move forward with

[01:00:53] option three. Thank you. Our next speaker is Sandy Shin. Hello my name is Sandy Shin. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'm actually a resident like Averill of Vienna, Virginia but I feel like when it comes to trees does it really matter where you live? We all breathe the same air. We all might enjoy parks in any number of places, Fairfax County, Shenandoah. The loss of the kinds of trees,

[01:01:31] 600, that we're talking about with the George Snyder Trail, it matters to everyone. And I did attend the walk with the town council a couple weeks ago, and I'm just shocked. I had previously done some plant rescues at the Stafford Drive Park due to the stream restoration, and I saw all the devastation from the stream restoration and then on top of that you're going to add an extremely wide trail on a slope going down to a small stream that it's just a you know footpath

[01:02:08] is fine in that case but a paved five percent grade trail it just seems crazy to me very expensive very disruptive you're going to destroy wildflowers besides the trees and I realized you know some a bunch of planning and money went into this but at some point you have to realize maybe this wasn't a good decision maybe there wasn't as others have said enough public input enough opportunity for the public to weigh in on this and I feel like it's as if it was planned for the cyclists to

[01:02:45] have a bunch of trees as they cycle through the woods. But what about all the trees that are destroyed to create this paved path at 5% grade? And I saw Cardinal Road. This is the east side, I guess. Perfectly suitable to have a bike lane or share the road signs for bikes. I don't see anything wrong with that. So I just hope that you'll reconsider um as some others have said it doesn't make sense to throw good money after bad thank you

[01:03:22] okay don't have anybody else who signed up prior is there anybody else in the room that would like to talk under the general public comment come over sir good evening mayor members of the board some of the returning members uh will maybe remember me from previous comments you were sick of me then and uh you're going to be sick of me again tonight so i thought i'd take the opportunity to the new members of the board of the council, excuse me, to have a chance to also get sick and tired of

[01:04:00] hearing me tonight too. On a little more serious note, I want to thank the members of the council and you, the mayor, who joined us on February 28th for what I call the March on the Long Trail along the George Snyder Trail. And I think all of you who walked that, and I know I'm speaking for my neighbors, I'm sorry, 3228 Cambridge Court, were absolutely dumbfounded, stunned, shocked at the destruction that is going along with the stream restoration project. I have seen pictures

[01:04:36] of landscape after a B-52 strike in Vietnam. This stream restoration project is a close second. Unbelievable. The George Snyder Trail is going to take, what, another 500 trees? We have, over the years, my neighbors have put forward proposals, compromised proposals, environmentally

[01:05:04] compromised, fiscally prudent alternatives to the George Snyder Trail. We've been rebuffed. We've even been called nimbyism. Well, yeah, I'm a nimby because it is in my backyard. We have just asked for, to use a fiscal responsibility, the environment. All we are asking, quite candidly,

[01:05:40] give common sense a chance. And if you're not going to kill this project, at least moderate it enough that it will not be a financial burden and will not destroy the environment. Thank you very much. Sir, can I get your name and street address? I'm sorry, Jack Kull, K-U-L-L, 3228 Cambridge.

[01:06:02] Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room? You can come forward. If you want to start a line, if anybody else wants to speak, if you want to just start a line over here by the window. My name is Linda Hoyason, and I live on Virginia Street.

[01:06:25] And I'm here because when I got my real estate assessment last week, I was shocked, shocked. I've been a resident here since 1998. I love living in Fairfax City, but my real estate assessment has increased 40% in two years, and I want to know why. I would really like to be able to stay here. People should be encouraged to age in place in Fairfax City. It's a fabulous place. Cinema, arts, traders. I haven't pulled any permits on my home. I want to be able to stay, and I don't think I'm being encouraged to do that.

[01:07:04] So I thank you for this opportunity, and I really hope that you can help us with this. Next speaker can come forward. Just make sure you state your name and address. Hello. My name is Elise

Axelrad. We are new residents of Cambridge Station, 3233 Dunster Court. This is regarding the George Snyder Trail. Just want to point out that part of what induced us to buy this last summer in Cambridge Station was the beautiful wooded

[01:07:42] lining of Cardinal Road. So when you're looking at just all the issues of environmentalism and all the issues coming up. Also, it's an attractive place to live when there's trees. And I think someone else spoke to seeing it all, what the fall looked like.

[01:08:00] It's just a beautiful lined road. That lining is gone because of the stream restoration. I'm not fully clear on how much of that will be restored of the trees after the stream restoration project, but it's pretty clear to me that the George Snyder Trail as planned is not going to restore the 600 trees.

[01:08:19] So it's just another thing to consider as you make your decisions. Next speaker can come forward. Good evening. My name is Faiza Alam, and I'm a resident of 10112 Radcliffe Manor Drive, Fairfax.

[01:08:40] I stand here in front of you as a science teacher, as a citizen, and one of my students actually spoke. I didn't realize that. And that what we educate in the school to our students, and I teach environmental science about protecting our environment and leaving this place in a better place for our grandchildren, as we have found, it doesn't look like to me that we are planning that.

[01:09:03] The other concern I have is that certain, it has come to my attention today itself, and I'm not going to call names here, that certain board commission members have been soliciting emails and sending it to the council in support of the trail.

[01:09:19] And if that is right, what I have heard, it really troubles me and hurts me today that other committee and commissions were not asked. And I ask all council members here, looking in your eyes right now, that you should ask all committee and boards to put their input on any project, not just few.

[01:09:40] If you are receiving from few, then it is your duty to ask each committee and board to provide their input as well. so that's my big request for that and actually that will help you as well since we have such a divided forum here some people are for it some are against it we hear some against on a one day are very lopsided another day you might hear something else ask your boards also ask your committees also to see what they feel and their input is right that's a an equity place as well because the committee and boards that who were not had the opportunity to speak,

[01:10:19] I feel they are being left out. They are being marginalized. So again, that's my big request. And to jump topics on the tax, it's a big burden indeed as a citizen to get that increased. And I'm going to look at the manager at this time.

[01:10:35] 20% plus, I don't think salaries are going up that much, maybe much less. It's really today as I was walking during my garden, my neighbor came, a retired person, tears in her eyes. And saying how this much thousand of money how will I pay it's it's hard We we need to look into it if we have to curse at certain places in the city in the schools We need to look at that we need to make the best of the funding we have and

[01:11:03] Make it easy for all of us. Thank you for your time next speaker can come forward. Hello. My name is Misha Lincoln This is my first time speaking, so please bear with me I've been living here since I was around five years old and I may not be a resident of Fairfax City but I do live in Fairfax County. I don't believe we need to see the forest as extrinsic. They have value because they're important parts of the

ecosystem, not so that bikers can have a pretty view. I'm also another voice of the youth, and I ask you to please stop these plans, or at least

[01:11:40] all to them, where it can benefit everybody. The people have spoken. Please listen to us. Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak? All right then. I will now recess the regular meeting to go into the work session. We will take a five-minute recess to go into the work session room if you do if you don't find seating in the work session room you are welcome to stay here in the council chambers and you can watch the

[01:12:13] discussions on the monitors in this room welcome to our work session Ms.

[01:19:19] Shinneberry our first items discussion update on the George Schneider trail project Winnie Samford transportation director will provide the staff presentation thank you good evening mayor and members of the City Council we are I have a pretty brief presentation and then I understand that there are a number of comments and so we have our whole team here tonight to answer questions I'm going to just briefly introduce who's up here with me next to my next to me is Steve Zender he's our engineer on the project with Stantec David Summers our Public Works director Anna Safford our urban forester Stacey

[01:19:54] Summerfield our parks director and Chloe Ritter our multimodal planner we also have Sonny Sarna here our capital projects manager available to answer questions as well again I have just a brief presentation there have been numerous numerous meetings about this project and so I'm really just condensing the history here and really moving to focus on how do we move forward at this point just by way briefly of the project status we are at the end in terms of plan completion we have acquired right-of-way that are needed for the

[01:20:31] project we have received the approvals from the Army Corps of Engineers from FEMA and VDOT we have received federal authorization to advertise the project which is valid for 120 days so our advertisement right now the authorization that we have received is valid through May thus far we have spent 3.7 million dollars on design environmental review and on purchasing right-of-way this is an extremely condensed timeline of the project again there are other presentations that I have done before and I believe mr.

[01:21:06] Foster sent you that timeline of all of the City Council work sessions and meetings that have happened to date on this project. And many of those presentations get into much more depth about the history of the project. In terms of the project location, it is shown in the dark line on the map. It is approximately 1.78 miles, extending from the west at Cambridge Road to the east, just shy of Draper Drive.

[01:21:36] There are boardwalk locations and four bridges included in the project. There were originally five. Boardwalk one and bridge A that are shown in the circle to the left have been removed from the project, which leaves now four bridges. And then you can see in blue the boardwalk sections leading up to those bridges. The next few slides are some renderings that Stantec prepared to show what those bridge locations would look like. And again, these are renderings that have been developed to show just what the bridge crossings and some of the boardwalk leading up to them

[01:22:10] would look like. At this point, I'm going to pass the presentation to Anna Savard, who's going to discuss more about the project impacts. Good evening, Mayor and Council. So, of course, there's concerns and interest around trees, and so I will take a moment to go into more detail here.

[01:22:37] Starting off with project impacts, we wanted to provide more of a high-level context of the area which the project is being proposed in. In the outlined black line on the screen are the parcels that will be impacted by the project. The green area is the tree canopy area from our land cover data.

[01:22:57] The brown line that goes from Trainbridge Road through down into Draper Drive Park to Fairfax Boulevard is the area of disturbance. Connecting those areas are thin gray lines, which are the existing segments of the trail that already exist.

[01:23:15] And then the dashed line is the resource protection area. In the table there, we have the area in acres of the project parcels. The total canopy area within these parcels, so the green area on this image here, is 72 acres.

[01:23:32] The RPA within these parcels is 47.45 acres, and the area of disturbance is 6.1 acres. Not shown is the area of the RPA, which is 3.81 acres. And we'll get into more details of some other tree statistics in a moment.

[01:23:53] I also want to provide a visual context. Again, looking at the forested area, it's hard for me not to look at the full forest. And so the impact for the Stafford Stream Restoration is 7.45 acres for context as well.

[01:24:08] So the two together is 13.63 acres. Visually, that would equate to the same size as Stafford Park West if it was to be fully canopied. So that middle parcel there is about 14 acres for a visual. But of course, the trail is linear from Chambridge Road down to Fairfax Boulevard.

[01:24:32] Then to provide a bit of an overview as to how I would review a project like this, I wanted to provide this overview because it is a bit different from typical land development projects or streetscape improvements that is more focused on individual trees.

[01:24:48] This area, again, is forested, and so the approach is looking at the full forest. Much of the review is driven through the Chesapeake Bay Act, which is adopted within our zoning ordinance as well as our comprehensive plan. Much of the forest of concern is within the resource protection area, which in the Chesapeake Bay Act is defined as the 100 feet on either side of the stream.

[01:25:13] It's to be vegetated and it's to minimize disturbance. The Chesapeake Bay Act does allow exemptions as to what can be used and disturbed within a resource protection area. Passive recreation is one of those as long as it is reviewed to meet the intent of the Chesapeake Bay Act.

[01:25:33] Through that review process, multiple staff within the city do review those components through the plan review process. Much of my review focuses on guidelines within the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Riparian Buffer Manual.

[01:25:50] The major components here on this slide are the forest components, the other site factors, and then, of course, the construction details and the project design. When looking at a forest, it's not, again, not just trees. We're looking at all the different layers, and so you have overstory, understory, shrubs, herbaceous, soil, all of those considerations.

[01:26:12] Together, they have different forest types. In a natural forest, unlike an urban setting, it will change over time. And so depending on the species composition, they have different characteristics and traits. Some forest types are more or less tolerant of disturbance. Some more or less are, you'll find more or less in urban settings.

[01:26:32] And so some are more rare than others, and some tolerate more impact than others. And so that's highly considered during the review process. Also what's looked at is, of course, forest as well as tree condition and their ability to both withstand and recover from impact within the resource protection area.

[01:26:54] Site considerations, they're, again, interacting with the forest, largely looking at terrain. Of course, the steeper the terrain, typically more impact is made to trees through cut and fill. Looking at existing disturbances, invasive plants and pests, basically looking at what other stressors are impacting this forest and impacting its ability, again, to recover from any disturbance that occurs to it.

[01:27:21] And then the construction detail and design, again, the grading, is largely influenced by the terrain, as well as the design is influencing the width of both the final path as well as the construction paths that are required to get in.

[01:27:38] In this chart here, we do have some of the statistics from the submitted plan for the fully proposed trail. It's, again, 6.18 acres. 3.81 acres are in the RPA.

[01:27:56] It's important to know how a tree is defined when looking at a table summarizing tree removals because for our zoning ordinance, it's five inches or greater. And so that's influencing the number of trees being shown on this table here.

[01:28:13] About 75% of them are either excellent, good, or fair condition. And as you see, 568 trees are proposed in the full project area for removal. Tree mitigation, similarly to the removal and preservation review, is driven largely through the RPA and trying to restore it back to its intended function from the Chesapeake Bay Act.

[01:28:40] So we're replanting overstory, understory trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. It's calculated, the mitigation that is, is calculated on a per acre basis. And it's being planted back into the RPA itself. The second goal for the mitigation is any tree outside of the RPA that's being removed.

[01:29:01] The focus is, of course, additional tree plantings in those areas, but then also invasive species management on 100 feet on either edge of the proposed trail. It will start at construction and go through typically the landscape warranty period which is about one year the goal is to reduce and control the invasives but not necessarily to eradicate them so now moving on and again I realize that we have condensed this presentation but I wanted to focus on what are our options for moving forward given where we are at this at this point the project

[01:29:40] as as we know has been going on at this point since about 2014 this was originally shown in the parks master plan in 2012 so now we have moved through more than 10 years of process on this project and we are left here with some options and we have fewer options than we would have had a number of years ago before we got to this point of having 100 plans before we had acquired right-of-way but now here we are we have acquired right-of-way we have 100 plans and

[01:30:15] we have received authorization to advertise. So because of that, we are limited in terms of what our feasible options are moving forward. So what is shown on the next few slides are three options. One, to continue with the project as proposed, and I will go through each one of these in more detail in a few minutes. One, to continue with the project as proposed. Two, to cancel the project. Three, construct the west half. As designed, leave the east half in its natural state.

[01:30:48] First, with option one, which is to continue with the project as proposed. This project, as I've mentioned, has been authorized to go to advertisement. That authorization is valid through May 28th.

[01:31:04] There is no council action required for it to proceed as is. It would be action to award the construction contract. That would be the action. Right now, the project estimate is \$20 million, and we do have \$20 million in available funding.

[01:31:19] We are right there at that point. So again, that is option one to continue as proposed. Option two, cancel the project. This would require formal action by the city council to cancel the project.

[01:31:39] The city would be required to repay some or all of the money spent to date. And this money would be paid out of the general fund. Unused funding, so the remaining 16 or so million dollars cannot be reprogrammed to a different city project.

[01:32:01] that money would be returned to the pot of concessionaire funding and would be available to other jurisdictions that need the funding for their concessionaire projects, or NVTa could open it up again and have a different call for projects, a new call for projects. This may impact the city's ability or just our reputation to receive future funding awards. The city has now received from the NVTa three positive recommendations to the CTB for this funding. So the NVTa, let me back up,

[01:32:37] the CTB is the entity that allocated this funding. The NVTa made a recommendation to the CTB about how to disperse these funds. These were one-time funds that were given to the Commonwealth by Express Mobility Partners, which was the vendor that won the bid for I-66 outside the as part of their bid they also gave the Commonwealth 500 million dollars of a concessionaire payment it's a one-time payment and this was given to the CTB the CTB delegated to the NVTa the task of making a recommendation to them about

[01:33:13] how to allocate those funds the NVTa has now made three positive recommendations for the city for this project for the initial award and then subsequent additional funding it also may impact the city's ability to proceed with the George Snyder Trail Extension, which is a separate project that extends from approximately Circle Glass down to Draper Drive across and then in front of the Harley-Davidson dealer to connect the eastern end of this project to the Wilcoxon Trail. VDOT has said if the city can demonstrate that that project has independent utility, then the funding may

[01:33:53] not be in jeopardy, but that would still be up for discussion with them. Again, I just want to emphasize that we have been working on this. There have been numerous prior City Council actions forming the city's desire to continue with this project and so in terms of how that looks when we go to receive future funding it may impact our ability to do that the expectation given the competitive nature of funding is that when a jurisdiction applies for funding and receives it the expectation is that we will spend it option three construct the West half

[01:34:32] only this is an option actually that VDOT suggested to us when when we brought this to them over a year ago about the comments that we were receiving and how could we deliver a project not necessarily have to pay back the funds that have been spent and meet the original intent of our application so to construct the west half this would be constructing the portion of the trail

[01:35:05] from Cambridge Road on the west side to Fairwoods Parkway in the east and then And this would leave segments B, C, and D on the east in their natural state.

[01:35:20] This would still connect to the new traffic signal that VDOT installed for the city at Chambridge Road. This signal was put in as part of the I-66 project, but at the city's request, given that the trail was going to come out on the east side of the Chambridge Road access road, and the new spur from the I-66 multi-use trail was on the west side of Chambridge Road.

[01:35:45] And so just to back up, as part of the I-66 project, VDOT constructed a trail along parallel to I-66. When you're out there, you can see it out there now. And then they built spurs in various locations. And so one of the spurs is down Chambridge Road into the city of Fairfax.

[01:36:02] And it ends right now on the west side of Chambridge Road right at that new signal. And so part of the reason that new signal was put in was to facilitate crossing from our proposed trail over to connect to that trail. So doing this west half connects to that signal.

[01:36:20] And again, it still allows the city to deliver a project. Some of the forest considerations, and I will ask Ms. Stafford to present the forest considerations of this option. So again, for option three, again, looking at the different components that I review, the forest factors, project and site considerations, and the site condition, the forested area on the eastern half is a much more mature oak hickory forest.

[01:36:52] It's less tolerant of construction, as well as significantly more rare in the urban setting. Sorry, the eastern half is the mature oak hickory forest. And it's, again, much more rare, much less tolerant of impact.

[01:37:10] We only have oak hickory forest both in this area, as well as parts of Daniel's Run. The other side on the western half is a bit more of an intermediate-aged maple, locust, poplar forest. It recovers much more quickly, it grows more quickly, and is much more common in an urban setting.

[01:37:31] Project site factors, the eastern half has much more significant slope, requiring larger areas of grading. The western half has much more opportunities for tree protection measures and significantly less grading that has to occur.

[01:37:48] And so the number of tree removals because of that is significantly less. And then also looking at other site conditions, it's again, looking at the full forest, the western, sorry, the eastern half has significantly more existing disturbance. It has existing trails going through it.

[01:38:04] As we are familiar, the stream restoration is going on. It has cleared a fair amount of trees and it has utility easements. And so the existing disturbance and the level of impact that has already occurred is significantly higher in that eastern half.

[01:38:20] So overall, just building the western half would preserve more than half the trees, as well as would reduce the number of good and excellent conditioned trees because of that oak hickory forest to the east. Yeah, that's it.

[01:38:37] - In terms of schedule and cost impacts of this option, VDOT has let us know that it would take approximately one year for us to reach advertisement authorization. So we have advertisement authorization now on the full trail. If we were to truncate the trail, even though it is still the same design for just that west half, because it is a different plan, they would require new plan review.

[01:39:07] It would not require revised floodplain analysis and our Army Corps permit would still be valid because we would be still within the existing footprint and it would be less of an impact. So as long as we're less of an impact, that permit would remain.

[01:39:22] would have a reduced overall project cost approximately 12 million versus 20 million and as with the option to cancel the project any unused concessionaire funding would return to vdot and it would not be available to the city if at a later date the city decided to construct the eastern section vdot has told us that we would likely not need to repay the 3.7 spent to date the exception is that we would definitely need to repay for any unused right of

[01:39:57] way if not used within 20 years so the right of way payment is required to be paid back but again has a longer clock meaning if the city at some point decides to utilize that right of way for that portion of the project we have 20 years to do that or need to repay that amount in order to pursue this option the city council would also need to take formal action to reduce the length of the project that concludes my presentation i know there are a number of questions and again the team is here to answer them so before we start with questions on the dais i want to make my

[01:40:36] position on this very clear um i sit on the northern virginia transportation authority i am one of the commissioners who votes on funding for projects around the jurisdiction in northern virginia i made my position on this trail very clear there was a motion to cancel the trail on January 23rd of 2024 and it was a tie vote and I broke that tie vote to keep this trail from being canceled and there was an election in November of 2024 and the voters of this city had the opportunity to either elect a candidate who was running to kill this trail or to re-elect me

[01:41:14] knowing I supported this trail. So if this city truly does not want this trail they elected the wrong mayor. Of the three people who voted to cancel the trail one of them did not run for re-election and the other two incumbents were not re-elected. So I want to understand, since we've heard lots of public testimony about what this city does and does not want, we have elections.

[01:41:38] And we have elections so that people can make that decision through their votes. Now clearly people in the city think that they have voted for people who've made a commitment. And maybe that is true and maybe it is not true. I don't know. That's what we're going to talk about this evening. But when funding is given to a jurisdiction, it's because we made a commitment to build a project that benefits our city but also benefits this region.

[01:42:03] This trail connects a trail network in northern Virginia. It's why we were given the money. And it's not just that we have tied up \$17 million for a project that may or may not be built. It means that other jurisdictions didn't get funding for projects that they wanted to complete that benefited both their jurisdiction and this region.

[01:42:26] We made a commitment, and if we vote to cancel this trail, this city has reneged on a commitment it made to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and VDOT, and I just want to be very clear about that. It's a math game. All it takes is a vote of four, but I'm the mayor of this city, and I sit on the NVTa, and I know what it means to make a commitment and to tie up this amount of money saying that you are going to do something because it benefits this region and what this region is trying to do with a trail network which also supports environmental sustainability.

[01:43:01] This entire debate has been boiled down to save trees. Very simple. There's a very moral core to never cutting down a tree. But there is benefit. I haven't heard one person say anything about runners. Not one word about people who run on trail. It's a bicycle road.

[01:43:19] People use these trails for all kinds of reasons. And there are trail networks throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Four votes is what it takes to make a decision. And it's not even mine unless it's a tie. But I want to make it clear where I stand as mayor of the city and how serious I take the commitments our city makes.

[01:43:40] to the rest of this region when we take money so with that i will open up the floor for questions questions council member peterson thank you everybody for your presentations and i know this is just the tip of a bigger iceberg there's a lot more there staff question i wanted to go back

[01:44:09] to the suggestion that vdot made to work this out by snipping it in half essentially and focusing on the west end and to understand whether as a part of that suggestion they also were would have been or could have been open to variations on the design of that western half other than simply

[01:44:40] leaving it as is and snipping it in half. So I've had many conversations with VDOT about all of the questions that have come to me over the last few years about this including a conversation today at 4 p.m. with the assistant district administrator. The question is about the evaluation that has not been done on a different alignment. At this point, what we have studied and what we have done and what we have brought to 100% plans is the trail alignment that we have. The feasibility of an

[01:45:18] on-road project, is it on Fairfax Boulevard, is it on Cardinal Road, has not been done. And that is the type of work that we do on our own dime before we even apply for money. So when we decide we're going to put a project, let's say, on the two-year program, we then go on our own dime and do the feasibility. And we look at it and we get public support or we do public engagement and make sure there's public support before we come back to you and say, is this a project you want to proceed with? Should we go request funding? And so VDOT is not in a position to pivot and agree

[01:45:55] to the idea of a different alignment without knowing what that alignment is. And so what we're essentially asking them, and I asked them this question, is, is VDOT willing to wait for two years while we, on our own dime, do a feasibility study, and I believe this is what you were asking, to look at a different project, essentially, to look at, instead of a trail, an off-road trail, to look at an on-road path of some kind. And that's all that needs to, that's what needs to be decided. Is it a path? Is it a shared use path? Is it sharrows? What are

[01:46:32] we talking about and where are we talking about it exactly? And all of that work has not been done. And what VDOT reminded me today was that the concessionaire funding, one of the rules, so to speak, of this money was that they were expecting projects to be in place by the time the I-66 toll facility opened. Well, that date has clearly come and gone. Most of the concessionaire projects have been completed. We're in the remaining one third that have not been. And so

[01:47:07] what she told me is that we would be tying up the money for another two years essentially while we wait and see if we if we come up with another alternative and there's still no assurance that we come out at the end of two years with a project that can move forward and there's also 3.7 million dollars that has been spent on a design that doesn't move forward so what she said to me was that we're really that we that she said I want to be clear because she said I've been hearing that VDOT doesn't allow flexibility, this, that, and the other. And she said, I want to be

[01:47:42] clear. VDOT does allow flexibility, but we've gone beyond the point now where we have that flexibility given where we are with the plans. When did this conversation that was initiated by VDOT

begin? When did they initiate this? Which conversation? To propose an alternate solution focused on the West half. We have been talking to VDOT for at least a year and a half about this because we were with the council about a year ago when the city council also proposed some alternatives and looked at this.

[01:48:21] And so we've been having conversations with VDOT for quite some time. But back to my original question, when that conversation started, was there any consideration or openness to alternative designs of that Western segment? And were they open to it at that time? Again, they said they had the same comments, which was that if we were looking at a modified design, time to have done that would have been prior to right-of-way authorization prior to right-of-way purchase which was when i'd have to look at the dates that we purchased right-of-way i don't know

[01:48:58] if i have it in this presentation all of the dates right-of-way purchase was approximately two years ago i'd have to get that right-of-way acquisition began in july of 2022. i will have a number of questions i want to give others a chance but i want at some point an opportunity to understand a little bit more clearly setting aside the george snyder trail but looking at other transportation program funding options and plans for the city what

[01:49:34] is potentially available and in store for the road network in this area coming forward i mean we heard in a retreat that within five years we would expect that there would be opportunities for some enhancement of pedestrian and bike infrastructure in this area, but that was just a summary statement. So it would be nice to understand a little bit more clearly what's potentially in the wings, and that would include a network, you know, that runs all the way from

[01:50:08] the starting point up there at the Eaton Place intersection down to where the current trail connects and even on from there I mean there's and then Cardinal Road etc so what's the forecast on that oh I'll mention a couple of things and then I'm gonna have miss Ritter to jump in on this but you are correct there are there are there have been other concepts that have been proposed in the bike plan in the small area plan we're looking at the north back east west road that shows a shared use path along that road and so yes we are also looking at additional

[01:50:42] bike facilities. And they're not mutually exclusive. So, right. So, yes, there are other bike facilities that are proposed. And I'll ask Ms. Ritter to chime in on this. Yes. So, in terms of what's currently funded, there are a number of discrete projects in the North Vax area that we've applied for funding through SmartScale, through transportation alternatives. And that includes, like Ms. Sanford mentioned, the North Vax East West Road, which does connect from Chambridge Road to the University Drive extension and has shared use paths proposed along that that's partially funded the Cambridge

[01:51:18] and Eaton intersection project is funded so there are a couple of projects that have specifically been funded and then there are a lot of other concepts and recommendations that haven't been funded and haven't been studied yet to connect along Eaton Place or connect along Fairfax Boulevard there's recommendations to put shared use paths on Fairfax Boulevard for example but None of that's been studied at this point or funded at this point.

[01:51:41] We would have to go and seek outside funding for those. And one thing I would mention is there is going to be an update on the Norfolk Small Area Plan next week as part of the Implementation Working Group, and we'll kind of go through the status of all of these projects. So there is potentially more funding.

[01:51:58] There are potentially more options. There are some things currently underway, some things that are different stages of contemplation in this area, but it sounds like in the longer term, this is an area that's going to inevitably receive some focus in terms of transportation improvements that could improve pedestrian and bike.

[01:52:19] - I'm not sure if I'd go all the way to say inevitably. I think that there's certainly some more attention that we as staff would like to give it and that I think that the city would like to give it through the small area plan, but we would have to compete for funding for each project that we go through. So we haven't started competing for funding for a lot of these projects.

[01:52:35] I just wanna make that point clear. Council action is something that would be Required to do that and it would be helpful. I presume if the council did choose to act to do that So with with council action, we go through we just wanted to through two-year program That's where we would start with all of these projects And so council action would start with the two-year program and then for each project go through an endorsement of each individual project Thanks, I'll reserve my other questions for later Councilmember Hardy Chandler. Thank you. I appreciate the presentation

[01:53:12] um the mayor talked about some of the things that she didn't hear um listening very closely to the hearing testimony uh what was there and what was not there one of the things that comes to mind for me i guess i'll have a comment and then a question one of the things that comes to mind for me for paths it's not just bicycles but when i think of paths one of the things that was reiterated over and over again on the walk was ada access so i think of wheelchairs i think of strollers I think of things like that so I really just want to emphasize that

[01:53:47] there I appreciate the complexity of all of the factors and as we celebrated Women's History Month the history that is involved in all of this the other thing that stands out to me when we were walking the trail our urban forester I I asked specifically if the impression of the plan, and the response was it was very robust.

[01:54:16] And so I would like to hear more about the robustness of the plan because I think you talked about the criteria, the factors that are taken into consideration. But ultimately, I appreciate the recognition that trees are a part of a larger ecosystem, and quite frankly, humans are a part of that system.

[01:54:36] Could you speak more to the robustness of the plan from your perspective? Yeah, so we did make some alterations to include certain tree protection measures, including certain types of matting that had adjusted root issues, as well as in certain areas made some slight adjustments to reroute around some large specimen trees.

[01:55:01] A lot of effort was put into the mitigation plan, Because, of course, if you impact the resource protection area, you want to bring it back up to its function and an intended purpose. And so very robust. We've done multiple site walks identifying planting locations and different planting techniques to try to minimize invasives, including the criteria for preserving trees was kept in mind for invasives.

[01:55:29] The longer you can have tree canopy, that helps reduce invasives coming in with a closed canopy, reducing that sunlight. And so we, in some instances, decided to keep trees when typically they may have been recommended for removal.

[01:55:45] But the thought is to try to help with that invasive control with the natural canopy. And so, again, throughout the project area, we did implement pretty significant tree protection measures. And, of

course, I think Steve can speak to a lot of the other environmental factors that were considered in the design.

[01:56:09] Beyond tree protection? Yeah. Does that answer your question, or do you want me to continue with? You certainly can. I mean, I just think that, first of all, there's a focus on that for me, and the response carries weight for me being married to a forester and the recognition that conversations around that impact, that that's been thought through and that it isn't merely the simple removal.

[01:56:39] I think part of the discussion about even the health of the trees, which, you know, the percent that are invasive and those kinds of things, looking at it more holistically. And so I appreciate that comment, especially. And if there are other elements that you want to add to that, that round that out, certainly welcome those comments.

[01:56:57] Sure. I would just add, I think Anna covered it pretty well, um but that early on in the project we did uh do perform a tree survey so we have individual locations of trees we had an arborist go out and evaluate the condition the size the species of every tree which is why we are able to tally the number of tree removals for this project with with some level of confidence and then you know when we try to determine whether a tree will be impacted or not um you know we use specific criteria you know we plot the critical root zone

[01:57:34] of the tree and we see okay well you know we have uh the trail in this location in a certain amount of fill uh or cut and how much of the critical root zone of the tree does that impact um and i think the criteria we set was 50 percent uh which is which is a little more generous than i mean typically we we would go with more 30 40 percent but early on the decision was to go with 50. And so that's how we came up with, you know, the schedule for removal. So I just wanted to add that as well. And I would just like to add that in addition, we also procured the services of a

[01:58:09] third-party engineering firm, Timmins, to do some value engineering and to look at the potential of saving even more trees with some adjustments earlier in the design. Just one more point of clarification the wooded area because i think i heard you say on the walk that the area is about 100 acres or thereabouts and that the impacted area is six acres of that nearly 100 acres

[01:58:41] yes so we do have on our slide i believe it's uh the 90 acres for the all the area and then the tree canopy is 72 acres um but the impact from the project is about 6.18 acres 6.18 acres of 90 acres is impacted okay okay I want to be very clear about that because we've heard about the economic I mean the environmental devastation wrought upon this forest and I just want to be very clear about the actual yes I'm sorry I just wanted to add the limit of disturbance is 6.18 acres and that

[01:59:20] doesn't necessarily that is not necessarily all canopy and it's not necessarily all canopy okay I just want it to be very clear for anyone who has not been on the walk to see the acreage that this is what we're talking about all right other questions comments of councilmember Hall thank you with regard to the 6.18 acres I did then want to point out that the stream restoration is 7.4 acres as you said correct Anna yes that's correct okay so that's a total of thirteen point four eight acres out of seventy two point two

[01:59:56] eight acres? Yes. Okay. So over 10% then, if I'm doing my math correctly. 18%. Thank you. Okay. A couple additional questions and comments. So first of all, just this is to kind of piggyback on what someone said earlier during the public session. Connectivity is lacking. I'm just not sure that this is the

answer. I was disappointed to learn that the changes to the Cambridge Road, Eaton place, which I don't support either, but I was disappointed to learn that

[02:00:36] eliminating that roundabout is now eliminating the road diet that had been planned for that, which also included bike lanes, shared use path, and a lot of other connectivity. Yeah, please feel free to interrupt. Well, I just want to comment that it eliminates as it was proposed in that small area plan, but that doesn't mean that we can't do it going forward. It just means the way it was shown was a road diet we can still put in other those features but it would need to be done differently okay that's perfect because that was actually i was going to go with next so i'm glad

[02:01:10] that you jumped in on that one um also and this is a question but the um sorry the section the western portion that's not shown on there um if that were to be built could someone bike from mosby woods to amazon fresh directly there's no exits from that portion of the trail is that correct there had been one previously the a what's shown on the map as a2 but that was eliminated at the request of the city council okay just want to make sure that when i'm responding back to

[02:01:48] constituent emails i'm giving them correct information that they are incorrect and that they cannot go from Mosby Woods to Amazon Fresh with a spur to exit. Formally, correct. That formal connection has been eliminated. Thank you. Okay.

[02:02:08] Ms. Stafford, you indicated that the western portion would grow more quickly than the eastern portion because of its maturity and things like that. Can you explain what timeline you're speaking to potentially for regrowth of the devastation that we're considering?

[02:02:27] Yeah, so the eastern segment, again, being a mature oak hickory forest, is likely 100 to 200 years old. It would take a newly disturbed forest likely 80 to 100 years to start to become an oak hickory forest.

[02:02:43] The western half, the maple, tulip, poplar, locust, typically within 20 to 40 years, you've gone from disturbed to a full enclosed canopy. - Thank you, and what sort of, I know all we talk about is invasives, invasives, invasives, and I know that by opening up a trail, we now bring in the opportunity for additional invasives to come in.

[02:03:09] I also recognize that most of our invasive work right now is done by neighborhood volunteers and things like that. I know you do a great job leading that. What type of continued, ongoing maintenance would be needed to deal with those invasives, and has there been any sort of, I know we talked about this briefly, but any sort of conversation around bringing in outside contractors to essentially kind of do some of the heavy lifting for us so that then we can start to maintain as opposed to trying to do all the heavy lifting ourselves?

[02:03:40] Yeah, so this past summer we did do an invasive assessment of 25 of our parks and green spaces throughout the city. Of course, these parks or parcels that are owned by the city were included. It ranked, we ranked in terms of invasiveness and access and ability to manage an area for invasives.

[02:04:01] These areas came in kind of middle of the pack. My intention with the invasive assessment, since all of our perks have invasives and we can't necessarily tackle all of them, is to have a ranked list in order to use resources effectively, so kind of going through a ranked list.

[02:04:19] So with these coming kind of middle of the pack, it wouldn't necessarily be the top priority to come in to manage the invasives immediately. And so that's kind of the consideration. Local jurisdictions in the area typically spend around \$100,000 on invasive contract services each year.

[02:04:38] That's Arlington, Fairfax Park Authority, Alexandria. And so that's kind of what you're looking at in terms of managing some of your parks, but certainly not all of them at once. Okay, thank you. And Ms. Summerfield, I know we had discussed on the George Schneider Trail walk the cost to purchase, I'm going to call them diesel wheelchairs. I know they're big, allow people to go through forests. They have tracks as opposed to tires and things like that. I think you indicated they would be about \$40,000 each and there were possibly grants available to cover that. Can you speak to that, please?

[02:05:13] Yeah, this is a program I haven't looked into since I had looked into it when I was working for Pittsburgh. We had a 600-acre park, so we'd be able to store an off-road wheelchair within the park, rent it out, not rent it, but check it out to users, essentially, on a free basis.

[02:05:31] So, yes, those programs do exist. I think the biggest hurdles are looking at storage. It's not particularly fast, and so thinking of, like, an off-site location, and then being able to get somewhere. They are heavily used in more, kind of, terrain-heavy off-road trails that are available.

[02:05:53] A lot of parks out west have begun to get them in order to improve access. I know my hometown in Montana has several that they check out to hunters for hunting season, just to improve access in the woods. - Thank you very much.

[02:06:09] We are fortunate, I think, with our locations. It might not be exactly in the trail and in where we're looking at, but I think with the police station being across from Daniel's Run Woods and also with the fire station being across from where the Georgetown Trail area already is, I think that those are not too far.

[02:06:26] So I think that's a good option. One final thing, and I might reserve the right to ask some more questions or comments. I just did want to point out tree size, and please, just for those following at home and those that are here, when we tag trees, it's six inches in diameter. When we replant trees, that six inches is no longer a mechanism by which we measure.

[02:06:48] So for the stream restoration, I believe on the walk, Mr. Edo said that we were pulling out 477 trees, and we were replacing them with 1,200 trees plus other bushes and shrubs and the like. So I just think that's something people should know is that we're not replacing a tree with a tree.

[02:07:06] Actually, replanting 3,000 trees and putting in 9,000 total plantings for the stream restoration. 3,000 trees, so not 1,200. Right, 3,000 trees and 9,000 total plantings, if you look at plants.

[02:07:22] That's wonderful. I'm glad I had lesser information, and you can correct me on that. Appreciate it. Thank you for now. Councilmember Peterson. Ms. Safford, the RPA guidance for trails, is it for them to follow grade?

[02:07:40] Sorry, what was the last portion? the guidance for trails and rpas is that to follow grade rather than modifying it so there are no set codified regulations it's all within the riparian buffer manuals guidelines the intent is to minimize clearing it is to follow grade when possible and when when clearing is exceeding or sorry when the project is having to clear wider than the the path itself you are to try to make

[02:08:13] adjustments to minimize the impact. So yes, but I wouldn't say that it's set clearly in the riparian buffer manual as clearly as you have said it there. I raise it, and for everybody watching we're saying, you know, grade and all that, we're talking about moving a lot of dirt around. We're talking about revising the landscape in a very fundamental way throughout this entire project.

[02:08:45] This isn't simply operating on top of the ground in an existing contour, an existing elevation, an existing grade. We're replumbing the whole system to make it man-made to accommodate vehicles on roads. So this is a different story.

[02:09:02] And when we think about things like the effect on forest, it's in the context of a construction project for a road that has effects that are very much driven by the disturbance to large amounts of soil.

[02:09:19] So to build on that for just a moment, and maybe just a comment to put in perspective on the six acres, et cetera. Many years ago, I worked on an issue known as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And the question was, what impact the road network that had not yet been built for oil and gas production in this wilderness area would have?

[02:09:44] And one of the ways that one set of folks described that is, well, if you take all the road network, it's kind of like a spider web. And if you scrunch that spider web all up into a bundle, here's how big it would be. And that's a pretty small piece of this entire area.

[02:10:02] But when you spread that spider web out, it's a different story. And so when you put something through, when you put a road in a roadless area, you have offsite impacts as well as having the impacts that are caused by the trail itself that you are building.

[02:10:22] So just to put this in slightly different perspective, not to be overly graphic, but a physician makes an incision down your chest and then estimates the size of that incision by multiplying the length by the width.

[02:10:39] It might be actually quite small, a centimeter or so, but it affects the entire body, particularly if it has scar tissue and even more particularly if it becomes infected, which might be the equivalent of the invitation to invasive species, which I know you are trying to control I also know there's a significant expense with keeping up with that but I think the story in terms of impact on a trail in a forest has these broader dimensions that need to be recognized including again the earth moving and my understanding

[02:11:12] is the earth moving is also occurring and having to adjust to areas that are wet so we are encountering as we go through this area areas that are wet whether they're designated as wetlands or not I'll leave it to you to let us know but I know from having walked the Western Trail that one of the first things I encountered was skunk cabbage patches which are indicative of wetlands and this was clearly wet soil a wet area in addition to being a riparian area with all the creeks and what have

[02:11:47] you and a lot of land disturbance is taking place in those areas so I'm not sure how that is factored into the description of impact whether that falls into the category of forest impacts or whether that soil disturbance and functional hydrology structure disturbance falls somewhere else but I want to know I think that appears to be fairly significant and in the area and I'm not sure whether there's an estimate of how much earth moving is going on

[02:12:20] here but my understanding is it's rather significant is that fair in my opinion And this is not a significant amount of earthwork for this project. Okay.

[02:12:39] So let me then make a quick observation. So I did walk the west end. Within about 125 yards in the woods, I found two fox dens and a little bit further on a coyote den.

[02:12:57] Saw seven deer and what was left of a barred owl. And I found what was left of a deer, a mature doe, likely the result of an automobile collision. This is pretty indicative of wildlife that is essentially being squeezed into a compressed area.

[02:13:19] And if they set one foot out of this area, they are very much at risk. If you go in and construct and then operate a road within an area that is a dense area and, frankly, a refuge for wildlife, it either permanently or periodically pushes them out and into the pathway of risk.

[02:13:42] And I just found it a bit surprising when I read the NEPA review that said there's no environmental impact associated with this trail, that that kind of impact, not to mention all these other impacts, were not noted. And I'm just wondering whether anybody has evaluated the potential for displacement and risk exposure to wildlife species in this area.

[02:14:07] And it could include a number of effects. Part of it is the displacement of being pushed out. Part of it is territorial aggression that takes place when you condense populations, which may be what happened to the owl. Has anybody looked at that? Okay, so I can respond to that.

[02:14:27] So in terms of the NEPA process and the evaluation of the project within the federal framework of environmental review, the focus is on rare, threatened, and endangered species. There were no rare, threatened, and endangered species located within this project area and we so it really you know foxes and coyotes aren't considered rare threatened and endangered species so it it passes from an environmental review looking

[02:15:06] considering a federal framework it passes muster we also look at cultural resources as part of that process so we did section 106 review um and as you alluded to we've also done wetland designations or delineation sorry and for the most part we've avoided the wetlands that were delineated for this project so much so that the core approved the project under a nationwide permit which is basically a blanket permit the other consideration that we take into account when

[02:15:45] we're looking at a trail like this is the 100-year floodplain but you know the goal is to not displace a significant amount of water that would cause rise in the floodplain elevation however we did choose uh to and in consultation with the city staff to elevate the trail slightly above the existing grade so that it would remain dry and wet events and i think the two-year storm was the sort of the target storm the design storm if if we were to just simply build the trail at

[02:16:21] grade it would probably be a bit of a maintenance hassle there would be a lot of resources that would need to be dedicated to repaving the trail because of the wet conditions the freeze thaw cycle would be constantly damaging the pavement not to mention you know mud puddles and you know collection of sediment on the trail that would need to be removed regularly every time there's any kind of flooding. So those are the main considerations that go into the environmental review for a project. Yeah, I would just note in a previous life I served as a division chief for

[02:16:58] state wildlife conservation agency and I'm familiar with the territory and it stretches significantly beyond those species that are designated as rare, threatened, and endangered. There's a broader spectrum of biodiversity and wildlife that is typically of concern and included in public impact analyses but let me just ask one more thing or two here before i i turned over and reserve it to others to

come back as i walked on this section i was struck by the fact that i was within a very short distance of pavement that was flat and looked like it would have been an ideal

[02:17:38] spot for a bike to ride and in fact within a relatively short distance on the marked proposed trail I was walking parallel to Fairfax Boulevard I mean from here to either screen I've measured the sidewalk there at seven feet I've measured the bike paths that are in place elsewhere there ten we're looking at a three-foot different differential here that Fairfax for that Blenheim Boulevard section is full of streetlights right the trail would not have streetlights at night I'm

[02:18:14] just a little bit puzzled as to from a design standpoint why we would be building a new trail so close to an existing facility for bike and pedestrian use and one that could likely be the subject of enhancement in the future.

[02:18:36] And I was also struck by the fact that when I arrived and exited from that area and drove up Eaton Place to the intersection, the Moose Lodge, et cetera, there was also an equally sized sidewalk that ran past the Willowood area, et cetera, that looked like it would also be a pretty good candidate and is also currently being used by Viking.

[02:19:03] So again, I'm just puzzled as to how we would, from a design standpoint, land where we're building this facility in the woods within eyesight and within arm's reach of existing facilities and ones that are going to be enhanced in the future.

[02:19:20] And was that intentional when this design was put in place? So I can speak on behalf of, I think, a larger group of people and those who put input into the alignment that was developed for this project.

[02:19:39] But, you know, and I think all of us are sort of party to this project at different times. I got involved in 2019 when we started, when we basically were given the initial concepts. I think there was an initial master plan that showed a rough alignment.

[02:19:59] We were provided a set of drawings with an alignment that is fairly similar to what you see here on the screen that was done by a prior consultant. We took that alignment, further developed it, and then we met with the council-appointed G-STAC committee and basically, you know, they vetted the alignment.

[02:20:23] We really, the focus of changes to the alignment were really on the east end over by Route 50, the crossing at Route 50, but we certainly had a consensus coming out of those meetings on the alignment that you see here today, and typically once that consensus is formed and we go through the public involvement process and we get concurrence from VDOT and as Wendy mentioned right away authorization, the alignment is locked in, and from there we're focused on the design details of the project.

[02:21:00] So typically at 30% that's where we try to lock in the alignment. On road facilities are completely different context. You know, you're dealing with a higher level of stress as a cyclist or as a mother pushing a child in a stroller as opposed to pushing, you know, that stroller through the middle of the woods.

[02:21:20] You know, you're talking about crossing intersections, conflicts with motorists, you know, is there signal at that intersection or is it is it you know a stop sign or a mid-block crossing so there's just

different issues you know all the driveways you have to cross five o'clock everybody's leaving work and you have trail users crossing you know and with this becoming a potentially regional trail there could be a significant amount of trail users and i don't you know it's not for me to say but i i would anticipate a lot of conflicts and potential

[02:21:56] crashes with pedestrians and bicycles at all these conflict points those things you're not going to have those types of issues with the alignment that we're currently progressing and not to mention you know with on-road facilities you're dealing with with air quality issues you're dealing with noise you know so it's just not the same context this trail was always conceived with this context from the moment we received it as a designer

[02:22:25] And that's, you know, the design that we have progressed and moved forward with the endorsement of G-STAG and I would say some council members in prior years and meetings. Well, it's my understanding that G-STAG did not vet this and they did not have a consensus, but I would leave it to members to speak for themselves on that.

[02:22:49] It's my understanding that the opposition and public comments that were recorded was it ran 80-20 against. And I would just say I rode this stretch the other day, three minutes and 57 seconds on my bike. I'm not exactly a speed demon, but I do my best from the Moose Lodge down to the 7-Eleven and five minutes and 14 seconds from there to Wawa.

[02:23:11] And it wasn't particularly difficult, not much of a grade there. But if riding wide sidewalks like that is so dang dangerous in this city, why do we have them? And are we not planning to make them safer no matter what?

[02:23:31] I just am having a little bit of difficulty on the design side of this. Well, let me help you out with that. In 1992, the 2020 commission had 112 volunteers and 12 committees talking about what this city should look like in 2020.

[02:23:49] And I shared a page with all of you on the council about their specifically talking about greenways, trails that were removed from roads. This goes back to 1992. In fact, the George Snyder Trail has been on the drawing board since the mid-'90s.

[02:24:06] Bill Niedringhouse recalling that John Mason met people from the Potomac Heritage Trail Association and walked them down this trail in 1995. So greenways are not sidewalks. They are not bike lanes.

[02:24:22] They are shared-use paths through a forest or through open space. That's why they're called greenways. And it has been part of the city's plan, in black and white, since 1992. So I don't know why we're having a conversation about why this Shared Juice Path, which is a greenway, instead of neighborways or bike trails or pedestrian sidewalks, they're different things.

[02:24:52] But there was always a plan from previous councils and from previous volunteers who served on committees that we would have walkable greenways in the city separated from the roads if I could add just a couple things I have the meeting notes from the committee meetings there were four g-stack committee meetings and I have copies for everyone that I can pass out and you know the conversation back in 2019 and I reread them today just to read them again was not about it was really about the details of the project and about should there be a crossing

[02:25:29] should how wide should it be that there was some concern noted by really just one member about about the trees at that time and there was discussion about mitigation but the topic of conversation at the time amongst this committee was really about the design details of the project and that was what was guiding the design um and so i think it is important to remember that and i know i hear you i mean i hear the questions and a lot of these comments have been a lot of the design questions that you have now we had then too we looked at that that parallel situation right next to fairfax boulevard and if i remember correctly there's a significant grade difference and there was and i don't remember the details of it there was a long conversation about what it would take

[02:26:09] to combine that and make it wider for that section versus having a separate a separate facility and the the consensus at that time and i and i cannot remember exactly who was part of the conversation was to have them as separate facilities and not to merge it with the sidewalk on fairfax boulevard for that portion. But again, these conversations all happened. And again, I have copies to give you, and I would encourage you to read them so you can see the types of conversations that the committee was having at that time throughout the early design of the project.

[02:26:44] So, I mean, I hear your conversation. I just, it's, and this conversation was also had then as well in terms of the alignment conversations, but then the project proceeded. So, you know, don't know exactly how to respond to your questions only because these conversations were had and there was there were different decisions made at that time than it than what you would make right now council member amos uh just for a breakdown what would the recurring costs what are they forecasted

[02:27:18] to be for maintenance storm water all of it do we have that um the storm water uh is incorporated in in the trail design. But I would say the first five years when things are relatively new, I would estimate around \$25,000 a year for maintenance. You have to remember there's some bridges and you have to remove the debris after storms and occasionally a bridge plank will get loose or railing, plus some repairs to the actual trail itself. I would say after you get past the

[02:27:55] five-year point, the maintenance is going to increase. And I would estimate around \$50,000 dollars a year and this is for the whole length the whole length of the trail do we have estimations for only the western half yeah i looked at that too and i would say uh for the first five years about fifteen thousand dollars a year and then moving forward uh after five years around thirty thousand dollars a year and that's just because you know you don't have the economy to scale really of taking care of the whole thing so it's about a little bit more than half okay um just for

[02:28:32] additional context, from what I've heard narratively, this was not always considered to be an asphalt trail, but because of the concession funding, or you were about to speak? Sorry. No, go ahead. Sorry. No, I'm just asking you. So looking back even at our original funding applications back in 2015, the trail was always shown as an asphalt trail, described as a 10-foot wide asphalt trail, even going back to SmartScale before that. Okay. Do we have a breakdown of trail types in the city?

[02:29:03] I mean, for example, do we have a distribution of dirt trails, gravel trails, and asphalt trails? Is that something we looked at? We do have those types of trails in the city, and I can certainly pull together a distribution of those trails. I will say the move towards paved trails is because it is cheaper to maintain from a staff perspective as far as in comparison to gravel trails.

[02:29:27] We get a lot of high-intensity rain events here, and it tends to wash out gravels and cinders, And so our staff has to go out and replace those, whereas the paved trails are a little more resistant to those

events. - So is that more of a maintenance issue or an issue regarding funding for the project?

[02:29:45] - It's really a maintenance issue. - Okay. - And also one thing I want to mention is that regardless of the material, it's the amount of clearing, regardless if it's a stone dust trail or an asphalt trail is the same. - Okay, I just want to add after we have a, as we can have these heavy intensity storms in the city, after we get a storm, I mean, we'll get calls from people saying I almost broke my neck on a rut in a gravel trail because it got washed out during the storm.

[02:30:15] So it's not like we have a lot of time to go out there. So usually as soon as the storm's over, Stacy's folks and sometimes my folks are out there filling in these dangerous ruts, which are a hazard to bike riders on the gravel. So really it's a maintenance. It's based on the resources that we have to maintain the number of miles of trail, The asphalt is where we go for, you know, our ability to maintain.

[02:30:38] Okay. And, I mean, just for clarification, just to reiterate, if the project were canceled, we would owe, what, \$3.7 million. And that's confirmed. Can we get an email? Part of my frustration with this process is I want more written correspondence.

[02:30:54] I've heard a lot of word of mouth, but I want things tangible. Okay. As well to you. I just passed out the meeting minutes from the committee.

[02:31:10] But I want to read this to you, and then I will pass it out. For cancellation, concessionaire funds would be returned to the balance entry per Virginia Code related to concession funds, a CTV resolution approving the concession-funded projects, the MOA between NVTa and VDOT regarding the projects, and the project agreement, we find nothing that indicates these projects should be treated any differently than any other construction program project.

[02:31:36] So for the purposes of cancellation and determination of repayment, our IIMI12 applies. I also have that. In order for us to determine if repayment is required, please provide us the details of why cancellation is being considered and if any of the following conditions apply.

[02:31:52] And then they list four conditions. Litigation has resulted in significant delay or stoppage of the project. The public involvement process has significantly altered the project's purpose and need. Completion or advancement of the project would be in conflict with state or federal law. Findings during NEPA process resulted in the project being unable to advance, and project development activities prior to scoping have identified issues that make completion of the project no longer feasible.

[02:32:18] Shifting political priorities, insufficient transportation budgets, and staffing are not considered standalone justification for a waiver of payback requirements. So that is from BDOT, and I have followed up again with them asking them more questions about this and what they have told me is that they would not recommend that we be that we receive a waiver of the repayment of the repayment and she they also told me that it's generally very rare that BDOT allows an off-ramp for

[02:32:54] repayment after the public involvement process so those are just these again these are I have this written that I can send to you and then also I just have some follow-up notes for my conversation with them because I was drilling down to ask more questions about this as well because I wanted to make sure I could give you as complete information as possible. To be clear, the CTB makes the final decision.

[02:33:15] That is who makes the decision about repayment. They follow their guidelines and they take a recommendation from the VDOT staff. So ultimately, you know, I can't look into a crystal ball and say yes,

they would require repayment or no, they wouldn't. But given that it is at 100% and given that it's so far down the line, what VDOT has said is that they would not recommend waiving.

[02:33:34] Okay. And what is, so if the project were canceled, from my understanding, the repayment plan would be to dip into the unassigned fund balance is that correct depend yes although depending on the timing you could budget for that in the current budget process and and and plan for an appropriation of 3.7 million but presuming that that does not happen at the point that the council decide if the council were to decide to cancel the project two things one we would have to encumber or on the balance sheet we would have to show a 3.7 million

[02:34:14] liability and encumber funds to ultimately pay that and then council would also have to appropriate the money to be spent if it wasn't already budgeted and appropriated okay understood um just some brief brief comments admittedly I have not really made a decision in my head on this project yet I went into this assuming it was and assuming that still that it's only a work session it's our first meeting together discussing this so personally I'm between the third option or cancellation and I'm still considering

[02:34:52] all the information I will say also to the community that many of you have come out against the project and in my emails I also had a lot of people that supported it and I would like to acknowledge that I'm not the biggest fan of how we often treat each other on subjects like this I know someone spoke earlier in support of the project and I saw a lot of this and laughing and I think that was inappropriate and that's not going to sway my decision I just think it's unfortunate that that happened it was disappointing for me because I will say that this is a very privileged discussion that we get to have because in Middletown Ohio where my family is they don't get to have a

[02:35:31] discussion about a trail so again that doesn't sway my decision but I don't know how I feel about it this time considering the fiscal impacts and I don't know what the future financially looks for us considering the tariffs the federal situation you got well schools the nine and a half cent tax increase and it sounds like the 3.7 if we were to budget for this year would I imagine would be probably what like another three and a half cents up to pay for it or three probably closer to four closer to four so that just a fiscal sense

[02:36:09] concerns me when it comes to full cancellation the environmental reasons would lean me towards cancellation so that's where I'm at I'm kind of split Councilmember Hall thank you for your detailed questions on that thank you for providing this I did just want to point out the second item under the determinant of repayment it says the public involvement process has significantly altered the project's purpose and need would that apply at this stage with a hundred percent or that would have been back that's what I was drilling down with them about because I asked that was what I was asking about I said is this and they were what she said was no and this is more like you've

[02:36:47] received the funding because you know there's a delay between when we apply for the money we receive the money you receive the money or you've just started design you haven't spent that much and so she did say there is precedent in other cases where they have where it's been early on in the project where you know the locality has said we just don't want to do this and in that case they have the waive the repayment option per their guidance but what she said is at this point at a hundred percent that you know the ship has kind of sailed on that and that again I'm just trying to tell you because I was drilling down that

was my exact question was would this be would this be a one of the exceptions on what they were what they told me was not at this point it

[02:37:27] would have been probably more than five years ago six years ago okay then if that's the timeline then I do have to say I think that there was another feel like there was another kind of conversational along those lines that did we not do the proper outreach and I think that that's where that NEPA study comes in where it seems to me like there's a lot of I'll call them myths truths in the NEPA statement with regard to does the public support

[02:38:02] this did we do the outreach did we do this so I was not part of that I probably honestly wasn't even paying attention then I had much younger children but do you know what we paid for the NEPA study by chance offhand I would have to go back and look at our our invoicing to see what the cost of that was I am curious about that if you can get that okay great thank you and then a couple other things I know we've talked about this over email but I just want to put it out here again I don't I'm not against trails I'm against roads in the woods which is what I personally

[02:38:38] feel like that's what this is. I know when we were on the Georgetown Trail Walk, we talked about the concept of doing some sort of boardwalk style over the sewer line area where it's already cleared. I recognize that those are wetlands. Is that something that's completely outside the scope of repurposing the funds? Because to me, we're still doing exactly what we said we would on that eastern side. We're just doing it in a different manner with different materials. I'd have to

[02:39:09] defer to Steve because this does get into the wetlands issue and and part of the the NEPA evaluation is looking at wetlands and unfortunately it doesn't regulate NEPA does not look at I'm not by any means a NEPA expert but my understanding is that NEPA does not look at tree impacts that's what's regulated more locally and when you're looking at wetlands that is what is regulated by NEPA and so there was a discussion also similar to the alignment by Fairfax Boulevard, there was a discussion also about that sewer line, and it was looked at also way back when.

[02:39:48] And so, I guess the overarching, and I will let Steve answer the question, but I do want to say that overall, these conversations have been had. I know. They have. And that doesn't mean that they're right or wrong, I'm just saying they've been had. And at that point, when it was appropriate to make the changes, various changes were made.

[02:40:06] Now, if we had to go back in time, would we make different decisions? if there were different there would be different people involved and so it's it is unfortunate you know that we're here at 100% plans and and we're not all in agreement about the decisions that were made way back when and you know it was it was a different time it was six years ago there were different community members engaged there was it was it was different but the decisions were made at that time and so yes we can talk through all the reasons for them I don't know if that's going to make it better but but I do want you to know that all of these questions that you are raising now most of them if not all of them have been asked and addressed again maybe not the way you would want it them addressed now

[02:40:45] but they were addressed but anyhow I will let Steve answer the question. Let me just real quick you know Public Works maintains that trunk main it's deep so in order to access it you need a very big trench so we have to be able to access it another thing is we've had odor problems with the manholes and one of the things that came up was it's in certain warm times in the summer it might not be the best place

for a trail because of the odor issues and also it's an older trunk main and we wouldn't want anything that would prohibit us from getting deep down to repair it those are two factors

[02:41:21] I appreciate that I will say the if I'm correct me if I'm wrong here but the placement of the trail versus the placement of the woodlands that are next to the sewer line we're talking maybe I'll be generous and call it 40 feet but maybe I'm not 50 feet I just my point is if something's going to stink in 50 feet here it's probably going to stink over here too right the the in order to get down to these trunk mains which could be 20 to 40 feet deep you need a deep a wide trench so you have safety for the workers down there so we really would need the whole width of the easement pretty much to keep it safe for access to the trunk main not to say you couldn't maybe

[02:42:00] slice off a portion of it but we going back to what he said we discussed all this and it was decided that you know wasn't the best place to put it I understand that and I will let you speak in one second but I recognize all that you're saying all the things you've done all of those things where we are timelines all this and that but we up here we're the ones that have to say yay or nay and so I will not be able to do that until I feel like I've gotten my questions answered so thank you for bearing with us because I do have more but please go. Sure, I just want to answer your question. So I'll just give some information about

[02:42:34] that location. So you can kind of see it on the map there, but we have two fairly, I wouldn't say large wetlands, but they're just inconveniently located right along that sewer easement. There's one kind of above the D1 symbol, and then there's another one that's down closer to the creek.

[02:42:53] So you can see the alignment that's shown there does avoid, for the most part, those wetlands and the location where we have to cross the one to the lower right we do have a boardwalk but we chose to cross it at the the narrowest point because even a boardwalk does have a little bit of an impact uh to a wetland but we're just talking about augering uh piles not doing like a large excavation so it's it's as as least impactful as as we can be that said um the easement itself

[02:43:26] is about 20 feet wide the sewer is actually 36 inches and as dave said it can be deep it's a fairly large sewer the manholes are as we saw on the field are pretty you know high up above the ground and the the sort of the conundrum with locating the trail there is that as dave said to maintain it you really need that full 20 feet whether it's for a trench or for the equipment and we were talking heavy equipment that would need to get in there to maintain it so

[02:43:59] you know uh you know excavators uh haul trucks um even just to i guess bring a back truck in i'm not sure if a back truck hose can reach can a back truck hose reach from from cardinal road or would you have to take it partially down the easement we would have to take it into the easement and for trunk mains of that size the vacuum trucks typically aren't what you need you need the excavator yeah um and yeah that's that's thanks for that clarification dave because 36 inch baby

[02:44:33] wipes a baby wipes not going to clog a 36 inch sanitary sewer um but um the other the other thing to think about too though with a boardwalk it's also a structure um it's 14 feet 9 inches out to out if you meet ash toe regulations for a 10 foot wide trail with two foot clear on either side to the railings so you're talking about 15 feet alone for the boardwalk and then typically we want to have another probably five feet on either side of the structure cleared of obstruction so trees so you're really talking about 25 feet just for the boardwalk alone and another road through the woods just with

[02:45:10] different materials yeah I mean it's it's basically you know you have to have some space now let's say we overlapped the buffer for the boardwalk with some of the easement um we you know i i looked at you know just spanning the small portion of the wetland that's on the um kind of the top side but the the issue is you just end up doing a lot of clearing for that as well because the the um uh you know the clearing is only 20 feet wide um and so and then if if you put it like right in the easement like in the middle of the easement of the clear in

[02:45:49] the middle of the clearing the problem is you're you're spanning the entire wetland and you're looking probably about another million dollars in cost just for the boardwalk and then you have you know the trail and the film the approaches which there may be some and if you put it in the middle of the easement the sewer sort of offset with the clearing so you end up having to clear on the other side of the easement just to provide that 20 foot width for the trucks and equipment to access so I think you end up doing clearing either way more so with the current alignment I will admit but we'd still be looking at doing clearing and

[02:46:27] additional cost and dealing with you know having to span and have have some wetland impacts with going through these okay so another though interesting fact or not fact but point about that is right above that towards the top right is Draper Drive Park which is already part of the georgetown trail um we play soccer there all the time i recognize we've had conversations about you know kids and bikes and purpose of trail and all that i strongly feel like that could be a very viable opportunity for us to make a bit of a better trail in there designate a bike lane

[02:47:02] designate you know put the um whatever they're called the rubber thingies yep thank you the flex put things um yeah put those there to designate this is where a bike goes i think parents recognize very easily what that is when their children are at play. So that would actually eliminate the wetlands conversation.

[02:47:21] It would eliminate the sewer line conversation. It could eliminate a lot of those problems. And it also could really help us, I think, make Draper Drive a bit of a safer alternative. I'm not sure if you've been out there recently, but there are a lot of no parking signs there that clearly are not enforced.

[02:47:37] I mean, people are parking every which way there. So it's not the safest road at the moment, but there's a lot of opportunity there, I think, to do what could be done. another opportunity I personally think would be doing this along the stream I recognize that there are stormwater maintenance issues but I also know that I think it's called five mile run down in Alexandria Arlington we used to go there all the time when we had very little kids and the dogs and they would just we'd walk and they would run down and do their thing I mean there's a lot of places where trails and and paths are along water just like on the cross country trail you know that part after you get past Home Depot I'll pause and

[02:48:15] let you speak there you look like you're gonna say something no okay I was just gonna say we did look at the option of winding through Draper Drive Park and I might defer to Stacy other Stacy on this question yeah so we right when I had joined the city we did look at it it was brought before crab there were some concerns about the intersection of park users and bikers there was also the necessity to potentially construct a 25-foot net to keep balls and other projectiles from flying out into the trail, depending on the level of use. So those were some of the reasons that

[02:48:52] Crab decided to endorse the plan in this alignment. So there are, again, we play soccer there all the time. My husband's the coach, my son's on the team. There are still many, many, many lost balls that go

down there because there is not any sort of net or fence all the way around. So that issue, I think, is maybe mitigated by trees that have grown in, but my concern is as we've taken these trees out, there might be balls flying still.

[02:49:15] Yeah? Oh, I think the concern about the interaction between the game and the trail users was with the proposal where the trail went around the outside of the field. Oh, I got you. So it joined the current walking path around the field. Okay. And then to imagine that much additional traffic on that path was challenging in the way that it's currently set up.

[02:49:38] Okay, I can understand that. I do think people can be a little bit aware. I know I walk there a lot with a girlfriend, but okay, so I'll move off of that then. I did want to thank Faiza Alam for speaking up with regard to the boards and commissions statement.

[02:49:53] I was too very disappointed that the ESC did not formally give a statement. I don't know if boards and commissions were asked to give statements, but I do know that we received a number of emails, but shockingly, the ESC was not one of them, So I don't know where that disconnect came from.

[02:50:09] But I feel like if you want to know about environmental concerns, to me, the ESC would be the people to ask. Side note, my kids bike from where we live in Cobbdale to Prefects High School all the time. Is it my favorite part of the city for them to bike on?

[02:50:25] No. Do I feel safe enough that I'm going to let them do it? Absolutely. And then a couple other things. Orchard Street to Amazon Fresh, the existing orchard. There will not be any sort of connectivity from Orchard to the new Orchard, correct?

[02:50:45] That's not a cut-through road. I'm kind of jumping topics here, but I'm just trying to understand. Are you talking about the newly North Facts Road? Yes. I guess it's called Orchard right now that has the light. On the west side of Chambers Road? Yes. There is what we have discussed as part of the North Facts East West Road that would then go east from there is having a pedestrian crossing across Chambers Road.

[02:51:11] would not be for vehicles but it would be a pedestrian activated so the idea was um that it wouldn't turn red every cycle for cars because that would cause a backup to fairfax boulevard but instead allow a pedestrian crossing if the button was pushed so yes there we are talking when we put in that roadway okay to allow to include that's what was studied originally was to have the pedestrian because that was very important okay but completely unrelated the george snyder trail completely unrelated and also not a through road to orchard just a footpath

[02:51:49] maybe connection from the fairfax like from cobdale neighborhood fairfax woods neighborhood to kind of cross over to where the new that's also footpath it's it would just be a crossing of the road yes like a okay with a pedestrian button okay and then when they actually cross over Cambridge Road and they get now behind the residence in and whatever else is going eventually built there is the plan currently for that to have any sort of pedestrian the the path through there the plans the very preliminary plans that we developed as part of our funding application for the North fact East West Road show a shared use path on both sides of that that North fact

[02:52:24] East West Road that then connects to the the little roundabout in front of the Amazon Fresh okay which then would get you to Fairfax Boulevard which then would have you continue up on whatever

happens over there. Which would get you down to Fairfax Boulevard. Yep, okay. I promise I'm nearing my completion here.

[02:52:39] You're fine. West side disturbance. Anna, this is a question for you. As far as acreage goes for just the west side, what type of acreage disturbance would that be in comparison to the total of 6.18? I will have to look that up in terms of the, Steve, do you know?

[02:53:00] We're going to have to get back to you on that. I'm not sure. We can get the number pretty quickly, but we have to open CAD and take an area. Okay, that'd be great. Thank you. From a fiscally responsible standpoint, I feel like the easy answer is we proceed with the west side.

[02:53:17] From an environmentally responsible standpoint, I am strongly, strongly struggling with this. I will tell you publicly right now, I do not support a full build at all. Thank you. Council Member Hardy Chandler.

[02:53:34] So I want to thank my colleagues on the council for their thoughtful questions because we are coming in on a very long road. I'm going back and what really resonated for me, Wendy, was your repeated saying that these questions have been asked and it was a different time and those kinds of things.

[02:53:53] The larger policy issue for me is we have to navigate multi-year things that come before our terms and will continue after our terms. So I would say, and thank you for opening this door, Council Member Amos. I just want to share my position so far.

[02:54:11] My position is I believe that cancellation of this project would be irresponsible from a policy standpoint in terms of setting that kind of precedent for multi-year projects, recognizing that, to your point, decisions are made at earlier points in time.

[02:54:30] no one has a time machine and sometimes we have to figure out and navigate how we move forward from decisions that made it may have been made five ten years ago these are long-term things and recognizing that in the future councils are going to look back to our decisions and question what we did and I think people are making the best decisions based on the information that they have at the time. So from a policy perspective, I think it's a disturbing precedent to cancel a project that has had this history and is to that date, to your point, back in time would some differences

[02:55:08] have been made? Yes, but I don't think that's in the best interest of the city to constantly question those multi-year projects in that way. So for me, I'll share that at this point in time, between choice 1 and choice 3 choice 1 is my preference choice 3 is something I'm open to considering particularly if we get more information around that particular choice thank you councilmember McQuillan could you please

[02:55:46] explain that public involvement process I know you said there were quite a lot of discussions but do you know when that started specifically the first one I I would have to go back and look. There's a very detailed timeline of the project in one of the presentations I've given that it goes through. So I would need to go back and look. There was engagement. There were discussions with PRAB, with the George Snyder Advisory Committee.

[02:56:13] I do believe this did go to ESC. And then there was other public engagement that occurred. Again, this was also, as I mentioned, this was six years ago. The public engagement that was done then is different than the public engagement that is done now but there was public engagement done and there

was also a formal public hearing held but again I will point to this summary which was given to you over email it has every city council meeting that was and in one of these presentations I think it was the last one and I will email it to you there is a very detailed timeline of all of

[02:56:51] the public engagement that occurred on the project my question more specifically is how many people were involved what did you get a good turnout was it something like you know three people because i did look back on a lot of these city council meetings and there were quite a lot of public hearing options that nobody spoke at so i was just curious as to which events were the most attended or had the most feedback that kind of thing i would have to go back and look at at the records for all of these various meetings um i will say until until all of the discussion about the trees came up within the last few years prior to that there were a few there were some comments about

[02:57:31] trees certainly um it was not the conversation that we're having today it was a different conversation um and so there was not as much public engagement in this plan it's why the project was moving ahead very smoothly um that's not just again that's not to say things would be different if it were done again today um but at that time and i will go back and find the the records of the public engagement if there were sign-in sheets i will find them for you but steve has um so the initial meetings were with g stag the um but then there was also a meeting held with

[02:58:10] mosby woods uh and then there was a meeting held with um cambridge station uh these meetings were in either July or August 2020 and then a a formal public hearing was held in October 2020. At what percentage of uh is of design completion prevents a project from being revised? I'd say once we pass the public hearing stage so even at the public hearing stage it's an opportunity to make comments

[02:58:46] about the project design and it was actually after that public hearing that the comments about the trees were were brought up to us and that is when we engaged a third-party review so i believe if correct me if i'm wrong that it was after the 60 design that we brought timmons in to do that third-party review of the plans and look at modifications that can be made to avoid um some of the the more treed areas and so um really until you get to right-of-way um you have flexibility i will say the flexibility becomes less as you 30 the plans wide open as you

[02:59:23] you move to 60 percent you're really supposed to be just focusing on design details and setting the footprint but there's clearly still design revisions that can be made once you purchase right-of-way you are committing to your your footprint of your project um yeah i think wendy kind of spelled it out but i think the path of scope changes or i guess the the breadth of scope change narrows as you get closer to 100 so there's not like a but what 30 is is kind of like

[02:59:56] the time when is appropriate to lock in the alignment and then from there forward you know we're really focused on hashing out design details um yeah that's just my next question is were there certain committees that were asked to comment on the project i know that you mentioned esc was there was a potential for them to give feedback on this um do we have the recommendations or the comments from that i would have to go back and look and check with the the staff liaison for the

[03:00:32] ESC um I believe we have the notes from the other meetings when it when it went to prab and I have the G stag meetings um but I will certainly look for the meeting minutes from from some of the other meetings that it went to and then upon reviewing the January 9th city council meeting council member Dr. Doyle Feingold raised concerns regarding the first NEPA analysis done by Stantec which made statements

assuring public support and complete lack of controversy or concern regarding this project, which we now know to be incorrect. It's worth noting and asking

[03:01:10] ourselves if that analysis was incorrect regarding the public perception and support of the project, what else might we have been off on in that NEPA analysis? Is there any review of that to go back? It's a hard question to answer. You know, every project has opposition. Every project has support um so it's it's hard to you know how many constituents do you have 20 20 plus thousand i

[03:01:47] mean so it's hard to say you know does 50 of your constituents uh support or reject this project um i think as the mayor pointed out earlier um you know i think the constituents vote and so we we didn't i think that statement um is is sort of a judgment and this project was not considered from based on my experience based on our team's experience um a controversial or impactful

[03:02:24] project okay so it was mentioned that the formulation of i think you said the 2020 committee yes the 2020 commission in 1919 commission thank you in 1992 that was 33 years ago that was a long time ago. A lot has changed since then. For transparency and for those of you listening, I received 56 emails from city residents regarding this topic. 45 were against the project. 11 were

[03:02:57] for it. Eight organizations reached out to me by email that were against it. Three for it. It's clear based on the testimonials and the data by local naturalists, environmentalists, our city's own stormwater specialists, urban forester, that the east side cannot support this project environmentally. We're lucky to have such caring, concerned, and engaged citizens, and we need to listen to them. I'm pro-trail, just not this project. If we pursue this project, we will experience an increase in stormwater runoff. That will raise our stormwater fee.

[03:03:34] We're going to see an increase in our trail maintenance costs, and with the future costs our city in mind coupled with our current economic changes that are happening along with tariffs that we're going to all feel the brunt of I cannot support this project that's where I stand and thank you for your comments and I would just say that there's a lot of conjecture in all of this as far as who is representing the city or how many responses represent the city people in my neighborhood don't even know what the George Steiner Trail project is when I

[03:04:12] I talked to them about it but the fact of the matter is is that there has been an organized opposition to this trail since I became mayor and it took up most of the last two years hearing about who represents this city and how this city feels about this trail and the environmental devastation being wrought upon the city if we complete this trail everyone's doing their part in their wheelhouse in their expertise to help us make a decision and I

[03:04:48] understand everyone has an opinion and everyone's entitled to their opinion but everyone's not entitled to their own facts and I think somewhere in there we are all trying to make the best decision possible and I respect how much time is being given to asking these questions in thinking deeply about this I will now turn it over to councilmember Peterson just a point of record and I don't know which staff person will have this, but there was an October hearing, and my understanding there was a count of comments that came in.

[03:05:23] My recollection is 36 against the trail and nine for it. Does that ring a bell? What year? 2020. I would have to go back and look. Yeah, okay. It's just sort of worth, yeah. I'll just add that typically when we receive comments, it's not of the nature of yes, I'm for, or no, I'm against.

[03:05:45] We typically get comments on what someone likes or doesn't like or would like to see changed. But I would say the comments don't always extend to, you know, for or against the trail. I'm not sure. We have the comments.

[03:06:02] We can share the comments from the public hearing. We'd be happy to share them with you. Well, I think it's helpful. We have data. And while data isn't perfect, it's helpful. And we have recurrent data on this issue indicating deep and broad scale concern, if not opposition.

[03:06:24] We do have data with some support. My own email shows, similar to Council Member McQuillan, interestingly, most of those who favor have caveated the comment by saying, however, they favor a redesign and are hoping there would be a way for that to be accommodated.

[03:06:41] It's troubling to me that it appears to be there isn't. if I understand it correctly, we have to cancel and re-scope this in order to do that. I'm not ready to conclude that that is the only way here because I think there may be yet another conversation of VDOT.

[03:06:56] I would just have to say it's really troubling that we had a NEPA review that made two statements which councils relied upon. One was that there was no environmental impact. I simply don't know how that occurred.

[03:07:15] The second is that there was no public opposition and none was anticipated, for the life of man, I can't understand how that statement becomes made, and yet these were relied upon and then they were colored by additional data to the contrary, et cetera, so the history is clearly a troubling one, clearly a lot of lessons learned here at a number of levels.

[03:07:40] I certainly hope that one of the things that comes out of this council's actions, whatever we decide to take on this trail will be reform for how we handle these kinds of issues, how we handle public involvement, and we create a pathway for shared decision making, et cetera.

[03:08:02] I went through a procedure with VDOT for one of their own proposals, and they do have a hearing, and they do solicit comments, and they do count them, and in that particular case the opposition was measurable, measurably more than the favoring of it, and the decision that VDOT made was to suspend the project.

[03:08:24] We didn't make that decision here, and yet we had the potential to do that and had the data in front of us. I know we can't change that, but that I find very troubling, and again, hope that we don't do that again. At this stage, I think there's still more to understand in terms of whether there is yet a way for VDOT to help us find an alternative here that's better than what we have before us, but I think what we have before us is a very difficult proposition.

[03:08:56] and i think it bears further consideration council member bates thank you um so first off with regard to input from boards and commissions um personally as i believe i said in the past i welcome input from any boards and commissions want to chime in on this topic including the esc and my understanding is that uh prab the eda etc have already issued um in in previous years

[03:09:34] you know positions on the issue and we're simply reiterating that um but but certainly i wasn't the one who solicited that um but uh you know certainly welcome that for many boards and commissions that want to chime in on it so um i want to point out uh one issue that that came up earlier with regard to the existing sidewalks between uh chambridge road and fairwoods parkway um do well first off

[03:10:08] uh miss sanford do you happen to have the uh the widths of those sidewalks off hand or they're not on you at the moment on fairfax boulevard well uh eaton place um you know and then fairfax boulevard from willowood to uh fairwoods parkway i don't but they they i don't i don't know them but they would they're likely five feet i measured them last night seven feet for eaton place and fairfax boulevard and when you get to the george snyder sign it's 10 it's 10 feet from there forward all

[03:10:43] the way to Wawa. I believe your question was for which area? From Eden. So Eden Place from Chambridge Road to the edge of Willowood Plaza, you know, from Chambridge Road to Fairfax Boulevard and Fairfax Boulevard from Willowood slash Eden Place up to Fairwoods Parkway. Some of the newer ones in front of the redevelopment areas are wider, but any of the older sidewalks would be five feet wide? Yeah. Yeah. So that is consistent with what I measured using the Google Earth

[03:11:18] measurement tool. Furthermore, one thing I want to point out is that the sidewalk in front of Willow Plaza that stretches up, you know, a very short ways along Fairfax Boulevard, I believe, did, you know, according to that come out to be around, you know, seven or eight feet. However, it does not have a buffer with the road so is that really seven or eight feet of usable sidewalk width not really I mean nobody's gonna and nor would we want anybody to walk or bike right along the edge of the sidewalk right next to Eaton

[03:11:54] Place or Fairfax Boulevard and just for reference in the Fairfax City bike plan Eaton Place is rated as the same comfort level for bicyclists as Fairfax Boulevard which to me makes sense especially having heard from someone who used to work on Eaton Place used to work in Willowood Plaza it you know it's really not a great road to for bicyclists right now hopefully that will change but at any rate so and then the past that

[03:12:31] short ways past Eaton or Willowood Plaza it narrows to around five feet is what it came out as on Google Earth. And you do have a buffer at that point.

[03:12:47] And so you're not, you know, the width of the sidewalk and the buffer remains combined about the same. But it's just that you're narrowing the sidewalk but you now have a buffer there. But the sidewalk's only five feet, you know, again at that point. So that is, to my mind, way too narrow to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.

[03:13:12] I've actually heard from bicyclists saying that, you know, I commute along this route along the sidewalk on Fairfax Boulevard to get to work and asking us actually to build this trail so that they don't have to do that because they don't feel comfortable doing that, which I can fully understand.

[03:13:35] So, I mean, thinking about this, the reason why we want shared use paths to be, you know, 8 to 12 feet, 10 feet in this case, is so that you have enough room to accommodate all the uses along there, bicyclists, pedestrians, especially strollers.

[03:13:54] And I want to point to something I actually came across just the other day, just a quick Google search. So this is from The Courier, an Ohio local daily newspaper owned by the same company, incidentally, that runs the Loudon Times Mirror, I believe it's called.

[03:14:21] And, yeah, so a Finley man died after falling off a bicycle and being struck by a vehicle on Trenton Avenue about 942 a.m. Wednesday. This is from October of last year. He was hit by a vehicle after losing control of his bicycle and falling into traffic.

[03:14:38] You know, he was operating a bicycle eastbound on the sidewalk in the 700 block of West Trenton Avenue, et cetera, et cetera. So, you know, we have a case where the bicyclist was on the sidewalk and lost control and fell into traffic and died.

[03:14:58] And, you know, this was October 30th of 2024 is when the story was written at any rate. And, you know, thinking about when we have a situation where we're forcing bicyclists onto a sidewalk that is, for a significant portion of it, perhaps five feet in width, and really for the whole length, you know, five feet effectively because of the lack of a buffer where it's wider.

[03:15:31] They go, you know, they see a rock on the sidewalk or they have to dodge a pedestrian or a stroller. And, you know, I could just see a situation where they, you know, they have to swerve and then they lose control and end up falling into traffic.

[03:15:51] Luckily, I'm not aware of that having happened, you know, at least to my knowledge. But I simply cannot, in good conscience, put ourselves in a situation where we are forcing people to do that when we have an alternative before us here.

[03:16:07] Now, I certainly don't support the full build, as I've reiterated over the past, over a year now. Of these three options, I'm fully in favor of constructing just the western half. I wish that things were done differently earlier on in the process.

[03:16:27] before, you know, back when I was in middle school and high school, really, so that maybe we could have seen a, you know, for example, combining the path with the sidewalk, explore it a bit further, since it is, you know, if the separate extension project is built, it's going to be combined with the sidewalk anyway, but, you know, given these three options, I'm fully in favor of the West Half, because I just cannot in good conscience cancel the

[03:16:58] project with absolutely no guarantee that we would have any further projects that would be funded and would be built and would come to fruition after that, providing that same level of connectivity, you know, from the I-66 trail to Willwood Plaza and then up to at least Fairwoods Parkway. So, yeah, and I also do want to point out, definitely second Council Member Amos's comments earlier that I have actually heard personally from members of the community who

[03:17:36] several of them have have said to me that you know I support actually in a lot of cases a full build but I do not feel comfortable my neighbors do in some cases and they do not feel comfortable coming forward because of our neighbors who oppose the trail I've heard that from several people and I Fully, you know, my experience has been that the vast majority of comments both in support and against the trail have been respectful and reasonable, but we definitely need to be very cognizant of how we are affecting the accessibility of our government and public

[03:18:16] engagement to other residents of the community. Right, so, oh, and one more thing, I mentioned this before, but just to, because it bears repeating, we have the community-wide greenhouse gas inventory summary from the 2020 report.

[03:18:39] So of, you know, commercial buildings, residential buildings, on-road transportation, off-road transportation, air passenger travel, commuter rail, the largest share of total greenhouse gas emissions, 29%, were from on-road transportation.

[03:18:57] And somewhere in here we have the amount, yeah, so 2% of total emissions were sequestered by trees.

[03:19:14] So 29% due to on-road transportation and only 2% sequestered by trees. So to my mind, we really need to do all we can to try and provide opportunities for bicyclists to make trips by bike instead of by car.

[03:19:32] You look at Europe, you know, you look at the stats in Europe for how many people commute by bike versus other means, it's way higher than over here in North America. And you look at the roads, the infrastructure there, it's a lot more bike-friendly than what we have here in America, North America.

[03:19:52] And so, you know, do we necessarily know that building the western half will lead to, at the end of the day, a greater amount of or lesser amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere? You know, I don't believe so.

[03:20:07] I've looked into it. It would be nice if we had a cut and dry answer, but we just don't, you know, from what I can tell. And, yeah, so that's all I have for now. Thank you. Council Member McQuillan.

[03:20:24] Thank you for your comments, Council Member Bates. I always appreciate you sharing your thought process because it really helps me kind of understand where you're coming from. You mentioned safety, and safety is a big concern of mine as well. So I walked the entire proposed trail and then also just walked from Fairfax Boulevard down Eaton, crossed that beautiful light, the new light with the crosswalk across Chambridge Road.

[03:20:50] And I observed lots and lots of students walking that path as well. from Fairfax High School, so it might not be safe, but we're using it, our students are using it, so it's something to look into.

[03:21:07] Also, you mentioned the greenhouse summary report and the road transportation sequestered by trees. It still doesn't address like the stormwater runoff stuff and the stuff that we know for fact that will increase with this plan and this project.

[03:21:24] Also, something to note is on Fairfax Boulevard, where the newer sidewalks are, there are trees between the street and the sidewalk, so that's always another option as well as we consider and think about places that already have the connection there, and we just wanna make it more usable or wider for multiple pedestrians and bicycles to use.

[03:21:48] I have biked all over the city. I am a former fitness instructor. I trained for all of my triathlons in this city. I have ridden on the road, on the sidewalks. I have pushed strollers on these sidewalks and I would say, I know that Eaton Place by that score is saying that it's as unsafe as Fairfax Boulevard, but it's 25 miles per hour on that stretch.

[03:22:13] I know that sometimes they go a little faster, but maybe with enforcement that would change. So there are, I think some solutions to address the things and the concerns that you have in a more feasible manner that doesn't affect our environment.

[03:22:30] - Thank you. - Council Member Hall. - If we can go back to the west side just for a second. Wendy, I think you said it would still need to go through the 30, 60, 90. Is there another opportunity for community engagement?

[03:22:45] Can you explain that process of that specific option? - Yeah, my understanding of that option is that it's, because it's a shorter plan, it still needs to go back through the plan review. And so it would start

back at 30% and at 60% there would be another public hearing on just the shorter project.

[03:23:05] But again, it's on minor design details of that 60% plan. I'm looking for the email from VDOT. That's why I'm shuffling back. Sorry, one second. Could we do a town hall to gather information on that, to be able to actually put in the time and have people feel like they have a voice on that rather than just the Engage Fairfax page when we are transitioning potentially from 30% to 60%?

[03:23:35] Or could we maybe do a town hall sooner on just that option to gather feedback? We can certainly discuss the public engagement process and how that would work and bring in our communications team for that as well. But I do want to be clear that the expectation is that it's the same alignment that we're considering.

[03:23:56] We're truncating the project. We're not looking now at an on-road path. Okay, but I think the community engagement process, the conversation, the walk that we all did, that was very heavily Eastside focused.

[03:24:11] whereas i think a few of us have walked the west side a few of us know what it's like over there and i i do think that regardless of whether or not the feedback can truly be incorporated into any sort of design changes or enhancements i still think people should know what it looks like and we should be given that opportunity as council to review that together as well i understand it's thorny and we'll you know bundle up or whatever but thank you council member hardy chandler uh councilmember hall i appreciate that question and i guess that's my i just want to build on that and

[03:24:46] just i think more information about that option and how we could move forward maybe a recommended plan for what that would look like it wouldn't necessarily be a commitment to that but i think since that is something that we have expressed some questions about i think some additional information about that option um and also considering the timeline that we have before us right so would what would be the recommendation for educating us on a process that would give us

[03:25:25] more information about that option including potentially sort of an an educational component for the community so i will confirm this would be my understanding of how this of how that would proceed if the if the city council elects to proceed with the with the west half is that that would first have a city council resolution to formalize that and then we would discuss with vdot i will obviously discuss with them ahead of time but the then we would have sit down and and discuss with them what the plan submissions would look like um and what the time they've given us sort of a rough outline of how long that would take and that's why they've given us this year-long

[03:26:03] time frame um i can provide even that time frame for you and sort of what the expectation is for vdot for us to get back to where we are now in terms of advertisement but there would be opportunity for public engagement built into that schedule and just for clarification would that resolution be sort of authorizing proceeding with that is is that what the resolution it would be author my understanding also from vdot is that even that this would need to go to the ctv for approval this is what i'm reading the email from them that i handed out to you all um that even if we were to

[03:26:39] just do the west half, that this would still need to go with justification to the CTB for approval. But VDOT has told me that this is a recommendation that they would support to the CTB. Excuse me, Wendy, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think VDOT also told us that even though it's a limited amount of redesign, the effort to get the plans to half of the original design would be on the city's dime.

[03:27:10] Correct. That is also listed there. And what would be that cost? I would not think it would be that significant in the range of \$20,000 to \$50,000. So I guess my inquiry is, you know, putting all of that together, having what that might look like would be informative.

[03:27:31] What VDOT has said, if you look at the sheet that I handed out, costs associated with the redo of plans and impacts the schedule delay will likely be at the city expense. So what I think we're looking at at this point is that the staff is looking for direction because we are looking at, you know, we have until May 25th to actually put out this RFP if we're going to go with the whole trail.

[03:28:05] So there's no point in putting out the RFP if we're not going to support the whole trail. So we would need, if we're not going to support the whole trail, we would either need to know if there is support for a resolution to cancel the trail, which has a price tag of \$3.7 million that we have to account for.

[03:28:24] Our next discussion in the work session is setting the proposed tax rate. And obviously, if we have to repay or account for or have on our balance sheets \$3.7 million that we owe, that has to be a discussion that we have in setting the proposed tax rate. If we go with the western half, if we have a resolution that is voted on, the direct staff to only pursue the construction of the western half, then that goes back to Wendy to go back to VDOT and to say that the city council has passed a resolution

[03:28:58] to look at only completing half of this project, right? We would know at that point that \$20,000 to \$50,000 would be our nickel. It's a ballpark. Ballpark to redesign, so we would be picking up the tab for that.

[03:29:16] And we don't have a guarantee that the CTB would approve it, But VDOT has said they will support that, they will recommend it to the CTB, but it's still up to the CTB. So they could still say, nope, in which case this puts us in a different predicament.

[03:29:33] If they say, no, we don't approve just doing that, we gave you money to do the whole thing. If you don't want to do the whole thing, then, you know, go figure it out for yourselves. But at that point, the RFP window has passed, and we can't put this out for an RFP.

[03:29:50] So this is where we are, and we can imagine lots of different scenarios about a new trail or a new design, but here's the reality. In 18 months and one week, early voting will start for mayor, city council, and school board.

[03:30:07] In 18 months and one week, we elect a mayor and city council and school board. And so when we look at talking about a year to reset and all of the timelines for this, some of us may be back or none of us may be back.

[03:30:22] But then the next council and mayor, whoever that is, will be left with this. So we need to understand, to Councilmember Hardy Chandler's point, these projects are long, people change up here on the dais, and then people are left with what we did, just like we are left with what they did.

[03:30:44] Like, we're all trying to do our best to be good stewards of these long-term projects for the city. But this is where we are, and the staff needs some direction. We can't just say we need to think about it because there's the deadline for the RFP in May. If we're going to do a resolution then it needs to go to VDOT and to the CTB. If you're going to cancel it, we need to know that because we have to factor in that repayment of that money into our upcoming budget. This is where we are Councilmember Amos. Yeah, and I included this in my email earlier.

[03:31:20] I don't support dragging this out. This ends with us and we're gonna figure this out But it doesn't have to be tonight. It could be March 25th or it could be early April But we're not going to drag this out into summer. That doesn't make sense obviously the RFP is in May So we have a tangible deadline. So this stops with us one way or another As I shared before I haven't even made up my mind on it I probably potentially lean towards a third option mostly because of the fiscal impact There's 3.7 in a year. We're opposing proposing a nine-and-a-half tax increase potentially It warrants further review with that additional context that we haven't done

[03:31:58] It's our first work session together on it and to your point. Yes That's because of the two-year cycle or majority new but at the same time We've been drinking for from a water hose for months, and that's not fair to us either I mean we step in and then obviously we got so many different fires and things to get caught up on I haven't even finished all my one-on-one orientations yet So asking us to make this decision tonight. I don't think it's feasible. I don't support it Even though I would probably lean towards the third option currently, but I need more time So I would prefer we either

[03:32:36] Save it for March 25th early April or something else, but it's not happening tonight in my opinion, and I'm sorry to staff for that again direction wise I'm Again, I'm probably leaning towards a third option But I'm not gonna give you any guarantees until I feel comfortable councilmember Hardy Chandler than council member hall i would just say coupled with needing a little bit more time to process this information that if more about option three could be brought at that date i think that would put us in a better position to not kick this can further down the road so i think it's an and here

[03:33:14] i completely agree that the buck stops here as far as this decision will end with this council yay whatever it is um it will not be made tonight but what i can tell you tonight is i do not support a full build i will not support any plans for a full build i would like the information that has been requested as far as the third option goes and if there is further confirmation that could be derived on whether or not that 3.7 is actually going to be due 100 if we cancel that is also useful information i know you i can tell you now i cannot there is even vdot they're saying it is

[03:33:50] ultimately up to the ctb so can we just ask the ctb i mean i i don't i'm not saying you're fear mongering but there's fear-mongering that's going on up here with council members and the community and I think we're like oh it's a really big budget year oh we owe a lot of money oh no we need got to do this like it it's concerning so that is a political question as to whether or not you want to approach the CTB on that that is not something that I would be doing that is something that would probably happen at your level to engage with the CTB members but again they have they have written guidance and written policy and

[03:34:27] And so all I can tell you is what VDOT staff, high-level staff, have told me about the recommendation. So I just want to be very clear that there's really not that much more that I can come back with about that. The answer is that they would recommend repayment. Okay. And I have to say, I think you've given us more information tonight on that canceling step than I've heard at any other meetings to date.

[03:34:46] So I do want to thank you for that. So I'll let you go, and then I'll finish up. Yeah, I guess to build off of that, it might be useful information to also assess, and this could be a VDOT question, have they ever provided a recommendation that failed with the CTB?

[03:35:03] I mean, if they say that they would support the third option, has that ever happened where they provided feedback and the CTB said no to them? I don't know the answer. No, I know. That's not for tonight. That's for tonight. And I just, from my perspective, that's asking a lot in a hypothetical.

[03:35:22] Like, hypothetically, our project is our project. You know, the CTB based on, and they have a lot of things that they're considering, not just the project on its own merit, I'm sure, but there's lots of things going on contextually in the Commonwealth of Virginia as far as funds and what they might prefer to use the funds for.

[03:35:41] So it's not just my perspective. They're not going to give you a hypothetical as, well, okay, no. We're going to ask them if we want them to consider, and they're going to tell us. And there's other things beyond the merit of our project itself that might influence or impact their decision on what to do with that approval.

[03:36:04] I'm sorry, the CTB. And I just want to read one more thing. I'm going through, I'm reading back through my notes from my conversation. And they were, what I was told was that, again, the concessionaire funding is tied to state law, which states that any, all the projects that are being built with the concessionaire funding need to show benefits to the toll users.

[03:36:23] And they need to be to the benefit of the users of the facility. And so meaning if we're not producing a project, we're not producing a benefit to the toll users. And so that was, that was the code statement. and again, and that's the direction that the CTB would be following.

[03:36:39] So that's what they were telling me was that it just doesn't seem likely that those CTB would say, no, you're good for \$3.7 million. So that language is like parameters that they typically abide by. Well, it was parameters for this. Understood. Yes. Council Member Peterson.

[03:36:56] I actually wasn't done. Sorry, Council Member Hall. If option three were to be selected and it does not require the full 20 million, that money would revert back to CTB, and VTA, kind of Necessant Arrows, all this stuff. Okay. And if it came in and it was over budget, then what happens?

[03:37:15] If it comes in over the \$20 million, well, wouldn't it be 20? So the whole project, to be clear, is \$20 million. I'm sorry. What if the west side? Whatever the – sorry. Wait. Are we talking about the west side or the whole project? I'm talking about the west side. Okay. I think I'm confusing things in my head. Sorry. So we have – the city has \$20 million.

[03:37:34] And so this does give, in theory, more wiggle room on the cost when it comes in because there is that funding but anything that is not used would go back to the pot okay but the full 20 million that's allocated for the full trail is allowed to technically be used for just the western portion potentially it's a good question and one that I will ask VDOT okay I think I'm done my direction is clear on what I want correct thank you councilmember Peterson seems to me two

[03:38:06] things would be helpful regarding this West End. One is a design modification and the other is a high-level consultation with CTB. And ordering that conversation from my standpoint needs to begin with a modified, I recognize, you know, what you've said, that that's problematic in terms of redesign. On the other hand, if there is a redesign that addresses significant conflicts here I think under any circumstance we need to have a high-level conferral with

[03:38:42] CTB to raise that and see where that goes and it would be my view that that really has to kind of come first before we get too far down the pike here I'm not even sure what that would look like it's the trend it's commonwealth transportation board and you bring matters before the board and okay mr.

[03:39:08] Foster the from my perspective the appropriate response would be for the mayor to reach out to the ctb representative for northern virginia you're not going to get a you're not going to get before the whole board you could get and ask the representative that represents northern virginia to to comment on that and that would probably be the best you'll get because the rep because there's there's no there's no way for us to get on an agenda for the ctb for something and it's hypothetical, given the current circumstances.

[03:39:45] But there is a representative from Northern Virginia, and we can certainly reach out to them. And given that would probably, the mayor is the chief elected official, would probably be the appropriate person to ask that question. I would just say I've actually been involved in a CTB conferral, and I do agree that talking with the representative is the way to go.

[03:40:10] But I think we have a diversity of elected official perspectives here. and probably we do a joint conferral would be my recommendation. That is certainly, again, certainly council's prerogative.

[03:40:26] I'm just telling you what my experience has been and that's typically how it would be done. But it's certainly up to this group. Where it stands now is we are still working towards advertising for the full bill.

[03:40:46] I understand nobody wants that, but until council takes affirmative action, That's the decision that the staff is working from. So you do have time, and if you want us to bring this back as an agenda item on March 25th, we'll do so, or at the next regular meeting, at the April meeting.

[03:41:07] We can certainly do that, and we'll certainly try to get whatever additional information that you want, but again, we've been here for two and a half hours on this topic, and i'm not sure we're really any closer than when than when we started um so we just you know we we we can we'll continue to give you information but we've given you we've had the conversations with vdot we've presented you the information which i know you haven't had a chance to fully

[03:41:43] review but we've we've given that to you so um it's just we're we're at this point from our perspective but we're just we're waiting on a decision if the council wants to change the direction um than the current direction that we're that we're in but i think council has given the direction that none of us up here support the full build so that in itself is direction and i i recognize it's been two and a half hours and i really recognize that you've all been here and we really appreciate it we're nearing the end here right like the finish line is here we're just

[03:42:20] trying to get this council there so that's important to me and i'm sorry time is valuable but it's important but from a process perspective council again it wasn't this council official action has been taken that is what the staff goes on until you reverse that official action we are still going to move forward in that fashion that is that's that's that's how that's how this process works okay so then do you need official direction to not move forward with the full trail because I think that's what we're saying I'm not trying to be difficult I'm not trying to do semantics and all that but don't waste your time on a full trail conversation it's not happening so the question is do you want a resolution to cancel

[03:43:00] it or resolution to pursue half of it I want a resolution that will consider canceling and pursuing the west side I got you a third of the way there I mean right before we continue the overall sentiment while I know there are a couple members who support the full design these two Yeah, it was when you stepped out, but she supports the full option, but also is willing to have a conversation about the third.

[03:43:27] So, but, and I know the mayor supports the full design. I think so we, because we can, you know, yell at each other or whatever. We're not going to do that. Okay. To sum up, it seems like the majority is open to the third option, and we need more information about that.

[03:43:49] What I will ask staff is that, can you just give us a couple weeks? Is that okay? No, that's what... Because I think what got lost is that it still doesn't have to happen tonight. We don't need to bicker and figure that out. That is correct. You're exactly right.

[03:44:05] We'll put it on the agenda. All I'm saying is that... You need direction. From a legal process standpoint, the governing body of the city of Fairfax has made a decision. Correct. Granted, it was a decision that this group of individuals did not make, but the governing body made it.

[03:44:24] You are asking us to go, you cannot just say, well, we have consensus to go against an official action. All I'm saying is you need to take official action to tell us to do something that's contrary to the existing official action. Correct, correct.

[03:44:41] But we are not going to go out tomorrow and advertise for the bid. We have until May 28th. So you have time to decide. All I'm saying is until you decide to tell us to do something different, that is officially, that is still the path that we are obligated to do to continue to comply with the funding requirements of the funding that's been awarded to us.

[03:45:06] Could we do a resolution to pause until the next discussion? You don't need to do that. No, you don't need to do that. We're not going to go bid. All I'm saying is if this keeps dragging out and you haven't taken official action, come May, we're going to go and advertise the full bid because that is the current official action that the council for the city of Fairfax has taken.

[03:45:32] So to be productive, and so we're not cyclical, we're not making that call tonight, but we need to make it soon. Correct. So over the next few weeks. That's all we're saying. And so if you want it on the agenda for March 25th, that's perfectly fine. We'll add it to the agenda. If you want to wait until April, we can do that as well.

[03:45:50] To advertise May 28th, we're going to have to give the consultant time to prepare the bid package. So I would say the beginning of May, the consultant's going to have to start putting the bid package together in order to advertise at the end of money.

[03:46:08] Spending money to prepare the bid package. Yeah, I don't think we wait until May. I think we can do this, well, I don't even know what the CTB process would look like in meeting with the representative. I didn't realize that. We could do the meeting right after the 25th.

[03:46:24] Whatever council prefers, I'm okay with. Just to clarify for tonight so we don't get lost on track, we aren't making decisions tonight. I think our opinions have been heard. We can move forward, and at the next meeting or next time we discuss this, we'll make a decision.

[03:46:41] and we're going to live by it because once bid goes out, I'm supporting whatever the bid is because that's an industry practice. You break that, we're not going to have development again in this city

or at least not good development. So that's pretty much where I stand on it. I don't want to keep spinning through this because that could happen easily.

[03:46:59] So let's call it a wrap. Any other comments, Council Member Bates and then Council Member Peterson? Thank you. Just to tie up a few more points, You know, just take a step back for a bit.

[03:47:15] If you're on a bicycle, you know, you're moving at a higher speed than someone who's walking, right? So because you have to keep up your speed to stay upright, you have less time to change direction. And you're also on two wheels, two inline wheels, so you're less stable than someone who's walking.

[03:47:37] And that is, of course, a source of stories like the one I mentioned where we hear people losing control of their bikes. And then with regard to the whole funding situation, we have essentially a guarantee here that we have funding to construct either the full build or the western half, but no guarantee of any other funding for any other project that would provide that connection in a different form.

[03:48:06] Is that correct? yeah um and and lastly to uh council member hall's point um i think that what we might be what you might be looking for here is or she's out of the room but uh at any rate um a uh we could potentially do uh if if that would make people feel more comfortable a resolution simply removing uh all sections except for section a1 from the project um just to kind of have that in

[03:48:41] place uh or just you know wait until we have full consensus on a very specific path forward it's you know just something to kind of put forward i think i think it's a good idea to seek um advice on the wording of the resolution based on what is feasible and meets the process and the requirements oh and mr lupkeman hello i just want to close the loop a little bit on the consultation with the commonwealth

[03:49:17] transportation board a comment that you made council member peterson about diversity of opinions what are you proposing because if we have more than two council members getting together it becomes a public meeting and i don't think the commonwealth transportation board representative is going to want to have a public meeting so i think if staff is trying to get some direction as to setting up something with the commonwealth transportation board or assisting you all in doing that we need a little guidance as to what you're talking about in terms of how many of you are going to be involved in that discussion does the mayor plus two council members mayor doesn't mayor doesn't count for sorry mayor for purposes of quorum i think it's quite evident so two two

[03:49:55] council members or or no more than two council members and well and the mayor but i'm only counting council members right okay so just looking for some guidance i don't know if we need that tonight but especially since council member halls out of the room yes and i would just say again maybe as a friendly addition to council member Hamas's comments I do think we should be in a position to consider some and possibly even a minor adjustment to this West End thing as we do that as I think that might address some key

[03:50:27] conflicts here well I'm certainly happy to request a meeting with the representative to the CTB and see when we can arrange for a meeting or a call Any further comments or discussion on this?

[03:50:48] Or does staff feel like we have given adequate direction? Well, all right then. Thank you so much for your patience. And what do we have next, Ms. Shinnaberry? Our last work session item is a discussion on the proposed FY26 budget.

[03:51:06] Brian Foster, city manager, will discuss the proposed budget.

[03:51:58] Okay. So, again, so we've, for the work session for the budget, it's, again, we're here, the majority, actually all of you, except for Council Member Hall, have had their budget.

[03:52:17] We had the staff budget meetings that we scheduled, so we had the opportunity to ask questions and so forth, at least individually. This is your first opportunity to continue that discussion as a group. Um, we, uh, can talk about, you know, as far as we're here, we don't, again, as, as we did last time, there's no set, we don't have a set presentation or anything.

[03:52:41] Um, the goal, uh, from this evening, um, is in order to stay on our schedule, the, the, the budget schedule that we've, um, set, um, is that the, after the work session, we will go back into, uh, the regular council meeting, and then there'll be a resolution to, um, um for you to set the advertised tax rate again the tax rate that you advertise is not necessarily the tax rate that you adopt and just from a process perspective

[03:53:19] and you heard me mention this before i i typically recommend to councils and governing bodies to advertise a rate that is higher than what is recommended only for the sole purpose is to give because we still are discussing the budget but in order to meet our advertising requirements that just gives you additional flexibility as you continue to have discussions should you wish to make changes to the budget then you have that opportunity if it was to require additional if the changes that you wanted to make require additional resources i'm not suggesting that

[03:53:55] you actually adopt a tax rate that is higher than what is in within what i've recommended it's purely a tool to give you flexibility while you continue your budget deliberations so and you asked me last time did we have a suggested amount i think the resolution that was prepared is for 115 which is two and a half cents more than the recommended rate in the budget but ultimately when you make the motion to adopt the resolution it's whatever number you want that

[03:54:31] to be we've we you asked us and that's what we sort of pre-filled in assuming that council is amenable to that recommendation but ultimately what we need from you tonight we can have as much discussion as you'd like but ultimately the the end point that we need is to for council to make a motion and pass the resolution that will state the what the advertised tax rates going be because you can always adopt less you cannot adopt higher when you come time to actually

[03:55:04] adopt the tax rate we're ready to answer questions or help facilitate discussion all right council member amos i'd be curious on where my colleagues fall uh and i don't have any additional budget questions at this time still working through it but in terms of the advertised tax rate i think i would feel more most comfortable just sticking with the recommended option of nine and a half and considering the the the split payment option providing that like 5.6 million kind of adjustment as well I think we could we could feasibly work

[03:55:44] with that but I'd be curious on what everyone else thinks council member McQuillan I agree with you I don't have much more to elaborate but yeah I'm comfortable with that as well councilmember Hall I am not really in favor of increasing I my only discussion purposes on it are that I was speaking with our attorney Brian Lepkeman earlier about something else and we start talking with the schools and I don't want to do this but I'm just throwing it out there as a conversation point if for some reason in conversation with the

[03:56:24] schools if things increase if there are other things we're not aware of between now and when we adopt the budget I'm I do have concerns that being said if the schools were to go up then we're finding ways to reduce that here regardless as far as I'm concerned so I really would like to go with the advertised rate but I do want to recognize that and open it up for discussion or additional conversation from JC or Gwen if you think that we something else that we

[03:56:55] should know about that yes mr. Martinez so just to clarify the managers proposed rate of nine and a half cents plus our current rate \$1.03 that's \$1.12 and a half is that council member Amos is that what you're suggesting as the upper limit to advertise the twelve and a half not potentially because it hasn't been seen yet but potentially the 115 is the advertised rate which again to the manager's point does not mean that that's what it's gonna be no correct I

[03:57:33] I, if it weren't 9.5 that were being advertised on all the budget considerations we have to take into conversation, I probably would just say advertise at a higher rate to build in that flexibility, but I don't really see us going beyond 9.5 anyway, and I know you want to build in something in case something extra dramatic happened, but I also just consider that we have kind of a 5.6 million buffer with the split payment.

[03:58:04] I know that there's considerations with that but I think the split payment option in addition to the nine-and-a-half is enough That's just my opinion though. So I would say the twelve-and-a-half. Yeah Understood and just to to reiterate what the manager said as well So there's still a couple of unknowns here potentially not to bring it up again But the George Snyder trail the three point seven million dollars I think I communicated that we would have to sort of set aside money whether it's known or material Materially likely to happen. I would have to set aside and reserve those funds from unassigned fund balance and move those funds over to a restricted

[03:58:43] Fund balance specifically for that equates to about four cents That is a potential option. I think it would I demonstrated that it would reduce our unassigned fund balance currently at 17.8% down to 15.3 slightly above the minimum threshold of 15 or about one million dollars more than what that threshold would be fy 25 all things constant no rate increase or anything like that is showing us at a deficit again trying to pay for the school tuition contract so there's a potential liability

[03:59:20] there there's also a lot of other unknowns with the federal government right now some potential federal funds. Luckily, we don't have much exposure to that per se as direct, but there's a lot of indirect exposure that we have through the county and some of our other partners as well, school funding included in that. There are other unknowns still that are sort of going on. In addition to that, whether it's the council member Hall's point where the tuition contract is going to happen and come in at, we won't know that till September, October. We are very hopeful, and I'm being very optimistic here that we're going to hit eight and a half which I can't say I'm

[03:59:59] saying that but we're gonna hit eight and a half or hopefully slightly below that and then there is a little bit of savings there so having further discussions with the superintendent we're trying to fine-tune that I know the proposed budget on the state side that hasn't been finalized yet but they were proposing I think a bonus a thousand dollar bonus to all teachers in the state the state does not pay that directly it's a small percentage of the state contributes usually the localities unfortunately have to pick up the majority of that tab so that was not accounted for in the development of the FY25 budget or the 26 budget as

[04:00:36] well so a couple of unknowns I'm hoping revenues would be better as well but if the economy starts pulling back because of higher unemployment or inflation those are things that we're going to have to address we do provide quarterly updates to council and in discussions with Gwen we're really going to be looking at this on a monthly basis quarterly to you all but internally more monthly just to ensure that we're tracking and trying to provide guidance and feedback to the manager and the council as soon as we can. Councilmember Hardy Chandler you had a question?

[04:01:12] Not a question but I'll just reiterate what I said when this was initially posed that I think it is sort of insurance I mean it's the advertised right it's not something that we are committing to and if it's lower it's lower which is good but i think that um while uh having you know our plan in mind there are unknowns and i think if this was our personal financing we would build in that cushion for unknowns um so i think it's the responsible thing to um support the 1.15 rate as

[04:01:52] the advertised rate reiterating that it is not a council commitment it is insurance it's a buffer basically for things that we can't accurately predict that could unfold council member peterson just to clarify you mentioned inflation etc what about recession where does that leave us on a prudent recommendation here plus minus what do we do so it's going to depend on the severity of

[04:02:30] recession i mean if we're talking about significant unemployment specifically in the federal workforce which is my biggest concern and fear right now given what's sort of transpiring across the river that's going to impact northern virginia tremendously so it's going to impact the meals tax it's going to impact the sales tax it's going to impact a lot of things including potentially real estate revenues as well if there's a downturn on that a lot of that is unknown i think as i

[04:03:00] As I mentioned, Gwen and I, our budget director, are going to be extremely conservative and cautious in monitoring on a weekly, monthly basis to ensure that we are meeting projections or targets. And then, if need be, trying to advise the manager and senior leadership and counsel of what we're sort of seeing, if we can try to foretell and do a corrective action as soon as possible.

[04:03:26] I don't know what that potentially looks like. I do think that there's a possibility for recession happening, given everything that's going on right now, or at least a downturn. The other point, maybe this is one just to sort of put it in perspective, given what we heard this evening, which I guess is a chunk of this, maybe it's embedded in what you just said, is the increase in assessments, increase in assessed value.

[04:03:59] And I think the note was it's jumped up a bunch, right? And then on top of it, we're still raising the rate, the real estate rate as well. so what we're looking at here if we go into recession is potentially a contraction of assessed rates as well and that would be at least i mean tell me how that flows through the system here so our director of real estate assessments is actually in the room i can have her come up and be more specific but real estate assessments christine can join us christine's real estate

[04:04:33] assessments happen yearly unless there's a catastrophic event. I don't see us reassessing throughout the year, but I will let our director of real estate assessment sort of answer that question and be more accurate than I can. Sure. So we monitor assessments throughout the year.

[04:04:54] It is an annual process, but we are analyzing sales. We're comparing them to assessed values every week. So we have a good idea of what the market is doing at any given time. And as of today, it's still a rising market. But that can change. And I've been through the recession here. I worked in the real estate assessment office at the time. And it plateaued.

[04:05:25] That's what we saw first, values plateau, and then they started to drop. So assessments are effective January 1st of each year. So anything that happens after that, we really can't take into consideration.

[04:05:41] So if those numbers are budgeted for, they're already there. But the next year, the sales leading up to the revaluation, that would certainly, you know, can affect the assessments.

[04:06:00] But there are, like JC said, there's a lot of unknowns. Do we need to hedge this year against next year in terms of the rates we set? I'm sorry, can you repeat that? Do we need to hedge this year against next year in the case that we are anticipating at least some probability of recession and a decline so that we're setting a rate now that anticipates that we're going to see those changed conditions next year?

[04:06:28] Well, for 1-1-26, so that's part of this budget, right? We are not, we don't have any built-in increase in assessments other than new construction that's like in the pipeline that may be coming online.

[04:06:44] But there is no increase in any of the property groups from what happened on 1-1-25. And if I can add, Council Member Peterson, so again, like the manager said, trying to potentially set a rate slightly higher than what the manager proposed.

[04:07:06] Additionally, buys us about another month and a half to two months. The budget's not adopted until May 6. During that time, a lot is transpiring. I think something pretty significant is going to happen this coming Friday with the federal administration of whether they're going to have a continuing resolution or not.

[04:07:23] Other things are going to evolve. That buys us, collectively as local government officials, more time to address and potentially adapt to that. Again, and I know Council Member Hardin-Channeler likes it when I give analogies, setting this rate to a potential 115 is very similar to being approved for a car loan of up to \$50,000.

[04:07:50] I would hope if you're approved to that amount, you don't go buy a \$50,000 vehicle, you buy something that's \$40,000 or \$30,000. getting pre-approved for a \$500,000 home loan, you could go buy a house for that amount, but hopefully it's slightly less than that.

[04:08:07] So to the Council Member Harding Chandler's comment, it's just a buffer. Remind me again of the lock-in date, May something we're locking. May 6 is your adoption. You adopted May, that's correct.

[04:08:25] Well, I mean, you know, my gut is 15 is a little high, but we do need a buffer, right? Council Member Bates. Thank you. I, you know, again, I still have mixed feelings about this.

[04:08:43] If it wasn't such a huge increase, I'd, you know, definitely be a lot more cut and dry that we should have programmed in that buffer. But I'm still leaning toward putting in the buffer. I think it seems like a safe bet, knowing that, you know, we have no intention of going that high unless absolutely necessary.

[04:09:08] Council Member McQuillan? No? Okay. Council Member Amos. uh i mean didn't consider the idea of a recession so i'm glad you brought that up so uh i can be amenable to a buffer does it have to be to 115 i mean i don't know how i've never had to adequately prep for a recession i was a kid in the last one so unless you count covid but i was also not here so uh well kind of here so how much room would we need i mean to which was brought up before we haven't even discussed our priorities yet that's not until the April 5th

[04:09:46] meeting but at the same time I think a lot of us including myself were willing to suspend some of our ideas and priorities unfortunately because of the budget we're looking at so I'm just wondering could we settle on like a one to 112 or 113 rather than the full 115 if that's okay with counsel just the recommended is 112 sorry I keep thinking about it wrong I so nine and a

[04:10:14] half can we look at okay the average the the the recommended the recommended in the budget the recommended tax rate is one dollar twelve and a half one twelve and a half so that's what's recommended so anything above that is what if you want to advertise either at that or above it it's whatever number your council is comfortable with.

[04:10:45] We suggested a number that basically the delta is what the 1% of meals tax would generate because we have, remember, there's a meals tax on the table as well. So part of that rationale was in case you didn't want to do the meals, at the end of the day, if you were like, I don't want to do that whole meals tax proposal, you can put it on real estate.

[04:11:09] You add, you've got unforeseen circumstances, schools come in higher, whatever things might happen, it just gives you a buffer. But ultimately, it's really just to, that's really all it's for is to give you options.

[04:11:25] Whatever you advertise, that's the ceiling without starting the process over. That's all that this, that's all we're asking. We're not asking you to adopt a rate. We're not saying that the rate you advertise is the rate we recommend you adopt.

[04:11:42] It's just, it's basically you're setting the ceiling for what you can adopt by what you advertise. Okay. I mean, obviously the preference for me would be the proposed rate as is, but I mean, there are a lot of factors we have to consider.

[04:12:01] We live in a very unique time, so I can be amenable to a buffer space, and I'll support my colleagues on that one. Council Member Hall. I'm going to go with no higher than the acting manager's recommended rate of 1.125. Council Member McQuillan.

[04:12:21] I, too, want to go with the city manager's recommendation of 1.125. Thank you. Any other thoughts? Well, you know, I don't have a vote in this, as in so many things.

[04:12:42] But I do have an opinion. So, okay. So, right, so setting the rate. I just can't vote on the budget adoption. No, a budget adoption, I can vote on that.

[04:13:00] All right, so I have a vote and an opinion. How exciting. So, so exciting. I just think we need a buffer because, just because, again, just because you have a mortgage or a loan, we don't have to spend it, but we don't know what's going to happen between now and May.

[04:13:18] And so I sort of feel like every day something catastrophic happens. So I just think having the recommended higher advertised rate makes sense because just having it doesn't mean we are going to adopt it.

[04:13:35] But we can't go higher. We can't go higher. And so this is an insurance policy. And I'm not sure that there's a downside to having an insurance policy if everyone's very confident that if nothing catastrophic happens that we have a pretty good handle on what our budget priorities are.

[04:13:56] Right? Okay. So, Council Member Hardy-Chandler? We've got to go back into the regular meeting. Oh, right, got it. So, before you do that, do you want to have other budget discussion this

evening?

[04:14:15] And so, the only thing I would say is, whatever, when you make the resolution, and Melissa can correct me, the resolution that's printed in your agenda says 115. If you want it to be something, if you want it to be 112 ½ or some other number, whoever makes the motion just needs to say the number that you want, and that's what the vote will be on.

[04:14:40] This is true. I'm not even going to try, but would it be okay with council if we put in buffer that wasn't a ½, whatever? You know what I'm talking about. Like, is there a middle ground on that, or do we just want to do the full thing? Because for me, we don't need to split the vote on this.

[04:14:58] we either go buffer or not I'll support whatever the majority decision is so I just want to know if we can split it and just be comfortable with that or not really you can advertise whatever rate you want oh yeah no I'm asking them just because I'm curious okay well I support 115 so so you're looking for you're testing the water here right you're looking for the temperature right is that correct in my math it's two and a half cents above two and a half cents per hundred

[04:15:34] above the recommended rate so maybe instead of the 115 what if we did 1.14 that is council's prerogative but again you'll go back into regular session to do that okay can't i support 115 mcquillan council member bates well um i'm fine with either really uh because i put you down as 115 council member peterson council member peterson since you gave an option there council

[04:16:09] member peterson i would actually like council member hall to just share your thoughts a little bit about this and where you think this ought to fall you think you know you mentioned you wanted to stick with the 12 and a half so and this is all going to be part of budget questions and conversation but i i think we're asking too much out of our taxpayers right now i think the proposed increase is entirely too much i know i asked for suggestions from you on how to reduce that and

[04:16:46] we'll get to that in a minute but I think we need to find areas in which to reduce what we're asking and so that is why I'm not comfortable going higher because I think this is already too high and so this for me comfortably would be my max I'm if you all want to go with it I'm just going to vote no it's not a big deal I will be on the record as saying what I want we're not voting to increase right now it's just a conversation but I understand there's contingencies I understand there's worries but I still think that we need to reduce overall so I'm not that worried about

[04:17:17] this part of it my gut is to cut the buffer and I would do you know 13 maybe something like that 13 and a half but because I think I agree with council member Hall that there's an important signal we send here people are really unhappy about this situation I mean they are really unhappy about it I can understand why and I think you know we need to be sensitive to that and be sending the signal that we are prepared to do more than simply pass along you

[04:17:55] know what's been recommended here we're willing to do some surgery on it if we need to so well talking about the budget is a work in process right so this is why we have all these budget meetings and workshops to really look at the budget because the tax rate is going to support what we decide the budget is so when you say 115 it doesn't say that we are going to say well we're just gonna create a budget that meets that top level what we're saying is we've got a a buffer and we can continue to whittle down work on or reduce what we can so that ultimately when

[04:18:30] we go to budget adoption it can be one point whatever but if something unexpected catastrophic that we didn't anticipate happens between now and then we have a resource i don't i don't see taking a resource off the table i'm to me this is an insurance policy it's getting a higher mortgage approved and what you know you're going to spend councilmember Hardy Chandler and I would just add that I think that people would be very unhappy if we did not prepare for something that is unknown or unforeseen so I think that there would be much more displeasure with our lack of foresight around that

[04:19:10] it's my opinion okay so so any other budget discussions because we're still in the work session so is there any other budget discussions before I reconvene the meeting councilmember Hall okay so I did want to thank you for providing some suggestions for budget cuts like I had asked you for I was actually a little surprised by some of the suggestions and I'm just gonna read them out the first one I'm just reading them for those that are at home that are listening along still hopefully the first option was number one reduce the

[04:19:49] cash transfer to the CIP by nine hundred thousand dollars so rather than doing a cash contribution of 11.9 million, we would bring it down to 11 million. This would still be in compliance with our policy, all of those good things. Second option that you've listed is to reduce the appropriation to the Renaissance Housing Program by \$300,000. Proposed budget has an appropriation of \$392,000, which is the same as what was in 2025. So this would be reducing that from 392 down to 92.

[04:20:20] So I'm curious on how that would impact. So I took advantage of this plan. It's fantastic. So how would that specifically impact the people that are trying to use the program? It would be less available.

[04:20:39] So that program covers interest. And so the amount of interest that's able to be covered is directly related to the amount of funding that council appropriates.

[04:20:54] So by appropriating less funding, there would be less interest. So in theory, either fewer folks could take advantage of the program and or for lesser amounts of loans.

[04:21:10] But so those that are already committed to have already signed on are already in the program and already receiving benefits. Do they still continue to receive what they were already agreed upon? This would just be, yes, because those funds have already been committed. Even though they haven't been pulled on. Right, they've already been committed.

[04:21:25] So this would be new ones. And again, because we haven't had discussion, you could zero that out if you wanted to, but I just was doing nice round numbers.

[04:21:42] No, no, I understand, and I appreciate that. Okay, I appreciate that. You said eliminate the appropriation for non-profits, which would save \$300,000. This was newly initiated in 2025. It goes towards funding for, in 2025, Bright Paths, Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates, CASA, George Mason University Foundation, Center for the Arts, Lamb Center, Pathway Homes, Salvation Army, Heartleaf Center, a place to stand can you expand on that a little bit what how are those funds being used now who took advantage of that so so there's a formal pro this predates me so i i but but so my understanding

[04:22:22] this is a brand new program for fiscal 25 so part of the reason i suggested it's because it's not because it's new it's not a long-standing embedded something that that the folks are overly reliant on but it provides services to community there's a formal application process that these folks go through and the total is 300 and the amounts varied anywhere from 15 to 20 to maybe as high as 50 individually for the different groups and my understanding the the sheet that i saw earlier

[04:22:59] is that the whole 300 hasn't been allocated i mean as far as what people applied for and so forth only accounted for roughly 220 of the 300. - Council Member Hardee Chandler. - And I just wanna add, I visited the Hartleaf Center, which is one of the recipients of these funds, and it is an incredibly good return on investment.

[04:23:23] They, in particular, address children who, to intervene early with children who experience trauma. They also have bilingual services for very little money and focused on getting children early intervention who are Fairfax City residents.

[04:23:42] So I would, the impact of these funds while it's a new program, having talked to someone who is directly providing those services really highlights what a great investment that is. Again, mental health and some of the other services provided by these organizations, without the early intervention and then sometimes prevention, the cost of those services get much higher later in life.

[04:24:10] - Yeah, I'm with you on that. And then the last item that you suggested potentially was to defer the start of the school capital program by six months, which would save 1.5 million. So when I read this, I totally panicked and I did reach out to Carolyn Pitch as our school board chair. And she was actually supportive of this and understood and made me feel much more warm and fuzzy about this as being a potential option.

[04:24:35] So that's something that we could certainly discuss further. As far as the grand scheme of things, it's six months. It's not an extraordinary amount of time, but it is helpful. What I will say, though, is while I appreciate you coming up with this, I think what I was, and maybe I wasn't clear in my request, was that I was hopeful that we would be able to go back to each of the departments and say to them, okay, council is concerned about budget, or some members of council are concerned about budget, however that phrasing goes, whatever the direction is of council.

[04:25:04] What could you cut for 10%, 15% of your budget? What are some things that could be delayed that could be pushed to next year or that really are a want versus a need? Because I think we're all tightening our belts, right? We all don't know what is certain about next year.

[04:25:22] We have friends that have lost jobs at this point. So needs versus wants at the city level is just as important as needs versus wants at our personal level. And I don't think that we would be doing what we were elected to do up here if we didn't ask for that information from each of our departments.

[04:25:39] I'm not saying we have to do it. I'm not saying we're going to choose one over the other. But I'd like them to be able to tell us or tell you what it is that might fall into that really want category versus not going to manage without it. Okay, that was not certainly – what I recall is you asked me for three to five items, which is what I presented.

[04:26:03] So what you're asking for is different, and if that's the will of council that you want us to come back and present you those options, we can. What I would say is that, as I've mentioned when I presented the budget, is that the proposed budget doesn't add anything.

[04:26:27] There are no new positions, there are no new programs, so you're talking about wants versus needs. It funds all of the services at the service levels that we currently have them at. It doesn't reduce service levels. It doesn't reduce programs.

[04:26:43] All of that's the same. If you want us to present whatever, you pick your number, 10%, 15%, some other percentage, we can do that. But what you're going to find is that we're going to be cutting programming and or positions.

[04:27:01] Because that for, so 10% of the general fund is 20 plus million. So you're talking about a \$20 million reduction. Can we find that? Absolutely. Are you going to like the choices that you're presented with?

[04:27:17] I highly doubt it. Because that kind of cut is significant. You're talking about people. You're talking about programs. So we are happy to do that. But that is a totally different conversation than the conversation that we had earlier asking for, you know, so these are some, you know, suggestions I made.

[04:27:38] Again, going back to the direction we were given that, again, that I highlighted in the presentation, going back to the previous, granted it was the previous council, but the budget guidance in November, and then what I asked you to give me feedback as far as priorities and what you wanted to see.

[04:27:57] It wasn't cutting programs, and it was keeping investing in the staff and those kinds of things. So that's how we crafted the budget. But if you want us to look at something different, we can certainly do that.

[04:28:14] But I just need to know what it is that you want us to look at, and we can certainly do that. Well, I think what's unfortunate is that we as a council have not sat down and actually done our own goals together, which is before you came that that has not happened so it's hard for me specifically to pinpoint what I think everyone collectively is is what's important to them all I'm saying is I know if cash gets tight and we have to cut somewhere from our own personal budget we sit down and we look at all these areas I recognize going out to eat is very different than IT and all those things

[04:28:51] so I'm just asking for information if it's supported by others to get that information if it's not so be it but at least residents will know i asked for it because i think it's important to know and yes remembering exactly what i asked you you have done exactly that which was to give me three to five things i think what i was asking in my head was not exactly the words that came out of my mouth and this is my first budget presentation conversation anything to this level of millions that's not my personal checking account level right so it's a big it's a big it's a big conversation Councilmember McQuilla I honestly took her question the same way she did because when I read

[04:29:30] that's why I was when I was looking at this I thought oh that's that's a little different than what I thought I was going to receive as well so I I too was expecting kind of response just so we so and again I'm sorry if I'd misinterpreted what you intended but again if you're wanting some sort of threshold reduction or you want to see or you at least want to see what some type of threshold reduction would look like we can do that but I'm but if we do that it's would be

[04:30:08] across what I'm hearing it would be across the board so then if you're telling me that well wait a second you can't count this or we don't want to reduce this or we don't want to reduce that So, again, a 10% reduction in the general fund would include a 10% reduction in the school tuition contract.

[04:30:29] But presuming we have to fund the whole school tuition contract, that means I have to come up with more than 10% in other areas in order to achieve a total 10% reduction. So, again, happy to do it. It's not a problem.

[04:30:45] It can be done. I just want to make sure that we are clear with what you're asking, and I truly understand the needs versus wants, which is why you saw that there were like 25 positions that were new, that were requested, that aren't funded in this budget, and that other enhancements and things that departments ask for are not included in this budget.

[04:31:13] because we've already done that exercise and actually the staff, and I give credit to the finance team, they already did that before I got here in terms of they already were seeing what the numbers were and what we could and couldn't do.

[04:31:30] But I think if we're saying to a department, and I'm not saying every department needs to cut 10%, I'm asking what 10% would look like in each department so that we can at least see what our priorities are. I want to make this very clear to any city staff that is listening or watching or reading this or whatever after the fact, I am not suggesting cuts to positions.

[04:31:50] I'm trying to say, okay, if you're the department lead and someone says to you, listen, we really need to cut, we don't want to get rid of employees, where can we find something? That's kind of what I'm asking here. If it really means we're overstaffed in one department, which I don't think we are, fine.

[04:32:06] But let's at least be creative. Let's at least do the work, in my opinion, to be able to have a conversation. Ms. Riddle. I just want to say that I've been through this exercise, and I understand exactly where you're coming from.

[04:32:22] Some departments, like finance, we don't even have 10% of our budget as discretionary in a way that we could even look at it. Besides personnel, the audit fee, those are major. That's what's making up our budget.

[04:32:38] You know we could cut training we cut travel but that's not going to get you anywhere close to ten percent of our budget So maybe it's five percent. All I'm saying is let's someone else can jump in here and ask maybe I do have other questions Specifically on the budget but this topic okay councilmember McQuillan and then councilmember Peterson I want to echo the sentiments of getting that information out there because as just as a resident taking off my city council hat I would want to know that that discussion was happening and that my representatives were doing everything they could to really understand the budget so that the

[04:33:15] decisions we make are really the best for our community how do we know that when we don't even know what's you know so I I agree with you I think it's important just like our residents are doing with their budgets right now and all those that have just lost their jobs they are doing the needs and wants situation and we have a responsibility to show that we're going to do the same thing for our residents so I I support that well I also I agree and I think this This goes back to a suggestion that I made very early on, which was that we have access to agency recommendations.

[04:33:52] I think part of what I'm hearing, not just from members of the council but from the public, is that we've had an opportunity to understand from the departmental perspective not only where their priorities are but that they have been asked, one by one, to take a hard look at this and see where they could bring forward recommendations for reductions.

[04:34:17] Now my understanding is you've already internally been through that kind of a process via the budget committee and bringing people in. However we're at a stage now where I think the sentiment is we need to kind of go back to the well and this time we need to understand in a more direct manner the

agency's perspectives and that the agencies have had the opportunity to take a hard look at it getting some reduction in there so that we get a more direct understanding of that and welcome alternate thoughts on this or additional thoughts but that was i think part of what was being recommended and i think that's

[04:34:52] not an unusual thing to happen during a budget process that we have some more direct understanding of the departments and what they can suggest in terms of reductions council member hardy chandler so i think that this also speaks to the town hall discussion that we had about how we make this an educational to um council member mcquellan's comment about getting the information out there i think that is building in a process that doesn't take place exclusively during the

[04:35:29] budget season so that people understand what's going on my understanding also is that the significant part of the budget uh after schools is simply salaries and so in order so there's things that can be cut but what can be cut to have an impact and what i'm hearing is that if we can cut things but would that have enough impact to reduce um the uh the the tax increase amount it doesn't sound like it and please correct me if i'm wrong if we are going to actually have cuts

[04:36:07] that reduce that if that's the end goal then it would have to require a cut in either something related to the schools or salaries right is that is that am i capturing that correctly or am i wrong well i don't know that it would i don't believe we can really at this point affect the schools because that's a contractual obligation until until we modify or unless the contract was modified or some other something happened in that regard so I'm not sure that that is on

[04:36:45] the operating side now you could choose not to you could choose to not fund the you know they we put in three one of the recommendations you could delay it six months you could just not we could delay 12 months and not do the three all but all you're doing is pushing that off to next year yeah so and I think I'm sorry to I'm going to get let you finish area I just want to highlight the point of we can find cuts but what would be necessary for impact and are we collectively willing to make that cost and I know I submitted that my priority is not to cut staff and to maintain you know their their merit pay and

[04:37:25] all of that stuff because I feel that that's important for us and the quality of services you know at this time so I just want to distinguish between yes we could make cuts but what cuts would make impact and that impact the cost of that impact I guess we don't want to know what what's the impact you're trying to achieve so I mean I've heard ten percent so ten percent of again that goes to ten percent of the general fund if you're wanting that just to see what that looks like that's 20 plus million in reductions so and then we would look at

[04:38:04] it by department and if you reduced if you reduced 10% then yes you would not have to you would not need the proposed tax increase you could be flat but but remember you also part of this is that we're creating debt capacity so you know you have this debt the voters have approved it so unless you just choose not to do it which I which you I guess you probably could do the voters just gave you the authority to do it so unless you're not going to do the school funding you know you're going to have that debt at some point which you're going to have to pay for

[04:38:41] which there is no money in the budget currently to pay for that debt so what this budget proposal did was to keep everything the same as far as service levels and service provision and then we've created debt capacity now i totally understand that it is a huge increase uh the the over what's been paid but we also got thrown a huge curveball with the school contract uh the tuition contract um so we started in a hole with that um and that's an obligation that we don't

[04:39:18] really um exercise much influence over so um we are then left with what you know what what is it that you're wanting to do so if you want uh and then all and then the other piece is whatever whatever reductions that you want to make from lower than what's been recommended you are also lowering the revenue stream and the debt capacity that we've planned for for future years. So you're going to have a repeat

[04:39:56] of this next year and the year after until we can but I understand if it's too much in one year or it's not something that you want to do, that's fine. But it's still, it's always about choices. And the choices, we either have to, you have a set, a suite of services and programs and activities that you want to do.

[04:40:21] They cost X. So you need to raise Y to pay for X. And you either need to cut one or raise the other or some combination of the two so that you're in balance. So, again, I know you haven't had a discussion of vision and values and goals, you know, but there's lots of, there are other, I say lots of options.

[04:40:47] We can give you all kinds of options. I'm just saying you may not like them. So if there's a number, if there's a number we're trying to hit, just let us know the number and we can provide you, we can provide you options on how to hit that number.

[04:41:05] If you want to know percentage by department, we'll give you that as well. But to Gwen's point, you know, unless you're giving us the flexibility of having differential percentages in different departments, a 10% reduction would be they're going to lose staff because I can't cut 10% in finance without cutting staff.

[04:41:28] And that's okay. If that is the analysis that you want, we will give you that analysis. but I just want to be clear about what it is that you're asking us to do that's all I am fully expecting that if we were to do this there would be a differential than results by department but I think we won't know what that looks like until we ask and get a little bit more information so they were trying to get a little bit of discovery here and where that lands again may be quite different we may have a zero in one case we may have a 10 in another we may have a two

[04:42:05] somewhere else but the exercise i think is something that would help us discover a little bit more clearly the options for reductions and is 10 the number that you want us to work for councilmember amos well i was going to chime in on something different but i i think it might be easier if we assess it based off of tax rates so what like if we had a target tax rate that we wanted to compare to say five five and a half what would that look like what reductions be proposed I think that'd be simpler and more digestible.

[04:42:37] I'm honestly just curious on our programs and their funding just because I don't know all of them because I'm sure we have a plethora. That's just from my own general knowledge. But to go back, this is, I think, directly correlated with our comments regarding the tax rate and the buffer. To your point, when you have a recession, you build in that buffer to be prepared, but you also prepare for reductions.

[04:42:59] When you look at the car, you say you got approved, you pre-approved for \$50,000, \$60,000, but you get a \$30,000 car just to be safe. I'm about to get married. I almost bought a \$1,600 suit today. But then I realized I didn't talk to my partner, and I still have to pay for the wedding.

[04:43:16] And so I think the simplest thing, and just to clarify for everyone, including staff, because I agree, I don't want to cut positions either. I would prefer to cut programs and positions. I'm not even sure I

want to do that because I don't know what's out there. But I think it would be helpful to have the information.

[04:43:33] But to make it easier on us and staff, and let me know if this is easier rather than trying to go by department and I have to figure out the differentials then we have to go through the differentials have more questions what if we say hey can we compare the nine and a half versus what if we got to five and a half and see what see what reductions are in there mr. Martinez just a word of caution and reiteration from what the manager said in his presentation my favorite slide and you've heard me say

[04:44:07] this before is about the debt capacity that's being set forward that twelve million dollars or about it's 9.8 or 12 equivalent cents we will be having this discussion again next year and then the year thereafter in the year thereafter i think the manager is absolutely dead on the 220 million dollar school bond was approved you are allowed to draw up to eight years after its approval an additional two years if we go to the court and ask for an extension it does not

[04:44:45] have to be drawn in year one year two year three year four that being said i would not advise pushing that out because inflation things get more expensive there was a cost analysis done by mosley and forella that projected it starting in fy26 and beyond and then additionally you're pushing those improvements on not on this on school kids it'll be another five or ten years before anyone starts seeing that so just full disclosure we will be having these discussions again which is which is fine if that's what council wants but

[04:45:23] we'll have these discussions again next year in the year after that and the year after that council member Amos and you bring up a good point because I was going to mention that and then I blanked on the wedding stuff because that's great the school bond also was approved by roughly 70% with the knowledge of I mean the idea that we'd have the 1% sales tax to cover as a part of it but But also, and I think Rachel and Stacey could attest more to this, we did also present the public with the idea that it could also potentially lead to a tax increase.

[04:45:53] So we do need to recognize that also, as stated earlier, you also get what you voted for. But at the same time, I think we can at least present options, maybe even at the budget town hall and get people's feedback. Honestly, from what I heard knocking on doors, I think people prefer services over the tax rate.

[04:46:11] that's to a degree but it would just help with communication and to the debt capacity question so if the this fourth option if we defer the start of the capital program does that also impact debt capacity with that the fourth option being the delay on the school bond or our cash contribution of three million two million and a half it would and I think the manager wrote that in that last paragraph that it would push it back one more year so we would have to figure out that equivalent in FY 27 as well and then so if you look at the

[04:46:44] cash flow it starts increasing pretty quickly so 22 million in 2027 28 million in 2028 90 some odd million in 2029 so high escalation we don't need all that money up front we will be borrowing against that before we borrow one of the requirements to borrow with both the rating agencies and then the debt issuer is they want to see a dedicated revenue stream or else they will not lend you money same thing when we try to go get credit go buy that vehicle go buy that house

[04:47:22] unless you have a historical trend of income mostly through your employer or job there they will not look at you or they charge you an exorbitant interest rate because they want to offset that risk

same concept in the world that we live in here hopefully that one percent though will be in place by then that that is a hope yes ma'am i have a lot of specific questions unless someone else wants to keep talking on the general conversation here no go ahead okay um excuse me i'm happy to answer all your questions so i did hear that there seems to be consent at least a

[04:47:59] majority that would like to hear for department reductions but i did not hear is there a target percentage i heard 10 percent or 15 percent is there is there a target you want us because i want to bring back something that's like we wanted to see more and let me just say I do not want to hear that I wanted to illuminate the costs of the meaning not money cost but the unit the yeah I mean the cost long term the cost to the debt capacity the just I was asking not to support that approach but to look at

[04:48:36] it more holistically in terms of longer-term impacts I just wanted to clarify my position on that council member bates thank you um yeah so a couple things uh certainly agree with i you know i definitely think that it sounds like uh this is very feasible for staff to do and i think that more information certainly doesn't hurt especially uh starting this um town hall process um and with regard to what i think council member hardy channel was getting at um i would also want to see the you know the cost long term not only monetary but also

[04:49:14] hearing from the departments on what the cost would be to services the you know the less quantitative costs and I you know I think that my sense is that it might be easier for for us to look at it on a percentage basis just because you know I think that's maybe makes a bit more sense for departments to you know say what does 10 percent of our budget look like versus you know I mean, I guess you can figure out what percentage, you know, a certain number of cents on the tax rate would be, but you'd have to, I guess, get that to be a percentage anyways for down

[04:49:54] at the department level. But at any rate, also from the perspective of looking at what the county has done on a comparative basis, I came across an article a couple weeks ago about how the county, the county manager had asked each department to cut 10% of your budget.

[04:50:16] And what ended up happening is we saw, you know, cuts to services and personnel, which I think that we don't want to do. But I think that given that, you know, 10% is what the county did, I think it might make sense to, you know, to look at that on our end as well. Just, you know, just to have that info, though, not necessarily making those cuts.

[04:50:36] And yeah, so at any rate, you know, definitely think that just having that information would be helpful, especially to, as Councilmember Hall said, show our constituents that those conversations have happened. And I'm confident that our staff are already asking themselves that question all throughout the budget process and throughout the year, how they can save money here and there.

[04:51:03] But just to sort of see from our side and from the public side that efforts are being made to try and make sure that their tax dollars are being spent as wisely and effectively and frugally as they possibly can be.

[04:51:25] So, yeah, I mean, I think that just, again, from the county perspective, 10% makes sense. It's kind of just consistent with what they've looked at on their end. And also hearing from the departments about what that would mean for services and for personnel, in addition to the, you know, just the monetary aspect.

[04:51:48] So it sounds like 10% is what we're talking about. All right. Well, that's, we will, we will work on that. And as soon as I have something, we will present it back to you. Council Member Peterson. Well, but I do just want to note that, as I understand it, I think the departments already have come forward to say at your request or in some dialogue with you here's what we it's going to be tight here's what we can do and so it's not like no effort has already occurred right and it

[04:52:23] would just be helpful to know how much effort already has occurred and where does that leave them and the essential question is going to be how much more juice is there in the squeeze here and they may say really none because like here's what we did and beyond that you're cutting bone I mean that's the kind of conversation that would be good to know but recognizing they've already taken a swing at this and getting a little bit more clarity on what that meant when they did that that way we're not going to be jabbing them too hard if we don't need to i can try to clarify that so we have budget meetings

[04:52:59] operating with every single department cip and operating we scheduled operating meetings specifically with enhancement requests as the manager alluded to i want to say it was about 12 million dollars in additional requests that were submitted collectively by all the departments.

[04:53:18] Schools was one of the very last operating meetings that we had. It was towards the end of November or the beginning of December. That's when things came to a halt because schools basically at that point disclosed that we were anticipating a very significant increase in the tuition contract.

[04:53:40] Preliminary numbers on the revenue side and the expense side up to that point showed us in a favorable position, meaning about \$9.5 million in additional revenue based on assessment increases, not doing anything to the tax rate, until schools had that meeting with us.

[04:53:57] And then at that point, all the requests, all the wishlist items that had previously been discussed by the departments ceased. There was no need to move forward because that tuition contract estimate had now just wiped everything out so we have not had discussions with the departments of what can you cut it's you're not getting anything that you've requested at a minimum we need to maintain what was approved in fy25 the current fiscal year that we're in

[04:54:30] other than inflationary contractual obligations that have escalating increases that again very similar to the tuition contract we have no control i can't make it up and say oh well we won't we won't increase that even though when we get the invoice it's going to be an increase so let's just go ahead and budget that and then even that amount was the most minimum amount needed five hundred thousand dollars on a 207 million dollar budget so less than a percent so that's where we are we have not asked the departments to propose any cuts other than just maintain current service levels

[04:55:08] okay councilmember all has more questions thank you I think we asked for this before but I don't know that it ever really made it beyond but I think it might be helpful for all of council to see the contracts that we have with outside agencies with Tim's group as an example with other consultants that we use when they expire what we use them for just so we can have an idea of what sort of expertise we're getting specific pages I'll go through and I Please know I am limiting them.

[04:55:42] I'm going to do a bunch with you on Friday. But on page 234, it's the city manager reserve for contingency. Actual in 2024 was \$66,000. Budgeted for 2024 was \$400,000. I'm sorry, budgeted for 2025. Estimate for 2025 is \$1 million.

[04:56:00] And fiscal year 2026 proposes \$400,000. What is this, and where did the million come from? Sure. So it's a reserve contingency account for the city manager. million was actually a supplemental increase of the base of 400 on December 10th \$600,000 was set aside from the unassigned fund balance that council approved the previous council approved to give the city manager additional funding the previous city manager additional funding to do his work plan

[04:56:32] that money has not been spent it is still in that account for FY 25 the one One thing that was funded out of that \$600 was the new pharmacy tech for the fire that was a contractual because the state is no longer providing those services.

[04:56:50] Okay. And roughly what was that number? \$107,000. Thank you. And that account sort of are things that come up through the year, either council initiatives or other initiatives that money was not budgeted by line item that sort of allow the ability for us to be adaptive or the manager to be adaptive and then also do whatever council wants, such as the survey would be a good example.

[04:57:18] That was not budgeted, but we're utilizing those funds to do that community survey. Okay, thank you. Sure. I'm going to say right now, if you're watching at home or you're listening in here, some of these might not be popular questions and you might be upset with me. I'm just asking information.

[04:57:34] I'm not suggesting anything. I'm just getting clarification. So on page 312, we have an ADA citywide assessment for fiscal year 2026 it's \$250,000 it looks like this was an internal assessment done in 2016 then 2023 was going to happen again then it got kicked down the road a little bit longer with the current administration as it is I'm wondering if this is money that's well spent or not to be in the fiscal 2026 plan because I don't know if there's going to be changes at the federal level for ADA stuff that we will be wasting our money on by implementing so if

[04:58:10] there's more information on this and i'm reading it wrong please do let me know i'll just say again just as a reminder this is a cip project so a reminder that the only way you're impacting the budget is to reduce the cash transfer so again you can we can delete the project we can push it out to another year happiness the questions but just in case you have other questions just a reminder that canceling and or deferring projects in the CIP will not affect the budget balancing for FY26.

[04:58:46] What will affect that is the cash transfer. I understand that completely. Thank you for the reminder. I do think my previous questions about the 10% will hopefully help in that regard, but there's a lot of CIP stuff that I have questions on. So that specific item, how does that impact current legislation?

[04:59:04] Let Melanie Zipp answer. She does our ADA. And, Mayor, just you might have not heard my disclaimer. None of these are intended to pull. It's just questions of clarification of certain policies or CFP things. I think it would be a policy question of the council of whether or not you wanted to not move forward with ADA recommendations.

[04:59:31] The last assessment was an internal assessment done in 2016. In 2023, the idea was to do a partnership with Falls Church. and combine our efforts for \$500,000 and get a full assessment of both localities.

[04:59:50] That did not come to fruition. I was not ADA coordinator at that time, which is why we've put it back in. Paul's Church went ahead and did their own, which is why I put it back in for the 250, to do a consultant-based assessment, not a self-assessment, not an internal assessment.

[05:00:11] What is the goal and what are we trying to understand with that? Where our deficiencies are in ADA requirements. It is better for us to do a self-assessment and figure out what our deficiencies are and then decide what we are going to move forward with as opposed to having administration come in and highlight violations.

[05:00:38] Okay, so the money then is to do another self-assessment or is to bring in someone to get us up to speed? to hire a consultant to do the assess the self-assessment for us the same thing we already did in 2013 but then didn't turn it again I'm sorry 2016 2016 we did it it was not done by a consultant it was done by staff right but so you said bring in a consultant to do an internal assessment correct okay so we're doing another internal assessment to be done by an outside party correct that's the

[05:01:10] I mean that's the request okay okay and then on page 330 there's conversion of carpet to I guess new carpet I know the schools do a lot of carpets a tile conversion because it's cheaper it's easier to maintain is there a consideration of maybe doing tile would that cost more what that cost less what's the maintenance moving forward from it like I'm just do we want carpet do we not want carpet is carpet a big deal just again it's not an extraordinary amount

[05:01:48] money but it's 125 now 50 and then 800 and 2028 so i'm just trying to understand what the goal is i think that's a question that i can pose to the superintendent i will say that when i met with sorry this is for city hall this is not for the schools i'm just saying schools do something similar yeah this is for the city hall maintenance for interior um so dave i don't know if you can speak well the 800 000 if you look in the description is for hvac replacement it's not for carpet if you look on the left side it tells you what the numbers are for each year okay my apologies I only wrote down carpet when I was just trying to

[05:02:26] scratch my notes out here so just in general we use tile instead of carpet my question is does it make sense to replace the carpet with tile should we continue with carpet again I'm just looking at things that are some sort of cost I recognize they're not going to impact our bottom line this year but it's just you know I think you know we want to replace the carpet because that's what we have now and it's quieter and it's something we've done in the past but not sure tile would save us any money okay we can move on to page 358 the van dyke

[05:03:03] master plan implementation again recognizing it's not until 2028 and 2029 and then 2030 16 million dollars so this is huge so we have not had a presentation on it I don't really know where this stands I don't want to push it on another council but just trying to recognize what we're approving in theory I think that's a summer field question. I know that it was actually scheduled to potentially kick off in FY26. We had discussions with her and then also PRAB and decided to push it out a couple of years.

[05:03:39] There is money that has already been set aside in a previous CIP, I want to say 2023, that gave them some funding to start doing some initial design and consultation. They're going to use that, and then I'm sure they'll present to council going forward of what those findings are with the feasibility study design and concept as well.

[05:03:59] So that is, my understanding, the Crown Jewel Park of the city. It's the largest park in the city, so they're wanting to make that as nice as possible. The last time it had an upgrade was actually when it was created.

[05:04:15] Stephanie, not Stephanie, Stacey actually showed us some old pictures from the 60s when it was originally done, and since then it has not had any major renovations or upgrades. But again, they will

provide an update to council during a work session when they work through that process of design and concept.

[05:04:35] 361 Sherwood Center Community Expansion, the \$9 million. This has been, where do we stand on this? Are we gonna get a presentation for this? Are we gonna learn more about this? I understand the other council did.

[05:04:52] Like, I know I'm jumping around here, but I'm just kind of going to page the page. All good questions, council member. Sure. And the \$9 million is the last request for funding associated with this project um which would bring the budget to 56 million total we do plan on doing a presentation for council we are working on updated budget figures now and we're trying to get the latest before we bring that to you but anticipate that in the next 60 days let's say

[05:05:28] applications have been filed for uh land use approval this would require approval of special use permits and special exceptions there have been over the years there have been multiple presentations to previous council and to the board of architecture review on the project we would do a work session prior to getting to public hearing public hearing would anticipate july or september kind of time frame okay but so we're being asked to approve

[05:06:04] nine million dollars in our budget without having a presentation on this and without knowing updated costs potentially if it's a desire of the council to to expedite that i can i can certainly get that to you sooner if you have a date in mind that you want to hear more about the project we've done lots of presentations so could do a presentation tomorrow really if you needed to we're just trying to get the latest number so you kind of know what the lay of the land is but we can do it whenever the council desires I'm not speaking on anyone's behalf I'm just asking questions so I hope everyone's

[05:06:41] listening and can maybe decide if they think that something else should be done and just so you know councilmember there is a lot of information that we've posted on the web page all the presentations that we've done to date including the financials Norman Cole plant upgrade what happens after 2030 are we still on the hook for millions of dollars a year or is that going for a little while the from our discussions with Norman Cole folks is it will never go away there's capital improvements indefinitely to that plant not a big

[05:07:20] fan of this but okay the Blenheim Boulevard multimodal project that one is in fiscal year 2027 right that one is not funded by the general fund that's a vdot funded project okay we're still going to have a updated presentation on it at some point though yes right now we're in the process of right-of-way acquisition uh for that project um you're talking about the improvements to blenheim boulevard it's page 399 blenheim boulevard multimodal

[05:07:57] project so i assumed that was the ones with the bikes the schools the sidewalks i know there was a lot of when we were knocking on doors there was a lot of concern over what that was right that's in right-of-way acquisition yeah it's it's 70 funded by nbta it's not affecting i understand none of these things are affecting our cash right now i completely understand that i'm just trying to understand them and i'm also understanding that this was not very highly supported at the time for when we were door knocking collectively at least from four people that i'm aware of so i'm just wondering if this is a community-supported project

[05:08:37] or if we're going to end up in the same situation we are with the George Center Trail, where now all of a sudden it's happening. We say, oh, no, no, it's 70%. No, it's 100% funded. It's 100 this, a completion. And then we're back in the same situation. So I'm trying to avoid some of those things. Well, during right-of-way acquisition, if we don't have to do any condemnations, we don't need to go to council to acquire the right-of-way.

[05:08:58] And once we require the right-of-way, we would start utility relocation. And so if the council would like a work session on this, we could certainly give you one. But as far as the next council action on this, it would either be for right-of-way condemnation or a ward of construction.

[05:09:16] Please. Just to briefly interject, I'm wondering if it's just worth doing a CIP work session. Rather, it doesn't seem like we're actually fully focused on the tax rate and budget discussion. Well, I think they're...

[05:09:33] I mean, I don't disagree that I want to learn about these projects. I just don't know if this is the venue for it since it's essentially we have to talk about the cash transfer. So, I mean, I'm open going project by project. I'm just wondering if it's okay if we do that another time.

[05:09:50] That's fine with me. I just want it on record. I understand this is not impacting our cash, but I also understand we're asking for hundreds of million dollars in CIP stuff, and it warrants conversation. So, sure. Thank you. Okay. Well, we can certainly set up a time to do an overview of CIP projects.

[05:10:08] Not a problem. not a problem okay is this all the budget stuff before we reconvene the meeting okay quick clarification on CIP there's cash transfer but there's debt payment and then there's M&O so we've got three flows of cash right three funds of cash three flows of cash here you've got a CIP thing you're paying a payment a debt payment on general fund on the general fund okay you're also doing M&O right whatever that is operation correct okay so your entire debt

[05:10:45] payment is drawn from general fund yes okay all right downstream as soon as you get it going you're into mno though so that's another place where if you don't move forward you get a cut there right that would be a part of the cash transfer to the cip unless it's in the general fund operating side there are some pieces of that streets sidewalks mostly in dave shop and then but in parks and recreation there is general funding mno as well i think i understand your

[05:11:22] question if there would be maintenance and operations once a capital project is complete in future years which would show up in the operating budget so if you to your point i think if i'm following you if you either reduce the project or eliminate the project then yes there would not be maintenance and operations in the future but but there's no mno in the current i mean until the projects done then the M&O would not be in there until after the project is done and if I could just quickly interject on that point I still think it's worth a CIP work session but also that doesn't factor in revenues from potential projects like for example the Sherwood Center update with the

[05:12:01] basketball court and all that stuff so well yeah I get what you mean but it doesn't factor in revenues alongside maintenance and operation cost correct so that would also be an additional factor but again I think that's more for a CIP discussion which we can set up but if everyone's cool we can move on. I just wanted to be sure we were fully capturing everything. You know I think I mean I understand your question and did I answer. So yes we would be capturing maintenance and operations but that would be basically the next

[05:12:40] year after whatever year the project was complete. Okay are we ready for me to reconvene meeting? Alright I will now reconvene the regular meeting. We'll go to items not requiring a public hearing, which is a consideration of the maximum real estate tax rate for fiscal year FY2026 to be advertised.

[05:13:04] I'll recognize Brian Foster, city manager, provide a staff report. Again, we discussed this during the work session just concluded. We need to decide the advertised tax rate. It's a seal.

[05:13:21] Whatever rate you decide is the ceiling. You can't adopt higher than that without going through the public hearing process, starting that process over. It does not obligate you to adopt that tax rate. It's purely for advertising purposes. And the recommendation was to advertise a rate higher than the 112.5.

[05:13:41] You all discussed this at length. The resolution is in front of you. The printed resolution says 115. If you want a different number, please just state that number in the motion, and then we will correct the printed resolution for the record.

[05:14:03] All right. Is there any questions of staff before I ask for a motion? All right. Is there a motion, Council Member Hardy-Jandler? I move that the City Council advertise a proposed real estate tax rate of 1.150 per 100 of assessed value.

[05:14:24] Is there a second? A second. A motion has been made by Council Member Hardy-Chandler and seconded by Council Member Peterson. Is there any discussion on this motion? Hearing none, a roll call vote. Council Member Amos.

[05:14:39] Aye. Council Member Hall. Nay. Council Member Hardy-Chandler. Aye. Council Member Peterson. Nay. Council Member Bates. Aye. Councilmember McQuillan aye we've got four to two motion passed four to two well all right then the manage Manager report out. Do you have anything for us mr. Foster? I just I was not going to report out But just because there was a lot of comments in the in the

[05:15:18] Turned citizen time about George Snyder Trail, but we're actually referencing the the stream restoration project I just wanted to mention a couple of things one was that our staff has worked to preserve more trees than what was in the original plan.

[05:15:37] And two, one, we saved 42 trees by having a retaining wall. And then once we had the contractor on board and going through working with the staff, the forester, and all, we were able to identify and save another 40 trees.

[05:15:53] So while it may not seem like a lot, we still are in that effort to preserve trees and whenever possible. And related to that, we received grant funding in the aggregate sum of \$1.67 million.

[05:16:13] \$1.17 million is specifically for that. SLAF is the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund administered through DEQ. That will pay up to 50% of the cost. So we're getting some grant funding to help pay for that.

[05:16:29] And, of course, that project, while I understand it might not look that great, Mr. Summers already told you about there's actually a lot more trees being replanted. Granted, it will take them a while to grow, but there will be way more trees as well as shrubs and other things, so much more being put back as part of that project.

[05:16:49] And, of course, this is for our regulatory requirements for Chesapeake Bay and so forth meet those requirements so just wanted to let you know there's some there's some good news if you will on that

and I know since we heard a lot of what I would characterize as negative comments on how that project least currently looks there are our efforts made to mitigate that and I just wanted to report that thank you councilmember Quillen any thoughts on February 14th I had the opportunity to attend the food and agricultural regional member policy committee where

[05:17:29] the big conversation was regarding the outbreak of avian influenza. They're urging owners of backyard plots to educate themselves on the symptoms in their chickens. That includes nasal discharge, circling, being off with their gate, to implement hygienic care and maintenance practices of the COOPs and to register with your city so we can keep you updated. There are 69 human cases in the U.S. Well, at that time there were primarily those exposed to infected wildlife, poultry, or dairy cows. Symptoms appear two to eight days after exposure and associated with conjunctivitis and flu-like symptoms. We will be having our member retreat on March 14th in Rockville, Maryland.

[05:18:06] I also had the opportunity to attend the Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee meeting, which was a basic crossover update at that time from the Virginia General Assembly. But in following up more recently, the program, recently the Virginia General Assembly has passed several key bills aimed at advancing clean energy, including a program to expand electric vehicle charging in rural areas, and updates to renewable energy portfolio standards for utilities.

[05:18:34] This past Monday and Tuesday, or today, I attended National League of Cities in Washington, D.C., where local leaders engaged on policy and learned from experts and made connections. As we witness changes at the federal level, I just want to say that we're paying attention Please know that your representatives hear you.

[05:18:57] We understand that you're concerned and you're worried. And we understand what this means to our community. While these shifts feel unsettling, we are committed to your well-being. And we want you to know that we remain diligent to ensure that your needs are being met.

[05:19:14] And that important initiatives are going to be supported. And that everyone has the resources and the opportunities that they deserve. You're not alone in this. We're together in this. And we will navigate these challenges with compassion and care. Thank you. Thank you, Council Member Bates.

[05:19:31] Thank you. I definitely second Council Member McQuillan's comments. Having current former federal employees among my friends and family, I know that the situation is really not great right now for them, and I just wish that there was more that we could do as elected officials.

[05:19:53] And additionally, when we requested the George Snyder Trail work session, um i had brought up you know the work sessions for um the country club hills connector trail and picket road connector trail and it sounded like the message from staff was that that would maybe take a bit more time we wanted to do the uh the gst as soon as possible due to the the timeline on that and how much further along it is but i just want to reiterate that um definitely want those work sessions as well without objection from my colleagues uh you know as soon as it's

[05:20:30] practicable and also reiterate that I as of now support canceling the CCH connector trail and moving the picket road connector trail to the west side and merging with the sidewalk if feasible you know without losing the funding or otherwise jeopardizing the project and that's kind of where I am right now on those but but definitely look forward to further discussion on those during future work session thank you councilman Peterson well I'd like to agree with

[05:21:03] both of you and thanks and very much thank you councilmember Bates for the reminder that we do want to tend to the other trail issues we heard a bit of commentary and public comments tonight about the role that boards and commissions play in providing input if you will to the council I spent two and half years as chair of the environmental sustainability committee so I'm well familiar with issues that are involved in there and I I do think that it is

[05:21:40] worth the council devoting some time looking at our procedures for our boards and commissions and committees and discussing them to be sure we're aware of them and they're up to snuff where we need them to be there's a lot of them And I think we want to be sure that everything is operating the way it ought to and not to take that for granted.

[05:22:03] So if others are in agreement, I'd certainly like to suggest that we find room for that in an agenda, as an agenda item in the not-too-distant future. Thank you. Okay. Council Member Hardy-Chandler. Thank you.

[05:22:20] I'd like to encourage everyone to support the upcoming expo hosted by the Village in the City. The village and the city is a unique model in that our city supports it, and that's not common throughout the nation.

[05:22:36] Other programs rely on member fees and those kinds of things, but we as a city have invested in this, and the Expo will help residents learn a lot about the resources that are available for them to age at home. So that will be April 4th. I believe it's from 10 to 2 at the Sherwood Center.

[05:22:57] So please come out, ask questions, get information, and engage. The other thing I want to highlight is just to reinforce the acknowledgement of Women's History Month through the proclamation. I was proud to see the current members of the Commission for Women.

[05:23:14] I served on the Commission for Women for five years, so I know that they are a very active commission. But to the comments that were made earlier, women's history, a community can take its temperature based on the status of women.

[05:23:31] A healthy community is treating its women well. So I think that, you know, we need to continue to celebrate Women's History Month. There will be an event, a panel of educators, on March 23rd. I'm honored to be invited back to moderate that.

[05:23:51] The compliment that I got was I did a great job last year. The truth is I was the only one willing to do it last year. So it ends up being a very good time.

[05:24:08] And the Commission for Women really, every year, year after year, tries to provide something that's engaging and informative for the community. So please come out and support that effort. As a side note, I want to once again highlight the fact that it is also Social Work Month.

[05:24:23] Happy Social Work Month to everyone, because whether you're a social worker or not, you're benefiting from having social workers as part of the community. And with that, thank you. Council Member Paul. Thank you. I want to thank everyone that came out tonight, this evening, to ask questions, to talk, to give their feedback on all of these different things, especially on the budget.

[05:24:45] I want to also thank everyone for all of the e-mails that we continue to get. Um, I'm, am delayed in responding, but please know I've read every single one before I come to these meetings. So, um, it's important and I, I please encourage you to continue to do so.

[05:25:00] Um, I do want to agree with, um, sorry, my brain, Council Member Bates. Um, I would like information on the CCH trail and Pickett Road. Um, I am actually sight unseen. Well, I've done sight, but I'm in agreement with you on, on your proposals.

[05:25:19] I also would like to have some information in a presentation on the Germantown Road CIP, those improvements. There's a couple, three different things, if I recall, in the CIP that I think we need to have addressed. They're in 2026, and I think they're very important to this council to be aware of specifically.

[05:25:37] And finally, I just want to remind everyone that we are having a town hall on April 2nd for the budget from 4 to 7 at the Sherwood Center. We will continue to inundate you and remind you of this, but I think it's really important. And I think, you know, when people get these notices in the mail, it is different than the person that comes out to talk about a trail or to support a bike path or to support X, Y, and Z.

[05:26:01] I think we all are aware in different ways. And for some, this might be the only time that you actually even think about the fact that we have a budget here. So we encourage you to come out and do it whatever way that works for you. Please know, as you've probably heard from my questions here, I'm very concerned about your bottom line, my bottom line.

[05:26:20] I mean, I have my assessment as well. It's up 20% or 23%, whatever it is. It's too much. I don't want to think about it. I see you, I hear you, and I'm with you, and we're working on it. So thank you. Thank you. Council Member Amos. It's tax season, so do your tax returns.

[05:26:37] And I believe the deadline for appealing your vehicle assessment for a high mileage and damage is May. Is that right? Okay, well, it's coming up, so be prepared. All right, that's it.

[05:26:53] Okay, I will just close this by saying that I want to wish much congratulations to the George Mason women's basketball team who won. They started the program in 1972. This was the first time they went to the semifinals.

[05:27:10] It is the first championship they've ever won at the AT&T Conference. By winning the championship, they are now going to the NCAA. And the men play this Friday at the Capital One Arena in D.C. If you want to go out and support the men's basketball team, you have an opportunity to do that on Friday.

[05:27:28] But, you know, Mason is doing just great things. Their basketball program is fantastic. And I hope the entire city shares the pride that I have as a Mason grad for what our athletic programs have accomplished over the years.

[05:27:44] We are really on the map. And I couldn't be more excited that the women have done something so historic. So with that, I am going to adjourn the meeting at 12.28 a.m. So we're going to go into a closed meeting.

[05:28:02] Sorry. We're going to go into a closed meeting. So we did have the closed meeting, and it will take a few minutes for what we intended to discuss. However, it can wait.

[05:28:19] It's not critically sensitive, but. - No, if we're here, if we're here. - Okay. - So I move that the City Council convene a closed meeting under section 2.2-3711.8.7 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel regarding non-litigation.

[05:28:36] All council members in favor of the motion, please signify by voting aye. - Aye. - Those opposed to the motion will vote nay. The vote is unanimous in favor of the motion. City Council retired into a closed meeting at 12:29 a.m.



Coraggio Consulting · aguyonx.com