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City of Fairfax City Council Meeting, Tuesday, March 25, 2025

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Place City Hall, City of Fairfax, Virginia
Length 4h 20m (video)

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- Agenda: https://fairfax.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4150
- Minutes: https://fairfax.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4150&doc_id=646748dc-0a56-11f0-ab6a-005056a89546

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[00:00:17] meeting of March 25th, 2025 to order. We have a very full chamber tonight, which I'm so delighted about. And we also have a troop of Weebelos who are going to help all of us to say the Pledge of Allegiance. I am also going to, before we do that, I'm going to read a motion for closed session. Did I already do that? I hand-handed it to you. All right. At 6.47 p.m., the City Council concluded

[00:00:51] its closed meeting to discuss personnel matters, consultation with legal counsel for non-litigation matters. And for Mayor? Yes. Sorry, just the personnel. That's all you did in the first one. And boards and commissions. We did boards and commissions too.

[00:01:07] I move that each of us certify that to the best of each council member's knowledge. One, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements in the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. And two, only public business matters identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered. All council members in favor of the certification motion, please signify by voting aye. Aye. Those opposed to the motion please vote nay. The vote, the motion passes unanimously. Okay. We took care of that little bit of business. So now I would like to call our Weevilos forward if you all would come down into the well to help us all with the Pledge of Allegiance. And I will ask that if you are able

[00:01:42] and so choose that you please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance. Okay. Okay. Here's your flag. You ready? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to a republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you very

[00:02:17] much. Good job. Good job. I'm going to ask Reverend Emma Chatton and others who have come

[00:02:25] with her down to the front for our first proclamation of the evening. No, come on in. Come

[00:03:10] Come on in. Come on in. Come on in. Come on in. Come on. There's plenty of room. Squeeze in. Squeeze in. Squeeze in. Low enough for me, so sorry about that. I'll make my book shorter. Okay. Come on in. I think I've met you. Oh. Yes. Yes, you have.

[00:03:34] All right. Whereas. On March 31st, 2009, transgender activist Rachel Crandall founded the International Transgender Day of Visibility to celebrate the achievements of transgender and gender non-conforming people and to raise awareness of the discrimination they face.

[00:03:55] And whereas the City of Fairfax is committed to recognizing and supporting those in our community who identify as transgender, gender non-binary, gender non-conforming, and gender fluid. And whereas the City of Fairfax is a proud center for the Transgender Education Association, as well as their monthly meeting location, the Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia Community Center.

[00:04:19] And whereas access to resources in health care, education, housing, transportation, and employment are essential to the well-being of the transgender community, along with the commitment of our law enforcement professionals to ensure we have safe public spaces free of harassment and discrimination.

[00:04:38] And whereas the passage of the Virginia Values Act, effective July 1, 2020, makes Virginia the first state in the South to enact non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people. The first state in more than a decade to add both sexual orientation and gender identity to an existing non-discrimination law. And the first state since 1993 to add a prohibition on discrimination in public accommodations where none existed before. And whereas the city of Fairfax values our transgender children, youth, and the people who care for them, making it incumbent

[00:05:15] upon all of us to ensure they are protected, celebrated, and allowed to live their lives authentically, shielding them from harm in our own hometown. Now, therefore, I, Catherine S. Reed, Mayor of the City of Fairfax, do hereby proclaim March 31st, 2025, is Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of Fairfax, and call upon our community to recognize the inherent value, dignity, and humanity of all who reside here, and to strive to be an open and inclusive city where transgender people of all ages feel safe and welcome. And I

[00:05:50] would like to ask Reverend Chatton to say a few words. Thank you. It's always dangerous to ask a minister to say a few words. So I want to thank the mayor, and I want to thank every single member of the council for participating in this. Those are some real pretty words, and I have very little to add to them except to say that those words mean something. They mean we see you. They mean you see us. The trans communities are a sliver of the population, less than one percent, somewhere

[00:06:29] between 0.4 and 0.6. Now, this means if you have a room of 500 people, you may only have two or three trans people. Of course, you have more tonight. It's special. Special occasion, special occasion. But you would likely never know. Yet this community has been falsely singled out through misinformation and misunderstanding. Way too much time spent pointing at us. We are gentle, kind, and harmless. Get to know one of us and find out the challenges we face in life. And

[00:07:01] if you don't know who, reach out to me. I like lunch. So, we are communities with well over 100 years of medical and scientific documentation. We have always existed everywhere since the beginning of time. Among indigenous people, we are often regarded as healers and people of wisdom who walk in many worlds. To paraphrase Shakespeare, we may be a small group, but we are fierce and we are not

[00:07:35] alone. We have friends, family, spouses, and allies here. Strong, fearless people who believe in the freedom of the human soul to find its place in community. Day of visibility? To paraphrase another writer, we are here. A person is a person, and people are people. Even if the group is small, speak up for what is right, and make yourselves heard. Speak up, speak up, speak up, one and all.

[00:08:08] You can't beat Dr. Seuss, and Horton Hears a Who. You see us, you hear us, and this is visibility. A moment where you see that we are here. We are people, we are friends and family.

[00:08:26] We rise for equality, all groups, big and small, and we give thanks for liberty. And for a city that makes room and is a safe place for all. Amen.

[00:09:59] Where is Patricia Innocenti?

[00:10:28] Oh, our favorite, favorite procurement professional here in the city. And my second favorite, and I didn't realize, you too, yes. Everyone, everyone, we'll let the room settle a tiny bit.

[00:10:48] Well, this is great. All right, whereas, the public procurement profession plays a significant role in the efficiency and effectiveness of both government and business.

[00:11:03] And whereas, in addition to the purchase of goods and services, procurement professionals add value to the organization by performing such functions as executing, implementing, and administering contracts, developing strategic procurement strategies, and cultivating working relationships with suppliers and other departments within the organization.

[00:11:23] And whereas public procurement professionals in the city of Fairfax and in other public and private organizations have tremendous influence on the economic conditions in the United States, with a cumulative purchasing power running into the billions of dollars, And whereas the public procurement professionals in the City of Fairfax are committed to providing high-caliber strategic, logistical, and operational support of all departments within the City of Fairfax,

[00:11:50] And whereas the public procurement professionals in the City of Fairfax recognize, support, and practice the public procurement values in guiding principles of accountability, ethics, impartiality, professionalism, service, and transparency established by the NIGP, the Institute for Public Procurement, as fundamental tenets of the public procurement profession.

[00:12:15] And whereas NTGP has proclaimed the month of March as Procurement Month to further expand the awareness of the procurement professional's role to the governmental officials, the general public, business, and corporate leaders, now therefore I, Catherine S. Reed, Mayor of the City of Fairfax, do hereby proclaim March as Procurement Professionals Month in the City of Fairfax and urge the

community to join the City of Fairfax in recognizing the role of the purchasing and materials management profession within business, industry, and government.

[00:12:48] And I will turn the microphone over to you. Thank you so much for the proclamation. And I want to acknowledge the procurement team, David Cundid, who's here today, and the other staff who are not here, and the hard work they do every day and emphasize their efforts to make sure that the goods and services that we purchase for the city are required at the lowest possible cost and in full legal compliance with the Code of Virginia.

[00:13:16] And with that, I'd like to invite our CFO, J.C. Martinez, down. So we just got this check in the mail today, so we thought we'd bring it by.

[00:13:38] Mayor Reed, I'd like to present a check to the city in the amount of \$20,000 on behalf of the National Association of State Procurement Officers. City procurement staff served as the lead public agency on two national cooperative contracts. This marks the first time in the city's history that a national procurement contract originated here, as we typically rely on national contracts from other entities.

[00:14:03] The program revenue is in recognition of the investment of staff time to serve as the lead public agency. The city will continue to receive \$10,000 annually for each contract we lead. Thank you.

[00:14:16] We can move to the adoption of the agenda.

[00:15:06] Okay. Is there a motion to approve the adoption of the agenda? Councilmember Hardee's Chandler? I move to adopt the agenda as presented. I have questions about the agenda. Let me know when the best time to raise that is, prior to a second or after.

[00:15:23] Either way, but you may want to get a second on the floor. I'll second. Okay, the motion has been made and seconded. Is there a discussion on this motion, Council Member Peterson? Just as a matter of policy, perhaps the city attorney can help.

[00:15:38] With minutes, do they normally include reference to work sessions? I do not believe we take minutes of work sessions. We used to have verbatim minutes in years past, but my understanding is, and the clerk can confirm, we have not been in the habit of doing minutes for work sessions.

[00:15:58] Do we have any acknowledgment? I'm sorry. Could you restate the question? Do we have any acknowledgment of a work session having been held in the minutes? So there should be a breakdown in the minutes that said what time we went into the work session and coming out, but we have a summary that we have.

[00:16:19] we don't post and it just has the agenda title the staff and then the summary of their staff report and just basically if any um consensus was taken from that item so it wouldn't have there's no action so that wouldn't be on there you have a record of the discussion internally and the outcomes of the discussion is that be the video we have the video that would count but as a summary no it would just be like the mayor and council made a consensus on whatever item but you would note in that if there were agreements during the work session on issues yes like if there's

[00:16:58] agreements that like staff to move forward yes well the reason i raise this is there is no mention in the minutes of the work session we had which was extended on the george snyder trail and there were agreements i think reached in that so just let you know work session is a separate document it wouldn't be included in the regular minutes where where would we see that we don't post that we've never posted work

session minutes or summaries well I think that during the work session my recollection is there were some agreements and they're timely in terms of recognition because of where we are on

[00:17:37] that issue and I'm just wondering when it is we need to affirm those agreements to move forward based on them whether that's something that we do later in the agenda today and if so when or we do this now as a part of the minutes that we are approving what is what is the way in which we affirm and clarify if needed the agreements that were reached in the work session I think with agreement of the body you all could have a discussion about what you'd like to talk about in terms of any agreements that were reached another appropriate

[00:18:16] time to do it would be during council comments if someone would like to reach the raise the issue then and we can have a discussion I'm flexible just as long as we at some point this evening do that to be sure we don't leave this evening without having nailed down agreements that we reached in the work session it's your all's discretion I might suggest that we do it during council comments then someone raised it as an issue and have a discussion and you all can agree on what the consensus was and the clerk I think has a comment generally during council comments people can make whatever comments they want

[00:18:55] including if there are questions to be raised or asked during council comments are we able during council comments to act on motions or act on proposed agreements no you achieve consensus during council comments a votable consensus no well tom so like for example when i proposed adding bacs with fairfax county adding a city representative to those we did that during council comments and that provided direction where there was an action by staff to send a letter

[00:19:29] So we can send a direction, but it's not an official vote, just like a work session. Well, so one of the key issues is that I think we have intended to make it clear that a majority of the council was not in favor of authorizing a bid for construction for the full trail construction.

[00:19:57] And the city manager pointed out that we may need to take formal council action on that because that's the official mechanism by which he is then able to act on that. So I am just, I think, wanting to understand the when and the where and the how about how we do that following our last meeting.

[00:20:17] If that was at all ambiguous, I think we would like to resolve the ambiguity. So, Council Member Peterson, as I think was discussed in the work session, staff is prepared to bring forward one or any series of resolutions that the council would like to consider with respect to the George Snyder Trail, either to terminate it, to modify it with the one option for the western side, and to any other modifications that the council might like.

[00:20:41] We had done that in the past with the previous council, and we're prepared to bring that forward at the next meeting if that's the will of the council for formal action. Council Member Hull. So I think that at least where my confusion is, Mr. Foster, you said that the expectation was that unless we came to a formal resolution that it was to continue down the path it had already been on, which was potentially to go out for bid.

[00:21:11] I think from the work session, though, what we had not fully agreed on, what we had fully, what had support from council to move forward with was to not proceed with the full trail. The other two options of cancel or Westside only, there was not full consensus yet.

[00:21:32] We were not willing to make that stand. So I left that meeting concerned that there was going to be continued forward progress on a bid. I had tried to raise the request of we had eliminated one of the

three options.

[00:21:48] Could we halt this until we had future conversation? We do this by formal action, first of all. And the discussion that we had was that there was a deadline for the particular window of May 28th to send out the bid, to send out the proposal for the bid.

[00:22:04] What the consensus was is that we were not going to do that until some formal decision was made, which we do through resolution, which can come to this council. That's how things are done, through resolution. There are things done in consensus in the work session, and the consensus in the work session was that the staff was not going to proceed to do anything as far as submitting the bid, but that the May 28th means that the time runs out on being able to put out a bid on this particular proposal.

[00:22:35] Yes, Mr. Foster. Yes, Mayor. So, hopefully I can provide some clarity. Council Member Hall is correct in what I said. so you keep in mind the council is a continual body the the last formal action that council took and i recognize the members sitting up on the dais may not have been the members of council that took the action but the last action that was took was to proceed with the george snyder trail and so we will continue in that process the deadline for the bids is may the 28th what i

[00:23:11] indicated to you was if you want to do something different you do need to take formal action which requires a vote to direct us to do something different however we are not going out tomorrow to advertise the bids we do have time and that's what i was explaining that that there is time between now and when we have to take action you have a couple of more meetings in between those times for you to decide if you want to do something different but absent an official affirmative action of the council to direct us to do something

[00:23:46] different what the current council direction that staff will follow is to continue to proceed with the trail because it was authorized approved and funds appropriated councilmember Amos hello hello okay there we go I mean just to follow up when we left that meeting my understanding was we were trying to kind of pinpoint the date on when we wanted to make a formal move and I thought we had kind of focused more on April to get past the budget Town Hall and some other items so my assumption was it was either coming next meeting or

[00:24:26] the meeting after I think it would be easier for us and not to drag this on because we do have a lot of speakers some on this particular subject some on the budget to just pick a date if that's helpful for staff we can but I think there's a process for that there's generally a lot of processes for how we do things and this isn't the process although if you would like to request a date we can put it on a future agenda this would not necessarily be the way in which we do that my my concern is just that we I think had reached an agreement

[00:25:00] to avoid having staff continue to work on a bid for a full trail at the last meeting and in the interest of time and resources it would be my sense that we should affirm that as officially as necessary as soon as possible so that we can stay focused on the the remaining options that the group was focused on and not again be distracted by a procedure that would be focused on the full trail and I can appreciate that but we there is a process for most things having to do with how we conduct meetings and so we can take that into consideration it can

[00:25:40] be put on an agenda we can set a date certain we can have a resolution and we can vote on it that that would not be what happens right now right here well I will look forward to that and then in

council comments raising any further actions we need one I guess final clarification that I would ask is how the council would be able to have access to the notation of the work session and as

[00:26:16] you had mentioned things that the council for instance came to consensus on, et cetera, how would we be able to review that? We can email that to you. No, that'd be great. That's not a problem. Great. Thank you very much. Okay.

[00:26:32] We've had a motion. We've had it seconded. Is there any further discussion on approving the agenda? Seeing none, a roll call vote. Council Member McQuillan? Aye. Council Member Bates? Aye. Council Member Peterson?

[00:26:48] Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler? Aye. Council Member Hall? Aye. Council Member Amos? Aye. Motion passed unanimously. We will go on to the initial general public comment. This is the portion where individuals have called the city clerk's office by 5 o'clock today to sign up to speak.

[00:27:04] I will call up the first speaker, which is Philip LaTossa. Mayor and Council, I speak tonight representing the Friends of Accurton Creek. We empathize with the elected officials and staff who have endured these years of frustration dealing with the George Snyder Trail proposal.

[00:27:22] The western proportion of the proposal has lately been much discussed. We see three alternative western routes that would enable us to avoid the intrusion of pavement and dramatic land modification into our woods and wetlands. Via Cardinal Road. The western end of Cardinal Road already has short informal pedestrian connections to 123 via the adjacent apartments that could be modified to become a more standard trail.

[00:27:47] Via Eaton Place and Fairfax Boulevard. The length of seven foot wide sidewalk already existing on Eaton Place and Fairfax Boulevard could be extended both westward to 123 and eastward to Boulevard Marketplace where users will find a connection to the existing Eastern George Snyder Trail and the Fairwoods Neighbor Way.

[00:28:05] Unlike the rest of Fairfax Boulevard, this stretch involves no intersections or driveway crossings. Via the Willowood Redevelopment. The Willowood Office Park is in planning for mixed-use redevelopment. This is an opportunity to route the George Snyder Trail along the back edge, as has been done at the City's Main Street Marketplace.

[00:28:24] The connection to 123 could continue at the back of the hotel properties. The future of this project is an opportunity to acquire the open space parcel at 10-270 Fairfax Boulevard, thus completing a chain of city-owned preserves and wildlife corridors along Akadene Creek from city limit to city limit.

[00:28:42] At the same time, let's improve access to these natural preserves by controlling the invasive exotic plant species that are choking out access for native flora, fauna, and citizens alike by the density of their infestations. Thank you. Our next speaker is Thomas Strange.

[00:29:03] Good evening. First, I'd like to start off by thanking us for at least taking the consideration of the environmental impact that this project has had.

[00:29:19] I would also like to raise concerns that I've talked with a lot of the fellow Fairfax citizens here. It's a very invasive project where the agricultural and how many trees are being removed, how is that going to affect this long term?

[00:29:36] though we are planting new trees to replace these, new trees don't provide the same amount of oxygen and do the same thing as old and well-vested trees. Even the thought of taking another 500 trees down is just, it's kind of almost sickening. The amount of money that is going into this is coming out of our tax dollars as well. And it's not. We're still contributing somehow. It's kind of just gut-wrenching to see how much deforestation has occurred. And I was just hoping that you can take this into consideration as everyone that I've talked to is feeling the same way all the

[00:30:12] residents that live in Mosby Woods area it's it's kind of really sad to see all these trees just getting removed that's what I would like to share so thank you our next speaker is Lynn McPherson good evening my name is Lynn McPherson I live at 3259 Cambridge Court my house is right across the street from C1 at the work session two weeks ago and for the better part of two years city

[00:30:51] staff has stated that community they conducted community outreach with Cambridge station regarding the GST and that outreach occurred in August of 2020 in the past two weeks this group has finally been provided the details of that outreach and here's what we've learned the email communication announcing the GST meeting only went to the then HOA president and did not specify that he should invite others in the community to that meeting.

[00:31:28] As a result only three of 118 homes in Cambridge Station were represented at that meeting. That's 2.5 percent. The city's presentation did not specify that the trail would be paved.

[00:31:47] It did not specify that more than 500 trees would need to be cut down. It did not specify that 19% of the tree canopy would be destroyed due to the combined environmental impact of stream restoration and the George Snyder Trail.

[00:32:09] And it did not specify that it would take more than 100 years for the oak and hickory forests that makes up the eastern portion of the planned GST project to recover.

[00:32:26] In addition to the community outreach city staff also discussed the environmental impact to wildlife as a result of the GST at the recent work session. Two weeks ago city staff advised the council that the environmental impact studies conducted were limited to protected and endangered species for which there were none in that area.

[00:32:53] So tonight, I'd like to share with you this picture of a northern spotted owl, which was taken in my side yard. After snapping this picture, this little guy flew off to his home in C1.

[00:33:09] Northern spotted owls have been protected by the Endangered Species Act since 1990. I'd also like to share this picture of a bald eagle in C-1, right in the area that the city is currently destroying for creek restoration.

[00:33:32] As you know, bald eagles are protected by the Bald Eagle Protection Act. Please stop the destruction of our wildlife and our forests. Please vote no to the George Snyder's Trail. Thank you.

[00:33:52] Our next speaker is Shelly Vance. Good evening. I'm Shelly Vance. I live on Cambridge Court in Cambridge Station.

[00:34:08] I come again to speak about the level of public outreach that the city wants to take credit for with the current plan for the George Snyder Trail. At the public work session two weeks ago on March 11th, the issue of public outreach and public engagement was broached by the council.

[00:34:25] The staff was specifically asked if there had been public outreach, and the staff responded that there had been without giving details. The idea of public outreach conjures up images of emails, door flyers, letters to homeowners by U.S. Post, news items in the city scene, and public meetings held at City Hall or the Sherwood Center.

[00:34:48] The expression public outreach covers a multitude of methods. But let's look at the public outreach that actually took place in 2020. A July 17, 2020 public outreach email from the city's Kathy Salgado was sent to the HOA presidents of the three nearest communities.

[00:35:07] The rest of the email recipients were city staff members. In it, Ms. Salgado asked to schedule a meeting to share with the communities, to brief the residents and take questions, all good intentions. The actual public outreach meeting took place on August 20.

[00:35:24] At that meeting, there were the same three HOA presidents on the original city email invitation, and there were two additional residents from those target HOAs. In other words, there were five property owners.

[00:35:40] There are 823 properties among the three HOAs. The five homeowners attend, and five homeowners attended. That is 0.6%. Not 6%, but significantly less than 1%.

[00:35:57] It is at that point the city should have recognized the ineffectiveness of its public outreach and work to find a better way to engage and nearby communities to brief the residents and take questions. Less than a month later on September 8, 2020, there was a project update provided by Zoom at a city work session.

[00:36:17] It was at this September meeting that Ms. Salgado spoke of having approached city residents in the vicinity of the GST. The project timeline slide takes credit for associated outreach activities and trail alignment review with the Mosby Woods HOA.

[00:36:36] This is not the first time I've spoken on this issue of poor public outreach. I spoke of this in December of '23, January of '24, and February of '25. Every time the city council or staff alludes to public outreach or public engagement and omits the details, I will cite specifics and reiterate that whatever public outreach and engagement there was, was insufficient and ineffective, thank you.

[00:37:07] - Can I ask that we not applaud, this is a public comment and it's a city council meeting, so we're listening very attentively to you, so I would ask that you create some decorum in the chamber, thank you.

[00:37:24] - Our next speaker, Stacy Langton. - I didn't realize tonight was the transgender Day of Recognition Proclamation, and I wanted to say that that was one of the more gross displays of woke grandstanding I've witnessed in a long time. And I don't think

[00:38:01] that your so-called minister's request that they be seen and be safe is actually even true because we have a transgender running amok in Fairfax County right now who's been arrested several times at the gyms in our locale and he's a biological man and he's playing fast and loose with the designation of being trans while he's exposing himself to young girls and women.

[00:38:31] So maybe the mayor and some of you councilmen would like to have a proclamation for victims of sexual violence such as, you know, I mean he's not being seen, right? He's busy showing as Johnson to anyone who would like to look at it in the locker rooms. So maybe you guys could have a

proclamation for victims of sexual violence, just a little suggestion. I actually came here tonight to talk about two other topics. I spoke because I live in Farcroft at the last meeting

[00:39:03] against the Far House development into a hotel on top of the second Hilton Hotel that's part of the Ox Hill Development Company's projects. I don't know if the council is aware, I think maybe some of you might individually have been made aware, but I wanted to make it public record that Ox Hill has now been sued a second time about two weeks ago in federal court for non-payment to the current architect, Thomas Jewell Hansen, of the city center west condos, part of their development. So I think the city council needs to look really closely when they're thinking about working with

[00:39:42] these types of development companies to see if they're actually solvent because these guys have three lawsuits now for non-payment. They don't look to be terribly solvent. My last comment is about the budget proposal that we witnessed at that particular meeting from your city planner.

[00:39:59] The rate of increase in all of the taxes overall was really significant, right? A 20-something percent, I think, overall from last year's budget, which that seems like a lot. But the Property taxes in particular are outrageous.

[00:40:17] And just three days after the meeting, we all got our bills. And to give you an example, for me personally, like the year before last, my bill increased by \$250, and then last year it increased by \$600. Well, this year, under that new proposal with his new property tax with no cuts, it's a \$2,400 increase.

[00:40:36] With runaway inflation, I don't think most people can afford that kind of an increase to their monthly mortgage every month. Our next speaker is Val Morgan.

[00:40:57] So security may disappear at any moment. I don't think I can afford it either. What I heard recently is that VDOT says that we have a fourth choice.

[00:41:14] So I'm voting for either the cancel the whole damn thing or as Philip said, put it on a sidewalk. I have another problem with talking about our prices going up is we waste a lot of money.

[00:41:30] And I'm just talking about plants and stuff. For example, like the bump out down on University, I think it had to be done twice because the first time they did the bump out, only one car could get through. Now it's a little better, but why didn't you just put a speed bump?

[00:41:49] And the other thing is they decided to plant. I think there were trees in there. They've gone to crap because there's no maintenance. And speaking of plants, my unfavorite committee is the BAR.

[00:42:05] They approved these plants to the tune of 2,700 plants, but they don't know anything about plants because I asked them. And I had a copy of the plant plan. They hadn't seen it, I'm sure, and they approved it, and then you guys approved it, and maintenance.

[00:42:30] We're not good at that, so it may fail, and then we'll blame the plants. Now, some of us are excited it's spring, but I don't think our trees are. The other day, a dump truck just pulled in and dumped copious amounts of mulch.

[00:42:50] If you take your phone and look up volcano mulch, all you'll see is this is dumb. This is bad for trees. And we keep doing it, and we used to be a tree city. I think we should change it to killer tree city.

[00:43:09] The other thing I witnessed was around the trees, and I've sent photos, besides the mulch, which is rotting the bark and other kinds of stuff, they decided to take an edger and cut through the roots.

[00:43:27] They went around the edge, far side of the mulch, and have cut roots all the way around. I don't think it's a good idea, and I did not hear the trees singing, I feel pretty, oh so pretty, because I think if they could scream, they would make a hell of a lot of noise.

[00:43:48] We can do a whole lot better than killing our trees, paying money, foolishly. And I've been, and that's going to go, screw you, been working my fanny off at the police station, and BAR, my unfavorite thing, seven men, thank you, decided we should have this big column and it was supervised and it was a mess you should leave a site looking like it did

[00:44:21] when you came except for that stupid ugly brick thing they did not and i have spent almost 20 hours trying to fix it and a lot of money thank thank you that i'm done thank you our next speaker sandy shin i am sandy shin um from vienna um thank you for this opportunity to talk um i just want to mention that I attended the walkthrough of the proposed George Sliders trail and also sat through the work session a couple weeks ago and I

[00:44:58] just sincerely hope that you you consider alternatives to the full trail you know at a minimum don't do the eastern half which cuts through some very steep woods and paves a you know a little highway through narrow woods and I'm not that familiar with the western half but I understand there's some alternatives there so I just want to appreciate your deliberations a couple weeks ago and I hope you follow through on some alternatives just like to remind you that trees contribute a lot to the

[00:45:36] air to erosion control they're valuable resources and they can't speak for themselves so we owe it to the trees to be somewhat conscious of their value to to all of our lives um so thank you our next speaker is ellen pence hi i'm ellen pence i own a home at 3211 adams court in cambridge

[00:46:16] station and a home at 10028 fairwoods drive in the mosby woods condominiums i'm speaking against the George Snyder Trail Project. I just want to remind you that in Cambridge Station, we fought to save this very same forest back in 2007 when we reached a compromise with the city council at that time. There was transparency back then. We had several meetings with the city council and

[00:46:50] staff members. We asked questions and they answered them. At that time, instead of raising the whole forest and putting in four ball fields in Stafford Park, which is on the eastern side of the trail. The city put in only one ball field and left this strip of forest. They also put in a lovely, pristine little gravel walking pathway through these old growth trees. Both Earth Day

[00:47:27] and Arbor Day are usually celebrated in April. On Arbor Day, a few symbolic trees are ceremonially planted, but both of these events need to address the paving over of the few bits of forestation that we have left in Fairfax City. I realize that paved property is usually taxable property, but ripping out a small forest in order to put in a big paved road makes no sense.

[00:48:00] That ADA-compliant road could take place on a parallel existing paved road that the city already maintains. If the GST removal of 500 mature trees and removal of tons of forest floor occurs to create an unnecessary wide paved road that cuts through the middle of Stafford Park, this little urban forest will be no more.

[00:48:33] just please leave it the way it is thank you for your attention our last speaker susan kyler hello my name is susan kyler i live in cambridge station on cardinal road i've talked many times about the george snyder trail among other things i want to start off by thanking you all this is the first council that has really seriously considered our concerns we had some other

[00:49:12] members on who did previous ones but the first one that has really decided hey we need to resolve this. We're now faced, I guess, with canceling or modifying. I happen to be in favor of modifying both the eastern and the western. You could have a full build if you used existing infrastructure.

[00:49:31] Philip LaTassa came up with four options for the western part that should be considered. Now, these are, talk about public outreach. When the public became aware and began engaged on this, they didn't just say, hey, there's a problem, we don't like it. They began coming up with alternatives. They're not engineers, but they really went out there and were measuring things, coming up with alternatives to save the city money, and preserve our forest land, okay?

[00:49:57] A couple weeks ago, I called VDOT because I wasn't getting clear answers about what the process was and what was really happening with the \$3.7 million. I talked to, let's see, Michelle Shropshire forwarded my email to the planning and investment group for the Northern Virginia District VDOT office, and I talked to Carol Bondurant.

[00:50:22] And I asked her about canceling, and she said, yes, at 90 to 100% completion, design completion, we probably would have to return the \$3.7 million because citing public outreach environmental impacts at this late date when there had been previous reviews over the last few years saying there were minimal or no environmental impacts and there was no public opposition, even though it was two to one against, would, she said, probably the governing board, the CBT, would, the CTV, would probably want the money back.

[00:50:55] Now, they'd probably schedule something to do it, but they would probably do that. And she couldn't, you know, make a determination because she's a planner. She's an engineer as well. I said, okay. She said also that over, I think, two years ago, she had suggested to the city that they look at the western half and build that and let the eastern half go until they figure out what to do on it.

[00:51:18] Two years ago, when it was not 90% complete. I don't even think it was 60% complete. I'm not sure about that. At any rate, yes, if we cancel the project, we'll take a ding on reputation. We will also take a ding on reputation as anybody would if they have performance issues with cost and schedule.

[00:51:38] It is one of the performance factors. It happens, okay? Now, modifying is a whole different issue. We may have to eat certain things. We probably wouldn't have to pay the \$3.7 million back. Modifying, we could build the whole thing. And she was mentioning the Western, and I said, yeah, we've been talking about options for the Western, but we could also do it for the Eastern using existing, and she knew all about Cardinal Road.

[00:51:58] And I went, oh, I was kind of surprised. So I'll cut it short now. I'm not really well prepared on this. But really, consider modifying, doing the full build, but putting it on existing infrastructure and minimizing environmental impact. Thank you.

[00:52:15] We can move on 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 number 6A, consideration of the March 11, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

[00:52:38] I move to approve the consent agenda, item number 6A, and the motion accompanying the consent agenda item as printed. Is there a second? Second. Motion's been made by Council Member Hardy Chandler and seconded by Council Member Peterson. Are there any items Council would like pulled for additional discussion?

[00:52:56] Well, I would like to just affirm the prior request that we bring forward the results of the work plan discussion so that that's available for Council and as a way of addressing the lack of any mention of that in the minutes for the March 11 meeting and with the understanding that we will have that information Council will have that at its disposal then I'm okay with proceeding here okay so great a roll call vote councilmember Amos aye councilmember Hall aye

[00:53:32] councilmember Hardy Chandler aye councilmember Peterson aye councilmember Bates aye councilman Verben McQuillen aye motion passed unanimously we will go on to the public hearings our first public hearing is a public hearing on the Chambers Road Eaton Place intersection improvement project this is a no council action item I will recognize Wendy Sanford transportation director to

[00:53:54] provide the staff presentation good evening Mayor Reed members of the city

[00:54:48] Council the item before you this evening is a presentation on the Chambers Road Eaton Place intersection improvements project followed by a public hearing. With me this evening are consultants from Timmins, Nick Susi, and Steve Schmidt. Our agenda this evening is to briefly review the project, review the design features, highlight the current design improvements and the results, discuss the tree preservation, maintenance, and replanting plan, mostly for the the buffer area, review the schedule and next steps, and finally hold the public hearing. There is no council action associated with this

[00:55:25] item tonight this is a presentation and then an opportunity for the public to weigh in on the final design as we move before as we move to the right-of-way phase of this project here we are what we have is the transportation capital project roadmap which you are familiar with and where we are now is at step 10 you can see the green arrow this is the the point in the project where we present 60% plans at a public meeting again no City Council action is required after this step we provide responses to those comments incorporating changes as

[00:56:05] feasible and then we move on to right-of-way acquisition and the development of 100% plans I'm not going to review the entire timeline but it is here in front of you and it does show the various phases of this project where it started in 2017 when it was included in the multimodal transportation plan and then moving on to where we are now which is approval of where we have an approved design concept for this project and are now happy 60% design public hearing at this point I am going to have Nick Susie present the following slides

[00:56:41] we want to make sure that we start with the purpose of need for this project that's really the why that we're here and the goals that we're setting out to achieve and we'll talk through each of these in a little bit of detail this evening but I'll jump straight to three main points here that will pop up in red as we click forward but the first thing that top left being that this is an intersection with an existing poor level of service and high congestion and traffic concerns it's also an intersection with significant crash history and safety concerns and lastly it is an intersection with access

[00:57:20] management and inadequate intersection space spacing concerns these are all important because this is a national highway system route 123 through the city is carrying over 40,000 vehicles in a day and it really is also a point where that volume of traffic blends with local city traffic residential traffic things like that to the side roads in and out of these neighborhoods so each of these must be addressed and are what we are aiming to accomplish with this

[00:57:49] project. Turn it over to Steve. So we began this project by looking at the existing, Nick talked about the volume out there, the level of service. How does the intersection operate today? You see on the top right under 2019 conditions, this intersection operated at a level of service D as in dog. We grade intersections from level service A through F. Much like you do in school, we also include E. And anything below a D in that EF range needs improvement. We then took a look at if we do nothing what will happen in the future with all of the development we know about in the

[00:58:27] area with the i-66 improvements with the regional traffic growth that is increasing this intersection will increase will decrease to a level service f where on average every vehicle coming through will experience a minute and a half of delay so both today and in the future something that congestion at this intersection is significant we also looked at the crash history from 2017 to 2024, there have been 99 total crashes at the intersection. A question was asked at the work session about the crashes from 2022 to now, and we did update those numbers. There's been 22 crashes

[00:59:03] during that time as well. 20% of those crashes involve vehicles coming from Cambridge, turning south on left onto Eaton. A third of the crashes involved traffic traveling to and from the access roads on either side. We did also take a video of some of the movements. Part of the challenge here is the access management, how close these intersections are spaced.

[00:59:29] And so we have a video briefly showing some of the issues that we've seen out there. As this is coming up, what you'll see is that there's really some really tight turns to and from the main line.

[00:59:56] And you'll also see that once you turn off, you have to make another second turn very quickly right away. Bear with us. Excuse us.

[01:00:16] Okay. We're going to skip the video. We're going to skip the video now. What it shows on the day that we did the videos, there's a lot of near misses. There's a lot of, as you saw, there's 99 total crashes. We saw a lot of opportunity for crashes because of the access management spacing.

[01:00:31] Can you go ahead to the next slide, please? So this intersection does not meet city or state access management standards on either side of the road. There's been some talk about can we do one side or the other. Both sides do not meet spacing standards. The standard is 225 feet.

[01:00:47] So what that means is when you turn from the main line onto the next street, the first intersection should be 225 feet away. On the East Service Road, we've got about 45 feet. On Assembly Drive, there's 32 feet. We are well below the standard. And that combination of the access and then the two-way traffic along the service road is unsafe and contributing towards the crashes that we are seeing out there today.

[01:01:10] As Nick mentioned, this is part of the National Highway System, and any improvement that we make must address the access management conditions out there. Okay, so now we'll fast forward a bit and begin in 2023 when the previous council endorsed the project and work our way forward.

[01:01:33] So if we look on the next slide here, the endorsed option, thank you, the council endorsed option from March and then April of 2023 included a variety of design parameters, but three main factors that I want to highlight here.

[01:01:52] The first of those being that the operational and safety improvements be maximized. Also that the west side traffic configuration be reconfigured and provide the new access to the newly constructed

and now completed signal on north of the Eaton Place intersection.

[01:02:10] And then lastly, the distinction that the local and more regional bike and pedestrian traffic be separated, whether that's on sidewalk or shared use path on that west side of the 123 intersection. Several of those other factors are mentioned here along the top, but what I want to hit on on this slide is those additional commitments that were made at the time for staff to move forward and vet some of these things further.

[01:02:38] We'll talk through each of these, but very briefly, there was a commitment to validate the projected traffic and redistribution of traffic. At the time, in spring of 2023, the new signal had not opened yet, and so the expectation was that once that signal became operational, that we would revisit the traffic analysis, re-complete and re-investigate with traffic counts, and then updating that analysis to confirm expectations held.

[01:03:07] Also look at improving the shared-use path crossing at Cobdale, and then ensuring tree preservation in the buffer strip along the west. And again, we will touch on each of the three of these in a bit more detail here. So from the first of those on that list was validating the traffic operations.

[01:03:28] We did indeed do that, like I mentioned, collected additional traffic counts and did confirm that vehicles were adjusting their travel patterns as were anticipated and that with those volumes taken in 2023 and into 2024, that the traffic would continue to, we would see the benefits that we had projected previous to that in the earlier study so if you look at the arrows that were in red the arrows there's a 40 reduction in the traffic making that red maneuver that traffic has now diverted to making the orange maneuver from

[01:04:05] southbound 123 and then vice versa leaving those east side service roads vehicles that used to take that green movement 43% of those are now taking the yellow turn instead so again that's consistent with what was anticipated and the studies that were updated at that time confirmed the operational improvements would be achieved and that is what is summarized here so we see our 2040 proposed build operations do indeed increase to a level of service C at the Eaton Place intersection and a level of service B at the new signal intersection just to the

[01:04:41] north and you can see those average delay times again significantly less than the minute and a half or so that Steve mentioned earlier the other piece of this to consider southbound 123 and the need for expanded capacity along 123 the counts did confirm and obviously future year projections only increase that that yes indeed we do need three southbound through lanes and we also need the two southbound left turn lanes from 123 to Eaton Place to accommodate the traffic volumes and the demand for those movements. The second of those

[01:05:19] commitments was to evaluate and ensure that the crossing for the shared east path along the west side of 123 was made as safe as possible. What's in the background here was what was presented at that March 2023 council meeting and two options were presented option one in the blue and option two in the yellow and And as we look forward to today's design on the next slide here, we can see that we have implemented option number one, which brings that shared-use path crossing closer to 123, improving visibility for those trail users as they cross traffic.

[01:05:57] Other enhancements as it relates to bike and pedestrian improvements, again, here we do have the separate sidewalk along the far west side of that service road, addition to and complementing the

shared use path that is between that west side service road and 123 there's also continuous shared use path on both the west and east sides of 123 that was not previously included but is included here to provide connections along both sides and prevent the number of times that folks have to actually cross over 123 as they travel and again those were all key features that that have been pointing out had been pointed out in

[01:06:36] those commitments so as we look again now at our our current design on the next slide here we have just a summary of the current design features there is the neighborhood sidewalk as well as the bus stop consolidation on the west side of the intersection the reconfigured traffic pattern coming out to the new signal expanded capacity for southbound 123 as I mentioned and perhaps most importantly here the safety improvements that are being made the reduction and conflict points are critical and those were again one of the main purposes and

[01:07:13] need identified for this project as well as the operational congestion and delay reduction that we talked about on the previous slide and then the last piece of that was the vegetated buffer management plan particularly for that west side buffer and we will elaborate a bit on that here so what was committed at the time was that by the time we got to this point a couple years later that we would have done additional and extensive tree inventory and assessment buffer management plan tree preservation

[01:07:46] plan and also look at native versus non-native plants in this area so this graphic just depicts the areas that were inventoried and assessed so you can see not only the west side buffer area that was a particular question but the surrounding areas both sides west and east of 123 next slide that inventory found 459 trees five inches and larger and those were each given a different assessment based on their condition and what you can see in the summary table there of those 459

[01:08:21] about 26 of those were either in poor critical or dead condition and so the next steps for us after that inventory included uh what you see in the second bullet there which are really three main components to this plan there's the tree preservation plan focused on preserving existing trees that are there non-native and invasive species plan dealing with those non-native and invasives that are in this area to help again preserve the native trees and then a replanting plan that has now been developed to either take advantage of new green space that's been created

[01:08:58] replant in areas where trees would be removed and each of those are included in what's posted on the engage site for the project now so the specific to the non-native and invasive species management these areas that you see in the orange color here are locations where there are those types of either plants or trees vines whatever it may be exist and there's a plan again that's provided online that involves dealing with those and and preventing

[01:09:35] those from continuing to spread and then the last piece of that puzzle is the replanting so you can see here a total of over 280 trees being planted that's a combination of trees shrubs small low-growth plantings depending on where they are planted it's a combination of deciduous and evergreen trees variety of sizes species and again the goal for this is not only to take advantage of new green space that's being created by eliminating the service roads for instance on the east side that are being disconnected but also to replant in areas where trees are otherwise being removed

[01:10:12] so the replanting is taking place on the next slide you see here in the yellow areas are all areas that would be replanted in one way or another and again that information is available on those and the plans posted online so in summary this is the current plan again this was shared at at the work session. It was also shared back in the fall as we held some additional public engagement and open house meetings

for this project. Again, the key design features to attack and address the purpose and need that we set out with are included in this proposal.

[01:10:51] So in terms of project costs, the city has \$10.75 million in NVTA dollars allocated to this project current budget is just under that at just about ten and a half million so we expect to be within budget moving forward with this project and then lastly I'll mention here just that the the latest public engagement on this project involved reopening of the engage page in the fall so there were about 400 visitors to the site that that were engaging with the project information

[01:11:27] and also an open house that was held in October again we've shared the results OF THAT, BUT A VARIETY OF COMMENTS, SOME FOR THE PROJECT, SOME NOT IN FAVOR OF THE PROJECT, AND SOME RESIDENTS WITH CONCERNS SPECIFIC TO THEIR PROPERTIES, WHICH WE CERTAINLY WOULD LOOK TO ADDRESS DURING THE NEXT PHASE, WHICH IS OUR RIGHT-AWAY ACQUISITION PHASE, MOVING THIS PROJECT FORWARD.

[01:11:48] TURN IT BACK OVER TO YOU. THANK YOU. SO WHERE WE ARE THIS EVENING IS AT THE PUBLIC HEARING PHASE. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PROJECT TEAM TO PRESENT THE PROJECT TO A PUBLIC AUDIENCE. This is technically the public hearing is something that is required as part of VDOT funded projects.

[01:12:07] This project is not a VDOT funded project. This is an NVTA funded project. That said, we are using the same process of the public hearing at the same stage for consistency. As part of the public hearing, individuals have the opportunity to have their comments recorded either tonight at the meeting or the public comment period, which will be open for 10 days.

[01:12:26] And so we have -- this is a new public comment period. And so the Engage Fairfax page is open for public comment as well. All of those comments will be recorded and entered into a public hearing record. And the city staff will provide responses to those comments.

[01:12:44] In terms of notifications, these are the various ways that the public hearing has been advertised. There have been signs in the neighborhood. There have been newspaper ads, email-specific associations. It's been in social media posts and in city clips emails.

[01:13:01] So in terms of the next steps, as you know, tonight is the 60% design public hearing. We would move into right-of-way acquisition over the summer and then construction would occur in approximately a year and also take approximately one year.

[01:13:18] That concludes our presentation. We'd be happy to take any questions prior to the public hearing. Are there questions of staff? Councilmember Hall. I would like to again express my disdain for this project and that I do not believe that it is supported by the community.

[01:13:36] I think it's very misleading that, well, I guess a general process procedure maybe is that when the engaged page updates with a new design or things like that, it appears that the previous comments seem to disappear.

[01:13:52] And I recognize that there might be a benefit to that in that maybe the comments are outdated and don't necessarily pertain to the current plan that people are looking at, but it would be really beneficial I think as a procedural opportunity that all comments are archived on there and are visible and maybe there's just a line item that says these were before 40% 30% whatever change I had a couple

residents reach out and they were very unhappy that they couldn't see the previous comments so forgive me for asking this I probably asked this last time but what is the width of the sidewalk that is being generated on the west side for the bus

[01:14:31] stops and such. It varies between five and six feet, depending on whether it's at the back of curb. There's a portion of it that's at the back of curb, which would be six feet and everywhere else five. Okay. And how wide is the shared use path that's going? 10 feet. 10 feet. Okay. So I will, again, strongly request that those two be combined. I think if, and if that's not going to happen for some reason, I feel like I could get some consensus on that. I would also then like to offer consideration for moving the shared use path onto the Cambridge Road side of the berm.

[01:15:11] I recognize it might not be able to be 10 feet wide. That's okay. I think that if kids can be expected to walk along a five to six foot sidewalk, a bike that's passing along there would be just fine. I also would like to point out that the other side of Cambridge Road that backs up to where the assembly is that's currently sidewalk maybe there's a plan to make that a 10-foot shared use path I think that's a bit excessive but I also think that in recognition of what our neighborhood is losing and the amount of

[01:15:46] public disdain for this project that there are still there's still an opportunity for the neighborhood to be overall be made happy and let me just be very clear I'm not speaking for everyone in my neighborhood I understand that I recognize that I'm not reading speaking for everyone that drives through my neighborhood I'm speaking for the large number of people that turned out in the past two years or three years that we've been doing this process so let me be clear and not everyone but there are still opportunities to make this compatible if I may respond to that so it says some of the comments so before

[01:16:23] the the resolution was adopted to adopt the major design features for this project we did look at variety different options for that shared use path we looked at an option that had it combined with the sidewalk we also looked at an option that had it closer, and originally that is actually how VDOT had shown this.

[01:16:41] They had shown the shared use path closer to the roadway. The issue that we heard very loudly was that that would take away the berm, that in order to put the shared use path there, that area now that has this berm would need to be flattened out and that that vegetation would not be able to be preserved.

[01:16:59] And there was a lot of concern that we heard about losing that vegetation and also having to flatten out the berm. So for that reason, it was fairly quickly, if I recall correct, the decision was made to not have the shared use path on the street side because of the need to preserve the vegetation that is able to be preserved in that vegetative buffer. A lot of it is invasive and it needs to be removed, but there is also a good deal of vegetation that can be preserved. And so what we heard was that we would like to preserve as much of that vegetation as possible the shared use path where it's shown now is actually in place of the travel lane so

[01:17:37] right now on that roadway it's a it's a two-way road so where the shared use path is being placed is where that second lane of it's replacing that asphalt where there is currently roadway so it enables us to leave the entire firm as is and really just clean it up so there's very little impact to that vegetated area and we heard that that is that was important so that's just to address it have it being on the outside of the road we also did look at the option of combining the shared use path and the sidewalk and that was presented to the City Council I'd have to go back and look at the date but that was there

[01:18:14] was a presentation where there were various options looked at we did not support that nevertheless the City Council was what had the option to vote on the major design features and it ultimately included the separation of the shared use path and the sidewalk in its resolution to adopt the major design features for this project so it is certainly up to the council to decide to modify that element but again there is a resolution that is on the record right now that has the major design features with these two features separate I recognize that I still would strongly like counselor to council to consider

[01:18:52] moving it so that it can be combined with the sidewalk and if there's a big concern about bikes and kids, then apparently there's 10 feet in which we could still work with in order to put the road on the closer side to the berm and still be able to utilize the other side.

[01:19:09] The other thing is, when I look at this and I think about a biker coming up on the berm and then coming up to the Cambridge Road intersection there, that's a real hard left to turn to see if there's traffic coming. I feel like if you're on the opposite side, you're really not navigating anything else the kids are already dealing with and then you're crossing over at the assembly entrance and then you're kind of head on there facing traffic and have an opportunity so if other council members would like to weigh in and consider maybe trying to do what i think was alternative one previously

[01:19:44] with just that shared use path being combined for the kids that are only there two times a day waiting for the bus i think that would be a consideration that cobdale would appreciate other questions for staff from the dais council member hardy channeler can you speak more about some of these concerns from a safety perspective because that's the primary concern for me so maybe educate us a little bit more about not only just the design considerations but the safety

[01:20:19] impact so for example with the statistic about 99 crashes at the d level and moving to the c level for example what is that difference from a safety perspective just so I understand your question you're asking about vehicular safety at the intersection not about the shared use path all actually all safety anything that you want to share that would improve because the number sort of disembodied from what that means or what these improvements might address or change about those numbers would be helpful I can elaborate on that a bit and I don't have the numbers in front

[01:20:56] of me but in previous presentations we've shared information regarding conflict points and we talked a lot about conflict points and we can recirculate that but we can't necessarily predict a comparable accident or crash number in a future year but what we can evaluate and understand is what are the number of conflict points points where vehicles could potentially collide or vehicles pedestrians bikes whatever it may be we know how many of those there are today and we also know that in the reconfigured condition there would be a certain number as well again I don't have the numbers in front of me and we could go back and pull those and circulate that but there was a

[01:21:35] substantial reduction in this reconfigured condition in the number of conflict points which generally would suggest that you are we are addressing the safety issues that are leading to those crashes you have more on that yeah the only thing I would add to that is when it comes to delay as an intersection degrades and levels of service and delay as you wait longer drivers get more anxious more aggressive they're more willing to kind of get past that if you know you're going to wait a minute and a half for that next signal to come around for you to get through you're more

[01:22:13] likely to push the envelope of that yellow of that red so we're trying to address safety in two ways reduction of conflict points removing the opportunity for vehicles to interact with each other. And if

we can reduce the delay and reduce the congestion, that will reduce driver anxiety, driver frustration, and help them get through the intersection faster and be more willing to adhere to the operations at the signals.

[01:22:39] Councilmember Peterson. Two things. First, with respect to Councilmember Hall's comments and requests, as a general matter, it does seem to me that separating sidewalks and bike paths should be a last resort and not a first resort, it seems redundant in a lot of cases. And the 10-foot wide configuration is widely used precisely for this purpose. Even new paths that are being constructed, for instance, in the county. And I do have to wonder whether that is a smarter way to go here

[01:23:18] in support of that suggestion. The second question I have is I'm trying to do my best to follow the map, so I'm going to need a little bit of help here. But if you look at where Chambers Road and Eaton Place intersect and you head down Eaton Place to Willowwood, et cetera, that area.

[01:23:35] We see a shared youth's path that cuts across Eaton Place, but it doesn't turn down Eaton Place, even though we have an existing sidewalk there. And that transitions rather quickly into a 7-foot sidewalk and ultimately a 10-foot when you get farther on Fairfax Boulevard.

[01:23:56] But there doesn't seem to be a connection anticipated here with bike and pedestrian use on Eaton Place. And I may be misreading the map, but I am curious to know because it would seem to me that we should be supporting bike and pedestrian infrastructure development on Eaton Place. And this would be the time to do that. Can you help me with that? Yes. And I believe I followed that.

[01:24:24] So the shared use path that comes across the intersection does continue to the south down 123, you're correct. To the east along Eaton, there are sidewalks proposed on both the north side and south side of Eaton Place. They're in a slightly lighter colored gray, and I realize it's probably pretty hard to see on the sides that we're all looking at, but there are sidewalks continuing, again, north side and south side of Eaton Place connecting to and bringing the sidewalks that are there today, you know, up to the new Shared East Path Crossing location. How big are the sidewalks just out of curiosity through there i believe they're five feet wide which is our

[01:25:01] standard sidewalk width i think it's not too far down eaton place before they hit seven feet and i'm just wondering why we wouldn't go ahead right here and pick it up at the wider width to facilitate combined use by bikes because people are already biking pretty heavily in this area right are you speaking of Eaton place where the best Western the hotel is yeah that unfortunately the city doesn't own that we have an ingress egress easement

[01:25:37] for that piece of Eaton place so you know we've done some work for them in the past but the city does not own that right-of-way are we restricted to the five-foot width as a consequence no we're not no particularly on the south side so that the south side segment was recently constructed that was actually constructed in that area with the university drive extension project so I know the first several hundred feet are at least five feet or are five feet wide but certainly there's no reason we couldn't for at least the portions that are being constructed with this project provide a wider width it would require

[01:26:16] additional easement to mr. Summers point there would be easement needed with the proposal and certainly that would just mean an extra couple feet of that easement but it certainly is something we could look at including. My own personal view is that would be a really smart thing to do right now and I'd be supportive of it. Would love to see if other council members would be supportive of that. So to clarify

the area you're requesting is what I'm circling here in yellow in that area where we are constructing improvements. Well so as I understand it there's there there is a sidewalk on both the north and the south side here. That is

[01:26:53] correct and so what I'm hearing is that you would like in that area that's shown in the black line outlined on the screen to be wider which is where we're constructing because that's really within the project limits otherwise we're outside of our project recognized but at least it gets you to the point where you can connect with future uh enhancement that would happen yeah well i mean the point is do it now here in the middle of all this council member mcquillen i don't have a question i just have a comment that i would agree to looking into that realignment proposal or

[01:27:30] aligning the shared use with the sidewalk as well i think it makes sense especially there with given how many bus stops and students we have that frequent that area other questions before we open the public hearing council member bates yeah i agree i definitely think it's worth looking into okay other questions comments okay um i will open the public hearing miss shinaberry has this public hearing been advertised yes it has and i have three speakers who signed up prior to the start

[01:28:03] of the meeting i'll call the first one up matt moore good evening i'm matt moore i live at 10506 assembly drive currently the president of our homeowners association i've been on the board for 24 years i'm also part of the senior leadership at the insurance institute for highway safety so i've been doing highway safety much of my life my point here tonight is just to encourage you to please act on behalf of safety i realize this project is very very polarizing it's one of the

[01:28:42] the few intersections that I know of in the area that's killed two people in the last six or seven years. I witnessed both of those crashes, or at least the aftermath of those crashes, firsthand. And they terrified me when my daughter began driving, period. In terms of our localized concerns, I think what that video that we were attempting to show earlier was going to show was that frequently we cannot, and we being residents of the assembly, can't leave our neighborhood. Vehicles coming out of Cobdale don't comply with the stop here sign. They move up. We

[01:29:17] can't egress, and oftentimes folks wait one or two cycles of that light to get out. Additionally, when we're southbound on 123 headed towards the neighborhood attempting to come in, when those vehicles are sitting there with their rear ends aimed towards Cobdale, we have to slow down significantly in order to S turn around to get into the assembly, which is challenging when lots of vehicles are coming in behind you at high rates of speed. So that's our very specific assembly concern. In general, I believe the term that the engineers used was low service levels at that

[01:29:51] intersection. Those low service levels encourage some really bad, stupid behavior, including excessive speeds on Eaton Place, all sorts of red light running. It just is not a safe place to be. They talked about future loads, but North Fax is just about to come online.

[01:30:10] This isn't additional load on that intersection is not an abstraction. It's imminent. Paul VI, when that project completes, there's going to be a lot of traffic going through 123 in order to get to 66. So please act on behalf of safety.

[01:30:27] Now, in addition to the other things I mentioned, I'm a cyclist. I commute by bike to Arlington most days. I also run, I've logged somewhere in the neighborhood of 4,000 miles riding and running in and around the city. In terms of Eaton Place, yeah, I admit, I bike and ride on that sidewalk.

[01:30:46] One thing to consider is there are six access points on the north side for vehicles to cross that sidewalk. And yeah, I ride it and run it all the time. It's far better than being on the road, but it's still a challenge to ride there for those reasons.

[01:31:03] That's it. Thank you for your time. Our next speaker is Lori Roskin. Good evening.

[01:31:19] My name is Lori Roskin. I live at 10512 Oak Place, which is directly impacted by this proposal. I strongly, I strongly am repeating that, support a cut through Cambridge Road Service Road, which is the main artery to the Cobddale neighborhood and leading to Oak Place.

[01:31:41] The proposed traffic flow is impractical as shown and needs a right turn at the first traffic light leading into the neighborhood located between Norman Avenue and the Henry Lodge to offload southbound traffic from Route 123.

[01:31:59] This cut-through is critical to helping alleviate the impacts to my neighborhood, the townhouse neighborhood at Assembly Drive, and Cobbs Grove Lane. You still need a two-way traffic entering and exiting this traffic light at Route 123 in Eaton Place.

[01:32:16] And the reason why I say that is now I'm going to have to go through the first traffic light, go to the second traffic light, go around back through this other traffic light again to get home, which is ridiculous. Okay. I also would like to eliminate the proposed, and I know I'm going to get a lot of moans and groans about this, eliminate the proposed grass tree island in front of Henry Lodge. This provides no benefit to the flow of traffic. Proposed sidewalk between Norman Avenue and Henry Lodge needs to be extended to

[01:32:53] and around the curved road at Oak Place you need a paved pedestrian bicycle access to the new traffic light. Currently we must walk through a muddy trench through weeds and overgrown shrubs and trees so basically the city has approved or in the process of approving a number of new construction projects that directly affect Route 123 and the access to Cobddale neighborhood. To name a few, Pulte Homes at Fairfax Boulevard and Walnut Street adds 60 units. City Center West at Main

[01:33:28] Street and the Fairfax Courthouse adds 79 units. Expend Commercial Gatewood Plaza at Fairfax Boulevard next to the Oarsman Toyota you're going to demolish the office building and put a seven-story mixed-use structure in Paul. The Sixth you've added 266 units. Davies Property at 4131 Chambridge Road adds 276 apartment units. Northbacks Chambridge Road at the old Fudrucker that's going to add 271 multi-family units. Fairfax West across from Fudrucker that's under construction now.

[01:34:02] Adding 56 townhomes and a 200-unit senior living facility. I understand that this brings new tax dollars to the city. I understand that you need it. Okay. Um, however, all this construction is creating a huge uh problem for that first traffic light and I think you need to seriously reconcenter how you get into that neighborhood by providing a right turn at that first traffic light. Thank you.

[01:34:31] Thank you. Our next speaker is Michael Ross. Then good evening. I'm Michael Ross. Gonna live at 10512 Oak Place. First I want to say by congratulations Council member Amos, Council member Hall, Council member Peterson, and Council member McWillen. I want to thank you for you taking time out to come down here to moderate the extremism that's been going on at City Hall with respect to the

[01:35:09] project. It is pretty important to us and I support the cut through and the construct that they're proposing. Um, in terms of the right in terms of the the cut through and creating alternative methods to get

in and out of cobdale and assembly i agree with the comments of the homeowners association uh president and the difficulties that that homeowners association has getting in and out that needs to be remedied however the traffic flow is inadequate one of the simple corrections is to expand the intersection of the come through so you get that right turn lane now

[01:35:47] our we previously spent 43 million dollars on north facts at that intersection trying to improve it supposedly but really what we did was we gifted about 40 of the 43 million dollars to the property owners by clearing the property from flood zone we realized clearly fraud waste and abuse the only benefit of that intersection improvement with the two lanes turning left functionally the the result is, is we come home now with the, you know, at post-COVID traffic flow, seeing people getting

[01:36:18] caught in two or three cycles of the southbound traffic into Northfax from 66. The right turn at that first intersection at least alleviates some of the backup that would be occurring further down. The next thing is, there should be two-way traffic south and allowing Cobbdale access to continue to access to Eden Place I think ultimately there needs to be some accommodation for the assembly folks in terms of yield signs or other you know approaches stop signs for the southbound traffic to discourage it but it should

[01:36:55] be bi-directional flow it's gonna have a major negative impact on the community as designed and I'd wholly recommend that you re look at some of the suggestions from Councilmember Hall the biggest single thing is the right turn is a simple simple easy thing just expand the width of that opening and you get a right turn in there no problem there's a lot of wasteful track stuff trying to put in you know this this tree barrier that's wasteful combining the sidewalks it makes a lot of sense so I want to thank you again I'm glad I've been a former city councilman I've sat here long nights up in Woodinville

[01:37:35] Washington I want to thank you for your service and I want to thank you for moderating the extremism of the city. Have a nice night. Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak on this agenda item? You can come forward. Hello, I'm Karen Greiswitsch, 3508 Winston Place in Cobdale.

[01:38:14] And Stacey, thank you very much for asking about the sidewalk width because that's one thing I was very concerned about. With all the students and parents walking from assembly to the new school bus stop, you need more than a basic five-foot sidewalk, really.

[01:38:31] And also that sidewalk could provide access for people like myself to get over to the bus stops on 123. So don't think of it as just for school children, please.

[01:38:47] And I'm hoping that the new sidewalk along Norman Avenue that is being planned will be wide enough for two people with walkers to pass without running out of the grass or into the street, which means more than five foot, please. It's got to be the width of two of these with a little room for elbows, you know.

[01:39:13] So, please, six foot at least. And that's not including the curb. This is not safe to be running on a curb, my walker here. I wobble too much, and I'm sure most people with walkers do.

[01:39:32] The other thing, I like the idea of combining the shared use path with the sidewalk. That sounds like a practical way to get the extra width you need for the various purposes and actually simplify things.

[01:39:54] And for each in place, yeah, everywhere you can go to a wider sidewalk now rather than having to say, oh, dear, we should have made it wider to match what's further along. Do it now when it's, you know, when you don't have to tear out what you've already paid for to put in something wider.

[01:40:11] I think that's pretty much all. I may have a few minor things to comment online, but those are the major points I want to make. Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak to this agenda item?

[01:40:34] All right. I will close the public hearing, and there is no counsel. Oh, okay. So we have somebody. One more person. Welcome. My name is Corinne Oliverio, and I live at 102.

[01:40:52] Well, I live on your map. It's Sidney and Carol Williams' home, but they moved out of the area, and we purchased that house. And so I'm kind of late to the process here and just catching up.

[01:41:09] So my first question is, I heard relocation of utility lines. It's never been clear, are the utility lines that run along the service road there going to be buried when you redo that road, that lane.

[01:41:27] So those utilities will be relocated underground. This is for public comment. We can address your questions, but this is just your three minutes to let us know what's on your mind. Just clarification. I look at this and I see on your agenda something about relocation of utilities, but I'm not clear what that means.

[01:41:51] And then earlier tonight, Several people spoke against the George Snyder Trail. Is that not already been voted on and approved? Is that still being reconsidered?

[01:42:07] That was my takeaway. So the second half of our meeting, we're talking about sidewalks and a shared use path, but that shared use path is actually the George Snyder Trail, which may not even be there.

[01:42:23] Okay. Really trying to follow. And when you speak of a 10-foot wide sidewalk and shared use path, am I right that you mean that to be where right now you have a circle that says separate sidewalk within Cobbdale, that location?

[01:42:46] or are you talking about a sidewalk shared use path that is currently the George Snyder proposed trail of 10 feet? Is it one or the other or are we considering both? So separated is a four or five foot sidewalk and then across one lane going one way is the George Snyder trail and that could be a 10-foot-wide shared-use path, and the reason that we need both is to safely move school

[01:43:26] children from the assembly to the proposed school bus stop on Norman Avenue. Is that correct? Am I understanding this properly? So this is a public comment period, so it's not really a back and forth, but there is information on our website on all of these projects.

[01:43:45] We have an Engage page, too, where you can leave your comments additionally on both these separate projects, both Eaton 123 and the George Schneider Trail. I have done that. I have not heard from anybody in the city specifically about my questions, to be honest with you, but I did submit them. So I guess my comment would be, in the old days... Oh, excuse me.

[01:44:15] So we have three minutes for public comments so that we can give everybody an opportunity. over my time yeah so so we can we can we can work with you offline to get some of your questions answered i will be better prepared next time thank you is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak on this agenda item okay i will now close the public hearing and there is no council action on this

item oh council member amos uh no action but just two quick comments the first one is uh regarding the the safety of this intersection it is an intersection that whenever

[01:44:54] it pops up on my Google Maps, I intentionally try to avoid, especially with chamber meetings sometimes. So in terms of safety, I can see the necessity of it. And I would echo, I'd be curious and supportive of the shared use path with the sidewalk.

[01:45:14] Okay. We can move on to the next public hearing, which is the public hearing on the proposed FY26 budget. This is the second public hearing of the proposed FY26 budget the city manager present on february 25th 2025 i will open the public hearing miss shinneberry has this public hearing been advertised yes it has and i've had people sign up prior to the meeting i will call

[01:45:39] the first speaker up which is tamara harvey uh i'm i'm gonna have to read my name after all that um i'm tamara harvey chair of the english department at mason and for the last 21 years a resident of the city of fairfax um looking at our real estate bill my family needs to make some difficult plans, and I understand that the city must as well. Still, I am here to ask the city to keep support for Fall for the Book at the current level in the upcoming budget. Fall for

[01:46:17] the Book, as most of you know, is a major literary festival in the city each fall that has now expanded to a year of events. It was started as a partnership between Mason's English Department, the City of Fairfax, and Fairfax Public Libraries a little over 25 years ago, and the \$25,000 contribution from the city is a very important part of our budget and one that we couldn't replace in the coming year. The city of Fairfax's contributions to Fall for the Book are paid back and more, I would add, when visitors eat at local restaurants on their way to events and are then

[01:46:52] drawn back to the city, having figured out the parking and discovered local businesses. A couple years ago, I was participating in a workshop on community engagement at a conference for English department chairs, and I started talking about Fall for the Book. And then I realized I really shouldn't be talking about Fall for the Book because I wasn't helping. No one else had this opportunity. I was just bragging. Teaching English at Mason is the best. The region is diverse, so our students are diverse, and that means they bring their wide-ranging experiences to our discussions

[01:47:26] of books that represent problems and experiences that are varied and complicated and expressed with the nuance of literary language. We in turn give our students the rich experiences of this region, the nation's capital of course, but just as importantly Fairfax and Northern Virginia. I love being a faculty member at Mason and a resident of the city of Fairfax because of the cultural opportunities both provide, buoyed by a long-standing partnership that other department chairs can only dream of. And when I watch my students meeting a writer we've studied or they've emulated, when I get to geek out when I meet a

[01:48:05] writer that I love, and when I see our students returning and our community members returning as Fall for the Book writers and speakers, I am, you know, heart-proud, right? My spirit soars. Like Mason, Fall for the Book punches above its weight, securing a wide range of authors and amazing headliners, often for lower speaking fees than they usually command because of the long success of the festival staff board members including city officials and and

[01:48:41] the relationships they have come vaulted cultivated over the years we cannot do without the city cities were support and we cannot make the loss of make up the loss of that support so I hope you will

continue that unique collaboration thank you our next speakers Carolyn pitches good evening mayor and council my name

[01:49:16] is Carolyn Pitches. I'm chair of the City of Fairfax School Board. I live at 10840 1st Street. I'm here to provide clarity on the City of Fairfax School's budget and the School Board's role in managing it responsibly. The School Board faces significant structural challenges when it comes to crafting our annual budget. We are required to approve our school budget before the Commonwealth finalizes its own budget and before Fairfax County Public Schools adopts theirs. This means that we're building our budget based on two layers of estimates. To develop a reasonably informed budget, we closely monitor a range of dynamic factors, but despite our best efforts

[01:49:55] to anticipate and adjust, this layered uncertainty makes the process inherently difficult. This is not a result of mismanagement, but of a structural process that requires constant adaptation. It's important to understand that approximately 90% of our school's budget is tuition paid to Fairfax County schools to educate our students. This is not discretionary spending. It is a cost of service, much like an electric bill. There's no fluff. There's no wish list, just a bill for services we receive. Our budget indicates an additional funding allocation of \$12.6 million

[01:50:34] based on the school's tuition contract, marking an atypical increase. Over the past decade, adjustments have typically varied only by \$1.5 million and sometimes in the city's favor. this funding increase is primarily driven by two key factors first fcps's operating costs have risen by approximately 300 million dollars we represent 1.7 percent of the total fcps student population so we pay 1.7 percent of their operating costs second the city's average daily membership

[01:51:10] has grown by 161 students over the past two years contributing 3.2 million dollars to the overall increase to put this in perspective our average annual growth is usually between 20 and 40 students a portion of this increase is tied to new housing developments over the past decades these new developments have added a total of 471 new students since 2015 127 students just in school year 24 25. we have the perfect storm significant increases in the fcps operating budget

[01:51:45] and that and the city population growing rapidly that being said our cost per pupil is still well within the regional average fcps pays 19 975 dollars per student we pay 20 108 dollars per student alexandria city 21 356 falls church city 23 735 and arlington 24 612. additionally fcps pays the city a classroom rental fee for the use of our school buildings by their students the mayor key staff members and I are scheduled to meet with

[01:52:21] senior FCPS leaders to discuss the recent atypical increases to the school's tuition bill and to brainstorm potential solutions that can be mutually beneficial additionally I know that there's interest in the possibility of operating our own school system it's important to note that termination of the contract requires action by both the council and the school board and by contract and by contract would not take effect for three years after notification during those three years we would continue to pay tuition while being tasked with building a complete school division from scratch dirt we would have to hire teachers administrators custodial food service

[01:52:59] and support staff purchase and maintain buses hire and train drivers secure licensing insurance and operational systems we would lose access to some educational offerings and infrastructure we currently benefit from as we do not have the student capacity to support all programming such as leveled AAP programming certain special education services access to 40 AP courses and the IB program

language immersion programs elementary foreign language some middle school and high school elective courses eight high school world languages eight Academy programs competitive athletics and a wide range of extracurricular

[01:53:35] offerings if this option is to be considered I respectfully request of the council fund and independent consultant to assess the full financial and educational impact this will have on our students and our taxpayers. Thank you. Our next speaker is Jennifer DiSano.

[01:53:58] Good evening, council members. I'm Jennifer DiSano. I'm the executive director of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, George Mason University, and chairman of the Fall for the Book Festival of our board of directors. Fall for the Book launched in 1998 as Northern Virginia's oldest literary festival has been supported by the city of Fairfax since its inception, and that's nearly 30 years. The annual fall event, spanning several days, attracts

[01:54:38] approximately 10,000 people, attendees with a diverse lineup of free and ticketed programming. Our entire festival is free and open to the public. This includes authors, readings, panel discussions, writing workshops, and children's activities featuring prominent writers like Amy Tan, Colson Whitehead, Stephen King, and David Graham, alongside emerging authors and national authors. Events are held across Fairfax locations such as libraries, George Mason University,

[01:55:15] and civic spaces. This festival operates through a partnership with the City of Fairfax, George Mason University, and Fairfax County Public Library. The city contributes \$25,000 annually, funding operational costs like venue rentals, author fees, and marketing.

[01:55:34] This investment generates an estimated \$225,000 in local revenue, a nine-fold return based on attendee spending at Fairfax restaurants, hotels, shops, and track-through economic impact assessments. George Mason University provides campus facilities and staffing, while Fairfax County Public Libraries offer additional venues and coordinates community outreach supplemented by grants.

[01:56:00] Beyond the Fall Festival, Fall for the Book delivers year-round literary engagement across Fairfax. This includes 15 to 20 additional events, such as author talks hosted at Old Town Hall, the Sherwood Center, libraries, and George Mason University, Writing workshops for teens and adults in spring and summer and youth reading programs like literacy outreach with Fairfax County public schools. These efforts reach an additional 2,000 to 3,000 more participants annually fostering ongoing education and cultural participation. The program leverages the same participation network ensuring

[01:56:40] consistent activity that reinforces Fairfax literary presence throughout the year. Currently, the Park and Rec Department has been directed by the City Council to perform a 10% reduction exercise as part of fiscal planning. Their preliminary proposal estimates eliminates the \$25,000 allocation for fall for the book, along with funding for the City of Fairfax Theater Company and Fairfax Band.

[01:57:06] Those have all been redlined in this proposed 10% exercise. This is not a final decision. It's a step towards understanding the council's ability to make adjustments to the budget. I look forward to speaking with you more on this at the next two public meetings.

[01:57:24] Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Mariana Fournier. Good evening.

[01:57:43] I'm Mariana Fournier. I live at 10134 Spring Lake Terrace. I spent a lot of time last couple of days looking at our proposed budget. I have to say I strongly oppose adoption of this proposed 2026 budget.

in its present form.

[01:58:01] We need to economize. We should be looking into limiting debt. I believe projects were approved without sufficient scrutiny. We planned for all the bells and whistles, which we really didn't need.

[01:58:19] So let's start looking at ways we can cut back. Do we really need all the changes on Blenheim Boulevard? We need to be governed by what we actually need, not just what we would like if we had unlimited funds.

[01:58:39] Some suggestions to bring in revenue could be charging a fee for electric car rechargers and a tiered payment system for the Q-Bus, which was established through our COVID funds.

[01:58:54] To cut expenses, we should be starting by canceling the Country Club Hill Connector. Limit hours of overtime and limit the overuse of outside consultants.

[01:59:13] Given clear instructions, I believe most city government work could be accomplished by in-house staff. Developers could pay, we could add the cost of ADA adaptations to the cost of their projects.

[01:59:37] Keep in mind, development comes with cost. The housing that has been done on former PVI site resulted in 200 new students between 2022 and 2024 at an additional cost of \$4.5 million.

[02:00:05] I read a comment in an analysis by Don Pritchard, which stated that inflation in our area is running 2.7% to 3.4%, and GDP is about 3%.

[02:00:27] Now, the budget growth is four to five times higher than economic growth, and we need to know why. And I thank you for your patience, since I am getting older.

[02:00:46] Have a good evening, everybody. Our next speaker is Jennifer Geer. We'll move to the next one. Paul Hopkins. Good evening.

[02:01:08] I'm Paul Hopkins. I live at 10773 Crest Street. I'm going to talk about the property tax for a minute. So my wife and I have lived in Fairfax City for 19 years, really enjoy it here, live in a great neighborhood. We recently received our 2025 real estate property notice of assessment change, and the proposed tax increase is estimated to be 20.1% higher than it was last year.

[02:01:38] Typically, it's been running 3% to 5% each year, so this was kind of a shock to us. So when we looked at it a little bit closer and talked to some of the neighbors, it turns out that half of the increase is due to a 10% plus-up in assessed property values, and that's common throughout the whole neighborhood.

[02:01:58] And then the other half is due to the increased real estate tax rates that are being proposed. So we're retired, and we're on a fixed income. So for us to come up with more money, it means we have to reduce someplace else, obviously.

[02:02:15] So we'll have to, if this increase goes as proposed, then we'll have to come up with money from other parts of our current budget because, like I said, our income is fixed. I don't have any other sources of bringing income in.

[02:02:32] And I'm asking the Honorable Mayor and City Council members to take into consideration those of us who are on fixed incomes and retired as you decide the new fiscal year 26 budget.

[02:02:47] so thank you. Our next speaker is Jim Eckhoff. Good evening members of the City Council and the Mayor. My name is Jim Eckhoff. I live at 10733 Borough Way in Burke just south of the city and I am the current president of the City of Fairfax Theatre Company. I'm here to speak in support of funding for local arts programs like ours along with our friends at the City of Fairfax Band and Fall for the Book you've heard from in the upcoming fiscal year 26 budget. These groups do more than

[02:03:26] entertain and inform. They shape lives, and I've seen it firsthand. Just this morning, I attended the funeral of Ray Scabelli, a music teacher and violist with the National Symphony for almost 50 years. My daughter, after starting classical music in elementary school strings, began studying with Ray about 10 years ago as a middle schooler, continuing through high school and informally beyond that. Her formal education now over, she's pursuing music professionally, both as a performer and an educator. At this morning's service, before her quartet performed, she tearfully addressed those gathered and stated how his influence had literally changed the course of her life.

[02:04:04] That didn't happen by accident. It started with years of access to school and community arts programs supported by small but steady investments along the way. School orchestras, one teacher, one viola, and now one kid is carrying that forward. That's the power of these programs. I find myself working with CFTC now after my other two boys spent four years performing in CFTC Summer Musical and many weeks as camp counselors, a similarly, tough word, impacting their lives and futures in ways both large and small.

[02:04:32] I know arts funding can often feel like a rounding error in a multi-hundred-million-dollar budget like this city's. A few thousand here, a grant there, it seems small next to the roads and utilities and schools. Spending advocates, like myself, might even use that as an argument in its favor, the spare some loose change argument.

[02:04:50] And it's not really a bad argument, but it can add some interesting perspective to take a lesson from science and engineering where small factors can propagate over time into massive effects. The difference of a few degrees, the wind direction, or the humidity in California on a Monday in January can mean the difference between a little rain or a foot of snow here in D.C. on Friday.

[02:05:10] A little budget adjustment might not seem like much today, but it ripples. A kid misses out on a theater camp, a stage role, a music group, a chance to find their voice. Years later, that's a life altered, maybe a career lost, or simply a passion never sparked. Conversely, a small investment grows.

[02:05:27] It builds skills, community, and even professionals who stay here and give back. The City of Fairfax Theater Company and our arts groups aren't just luxuries, they're foundations. They teach creativity, resilience, and collaboration, reaching kids and many adults alike. For some, it's a lifelong hobby. For others, it becomes a calling.

[02:05:44] Either way, the impact lasts decades. So as you discuss and finalize the budget for fiscal year 26, I ask you to consider the long-term implications of these small numbers now and protect and prioritize these programs. Those line items aren't just numbers, they're seeds. They grow into artists, leaders, and stronger communities.

[02:06:03] Let's keep planting them. Thank you for listening. Our next speaker is Jessica Russo-Ravon. Good evening, and thank you for giving me this time to speak on behalf of the City of Fairfax Theater Company.

[02:06:21] My name is Jessica Russo-Ravon, and I've been a city resident since my family and I moved here in 2016. That summer, we saw a CFTC performing part of their summer musical, The Music Man, in the July 4th Parade. When we went to see the show at KJMS, I remember thinking, oh my God, these are adults.

[02:06:39] They live in the city, and they're just performing their hearts out on the stage and having a great time. Can I do that? So I auditioned for my first musical ever the next summer and joined the board in the fall of 2017. I am currently the vice president of CFTC's board of directors, and I also served for several years on the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts.

[02:06:58] I'm speaking today to emphasize the continued importance of funding for our community organizations, like the City of Fairfax Theater Company and our friends at the City of Fairfax Band and Fall for the book. continued funding will allow us to sustain and expand our vital programs, which provide numerous benefits to our citizens. When COVID shut down theater productions, CFTC quickly pivoted and identified Veterans Amphitheater as a perfect location for outdoor productions. We were able to bring live performances to our community during a time of isolation, and we partnered with our local restaurants and encouraged patrons to order takeout and enjoy it picnic style during the shows.

[02:07:34] The arts are not only a cultural asset, but also an economic driver. In 2024 alone, we brought over 4,000 audience members to the city and more than 350 cast and crew members who came four to five times a week for rehearsals. We're committed to diverse education opportunities for kids and adults.

[02:07:53] For the second year in a row, we're collaborating with Educational Theater Company to offer a one-week adaptive summer camp for kids with more specialized needs. Now, and this is really exciting, as a result of the city's generous grant support for the past few years, we were finally able to secure our own space earlier this year.

[02:08:11] CFTC now resides at Waples Mill Road in Fairfax. That's where we have our office, as well as our costume and prop storage, and a newly painted black box theater, and it will seat approximately 60 people. Wow. Now that we've secured this space, we are so excited to host more cabarets, workshops, and camps.

[02:08:31] and we couldn't have gotten here without you one of our key priorities is ensuring that the arts are accessible to everyone in the community regardless of socioeconomic status we offer free or low-cost performances through vet ticks free or discounted tuition for qualifying students to our summer camps discounted tickets for our seniors and students all to ensure that all members of our community have access to transformative power of the arts in conclusion the continued support of our community theater organization is an investment in the cultural social, and economic well-being of our city. We are committed to enriching the lives of our residents, driving local economic growth, and ensuring that the arts remain accessible to all.

[02:09:09] We respectfully ask that you continue to support our efforts through city funding so that we can build on our successes and continue to serve our community in meaningful ways. Thank you. Our next speaker is Peter Bonner. Hi, good evening. I'm Peter Bonner. I live at 4334 Delegate Court.

[02:09:37] And first, thanks for the opportunity to come talk to you tonight. I am a former public servant in the federal government. My wife is a retired teacher from Fairfax City Schools, having taught English

there for a long time. I don't envy you your decisions you need to make and the trade-offs you need to make.

[02:09:56] I want to thank the staff for the preparation of the budget. I also want to particularly call out Christine Johnston, who has answered my incessant emails a whole host of times to help me understand what's going on with the tax assessment. I want to take two comments, make two comments and one recommendation.

[02:10:16] First comment is around community interest. Second comment is around my self-interest, and then I'll get to the recommendation. When it comes to community interest, I have to say that I believe we face a really difficult financial situation coming up.

[02:10:33] Because of the cutbacks in the federal government, it's estimated that for every federal employee that's laid off or fired. There's two to three contractors who are laid off and fired. Now, you know the demographics of the city better than I do. And so the impact of those cutbacks are going to hit the people who are paying the taxes here. I'm gratified to hear that you're going to be talking to Fairfax County public schools about the assessment and the levy on our school system. Obviously, I'm interested in that because of my wife's contribution at Fairfax

[02:11:11] City High School. But I think we really have to look carefully at this budget given our future financial situation. My self-interest, my wife is already on a fixed income. I am quickly moving to a fixed income. The rate of increase in the 9% to 10% in the tax rate is going to be really tough to swallow as we look to our future. Similar to the gentleman who just spoke, we've lived here for 15 years, we've made friends, neighbors, taken advantage of the cultural opportunities that have

[02:11:50] been talked about here. We love this community. We don't want to have to make a decision to have to leave. But with this kind of increase, this is going to be tough. To my recommendation. My recommendation is to slow down. It's to slow down on the rate of increase, push back on Fairfax county public schools as much as possible, perhaps look at a four to five percent increase in the tax rate for the tax assessment. Again, thank you for your time. Thank you for your

[02:12:23] service. Good luck with this. Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak towards the budget? Good evening, Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is

[02:12:57] Derek Scott. I am the current director of the City of Fairfax Band Association, and I sent a virtual comment earlier, but I felt in solidarity with our colleagues in the Fairfax Theatre Company and the Fall for the Books, I would read my comment publicly. The City of Fairfax Band has its formation right here. 1969, we performed our first concert outside of City Hall. Because of the city's support, our organization is now celebrating its 55th year, which is a remarkable milestone for any organization the city of fairfax band association started here this concert was

[02:13:36] first of many that not only sought to create music of the highest quality from our residents of the city and county but also to show the world that the city of fairfax has one of the best and most celebrated community bands in the country our organization performs over 50 events per year including the fourth of july parade numerous summer events official installation ceremonies funerals, and many other city-sponsored events as requested. Likely the most recognizable events to the council is our summer programming and our Honor Flight Ensemble. The Honor Flight Ensemble, which started in 2010, is easily one of the most moving groups in the City of Fairfax

[02:14:14] Band Association. This group, led by city resident Jeff Seffens, welcomes veterans to Dulles Airport and Reagan National as they come to visit their monuments for the time they have given to this country. The impact of this has on the veterans is significant, positive, and inspirational.

[02:14:31] This ensemble is composed of members of each of our bands and performs numerous flights per year. Additionally, this ensemble has been featured on the local news both in print and on television. Our summer programming offers the council an opportunity to interact with the residents of the city via wholesome family-friendly entertainment. In particular, the children's concert in late July is a particularly wonderful event, as council members get an opportunity to serve ice cream and shake hands with the awesome students and children and families in the area.

[02:15:05] But it also demonstrates the joy that music can bring a community. In addition to this, we have strong partnerships with the Spotlight on the Arts, the Fairfax Women's Club, the Fairfax Choral Society, and due to the contributions that we have made in the community, We receive support from Arts Fairfax and the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

[02:15:26] While the city of Fairfax band also enjoys our commitments to the city, we're also a celebrated community band across the country. Due to our programming, our commitment to success, and our internal governance, we are looked at by many community bands across the country as an inspiration and as a guide.

[02:15:44] We have been invited to perform at national assemblies of community bands, And we are hopefully going to be doing so again here in the coming months in Towson University. The rest of my comment is available virtually. I want to thank you all, and I don't envy the decisions you guys have to make, but we hope that you keep all of us in the performing arts in mind.

[02:16:06] Thank you so much. Is there anybody else in the room that would like to speak to this item? All right. This public hearing will stay open until April 8, 2025. We'll move on to the second general public comment.

[02:16:25] Is there anybody in the room that would like to speak on a general item that was not a public hearing item? - Well, all right then. We are going to move on to our work session. So I'm now going to recess the regular meeting to go into a work session.

[02:16:44] While we are going to stay in the council chambers, we are going to take a five minute break. And I suggest everyone watching at home, as well as those of us here, stand up and stretch.

[02:16:55] We'll rejoin you in five minutes.

[02:24:40] And we're back.

[02:25:34] We are now in our work session, Ms. Shinneberry. Our work session item tonight is the discussion on the proposed FY26 budget. I'll recognize Brian Foster, City Manager, for the discussion. Thank you. Good evening, Mayor and Council.

[02:25:50] So this is for the budget work session. We had scheduled, I'll say the schedule, the sort of the suggested schedule of topics that we had sent out previously at the start of this process.

[02:26:07] We mentioned discussion of meals tax and historical real estate tax rates for the city, the Old Town Service District and Transit Fund, if you had questions on that, and then just general discussion

about the general fund, which is the largest, obviously the largest part of the budget, and which is funded by tax revenue, which is what I know a lot of the speakers have commented on.

[02:26:33] We don't have to, just because that was on the list, it doesn't necessarily mean we have to talk about those things. But we're prepared to talk about those things if that's the desire of counsel. We do have a few department heads from our largest operating departments here, if you've got questions, specific questions.

[02:26:59] I have sent you lots of information in response to questions that had been submitted by different council members and we still have there's a few questions still to send answers for which we haven't done yet but we've sent you a lot of information you may have questions on that and I recognize some of that just came today and so I'm sure you have not had an opportunity to really review the most recent information that we sent you but happy to discuss any and all of that but we don't we've we've of course given our the original presentation which we've we've done so we don't necessarily have a specific

[02:27:38] presentation JC did prepare a couple of slides about the historic tax rate in the service district and stuff if that's what you want to talk about really no changes there but again to if that's because your councils knew we were trying sort of cover all the various parts of the budget so we're here and are prepared to answer questions or discuss any parts of the budget that you would like as a reminder next Tuesday the 1st of April is all work session no regular council meeting all work session single topic is the budget the suggest one of the

[02:28:18] suggested topics for that meeting is the CIP I know there were some CIP questions so again if you want to follow that schedule we can we can talk about that then of course if you have CIP questions tonight we can do that you will have all of the department heads should be present on April 1st which I think I'd previously communicated as far as for answering questions and so forth as well as the 10% exercise that council had requested that you've now been

[02:28:50] provided those responses today and of course we have our budget open house on the second at the Sherwood Center and we've been making finalizing our plans and the information and so forth to have a very productive interactive meeting with our residents so happy to JC is here Gwen who's our budget manager and and several department heads from the largest departments and we're ready to have discussion

[02:29:26] and answer questions all right so i just want to remind people who might be watching our work session that the april 2nd event is an open house it is from four to eight and we will be there staff will be there but the school board will also be there so people who have questions about what carolyn pitches talked about this evening will be able to talk with school board members as well as the chair so i do encourage people it's it's a very wide range of hours to try to hit people in a place that's convenient for their schedule so all of us are going to be fully on board

[02:30:05] at the sherwood center on wednesday april the second and with that i will now look to the dais for questions anybody anybody in anybody council member hall not a question specifically but just want to confirm that people will be able to park at both st leo's and across the street at daniel's run elementary school and usually there's parking at the church so i don't want to guarantee that for anybody but those are usually overflow options and sherwood is not the biggest parking lot i would agree that sherwood is not does not necessarily have adequate parking for the events that are held

[02:30:42] there so there are parking van dyke has parking too next door and so please look around across the street next door as well as the parking at sherwood and they can take the q bus and they can take which will drop you off right at the sherwood center or you could ride your bike right so so one of the things i just want to say that i don't think we've done a very good job of is there were people who came to make comments tonight who clearly don't understand what is funded with grant

[02:31:15] money. There is this idea that all of these projects from Eaton and 123 to the George Schneider Trail, that all of this is taxpayer-funded projects. I mean, there is a common, I heard people say, it's our tax money. And so I don't know how we can do a better job making it very clear which of the projects that are in process, projects like Blinnan Boulevard, which ones have grant funding. I just get the feeling we have not done a good job with that with the public the other thing is is that projects that are in place where we we and the george stutter set trail is an example of that is that we are 11

[02:31:55] years into it money has been spent out of the grant that we received and so again I think I think people are not really understanding grant funded projects in the city and I'm not sure how we do a better job helping our residents understand the things that are funded through their residential property tax, the meals tax, their personal property tax, the things in our budget that are funded by that tax versus some of these very big projects that are grant funded.

[02:32:25] I get the feeling that's confusion. Council Member Hardy-Chandler. I think educating the public is part of what we're wanting to do with the open house, and even though this is a single incident or an occurrence, I would hope that open houses around our budget how we're functioning grants those kinds of things become a year-round thing that we offer so it not it's not just a budget season when people are thinking about that but giving them the opportunity to learn the background and the history and all of the factors that are impacting these

[02:33:00] issues on a year-round basis so I hope that April 2nd is the start of something that we find a regular cadence for to do exactly that.

[02:33:15] - Councilmember Peterson. - Just to follow up on the grants issue, and on the educational issue, there's this issue of matching sources and uses, and our Chief Financial Officer can certainly help people understand how you have different revenue streams coming in, and they have to be matched appropriately to the uses of funds, and there is a system for that, and part of that matches grants with up-front expenditures, et cetera.

[02:33:47] But I do think it's important with respect to grants to understand that it is quite typical for them to fund either entirely or partially up-front expenditures for something, whether it's infrastructure or program.

[02:34:05] Frequently, however, they also incur future obligations. So it's terribly important when we evaluate the cost of grants, we look at not only the the current income associated with them, but the downstream expenses associated as well. And it's very, very common, even at the front end, for those grants to have to be matched in order to come in the door.

[02:34:25] And so you have to come up with a matching mechanism. Frequently, that means you've got to create a new revenue-generating mechanism in order to be able to make that grant sustainable. Otherwise, you wake up one day kind of knee-deep in a bunch of future obligations that you can't afford.

[02:34:40] So we have to be very disciplined about grants we look at them thank you councilmember Amos there we go so moving on from the budget Town Hall I'm just gonna preface I got to get up at 5:00 a.m. so I have every intention of having this done by 11 11:30 we're not going past midnight again reason I say that is while we do have budget questions I also want to preface that we're not gonna make any decisions before we hear more from the public through April 8th we have our April 5th retreat we haven't even had the chance to talk about each other's priorities and what we actually want to

[02:35:17] accomplish during our short stint here, as well as the open house next week on Wednesday. So I wanted to open with that. We got the 10% reduction information, and we got it earlier today, so it may be useful to digest it some more and then submit some more questions via email or however people want to communicate.

[02:35:36] And I just want to make sure that we're efficient. For me personally, the 10% exercise can be helpful. I would have preferred that we just set a tax rate goal or a couple tax rate goals we're trying to get to thing that's more efficient and we could have avoided some of the public perception like would fall for the book and programs that realistically none of us are going to consider cutting but we're at this point now and I just want us to be efficient and I'm gonna keep us on point to get us out of here on time and I admire that about you councilmember Remus I

[02:36:10] admire that anything else from the dais at this point councilmember Hall for those that are following at home with regard to the funding sources I know you all don't have a budget book but you can access the budget book online if you do that you download the entire thing on page 289 it talks about capital improvement program overview and it goes through all of the different various sources of funding ARPA capital cable grant I 66 inside the beltway there's all different terms it doesn't necessarily define them all for you but it does give you a little bit more opportunity to see what they are and

[02:36:47] then you can certainly ask our experts who are not me at the moment on what those fund sources mean all right then anything else councilmember Bates thank you so just you know it's clear that we really do need to do our best to try and just lessen this burden as much as we can but without really significantly affecting the services and events that residents have come to expect from

[02:37:18] the city. So with that in mind, some things that I'd like to kind of float for further consideration and as we do start having those conversations about our goals, et cetera, and conversations about the budget going forward, by my kind of amateur number crunching here, it looks like we could reduce the CIP transfer by \$1,575,000. That would get us a little bit above

[02:37:58] 5% of general fund expenditures because the expenditures are also reduced by that amount. But it would get us a bit below the \$11 million. And I would like to see if there's maybe a way that we could look more into what that would really mean for our position in terms of what Davenport has been projecting and that kind of thing. We can talk more about that. And on the other hand, there are, I think, several projects in the CIP that, while they're certainly excellent

[02:38:37] projects, are not really, to my mind, necessary to maintain the current levels of service that the city offers. And again, we can talk more about that. Also, potentially reducing the Renaissance Housing Corporation funding by \$292,000. That gets that down to \$150,000. Half of the non-profit grant program funding, which to me makes sense in the current climate, given that I think that,

[02:39:11] frankly, the non-profit service by the non-profit grant program are probably going to be really hurting for funding uh in the current climate and their programs that really help out the most vulnerable city residents whereas the renaissance housing corporation well it certainly is very valuable to the city and uh provides a great benefit to the city um home renovations not necessarily something i think that uh we need to be prioritizing quite as heavily uh during these

[02:39:48] trying times um additionally and you know this is just a number we know we can tweak it but um an additional two percent increase in the meals tax above what was proposed um that's eight percent you know richmond is 7.5 percent it's not totally out of uh out of context that according to the city manager presentation that initial two percent increase was 4.6 million um assuming that that's maybe another \$4.6 million, and keeping in mind that that is something that is a lot more of a

[02:40:25] luxury than housing or cars that we'd be taxing and something that would not apply to groceries or that kind of thing, and also bringing in revenue from the county and from others outside the city. And, you know, certainly not something I would love to do, but, you know, at the end of the day to my mind we want to maybe shift that burden away from you know things that are really necessary for the city such as housing you know could also do you know maybe like seven or seven

[02:41:00] point five percent if we wanted to also the deputy city manager position which is currently vacant leaving that unfunded for this fiscal year that's another roughly 287,000 according to the the memo that we got so all in all that's another almost six point eight million that we could use to offset the real estate tax rate just preliminarily for further

[02:41:33] consideration thank you thank you councilmember Amos I realized that I should have brought this up sooner but so regarding the split payment for the car tax I know that there was some express support from that from council I I don't know if there's anyone against it, but we do need to publicize that and have that decision made prior to our adoption of the budget.

[02:42:01] So if we wanted to have a conversation about that or if you wanted to do it in April, but it seemed like we were all pretty okay with that, and it gives us a one-time buffer period that we could apply specifically to our debt, if I'm correct on that. Yeah, so you're correct, Councilmember Amos.

[02:42:20] that was represented that I think early on in the very first work session I think if you were to do that it's a one-time revenue gain you you would the year that you make the transition you would collect 150 percent of revenue that one year it's an account because because our accounting year differs from the the resident's tax year so it's neutral to the resident in terms of how much they pay in a year, although I'm sure some will not like paying 100% in the fall and then in the year of transition and then having to put another 50% in the spring.

[02:42:59] But on an annual basis, it's neutral to the residents. The 6.5 is what we estimate at the current personal property tax rate. so it's one-time gain and if you were to do that we would certainly strongly recommend that if you you use that for one-time expense so so for debt service or a one-time capital expense so if you know in in the in the budget proposal before you there's 9.8 in one-time expense

[02:43:35] 6.8 is the one-time debt service payment from the loan that was taken out the new covid and then \$3 million was to get the start of the school's school bond, voter-proof school bond program was to get them started.

[02:43:50] So that's what makes up the 9.8, and so you could certainly use the 6.5 to offset that. The downside to that is you would not be creating future debt capacity.

[02:44:05] You would have to deal with that down the road. But if you were to do that, you would be able to offset the debt payment with that one-time revenue gain. And to your point, we would not want to include that revenue in the budget, not knowing if you haven't adopted the change to twice-a-year billing and collection.

[02:44:31] That's sort of the timing issue. Yeah, and so I wanted to get my colleagues' thoughts on that, i know part of it is also we haven't really publicly outreached either uh regarding this i don't see it as being very controversial and it provides us some one-time dollars but i'd be curious on everyone else's thoughts councilmember peterson uh well and thanks for opening this up as an opportunity i i think there are two parts of this that are potentially a concern from my standpoint the first is public support i think we really do need to hear from people whether they're comfortable with us going into this paying tax twice a year routine and we

[02:45:10] haven't had a chance to do that i think that's a really important thing for us to do the other thing maybe a bigger picture thing though is i i think it's really important for us to address the underlying imbalance between revenues and expenses that exist in the city and we've really got to get past any of these sort of unique adjustments that don't get to that and look more fundamentally at the structure of this budget and how we can bring long term sustainable correction to that and so I would really favor our focus on those things rather than these things that are short short term in comparison

[02:45:49] thank you councilmember Hall can you explain the 6.8 million dollars a little bit more for those that might not be familiar with it and how the funds were used I'll acts since I wasn't here when that was done I think probably mr.

[02:46:07] Martinez can probably answer that a little better than I can sure I wasn't here either but I can't answer the question so in 2020 when the world was in complete uncertainty the previous CFO and the previous city manager had decided and council concurred to basically do a debt issuance of 6.75 6.8 million dollars to ensure liquidity for the City so they use those funds to basically offset some certain CIP projects and reduce basically the cash

[02:46:45] transfer from the general fund to the CIP those funds are in our account we have been gaining interest in it not very much because interest rates were low until most recently but those funds were there this was and we've only paid interest on that on a perennial basis for the past five years. In totality, the interest payments equaled about \$477,000. The interest rate on the \$6.7, \$6.8 million was 1.53%. Interest rates were very, very low in 2020. So the plan was after the end of five years, we no longer need the money.

[02:47:23] We would go ahead and make a balloon principal payment, pay it all back. Thank you. So just to be sure I understand, so the money was never used for anything. It's been sitting in an account the entire time, earning interest, and now we have the cash sitting in the bank to then turn around and pay the loan, but instead we're trying to create a new source of revenue for the \$6.8 million recurring between now and future years to be able to borrow in the future? Is that what I'm understanding?

[02:47:57] So it's been sitting in the account, yet we've utilized other funds to do either operating or CIP. So those funds have been sitting there, but we've utilized other funds. So now we sort of need a waterfall, those funds to supplement or backfill what was previously used.

[02:48:21] I would say that in the past five years, those dedicated funds, we didn't build or have a plan to sort of pay it back 100% without knowing what the assessed values were going to be, which is what we were anticipating for fiscal year 26. We did have increased assessments. The plan was to utilize some of that, yet we had an unknown tuition bill that came up at \$12.6 million more than what we had budgeted for FY25, and that sort of wiped out

[02:48:51] our plan to pay that back okay thank you so i understand creating future revenue sources but i have to agree with council member peterson that we need to address the elephant in the room which is our operating expenses we need to talk about what we can do to make sure that we are being good financial stewards of this money that we are collecting just a few key takeaways from my forth go around through this budget um it looks like from based upon the numbers that you provided

[02:49:29] mr foster that we since 2021 in which zero positions were added through 2026 which has 0.5 fte added that being said that is existing school board funds that are being reappropriated or redirected so it's not actually a new 0.5 role so the total ftes since i'll call it 2022 are 48.375. I also understand that from 2018 to 2022, we had 63 new FTEs. So if I back out 2022,

[02:50:05] so I'm equalizing there, between 2018 and 2025, we have 104 new FTEs, which is about 25% of our workforce. Is that correct? We have about 400 and some employees? Yeah, we do have 450 plus or minus.

[02:50:24] I'm sorry, I don't have the exact number, but I'm not clear on the number. The number we gave you was since 2022. Right, and I got other sources for previous years when I was talking with others. But I can attest to those numbers because I don't know those numbers.

[02:50:41] But yes, we have 450 approximately full-time equivalent employees, yes. Okay, thank you. And so, okay, so that's a big number, I think.

[02:50:59] And I think, again, this is part of the bigger picture of conversation. But I also just, I want to just do my own mortgage impact, my own statement here. So with my tax assessment, I was paying \$84.36.73 for 2024.

[02:51:15] My new estimated tax levy under a \$9.5 increase proposed is \$9,876.38. And so I'm a person who likes budgets, likes numbers. And so I called my mortgage company and I said, I'd like you to walk me through how much this is going to cost.

[02:51:34] And recognizing that for the first six months or so thereabouts, depending on when they pay the taxes, they don't know that there's been a change. And so I'm continuing to pay my regular mortgage payment. And I imagine most other people are in my situation are going to do the same thing until they get that notice from the escrow analysis that says, you know what?

[02:51:56] You've reached a shortage. Ding, ding, ding. You owe us a lot of money. And so what I was able to determine from the woman I spoke with, she can't give me exact figures, but my payment, which now is increasing about \$1,500 from a real estate tax perspective for this proposed increase, \$1,500 is going to cost me between \$2 and \$250 a month once it kicks in.

[02:52:18] And then there's still going to be an additional escrow analysis assessment that's then going to be added back in. So I might be looking, I'm going to ballpark somewhere between, I'll be on conservative,

I'll call it between \$200 and \$350 a month. So back in my day, since that was like my first car payment ever, and I don't know what kind of cars people drive these days.

[02:52:42] I don't know what expenses are, but I can tell you that that's a significant amount of money for my family. We both work, and I recognize people that are on fixed incomes. I would have to say that I think most people that have a job would probably consider themselves to be on fixed income.

[02:52:58] I think that term is used very loosely for Social Security and people like that that have that kind of fixed income. But most of us can't just go to our bosses and say, you know what, they increased the real estate taxes. I got to get a raise, right? I mean, that's not how this works. And so it might be another year or two or not before I or my husband get an increase.

[02:53:18] We just don't know. And, again, trying to be a financial steward up here that is being responsible and fiscally aware of what's going on, there's absolutely no way that I will even consider a nine and a half cent increase. And quite frankly, I will not support an increase on the meals tax.

[02:53:37] And so I am sitting down. I thank you very much, you and all the departments who provided the 10% reduction, who answered a thousand questions that I had. I recognize this is in addition to your normal daily work, and I know it's a lot. but this is critical information this is really key to help me a numbers person sit down and kind of go through these things and so I'm just putting it out there right now what I will not be supporting and I will work very hard to find out what I will be supporting and what that might look like also another conversation I had was regarding the Davenport summary from December I'm sorry

[02:54:16] from January 30, 2024, in that kind of the bare bones, what is needed at the CIP level, and Mr. Martinez, please correct me if I'm incorrect here, but it looks like to keep, I call it to keep the lights on, essentially, for our CIP projects, for the paving, for the asphalt, for the curb and gutter, and all of those things that are really not very sexy, exciting things. It's over a five-year period, \$31 million. So that works out to \$6.27 million every year for five years. Again, that's just keeping the lights on, keeping our

[02:54:53] roads going, things like that. That doesn't include things like the Willard Sherwood Center, the fire station. It doesn't include a new fire truck. It doesn't include a lot of things that I think people have been seeing in the CIP for years and years. And I, again, I'm a numbers person. I'm not willing to sit here and accept what has been handed to us. And I hope that others are going to take a stand and really try to work together to come up with something. It was proposed that maybe

[02:55:26] we just give a number, give a tax rate, and maybe that would be the easy answer. But I really want to understand that if I'm saying no to nine and a half, but I'm saying yes to three or yes to five or yes to whatever that number is for me, I need to understand what our city and our residents are giving up. And so the only way I feel like I can do that responsibly is by asking all of these questions and pouring through all this data and information. And I would certainly encourage those at home that are of a financial mindset to do the same. You know, pick an area of the budget that is

[02:56:04] important to you. Pick an area of something that you think maybe there's some waste or things like that. Spend the time on it. Please come prepared next week to our meeting. That's the only way this is going to be made any better. And just one final statement, and I will let someone else have the floor, but thank you, staff, for doing the 10% reduction exercise. I know it was not easy. I know it was work. I know it is an uncomfortable thing to have to pick certain key personnel or not key that you want to have to

consider maybe getting rid of. That's not our goal. Sorry, that's not my goal, okay? I don't want to speak for anyone else up here, but that is not my goal. If that is an

[02:56:44] indirect consequence of trying to be a responsible steward to my 24,000 taxpayers and residents it's up for consideration it's not something I want to do and I'm going to really going to try hard to find things that are not going to hurt you that are not going to make you feel like you're missing out on anything and we'll still keep our workers employed so please read the budget look at the budget ask questions come we need help thank you councilmember Amos I do echo my colleague sentiments I hate the meals tax I've said that multiple times nine and a half cents I think we all feel is definitely a burden that

[02:57:23] everyone's gonna feel a couple things that I wanted to include and part of this is we need to understand what our priorities are because when we were sitting in the parks and recreation advisory board meeting we talked about how this city has a history of exploit exploiting our workers especially our temporary workers which is why we saw part of the reason why we saw such a significant increase in our Parks Department when it comes to FTEs and we all were kind of disgusted with that practice but then we can't turn around and say this because we're uncomfortable now I get your point about looking at

[02:58:02] revenues and expenses and if we wanted to be serious about that conversation we need to talk about schools because that is the number one thing you know we could trim through this budget look at every single contract but the majority of our budget goes to a lot of our contracts with the county especially with FCPS. And I know that we're hesitant at even looking at an independent school system and that we have some discussions going on, but you want to talk about outlook for the future. What is stopping Fairfax County and FCPS from coming back and charging us in the future when we're not in a negotiating position like we are in now? So the thing is, we need to get serious by looking at all

[02:58:41] options on the table and looking at the future. It's untenable. But also, do we want to just compromise and keep exploiting the temporary workers we already have existing like they have been for decades. I'm sure this conversation has happened before, probably during the economic recession, and they prioritized the tax rate. And I mean, that's something we've got to figure out.

[02:59:06] Council Member Hardy-Chandler. So I just want to echo your last comment is, you know, the saying is pay now or pay later. This is later. And there were, from my understanding and the education that we got, choices that were made that are a part of this history.

[02:59:23] I think that's the other elephant in the room is the history that contributes to why we're here in this place. I think we do have to absolutely listen to the impact on people's budgets and the painful experiences that people are having not only in terms of their houses and their mortgage and that sort of thing, but other expenses that are elevating at this time.

[02:59:51] There are two, as I understand it, major, looking at the history, now we're here. We're having to pay more because of historical decisions. There are two big areas in our budget. There are schools and salaries, and I want to introduce the fact that we will have more conversation about priorities but our staff members our families who have responsibilities too what I'm not willing to compromise are things that impact those who serve our residents because I think in the future when we look at the consequences of some of these decisions there

[03:00:29] will be consequences for not having those services and listening to the reports from the departments people are doing a lot to serve the city with very small staffs across the board so i think you know when we look at the big areas of impact it is either schools or salaries and i believe that these are not just positions these are people with families and needs too so it is a hard discussion to have i welcome the ongoing conversations that we'll have but i'll put

[03:01:04] that out as one of my priorities. Councilmember McQuillan. So this is nothing unique. I watched Falls Church City's City Council meeting from last night, and they're in the same situation.

[03:01:20] We pay, as our school board chair stated on record, a very good wage per pupil cost right now. We need to recognize what we would be giving up if we do open that contract and we aren't able to come up with something that works for both. So we need to be very aware of that. I echo the sentiments of Councilmember Peterson and Hall about operating expenses and moving forward in a responsible manner, making sure that we are thinking and considering the current

[03:01:55] economic climate and the proximity that we have to the federal workforce. I also cannot approve uh the proposed tax increase uh it's clearly not sustainable for a large portion of our residents and um i too will not consider increasing the mills tax that's where i stand on that thank you councilmember peterson uh just a follow-up if i might to the 6.75 million eight

[03:02:32] 6.8 million. So you, as I understand it, have protected those funds and we can, as a consequence of that protection, repay them. My question is, are we and why are we, if we are replenishing that 6.8 million dollars, let's envision this as a piggy bank that had 6.8 that was created to hold it and it's going back. Are we replenishing that piggy bank with another 6.8? Is that what's going

[03:03:07] on here so regarding the 6.8 um i would have to confer with dave hodgkins the previous cfo but it was my understanding in our conversations as we transition and then even more recently the last few months um those funds are sort of sitting in a fund balance and an assigned fund balance and at one point in 2018 2019 maybe a little later than that definitely later than that 2022 they increased it from 13 percent 12 percent to 15 percent as the minimum balance I don't know if they took that

[03:03:46] into consideration that those funds had sort of been sitting there but now there's a new minimum threshold I would have to take it from unassigned fund balance or some other area where there's excess that would be the only area that we have right now that would have that so there they weren't fully utilized as in SNAP funds, VRA funds, or any of that regarding the CIP. They were set aside, but we utilized other funds, not necessarily those, to do other operating and or capital

[03:04:18] improvement costs. Thank you. Follow up. If I understand it correctly, then those funds, the proposal is not to replenish in order to create debt capacity? I would say that we do need debt capacity in the long term based on a presentation that our financial advisors Davenport gave to council at the end of January where if we maintain the course that we're on regarding the CIP and schools we would potentially need about

[03:04:55] ten cents overall not necessarily at once for the CIP and about 21 cents for schools that's potentially 31 cents over the course of the next five to seven years. Now, we can use appreciation to offset that increase and or the meals tax and or other revenue. Hopefully, the 1% of that ever passes, the 1% sales tax. But we do need ongoing revenue generating mechanism in order to continue down the path that we are for schools and the current

[03:05:28] proposed CIP. What if a year from now, the 1-cent sales tax actually is signed by a future governor? what impact does that have on this that would have a tremendous positive impact and would allow me to sleep and we would probably have a big party in the city if they were to use the current language as what was previously proposed we could go back in time a certain defined time whether it's one two three or four years and replenish any cip that had been set aside specifically for schools

[03:06:05] so that would also be an additional plus the equivalent of about one percent on the sales tax is about 13 to 14 million dollars again we would have to take it to the residents for a bond referendum or for a referendum to see if it passes but we would be able to utilize that that would basically cover all of the needed expenses for the two elementary schools in the high school route am i correct that we are assuming in the budget that it will not pass and so we're okay do we need to reserve and create this debt capacity now as opposed to waiting to see whether or not it

[03:06:43] passes so that would be a discussion i think with the school board as well and you all to see when the timing of that the referendum and the discussion that we had did propose a timeline the longer we wait as i mentioned either last week or two weeks ago inflation costs start eroding that we did have estimates from uh forella and mosley of what would be needed on a per year basis for the next six years so i'm assuming those increase there would be increases to that if we delay and push out as well very helpful to know but it does sound like if i'm reading it right

[03:07:23] the rate that we are that has been proposed here is not just driven by tuition increases for the schools it's driven by a school bond and an expectation that there will not be an alternate financing option through a one cent sales tax correct if i understand correctly so just to clarify on that i i mean i sort of what i hear and i can understand it as a concern that we are maybe jumping the gun a little bit on reserving a heck of a lot of debt capacity here all in one fell swoop without getting a little bit further down the pike and i think i'd like to sort of

[03:08:00] understand that a bit more clearly in terms of from prudence sake how much of that debt capacity we really do have to reserve at this time thank you council member Amos in addition to councilmember Peterson's comments I do also want to acknowledge that it was briefly brought up not on the dais back in January it was just a question but seeing that Prince George's County in Maryland they actually did a PPE a for their schools for now it may have been new construction rather than renovation but they actually work with a private group and they essentially did a lease agreement in that capacity to help cover

[03:08:38] the upfront cost of the bond now I don't know how amenable counsel is to that but I think the future of public facilities is going to be eventually PPE as and we're already exploring that with our fire station so if there are groups that are amenable to it we should do that for our school renovations as well as a backup plan because I while we're having this discussion now about nine and a half imagine if we get to 2030 and it's 20 and i don't think none of us want to do that council

[03:09:09] member hall so if if you're in the budget book on page 11 it talks about this 9.8 million in one-time expenses and how we use recurring revenue to pay for that which is equivalent of 12 cents on the real estate tax rate this thing gives us revenue to have in place to start paying debt service on our school and general capital projects as they come online and i quote by doing such heavy lifting in the fiscal year 26 budget, it gives the city flexibility for fewer and or smaller

[03:09:45] tax increases in the future. So I very much disagree with heavy lifting in one year. And I very much disagree with this because we have absolutely no idea what is going on out there right now. We have federal workers that are being laid off. We have, as the other representative spoke up earlier, potentially two to three contractors being laid off for every federal employee. We don't know the impact of this. We don't know what our home values are going to do.

[03:10:11] We don't know what our own jobs are going to do. There's so much uncertainty that to me this is irresponsible to even consider an increase like this. And I think if we call it what it is and we are open and transparent and honest and communicative with our residents, they might understand why we need to do some small increases over the next few years. And I understand where you're coming from with the schools, but strong schools make strong communities and we're raising

[03:10:46] the next generation of humans. We're raising the next people that are going to sit up here in our seats and be out here in our audience here. And not only are schools just schools, they're child care facilities. They are sources of meals and comfort and support and love and all of these things that not all of our kids get at home, okay? There's a reason why a large number of kids get sent home with a backpack that has food in it to cover them for the weekend. If we don't support our schools, we don't have that. We are a Title I school at Providence Elementary School,

[03:11:26] which means that we are, I believe what the percentage now is 38 or 40 percent below of our students are below the poverty level. I might be messing that with a little bit with poverty level, but it's some sort of percentage. Providence is very far. They have a large number of students there. So because of that, we get added resources, at least currently, depending upon how the administration may change things. But that number right there, regardless of what benefits we get or don't get, that speaks to the large number of children at that school that are in need, that are relying on these services, these teachers, these administrators, these people

[03:12:01] to care for them and there's absolutely no way i will do anything that will cut funding to our schools i think that they are very important and i think quite honestly the vast majority of those people that need us the kids that need us they're not here speaking up for us right they're out there the little weeblos were there they're here they're showing up they're learning about our government works and it's our responsibility to show them that the grown-ups are listening and the grown-ups are making smart choices.

[03:12:31] Councilmember McQuillan. I just wanted to follow up to what Councilmember Hall just stated. The Title I threshold is 57%, and Providence Elementary School has 69% of its students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals.

[03:12:50] So please consider that when we're talking about our schools. Thank you. So talking about the meals tax, which people are against, the whole idea of raising the meals tax is spreading out the tax burden and relieving people who are residential property owners.

[03:13:09] Because right now, the bulk of our tax revenue comes from people who own homes. We have a personal property tax, which everyone loathes, and we're talking about doing a one-time thing to actually split the payment, which I think people will actually welcome paying two smaller bills, six months separated in the long term, than being hit with one big one.

[03:13:29] But there are people who own cars who don't own homes. There are people who don't own cars or homes, but who eat out. There are people who come and stay in hotels. We need to talk about our transient occupancy tax, which is weirdly put in our charter. But my point is that we are trying to spread out the burden for raising revenue in our city, and not just from residents, not just from property owners, not just from car owners, but from the people who visit the city.

[03:13:56] And there's lots of people who eat in our restaurants that are not residents of our city. We're trying to spread the burden out, which is why I think we need to think seriously when we say, I absolutely won't do something. The other thing about these cuts, this 10% exercise, you know, we mourn the loss of people losing their federal jobs, and yet we're talking about possibly laying off our own employees in the city as just a necessary thing we have to do, which, by the way, I don't think really has been done in the last 30 years, but it's kind of like, well, this is a necessary thing.

[03:14:29] I think it's also a conundrum that people care about the value of their house because every time anything happens in the city that people are like, oh, my gosh, that'll impact my property value. Yeah, and then the bill comes due to pay the taxes on the property, and it's kind of like, wait a minute, my assessment is too high.

[03:14:48] You know, this is a conundrum. Everybody wants a high house value for when they potentially sell it, but they don't want a high house value when they have to pay the taxes on it. And I don't know how we resolve that problem, but if we start cutting services in the city, then what you're going to find is all the things that made people really love being in the city are suddenly going to be like, well, we cut that, or we cut the staff to provide that.

[03:15:11] You know, we have to think about, there are real impacts to making decisions about what we cut. And so all of this is theoretical. I understand I can read a balance sheet too, but all of those numbers are connected to something, a service, a program, a festival, or an employee.

[03:15:27] So we can all do math, but there are real-world implications for that. And for the people who are like, I love the city so much, and I've lived here, and I love it so much, it's kind of like, well, to save your tax rate and to make sure that we have done everything possible to lower the tax increase, and by the way, that's what we've done for the last 10 years, which has left us with, yes, the lowest tax rate in Northern Virginia, but the bill has come due, as Council Member Hardy Chandler has pointed out.

[03:15:55] The bill has come due. So the community does need to decide whether the lower tax rate is what they really want over the things they claim make our city so special. Because I would say we cannot have both things. So hard decisions will have to be made.

[03:16:10] But as far as things like the meals tax, that is not putting the burden on residents necessarily here. It is putting the burden on a lot of people from other places who come and eat meals here. And it is not housing and it is not transportation. It is basically a discretionary decision on spending to eat out.

[03:16:31] So, Council Member McQuillan. I agree with you. I agree that we need to spread this out. However, I do know restaurant owners who do not own homes right now, and I do know that there are people that have been with our community for a very long time and have worked here, have contributed, and they're retired now, and we are talking about pricing them out of their homes, and that is not okay.

[03:16:56] And we need to talk about this because there is a solution that I think will appease. I think there is a good solution here. I think we can come up to something where we do come up with some

unique ideas for revenue that we discuss maybe working out the cut of certain services without cutting staff.

[03:17:18] There are ways in which we can implement technology and modernize so that we aren't just cutting the services that we're talking about. There's ways to do this, but we need to be creative and we need to talk about it in a way that is collaborative and allows people to feel comfortable to express their thoughts and their ideas.

[03:17:37] And talking to people, or I appreciate the passion, but yes, we can all read a budget. Yes, you're correct. But stating that doesn't help. It doesn't create a collaborative environment here. And everybody's voices should be heard because that's how we're going to get the best solution.

[03:17:56] Thank you. Councilmember Bates. Thank you. Just to kind of summarize my feelings on it, I would want to raise a meal tax before we start laying off employees and before we further increase the real estate tax to offset that.

[03:18:17] Thank you. Council Member Peterson. A question that maybe is best punted to what April 1st we're going to have to all the agency folks in. Is that right? So this is a general question, and I try not to pick on anybody in particular right now, but I can't help but spotting Director Summers here, who was hiding over there in the corner. I think a question came up at least once in comments, and also I think it's really incorporated into a data request that we issued, which is to have an understanding

[03:18:55] of the roster of staff and then the roster of consultants and consulting contracts and try to get a sense of the roles of these. And the nature of the comments that came in, some of them, and they're not unexpected, is question mark whether we have opportunities to be sure we're placing and retaining qualified staff who can do the technical work that we otherwise might be contracting. And I say this in full disclosure because I'm one of those contractors. I understand the price points. I understand the relationship. I understand how

[03:19:31] important it is to provide that specialized capacity that surge capacity the catalyst that comes along with that but part of what my organization does is train people in government particularly local government how to do these jobs in-house and so we are a group that is actively trying to put ourselves out of business by making sure there are other people that do what we do by the time we leave long way of saying you know have you taken a look at that because without calling up specific line items I have gone through a few and it looks like there's some places where possibly you either have existing

[03:20:10] employees or employees that are on the hit list here that may be qualified perhaps with some additional training to perform tasks that are being contracted out at like a couple hundred thousand dollars a contract kind of thing the consultants that we use are for transportation design typically. Now I do have some retired folks that work for me as construction managers which are consultants and we have I don't know 30-40 construction projects and public works going on at once. I have two inspectors so I use these

[03:20:49] retired folks who used to work here as construction managers and construction inspectors. It saves the a lot of money because there's no multiplier for overhead. You know, when I used to go out to a company to get a construction manager or an inspector, because I don't have the in-house staff, I used to pay maybe \$250 an hour because I'm not only paying that employee, but the multiplier because they're employed by a consulting firm. I've changed that. I've improved that by hiring people who used to work

here, who were trained, but are retired. And I save a lot of money. Instead of paying \$250 an hour, I'm paying \$100 an hour. So a lot of the projects that you

[03:21:28] see, the City Hall Landscaping, Thice Park, I'm using retirees to do the construction management. I have an engineering admin. I have three or four people like Wendy, and they basically only have time to administer the projects. If you look at every month, you get a project sheet from Stormwater, Satoshi, you get a project sheet from Wendy, and you get a project sheet from Saeed and Wastewater, and all our projects are, and Stephanie Kupka sends you for environmental, and you see how many projects they have.

[03:22:03] Really, you know, they only have time to administer them, project manage those. But for construction management or for design, to get a set of drawings designed, we don't have the resources for that. And I just want to make a note that I heard some comments about staff that was hired over the past years.

[03:22:22] Well, I think what you have to look at is how much of that staff was hired for the property yard. None. So most of the staff that was, or just about all the staff that was hired over the past five or six years, was for City Hall, not the property yard. The property yard is very lean.

[03:22:38] Those crews, I mean, I've been public works director 20 years, and it took me that long to find the qualified people I do in these divisions, whether they're working concrete, traffic signals, asphalt, wastewater, stormwater. It took me years to find these people that are loyal, will come out in the middle of the night to fix a blockage, are intelligent, are certified, and are constantly trying to do their best for the city.

[03:23:05] And those are the folks at the property yard. And those are the folks that usually get hit the worst when things like this happen. But to answer your question, I don't have any resources to do design or to do a lot of inspection work.

[03:23:22] All incredibly good points and much appreciated, but I would like to call out one example, and I don't know whether it's entirely unique, climate change and energy. That's my wheelhouse, right?

[03:23:39] And we've got some contracts in here to do climate and energy plans and resilience plans. I think they're \$200,000 a pop. We also have on the hit list a person who's a climate and energy manager, talented person, right?

[03:23:55] Under this budget, they go away. However, there certainly is a scenario where a person like that could be retained and at least for a pretty good stretch of time conduct work that would either eliminate the need for contracting altogether or significantly postpone that.

[03:24:18] Again, it's my wheelhouse, and I'd be more than happy to talk further with you about that, But we kind of go through this all the time with governments that are trying to figure out how can we swing this thing? How can we afford to do this? Because it's a piece of change. And nine times out of ten, they say we can't, not right away.

[03:24:34] So what's the graduated pathway here? And that exists, and it's a much lower cost pathway. And in this particular case, ironically, it's one that involves retaining a staff that otherwise would be lost. But the contract has got to either be cut or postponed. So that is the kind of surgery, it seems to me, we need to be looking into in every single department where we have a significant load of consulting assistance to see

what the nature of that is and whether we've got some substitution opportunities here with staff that might reduce that exposure.

[03:25:05] Understood. I think in that division of public works, environmental sustainability, I have two employees. I have Stephanie and I have Melissa Pennant who are working on the solid waste plan, the composting. there's a list of 40, I don't have to tell you, you've seen the list of 40, 50 projects they're working on. Stephanie and Melissa are running around just trying to administer and keep these projects moving. So the grant that we had to hire this person to do this climate energy study was great, you know, that we had this person, but like you said, the grant's going to eventually expire. But the contracts persist, and that's the issue here. You've got, unless I misread that,

[03:25:44] there are some sizable consulting contracts and by the way somebody's going to have to manage them and those are in the cip you know and and we're not talking about the cip if listen you know i was told to cut my operating budget i wasn't told to cut projects out of the cip okay there's a difference i mean to me to me the operating budget is really the blood and the nerves of the city the cip is to me some of that stuff yeah maybe you could defer but you know i've always been here take care of what we have maintain the infrastructure that's the most important

[03:26:21] thing we have if you look at the asset the value of the city it's over a billion dollars you know if you look at everything we have in the city the roads the bridges the traffic signals the storm sewer the wastewater pipes you look you add that asset up it's way over a billion dollars you look at my operating budget it's like less than one percent to maintain all this stuff and that's that's the property yard and to me that's the key agreed but but again it's good to know that those particular funds, and we're talking a couple hundred thousand a pop here. CIP. Okay, because that's cash out. It's just out of the back pocket. You pay consultants cash to help

[03:26:59] you with planning and analysis and what have you. My operating budget, staff, asphalt, eye protection, saw blades. You look at my operating budget, that's all that's there. Yeah, I get that. I just know there's some money parked to do some things that possibly wherever it's parked, a staff person might

[03:27:18] be able to do and I think we need to explore that because it adds up. Thank you. Councilmember Hall. Mr. Summers I'm actually very glad that you brought up CIP and the reason why I think that that wasn't part of my big picture for departments when I'm the one who brought up the 10% was because Mr. Foster every time I asked about CIP stuff said that doesn't affect your cash it doesn't affect your operating expense that's just the cash transfer to the CIP and I look at these things and I Look at all the CIP projects that we have and ones that have been added in recent years,

[03:27:57] and I have to agree with you. I think CIP is probably an area that we should really take a good, hard look at. And I don't mean to paraphrase you if that's not what you're saying. That's fine. That's my take on it, and that's what I think is also really important. But at the end of the day, I mean, we have a lot of wants as far as I'm concerned, a lot of wants.

[03:28:17] And while every building might not be in tip top shape, while every fire station, property yard, you know, the Sherwood Center might not be operating at peak performance, we have to make a decision.

[03:28:32] Do we want to keep jobs? Do we want to maybe delay a project? Or do we want to take a project off the table entirely? And I don't know the answers to this. And I clearly am being the evil person up here that's even considering and talking about this stuff. but you know what? It's important stuff. And somebody

has to do it because things are not just roses and cherries and sunshine and rainbows all around here. I'm sorry. I value our staff very much here. Every project you mentioned, there's going to be a public works person having to manage that. Out in the field, the testing, the inspection, the maintenance of traffic, the contractor, the complaints by residents, the dirt in the road, you know, all the safety hazards.

[03:29:12] There's a public works person that needs to be on site for those projects. Yeah, I mean, I kind of joked before that maybe we should put like a moratorium on building in the city. And every time I ask a question about a planning development or some sort of commercial or mixed use or whatever, I always focus on how many kids are we expecting? How many, you know, residents are we expecting to move in here and there? What schools are impacted? You know what? These questions matter because at \$20,800, I believe, as Carol, a chair of pitches said, that's a lot of students that we get going here.

[03:29:45] So when it's \$4.5 million or it's 417 students since I think she said 2017, that's a whole lot of bucks. So for those of you that are upset, don't like development, are complaining about the tuition bill, you need to hold us and your previous council members accountable for the decisions that they made that have brought all of this extra development into our city.

[03:30:10] and as the planning commission meeting that i attended last night um some of their my takeaways were that there are only so many roads people are not going to bike to work they're not going to bus to work why are we i'm sorry what are we building and why do we need to continue to build build build to support the count goals that was a reference to the fact that the county would like to have or the northern virginia area wanted to have i'm throwing out numbers a million residents And so our fair share of that would be 3,000 units.

[03:30:39] Well, we far surpassed our 3,000 units. And now we're looking at 4,000 or 5,000, whatever. These units have consequences. They bring people into our city. But if we don't have anything fun for them to do, if we have restaurants that are now at a meals tax that's already been 4% higher than the county forever and now is 6% higher or now is just 2% higher if the county approves it, we're not so attractive to come out and eat anymore, are we?

[03:31:05] Maybe we're not so attracted to come out and do things. Maybe people don't want to be here. And if we give them nothing fun to do, we're simply a bedroom community that is never going to be able to get away from our real estate tax burden. As Mr. Cunningham said, I believe, it used to be about a 70-30 split, give or take.

[03:31:24] 70% commercial and retail, 30% residential. We have flopped. We are now spending about 70% of our tax generated here is residential. And as we continue to build, build, build, that's a problem. So what type of development do we really need here?

[03:31:41] Mr. Cunningham also said that many, many years ago, we didn't have any move-up opportunities. Everything was kind of a starter home. And now we have move-up opportunities so people can move up in our city and not move out. Yes, we now do appear to be lacking in some affordable housing.

[03:31:58] And again, previous decisions made by previous councils have pushed some of those things out of here and replace them with townhouses or replace them with apartments and this and that. And there's a cost to that. We are sending people and their children out to a place that they can't attend our schools anymore. They got \$800, I believe, to move when they closed the apartments.

[03:32:21] I'm going to screw up what they are, the ones behind the breezeway. They were given \$800 to move. These are people I know because I delivered yearbooks to their kids during the pandemic when I was spearheading the PTA and gave a yearbook free to every student, there were 40-some kids that lived there. These families had pandemic learning. They had to be at home. Then shortly after that, they lost their apartments. They were given an opportunity to move to the same developer, but I believe it was in another part of Oakton or some part of the county, and \$800 to move.

[03:32:55] Their kids, they don't go to Providence anymore because they don't live in here anymore because they can't afford to live here and so these are things that we need to discuss and one last point about the planning commission last night was the fact that it's just too much of a burden on the homeowners and yet when they bring development opportunities to us or to the planning commission we seem to be willing to maneuver with them and make um you know consolations or whatever the right word is right now but you know they say we say to them we need residential i'm sorry we need retail on the first floor and they say what if we only do retail on the side that faces the street

[03:33:33] but on the other side we can put in more housing more housing means more people and if you watch the planning commission meeting from last night more people does not mean more money here in our city it really does not it often means more of a burden for our city council member amos uh while i i don't disagree with you um i first addressing some of the rhetoric you such as the the rose colored glasses. I think we all understand the severity of the situation. No one likes this decision. And I mean, for example, Council Member Bates just mentioned earlier, what if we, the nonprofit funding, what if that were reduced? What if we took a look at the

[03:34:12] Renaissance housing program? We didn't even talk about that. And I get it. That's a useful thing for our residents, but so are our staff. Suspending the deputy city manager position since it's already vacant, that was brought up. So we do have options on the table that seriously considering which I which I said earlier and we were gonna have other opportunities to discuss it but again we also don't our own priorities like for example look I ran on a setting up a volunteer I wanted a volunteer rewards program for residents the more you volunteer maybe you could get discounts or something around the city who knows but you know I also recognize

[03:34:50] that it's a tough budget year but I also don't want to insinuate that we're not taking this seriously because we are and I think that we've been working very cordially together to try to manifest that I'm I believe that our next work session is supposed to be CIA related CIP related yeah it's almost 11:00 I'm watching the clock closely it's supposed to be CIP related next week and and I agree that there are and as councilmember Bates also reiterated there are things that we need to take a harder look at because we can't afford it but there are other contextual things that I mentioned earlier not because I'm trying

[03:35:30] to justify this tax rate, it's things that we might be leaving off the table that need extra consideration as well, such as the temporary employees. While we have some affordable housing, it's really laden, the scout not too much, we're extremely lacking in workforce-specific housing, which has been something we see across the state.

[03:35:50] Regarding your 70/30 comment, which you're absolutely right on from the Planning Commission, it's not just us, though. It's almost every local jurisdiction in the country at this point, because the commercial market was trending downward since the economic recession actually even prior to that so and i hate that i'm going to mention the dylan rule but i'm going to mention the dylan rule we're

extremely limited in what we can do one of the first questions i asked was can we use our unassigned fund ballots to do a specialized tax relief program for one-time money and we don't even have the purview to do that but on top of that you know we're just a lot of the decisions that we need to make on this budget aren't even ours to make which is frustrating but i just wanted

[03:36:29] to kind of hit that home as well as just there's a lot of contextual factors that make this extremely difficult because there's human rights issues there's affordability issues both taxes and with housing there's obviously some maybe staff and some burden and administrative burden on staff regarding the amount of workload that each individual has to do and how do we rectify that in a budget where we can't add new positions so that's my comments Councilmember Hardy Chandler so I just want to compliment what Councilmember Amos was saying I I think we need to simply accept the fact that there will

[03:37:09] be no optimal outcome from this under the circumstances and going back to Councilmember McQuellen's comment there are going to be passions around this but I actually appreciate that because it's the different perspectives that are going to help us come up with hopefully the best possible outcome so i actually welcome the discussion and the different perspectives because we all need that as we navigate complex issues this is not simple you know this is not neutral and so it's not being the bad guy it's asking

[03:37:47] questions so i want to i know this is one of our initial conversations i just want to kind of tone set and say that we need to welcome the different perspectives and what I would like from staff is a very thorough very thorough feedback on the consequences not just for the 2026 budget because I know that's what we're discussing but any budget as we have learned is a stepping stone to the future so there will be immediate consequences but there will be long term consequences. And I have said from the beginning of my campaign that I am not just

[03:38:26] concerned about this time. I'm concerned about the legacy that we live, that we leave, and to what extent we're causing burdens for future councils, future residents, and it can come out in a very concrete way in our current decisions. So my ask from my colleagues is let's give each other grace from the different perspectives because diversity is a good thing diversity of perspectives is a good thing and it helps us all see the pros and cons we are not going to make a perfect decision

[03:39:03] we're going to hopefully make the best decision under the circumstances and that's a difference right but again my ask from staff is make sure that you're giving us the feedback in terms of the short long-term you know consequences um so that we're not being short-sighted in what we're factoring into these decisions things like the bond rating i want to maintain our double triple a bond rating and i know some of the decisions that we may make may have impacts on that so

[03:39:38] again that's not a 2026 impact but that's something that is for the longer term health of our city so i just want to put that out there mr foster if it excuse me if it's all if i can interject um we've heard a lot of comments so i'd like to chance to sort of um uh give give some feedback to what uh i guess like council member hardy chandler's is asking so um with just i want

[03:40:12] to clarify a couple things and so with regards to the CIP Councilmember Hall and you're right I've repeatedly said that the issue for balancing this budget for this year is the cash transfer that is a that is an absolute true statement however anything any if you want to defer or cancel or modify projects to for the future that does have an impact on the future it will lower the costs in the future of what you spend. It will lower the amount of debt service that

[03:40:45] you need. So yes, there are positive cash flow decisions, if you will, if those are some decisions that you wish to make. But that doesn't help you in the current year.

[03:41:03] That's just the way the things, that's just how it's structured. So yes, you could cancel. You mentioned several projects. I'm not saying you're suggesting to cancel them. But if you were to cancel them, that will definitely have a positive impact on the future in terms of the revenue needed to either pay for them or to fund debt service.

[03:41:22] So, yes, there is an impact, but it's just not for the current fiscal year. So I just, again, not to sound repetitive, but just making that distinction. With regards to the issue with consultants and so forth, that we could use a little bit of clarity.

[03:41:48] So some of the questions we were asked, we've provided, you asked a list of all the contracts and so forth that we have, which we've provided that and what they are and so forth. As far as, so we only have a few instances, and I've shared this with the council, as far as ongoing consultant use for like day-to-day staff things.

[03:42:13] So we have some in community development planning, we have some in code enforcement, et cetera, that we're in essence using consultant in place of staff to provide a routine service.

[03:42:28] And I've given those to you. So it's just a handful. this question about consultants and these large consulting contracts I'm not sure I mean we can we can have we can dive into that more but as mr. Summers indicated you know most of those are for capital prize so we're hiring folks to or if it's not a capital project it's for a specific study or specific thing that that council has approved so I just as far as the distinction we can certainly take a look at that and if there are things you want us to do

[03:43:08] differently in that regard we certainly can but most all of those as mr. Summers also indicated are for expertise and things that we don't have on staff and it's not something that we would use on a regular basis that would require or have enough work to have a full-time employee that provide that level of expertise so again so if there's certain things so you've asked for some very specific information that that we don't have in terms of or in order to get it

[03:43:45] for you as a very labor-intensive because I've you've asked for lists of staff so when we have consultants I mean that's the firm that works for us and that firm might have lots of people and they might and they they give different people to work for us so I'm not clear on and you're wanting to know like ratios and things and so I'm not clear exactly because from our perspective it's a single contract with a single firm so that's you know but there might be lots of people depending on what the need is and the specialty so I'm not I'm not

[03:44:21] quite understanding what it is you're trying to get at and maybe there's a different way to get what you're after I'm just not clear on that but so that would be because from a systems perspective what I've heard you ask is like you want to you want to know the the amounts for each contract and the staff in each contract and that's what some of the things have been asked and those are things that are not readily available will require us to manually go through every contract and even then as I indicated in in some of the

[03:45:00] communication most of our contracts are what are known as IDIQ contracts meaning they specify especially the ones for goods because you ask for contrast for goods and services so maybe you're not concerned about the contracts for goods and if that's the case then that's certainly helpful information

to know but we'll we it guarantees us a price but the quantity and the deliveries in determine as we need whether it's janitorial supplies office supplies stuff for fleet those kinds of things so um so again i'm just it's not very clear to us and so just as a and another

[03:45:38] important point to share that i'm not sure we've clearly communicated is with this council is that we went to a new financial system last september so all of the information we have the detailed information is as of September we did bring in I think three years of prior data in the aggregate so we didn't necessarily the details but sort of the some the summary amounts now we do have access and we still maintain the old system that has more of that detail but it does not capture the detail in the

[03:46:15] same way that the new system does which is why we went to the new system so you're talking about I heard you talk about like technology improvements and things that we can to help us work better that's one of the things we've done by switching to this new system but in order to get some of this comparative data that you're asking is requiring us to look not in just one system but in a second system and that's labor-intensive and it's requiring lots of effort so not not understanding the goal and what you're after if there's if you're if you're wanting just if you've heard somebody mentioned well there's this specific contract you should take a look at well okay well let us know that so we

[03:46:54] don't necessarily have to go through everything that if there's like one or two specific things that you're after that would certainly be helpful for us and and for staff because it is we've as we've been going through this that is been a lot of work and we're happy to provide the information as I've communicated before we want you to have the best information to make the best decisions um but there's a i would argue there's some diminishing returns on depending on the level of effort versus what information you're trying to glean in the in the level of effort in order to get that information so um if you can you know so we would appreciate some clarity

[03:47:34] um on that piece um and then finally i guess i'd love so you know we still have more work sessions You've shared a lot of what I would say starting to get at sort of your preferences and maybe philosophies on things.

[03:47:50] So I've heard, for example, two of you indicate that you won't vote for a meals tax increase. That is perfectly fine. If a majority of you aren't going to vote for a meals tax increase, that would be great information to know. SO WE CAN THEN ADAPT IN SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND THINGS IF WE KNOW THAT THAT'S NOT A POTENTIAL REVENUE SOURCE BECAUSE THERE'S NOT SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL, THAT WOULD BE GREAT INFORMATION TO KNOW.

[03:48:16] AND I RECOGNIZE YOU MAY NOT BE -- TWO OF YOU HAVE SAID -- I TOOK IT AS FAIRLY DEFINITIVE THAT YOU WERE NOT WILLING TO VOTE FOR A MEALS TAX INCREASE, AND THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE. BUT KNOWING THOSE KINDS OF THINGS, WHAT YOU WILL AND WON'T SUPPORT, THAT WAS ONE OF THE questions that I asked you at the very first meeting if there was any non negotiables sounds like for a couple of you that's a non-negotiable it's that's how I'm perceiving those statements and that's my perception that may not be exactly what you mean but again knowing that helps us better serve you and give

[03:48:51] you the information and give you options and opportunities the reality with the the exercise the 10% exercise that you asked us to go through we presented that it doesn't get you where you need to be to have virtually no taxes and I'm not saying you're you're wanting virtually known tax increase but I've heard you say it's too high I agree with you it's very high I didn't I took no pleasure in recommending that

but the parameters in which we were working from which is we didn't want to cut we there wasn't doesn't seem to be an appetite to reduce service levels. We wanted to take care of the staff. There was no discussion about things that

[03:49:30] you wanted to discuss. That's the conversation, quite frankly, that we need to have, and I think that's what you all are getting at this evening. That's very helpful for us to know. We're giving you information. As I've said before, we as a city do things that don't make money, and that's intentional because you want quality of life and services, and the private sector won't provide it.

[03:49:55] Why? Because there's no profit to be made in it. So all the things that we do are to benefit this community, and it's sometimes difficult to place a value on it. I can show you, if you want to just do a straight cost-benefit analysis, most everything we do is not going to be positive strictly from a cost-benefit analysis.

[03:50:17] Now you're having to make a value judgment, which is what we've been trying to get at with you, and one of the things we're going to talk about at the retreat is sort of understanding.

[03:50:26] that so we can make good recommendations for the things that you would like to be doing so anything like that that you that is helpful for us in terms of making recommendations we can go through and look at ways to reduce but even with that that exercise we've gone through you want a 10% or that was the exercise we couldn't even get four and a half because so much is not is non-discretionary school tuition the Fairfax County shared services debt

[03:51:05] service all of that's well over half the general fund budget that you really have you that are contractual obligations that you have no control over so now in order to get that level of that you need to offset the amount of extra costs that we're seeing for revenue that's going to be if you're not willing or we're not able to raise additional revenue that's an even larger cut that we're gonna have to do so that's what we're faced with so the any guidance and so forth that you can give us and so this conversation has

[03:51:42] certainly been helpful but those are the things that we need to understand to help you get to where you want to be because that's what we're here for and so I've heard you doesn't I don't think anybody wants to vote for nine and a half cents there but that means we're gonna have to look at other options we presented you some options that don't require the you know some some ways and granted to mr. Peterson's point yes some of them are short-term and you're right there's a there's some structural things that we need to take a look at I just don't think we're gonna get all of that done in one year for this budget it's

[03:52:18] going to take some continual effort so we may have to look at some of those things to bridge us to where we can get at some of those more structural things in which you're referring so I hopefully wanted to provide some of the context and sort of respond to some of the things that we're hearing and again in the more clarity that you can give us the better we'll be able to help you in your decision-making specific follow-up and then a general thing on the contract stuff I'm personally not interested in knowing the individual staff but

[03:52:56] managers should know the scopes of work like the back of their hand. That's a thing. You ask them, what are your scopes of work for your contracts? You don't know that, you're not doing your job. That's what we need to know, and we can take it from there. Generally speaking, we're just now, it's March 25, starting to get to the stage where we can directly engage with agencies and department heads.

[03:53:17] But the overall picture that I keep hearing is that maybe we've bitten off more than we can chew in terms of what the city is trying to do. We got a loud and clear message from the Planning Commission. There are a lot of things that get moved forward for consideration on development that, in their view, are not adequately considered.

[03:53:40] And this is not a unique story about things happening here in the city. There's a bit of sobriety that I think potentially we need to bring here in terms of the volume of things that we're trying to do because we may be overloading the system, and that may be part of what's going on here.

[03:53:58] And I think we need a chance to dialogue with department heads and getting into the information We have this but we've gotten more we've just recently received but again I I have to say I'm a little bit concerned now It's March 25 and we're just getting at the stage where I think we can start that conversation So we are probably going to have to find ways to accelerate and expedite to get to the bottom of some of these things And I'm all ears for how we go about doing that Councilmember Amos and Councilmember Hall all I'm just going to reiterate is a few minutes till 11:00. I'm watching the clocks So I'll give you until 11.15.

[03:54:36] Thank you for that information and for summarizing things. Just to confirm, the Fairfax County agreements, I know we've discussed the school board one, and I know the Chair Pitches was here. I think Councilmember McQuillan had asked for information on the county contracts.

[03:54:58] Is that something that Ms. Abashian is working on? No, we're pulling. I want to make sure, again, sort of like the school one, it's been amended through the year. Well, maybe the school one hasn't. maybe that's a bad example this one's been amended through the years I believe the most current is 2003 we have that I just want to make sure and so in yes we'll we'll provide that to you in terms of the question about number of residents well we will have to get that information but there these are the thing like so you know and we wish the county in because they're the ones providing the service in most cases we should be we can should be able to get

[03:55:35] that data from them, but it's not necessarily a cost for service like you think of schools in terms of, you know, it's this X number of students, so that's how much we pay. It's kind of the cost for social services, CSB, libraries, et cetera, the formula's in there.

[03:55:53] So whether we serve two people or 20,000 people, that number isn't necessarily going to change but so much. What is CSB? Sorry. community services board that's a mental mental health okay so I mean so we can actually get you that we can we'll ask them for that data all I'm just saying is that the the that the numbers that they serve isn't necessarily directly tied to what we pay because it's not on a per unit basis

[03:56:31] that's really what I was trying to get at that's unlike schools which it sort of is. Yeah, no, that's helpful information, and hopefully it'll make more sense once we see it. One last point is the 1% sales tax. I did reach out to Senator Saddam Saleem just to, what were you going to say it to? Just to ask what our next steps are, because we have no idea who's going to get elected in November, and quite frankly, I don't think we can sit around and wait another year.

[03:56:58] You know, there's maybe a discussion about, well, we're in Northern Virginia, we have resources. Our schools are expensive, and I think we should pursue every opportunity we have to try to get that 1%. So hopefully there's consensus from this council and from the school board to proceed.

[03:57:16] Okay, perfect. Because if we can get it, that really helps a lot of these conversations. Thank you. Just still, again, like the school board, it requires a voter referendum. So even if the legislation, there's still a two-part process, which is the voter referendum for approval.

[03:57:36] Any other? Council Member Bates. thank you uh first couple uh points um as far as uh development yes you know absolutely any kind of development commercial or residential is going to increase city expenditures to provide services to that development on the other hand it also is going to impact the tax base usually positively and of course i can't speak to prior councils but at least during my time on the

[03:58:11] council, I always am sure to look at the fiscal impact analysis, and I don't recall ever supporting a project that had projected a negative average projected fiscal impact. All the ones I recall supporting, as I recall, were positive, and that takes schools into account. Furthermore, it also does not even you know as far as other than schools schools it does look at the you know

[03:58:45] the differentiation between different types of housing but otherwise the other expenses are just kind of the average I believe throughout the city but there's no differentiation in terms of different types of units and so that doesn't even take into consideration the economies of scale that come from having for example multi-family building versus a single-family home neighborhood but definitely something that we do I strongly agree that we do need to keep an eye on that and make sure that we're taking that in consideration looking at different development projects and what that impact of you know schools and any

[03:59:22] other expenditures are and how that balances out with the increase hopefully an increase in tax revenue as far as looking at contracts I think that with regard to as councilmember Peterson and others have mentioned looking at what is more kind of service based something that a staff member might otherwise carry out even though you know the course you might not have enough work really for

[03:59:59] them to maintain a permanent staff member to do that work or you know might not be able to recruit somebody or you know etc it might be helpful as a starting point to look at uh billable hours for contractors versus paid staff hours um you know just a suggestion councilmember hardy chandler just one final comment um my husband has a saying don't spend ten dollars to save 50 cents right so i just really want us to be as we're learning

[04:00:38] open to some of the feedback about the aim as opposed to sometimes it is the numbers but sometimes it's also other factors and restrictions and so not i i just want to make sure that we're getting the return on investment in this process but we're also learning along the way um i think that's just the main point i wanted to make okay keeping an eye on the clock because i do respect

[04:01:17] councilmember amos's desire for all of us not to be here super late um if if we are done with this i will reconvene if we're done with comments in the work session i will reconvene the regular meeting so i just did that um we will now go to the manager report out and council comments so

[04:01:40] Mr. Foster, I have nothing else to report out this evening. Okay, councilmember McQuillan. Thank you I just wanted to thank staff for their presentations And all the time that you guys have put into answering all of our budget questions I know it's been a lot on you and I really appreciate it I also want to thank all who came out to share their thoughts during public conversations your participation is vital

[04:02:15] I encourage everyone to attend our budget open house on April 2nd from 4 to 8 at the Stacy Sherwood community center as a former at-large school board member i took seriously the responsibility of serving every child just as i now do for our entire community on city council i'm honored that my birthday coincides with fairfax city's transgender day of visibility on march 31st as a proud american who believes in freedom and equality for all i stand in solidarity with our transgender community and celebrate their contributions to our city as i gear up for

[04:02:51] another ride around the sun i just want to thank my fellow council members and mayor this opportunity has been phenomenal and i really appreciate serving our community with you thank you councilmember bates thank you uh just want to wish everybody a happy trans visibility day and just to say that as someone who has friends who are trans and as a christian i it is just intolerable for them to be singled out and bullied and demeaned um just for existing

[04:03:29] or just for celebrating with us here tonight um and i will always stand with the trans community thank you councilmember peterson a couple things first for everybody who's watching as late as it is thank you so much for the emails you send and i am doing my darndest to respond to them Promptly it's the first thing I do literally Saturday morning and it takes me a while I think the first thing I did was to respond to 60 regarding the budget Folks who weren't real happy and wanted to express etc. But really

[04:04:08] Your incoming emails mean a lot and I'm doing my very best if I'm a little bit late You know my apologies. I'll get to them. The second is An issue that I'd like to suggest we move into a work session at some point not During the budget season because we've got other fish to fry but as I think many of you know I Spent two and a half years chairing the environmental sustainability committee before I joined the council wonderful experience But it was also a bit eye-opening

[04:04:42] Because one of the things I discovered is that our boards and commissions and committees are not all created equal terms of the way they are set up some of them don't have bylaws I'm not sure with any of them that when we make appointments we're doing conflicts checks or even background checks there are anomalies also in the public meeting requirements some are required to go through incredibly stringent public meeting requirements where members are told no more than two of you can

[04:05:18] socialize and public others do that routinely some are paid some are not paid it's kind of all over the map and I discovered this year or so ago but I learned when I chatted with the former city manager that the committee that I was chairing was not alone and it was clear that there needed to be a more broad-scale review of boards and commissions and some updates shall we say needed so I had the opportunity to chat a little bit with the city attorney about this and it would be my suggestion to the council that we do reserve some

[04:05:57] time to take a look at boards and commissions I think it would be in everybody's best interest including ours to do that no finger pointing it's just it's a lots going on and I think that would be a timely thing to do so I'd like to suggest that and thank you for the conversation to help sort of understand how we might approach that I know it gets into some tricky areas there's another component to that that we might address either in that session or separately and that is with respect to contracts for services in particular the councilmember Bates mentioned I do think it's worth taking a second look at how we handle conflicts of interest on them there are some unique things that

[04:06:37] may not be caught in the generic conflicts of interest template that the city uses and I think they're key and we ought to address that for prudence sake the other thing is I appreciate everybody's patience and determination on us sticking with it to try as a council to bring a permanent resolution to the George Snyder trail and as I understand it from speaking with the city manager about where we are with respect to our next steps the council

[04:07:12] NEEDS TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT WHICH TWO COUNCIL MEMBERS WILL BE JOINING MEETINGS WITH VDOT AND THEN SEQUENTIALLY ONE WITH THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD I KNOW I VOLUNTEERED SOME OTHER PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE THAT'S SOMETHING WE NEED TO DO FIGURE OUT WHO AMONGST US ON THE COUNCIL SIDE WILL BE DOING THIS AS WE DO THAT I THINK IT'S ALSO REALLY IMPORTANT FOR US TO THINK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE AGENDA FOR THAT CONVERSATION WHEN WE SPOKE ABOUT THE trail on march 11th we received a staff presentation that identified three options build it cancel it

[04:07:49] or snip it in half but we received simultaneously an email copy from vdot that said there was actually a fourth option it was literally designated as number three which was to look at a realignment something that's out of the woods and on the streets and a procedure was identified for actually examining that option and as a prior speaker said tonight there was an ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY VDOT EVEN RECENTLY THAT THAT IS A PROCEDURE THAT IS POSSIBLE SO I DO THINK IT'S IMPORTANT WHEN WE VISIT WITH VDOT THAT WE AND THEN COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD THAT WE HAVE

[04:08:25] ON THE AGENDA AN OPEN CONVERSATION ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES WHICH AS I UNDERSTAND IT ARE REALLY FOCUSED ON SOME MODIFICATIONS TO THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE TRAIL THE SENSE THAT I UNDERSTOOD FROM OUR PRIOR CONVERSATION WAS THAT THERE WAS NOT A majority of interest in pursuing the eastern side further so I guess my request would be let's figure out who amongst us will be attending and then agree that we will be focused on this flexibility option in that conversation to receive their best guidance but really structure this as an open

[04:09:01] conversation and I will just say I serve for the committee on the transportation planning board and Northern Virginia Northern Virginia Transportation Authority has a committee I serve on also and in visiting with both the executive staff and the other officials elected officials on those committees project non-completion and project modification happen all the time and everybody has said you need to have a conversation this is not black and white and it doesn't happen just like that so you need to be able to sit down

[04:09:40] and work your way through this and not expect you know instantly there will be some determination and it will be again black and white so I wanted to raise that and see if we could get an agreement because I know there's an interest in having a get-together tomorrow afternoon with staff to sort of talk through what that might look like and then literally a Thursday afternoon would beat out as well so I'd love to hear how we might get that resolved again I'd be delighted myself to join that meeting but open to others thank you so I'll go ahead and address that because during the work session you did make a request about meeting with VDOT and so Wendy Sanford went out and

[04:10:20] assembled a meeting with representatives from VDOT you as having made the request were invited to attend councilmember Hall also offered to attend wanted to attend as did councilmember Bates we decided that there would be two representatives otherwise it is a public meeting so councilmember

Bates, who has previously voted on the trail before, having served a previous term with the previous council who took votes on this trail, I believe that he represents and has consistently said he wants to build only half the trail. You have indicated that you certainly are open to

[04:11:00] canceling the trail completely. I am supporting building the full trail. So that is three different perspectives in this meeting with VDOT. So that meeting was set up with VDOT for Thursday at 3 p.m. The pre-meeting, which you requested, has been set up for tomorrow at 3 p.m. So I don't understand if there's a lack of communication. Perhaps it's my lack of communication. But I believe you made requests, requests were met, and we have proceeded in a manner in which you

[04:11:33] indicated you wanted to move forward. Well, a couple things quickly. So in terms of my own position. I am very supportive of exploring modifications to the West End, and I understand a majority of people in the committee are interested in that. I certainly hear a lot of public sentiment towards that. It would seem to me that it's important for this meeting to include people who are sincerely interested. Well, I don't know what you mean by sincerely.

[04:12:03] So let's examine who you think on this dais is not sincere in their interest. I think it's important for people to be included in that meeting who are interested in a successful agreement to pursue modifications to the trail particularly the west end and because that is supported by a majority of the committee and I think widely supported by the public I think that it's important that we have people representing the council who are supportive of that option I think many presumptions have been made in your statement.

[04:12:43] So unless somebody wants to tell me something different, we have a meeting scheduled, you are included in the meeting, I am including Councilmember Billy Bates, unless all of you want to do something different. Councilmember Hall.

[04:13:00] I think the question that I'm wondering is what, and I say this very respectfully, so please don't take it any other way, but what gave you the authority to make the decision that I was excluded and Councilmember Bates was included?

[04:13:17] Okay, so first of all, you're making a presumption about my ability to decide anything, and I think that has been something that has been part of this council since everyone was sworn in. Like, why do I have the right to make any decisions? Is that what you're asking? I don't think that's what I said. I think I was just curious if I responded before Councilmember Bates did, or if he responded before me, or how it was...

[04:13:41] And you think that simply raising your hand first is how we decide? I'm just curious as to how it was decided since you were the one that came down and said that Council Member Bates was to go. So I'm just trying to understand how that was decided and who made that decision. I made that decision and I'm sorry that you feel that you were excluded somehow, but we decided on two council members and there are six council members.

[04:14:04] Okay, so you did make the decision then for Council Member Bates to go? I did. Okay, well you just said it was presumptive of me to assume that you had made the decision. I said presumptions are being made about how people were included and the fact of the matter is council member peterson made these requests these requests were met i'm happy to withdraw my name i was just curious at how i was not chosen and how that decision was determined so thank you for clarifying council member hardy

[04:14:35] Chandler okay um just a quick comment on that and no more when I saw the selection I thought it was based on having different perspectives in the meeting, people who held different perspectives without it becoming a meeting. That was just my interpretation. In terms of comments, general comments, going back to some earlier comments about our proclamation, an inclusive community

[04:15:12] is absolutely a strong community. And so I appreciate some of the comments that were made earlier in support of trans visibility the other thing I just want to say is as we're learning to do this process and making requests I want to explicitly state that I do not believe it's our intention to in any way cut funding for the arts we heard from a lot of community members who came to testify today I believe the arts are prevention in terms of later costs as we talk

[04:15:48] about long-term impacts and so for me fall for the book funday Monday the band the theater all of those things are things that add to again a budgetary priority for me quality of life so I just wanted to express my concern that there was concern that rippled out in the community around that probably as a consequence of the exercise but to reiterate that these are just factors that emerged and again quality of life

[04:16:26] is a significant priority that's it Councilmember Hall just want to thank everyone for coming out tonight for expressing your opinions and your concerns I do take them seriously and I try to respond to every email I have no intention of cutting arts and I don't know where that came from I don't know why all the emails are coming in as I have responded and I apologize for the copy and paste but I think it's very important that everyone hears the same message from me and it is I'm gonna read it and this is with regard specifically

[04:17:03] to the programs that were discussed tonight but at this time I'm not aware of any proposed budget reductions to specific programs within Parks and Rec or any other department. However, as part of a broader budget review, the council has asked each department to outline what a 10% reduction would look like. We expect to receive these proposals within the next week or two. I understand your concern about potential funding cuts, especially for organizations that rely largely or entirely on these grants. Please know that I take these decisions very seriously and will carefully review any proposed changes with a thoughtful and balanced approach.

[04:17:36] So that pretty much summarizes my entire approach to all things that are on council. I am up here just trying to do the best job that I can, and sometimes discussions, disagreements are going to occur. It doesn't mean that we're not going to continue to serve in the best way moving forward.

[04:17:54] It just means we have a difference of opinion on a particular item. It doesn't mean that we don't share many of the same views for our city. It just means I wanted to know why I wasn't chosen. That's all. So thank you. Councilmember Amos. - Man, it's 11:20.

[04:18:11] I'm going to avoid my pissed off-ness, my anger for a moment by what just transpired and just let it go. Because if this is what I should expect moving forward, I would never run for office again.

[04:18:26] We're better than that. So I hope to never see that again. But anyway, Cherry Blossoms this weekend. Hope you check it out. And I wanted to thank George Mason. I was selected as one of their 40 under 40 for the -- was it the charter school specifically?

[04:18:43] No, George Mason Black Alumni. So I was selected as a 40 under 40. And -- thank you. And also the American Legion celebration for their 80th anniversary is coming up, American Legion 177. They are holding it on April 4th -- 5th.

[04:19:03] Thank you, sir. I appreciate you. Yeah, they're holding it on April 5th, 11 to 3 p.m. So I hope people will go by and check out. Thank you. So I want to congratulate the George Mason University women's basketball team.

[04:19:19] They were in the NCAA tournament for the first time. They won the A-10 championship for the first time, and they were eliminated in the first round by Florida State, but still this was historic for the school. Same for the men. They lost to VCU in the final tournament at the A-10, but again, both of our teams, our basketball teams, are doing very well, And I hope that our city residents support and celebrate and are excited about what our university next door is accomplishing.

[04:19:48] I also want to acknowledge the Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31st, which we have recognized every year that I've been mayor. And it's because it's important, as other people have stated. This is a community within our community, and they deserve respect, and they deserve to have a welcoming and a welcoming and safe place to live.

[04:20:10] So with that, I am going to now convene a closed session.



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