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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Budget Public Hearing (Session I), Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Date Wednesday, March 1, 2023
Place Board Room, First Floor, Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE, Leesburg, Virginia
Length 33m (video)

- Official meeting video (county, Granicus): <https://loudoun.granicus.com/player/clip/7204>
- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7204

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-20. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:11:49] Thank you. All right, we're ready? Ladies, you ready? You guys are good? Okay. All right. I would like to call the 3 o'clock p.m. March 1st, 2023 Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Budget public hearing to order.

[00:12:09] This room has a hearing loop. If you need hearing assistance, switch your hearing aids to telecom mode. If you need a headset, we have those available as well. Please see the clerk to request one. This public hearing is also to allow members of the public to address the board on the Proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning, excuse me, July 1st, 2023 and ending June 30th, 2024.

[00:12:31] The fiscal year 2024 proposed budget. And the proposed tax rates on the real and personal property tax for the year, tax year 2023, beginning January 1st, 2023 and ending December 31st, 2023. There are three sessions for comment on the proposed budget.

[00:12:47] Any members of the public may address the board at only one session. Members of the public wishing to speak at this public hearing and have not already have not already done So please sign up with the clerk to my left all members of the public who have signed up to speak will be a lot of two and a half minutes If you're in the boardroom, we ask when your name is called Please come down to the podium and state your name for the record The timer on the podium will indicate your remaining time when your time has expired Please yield the floor to the next speaker if you're providing your comments via phone I

ask that you use a stopwatch to track your time and I will monitor your time in the boardroom as well and notify you when your time has expired when taking public comment I

[00:13:27] will first ask if there's anyone in the boardroom wishing to speak then I'll go to the moderator Lisa and ask if there are any speakers via online please note that there is a slight delay between the broadcast in the boardroom although not all board members are able to attend board members have assured their colleagues that they will review the video recordings of the budget public hearings and listen to the public comments on the budget. Missing this evening will be Chair Randall, Supervisor Brissman, Supervisor Buffington, and Supervisor Kushner. They will not be here

[00:14:01] for the three o'clock session. Mr. Kushner will try to attend the six o'clock session in a few hours later this evening. Okay, so with that, we will get started with our first person speaking this evening. We have Robert Anderson, followed by Reverend Dr. Gene Wright, followed by Jim Bingle. Robert Anderson. Good afternoon. I've been a resident of Loudoun County for 35 years, and I'm at the point I'm very frustrated because with a lot of people, the property taxes that I

[00:14:37] pay every year continues, continues to go up. I decided this year to take a little hard look at the budget and try to understand the budgeting process. I'm basing my comments upon my professional background. I was a division controller for the largest unit in the largest privately owned company in the United States. I've also served as a consultant for the United States Air Force doing strategic planning, financial planning for over 35 Air Force bases and commanders.

[00:15:07] I have two concerns in looking at the budgeting process. My first concern relates to on how the tax revenue is being expended on a general basis. With any organization, you need to constantly be looking at ways that you can improve your investments, eliminate waste, find better ways to do things, and promote innovation wherever possible.

[00:15:35] I went through the best that I could the very voluminous reports that the administrator had put together, not going through everything, don't intend to understand everything that's in there, but it was very hard to find any effort, sincere effort, that has been made to reduce current expenditures.

[00:15:53] It seemed like it's a continuous increase of expenses to just handle inflation. You know, as well as I know, there has to be significant waste within the budget. An organization that's at \$4.2 billion has to assume you've got waste, and I'm here to encourage you to find that waste.

[00:16:16] In my experiences, the best way to find waste is to get your employees involved. They work with things all the time where they cannot understand why they're doing it, why that program is existing, and they see waste all the time. Ask them, and they will tell you.

[00:16:33] By simply going back and saying, can you reduce expenses by 5%, they will come up with ideas unless you do those things i do not believe you're being properly served by your county administrator and his staff to thoroughly look at these expenses my last concern is i hope you will do everything possible to prevent from what happened last year with the school board where they went on a spending spree to basically spend money that they haven't used this has to change and i hope you take an action to eliminate that thank you sir your time is up Thank you.

[00:17:09] Thank you. Next, we have Reverend Dr. Jean Wright, followed by Jim Bingle, followed by Michael Myers. Good afternoon, Mr. Vice Chair and Board of Supervisors.

[00:17:27] I am Reverend Dr. Jean Wright, a resident of the Ashburn District and co-founder of the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions and lead of the FACTS Loudon Hub. I'm here this afternoon to speak in support of the \$1,080,783 requested to launch the Environmental and Energy Work Plan.

[00:17:49] This is a small percentage of the \$3.5 billion budget. Many county leaders have worked countless hours to develop the plan, a needed update of the 2009 plan. However, without funding, it won't be implemented.

[00:18:06] Funding it is a matter of urgency. NASA has just released its latest update on vital signs of the planet stating that 2022 is the fifth warmest year on record, with the last nine consecutive years being the warmest nine on record.

[00:18:24] The good news is that we here in Loudoun County can make a difference for the environment, but that difference includes passing the full budget. Included in the energy plan budget is the money for a needed energy manager to guide the launch process, It also includes funding for energy equity projects for a building of the public-facing county dashboard that will track county energy use, and this dashboard will serve as an important model for county residents and businesses.

[00:18:55] The budget will lay the groundwork for a green bank to assist lower-income communities and businesses in becoming more energy-efficient and sustainable. Additionally, the planned budget includes important projects related to our watershed, tree canopy, and public engagement. As a walker and hiker, I see the eroding river and stream banks and too many dying and dead trees. Also, I'm hearing and seeing fewer birds. This saddens me.

[00:19:27] The energy work plan is essential to the health of our soils, water, animals, vegetables, and yes, human life. It's essential to our farmers and winery industries. It's essential to the sustainability of the generations who follow us. It's essential because it says to all county residents and we who are responding that we are responding to the climate crisis and building for climate resiliency. I ask that you vote yes for the energy plan budget as well as for the recycling projects, for expanding glass recycling, and for the composting pilot project. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:20:07] Next, we have Jim Bingle, followed by Michael Myers, followed by Louise Everett. Good afternoon, Vice Chair Sains and board members. I'm Jim Bingle, chair of the Environmental Commission, and speaking in that capacity this afternoon.

[00:20:22] The members voted to have me and the vice chair officially present our unanimous request for board support of our priority goals in FY24. These are an outgrowth of our work plan that you approved last year, last July. Although we consider all of the projects in our work plan important, during FY23, we prioritize those that have not required additional funding.

[00:20:46] Our accomplishments include reviewing already completed watershed management plans to identify initial projects, providing input to the county energy strategy, considering elements of a strong solar ordinance, brainstorming on an environment and energy informations hub, considering a program to increase energy equity, improving outreach to and inclusion of our diverse population, kicking off the Environmental Excellence Awards, and preparing for the environmental forum scheduled for May 11.

[00:21:19] In FY24, however, while we are still cognizant of your restraints, we will need resources to enable key actions in our work plan. Therefore, we are requesting the proposed energy program manager

position with some consultant support, which represents our highest priority and therefore is our primary recommendation for funding.

[00:21:40] This person is essential to start implementing the energy strategy and getting them on board will help to apply for and receive grants from the Department of Energy to support the goals of the strategy. Without this position, the strategy will be just another good idea on the shelf at a time when urgent action is needed.

[00:22:00] And then resources for next steps of three of our other work plan projects. Developing and implementing an energy equity program with projects that involve other departments and diverse stakeholders. Working with mapping and GIS department to implement ideas that we're developing for the information hub using existing data.

[00:22:19] And taking action on initial watershed management plan projects that we've identified this year. We hope these requests will allow staff to advance the work plan without a major impact on the budget and look forward to helping the county accomplish its environmental objectives.

[00:22:36] Thank you for your consideration. Thank you. All right, next we have Michael Myers, followed by Louise Everett, followed by Jill Norcross. Hi, good afternoon. I'm Michael Myers, and today I am speaking as a member of the Environmental Commission on which I serve as the Natural Resources Committee Chair.

[00:22:55] I would like to thank the board for approving our work plan last year. As noted by JEM, the Environmental Commission has submitted written comments on our fiscal year 24 budget considerations. This fiscal year, we have made a lot of progress towards goals in our work plan within the constraints of the current budget and available staff time.

[00:23:12] While we would love to have significant funding to fully fund all of our projects for next fiscal year, we identified a few projects that require modest funding in order to be successful. Other commission members will speak more in depth at future public hearings about the needs on an energy program manager, and energy equity program needs this afternoon i'm going to focus on funding to create an information hub on energy and natural resources and taking action to implement components of the existing watershed management plans as we all know the county website has a tremendous amount of useful data however when it comes to the environment that information is spread across

[00:23:48] many pages and can be difficult or confusing to find useful data as outlined in our work plan an information hub would create solutions and benefit the public having an easy to use interface would make it easier for your constituents to access and understand data and information relating to the natural world. Increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of our natural world, steep slopes, rivers, streams, wetlands, tree canopy, wildlife corridors, etc. not only helps create a place where people and wildlife thrive together, it will help make it easier for your constituents to formulate constructive comments and feedback to inform your decisions. The second item I would

[00:24:26] like to highlight is funding for watershed management planning the county currently has two watershed management plans out of a potential 10 that that outline many goals objectives and actions to protect preserve and restore the water resources of loudon county members of the the natural resources committee have reviewed and analyzed these plans and we've identified some initial actions with approval of modest funding that would improve water quality by educating and engaging residents on actions they

could take and potentially offering direct assistance to complete projects. Funding is necessary to take the plan into action. We appreciate the board's support of the Environmental Commission's work plan. These modest funding recommendations would have a tangible

[00:25:05] positive impact on the environment and natural resources of Loudoun County and they would improve the quality of life of your constituents. Thank you for your time and consideration. Thank you. Next we have Louise Everett followed by Jill Norcross, Norcross, excuse me, followed by Nicole Costa. Mr. Vice Chair and members of the board, my name is Louise Everett. My husband and I have lived at Ashby Ponds in the Broad Run District for almost six years. A couple of preliminary thoughts. I love your emphasis on plans for retrofitting existing government buildings and

[00:25:41] constructing new energy efficient buildings. I understand from other sources that nearly 40% of global CO2 emissions comes from operating and constructing buildings. In other words, efforts in this area have more leverage than most other approaches to greenhouse gas reduction.

[00:26:00] Second, if the county implements a glass recycling plant and makes glass collection widely available, you'll hear a loud cheer from Ashby Ponds. We have residents who routinely collect glass from neighbors, then transport it to Sterling Park Community Recycling Center. We ask for approval to fund a bin for the broad run district in the 201 zip code. Specifically, my primary goal today is to express support for your budget proposal for conservation practices within the Loudoun County

[00:26:36] Flood Plan Overlay District. Specifically, I support funding for implementation of watershed management projects and the new watershed management plan. In addition, because I know from my own professional experience that communication is essential to the success of any project, I also support funding for management support services. Here's my thinking. The most obvious impact of a floodplain is that it helps protect life and property during a flood by containing the floodwaters. During and after a flood, the plain allows the water to slowly seep

[00:27:13] to the earth and its groundwater for later use instead of quickly running off. But in addition to that, floodplains, especially those covered by diverse vegetation, are some of the most biologically rich habitats on earth. Fish spawn there, migrating waterfowl, and birds use it for rest and foraging.

[00:27:34] Our floodplains support the ecological health of our larger Chesapeake Bay watershed, as well as our county's 17 smaller watersheds. They are all around us, contributing to our welfare and physical well-being. Thank you for this opportunity.

[00:27:50] Thank you. Next, we have Jill Norcross, followed by Nicole Acosta. Good afternoon. My name is Jill Norcross, and I am the Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, or NAVAHA, as we are known.

[00:28:12] NAVAHA promotes healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities that meet the diverse housing needs of Northern Virginia residents. We appreciate your leadership and service, and I wanted to thank you for allowing us to provide comments on the FY 2024 budget and your housing initiatives.

[00:28:30] We acknowledge the progress that Loudoun County has made to increase the supply of affordable housing through your Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan adopted in September 2021. This plan is your North Star for obtainable housing in the county as it has clearly identified the goals that you need to follow.

[00:28:49] We also recognize and commend your work on the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance Rewrite in Chapter 9, Attainable Housing, which includes regulations that implement the ADU program, the UHNU program, and the Affordable Housing, or AHU program.

[00:29:04] We commend TLUC's approval of removing the multifamily ADU exemption for 100% residential multifamily apartment buildings with four or more stories by a common elevator. And we applaud your efforts to establish the Loudoun County Regional Fair Housing Plan goals, as well as your willingness to invite residents to attend a public hearing on March 8th to learn more about the Regional Fair Housing Plan and provide feedback in person. And today we want to offer comments on the county's budget and the strong connection to your ability to increase the supply of housing, to obtain funding for housing through local tax revenue, and to dedicate general

[00:29:40] funds to housing programs and services. These are all well-articulated goals that you elected officials in partnership with staff have worked on for years and voted to adopt. Today, I'd like to offer encouragement to commit additional resources beyond the \$6.5 million for affordable housing. This amount continues the dedication of one-half cent of real property tax to affordable housing needs and is insufficient to meet the future demands of housing outlined in your plans.

[00:30:08] Along with our partners from the Loudon Housing Justice Coalition and Loudon Workforce Housing Now campaign, Navaja strongly recommends that you significantly increase your funding by devoting one penny of the real estate tax to affordable housing. This \$12 million in funding will more adequately help address the needs of our very low-income populations who are struggling to survive in the county.

[00:30:29] Thank you for this time and consideration of this request. Thank you. All right, next we have Nicola Costa, and is that the last speaker that we have right now? Okay. Take us out. Good afternoon. I'm Nicole Acosta, the Vice President of the Community Foundation for Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties.

[00:30:48] The Community Foundation is also a proud member of the Loudoun Human Services Network. The Community Foundation supports our local nonprofits in many ways. As a grantee of the county's Human Services Grant Program, we directly improve the quality of human services by providing training and education to more than 300 nonprofit professionals annually.

[00:31:08] As we have been engaged and convened our local nonprofit leaders in recent months, we continue to be concerned about their reports of rising levels of need in the aftermath of the pandemic, especially as it relates to housing and mental health. With those concerns in mind, I'm speaking today to express my support specifically for three important items in the proposed FY24 budget.

[00:31:28] First, we support the proposed allocation of \$5.2 million for the nonprofit human services discretionary grants and core services contracts. These grants and contracts provide critical funding to support the safety net of services provided by nonprofits for Loudoun's most vulnerable residents.

[00:31:45] Second, we support funding for the development of the mental health crisis receiving and stabilization center and the capital improvement plan. More resources for individuals experiencing mental health crises continues to be a critical need in our community. And finally, we support all of the work that you have as a board have done to take leadership to meet our county's unmet housing needs.

[00:32:06] And my colleague, Amy Owen, will be here later tonight to tell you more about our position on that. Thank you. Okay, thank you. And again, I'm going to double check. No other folks have signed up to speak for the 3 o'clock. I see some other folks sitting in the audience that did not speak. Anybody else want to speak for 3 o'clock?

[00:32:24] No? Okay. All right. Going once, going twice, sold. The 3 o'clock public speaking for the budget is completed. We'll see everybody back at 6. Thank you.



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