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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Business Meeting, Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Date Tuesday, September 5, 2023
Place Board Room, First Floor, Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE, Leesburg, Virginia
Length 5h 31m (video)

- Official meeting video (county, Granicus): <https://loudoun.granicus.com/player/clip/7393>
- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7393

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[00:04:00] go let's rock and roll folk i'm gonna start mr sayings mr kirschner we're gonna start okay well good evening supervisors good evening staff good evening loudon i'd like to call to order the september 5th 2023 loudon county board of supervisors business meeting this room has a hearing loop if you need a hearing assistance please switch your hearing aid to the telecall mode if you need a headset we have those available as well um you have to see the clerk to request

[00:04:35] one. Pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3703-3 and the Board of Supervisors Rules of Order, Supervisor Tony Buffington has requested to participate in this meeting via electronic communications. A physical form of the Board of Supervisors is present in the boardroom and the board has made arrangements for the voice of Supervisor Buffington to be heard by all persons in the boardroom.

[00:05:00] Supervisor Buffington made this request within the required timeframe and the county attorney determined that Supervisor Buffington's request met the qualifications to participate remotely. The board will record in its minutes that Supervisor Buffington participated remotely. He is home with a medical condition. Mr. Buffington, can you hear me?

[00:05:21] I can, Madam Chair. Thank you. Very good. We're going to miss you tonight, Tony. We'll miss you tonight. Tonight, I will So ask Supervisor Kirshner, will you lead us in a prayer or words of encouragement in the President of Allegiance?

[00:05:38] I will. Welcome back, everybody. Let's bow our heads. God, we just thank you for the opportunity to live in a representative democracy and that the people of this county and this nation get to choose who their leaders are. I pray that you will give each one of us up your wisdom as we make decisions.

[00:05:57] We thank you for all the folks that helped put this information packet together each and every time that we meet. May we go through it and make wise decisions to give those folks of law and the best quality of life they can have. We pray this in your name. Amen. I pledge allegiance flag to the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:06:29] Before I read the consent agenda, may I say that we have a new boardroom. Since we've been on our August break, the pews have changed, or I guess the benches. Yes, the benches.

[00:06:45] The benches. Yeah, you can tell I grew up in church. The benches have changed, the carpet has changed, and it looks amazing in here. So to everyone who worked really so tirelessly to get this room ready in just one month, to Mr. Brown and your entire staff, thank you very much.

[00:07:03] It looks fantastic. We know how hard it is to do all this in one month, but you did, and we appreciate it. So thank you very much. All right. The proposed consent agenda is as follows. Item R1, proclamation to recognize National Recovery Month.

[00:07:18] That's for approval only. Item R2, proclamation to recognize September 10th through 16th, 2023 as National Suicide Prevention Week. That's also for approval. Item R3, proclamation to recognize September 2023 as Workforce Development Month in Loudoun County.

[00:07:36] That's for approval only. Colleagues, when I go to present those proclamations to different organizations, I will let you know, and if anyone wants to join me, you can. If more than one person wants to join me, we can put it on the consent agenda. Item 1A, Appointments and Confirmations.

[00:07:53] Item 2, the AAR Report for September 5, 2023. Item 3, Loudoun County Transit Title VI Equity Analysis Service Changes Resulting from Closure of the Perseville Park and Ride Lot. That's an interesting item. You guys should go read that.

[00:08:09] Item 4, Proposed Memories to Chapter 1066 of the Codified Ordinance of Loudoun County On-Site Sewage Treatment System. Item five, board member initiative to enhance pedestrian safety on Gloucester Parkway and Lower Ridge Drive and Deerview Drive.

[00:08:26] Ms. Glass, is that your BMI or is that Mr. Turner's? Ms. Glass? That's both of you. That's both. Okay. Item six, board member initiative, installation of marked crosswalks at intersection of Ashburn Road and Marriott Way and Matchpoint Way.

[00:08:44] Is that one yours? The former is Mr. Turner's? Mr. Turner's. Okay, that's what I thought. Item 8A, FY2023, Affordable Dwelling Unit Advisory Board Annual Report. Item 8B, FY2023, Housing Advisory Board Annual Report.

[00:09:04] Item 8C, FY2024, Environment and Energy Work Session. Item 8D, FY2023, Environmental Commission Annual Report. And item 8E, Permanent Pump and Hall Request KCK Gideon LFC Sheets Gas Station.

[00:09:19] Is there a motion to approve? Motion to approve by Ms. Brixman. Is there a second? Seconded by Mr. Sainz. Is there discussion on the motion? Mr. Buffington, are you there? Do you have any discussion? No discussion. Thank you.

[00:09:37] Thank you. Ms. Glass? Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to thank my colleagues for supporting Supervisor Turner and my initiative to study for a crosswalk on Ashburn Road and Mary Oak Way. A crosswalk at this location would help link together two sides of the Quartz and Ridges community that are split by ashburn road i look forward to seeing the results of the study when the transportation staff returns with their review thank you mr james thank you madam chair i'm being told i need to make a motion here regarding our district representative on the advisory

[00:10:12] commission on youth i move to remove ashley currington from the sterling sterling election district seat on the advisory commission on youth um you're making a motion to remove somebody yes all right i'll this is your this is your representative okay then i'll second your motion uh discussion on the motion wait wait i'm confused i'm a little confused too mr sayings actually we're on the consent yeah so is that part of the consent agenda yeah it's part of the nominations oh you just didn't add it oh okay all right but you're removing somebody do you want to wait to nominations before we do that maybe that may be the most more appropriate place to do that i'll defer to staff staff told me this is what i need to do you want me to do it you want

[00:10:51] going to do it now? So, Chair Randall, you're on the consent agenda, so to talk about nominations or boards and committees would be under item one. But, okay, okay, all right, would you like, okay, so motion to remain second, would you like to discuss anything? No discussion? Anyone in the discussion? All the people who say aye? Anyone opposed? Okay, that motion will pass 7-0-2, and that was 7-1-1, and that person is removed, because Mr. Sainz is perfect. Yes, I know I said

[00:11:29] seven one one yeah I did it said seven one one yeah eight eight no no no it's seven one one but thank you all for all your help 707011 but it's one one we have one person who is not here and thank you thank you very much okay thank you I'm saying this one more time y'all gonna help me you gotta actually help me confusing help is not help but thank you anyway people all right um are there

[00:12:03] any additions and deletions to the agenda? Seeing none, I have quite a bit to report on my chair's comments, because quite a bit has happened over the past month. So I'll try to get through them as quickly as possible. I attended the Virginia Association of Counties Conference. Obviously, as a group of local elected officials, one of the main discussions was the lack of the budget that has been passed by the General Assembly. They passed a skinny budget, and we're hearing that the budget is coming, but we don't have any details on the budget, and none of the budget

[00:12:41] numbers can be rolled into any of our finances yet, because we have no idea what it is. We did learn that the state does, in fact, have a surplus of about \$5.2 billion. The fact is that we learned the fact that only one year of our biennial budget has accounted for the education shortfall for the mistake that was made by the Virginia Department of Education.

[00:13:07] Only one year of that has been made up and we are going to just wait and see if the other year is made up when the budget comes out. There's a lot of discussion about the new JLARC study. JLARC is the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee report. That was widely discussed because of the J-LARP report, which is a bipartisan report, not done by people who are in office, said that Virginia, not any

particular county board, but the Commonwealth of Virginia, underfunds our education system by about \$1,900 per student.

[00:13:46] In Virginia, our student funding falls below West Virginia, falls below Kentucky, falls well below Maryland, and falls below all the states that touch Virginia. The JLARC study can be found at jlark.virginia.gov.

[00:14:03] I do have, I think, the executive summary if somebody wants to see it, but I would encourage everyone to go take a look at the JLARC study. It is pretty telling. Of course, I sit on the Health and Human Resources Steering Committee.

[00:14:19] Nelson Smith from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services gave a briefing on Governor Yunkin's Right Help Right Now plan that concerns behavioral and mental health in Virginia. A long discussion was had about the 911 call center, how to use it, when to use it, and the same-day crisis center.

[00:14:39] Also discussed, and I could not agree with this more, is the need to have a crisis receiving center. Our law enforcement, who are CRT trained, are not mental health therapists, and having them sit with a person in the emergency room for hours and hours, sometimes even days, is neither a good idea for their use of time, nor is it a good thing for the people who are in the behavioral health crisis.

[00:15:03] So we had a discussion about that. Other discussions at VACO were the shortage of workforce in Virginia and the shortage of attainable housing in Virginia and how those two issues are not just Virginia issues, they're very much nationwide issues. I participated in the Northern Virginia Elected Leaders Summit, and many of the same issues were discussed, as was discussed at VACO, with one addition, and that one addition would be the metro funding shortfall that I'm sure we've all talked about quite a bit.

[00:15:34] What else? NVTa will be moving to a new location likely. I'm sorry, NVTa is the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority sometime between now and March. My colleagues, Supervisor Sains and Glass, who are in NBRC, are aware of the leasing agreement concerns between these two organizations.

[00:15:52] It's likely that NVTa will move out of the building and not just out of that space. I will keep you informed as to what's going on there. Colleagues, I do want to talk just a little bit about the Zora meetings that are going to start on Thursday because I have sent you all emails about this a couple of times, but I also want to say it to you so that I know that you know that you have it.

[00:16:15] So a couple of things. It is vitally important, colleagues, that we read our package before we come up on this day as for the Zora meeting. Listen, it is dense, intense reading, but please, please read your package. You will not be allowed to bring a motion to the dais that you want to have considered that night.

[00:16:34] Please send all motions at least 48 hours in advance, if not more. The staff cannot evaluate them, the public cannot see them, and your colleagues cannot ingest them if you bring them to the dais that night. So that will not be allowed. I will be meeting with stakeholders every Friday after the Thursday meeting to talk about what just happened in the meetings, at the ZOR meetings, and what might be happening next week.

[00:16:59] I have invited the T-Lug chair to join me. He can join me or not if he does not want to. If anyone else, the T-Lug chair doesn't want to, anybody else wants to join me, let me know that. The stakeholder slots, there are six stakeholder slots that will be speaking during the ZOR meetings.

[00:17:16] They are, and this is one slot, chamber data center business slot is one slot, Residential development is one slot, commercial development is one slot, tourism and hospitality is one slot, heritage and preservation is one slot, and animal and wildlife is one slot.

[00:17:32] I was asked earlier this week why not somebody from, like, the ag community or farming. I want to remind everybody that the ZOR we're doing now is eastern Loudoun County. So when the board for next term gets to the CPAM on the ZOR that is western Loudoun County, It is my hope that, and hopefully I'll be here, so we know that we will have those industries speaking at that time.

[00:18:02] So that's why that's not there now. Again, stakeholders from those six organizations, from those six industry areas, can change meeting to meeting to meeting as long as they tell us who's coming four days in advance.

[00:18:18] And so I've already given you all in your e-mails who is coming for the Thursday's meeting, but they can change if they want to. Please send all questions to staff well before the meetings because it will be impossible to do that at the time that we're sitting here.

[00:18:39] It's just too intense. All the votes taken during Zora meetings are straw poll votes. We will take the ratifying vote at the end of the entire process. I'm doing it that way Because if we take a vote that's a straw poll vote, if you get different information, if the staff gets different information, if we learn something different, if you just want to go gather more information, your vote has not been ratified to the end.

[00:19:03] Having said that, please do straw poll votes with intention. In other words, please don't do a lot of straw poll votes that you do not intend to support when we get to the end of the process. But if you do have a straw poll vote that you want to change before we get to that last meeting when we ratify all the votes, that's fine.

[00:19:20] Let's just try to vote with intention overall. And please remember that I would be moving the board to a committee as a whole for Zora meetings. I would probably do a committee as a whole for an hour to have those discussions. I would ask that not one person takes up that whole hour.

[00:19:37] So the flow of these meetings will be this. The staff will present. We can ask questions for the 2.5, I'm sorry, three minutes that we ask questions normally. The stakeholders will come up and speak. If we have a closed session, we'll go to closed session at that time.

[00:19:56] After we come back from closed session, we'll go to the committee as a whole, and then we will make any straw poll votes we want to make at that time. I imagine there are probably going to be at least four-hour meetings for every Zora meeting. They will be longer if you don't read your package, and if you don't send questions and stuff, they're going to be longer.

[00:20:15] So that's the order of the Zora meetings that we're going to have. So that's how that's going to look. We're going to get through it. I know there's a lot going on. I know it's going to be hard. I know this is not particularly fun, but we've got to get the zoning ordinance done to the best of our ability.

[00:20:32] So any other questions you have, you can send me an email, send Mr. Kroboth an email, send Mr. Hemstreet an email, send Mr. Rogers an email, send Ms. McClellan an email. Mr. Hemstreet. I'm sorry, Chair Randall. On the consent agenda, the staff and I did not follow everything that was said in terms of the motions and what the vote was.

[00:20:55] So we had two motions, but only one vote. And so we're not clear on what exactly happened. No, we had two votes. We had the vote on Mr. Sains, and we had the vote on the whole thing. We only caught one vote. We did. So we're just clarifying.

[00:21:10] Which one do you not have? We only have one vote, and we're not sure what that vote was. So now they have them both. Remember, we did the 7-0-1-1-7-1 when we did that one for a while. Mr. Sains' vote was before Mr. Turner arrived, and that was everyone voted for that before Mr. Turner arrived.

[00:21:32] And then the last vote was Mr. Turner was here, and so he had just arrived, so he abstained, and then we have. So under the vice chair's motion, then, that would be 7-0-0-8-0-0-1-1? No, it would have been 801, because everyone was here but Mr. Turner for the vice chair.

[00:21:54] You're forgetting Mr. Buffington is on the... So what was the 1-1 then? That was the second one. That was because Mr.... Oh, you're right, because Mr. Turner abstained. That should have been... 8-0-0. Yes, we did. Okay. For the consent agenda, all in favor say aye.

[00:22:12] Any opposed? Aye. Got that? So that's 9-0. 9-0. Thank you. All right. Okay. All right. My voice for a cause today is Coaching Boys Into Men with Colleen McDonnell, Kathleen Parker, Kyle Hoffman, and Leanne Greenberg and Lonnie Wiley.

[00:22:38] Please come. So Coaching Boys Into Men, a primary prevention program from Futures Without Violence. Coaching Boys Into Men is the only evidence-based prevention program that trains and motivates high school coaches to teach their young male athletes healthy relationship skills and that violence never equals strength. Man, I love that. I love that. Will you introduce yourself, please?

[00:23:08] Hi, everyone. My name is Dr. Colleen McDaniel. I'm the violence prevention manager at Laws, domestic violence, and sexual assault services. So, Dr. McDaniel, is this a subset of laws of the Loud and Abused Women's Shelter? Is this a subset of laws? Is it separate?

[00:23:25] Yes, ma'am. Yeah, it's a part of our violence prevention program. That's so wonderful. What are some instances that led you to creating this program? Yeah, absolutely. So, laws prevention program is really focused on primary prevention, which means stopping violence before it happens and stopping violence at its source.

[00:23:46] And in our experience in working with youth in the schools and throughout the county, we've really learned that the best way to talk to youth about healthy relationships and body safety is through those naturally occurring mentorship relationships that exist in their lives.

[00:24:04] So although I love to talk to the youth, we know that, you know, hearing a one-hour presentation from me is not what is going to get them to change and think about these issues more in depth. Youth, especially young men who are the highest group at risk of committing violence sort of across the board, they're going to be most comfortable hearing from the mentors that are influential in their lives.

[00:24:33] So those are often athletics coaches and school curriculum supervisors. So Coaching Boys Into Men is all about that. It empowers coaches and supervisors to talk to youth, in particular young men, about how to have healthy relationships and engage in life.

[00:24:50] So even if a person is not in a sport and doesn't have what we kind of think is a coach from a definition, If they have a counselor or therapist or somebody else, that would apply as well.

[00:25:06] Absolutely, yeah. And especially, you know, young men's groups, any group of youth that's supervised, yes. Wonderful. What are some services that you have been able to provide already? Yeah, so we're actually currently in the recruiting process for the program.

[00:25:23] This is our year one launch. and so already we've recruited four male adult coaches that will be getting trained in the program and so we're really looking for more so that we can launch the program this fall. We're hoping to have at least 10 coaches or supervisors involved in the program and so all that will be required is to participate in a 90-minute training certification session with LAWS staff

[00:25:53] And then to provide curriculum-led discussions throughout the season, whether it's throughout the school year or throughout an athletic season. And then LAWS staff will be present to provide coaching for the coaches.

[00:26:10] So that means we can co-facilitate if needed. We'll check in. We can answer any difficult questions. And, of course, provide support because it is a difficult topic. Dr. McDaniel, are you all using the Seeking Safety curriculum? What's the curriculum? Because it's evidence-based, correct? It is evidence-based. Do you know the curriculum you're using?

[00:26:27] So Coaching Boys Into Men is its own curriculum. It's its own curriculum. Does it fall under the seek and safety curriculum? It is separate from that. It's separate. This was developed by Futures Without Violence. I'd love to see that. Yeah, I'm happy to see that. I'd love to see that. And then my last question is, if we have men out there who are watching, who are hearing, how can they get involved?

[00:26:47] Absolutely. Thank you for that question. So people can go to the law's website. So lcsj.org slash prevention, and they can get in contact with us just by sending an email, and we'll jump on a phone call and talk about getting involved in the certification. That is absolutely amazing.

[00:27:03] Thank you. Thank you so much, and thank you to everyone who is doing this work already, who's going to be doing this work. My chief of staff told me he would like to get involved, and he's already getting involved with this. I'm so proud of him. So thank you for doing this. We really appreciate it. Thank you all.

[00:27:18] Thank you for your time. Mr. Hempstreet, do you have any statements today, sir? Thank you, Chair Randall. I have three statements or comments for today. The first is I would like to officially welcome board members back from the August recess.

[00:27:35] Since your last business meeting, the county has received some major awards, and there are four of these. The Virginia Association of Counties has recognized three Loudoun County programs for excellence and innovation with 2023 Achievement Awards. The programs are the Loudoun County Public Library Fights Food Insecurity, the Loudoun Innovation Challenge, and the Sidewalk and Trails Program with an Equity Lens Framework.

[00:28:01] Second, Loudoun earned the 2023 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Procurement Institute. The county also received an Excellence in Financial Reporting Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the fiscal year 2022 annual comprehensive financial report.

[00:28:17] Two Loudoun County facilities have received national recognition for their design. The Lockett's Fire and Rescue Station has been recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council with a Judge's Choice Award. And the Engineering News Record Magazine will feature the Hal and Bernie Hanson Regional Park in its October issue as part of its Best Project Awards.

[00:28:38] And finally, Loudoun County's Spotted Lanternfly Public Information Campaign was the overall winner, receiving the Best in Show Award in the National Association of County Information Officers 2023 Awards of Excellence. Loudoun was a top winner among 192 submissions.

[00:28:56] Details about the county's award-winning programs can be found at [loudoun.gov slash awards](https://loudoun.gov/awards). Second, a major event that occurred during the August recess was the much-anticipated launch of Landmark, our new online land management system. Landmark offers a comprehensive online portal for accessing, managing, and maintaining Loudoun County's land-related information.

[00:29:18] Details about the new system, including a link to sign up for updates, is online at [loudon.gov slash landmark](https://loudon.gov/landmark). And then finally, all of this month, which is National Preparedness Month, Loudoun County will be encouraging our residents and businesses to plan for emergencies. This year's theme is Take Control in 1, 2, 3, and focuses on preparing older adults for disasters.

[00:29:40] Look for posts about preparedness on our social media platforms throughout September, and check out [loudon.gov slash ready](https://loudon.gov/ready) for more information on how to prepare for emergencies. And those are my comments this evening, Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Hemstreet. So I believe I saw one of those lanternflies. And I know that there are some people who believe everything is God's creature and you should never kill it. That is not my belief. I had no trouble killing that thing.

[00:30:07] And from what I understand, that is the goal for the lanternflies, right? It's like literally like some campaign to squish them. Am I not right about that? Well, it's definitely to control they're spread they are an invasive species and they do uh adversely impact uh native agriculture so we should so people who see them the goal is to kill them yeah i think it's actually it's actually something like that it's actually it was actually it was i saw it in in the in the parking garage upstairs yeah so if i will follow up with staff yeah yeah it's in the parking

[00:30:40] thank you thank you very much okay um supervisors we have we have only one um in a significant incident report and only one item that will not take us to our six o'clock time when we start our public input we have a lot of public input for anyone who's here right now for public input i apologize we don't start public input until six o'clock we do that because we want everybody to get home from work to get here.

[00:31:11] And so what we're going to do is we're going to take this item, and then we're going to supervisors, we're going to go into closed session, and we're going to try maybe to get as much of the closed session done as possible. So when we come back out of closed session, we will go right into public input, and then we will do board comments, and then we will do the one item that we have.

[00:31:30] And if we have to go back in the closed session, we will, but we may not have to go back in the closed session, although I think we will. We may not have to go back in the closed session. So that's what we're going to do right now. So, again, if somebody's here for public comments already, I do apologize. We don't do those quite yet.

[00:31:46] So if you want to take a break, go grab some food and come back, you can. If you want to just stay here with us, you can. Either way, it's fine with us. So can I please have the fire chief and anybody here for that item to come down?

[00:32:03] Supervisors, if you look in your item, this is page 34 in your package. significant incident report. The fire item starts on page 34 of 63. Good evening. Well, good evening and welcome back. Thank you. Like the new look in here. Like it? Like the new digs? Looks good.

[00:32:26] Well, welcome. Good evening, Chair Randall and members of the board. Tonight, as we present our significant incident report, I'm joined by Assistant Chief Travis Pro and Assistant Chief James Williams. So, this is the quarter four. So, Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System responded to a total of 35,766 incidents in last fiscal year 2023, which was between July 1st, 22 and June 30th of 23, of which 27,024 were EMS incidents and 8,742 were fire incidents.

[00:32:58] This year's call total is up by 2,066 incidents from the last fiscal year, and I can tell you we have seen an increase so far in this fiscal year as well. The charts in your board item display a breakdown of the various types of incidents we responded to. I'll be brief in my presentation as I know all of you had time to read the quarterly report, but a couple of significant fires occurred during this period to include some familiar causes. I know you've heard that before. Three fires were caused by improperly discarded smoking materials, a common cause, causing over \$2.5 million in damage to residential homes. One of these fires occurred to a four-story residential

[00:33:36] apartment building, of which damage was limited to \$20,500 due to an activation of the sprinkler system, which limited fire to the exterior balcony. The sprinkler save, in addition to the other residential sprinkler system activation in a three-story apartment building, where a fire in a clothes dryer was limited to \$15,000 in damage. These two sprinkler activations represent over \$24 million in property saved due to the presence of an activation of a sprinkler system. Other fires included electrical failures of a home exterior HVAC electrical disconnect. Two significant fires

[00:34:15] remain under investigation. One included a single-family home in Chantilly that caused over \$520,000 in damage and is classified as incendiary due to the presence found of flammable liquids. The second fire is the June 25th fire at Leesburg Airport, which involved a hangar fire to include several planes, vehicles, and contents. The initial damage estimate to that fire is over seven million dollars. Due to the extent of damage both in the both of those fires several components were collected and are being analyzed by the ATF and subject matter experts and the fire investigators continue in the investigation of both of those causes. Loudoun County Fire and Rescue

[00:34:55] continued to graduate firefighters and EMTs with the graduation of 21 new recruits and recruit class 43 and we maintain a recruit class 44 which is in session right now. We continued our professional development opportunities with 21 students graduating from hazardous materials training school technician school which is a partnership between prince william county and em water has been gone for ongoing for several years and we also graduated 11 from our lcfr office of development school during the

last quarter you as a board were busy recognizing through proclamations our Loudoun County Combined Volunteer System and our first responders

[00:35:31] national volunteer week our public safety communicator center personnel and our emergency medical personnel as part of EMS Week. During the last period in April, we kicked off our annual smoke alarm community outreach program, visiting homes in Loudoun each month to check for working smoke alarms, installing new ones, replacing batteries if needed, and offering to conduct home fire safety surveys. Our mission remains simple, to ensure every home in Loudoun County has a working smoke alarm in them on all levels, outside the door of any sleeping area, and inside every bedroom. During the month of May, the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System

[00:36:08] leadership, shifted our focus away, shifted our focus to work with their assigned staff to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month, exploring the effects of fire and rescue incidents that have on our first responders and what resources we have in place when they are in need. In May of this year, we added firefighter Jeffrey Rizzo to our Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System Memorial, our training academy, and in June, we participated in the annual Fallen Firefighters and EMS Memorial Service, again recognizing the sacrifice made by Firefighter Rizzo due to his line of duty death.

[00:36:42] Finally, in May, many of you joined us as we broke ground on the replacement of the Lovettsville Fire Station, which provide our career and volunteer members with a new safe and efficient fire and rescue facility. In closing, once again, thank you for all of your continued support of your fire and rescue system here in Loudoun County, and I and both chiefs remain available to answer any of your questions.

[00:37:02] Thank you. Thank you, Chief Johnson. And as always, we are so appreciative of the fire and rescue service and volunteers in Korea and all you all do to keep us safe. Supervisors, if you have questions, would you turn your lights on, please? Mr. Turner.

[00:37:20] Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief, what's the nature of the dryer fires? Because I have found myself now not running my dryer or my laundry washer, for that matter, when I leave the apartment, when I leave the condo. Is it excess lint buildup inside the dryer, or is there something integral to the dryer that's causing these fires?

[00:37:38] Most of the causes we see are due to not cleaning your dryer excess lint. So just like anything else, you need to clean your lint trap. Those exhaust piping needs to be cleaned. It's not a one-time thing. You just install it and let it go. Most of the fires we see are with excess lint.

[00:37:55] And we would advise never to run your dryer gas or electric when you're not home. You know, always, just like anything that has heat build up, gas or electric, we advise you to do it when you're home. Okay. The other one is I tend to now unplug all of my charging devices, my computer and my phones when I'm not there.

[00:38:13] And I'm thinking about buying some home fire extinguishers. Are there certain types of fire extinguishers that are more effective against lithium battery fires? We would always advise on the, it's called a universal class ABC extinguisher, 10 pound, 20 pound, depending on the size. But those are pretty universal.

[00:38:30] Obviously, everybody knows we don't put water on lithium batteries or on grease or anything like that. So those ABC multipurpose extinguishers work best. And I was hesitant whether I was going to

bring this up or not because I hate to scare you all. That's a great way to start, Chief Johnson.

[00:38:46] It gets our attention. We ran a fire just recently, not in the last quarter I'm reporting on. So I reported this happened a couple weeks ago, where we ran a single-family home, a garage fire, which took a lot of hazards in the garages, right? We all know that, gas and things of that nature. But this is our favorite subject lately, lithium batteries.

[00:39:03] This person did nothing wrong. This person had a 60-volt, which is a larger lithium battery, probably a size that you see on a lawnmower or something like that, on a shelf, and it caught fire. They weren't charging it. They were not doing anything wrong with it. It was on a shelf. This family, from what I'm told by Chief Kyger, was aware of the hazards of lithium batteries and did everything right.

[00:39:24] And for some reason, this battery caught fire, and we have sent it off to the insurance company. We'll now take possession and send that off to a lab to see if we can determine what the cause of that fire was. Two things we could have done better, the occupant, call 911 right away. We often see people try and do something with the fire right before they call 911, whether it's put it out or grab a hose line or do whatever, call 911 first, is our worst recommendation, and make sure the door between your garage and your living quarters is closed tightly.

[00:39:55] Because if it's not, the fire is going to enter your home. That door will provide tremendous amount of protection between the garage. But scary stuff, even for myself, right, who've been doing this for a long time, when a lithium battery just starts combusting and starts on fire, it's very scary. We're seeing more of that here in the region. Of course, we speak about it almost every time I come before you, but often we see some kind of cause for that, and this one was simply sitting on a shelf. That's petrifying. Thank you. Ms. Umstead. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00:40:26] Chief, how much overlap is there between EMS incidents that get reported and fire incidents? Do you often have an EMS component to a fire incident or vice versa? Thank you, Supervisor Armstead. We've certainly transported patients from fire incidents, but I wouldn't classify it as a high number. Obviously the fire event is very emotional, you know, for the family involved. So

[00:40:59] oftentimes I would say more anxiety related where they're just really upset and, you know, we help remove them from the immediacy of the scene and calm them down. Sometimes it requires transport, you know, the significant incident on Brown's Creek, which was a very large home.

[00:41:21] The children were home away from their parents, and it required the parents coming to really help them. But obviously, you know, we've had fatal fires in the county, and we've transported, you know, burn patients, but we don't see a tremendous number of injuries related to fires, which is good. I think a lot of people are getting out early notification through working smoke alarms and oftentimes we have people waking up in the middle of the night hearing the fire either at their house or at their neighbor's house and helping to knock on doors. So I hope

[00:41:57] that answered your question. Yes, thank you. Subvisor Kirshner. Thank you, Madam Chair and Chief Johnson. Thank you for everything that you've done. I just want to thank you personally for a great groundbreaking at the Levittsville Fire Station 612. I think that's correct. And for all those who came out, the chair included, and the mayor and some other folks there in Lovett'sville, really great day, perfect weather. And where are we in terms of when that is operational? When we're on track. That's a good thing.

I know I did get the briefing from Chief Cooper that we're on track. The walls are starting to go up. Chief Pro, do you remember the exact

[00:42:34] date of when that becomes operational? I don't have it in front of me. Okay, that's fine. I don't need that now just 2025 okay okay great so no there's been no delays no okay good uh we have had decent weather um no no delays in that one so far and uh the walls are going up so excellent well thank you for that the other the other question i had was during your comments you had mentioned that obviously we're having more incidences this year and even more this this last quarters um than past quarters and past years is that largely i want to make sure i heard that right and is that because we're kind of coming out of covid people are becoming more active going

[00:43:08] around? Or is there any rhyme or reason why that is occurring? We have not put a finger on any rhyme or reason. Again, 2066 in the scheme of 35,000 incidents is not devastating. But our incidents seem to be going up each year. Not astronomical. An aging population, Loudoun County is a very young county, aging population will certainly breed more calls. And we see that in a lot of our jurisdictions that surround us that they run a significant amount of more EMS incidents and age is a factor. As Loudon continues to age, if it truly is, our age is going up, we will see

[00:43:47] more EMS incidents as all of us can. It's pretty obvious why, you know, older folks need more EMS service sometimes. So I don't have any specific reason. I'll talk ahead. All right. Thank you. Appreciate it. Mr. Letourneau. Thank you. Two questions about smoke alarms or fire detectors.

[00:44:04] So after one of those recent fires, and it may even be the one you're just referring to, the homeowner actually went on several community message boards and told residents they should get a smoke detector and make sure it's installed in their garage. I did a little online research on that and found that that is not typically a best practice.

[00:44:24] So that's first question. Second question related to smoke alarms is, do you need to replace a working smoke alarm after 10 years, no matter what? So if you can answer those two. Yes. NFPA asked that you replace a working smoke alarm after 10 years.

[00:44:43] That's the shelf life of a smoke alarm in general, right? I mean, a lot of our homes were built more than 10 years ago, and I just wonder how many of us have thought to actually replace the smoke alarm if it still seems like it's working. I do mine every 10 years. And the hard part now is, you know, the new smoke alarms have 10-year lithium batteries.

[00:45:02] So where we give the message to change your batteries every year, not we ask you to check your batteries every year check your smoke alarm because if you have a new the new type they're good for 10 years how many else remember in 10 years that oh yeah i'm at next year 10 years i've got to replace that so i know for my instance i usually write on the smoke back of the smoke alarm when i installed it or put a new battery in so it will help me look and see back to your point about the garage smoke alarms are not required by code in garages and family homes. Not required by code, but are they a good idea or not? I've seen some articles saying they're not because they're different reasons, but that's what I wanted your opinion. I think it's, I have

[00:45:41] one in mind and it's a battery operated one. What else do you have, right? I mean, yes, there are things that could potentially set it off. So is the only risk really just false positives because it gets hotter or something like that? Any of us, if our smoke alarm was going off in our garage, we'd open the door.

There's no, check it out, no problem and things of that nature. You know, You have the instance of bugs getting in there and things of that nature in your garage, which is probably why they're mentioning that.

[00:46:08] I think having one is better than nothing at all. There's a lot of hazards in the garage. We spoke about lithium batteries. We spoke about electric vehicles. We spoke about anything electric, radio-controlled cars, and now all things that contain lithium batteries, a lot of them are stored in the garages. My recommendation is would be to put one in there.

[00:46:26] Well, if you have one, that's good enough for me. All right, thank you. Mr. Sainz. Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, your report noted, and of course it's been well documented in the newspapers, a lot of recent fires have been started due to not putting out cigarettes appropriately.

[00:46:44] So is it safe to say, because it's just kind of hard to imagine somebody not putting their cigarette out, and then that sparks a fire that burns down a house a darn year. So is it safe to say that the materials that home builders are using are just extremely flammable, or what's the cause or the issue?

[00:47:02] That is true. more flammable materials. Almost every one of the fires when we speak about improperly discarded cigarettes means that they're putting the cigarette out in some type of planting material, some type of combustible planting material. People think that a plant and the dirt that's in a plant doesn't burn. It's combustible. It will burn. It will contain paper. It contains mulch. It contains all of those things. It's not true dirt like topsoil or something like that. So it contains planting material which is combustible so i would venture to say almost every fire we see that but when i say that cause of improperly discarded smoking materials it's they're putting

[00:47:41] a cigarette or smoking device out in a planter on their a lot of times on their deck their balcony wherever wow so so in other words people please do not put your cigarettes out in your mulch your planters especially the planters are next to your home put them out in the ashtray or put it in a water bottle and safely do it properly and use a non-combustible um ashtray or you know to put your cigarette butts or whatever smoking material you have in a non-combustible container right something that's not going to catch fire very good but thank you for your service to everybody thank you chiefs thank you so there's so much i've learned just listening to you all um i i

[00:48:17] and maybe i should i'm sorry mr baffington do you have questions no questions madam chair i just want to thank uh chief johnson and the combined fire and rescue system for all of the work that they do to keep us safe on a day-to-day basis 24-7.

[00:48:34] Thank you, sir. Thank you. So there's so much I've learned just by listening to you all. You know, maybe I should have known that fire extinguishers expire. I didn't until you guys said something to me. I didn't. There, you know, the closing your door, a lot of people, especially, you know, when I was a young mother, I never closed my baby's bedroom door because I was afraid I wouldn't hear them, even though I had the thing right by my bed.

[00:49:00] I want to hear my baby if he cried or something, you know. There's so much I've learned. Could it be helpful if you guys, you know, put kind of like what should you know? And so we can all put it in our newsletters and share it out. There's just, every time you come in here, I learn something different.

[00:49:17] I feel like I'm pretty, I try to stay pretty caught up on stuff. So closing the door, changing your fire extinguisher, you know, don't throw water on a lithium battery, right? I mean, because you see fire, you put water on it. That's how that works in most people's heads, right?

[00:49:34] And so if you do something like that, there would be maybe, and we can all just put out at the same time kind of like just a blast from every place in the county, all of our Facebook pages, all of our newsletters, all at once, because there is so much that you all have taught me that I didn't, and I feel I'm a pretty careful person.

[00:49:53] My only question is, so I'm a little, the HAZMAT numbers, did they creep up a little bit, your HAZMAT significant incidents? Did they creep up a little bit this time? And are those HAZMAT numbers, which are actually on page 35, are those HAZMAT numbers that combine with Prince William County?

[00:50:12] Because I know you guys are doing something with HAZMAT in Prince William County. Are those just Loudon numbers? Just Loudon. So the Prince William County is a training part. We do our combined training. You do your training there, okay. But the numbers you have that you have listed on page 35, when it says hazmat, that could be a diesel fuel leak from a truck or something.

[00:50:31] It doesn't mean hazardous chemical per se, although diesel fuel is hazardous chemical. So it's just how we classify that incident as a hazardous materials incident. But that could be something as such as a diesel fuel leak from a truck or some other type of chemical spill. So it's a wide variety of them.

[00:50:47] It's a wide variety. I'm always, for some reason, really aware of that number because it's kind of the number that, you know, people are driving if something happens and you want people to stay away from that area and that type of thing. And we will resend you the links to, we have pages that we have sent before. We'll resend them. You get a lot of e-mails.

[00:51:02] We'll resend them on all types of hazards that you can share, put in your... Well, if you put it on one document, you know... One pager. Yeah, one pager, you know, like literally don't throw water on a lithium battery, right, that kind of thing. And then my last question about the lithium battery, and this, excuse me for my ignorance, But could it be because it's been so hot?

[00:51:21] Does that have anything to do with it? Not really. I mean, not that I know of off the top of my head. And again, the lithium battery crisis, as I'll call it, is new. We're seeing more of them. Lithium batteries are being mass produced, right? Everything we see them used in cordless drills and lawnmowers now become very popular.

[00:51:40] They're mass producing lithium batteries for everything. E-bikes and what is the quality control, I think, as we are seeing as a nation, right? As you mass produce these batteries, is the quality control being kept up and where they're being made?

[00:51:56] And that's a big concern of the fire service right now is the quality control. Forget the disposal part of it, but the quality control of where they're being made, how they're being made, that's a big question for us. Okay, well, thank you all, and please thank the entire combined system.

[00:52:13] We really do appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, Supervisors, Mr. Sains, if we have nothing else before now, how about we go on and go into closed session and see how much we can get done in the closed session? As I said, Supervisors, if we're going to come back out of closed session, we will go into public comments, and then we will do supervisor comments, and then we will do the action item.

[00:52:38] How about this? Before we go to closed session, let's go on and do nominations. If you have a nomination, go ahead and put your light on. We can do those right now and get those out the way. Mr.

Buffington, do you have any nominations? I do, Madam Chair. Okay, we're ready when you are. I nominate Larry Malone as the at-large representative on the ZOC doing ordinance committee, and I nominate Alexander Nance as the at-large representative on the Library Board of Trustees.

[00:53:07] Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Umstead? Thank you, Madam Chair. I nominate Danielle Black-Hartman to the Housing Choice Voucher Resident Advisory Board. Supervisor Glass. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00:53:23] I nominate Juliana Noriega and Samara Jackson to serve as the Youth Advisory Council representatives on the Advisory Commission of Youth. Thank you. Supervisor Turner. Thank you, Madam Chair. I nominate Kristen Langhorne to the Housing Advisory Board to fill the at-large seat, and I nominate Brandon Farrell to the Facility Standards Manual Public Review Committee to fill the at-large seat.

[00:53:47] Thank you. Ms. Umset, your light is still on. Do you have anything else? Mr. Sains. Oh, no nominations, ready to make a motion. All right, no nominations, all right. Mr. Sames would like to make a motion. I move that the Board of Supervisors recessed this public meeting and entered into closed session pursuant to Sections 2.2-3711, A8, and A29 of the Code of Virginia to consult with legal counsel pertaining to the negotiation of collective bargaining agreement where public funds are being expanded and where negotiations in open session would adversely affect the bargaining position of the county.

[00:54:21] Motion is made in second. Mr. Buzzard Glass, I do believe. Discussion on the motion. I have one discussion. Mr. Rogers, before we come back out of closed session, come back on the dais, can people take a break and then come to the dais, or is that not allowed?

[00:54:41] Generally, you don't, because you might have discussion outside of closed session. I'd recommend you come back to the dais first. Okay. We can do that. We can do that. Thank you. All right. All in favor, say aye. Any opposed? That motion will pass. Oh, I'm sorry, are we pulling Mr. Buffington in there, hanging up, pulling him?

[00:55:01] Okay, wonderful. That motion passes. Madam Chair, I just wanted to let you know I will not be participating in the close, but I'll be back when you come back. All right, that sounds good. That sounds good. Because you're voting for a closed session, but you won't participate in closed session. Gotcha. Then that motion will pass. Are you voting for a closed session, Mr. Buffington?

[00:55:19] Because you can just abstain. Whatever, Mr. Amstreet. You can abstain on the vote. Just abstain on the vote. Abstain as well. Okay, there we go. The vote will pass. Mr. Buffington will abstain. We are in closed session.

[01:15:34] Test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test.

[01:31:49] Can turn me in.

[01:47:44] Thank you. Okay, we are going to read out a closed session, and we haven't had a break yet because we can't take breaks before we read out a closed session. We will start our public comments at 6 o'clock. We will not start late when we read out a closed session, take a very quick break and come back to close, do public comments, then do board comments, and then do the item, and then we will go back in closed session when the item is finished.

[01:48:10] Mr. Sainsbury, please, we'll have a closed session. Whoa, whoa. Mr. Buckingham, are you back? Are you on the phone with us, sir? Second. Okay, all right. Yeah, I'm here, Madam Chair. Thank you. Thank you, sir. Please, we are out of closed session. I move that the closed session be adjourned, that the Board of Supervisors reconvene its public meeting, that the minutes of the public meeting should reflect that no formal action was taken in the closed session, and further move that the resolution certifying the closed session be adopted and reflected in the minutes of this public meeting.

[01:48:34] Motion is made and seconded by Mr. Laterno. Discussion on the motion. All the people say aye. With the exception, Mr. Buffington, would all of you please affirm, Mr. Laterno. Affirm. Affirmed. I affirm as well.

[01:48:51] That motion will pass with one abstention being Mr. Buffington. Okay, let's take a 10-minute break. I want you back on this day. It's at 5 till 6. We're starting closed session at, I mean, public comments at 6 o'clock.

[01:49:06] You got me? Mr. Buffington, you're there? Mr. Buffington?

[02:00:50] I am, Madam Chair. Thank you. Wonderful. Okay, everyone. I'm going to call us back in the order. I'm going to read, because we haven't been in the room in a while, and so I just want to go over some of the rules of the public speaking in the room.

[02:01:06] I should say that the rules I'm about to read of public speaking, these are in our rules of order. The board supervisors have voted on these rules of order as a body, So these are not my rules, these are the board's rules to keep the quorum in the room.

[02:01:22] So everyone will have two and a half minutes to speak, no matter how many speakers we have, I never change that to less or more, it's always two and a half minutes to speak. Please direct all comments to the dais, and if possible, to and through me, for a couple of reasons.

[02:01:38] One, that's actually in our rules of order, but two, also, when you turn around and look toward the group, you can't be heard. You're off mic and you can't be heard. and so direct all comments directly to us, please. We do not allow clapping or jeering in this room because we don't, and that's also in our rules of order, so you can express your appreciation by jazz hands or something, but clapping or jeering, I will stop the meeting, and if I have to recess the board, I will recess the board, and we don't wanna do all that, so if you could refrain from that, I'd really appreciate it.

[02:02:15] I will call names as they appear on the list. If we still have, so the way our list works is this, we have 90 minutes for public comments, and 90 minutes, if everyone speaks for two minutes, two and a half minutes, that's about 36 people.

[02:02:31] If I get to the end of 90 minutes or toward the end and the list is finished, the list is finished, but if everyone doesn't speak for two and a half minutes or somebody doesn't show up, then I would just go to the waiting list. We have a wait list of, I think, 16 people to speak.

[02:02:47] And so when I get to the end of the 36 people, I'll just start calling people off the wait list in the order of which they came in. And I will also call your names about three people in advance so that you know that you are coming up next so you can get ready to go. You can come to either podium, and you will start when your timer starts on either podium.

[02:03:07] We have one minute, but I'm going to go on right now and hope that everyone might be in the room. And so, no, actually, we're right at 6 o'clock. Here we go. So, I'll call your names in advance. Our first speaker is Ashley Routh, followed by Kevin Cox, followed by Lynn Davis.

[02:03:32] Good evening. Good evening. Good evening, Madam Chair and Supervisors. My name is Ashley Routh, and I moved to Loudoun County three years ago. It has been a breath of fresh air for my family and me. We previously lived in a very small, homogenous county whose county commissioners championed nationalist views, whereas Loudoun is a large and growing community rich in cultural diversity whose Board of Supervisors value globalism.

[02:04:01] We feel truly blessed to live here. However, a news report by a local journalist recently caught my attention on the issue of Loudoun's place on the global stage. As Loudoun County is such a multicultural community, its residents understand that it is appropriate to have business, cultural, and educational relationships around the world.

[02:04:23] Why then would the Sister Cities program be ridiculed, and why would trips by our Board of Supervisors to Sister Cities be condemned? A little bit of research yielded some facts. Fact one, our Sister Cities program has benefited our county in multiple ways, including the Loudoun County Economic Development Department receiving the gold award from the International Economic Development Council in 2021.

[02:04:47] Fact two, former Chair Scott York, a Republican who started the Sister City program in 2006, understood the importance of visiting our partner cities. As a matter of fact, York made 11 trips to Germany while he was chair.

[02:05:03] Republican supervisors like Lori Waters and Janet Clark went with him on some of these trips. They traveled on the taxpayer dollar. No one criticized them for this. Fact three, yet now when Chair Randall and her chief of staff go to Ghana, she is lambasted.

[02:05:21] And here's the kicker. They did not travel to Ghana on taxpayer dime. I will repeat that as to not be misquoted. Chair Randall's trip to Ghana was not funded by taxpayer dollars. Chair Randall and her chief of staff travel was paid for by the Economic Development Authority.

[02:05:40] As a matter of fact, it was Chair Randall who championed not traveling on taxpayer funds. Fact four, the misstatements and false information about Chair Randall's travels on the tax taxpayer dime is purposeful. It is a lie that keeps being repeated.

[02:05:56] It's yellow journalism. It's creating a story where there is none for clout, and it won't work because facts do matter. now and always. Thank you. Thank you. Kevin Cox, followed by Lynn Davis, followed by Kitty Messner. Good evening. Good evening, Chair. Good evening, Board. My name is Kevin Cox, and I've lived in Loudoun County for about 30 years or so. I've seen a lot of growth and development here in the county. One of the things that led me to want to come here tonight was just

[02:06:34] all of this seemingly controversy over these business trips. My background in business is I'm in corporate software sales and have been for many years, and I've done a lot of travel and a lot of business travel. And the business travel does require, you know, building trust with your potential client and also requires building a relationship so that you can have that trust.

[02:06:59] And through that trust, that's how we develop the business and the return in revenue. And as our elected officials, I would like to think one of your responsibilities is to help reduce taxes here in the county, help develop the business community and our economy and then at the same time be able to create jobs in our county as well and i would think that one of the things that you can do to do that is to travel on business to try to strike these relationships with sister cities and sister counties and sister and other countries and if that helps to bring business back to loudon county

[02:07:38] and that's good for us and i appreciate that and that's what i that's why you know you're i feel that you're elected and one of the things that you're elected to do now i understand that there's been some controversy over how the funding has been utilized for some of these trips but you know trying to nail down every little last dime and penny is a hard thing to do you do the best you can do you know it does cost money and it does take expenses and investment in order to return get a return on that investment and that's something that i can appreciate from being in business myself. I understand that this sister city program has brought back a return of over

[02:08:16] \$56 million since 2015. And the cost, the investment to generate that kind of money was very small. As a matter of fact, the return on investment was in the thousands, something like 4,000% return on investment. It sounds like a good business deal to me. So I think all of this that's being genned up seems like it's genned up, manipulated or manufactured controversy.

[02:08:43] Maybe because it's an election year. But I think it's really inappropriate. It's a waste of our tax dollars' time having to debate this. And it's a waste of my time to be here. This is not one of my favorite things to do. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Cox. Lynn Davis, followed by Kitty Meschner, followed by Julia Jarvis.

[02:09:05] Good evening. Good evening. Lynn Davis, resident since 1989. I've recently seen the posts that people are outraged over the trips, our current Board of Supervisors are taking. I haven't seen this level of outrage in the past over trips and surely not as blown up all over social media, especially by so-called journalists.

[02:09:31] So I did some investigating and I was shocked. From 2009 to 2016, Chair Scott York, Republican, took 19 sister county trips. No outrage. He was joined on at least one of those trips by Supervisor Lori Waters, Republican. Still no outrage. Current Supervisor Letourneau, Republican, also went on a sister county trip. A cursory look at social media shows, you guessed it, no outrage.

[02:10:06] When she came to the office to be chair, Randall changed the policy of how these trips would be funded and began using the TOT, a restricted transit occupancy tax that brings money into the county through hotel, motel, etc. And so by going to other cities and establishing these relationships, the return on investment of people coming into the county and using our hotels and

[02:10:37] motels is what helps to keep our taxes low. It's interesting that one chair takes multiple trips using county resident tax revenue, and yet there's no criticism of that. The trips we're causing such outrage have been fabricated. If residents are concerned, they can come here. These trips are causing such outrage, they were vetted by county staff and unanimously through the finance committee.

[02:11:09] Supervisor Umstead happens to be the chair of the finance committee. Supervisor Umstead even seconded one of the motions that passed unanimously. After returning from Sister City County trips, Chair Randall realized that she got lots of gifts and she immediately turned them over. And then she

reached out to the previous chair to find out if he would return the ones he was keeping safely at his own home. Must be an election year. Thank you, Ms. Davis. Kitty Messner, followed by Julia Jarvis, followed by Chris Tandy. Good evening. Hi. Hello, my name is

[02:11:49] Kitty Messner, and I'm here tonight to support our sister city program. First, I want to share something about myself and why somebody like me would be here for this topic. My husband and I came to Loudoun County in 99 to work as educators in Loudoun County Schools. Today, we still say this was the best decision we ever made. We were so grateful to be under the leadership of Dr. Hatrick, the best superintendent we ever had. When we retired, we thought we would move, but realized that we lived in a lovely, vibrant, diverse community. Why would we move? We love Loudoun

[02:12:27] County and all it has to offer and started to get more involved. The controversy over to the Sister City program seemed like a lot of noise that was mainly aimed at Chair Randall. I find her to be a sincere advocate for all in Loudoun with a decorum of utmost honesty. I was alarmed that she was being seriously threatened since the uproar began. The attacks are unfounded and unacceptable. The Sister City program was established in Loudoun by our former Chair York.

[02:13:00] This was a very forward-thinking proposal to get in on what was being used by communities all over our country. Taxpayers' money was used to support Chair York's many trips to Europe as he promoted business. No one complained about this investment, as we all hoped that it would give good returns.

[02:13:19] Today, Chair Randall continues this commitment to bring investment into Loudoun while taking a better approach, using grant money provided by the EDC instead of money from our coffers, as leaders in the past have done. It takes much collaboration, dedication, and yes, investment on our part to bring things to fruition. The cities will do the same in return. The GDP of Loudoun does need a boost. We think we have it made with the data centers, but this could vanish at any time if they find a better setup elsewhere. We cannot sit back and say, we're all good. So to my fellow citizens of Loudoun

[02:13:57] county i say beware of loud persistent opposition to this board's operations as it isn't always fully truthful don't be alarmed find out for yourselves before you believe what is written or broadcast to those of you in this room who are determined to continue loud and persistent half-truths for political gain i say use those skills and talents to do good for our community and neighbors instead of causing uproar to chair randall to supervisor turner represents me to all Supervisors, thank you.

[02:14:27] Thank you. I'm sorry your time. Thank you. Julia Jarvis, followed by Chris Tandy, follow, I believe. She will be on the WebEx, I believe, and that will be Virginia Diamond. Ms. Jarvis?

[02:14:44] Hi, I'm Julia Jarvis. You all know me. It's nice to see you all again. I've lived here 12 years. It seems to be obligatory to say how long you've lived here, although I have a sneaking suspicion that once you move here, you're allowed tonight, whether you've been here a year or 30 years. You know, Ashley and Lynn, who are personal friends of mine, and Mr. Cox, who is not, although I wish he were, have said such wonderful things that I'm not sure there's really a whole lot more to be said, except that sister city programs are common. They are part of

[02:15:21] our civic life. They are in some ways as wonderfully old-fashioned as our town and Grover's Corners. They are how we put ourselves also on the map as a county, as a place. We're connected in all kinds of ways. I was thinking on my way down here from Mason, where I teach.

[02:15:43] I just got here. I was thinking how we are connected by the data centers to the whole world. We are connected by the metro to Maryland and to the area around here. And we are connected in all kinds of ways, but 400 years ago, John Donne said it much better than I could. No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a cloud be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner

[02:16:17] of thy friends or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee. We're all connected. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Jarvis. Chris Tandy, followed by Virginia Diamond, who was on the WebEx, followed by Amanda Tandy. Mr. Tandy, good evening, sir. Good evening. I'm sorry, I lost my

[02:16:54] notes. Oh, shoot, my time is going, isn't it? Oh, shoot. Mr. Tandy, I can go to the next speaker and come back to you if you like me to if you if you wouldn't mind I would be I'd be happy to do that um who is doing the Webex tonight I'm sorry I didn't is it is it Andy is that you doing the Webex tonight yes okay we're ready is Miss Diamond on the phone yes she is let me put it

[02:17:25] through thank you I put her through yes uh she did not she's not speaking she's not I don't understand so you there you go yeah we can hear her I'm sorry yes can you hear me yes we can hear

[02:17:52] you. Okay. You may start. Hello? Yes, Ms. Diamond, you may start. Oh, thank you very much. I'm sorry. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. My name is Virginia Diamond. I'm the head of the Northern Virginia AFL-CIO, and we have several thousand members who are workers in Loudoun County, and I'm speaking in support of the Sister City program, primarily because of the many jobs that has brought into Loudoun County.

[02:18:29] The International Economic Development Program has brought in at least 2,500 jobs, and just the sister city program alone has brought in more than 650 jobs. And so what we care about, economic opportunity for the residents and the workers in Loudoun County, and we are part of a global economy.

[02:18:54] So we appreciate the fact that the board has continued this program and that it is a successful program that links international job opportunities to our county. So thank you very much for the opportunity. Thank you, Ms. Diamond.

[02:19:11] Mr. Tandy, you ready? And then you'll be followed by Amanda Tandy, and she will be followed by Laura Reynolds. Appreciate it. Greetings, Supervisors. I'm Chris. I live in the Ashburn District. I'm representing only myself today, not any groups that I might work with. I'm here to talk about the urgency and imperative of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preventing new ones. Humanities collectively barreling right past 1.5 degrees and towards 2 degrees Celsius of warming compared to pre-industrial levels. That level back when the Paris Agreement was formed in 2015 was seen as a level that poses large and escalating risks to human life as we know it on earth. Maria Ivanova,

[02:19:51] a professor of global governance at University of Massachusetts, Boston, said of the two degrees figure. At two degrees, we see dramatic alterations to the ability of earth systems to maintain the conditions that allow for human life and indeed other species' life. Put another way, two degrees has widely been seen as the maximum level of warming before climate change becomes catastrophic to life. So far, our collective efforts to not hit this warming level have not been even close to sufficient. Now, in a new study published in the scientific journal *Energies*, authors Joshua

[02:20:29] Pierce of Western University in Ontario, Canada, and Richard Parnkut of University of Grads in Austria, performed a meta-analysis of studies that examined fatalities caused by climate change impacts. They found that a future person is killed every time a thousand tons of fossil carbon are burned, and those deaths will largely be among poorer people and caused by richer people.

[02:20:52] The researchers concluded that if warming reaches or exceeds two degrees Celsius this century, Mainly, richer humans will be responsible for killing roughly 1 billion, mainly poorer humans through anthropogenic global warming, which is comparable with involuntary or negligent manslaughter.

[02:21:10] If this all sounds alarming, that's because it is alarming. The costs of inaction in terms of human life and suffering that could come about should be something that inspires everyone to action, especially policymakers at all levels. In conclusion, I'd remind the board that Loudoun's data center industry uses an extreme amount of energy, more than five times the energy that residences in Loudoun use, the Potomac Energy Center in Leesburg alone emits around 2 million metric tons CO2-equivalent greenhouse gas a year or 1,000 lives, based on Mr.

[02:21:42] Pierce and Mr. Parncutt's findings. Dominion's energy portfolio isn't renewable enough, and Loudoun uses too much energy. Thank you for your time. Thank you. Thank you. You will be followed by Amanda Tandy, followed by Laura Reynolds, followed by Mark Pontellio.

[02:21:59] Good evening. Good evening. Supervisors, it's become clear that the BOS has no control over data center development in this county. Data centers are popping up where they don't belong. For instance, along Route 7 across the street from the Belmont Cemetery for the enslaved. And in quantities so significant that the energy infrastructure doesn't exist to power them yet. So now we get high capacity power lines where we don't want them, in addition to the data centers, to cover the absolutely insane amount of energy that they use. On the cemetery concern, a bill in the General Assembly would have

[02:22:34] blocked that, but sadly that bill did not pass. In the county's inability or disinterest to address this problem, working with legislatures in the GA seems to be the only remedy. It seems like every time a data center gets built across, excuse me, gets built, acres of trees are cleared, resulting in runoff into the many small waterways we have in Loudoun. Trees are important. The County environmental commission has a tree planting initiative but more should be done to preserve trees that we already have if we broadly agree that we want trees why do we allow existing trees to be cleared i changed to the zoning from a buy right to a permanent required in large areas of

[02:23:13] Loudoun would help many push back on this saying that the county may be sued because the land would be less valuable but what about homeowners whose homes get hideous prison looking data centers as neighbors devaluing devaluing their property why is the value of data center land so sacrosanct that nothing can be done. Meanwhile, the voters and homeowners in this county seem to matter very little. Is it because homeowners don't have the same legal resources as developers? And certainly, a proposal to ease transportation-related taxes on developers, instead of creating a disincentive

[02:23:51] for development by shifting more tax burden to the developers, is moving us in the wrong direction. I know a lot of you care deeply about the environment, but for whatever reason, that isn't translating into results this um this county needs to diversify itself away from data centers and towards more sustainable industries for the good of the local environment and the people who live in it thank you thank you miss Tandy Laura Reynolds and you will be followed by Mark Pontellio followed by Bob Moses miss Reynolds are you here Laura Reynolds Laura Reynolds going

[02:24:28] once going twice okay mark pontelio are you here and you'll be followed by bob moses followed by John Legabo. Mark Pontellio, you here? Mark Pontellio. Okay. We will go to Bob Moses, followed by John Legabo, followed by Lisa Jones. Good evening. Thank you, supervisors, for your service and this forum. I'm Bob Moses. I live in Broad Run. Tonight's meeting has been orchestrated

[02:25:04] by a partisan reporter who worked in the Trump White House and worked for Sinclair Media, known for supporting one party. His stories are filled with half-truths and lies. I wish this was just about good stewards of Loudoun's money, but it's not. With only two and a half minutes, I'm going to focus mostly on one elected person, our sheriff, and his big, big money issues.

[02:25:29] Sheriff Chapman just settled a \$7 million lawsuit, an incident where no one was disciplined, no one was fired. This settlement was almost 10 times the total amount that we're discussing tonight. In fact, the sheriff has been sued for over \$50 million. That's millions of dollars.

[02:25:48] many of which have been sealed settlements. Lawsuits like wrongful arrests, retribution, water scolding of a mental health-inflicted inmate while strapped in a wheelchair.

[02:26:05] What did this cost the county? What did it do to our insurance? What did it do to our bond ratings? He's also trying to build an addition onto the county jail and is currently being housed mostly by out-of-county inmates because of space that we have.

[02:26:26] And now he's selling it out to other counties. Where's all this money going to? Is it going back into the general fund, the sheriff's office? I can't find it. I've been looking through the budget. The sheriff travels, too, many in high-cost areas. My point is we're looking at a small slice of the county travel, not looking at the overall picture.

[02:26:46] Let's stop playing hyper-partisan games and listening to a reporter who seems to have a Jones for our chairwoman. I'd like to end with a phrase, and that's the rest of the story. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Moses. John Legalbo, followed by Lisa Jones, followed by Gladys Burke.

[02:27:11] Good evening, Mr. Legalbo. Hi. My name is John Legalbo. I live in Broad Run Farms in Sterling.

[02:27:26] Much as I would enjoy standing up here to engage in a solemn debate over the price of a hotel that you stayed in in an African country or where you sat during a 10-hour plane ride over the Atlantic Ocean, I'm going to leave that to the other good citizens here tonight who have shown the intestinal fortitude to cut through the demagoguery of our political opponents and have addressed themselves to the actual facts.

[02:27:50] Instead, I'm going to speak personally for a moment. The last four jobs I've held in my legal career since 1992 have all come through personal contacts. The first of those came from someone I've known since high school. Each of the three positions after that came either through a professional encounter made by chance with another human being or a contact I made through an ongoing professional relationship with another human being.

[02:28:19] And I mention these to point out the unpredictable but irreplaceable value of person-to-person contacts. We don't enter into business relationships with spreadsheets or with a computer screen or with an RFP.

[02:28:35] We enter into business relationships with persons. And when our supervisors, you all, travel outside of Loudoun County or outside of the United States, you're doing so to seed business relationships

that, if we're fortunate, will take root here in Loudoun.

[02:28:56] And growing businesses in the county leads to jobs and economic activity of all kinds, which leads to the dreaded thing we call tax revenue, which funds schools, which funds health care, which funds roads and bridges, which funds parks and playgrounds and public spaces and arts and culture, which makes living in Loudoun County great for everybody.

[02:29:16] So I respect the judgment of those of you on the dais who understand how business development actually works in the real world. And I believe that establishing personal contacts with key officials inside or outside the country, the county or the Commonwealth or outside the country, ultimately really works to benefit all the residents of Loudoun County.

[02:29:41] So please, I hope you'll stand up to the political grandstanding and keep doing the right thing for the county. Thank you for all you do. Thank you, Mr. Legabo. Thank you. Lisa Jones, followed by Gladys Burke, followed by George Mambingo. Good evening.

[02:30:07] My name is Lisa Jones. I'm speaking on behalf of myself, no business, not my nonprofit. I feel like I'm the only non-political person here. Today I want to speak on character. I'm not political because of things like this. I cannot believe that we're here speaking on this topic.

[02:30:33] it's almost like a movie unfolding. It's like watching people be targeted. I'm seeing what the media can do negatively and how it affects people. I'm sorry that this is happening to you all. Very sorry. I, um, for nearly five years, maybe more, I have watched character. I've watched people show up when cameras are not involved. I've watched you uplift, teach direction with

[02:31:07] integrity. And this right here is crazy to me. It's absolutely crazy. I am distrusting before I'm trusting. I think before I speak, before I act, I watch, sometimes for years, just to make sure I'm aligning myself with someone who can lead better. I think you are amazing for this county.

[02:31:33] I hope that nothing of this nonsense goes further than this, because it's toxic. I had friends who wanted to come, people of color, and scared to come because of the outcome. I didn't even drive my car here today because I wanted to speak my mind on this nonsense. Signs with names on them, name calling. This is not an example for our kids. I just, I want better. I want to feel good about voting. I want the youth to feel good about voting. But this is not the way of being sneaky.

[02:32:08] This is not politics to me. And again, I'm sorry that this is happening. And I hope it stops today. Thank you, Ms. Jones. Gladys Burke, followed by George Manbingo, followed by Dawn Slayman.

[02:32:34] Ms. Burke. Good evening, Madam Chair and other members of the board, and especially Ms. Umstead, because she's my representative. My name is Gladys Burke, and I live in Leesburg for some 40-something years, and I like to say I love Leesburg.

[02:32:52] I'm here tonight to applaud the Board of Supervisors for going into the Sister City Agreement with Tema Ghana. When I first heard of the plan a few months ago, it was from Chair Randall at an event that she attended where she was speaking.

[02:33:08] She indicated that this project had been a couple of years in the planning with extensive research on Tema as a possible good fit for Loudoun County. she outlined what a sister city is and what the attributes are necessary for it to be considered for partnership.

[02:33:31] She said the number one reason for a possible partnership was to bring back economic development to Loudoun through having cocoa beans imported here from Tema. Apparently, they have great cocoa beans.

[02:33:48] With that, Loudoun would be positioned to have chocolate manufacturing, something it doesn't have right now. I know Loudoun is very prosperous right now, but I love the forward thinking of the idea of bringing something new here.

[02:34:07] And I love the way she laid it out so plainly, like one of my favorite actors, Denzel Washington, would say that even a two-year-old could understand it. And having been in business myself for some 40 years, I quite understood the idea, and I thought it made great business sense.

[02:34:30] So we fast forward to June, and now Chair Randall and Supervisor Glass and Sains are in Ghana. I later watched their interview on Ghanaian TV, and I re-watched it a couple nights ago. Our three supervisors did us proud, Loudoun and America.

[02:34:51] In regards to the travel policy, I want to get this in. Okay, you found some holes in your policy that you didn't have or that weren't clear, but now you're working on strict policies. Just make sure they're not so strict that the supervisors and the staff can't do what they need to bring business to Loudoun.

[02:35:11] Thank you. Thank you very much. George Mombingo, followed by, wait, I'm sorry. I think the next couple of people are actually on the WebEx. I have George Mombingo, followed by Donald Slayman, followed by Christina Kerfman.

[02:35:30] And all three of those, according to my list, are on the WebEx. And so, Andy, do you have Mr. Mombingo on the phone? I do. All right, we're ready. Yeah. Hi, my name is George, and I am calling in support of the Sister City program.

[02:35:49] Loudoun County is large, and it is a growing county. And sister cities are very important, and I think it would benefit the county because they help to enable communities to realize and strengthen cultural and historical bonds, as well as increase education opportunities, develop diverse economies, and collaboratively tackle emerging issues.

[02:36:16] Kind of piggybacking on that, Africa as a whole is one of the largest growing economies, has some of the largest growing economies in the world, truly. And, of course, with their population being so young, with around 60% of it or so, 60% of it as a whole, their population is below the age of 25.

[02:36:42] I think the idea of a sister city there would be tremendous for Loudoun County, for our growth, and theirs as well. I think it's appropriate to have business and educational relationships around the world. It would be wonderful to have a sister city in Africa.

[02:37:01] Also, given that Africa is expected to be one of the largest technological hotspots in the future, So with young talent being there and us having influence there, I think, would be fantastic as far as what we could have to offer.

[02:37:18] We should also consider that there was a formal chief who took several trips to Germany on taxpayers' expenses, something that Chair Randall has not done. In fact, Chair Randall was the one that changed that policy so that she does not travel on taxpayer dollars.

[02:37:35] I think these misstatements and false information should, I feel the truth should be brought out. And that is that that has not happened with Chair Randall. And I do support the work that we very

well do between a partnership with a sister city in Africa and here in Loudoun County.

[02:37:57] Thank you very much for your time. Thank you. Thank you very much. Donald Slayman, followed by Christina Kerfman, followed by Suzanne Sutterfield. Good evening, Chairwoman Randall and the supervisors on the board.

[02:38:16] Thank you very much for letting me speak this evening. I'm actually over in George County where we're having a vote on a data center campus that's going to erase the \$139 million deficit this county has for only 27,000 citizens.

[02:38:32] It's going to bring in \$100 million a year to this county. It's following the leadership of Loudoun County, which has made the data center industry centered in Ashburn and Loudoun, and now it's moving around the rest of Northern Virginia. And these are creating not just thousands, thousands of jobs, but for my local union, it'll create jobs for the next few hundred years.

[02:38:55] We're constantly in those data centers. Most people don't understand all that equipment. We swap it constantly. We swap it out. New firms come in. numbers down, plus we deal with the efficiencies. We have over 1,700 members that live in Loudoun County. I mean, 1,700 members of ours who work in Loudoun County just swapping equipment, just maintaining the existing data centers. And this industry is so important to Loudoun County but the entire region. And if it wasn't for the foresight and the help of this current board, we would not be in a position we're in to offer such great six-figure blue-collar jobs to help

[02:39:31] erasing company quality in community and so it's just the leadership that this board has shown is spreading all over the region and we really appreciate all of your efforts and thank you and i can't say enough for for uh what this board has done for it thank you very much thank you mr slayman um supervisors the next name on the list is um has has asked that her name be pulled so she is not here we would go to christina kirffman followed by suzanne satterfield i'm

[02:40:04] sorry satterfield i'm sorry i'm sorry miss phantom names followed by george bright christina has not called in tonight christina has not called in tonight okay suzanne satterfield followed by george bright followed by jason asher good evening um good evening the trips the trips taken are a symptom of the overall disease of this board which is the constant abuse of taxpayers hard-earned money. Phil believes she has earned the privilege of flying business class and deciding to only paying back a portion of her husband's expenses that she charged to the county. Mr. Sains thinks

[02:40:42] that he has the privilege of breaking the law by refusing to turn over all the pictures he took with the county camera. Can you imagine if we decided to just pay a portion of our exorbitant property taxes and vehicle property taxes? Who am I kidding? They're buds with Buddha, so she'll look the other way. The taxpayers, on the other hand, well, we know how it goes for us.

[02:41:01] we were not one of Buddha's cheerleaders. LCPN's attendance is still down, but you keep throwing money at them because, as Mike Turner has said, it's for education. Well, guess what? Kids reading and math scores are far from acceptable. The bloat in the admin building grows with high-paying jobs that do nothing to help student outcomes and support teachers. Just take a look at the new superintendent's salary of \$375,000. That's an \$80,000 increase over the last. Why? Oh, and his best gal from Virginia Beach, he gave her a newly created job in the admin building of \$200,000.

[02:41:40] Does nothing for kids. And hey, \$11 million is out the door on dangerous bathroom remodels, but kids can't read and other schools are falling apart. Data centers and multi-residential housings are

filling up the green spaces and we see no tax breaks. You support a 40% tax increase on the green way, which might as well be called privilege way, because people making an hourly wage can't afford the ride. Let's not forget about the plastic bag tax. Supervisor Umstead proved that it's not good for the environment. And you voted for it anyways, because the only green you care about is getting the taxpayers money and spending it furvously on trips and your raise.

[02:42:19] Buddhas filled her promise to go soft on crime with her big donor Soros. Decisions she made caused lives and destroyed others. Regina Redmond died and girls were sexually assaulted. You fully funded her office anyways. The hurt is beyond taxpayers' pocket.

[02:42:37] Lives can't be brought back and the scars from an attacker last forever. And the heartache of their loved ones suffer never heals. Yes, it is an election year, and it's time for a new chair and new supervisors that will stop wasting taxpayers harder than Monday.

[02:42:54] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Satterfield. Our next speaker will be George Bright, followed by Jason Asher, followed by Tracy Hamlin. Good evening, sir. Good evening, Chairman Randall and Board Chair, Supervisors.

[02:43:12] My name is George Kweisi-Bright, and I speak for the Loudoun County and Temer City sister relationship. The Loudoun County and Temer City sister-city relationship will be mutually beneficial to both counties.

[02:43:29] It is not the only sister-city relationship between a city in Ghana and USA. There is a tall list of such relationships, which promotes exchanges between education, culture, and offering investment opportunities. There are currently several Ghanaian-owned businesses, to name a few, Agi's Cuisine, Rahama Restaurant, and Ghana International Market, all in Loudoun County.

[02:43:53] And this attests to the huge Ghanaian population here. At the signing of the agreement in Ghana, the board chair said, although the event marks a formal agreement that will promote economic, cultural, and student exchange programs between the two regions, but in actual sense, we are here, we are really signing an agreement to be firmly.

[02:44:13] This profound statement meant a lot to Ghanaians, home and abroad. Thousands of Ghanaian professionals have made Loudoun County their home. They work here, pay taxes here, and own homes here. It's my humble opinion that welcoming the sister city relationship between Loudoun County and Temer, Ghana's foremost industrial city with industrial products such as aluminum, steel, processed fish, refined petroleum textiles chemicals and food products and cement will be very

[02:44:48] laudable development thank you thank you sir um i think that this next person is on the webex and so andy do we have jason jason asher on the phone he has not called in tonight okay he has not called in so jason asher is followed by tracy hamlin followed by michelle buhinda buhinda buhinda Followed by Jessica Smith and Kitty Haggerty.

[02:45:18] Good evening. Good evening, everyone. My name is Tracy Hamlin. I'm an international recording artist, a loud and business owner, and also vice president of the Ghana Impact Project. As someone who has traveled and performed in 58 countries, I can personally attest to the power of relationship building that translate into positive economic impact.

[02:45:41] Chair Randall's commitment to our county and her visionary leadership in selecting Ghana as a sister city helped her to align with continuing the successful sister city initiatives created by the previous chair. Today, I'm here to express my full support with Chair Randall's selection of TEMA Ghana for a Loudoun sister city program.

[02:46:03] With the Washington, D.C. area having the second largest population of Ghanians in the nation, only second to New York City, having elected officials participate in the trade mission is important to me as a Loudoun business owner and in my role as vice president of the Ghana Impact Project. It's essential to highlight the vital connection between the sister city program and the Ghana Impact Project, particularly the collaboration with the Orthopedic Training Center, also known as OTC, in Ghana. This partnership underscores the significance of the international relationships and the positive impact they can have. Lauda's involvement in

[02:46:42] Sister City programs is not new. The fact that the previous chair undertook a total of 11 trips to Germany and South Korea while maintaining and nurturing the Sister City relationships is strong evidence that the program represents a wise, beneficial, and proven investment.

[02:47:02] Since 2015, deals tied to Loudon's Sister City program have contributed to \$56.43 million and created 662 jobs, with an estimated program cost of \$1.2 million, a remarkable 4,700% return.

[02:47:20] In conclusion, let us remember that our actions transcend borders and create a more interconnected and compassionate world. Chair Randall's visit to OTC in Ghana serves as a reminder of the human aspect of global cooperation, the bond we form, and the lives we touch.

[02:47:38] As we reflect on the importance of this relationship, let's continue to support and nurture such meaningful connections that have the potential to alter lives and inspire positive change. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Hamlin. Michelle Buhindua, followed by Jessica Smith, followed by Kitty Haggerty.

[02:48:06] Oh, I'm sorry, she's on the WebEx. Is she on the WebEx? Yes. Okay, we're ready when you are, ma'am. Yes, I am. So my name is Michelle Buhindua. I came here in America 20 years ago. I've been in Loudoun County for 19 years now.

[02:48:24] In 1956, when President Eisenhower launched the Sister City Program, the purpose was to have exchange between Americans and peoples of other lands. To begin with, I'm in support with the Sister City Program launched by Madam Chair, and I'm really outraged by seeing how angry people are without looking at the broadened picture that this program can bring to America and the rest of the world.

[02:49:00] Today in Africa, China and Russia are gaining terrain in Africa because of exchange program. And I think what Madam Chair did, especially to Ghana, it opens the door to the American culture and also to Ghanaian culture to be known.

[02:49:24] Day by day, little by little, people are getting accustomed to Chinese. I was surprised I was in Africa myself a month ago. People are learning Chinese in Africa. People are learning Russia in Africa. What about Africa? And Africa has many, many things to offer to America, contrary to what people might think, that it's America that's only, I mean, it's only Africa that needs Africa.

[02:49:53] Their minerals, their oil, there are many opportunities that also America can benefit from Africa. So I am in support from Madam Chair with the Sisters City Program. And I will also call other people to come and join and raise their voice to support Madam Chair of Loudoun.

[02:50:15] Thank you so much for your service for this country and this county of Loudoun. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you. Jessica Smith, followed by Kitty Haggerty, who is on the WebEx, and then followed by Beth Hess, who I believe is in the room.

[02:50:36] Good evening, ma'am. Good evening. 23 years ago, we decided to move to Leesburg, start our small business and our family. Little did we know what was to come. Phyllis Randall, Corinne Saines, Julie Briskman, Sylvia Glass, and all those who went with you on your secretly taxpayer-funded luxury trips should be criminally charged or at the very least required to reimburse the county of Loudoun in full.

[02:51:12] No jobs or businesses are relocating to Loudoun County as a result of these trips, just more lies concerning the same. You forced the hand of your constituents to utilize FOIA to find out the truth.

[02:51:29] We've seen the photos, including those that Corinne Sainz lied about not taking. You wasted \$100,000 of taxpayers' hard-earned money while sipping wine, swimming, and paying for your memories to be captured on film.

[02:51:48] You balked at Supervisor Umstead's request to pull back from such travel. Sains double down and wants to waste time and resources like you did on the Sheriff's Department for a report to show what other counties' international travel is like with the hopes to justify more free vacations.

[02:52:13] We've had enough. You all need to take responsibility and stop the deception and the lies. It's time for taxpayers to get in the driver's seat and send you permanently packing this November.

[02:52:31] Why wait when early voting starts September 22nd? I'm gonna vote for Gary Katz for chairman. I support to my Harding, Ashburn, Debbie Rose, Algonquian, Michelle Suttle, Broad Run, Ram, Vingachalam, Little River.

[02:52:55] Sorry about that. To get this board back on track. Thank you, Ms. Smith. And it's Veketulam. It is a hard name. I've actually had to learn it myself.

[02:53:11] So thank you very much. Kitty Haggerty, who's on the WebEx, followed by Beth Hess, followed by Anthony Solis. Kitty has not called in yet tonight. She has not. Okay, we'll go to Beth Hess, Anthony Solis, and Avram Fector.

[02:53:28] Ms. Hess, I think is in the room. I'm sorry to take her name off the list. Okay, so Ms. Hess is not here. Thank you. Anthony Solis, followed by Avram Fletcher, followed by Cheryl.

[02:53:46] I always get your name wrong, Cheryl, and I apologize. I think it's under chain, but you check when I get here. So is Mr. Solis in the room? No? Okay. Going once, going twice. How about Avram Fletcher, Fector?

[02:54:03] I'll be Fector. Is he in the room? No? Okay. Ms. Underchain. I think I got your name right that time. And you will be followed by, I think that's Evarista Kapinga. Good evening, ma'am. Good evening. So you were trying to bring investment to Loudoun County, and that's why you traveled to Ghana and Uruguay. Just curious, what process went into selecting those two countries? Did you even consider contacting the U.S. Department of

[02:54:40] commerce before jet-setting around the world. Commerce, after all, focuses on bringing foreign investments to the U.S. In fact, commerce coordinates federal agencies at an annual event called SelectUSA, which since its inception has facilitated more than \$146 billion in investments in the U.S. in creating and or retaining over 166,000 U.S. jobs. This year's event actually occurred in May at National

Harbor in Maryland. You would not have even had to board a plane or get a passport to attend this event where over 2,300 foreign investors representing

[02:55:18] 83 international markets were in attendance. In fact, our U.S. Embassy in Ghana even led a delegation to SelectUSA, so those interested in U.S. investments were just across the Potomac at a three-day summit just in May. All of your entire staff could have driven there for less money and more opportunity than your boondoggle trip. To be clear, your trips were completely unnecessary and a waste of our taxpayer dollars, and you all abused your positions. I hope every voter in Loudoun County thinks of your taxpayer bankrolled international vacations when they pay their

[02:55:55] car tax bills this fall. I know I will. I still cannot believe that you all had the audacity to fly Polaris class. I've never flown Polaris class. I've traveled on lots of business trips. That extravagance is so incredibly a slap in the face and just completely tone deaf when there are so many people struggling to pay their bills right here in Loudoun County. I hope you're all voted out in November. You've officially joined LCPS in bringing shame and embarrassment to a once great place to live. And since I have a few seconds left, I'd just like to address something that

[02:56:32] is very near and dear to my heart. It is just enraging that you all are talking about the importance of face-to-face contact and developing relationships. When my kids were locked out of school for a year and a half, where were you? You were all silent and kids suffered because of it and many will never recover. Thank you. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you. Our next speaker is, I think it's Evarista Kapinga. I think that's correct. And you are on the Webex and you will be followed

[02:57:06] by Kendra Dion. Is she on the Webex? Yes, I'm here. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm a pastor. Yes, sir. I'm a pastor Evarista Kapinga. I would like to talk this evening about the trip in Ghana And I'm calling to support it.

[02:57:34] Why? Because it's beneficial for the county, for businesses, and for student exchange, and the cultural exchange. I would like to ask that question.

[02:57:52] And why all the trip that the chair has made for Germany or for China is not bringing a lot of questions. Just the only trip she made for Ghana should be a problem.

[02:58:15] We need more trip in Africa. We need that exchange with the own county, which is a large and a growing county. It's appropriate for Africa also, and particularly Ghana, to have a business, to have a cultural and educational relationship with the world.

[02:58:45] And we know that the Loudoun County contains almost all relations in the world have been found in Loudoun County. I support the trip in Ghana, and my wish is to have the chairman, Randall, running to that position so he can open doors for other countries in Africa.

[02:59:17] Thank you. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. We have our next – well, let me make sure I'm not missing anybody. Hold on just a second. Yes, yes, yes. So we have Kendra Dionne.

[02:59:33] You will be followed by Abby Platt, and you will be followed by Brandon Michon. Ms. Dionne, Abby Platt, Brandon Michon. Good evening, Ms. Dionne.

[02:59:50] Good evening. Thank you so much for the opportunity to come before you to speak today. I stand before you as a resident of this great county. The economic health and well-being of this community is of utmost importance to me.

[03:00:05] As a small business owner, a contributor, a volunteer, a former employee, and a person who works tirelessly to see to it that this county, its citizens, and its businesses win in every single possible way that we possibly can.

[03:00:21] I stand here in support of the work that we do, not just in this county, but across the state with the Virginia Economic Development Partnerships and the trips that we all take to make sure that this county continues to be an economic engine and driver here in the state of Virginia, representing Loudoun County.

[03:00:42] I understand that building relationships with other businesses, other communities, and other citizens is critical to our growth. This helps us to increase opportunities for trade, investments, academics, new markets, customers, greater efficiency, productivity, economic development in areas such as agricultural development and technology.

[03:01:06] And that's something that we all need. To have opposition is normal. To have people to disagree is welcome. Our goal is not to make sure that everybody agrees with one another, but our goal is to make sure that we all understand that we're here with the same goal, and that's economic growth and development for this county and this community.

[03:01:30] And if we focus on seeking to understand economic growth and understanding, then we can focus on what's really important, which is moving this county forward. I feel as though all the noise that we're hearing in the news is a part of the political rhetoric that's meant to distract us from the main issues.

[03:01:49] We need zoning passed. We need rules and opportunities for our students and our students' academic advancement passed. We need opportunities for neighbors to become friends and to get to know each other and to listen to each other more and better. That is what we need. We need less of these conversations that are about dissension and tearing us apart.

[03:02:10] We need less name-calling and finger-pointing. We need more collaboration, more connection, and more support for programs that bring economic infrastructure to this great community where we all pay taxes and we all live. Thank you. Thank you.

[03:02:25] Thank you, Ms. Dionne. Abby Platt, followed by Brandon Michon, followed by, on the WebEx, Cynthia Pearson. Good evening. I'm glad to have heard a prior speaker stress the importance of personal contact.

[03:02:44] That's part of the reason that so many are upset about Loudoun schools being closed to most kids from March of 2020 till August of 2021. Over an entire year and a quarter, kids and teachers and parents were told that online learning was just as good as in-person and all in-person activities were canceled.

[03:03:04] But personal contact is important, and I hope more officials will acknowledge the harm that was done to our children through school closures. That said, now for you to sit here and to tell us that you need to travel to a foreign country for a couple of meetings and a couple of signatures, well, that frankly does not sit well with me.

[03:03:26] With teleworking and Zoom and Google Meets, the need for international travel should be strictly scrutinized. If I can buy a house online without ever setting foot in it, how can you say that you can't sign a sister city agreement, which isn't even a binding contract, unless you fly to Uruguay?

[03:03:43] The money being spent is taxpayer money. It's our money. And I will not apologize for asking questions about whether or not, about whether it is being well spent. I want to be clear. I am supportive of business and economic development efforts to build Loudoun County.

[03:04:00] I am, however, adamantly opposed to funding luxury trips, first class airfare, exclusive resort stays, and your Instagram reel. No thank you. Those two trips should not have cost taxpayers over \$100,000. dollars. That is appalling at best. The outrage is not about the sister cities, but instead it is about wasteful spending and a sense of entitlement that has been exhibited from this board. The board of supervisors increased the county budget by 17 percent this year, which means that we, the taxpayers, bear that burden. We are paying excessive increased taxes. You should refund

[03:04:40] the taxpayers money and get back to the real business of addressing the important needs of County. Thank you. Thank you very much. So I'm getting the message that we have a speaker who's been trying to get through but can't get cannot get through is Andy are we having trouble letting anybody through the line? Is everybody getting through that we're trying to get through? Yeah I'm not receiving any other calls on my end. Just so I think it was I think it was Miss Kaufman

[03:05:14] uh Christina Kirffman c-u-r-f-m-a-n I I'm getting the uh text that she's having trouble getting through uh if you have her number because I do want to make sure that everyone who was in the first 36 slots speak um I want to make sure and she was one of the first 36 slots if you have her number could you maybe give her a call is that possible yeah um okay I could just need the number um well it's on the it's on the list it's on the list of she's on the list of i'm sorry just give

[03:05:53] me one second she's on the list of speakers and she's one of the first okay you got it okay because for the first 36 you were guaranteed a speaking slot and i just want to make sure they get a speaking slot all right i thank you for letting me do that and you are uh mr michon you'll be followed by cynthia pearson followed by abigail um moosen gary i think that is good evening sir How are you? So I'm here tonight to highlight some of the reckless spending that's being hidden under the guise of government business while you continue to increase our taxes. Technology has

[03:06:30] allowed business to be done daily without massive spending. Your responsibility as a board is to oversee the money and spending of this county. Every single person, no matter your political politics in the county, saw their real estate taxes go up last year. Every single person in this county saw their daily living expenses go up last year, and you thought it was smart to spend over \$90,000 on glamorized publicity stunts to other countries on our dime. You can say the funds came from whatever program you'd like, but we all know it's taxpayers' money. Not a single one of your board salaries afford the luxury trips that you are taking on the taxpayers' dime. \$8,000

[03:07:07] first-class tickets, luxury hotels, and meals. Come on, seriously? To the six of you who didn't make these trips. Every single one of you should have a pit in your stomach because you failed your constituents. You failed to check and balance those who take advantage of their position.

[03:07:24] You failed to ask questions, and you failed to stop it. So now, taxpayers like myself are here to hold you accountable. As you can see, your combined salaries, and I'm sure you know this, are over \$620,000. It's time for you to break out your checkbook and refund the money. I don't care if you have to sell your soul to the data centers. I don't care if you have to sell your soul to the local developers or the political donors who are going to ask for big favors. You need to come up with the money. You can't steal

ours and get away with it. So some of you have shown that you're financially illiterate and the board has failed us. So I brought a ginormous check, which you can

[03:08:00] see right here, to show you how to make it out. So first, I'm going to walk you through it. So please, Julie, take some notes for us since you seem to not be paying attention. So first, put in the name section, Loudoun County Taxpayers. Then put the number to \$93,000. Make sure it all adds up between you. I don't care. Just don't make it a penny short. And last, in the memo section at the bottom, say for the money that we stole from the hardworking taxpayers of Loudoun County.

[03:08:26] Lastly, make sure you sign it, date it, and put it in the mail to us because we want our damn money back. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Next speaker will be Cynthia Pearson followed by Abigail. And I do not want to mess up your last name. I will spell it. It's M-U-S-U-N-G-A-Y-I.

[03:08:47] And then after that would be David Pala. And so Ms. Pearson, I think is on the line. Is she on the line? She did not call in today. Okay. How about Abigail? Is she on the line? She did not call in either. She did not call in either. How about David Pala, who's I think in the room. Is David paula in the room david paula going once going twice okay then we will go we are now going to go to the um to the uh waiting list the first person on the waiting list i if he's on the phone is

[03:09:24] abraham sese followed by solitaire carol followed by george um today is abraham sese i'm sorry Hello, how are you today? Good.

[03:09:40] Awesome. So I just want to say, like, I support the government. This is City Chief, and the reason why is that Africa boasts a lot of beneficial things that can benefit America, that can benefit Loudoun County.

[03:09:56] But by your mind, are there resources there that the county can benefit from? So I just want to say I support it, and I ask that everybody else would support it, too. Thank you. Thank you very much, sir. Solitaire Carroll would be our next speaker, and Ms. Carroll will be followed by George, I think it's Tate, followed by Gladys, and again, I'm going to spell your last name because I just do not want to get your name wrong.

[03:10:22] It's A-D-J-I-R-A-K-O-R. But Ms. Carroll, you are next. Thank you very much for your time. My name is Solitaire Carroll, and I'm here to speak on behalf of myself only. I am a federal employee, so I want to make sure that's for the record that I'm speaking by myself.

[03:10:40] This evening has been incredibly disappointing as a millennial, as a taxpayer, as a federal employee, that this is where we're at as a debate, as a society. The problem with our current political system is that common sense solutions and common sense problems cannot be discussed in a positive or even constructive manner.

[03:11:06] And the fact that this is actually the conversation tonight to politicize and demonize a faulty policy is disgusting. And it hurts us as citizens of this county and as this country. There is absolutely nothing honest about the debate that's going on here tonight.

[03:11:25] First off, the fact is that travel was funded through grant funding, which means it was reviewed and it was approved through board-managed governance. It was booked approved through a policy regulated of procedures, and it was also paid out according to fiscal policy. So a board to supervisor cannot spend personal funds on a business activity.

[03:11:44] That would be improper. If the discussion on the table today was that the policy allows a supervisor to use a certain class of service when they're doing official travel, that is a completely fair and decent discussion to have. But that's not the discussion we're having tonight. Loudoun County has a budget that is equal to some small nations.

[03:12:05] The idea that we would not be doing any type of international economic development or evaluation is ludicrous. The future of our county, the future of our country, is international development. Right now, we have cities and counties in this country that are going bankrupt because they are not looking for other ways to develop economic development.

[03:12:28] The San Francisco area, the Bay Area, is literally going bankrupt. We have Fortune 500 companies that are moving to Loudoun County. And the fact of the matter is Loudoun County is thriving. Yes, we have issues. Yes, we have problems. But every county has issues and problems.

[03:12:45] And what we need to do is encourage our elected leaders like yourselves to be able to have open, honest, constructive, and critical debates in an open space where we can have real conversations. I hope tonight we can continue an honest, real conversation about how we move forward.

[03:13:03] Ms. Carroll, thank you so much. Thank you so much. Gladys, and again, I'm going to spell your name again because I think you are in the room. It's A-D-J-I-R-A-T-K-O-R. When you come up with your pronunciation name for me, you will be followed by Donna Machina, followed by Ram Veketulam.

[03:13:24] Good evening, ma'am. Yeah, my name is Gladys Ajirako, and I live in the county, and I'm from Ghana. Sister city relationships are more than just economic relationships.

[03:13:43] They are relationships that foster cultural exchanges. And there are many things that we do well in America and London that folks in Ghana can learn from. And likewise, there are many things that folks in Ghana do that could be of benefit for Loudoun.

[03:14:05] There is a huge Ghanaian diaspora in Northern Virginia, about 40,000, many of whom have family and friends who visit and spend money in Virginia. This sister city relationship increases Loudoun's profile and makes it the first choice among these visiting the area.

[03:14:33] For some, this reason, I am in favor of the city relationship. Thank you. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you. My colleagues are telling me, I thought I didn't miss it, but my colleagues are telling me I missed George Tata on the WebEx.

[03:14:49] Did I miss him, Andy? If I did, I apologize. Let me go back to him. He did not call in today. That's what I thought. That's what I thought that you said to me. Again, you guys don't help me, B. Don't help me. Just don't help me. Okay, we're going to go to Donna Machina and Mr. Fekechulam, if you are here, followed by Brian Turner.

[03:15:11] Good evening, ma'am. Hi, I'm Donna Machina, a resident of Loudoun County. I'm an angry resident of Loudoun County, and I'm angry because of the deliberate misinformation and lies permeating out in the public by some irresponsible media sources and groups concerning the Sister City program.

[03:15:28] Former Chair Scott York began the program in 2006 to promote economic development in Loudoun. Funding comes from the Economic Development Authority, contrary to rumors. Travel is not funded by taxpayers. Positive benefits from the Loudoun County Economic Development Department

have included a gold award from the International Economic Development Council, of which the Sister City Program is a part of.

[03:15:53] Our close proximity to Dulles and the data centers give our county an advantage over other localities, and we should use that leverage. I want residents of our county to have a good quality of life, good schools, good jobs, affordable homes, higher education opportunities, safe communities, and so on.

[03:16:11] Why wouldn't I want our elected officials to do all they can to make those goals possible? Rather than being criticized for participating in the program, our board should be applauded in trying to bring more smart economic development and revenue to our county. Thank you. Thank you, ma'am.

[03:16:31] Mr. Vekechulam, you are in the room. Mr. Vekechulam, you will be fine, followed by Brian Turner and then Donna Wadowski. Good evening, Mr. Vekechulam. Good evening. I would like to recognize all the hardworking people out there in observance of Labor Day yesterday.

[03:16:47] And just for the record, I don't think anybody is saying or anybody is against sister cities. Sister cities are, yes, they're not saying sister cities are bad. I think the question here is the judgment, maturity, accountability.

[03:17:04] I think those are in question. They say the cover-up is worse than the crime. Until recently, members of the county board of supervisors have not tried to sell themselves as international diplomats or business development experts, which we are not.

[03:17:26] And now, not one supervisor, but multiple supervisors have gone on a single trip. And they have been caught red-handed, and it's one of the biggest scandals in local government. And our taxpayers, however we spin it, economic development or whatever the case is, they have paid for these trips and their aides, staff aides, a political campaign donor, and others under the umbrella of sister city partnerships without a compelling reason and with no return on investment or jobs.

[03:18:04] and tax revenue paid 100 percent of the bill and you know and many of them have been silent including candidates running for office including my opponent laura tecroni who's running for the little river district supervisor seat who's chair randall's chief legislative aide and this is not a republican democratic or independent issue let me be very clear it's more of like an it's more of an ethical moral and integrity issue i command supervisor umstead's integrity on this issue and support for the policy changes.

[03:18:42] But we need more. It's taxpayers' money, and let's be accountable to the taxpayer. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Vekechulam. So I am told that we have a person who is one of the first 36 back on the line.

[03:19:02] So I'm going to go back to her. Andy, do we have her on the phone? Yes, I have Abigail here. Okay, we're ready when you are, sir. I mean, ma'am, I'm sorry. We're ready when you are, ma'am. I apologize. Okay, no problem.

[03:19:21] Hi, I'm Abigail, and I'm calling to support the trip to Ghana. And I'm calling as a college student, and I heard about this organization through the media.

[03:19:38] And it's unfortunate that while the world is a global village, that some people do not recognize the advantages of working with African student exchange, cultural interchange, and the economic development.

[03:19:57] And it's just how do we really get to know what African countries have to offer if we do not build that community, if we do not try to export what benefits they can give us.

[03:20:20] Okay, thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. All right, I'm going to go back to my list now. Brian Turner, if you're in the room, are you in the room, Mr. Turner? You were going to be speaking about Dominion Power. No, going once, going twice, Mr. Turner.

[03:20:40] All right, then we will go to Donna Wadowski. And I do see Mike Taylor in the room, and then Mr. Higgins, who I think left, actually. Good evening, ma'am. Good evening. Good afternoon, Chairman Randall and the Board of Supervisors.

[03:20:56] My name is Donna Wadowski, and I live in Ashburn. Supervisor Briskman, you held a hate speech forum, which I attended, on June 28th. You said you came from a, quote, white-privileged family.

[03:21:14] What do you call a taxpayer-funded beach vacation to Uroquay at the cost of \$7,000? Your actions are the epitome of white privilege. Chairman Randall, Supervisors Bristman, Sains, and Glass, I am saddened that you would think that it is okay to spend over \$100,000 of taxpayer money on sister trips when there are folks here in Loudoun County that can't make ends meet due to high taxes.

[03:21:51] According to Channel 7, Nick Minnock's FOIA request, the sister city trips did not produce any of Phyllis Randall's \$1.37 billion in commercial investments and 2,500 jobs.

[03:22:10] Nick Minnock said Ms. Randall appears to have exaggerated sister city trips economic benefits. On June 31, 2023, U.S. State Department issued an increased caution in Ghana due to crime.

[03:22:29] Ghana has been facing severe economic and financial crisis with a debt burden assessed as unsustainable. What possible benefit can Ghana provide to the Loudoun County taxpayers? None.

[03:22:45] Enough of the line and enough of the sense of entitlement. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Wadowski. Mr. Mike Taylor, followed by Mr. Gary Higgins, followed by Kwasi, it's K-W-A-K-Y-E slash N-U-A-K-O.

[03:23:10] Good evening, Mr. Taylor. Madam Chair, members of the board, good evening. Hope you all enjoyed your vacation. Also hope I don't get the bill for it. I stopped on my way here and got gas in my car, and I had to decide do I want to use my Sheetz card, my Best Buy card, or my Costco card.

[03:23:26] Funny thing is, all the bills come to the same address, just like spending TOT funds or EDA funds, which are taxpayer funds. Just February, you all funneled \$4 million through them for hotel relief. It's on the record. so you've spent this money on these trips that didn't need to be taken you've traveled the world in luxury now from 1990 to 2017 all my w-2s say county allowed and for the last half of that better than half i had a county credit card in my pocket and you can bet before it came out i had scrutinized

[03:24:02] everything down to nothing i spent a lot of nights when i traveled for training at the motel five and I can tell you, they don't leave the light on for you. So all of this upgrades, tourism, you know, we've got pictures of a board member frolicking in the ocean.

[03:24:18] At the same time, she's trying to extort another \$5,000 in raises on top of what you already voted for the next board coming in. The scandal here is almost as bad as this very building, where the taxpayers voted no on the bond referendum to build this place.

[03:24:37] And the board at the time said, all they said is we couldn't fund it with bonds. They didn't say we couldn't have our building. And a sham corporation was formed, and a lease purchase agreement was entered into, and here stands the building. Full disclosure, it was a Republican board. Now, I also know from my years with the county that evaluations just finished up.

[03:24:57] Somebody should be getting a remediation plan, because after all the hoopla on equity back in January, I saw no diversity in that delegation to Ghana. That's something to think about with all the screaming and all the personal attacks I took for talking about equality and not equity.

[03:25:17] At any rate, I'm going to leave you with about 20 seconds. Have a good evening. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Taylor. I believe Mr. Higgins, has he left or is he still here? He has left. Okay, thank you. Then our next speaker is Pueze, and you will pronounce your last name for me, sir, and you will be followed by Augustine Dula.

[03:25:39] Good evening, sir. Good evening, is my name. Thank you. And I'm a native of Ghana, but currently I live here in the Washington, D.C. area, and I teach at Howard University. It is indeed a joy that Loudoun County has decided to expand its horizon across the globe and found people in Ghana to team up

[03:26:12] with Tema as a sister station. There are so many things that we can all learn from one another. And as a teacher, one of my main interests is the kind of interactions that we have when we meet as people. We learn about ourselves through others. And when we make the necessary connections, we see how well we are endowed as human beings. And I think the approach that you have taken is a step in the right direction.

[03:26:45] We lose money in order to gain money. And sometimes when we do investment, we don't get whatever we want immediately. It takes time before the return on investment is realized. And so I want to celebrate this great move and appeal to all the residents of this great county, which is one of the fastest growing counties in this country, to come together and support these great initiatives because of our children.

[03:27:20] The kind of benefits that we can derive from the exchange programs, the kind of interactions students can get and learn from one another are priceless. And it seems to me, if we don't think about our children and their future, we will be doing them a great disservice long after we are gone.

[03:27:42] And so I salute this board, and I want to hope that this is not the end, but more of these initiatives will take place in the future. Thank you. Thank you, sir. Our next speaker is Augustine, I think it's Dua, followed by Samuel.

[03:28:01] And it sounds like I can't read your last name. I can't quite read your handwriting. So when you come up here, tell me what that is. Thank you. Good evening, sir. Good evening, supervisors. As you rightly say, my name is Augustine Dua. I stayed a little bit in Germany, and I remember one time somebody asked me, I hear in Africa you guys live on trees.

[03:28:27] And I said, you know what? The German Chancellor in Ghana is living on the tallest tree. Why would such a person ask me this question?

[03:28:43] I don't blame him because that is the impression he has created during his upbringing. I recently watched America trying to, when they had a meeting with African leaders, all in a bit to get back the relationship that existed between African leaders and America.

[03:29:08] Recently, the vice president went to Ghana, all in this effort. So when I heard about this sister program with Tema, I thought, hmm, Loudoun is doing something that is great, something America, the whole America is trying to achieve.

[03:29:26] Now you go to Africa, as my sister was saying, you are seeing China, you are seeing Russia, which were not known. Now they are taking over because they see that the potential in Africa is great. And so Loudoun, I think Loudoun has taken a good step of faith.

[03:29:46] It is, as the great book says, a blessing, more blessing to give than to receive. I believe that if Africa is not doing well or other nations are not doing well, and we spend our whatever we have to support, that we're blessing for this county.

[03:30:09] I know it is a great direction, and I applaud the leadership, and I pray that it continues, because I see a lot of benefits. Cultural exchanges, we see economic benefits. Now we have, for example, in Ghana, we have our cocoa, we have all the minerals, and that is what all the other worlds are chasing. Why can't we do that, and why can it not start from Loudoun? Thank you.

[03:30:39] Thank you, sir. So we have time for just two more speakers. Samuel, and I think I'm going to let you say your own last name because I just can't read it. And then Matthew Antle, and I think that would be it for our speakers. Good evening, sir. Thank you.

[03:30:55] If you say your last name for me, I'd appreciate it. My name is Samuel Ajimai. Nice to meet you. Nice to meet you. I speak on behalf of the Sister City Program, and I applaud you for your leadership. This is to develop economic, cultural, and technical exchanges.

[03:31:15] In simple words, I would just quote the motto of the sister cities, one individual, one community, and I applaud you for your leadership. Thank you. Okay, thank you. And then Matthew Anto, wonderful.

[03:31:36] We may actually have time for one more. Good evening, sir. Yeah, good evening. My name is Reverend Matthew Anto. Reverend Matthew, I'm a local pastor, and I stand to speak on behalf of the Sister City Program.

[03:31:52] I've been listening all evening. I'm glad when citizens call their leaders to task as to how much money is spent. It's good. But in anything, there are certain things we spend money on, the benefit doesn't come immediately.

[03:32:13] And I see this as one of them. In 2005, I'm from Ghana. I'm a U.S. citizen. I'm from Ghana. In 2005, I was traveling to Ghana and at London Heathrow Airport, I met a then-lieutenant governor of Maryland, Michael Steele, the county board of PG County, Montgomery County, and about 20 businessmen from Maryland.

[03:32:40] And I said, what are you going to Ghana for? I said, well, the governor wants us to, the governor was Republican, almost all these people were Democrats, wanted us to go to see what business opportunities are there in Ghana for us. you know africa is the fastest growing continent africa is if projections go wrong will be the richest continent because if you have a cell phone if you drive an electric car if you have a solar panel okay most likely the minerals and materials you're using are from africa so it is in our

[03:33:15] interest as a people to see to what is going on in africa if you're going to be honest some of us here have impressions of africa that are not really true you know and i'm not asking for everybody in the county to travel to Africa to know what really experience the African has.

[03:33:33] But I would at least want the policy leaders to know what it means to be an African. Because the majority of your constituents come from Ghana, and it's growing. I've been listening, and people are saying, well, it was taxpayers' funds or not. Even if it had been taxpayers' money used, it would still been worth it. It's still worth it. Tema is the first planned city in Africa. It has an oil refinery. It has a harbor that can, any ship can go there, including super tankers. Nestle, a Swiss

[03:34:12] company, has a plan there. The company that makes KitKat has a plan there. Sir, can I? Reverend, I'm sorry. No, I, when, when time's up, I actually do stop you. So thank you very much, but your time is up. appreciate it though I know but I I stop okay supervisors first of all everyone everyone thank you for coming out everyone we're going to do now was we're going to do board comments and then we're going to take up the the the the item of the public travel policy item so first we're first we're going to do board comments and since he I just want to make sure I get him and he's not in

[03:34:52] room i don't want to miss him i'm going to call first and mr buffington mr buffington oh i'm sorry board comments and disclosures yes mr buffington i'm sorry thank you madam chair i have no required disclosures and no comments other than to thank all the speakers who took time out of their busy lives this evening to come and talk to us about various issues thank you thank you sir Thank you, Madam Chair.

[03:35:19] I have one disclosure, which is an August 24th meeting about Aligned Data Centers with Colleen Gillis, Amanda Williams, Jessica Baker, Ryan David, and Dave Robinson and board comments.

[03:35:36] I would just like to thank everybody for coming out. I very much appreciated your comments. Thank you. Ms. Glass. Thank you, Madam Chair. For disclosures, on Wednesday, August 23rd, I met with representatives to discuss the Align Data Center application.

[03:36:00] On Monday, August 28th, I met with representatives from X-Cal to discuss the Russell Branch Car Club application. And for comments with fall now upcoming, I hope everyone had a fantastic summer and are slowly getting back to regular routines.

[03:36:17] the school year of return to in-person teaching. Although it's been a busy first two weeks, I'm excited to be back in the classroom with our students. As your supervisor, I've been equally busy and want to share a few recent events with you all. At the pleasure of holding town hall meetings with the Broadlands and Village Waxpool communities in August, I had positive discussions with both neighborhoods on transportation and land use projects occurring in broad run, county initiatives, and other topics affecting their communities.

[03:36:49] My office is working to schedule meetings with Westmore and Vantage Point, so be on the lookout for when those dates are announced by your HOAs. If you would like me to come out to your community to discuss topics, please email me at sylvia.glass@loudon.gov.

[03:37:07] I also attended Dominion Energy's open house on their proposal to run power lines down Route 7 in Ashburn. I thank all residents who attended the meeting for their engagement in this process. I look forward to continuing to advocate for a route that is the least intrusive to Broadrun residents.

[03:37:29] Information on the proposal is available here at dominionenergy.com/slash/NOVA. The Ashburn Library also recently celebrated their 20th anniversary. It was great to see the many families who came out to commemorate an important occasion to learn the origins of one of our beloved community spaces.

[03:37:50] The Ashburn Library has many exciting events and programs for people of all ages where they can be found here at loudon.gov, I'm sorry, loudon.library, library.loudon.gov slash Ashburn. Also, in August, I attended VACO as well as NACO, so the National Association of Counties.

[03:38:19] During the conference, I attended the Human Services and Education Committee meeting. We voted and passed two platform changes and 12 proposed resolutions. The platform changes were to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which is TANF, so that counties can be permitted to align TANF income eligibility requirements with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

[03:38:43] It's a more flexible policy to ensure maximum coordination and integration between the two programs. The resolutions that we had were urging Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to reduce the immigrant and non-immigrant visa backlog and processing times, improve intergovernmental coordination to connect transitioning service members with county veteran service officers, address food insecurity in military families, guarantee access to federal child nutrition programs,

[03:39:18] support increased federal funding for social and emotional learning, which is also known as SEL, stabilizing the child care industry, urging Congress to decrease the error rate of the E-Verify system, extend eligibility for foster care support, support streamlining administration of federal benefit programs, preserve federal benefits eligibility for participants in county-led income support pilots, urging Congress or the President to establish a federal office of New Americans and create financial incentives to assist individuals

[03:39:55] in paying for out-of-pocket health care services. So for VACO, I attended that, and I attended the Education Steering Committee meeting, and Chair Randall had talked about JLARC.

[03:40:10] In that committee, we received a presentation from JLARC, of JLARC, of Virginia's K-12 funding formula. This resolution was agreed by the State Senate and the House of Delegates to study the true cost of education in the Commonwealth and provide an accurate assessment of the cost to implement the standards of quality.

[03:40:32] One thing that I took note of is Virginia's divisions receive less funding per student than Kentucky, Maryland, and West Virginia, which are border states. It also discussed staffing, cost calculations, funding for at-risk special education, and English language learners.

[03:40:55] The presentation also gave near- and long-term recommendations, and I'm out of time. And thank you all for coming out and speaking. You are. Thank you very much. We actually have five seconds, but okay. Supervisor Turner. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[03:41:11] I'm going to save my disclosures for my next meeting because I have some stuff I want to say. First, I heard a lot of misinformation, disinformation that's been banded or out by irresponsible reporters and irresponsible press over the last month, so I'm just going to talk facts. I don't expect they're going to show up in any public reports because they'll be just factual.

[03:41:32] The list that I received from Economic Development Department on the benefits of the International Economic Development Program since 2015 is the list that I quoted from of \$1.3 billion in economic benefits and 2,500 jobs.

[03:41:48] I ironically reported that in a letter to the editor as a direct benefit of the sister city program. After I corrected that in the press, which apparently the press doesn't feel the need to correct themselves

when they make factual misstatements, after I corrected that, I asked, got the list, and for the first time, actually looked at the list.

[03:42:04] Now, it took about five minutes of fifth-grade math to figure out the direct benefits of the Sister County program, and so that may be too much to ask of WJLA and Mr. Minnick. But in that five minutes of math, all I had to do was go down and look at the countries in which the sister city program was operating robustly in those countries when we closed those economic deals.

[03:42:29] Now, as a multifaceted program, the countries in which the sister city program was operating resulted in \$56.43 million. If you assume the Ghana trip of \$60,000, which we know Chair Randall and her chief of staff did not travel on taxpayer dollars, But if we assume, worst case, that's a typical, most expensive trip, and I checked with economic development, and we traveled somewhat less than 20 trips since 2015.

[03:42:56] Worst case, 20 trips times 60,000 a trip is \$1.2 million. So let's do that math. That's a program that costs the county, and again, not taxpayer dollars for Chair Randall and her chief of staff's travel. But worst case, that cost the county \$1.2 million and returned \$56.43 million and created 662 jobs.

[03:43:20] That's a return on investment to Loudoun County of 4,700%. That's a fact. These trips were approved unanimously by the quorum president at the time by the Finance Committee, chaired by Supervisor Umstott. That's a fact. She voted with the majority to approve these trips.

[03:43:38] That's a fact. It was recommended to the board to approve these trips. The board voted unanimously to approve these trips. That's a fact. Supervisor Umstott was in the affirmative vote on that unanimous decision. That is a fact. Now some relevant numbers.

[03:43:55] When I was at the Joint Staff from 1993 to 1997, I was at first the Egypt-Jordan-Libya desk officer and subsequently the Africa branch chief. While I was Egypt-Jordan-Libya, let me talk about Africa first. Over the course of a year, I traveled to Malawi, Mali, actually went to Bamako, which is the capital 60 miles from Timbuktu.

[03:44:19] I wasn't in Timbuktu, but I could see it from the horizon. I went to Malawi, I went to Ethiopia, and I went to Ghana. I stayed in the same hotel that our delegation stayed at, and yes, I swam in the ocean at that hotel, along with Susan Rice, Ambassador Susan Rice, and Deputy Secretary of State George Moose for African Affairs.

[03:44:42] Now, what did we get out of those trips? Well, we didn't upgrade to first class because we were traveling on our own airplane. And what did we get from those trips? We got a goat. We got a ceremonial goat from those trips. But you know what we got within the next three months? we got a donation of six African battalions of peacekeepers for a new concept we designed to have Africa build its own peacekeeping force. It became the largest U.S. peacekeeping mission in Africa, trained 250,000 African peacekeepers, and became the basis for U.S. African Command.

[03:45:17] When I went to Jordan, I spent a two-day seminar with then Crown Prince Abdullah. He's now King Abdullah of Jordan. And on the second day, we took a half a day and went to the ancient city of Petra. And we sightseed. I got some Roman coins from a vendor. We stood in the Colosseum. We had a great time. What did we get out of that trip? Nothing. Not a thing. But you know what happened? Two months later, Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan, which is in effect today and probably has saved tens of

thousands of lives. Diplomatic trips are multifaceted missions over a prolonged period of time. They are personal relationship building. And I want to compliment one of the speakers

[03:45:57] tonight who said, we are so reliant on data center revenue, we would be out of our minds not to be cultivating international revenue from international partners. This is a great program. We have no business playing with it, and I'm done talking about it. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you.

[03:46:15] Thank you very much. Mr. Kirshner. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank everyone for coming out and saying the words you had to say. I have a few things to say about that when we get within the motion on item number seven, and I will talk a little bit about my thoughts in terms of what's going on. I learned a lot from folks tonight, and I appreciate everyone taking the time to come out regardless of what side you're on. In terms of disclosures, August 8th, I met with Cooley LLP and J2 Engineers Magnolia Rose application on August 10th. I met with Cooley and Compass Data centers to discuss noise issues, a compass data center campus in Leesburg. August 15th met with

[03:46:54] Walsh Kalushi and with the Traditions Company about the development proposal. And August 22nd met with Cooley about the Vantage data centers. I had some things to talk about in the news of Catoctin. I think I'm going to forego that and go ahead and talk a little about the item in front of us since there are still some people here. I don't think anyone would dispute that our sister city program is probably not a bad idea that you can debate the merits of what country we have a sister city with you can debate whether we should be involved in that at all I think those are all reasonable debates to have I don't really think most of the folks who spoke tonight nor most of

[03:47:31] the people up here would really would say that's the issue here I think the issue that really arises and I think the concerns that have been brought out by some of the individuals who have spoken, is how we're spending our taxpayer dollars. And I think that's really the issue.

[03:47:49] And we can say it's not taxpayer dollars, it is taxpayer dollars. But I have, as most of you know, I take a pretty conservative view on how we spend our money. And I think we are stewards of the taxpayer dollars, and we hold that in trust. And so even if we have to take a trip or go places, I think we have to take some level of consideration.

[03:48:11] And I think the concern that rises from a lot of the comments is why did we spend as much as we did? Why did we take as many people as we did on these particular trips? And, again, we can look at past trips. That's fine. And we can be critical of those perhaps. I haven't looked at those carefully.

[03:48:28] I know that we didn't have to fly first class. I know because I – many people don't know this, but I happen to be on one of these flights, not because I was flying for the county, but I was actually flying privately to go to Argentina. And I sat in coach, and I paid the thousand bucks that it cost round trip to go on my own private trip, which was planned for over two years in advance. And I think that's really the issue.

[03:48:54] And I don't think anyone up here was necessarily trying to rip the taxpayer off. I don't think that's the case at all. But I do think sometimes we get kind of comfortable in our positions. And it's important, I think, that we all step back, including my fellow supervisors, people in the public, and say, hey, let's take responsibility.

[03:49:14] Let's make sure we're spending our taxpayer dollars well. That's why I appreciate this particular motion that's been brought forward by Supervisor Sainz. I also appreciate some of the

comments that Supervisor Umset has said, and that is let's get back to the basics. Let's make sure we are good stewards of taxpayer money.

[03:49:30] Should we be sending money on the sister cities? I think we probably should to some degree. Should we be taking the kinds of trips that we have been taking in the past? I think we need to take a real close look at that and say we probably shouldn't be spending the kind of money that we did. But there is value in developing economic engines and economic relationships with other countries to some degree.

[03:49:53] And perhaps we as a board should have done a better job in taking a strong look at some of these countries, and I think we will as we go forward when we consider sister cities. Is it really an economic benefit here? Is this country an economic benefit? Is it going to help Loudoun County grow?

[03:50:10] Because our job as elected officials in this capacity is to look out 100% for the people and the taxpayers of Loudoun County. And if it makes sense to spend money there, then we should do it. If it doesn't, we shouldn't. And we should be careful how and when and in what way we spend that money.

[03:50:27] Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Kirshner. Mr. Letourneau. Thank you. By way of disclosures, on August 4th, I met with Sasha Brewer and Randy Minshew of Walsh Colucci and representatives of JLB to discuss Defender West Residential.

[03:50:44] On August 9th, I met with Mike Romeo of Walsh Colucci and the property owners along Hiddenwood Lane to discuss their rezoning application. And on August 23rd, I met with Sasha Brewer of Walsh Colucci and representatives of JLB to once again discuss Defender West Residential.

[03:51:01] In terms of the last few months, I do want to disclose to the board and the public, I was asked by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to serve on a working group that's been put together on Metro funding with representatives from D.C., Maryland, Virginia.

[03:51:18] So I have begun participating in those meetings. Of course, continue on the Metro board. The board will meet on the 14th. The team has been working on next year's fiscal cliff issues, and we'll have some further discussion about that in terms of a strategy as we get closer into September, deeper into September.

[03:51:42] I had a town hall meeting last week at Lunsford Middle School. It was a good turnout. I appreciate the members of the public that came out. We had a lot of discussion about land use. There's a lot of land use applications, as you heard from my disclosures, coming in the Dulles District, and I think there's also the potential for some solutions for some of our transportation issues, which also came up in that meeting.

[03:52:06] In particular, the board is familiar with my pleas for help on Defender Drive and South Browning Boulevard. I do believe that since we last met, there's been two additional accidents at that intersection, and so one of my focuses has been both with the Defender West residential application and with another Defender application to make sure that we can perhaps accelerate a solution to that before we start having even more development occurring in that area because we have a problem today.

[03:52:36] And so I appreciate everybody coming out to speak tonight. I just want to mention, if you have any questions about any trips that I took as a member of the board, I did not go on Sister City trips, but I did go on travel. I have an explanation in my August newsletter, came out last week.

[03:52:55] It's a Q&A. I put out everything I can about those trips, and I'm happy to answer questions if you have them. Thank you. Bye-bye. Thank you, Ms. Letourneau. Ms. Bricksman. Thank you, Madam Chair. By way of disclosures, on July 21st, I met with Mike Romeo about Dogwood Farm Station application.

[03:53:16] My staff met with Mike Romeo about Dogwood Farm Station on August 4th. I had a call with Michael Majestic about Cascades Marketplace on August 7th. I had a meeting with Michael Majestic, Grant Ehot, about Cascades Marketplace on August 21st. I met with Mike Romeo.

[03:53:33] We had a community meeting, actually, about Dogwood Farm Station that was really well attended with Mike Romeo and Ben Miller, who builds affordable housing, on August 22nd. On August 23rd, I had a follow-up meeting about the community meeting with Mike Romeo. My staff met with Vantage on the ZRTD rezoning and broad run on August 28th.

[03:53:55] I, too, attended the VACO Summer Summit. My colleagues talked about much of the stuff that was, you know, high up on the agendas for many of our committees and also the board of directors. Mainly the JLARC study that we're short \$1,900 per student annually, lower than the national average in Virginia.

[03:54:17] West Virginia spends about 25% higher on their students than we do in Virginia. I also sit on the Finance and Now Elections Steering Committee, where we had some discussion about who should pay for primaries, and then also on Governor Youngkin's administration's decision to take us out of the national elections integrity consortium known as ERIC.

[03:54:42] This leaves elections offices on their own to research prime sources and contact different agencies across state lines directly and is going to increase time and resources expended by our elections offices and could lead to more mistakes, not less, in our elections.

[03:55:00] We directed staff to research the benefits and efficiencies of ERIC and report back to our steering committee meeting before November. Four out of Virginia's five border states are still participating in ERIC. ERIC is like a clearinghouse to keep our voting rolls clean.

[03:55:21] And I really think that we should be staying in that system. So I'm hopeful about the report back from VACO staff on that. Fun announcement. We are going to have a new Shake Shack in Cascades Marketplace. Pretty excited about that. and the developers and the owners of Cascades Marketplace have been repairing and painting buildings over this month and next month. So stop by the new Shake Shack and the new restaurants there. It's going to look great. I was really excited to hear that LCPS finally fully eliminated athletic fees for our families so that no longer do we have disparities for families who cannot

[03:56:00] afford that extra fee for athletics which you know we know athletics build esteem they build confidence they build leadership skills they build resumes for our students and now at least for athletics our families will not have to choose between paying for that and maybe paying their grocery bill and their electric bill now hopefully if we're all here again next term I'd like to work on other fees such as marching band theater DECA and all those other sorts opportunities that students should have equal access to. I went last week with DTCI and our

[03:56:35] consultant on a site visit three hour long bike ride on Algonquian Parkway last week to actually feel what's on the ground as far as traffic and transportation during school hours for the feasibility study that my colleagues were kind enough to support a little while back. We learned a whole bunch about traffic patterns on Algonquian Parkway, student bus patterns, student walking patterns, student biking patterns.

It was phenomenal. I really appreciate DTCI putting that together. Lastly, I had a visit on August 16th with our Senior Center. I guess they have a

[03:57:13] monthly new member coffee, and so I was able to stop by the Cascade Senior Center on August 16th and learn all about the services that the counties offer there at the Senior Center. It was really impressive and inspiring. And lastly, on gun violence. So far this year, we have had 485 mass shootings in our country. That's more than two a day. 29,396 total gun deaths have happened this year. 13,000 were homicide, murder, or unintended. 16,368 were suicide. These deaths have included

[03:57:50] 208 children under the age of 11 and a thousand and five teenagers ages 12 to 17. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Ms. Brixman. Mr. Sainz. Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I'd like to thank everybody that came out and spoke this evening during our public comment period. As I always say, during this time, you could be anywhere else, but you chose to be here with us this evening to say what's on your hearts and minds about an issue that is possibly near, that is near and dear to your heart so again thank you so much for taking the time to do so announcements

[03:58:26] like to announce Parkview High School is having a community meeting tomorrow evening at 6 o'clock p.m. the school cafeteria to go over the proposed plans for the rent of the renovations and the new rebuild for Parkview High School so if you're interested in hearing more about the details for the upcoming build of a new school please make sure that to attend tomorrow evening six o'clock in in the school cafeteria in Parkview in Sterling, Virginia, and we're all very excited and happy about this project moving forward.

[03:58:58] In regards to, you know, I'll get into my comments regarding the item when we're there, but just wanted to quickly say, you know, listen to some of the commentary. Some folks were not happy with us traveling. They say it's a boondoggle, okay?

[03:59:15] But if you're not happy with us traveling, then hopefully you have the same feelings regarding the governor who's traveled to South Korea, Taiwan, and while we were in Ghana, went to the Paris Air Show. So if you feel our travel is a boondoggle, I'm hoping you would say the same thing about that travel because that's taxpayer-funded as well from the Commonwealth.

[03:59:37] You pay the Commonwealth taxes. In regards to some folks saying, you know, if you're not happy with our accommodations, okay, we can have that conversation, which actually we will do with the next item. Then I know some people are saying, well, don't waste your time with this item.

[03:59:52] Well, if you're not happy with the way we traveled, in order to review how we traveled and possibly make changes, we have to have the item and have that discussion. So that's what we're doing to possibly see if there's any updates to our travel policy that we can do. So I'll just leave that there and just say also for the sister program, sister city program that has been in existence for quite some time now, way before many of us took our seats here in the Board of Supervisors.

[04:00:20] It's been a well-documented program, even just this past couple of weeks. I've been receiving emails from LCPS asking for host homes for exchange students coming from Germany, and guess how we got that program, which a lot of people talk about and want to raise their hand to host the exchange students coming from Germany, was from the Sister City promotion and project.

[04:00:43] We have German students come here. We send our students there for a period of time. So possibly we can do the same thing with Ghana, possibly we can do the same thing with Uruguay and the

other programs that we have an agreement with. I think that's a good thing and I know people actually like this program because people sign up left over and over again to host the German exchange students when they come in September and October time frame every single year. And then lastly I'll just quickly say this that finally I'll take the moment to address my colleagues. I have tremendous amount of respect for everyone sitting on this dais and would like to request that we extend professional courtesy to one another moving forward. The sister city

[04:01:22] trip to Ghana was discussed on several occasions including at our finance committee and at the board meeting level. I know some people said we were caught red-handed and not disclosing the travel. That's not true. We disclosed this travel numerous times actually and the sister city partnerships.

[04:01:39] It was also discussed here at our state of county address where several board members were intended sitting up here when the announcements were made and everybody stood up and gave a thunderstranding ovation applause to announcing that we're going to Uruguay or going to Ghana and had members from the embassy of Ghana the embassy of Uruguay here in this very room no one has previously had an issue with the sister city program again like I said has been in existence for nearly two decades at no point during our discussions in finance at the board level meeting or the state of the the county

[04:02:13] address nobody raised any concerns or questions about either trip to Ghana Uruguay in fact the first instance that I heard of so-called concerns were in the last few weeks in the media. I just want to encourage my colleagues to reach out to one another prior to making statements in the media if you truly, if you genuinely have a question or concern. I shouldn't have to hear about it in the media interview. We all have each other's contact information. Pick up the phone or send an email

[04:02:43] to us if you truly do have a concern. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Sains. Okay. There are times when people don't want the truth. They don't want the facts. They don't want the answer because they want the issue. At this moment, in this campaign season, there are people who don't want the answer. They want the issue. I was in Middleburg a couple of days ago at a town hall, and a little lady came over to me, and she said, did you go on that Ghana trip? And she was busting me out, and she was an

[04:03:17] older lady, and so my response to her was, yes, ma'am, no, ma'am, yes, ma'am, no, ma'am. And I said, ma'am, May I ask you, do you have an issue of any elected official traveling anywhere at any time? And she said, yes, no one should ever travel. So I said, so then Mr. Youngkin traveled to Taiwan and spent \$224,000.

[04:03:36] How did you feel about that? And she started laughing, and she said, well, that's okay, because he's in my party and I'm a Republican. And she laughed, and I laughed, and we laughed about that because, you know. One of my colleagues said not long ago that this is how we're being treated right now, how I'm and Democrats are being treated in the media is how Republicans are always treated in the media. And so kind of, we're getting, we're getting what we get because how's that, how's it feel? A door knocker said, said, said to us, me recently, I know it's BS, but it's a way to take you down. Okay. That's pretty honest, actually. It's like we're living in a world where truth

[04:04:15] does not matter at all. The issue is more exciting. The issue gets more clicks. The issue stirs people up. The answer, the truth, is just not very salacious, so it's not very interesting. So even though a reporter actually knows that, yes, my predecessor took 19 trips in 11 to one country, and even though they know that I changed that policy, and Mr. Kirsten, with all due respect, you were not correct. Restricted

TOT money is not taxpayer money. I'm happy to walk that through with you, but it's not. Even though he knows that's all true, this is what he's reported.

[04:04:51] And I think the worst part about all of this has been the attacks on county staff. Our county staff is excellent, and the attacks on county staff has been horrible. Over the past month, I have been called every name you can possibly imagine.

[04:05:09] If you can imagine a racist name, I have been called that. If you can imagine a sexist name, I have been called that. I have been called everything that you could possibly think of. And as all this is happening, people are giving me advice. Some people are saying, you have to answer every lie.

[04:05:26] You have to answer every false statement. Other people are saying, don't explain anything, because if you're explaining, you're losing. What I realized is this. People who want the facts, people who want the answers, they receive those facts. But the people who want the issue, facts are irrelevant.

[04:05:44] There have been two pieces of advice that have been really helpful for me. One came from somebody who's on this dance with me right now. He said to me, always remember who you are. I love that. Always remember who you are. As it turns out, for me, I don't just remember who I am.

[04:06:02] I remember who I am. And that, for me, is pretty important. I know this right now about myself. I can look in the mirror. I can look at my children. I can look at my constituents, and I can stand before my God, because I know that what is being said about me and my colleagues and county staff is not true.

[04:06:22] And that there are people who are reveling in their ignorance while ignoring the truth because they don't want the issue, the answer, they want the issue. The other statement came from a friend of mine who said, you know, Phyllis, robbers don't break in the empty houses.

[04:06:40] I'm just leave that one there and let you all ruminate on that one by yourselves. Robbers don't break in the empty houses. So let me tell everybody what I'm now going to do. I'm going to do my job. I'm going to do the job that I absolutely adore.

[04:06:58] I wake up every morning. I am thrilled to still be the chair of Loudoun County, Virginia. I'm going to do the job that I adore in the county that I love for the people that I greatly respect. Whether those people are people who want the issue or people who want the answer, I'm going to do my job.

[04:07:21] And as always, I thank you for allowing me to be your county chair. Thank you. Supervisor Sains, we have an item that's a board member initiative. BMIs, just for everyone's knowledge, on a BMI, there is no staff because it's written by a board member and put forward by a board member.

[04:07:45] So I'm going to, what I usually do and normally do for a BMI, is I turn to the person whose BMI is being put forward, and this moment is Mr. Sains, give you a quick three minutes to explain the BMI and then go to a motion that is normal behavior how I always do a BMI nothing's changing Mr. Sains I can make the motion then speak after if that's okay it's up to you yeah I'll like to do that that's fine I move that the board of supervisors direct staff to research business travel policies for board members and board staff aides and return to the finance government operations and economic development

[04:08:22] Committee meeting in November, or when the item is ready, with findings and recommendations. Second. Motion's been made, and secondly, we have Supervisor Turner. Discussion on

the motion, Mr. Sains. Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide a bit more context on this board member initiative.

[04:08:39] Over the past few weeks, I've received inquiries from the community regarding the Sister City trip to Ghana and business travel overall due to some misleading coverage of our new Sister City agreements in Ghana and Uruguay. The Sister City programs have been in effect since 2005, predating my tenure as a supervisor and through the course of the program, and board members have utilized the county's travel policy as a guide for travel plans.

[04:09:04] In preparation for the trip to Ghana, I, too, followed the county policy for lodging, food, and transportation. My office didn't book the transportation, the county staff did, and they followed the policies that were in place. While I did not violate any policies with my accommodations for the sister city trip to Ghana after receiving a few inquiries from constituents and taking in their feedback, I wanted to look into our policy more to see what could be improved.

[04:09:28] What I found was that our policy is fairly comprehensive, and if anyone caught the Loudon Now article from last Friday, some of Loudon's travel policies are actually more restrictive than the federal rules. It does not technically address the board and the board aides. It only addresses county employees.

[04:09:44] If you look at the structure of our county government, the Board of Supervisors and the aides are separate entities from the county employees. And there are several reasons for that. And I feel that we should remain consistent with our structure. And the intent behind the item is to address the feedback that we received to update our travel policies, but to do so in a way that is reflective of our governing structure and the way that we operate everything else.

[04:10:07] As you can see in the item's description, this BMI is not prescriptive. I'm not seeking any particular rule change at this time. I would like for more information on the best practices and trends across the region and around the country, including looking at the state and federal levels.

[04:10:23] If there's a better way to do things, I want to know about it. And I remain completely open to hearing from what staff brings back to the table in November or when the item is ready to be received by us. Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Umstop. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate what Vice Chair Sains is trying to do.

[04:10:43] I also appreciate some of his remarks. I must say that I appreciate my colleague towards the other end of the dais, who is very passionate in his statements, but often I think that passion clouds his memory because the motions that the board and the finance committee passed did not authorize travel.

[04:11:07] They authorized sister city relationships. That is how those motions read. I'm looking at them right now. So, as you all know, I sent you back around July 27th a proposed change to the rules for board member and board staff travel and requested that this BMI be brought forth at our very next meeting on September 19th.

[04:11:38] The goal of that is more extensive than the goal of Supervisor Sane's motion. The goal of what I will be bringing forth on September 19th is to have Board of Supervisors oversight prior to the authorization of any trip.

[04:11:59] Because it became very clear to me that the media through FOIA had more information about the expenses of these trips to Uruguay and Ghana than any of us on the board had.

[04:12:20] That needs to end. We need to have travel approved by the board, both to personnel going, expenses, and also itinerary, so that we don't run into the firestorm of public outrage over future trips that we have run into with these two trips.

[04:12:37] It also would require that we fly economy, as many federal officials do, even on long trips. It would require that we stay at moderately priced hotels, which is what most federal officials do.

[04:12:56] We should not put ourselves above the federal government when it comes to relationships with foreign countries. It would prohibit us charging the taxpayers for oversized baggage fees. It would also prohibit us taking personal advantage of sky miles or hotel discounts for which the taxpayers paid money.

[04:13:19] And it would recommend strongly that we limit our trips to one to two days, those days being the essential ones for doing business, so that there wouldn't be days off. For those reasons, I don't think Supervisor Sane's motion accomplishes that, and I regretfully will have to oppose it.

[04:13:40] Thank you, Ms. Umstead. Your time's up. Well, we don't have clapping in the boardroom, but thank you anyway. Ms. Bricksman. Thank you, Madam Chair. We would be practicing economic development malpractice if we were not to leverage the fact that we have an international airport in Dulles and leveraging the International Airport for Economic Diversity helps our entire economy and helps the airport. If our award-winning Department of Economic Development, Visit Loudon, and Economic

[04:14:18] Development Director, believe that having a couple of us along on that trip to help build relationships, I'm happy to join and offer my support. And Chair Randall, I really think you should be commended for expanding our horizons with these sister county relationships.

[04:14:41] And I know that you said people want the issue, but the issue is, I think, broader than we have even talked about yet here today. And I'll just say, why did we hear no uproar about multiple trips to Germany and Europe, But we suddenly are losing our minds about a trip to Africa.

[04:15:15] What's the difference? On transparency, this item was on two public agendas. Our sister county agreements were on two public agendas, on finance committee and at a full board meeting.

[04:15:37] If any one of my colleagues or the public had questions about how these trips were planned, vetted, financed, they could have asked questions then at two public meetings.

[04:15:54] And by the way, they passed both meetings unanimously with no questions. On accountability, we followed every policy that is set forth in our rules.

[04:16:14] Nobody questioned those policies. Nobody questioned those policies when Chair York went to 11 times to Germany. The process of determining what will be a sister county is rigorous, thorough, involves economic development, involves outside resources, involves staff in our offices.

[04:16:42] We just don't go willy-nilly and, like, throw a dart at a map and decide to do this. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm out of time. I'm sorry I wasn't looking up. Ms. Glass? thank you madam chair um i will be supporting this initiative and i look forward to seeing and researching two of their governmental travel policies i think this is very important that we continue with this uh with the sister um with the sister program i think uh as many others have said

[04:17:21] that this is a process so for people to think that you're going to immediately see some type of return on it um that that that's that's not even a responsible thought process i mean i've spoken to many um uh people in business who had talked about um the process that they go to in order to

[04:17:53] um to gain businesses so i think we are we've been following the rules that we've had and so If there are some things that we need to change, I'm fine with it. We look to see what the travel policies that they align with the state and or the federal government use.

[04:18:16] I'll wait to see what our staff has to say with the research and then make that final decision. Thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. Kirshner. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to support the motion, but I appreciate a lot of what Ms. Umstead has said, and I will support her emotion as well when it comes to us in the next business meeting because I think it's super critical, and I think that's why the people are here.

[04:18:42] A lot of people are talking about, you know, we want to make sure that things are spent well, but we also want a Sister City program. I heard that from both sides, but the one thing I think that's really missing from most of my colleagues up here as well as a lot of folks who spoke is this is not an attack on the Sister City.

[04:18:57] As much as has suggested that somehow we shouldn't have a sister city program or we shouldn't try to develop or have economic development, that is not at all what's being said. The concern that's being put forward is how are we spending our money?

[04:19:14] And I think every time we spend money, we need to take into account how are we spending the money, how much money are we spending, are we spending too much, are we spending first class tickets or whatever. And maybe that's part of our policy. And if that's part of our policy, then we should probably not have that, which is what supervisor Umstead has suggested.

[04:19:42] I know that congressmen have to travel coach and should generally do that. And again, it's about being a, it's about taking seriously the trust of our taxpayer dollars and just making sure that we are honest and upfront and it doesn't have anything to do with whether or not we have a sister city program or not. I think that's what we keep talking about.

[04:19:59] And really, what's malpractice is not economic malpractice. That's important. But it's a balance in all of this. And we need to balance how we are spending our money. And that's what I think really the debate has been. And we can have that open and robust debate.

[04:20:14] And I know we're taking various defensive positions. I don't think that's the purpose. The purpose is something got brought to our attention. It's become a big media concern. And we need to address it. And that's what we as supervisors do. And so I will favor this, but this motion is only a very, very small portion of what we need to look at in terms of how we conduct our travel, who gets to travel, and I think it's a very good idea for this board to have oversight on that, and that's why I do appreciate what my sumstead will be bringing forth.

[04:20:42] But part of that analysis, of course, is this motion, and that is, what are other counties doing? And we, quite frankly, should take pride, and we should seek to be more accountable than any other of our surrounding jurisdictions, quite frankly. So I can answer some of those questions.

[04:21:01] I know that – oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Buffington. I'm sorry. Mr. Buffington, I'm sorry. Yes, sir. No worries, Madam Chair, and thank you for acknowledging me. I think this is a worthy board membership. i think it's a good time to look at this obviously a lot of questions from the from the public so there's always a good time to look at something that's concerned about let's look at this it's a good idea to have different travel policy for board members and staff aides than just all

[04:21:34] employees of the county um i'm sorry i'm hearing everything i say right after i say it so it makes it's more difficult to speak. I think a lot of what Supervisor Umstead said has merit, and I think that as part of the process, after whatever comes back from this BMI, we should also consider what she has said, and then have some public input on all of that and see which direction it takes. But I think having a board member and staff a policy on travel is a good idea, and this is a good BMI.

[04:22:11] Thank you. Thank you, sir. So, first of all, the choosing of sister cities is a very long process. It took us two years. And, by the way, when I do my chair's comments, I report on that process during those comments.

[04:22:27] And so there is no way. The media actually got this, not because they sussed it out, but because I give every person in the media a copy of my state of the county address. This was put on the dais. It was put on the dais in finance.

[04:22:43] It was put on the full dais. I invited the ambassador of Ghana and the ambassador of Uruguay to the state of the county address. They stood up. They were clapped for. And I made the announcement I will be leading the delegation to Ghana. And then I sent that state of the county address to every single media outlet in the Washington, D.C. area.

[04:23:03] And so it was absolutely vetted and out there. Mr. Kirsten, just to answer one of your questions, I could tell you, one of our counties, Fairfax County, in many counties actually have offices in their sister county locations.

[04:23:21] And they have people who are staffed in those offices and taxpayer money pays for those offices. The way we do it is different because we are trying to save money so we don't have, we don't put offices in all of our sister county locations. I did change the policy when I came to office.

[04:23:39] I'm sorry, but restricted TOT money is not taxpayer money. It was like literally set up for this event. And you can absolutely go check with the chamber and other sources that all support this use of restricted taxpayer money.

[04:23:57] The hotel we stayed at was the hotel that the U.S. Embassy asked us to stay at. I had actually selected another hotel initially, but the U.S. Embassy wanted us to stay here. In fact, told us we had to stay here for the purpose of safety.

[04:24:13] You are incorrect. Federal officials, our policy is actually more restrictive than federal officials. And federal officials, how they fly is based on how many hours they fly. And so in many ways, our policy is more restrictive.

[04:24:30] And I do want to find out, and maybe this is a question we can ask staff later, for the purpose of this BMI, which I'm happy to support, how does it apply to anyone who's not traveling on taxpayer money, which I do not, and which my chief of staff did not?

[04:24:47] So is it to say, I mean, what do we do with that? And let me just also say this, and I need to say this real clearly. I am not criticizing my predecessor for taking trips and doing it on taxpayer money. I think he set up this program, this sister county program, and it has had good results.

[04:25:08] And so for anyone who thinks I'm criticizing Mr. York, I'm absolutely not. In fact, Mr. York, thank you. Good job. So, Mr. Sainz, would you like a closing? Thank you, Madam Chair. thank you for everybody for the commentary here then we had a nice civil conversation just want to point out also our

current policy states if you fly 10 plus hours you can sit you sit business class or the equivalent that's what it states currently right now in our policy also county staff and the county policies right now state we have to follow room per diem meals per diem per the federal government which we do and the pricing for this hotel I know

[04:25:46] the hotel as it was um put out there in the media again misleading the hotel website says five star yada yada yada but again i would put this a hotel's equivalent to any full service marriott hilton or hyatt in washington dc new york or wherever plain and simple so you can we can have that conversation offline if you want to but it was it's on on par with those so um i hope we can all support this motion have staff do the research bring us back um some trends and best practices around the region, the country, and federal government and see what we come

[04:26:21] up with down the road. Thank you. Thank you. Madam Chair? Yes, Mr. Buffington. I wanted to ask, supervisor. Do you have a point of clarification? I wanted to ask him if he'd set the friendly amendment to add an additional county to the list of comparators that we would be looking at, staff would be looking at, and that would be Arlington County, Virginia.

[04:26:48] I don't think he has any counties in the motion, Mr. Buffington. Yeah, it just says direct staff to research business travel policies for board members and board staff aides return to finance. So I kept it open-ended to your point, Mr. Buffington. We can look at our comp set and go, like I said, nationwide and federal government and state government as well and see what they have.

[04:27:10] So I purposely did not. So in other words, Mr. Buffington, there are no counties listed in the motion. it's a it's a open motion so the staff can do what they think they want to do with it that's true madam chair but on page one of the two-page document under the background section it says research should include but it's not limited to which i understand it's not limited to a portion of it but it does say fairfax prince william montgomery maryland prince george's maryland and frederick maryland and i know that we normally consider arlington county virginia and i just wanted to have that added into the BMI. So would you like that to be added to the

[04:27:49] background? That's okay. Okay but that's not. It's fine I think they will look there but I think it should be added. Mr. Buffington that's not part of the motion so if you'd like the staff to do that as part of the background language that's fine but it wouldn't be a friendly amendment to the motion because those counties are not listed in the motion. Thank you Madam Chair. I think based on what all has been said uh since i've been speaking on this it's clear that wait uh staff should probably look at her like okay i don't think we really need to do anything else sounds like

[04:28:25] there's consistency among the board on that okay thank you mr buffington um mr sayings you just you did a closing okay but this is a point of clarification to the closing one to the question i ask uh is this for any travel even travel that's not on taxpayer revenue and if it's so that's fine I just want to be clear about that.

[04:28:50] And do you want to say committee meeting in November or do you want to say to come back to a committee meeting? Because I don't know what the staff's schedule looks like right now. They may be able to come sooner.

[04:29:05] They may have to come later. I don't know what their schedule looks like. And so if we prescribe this just to November, it may be too prescriptive. can we, can you have a friendly member to say

return to a future finance government operations that come with development committee meeting? Yeah, that's fine.

[04:29:21] Okay, thank you. And then to your other point, would it, I'm fine with what you're saying also, so would it be appropriate maybe to add in the motion where it said board members to put care at large? No, no, it would say board members who were, well, because it says board members who were traveling on tax revenue.

[04:29:39] But that's okay. I'm fine either way. Track revenue, but. I know, but I'm fine either way. I'm just trying to get some clarity for when. So I guess I would ask this. When the staff comes back, whenever they do, can they have both of those discussions? Yes. Okay. All right. Cool. Wonderful. Thank you. And we will take out the November staff.

[04:29:57] Okay. All right. Thank you very much. Motion was made by Supervisor Vice Chair Sains. I think seconded by Mr. Turner. All in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? Nay. That motion will pass 8 to 1 with Ms. Umstead objecting on the motion.

[04:30:16] Thank you very much. Supervisors, that is all except to go back to closed session. However, how about we take a break and then come read back into closed session. How about we do 10 minutes and then come back and read in closed session.

[04:47:47] Am I on? Okay. We are back. We have one more closed session. Well, no, that's not true. We have a continuation of the last closed session. So, Mr. Sainz, can you please read us back into closed session? My pleasure. I move that the Board of Supervisors recess this public meeting and entered into closed session pursuant to sections 2.2-3711-A8 and 829 of the Code of Virginia to consult with legal counsel pertaining to the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement where public funds are being expanded and where negotiations in open session would adversely affect the bargaining position of the county.

[04:48:23] Second by Mr. All right. Motion made and seconded. Discussion on the motion? I think Mr. Buffington has logged off and he's going to not come back on And Mr. Bricksman is leaving for the evening, so it is the seven of us.

[04:48:40] So all in favor to say aye. Any opposed? Very good. That motion will pass 7-0-2. We are back in closed session for the next five, six hours. I will.

[05:31:05] Yeah, well, no, those are pews. Okay, we are back, and we are going to have Mr. Sainz read us out of closed session, please. I move that the closed session be adjourned, that the Board of Supervisors reconvene its public meeting that the minutes of the public meeting should reflect that no formal action was taken in the closed session and further move that the resolution certifying the closed session be adopted and reflected in the minutes of this public meeting. Second. Motions made by second by Supervisor Glass. All in favor of the motion please say aye. Aye. Any opposed? That motion will pass 7-0-2.

[05:31:41] Would everyone please affirm? I affirm. Affirm. Affirm. Affirm. I affirm as well. I do believe that's all for tonight. We will see everyone on Thursday. We are adjourned.



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