



MACHINE TRANSCRIPT • CORAGGIO CONSULTING

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Budget Public Hearing (Session I), Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Date Wednesday, February 28, 2024
Place Board Room, First Floor, Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE, Leesburg, Virginia
Length 30m (video)

- Official meeting video (county, Granicus): <https://loudoun.granicus.com/player/clip/7604>
- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7604

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-19. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:05:30] Well, good afternoon, supervisors, good afternoon, staff, and good afternoon, Loudon. I'm going to call to order the three o'clock public hearing for February 28th. It is our budget public hearing. This room has a hearing loop.

[00:05:46] If you need a hearing assistance, please put your hearing aid to the telecall mode. If you need a headset, we have those available as well. Please see the clerk to request one. The public hearing is to allow members of the public to address the board on the proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1st, 2024, and ending July 30th, 2025.

[00:06:12] fiscal year 2025 proposed budget and the proposed tax rate on real and personal property for tax year 2024 beginning July 1st, 2024 and ending December 31st, 2024. There are three sessions for public comment on the proposed budget. Any member of the public may address the board at only one of our three sessions. If you wish to speak at this public hearing, If you've not already done so, please sign up with the clerk to my left.

[00:06:48] If you have signed up, you will be allowed it two and a half minutes to speak, which is the normal time for public comment. Nothing changes during public hearing during the budget process, two and a half minutes. If you're in the boardroom where your name is called, please come to the podium closest to you.

[00:07:06] You will see the timer on the podium. If you don't mind indicating, give me your name. And if you don't mind indicating, if you don't want to say where you live in Loudoun, just indicate if you live in Loudoun, if you don't mind. If you're providing your comments via phone, I'm going to ask that you use your own stopwatch because you can't see our clock.

[00:07:25] And I won't stop you while you're speaking because to stop people throws you off your kind of your public speaking. It interrupts your flow. But I will stop you when your time is up. So if you clock yourself, I'd really appreciate that. When taking public input, I will go to the people in the boardroom first, and then I will go to the moderator and ask if there's any people on the remote who'd like to speak.

[00:07:49] As of right now, it looks like we have one person to speak remotely. We do have board members who may be at work or trying to get here, so they're not here yet. They may be on their way.

[00:08:04] I will say that board members have assured us that if they cannot attend the public hearing, they will go back and listen to the audio so that they know what things are going on and who was given the opinions on what issues.

[00:08:21] I will ask the moderator, Lisa, can you hear me? Good afternoon, Chair Randall. Yes, I can hear you. Wonderful. We're going to go on and start calling names. I'm going to call your name about three people in advance so you know if you're going to be the next one coming up. Our first speaker is Dr. Gilbert Corolla.

[00:08:39] Our second speaker is Eric Schollwalter. And our third speaker is Betty O'Lear. Dr. Gilbert Corolla, good evening. Good afternoon, rather.

[00:08:55] Yes. Ready when you are. I am not a county resident, but I represent the Loudoun Community Band, which is a 501c3 nonprofit that has been here in the county since 1994. We are a performing arts organization comprised of about 100 volunteers.

[00:09:14] Most of us are not professional musicians. As a matter of fact, we very well represent the diversity of the county. For example, we have lawyers, doctors, engineers, retirees, veterans. You name it, we have it in our organization. We have about three performing ensembles.

[00:09:31] The two largest is a concert band called Loud and Symphonic Winds of about 60 members. We also have a jazz ensemble called the Loudoun Jazz Ensemble. It's a big band of about 20 members. Our greatest challenge has really been to find venues that would accommodate groups of our size.

[00:09:51] And we have been very creative and very active in the community for the past 30 years. We have partnered with Loudoun County Public Schools by providing free workshops for students. We bring in acclaimed artists such as the Canadian Brass. We also offer continuing education credits for any LCPS teacher, music teacher that is, that participates in our organization.

[00:10:15] We've also supported the county annually for the past 25 years by performing at the fireworks celebration at Franklin Park on July 4th. For the past 15 years, we have supported Toys for Tots. Every year, we host an event of which all the toys that we collect go to the 25,000 needy children right here in the county.

[00:10:34] And we also support in other ways, such as performances at retirement communities at Ashby Ponds. So I couldn't stress to you enough how important it is for us to be able to have a venue such as this

notion that's being brought forward. We have been very creative, like I said, but we've had a lot of challenges in terms of finding a place where we could perform.

[00:10:55] I also, finally, I just want to stress to you that I'm hoping that this will be an initial conversation that we have with you, the Board of Supervisors. We've been around for a long time. We want to raise awareness of who we are, so there are some supportive materials you're going to get in your inbox in the next day or so, and I'm hoping to have continued conversations with you in terms of how we can partner with you, raise awareness, and support the community.

[00:11:18] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Eric Showalter, followed by Betty O'Lear. Good evening, sir. Good afternoon. Afternoon, sir. Hi, I'm Eric Showalter.

[00:11:34] I'm a 20-year Loudon resident, and I live in Broad Run District. I'm here today to give my support for a public arts venue that would allow local music groups to have a rehearsal and performance venue here in Loudoun County. My support is based on my own experience as a former board member and musician with the Loudoun Symphonic Winds.

[00:11:51] I was a trumpet player in my youth, but I didn't play after high school. And 27 years later, I picked up trumpet again and I started taking lessons in Leesburg. After spending a year shaking off the cobwebs, my teacher suggested that I find a local community band.

[00:12:09] and that's when I met Gil and joined his group. The band members range from just getting back to it to really talented and exceptional musicians. Some members were high school students who I played with in the Loud and Symphonic Winds who then went on to prestigious music programs at major universities.

[00:12:32] Others were former military band and college band members who joined Loud and Symphonic Winds to stay connected to music. Some of the members were recent Loudoun residents who perhaps moved right out of college and came as a way to connect to the community.

[00:12:50] Others have been in Loudoun County for many, many years and were well into retirement. Okay, so what is the activity level? The band members typically attend a two-hour rehearsal every week and five or six performance weekends per year. A performance weekend will include a full program run-through on a Friday night, and then a live performance on Saturday evening.

[00:13:15] A persistent issue for the board was always securing space. When I started with the band in 2015, rehearsals were held at Parkview High School in their band room on Tuesday evenings, and performances were held at Potomac Falls High School in their general auditorium.

[00:13:31] There were frequently resource conflicts, as each school had its own schedule of band concerts, school plays, orchestra, and choir concerts, but we would adjust. Sometimes we would use facilities at Tuscarora High School. Sometimes we would use facilities at Riverbend. Currently, the band rehearses and performs at Potomac Falls High School, as well as Christ the Redeemer Church in Sterling.

[00:13:53] A dedicated community performance venue would make amateur and semi-professional music programs more accessible to the community without putting resource pressure on other important organizations already managing their own priorities. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[00:14:11] Betty O'Lear, followed by Matt Banner, followed by Jennifer Kionis. Good afternoon. Good afternoon. I'm speaking today on behalf of the group called the Citizens for the Arts in Eastern Loudoun.

[00:14:29] We're not artists. We're not musicians. We're not actors. We're merely a passionate group of arts patrons. And I'm here today, actually, to thank you, the Board of Supervisors, for having begun the process of moving a community center for the arts in Eastern Loudoun from concept to reality.

[00:14:52] This is the first step, hopefully an expedited one, I can say that over and over, an expedited one, in balancing our opportunities for education and enjoyment, along with the places that we already have, our libraries, schools, parks, and other complexes.

[00:15:09] The one thing I have learned since moving to Ashburn is that Loudoun County does everything right, big and right, and what we think is that building this proposed arts center means we will once again be doing things right by adding a much-needed venue where our artists, actors, and musicians can thrive.

[00:15:33] We will be funding a place that is accessible and affordable, that is critical, and one that will benefit all of us both economically and socially. I have attended many performances at schools and churches. I have watched as groups like our Loudoun Symphony and our Loudoun Chorale that have grown so much that they have sellout performances and now are required to do two performances rather than one performance to meet the needs of the community. We recently held a

[00:16:12] meeting of an arts group. There were about 30 people in attendance, arts leaders, and they described what we've just heard, grappling with the problem of finding suitable venues for their work. The new budget, as I understand it, will recognize these new and immediate needs and the dynamics of what I now refer to as our mature Loudoun art world. Julie Andrews once said, feed the body food and drink and it will survive the day. Feed the soul art and music, it will live

[00:16:51] forever. Your public support of an arts venue will provide the sustenance our citizens need and deserve. Let's make this happen. Thank you. Thank you. And Ms. O'Leary, thank you for all the all the work you've put into this effort. Matt Banner, followed by Jennifer Chionis, followed by Laura Stefanielli. Good evening, afternoon, and afternoon, whatever. My name is Matt Banner. I'm a 13-year resident of Leesburg. I'm also president of the Loudoun Symphony Association, and I'm here today to express the symphony's delight that the Capital Improvement

[00:17:28] Program includes funding for the preliminary design of a community arts center in Loudoun County, Eastern Loudoun County. I want to share with you a few points that underscore the need for Performing Arts Center in Loudoun, as well as some considerations that should be factored into the design. As you've heard already this afternoon, currently we have immense difficulty planning our season with the lead time we desire because we can't confirm school auditorium venue availability until the school year actually begins. Last season, the symphony had 350 seats available at each of our LSO concerts. Our final subscription concert last season sold out two weeks

[00:18:04] ahead of time, prompting us to add a second performance of our subscription concerts this season with incredible success. We had nearly 600 attend our season opening concerts, over 900 at our holiday concerts, and Truth in Transcendence earlier this month drew 800, including 450 just a few hours before kickoff on Super Bowl Sunday. Our youth orchestra program has swelled over 130 percent in two years, from 93 students in the 2021-2022 season to 215 musicians now. Their performances draw over 800, and with three of our ensembles sitting in the audience to watch the

[00:18:44] fourth ensemble perform, we fill nearly 1,000 seats in high school auditoriums. Of our fellow arts organizations, the symphony has perhaps one of the largest stage requirements, 40 by 60 feet. We're

excited for the day we'll be able to collaborate with our arts partners in new and novel ways, the Loudoun Ballet or the Loudoun Lyric Opera, for instance. For such an endeavor, the design should include an orchestra pit. And let us not forget rehearsal space. Our four youth orchestra ensembles rehearse weekly throughout the school year, and the LSO rehearses the four Wednesdays before a concert. The performing arts scene is highly diversified and well-supported by

[00:19:20] the community. High-quality arts experiences in the county must be accessible to all, and a community arts center is instrumental in making this happen. If you build it, they will come. So I encourage the board to vote yes on the budget, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. Thank you. Thank you very much. Jennifer Chionis, followed by Laura Stepanelli, followed by Theo Stamatis. Good afternoon. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

[00:19:48] When you think of the arts and where it is celebrated, you think of places like Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, or the New World Center in Miami, home to the New World Symphony, and designed by the world-renowned architect Frank Gehry. These great spaces evoke feelings of beauty, greatness, world-class arts, theater, music, and inspiration.

[00:20:08] Hello, my name is Jennifer Quinonez. I'm a conductor, a pianist, and a musician that lives and works in Cascades, Sterling. I thank you for this chance to speak to you. It's something I'm very passionate about. I'm the conductor of a newly formed and award-winning Inspiro Choir in Sterling, as well as one of the founding contributing members of Canto Vocal Programs, which we'll be putting on an opera this summer.

[00:20:30] I'm here to advocate for Loudoun County pointedly focusing energy and funding for the design and building of a true performing arts center. Loudoun County desperately needs a space for the many performing arts groups and artists that are either presently performing in strip malls, churches, or high schools in Loudoun County.

[00:20:49] I am presently a music director at a church in Sterling, and we receive requests weekly from various groups to let them perform in our space. And I think of the people who may not be Christian that are looking for places and what that means for their groups. Beautiful space, we need a beautiful space to perform.

[00:21:08] This absolutely matters to all of us. The performing arts in our schools are magnificent. I play for many of those choirs and theater departments. They are truly world class, and we should be proud of that. But where is this talent going to go after they graduate?

[00:21:23] For all of our investment in the superb education of our young artists and musicians, What do we have for them as they grow into contributing creative adults? They will go somewhere, anywhere else. Seventy percent of the world's Internet traffic travels through Loudoun County. That's great.

[00:21:39] Percentage of data of the world's Internet comes through Loudoun. What percentage of artists come through Loudoun? And I think that's a good question to ask yourselves. It is very important to me that Loudoun County is regarded not for just the wonderful schools and parks, but that it also is a place for artists of all concentrations.

[00:21:59] If you build it, they will come. There will be businesses and individuals who want to support this mission. There will be patrons and benefactors. We have to simply decide that it is important enough. It is our secular chapel to the human spirit. Thank you.

[00:22:18] Laura Stefanielli, followed by Theo Stamatis, and then we'll go to the remote speaker, Stacy Musien. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, supervisors. Thank you for your time today. I also want to echo thank you for the wonderful management that you have done with Loudoun County.

[00:22:40] I live in the Cascades. I've been in the Cascades for over 30 years in the Algonquian District, so I've seen so many changes, development, and growth, and it's all wonderful. But the one thing we don't have is a performing arts center in eastern Loudoun County.

[00:22:56] I'm here today to speak on behalf of this initiative. I am a singer and a chorale coordinator for a new group called the Encore Chorale of Ashburn. And we rehearse weekly at the Ashburn Senior Center on Thursday afternoons.

[00:23:13] And we have two semesters. And as a new group, we're fine for now at the Ashburn Senior Center, but we hope one day to be as large as some of these other groups and contribute artistically to Loudoun County. And data centers are wonderful, but it would be nice to have a diversified revenue stream as well for our county.

[00:23:35] And the arts are another really good revenue stream to consider. So I don't have as much to say, just to echo what everyone else has said, but I would like to share with you a message from our corral, if you don't mind.

[00:23:59] I'm sorry, it's not coming up. Oh, take your time. Try again. No, you don't. You do not want me singing alone.

[00:24:31] Sing. Well, first of all, thank you for sharing that. And we just learned that Supervisor Kirshner can sing.

[00:24:49] Well, we would love to have you all come to our concert. We, Encore Creativity, the Encore Chorale of Ashburn is one program of many programs in the district, Maryland and Virginia. We have over 1,500 singers, and our group just, oh, I'm sorry, I'm out of time.

[00:25:10] So long, farewell, say goodbye. That gets some jazz hands right there. That gets some jazz hands. Thank you. You made my week.

[00:25:26] You really did. Thank you so much. Theo, you have to follow that. I have to follow that. And then we have Stacey Mucin in, and then we have one more person in the room, Susan Cox. Good evening, afternoon.

[00:25:42] Good afternoon, evening, Madam Chair, members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Theo Stamatis. I'm the Government Relations Manager for the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce, and we reside in the Ashburn District. On behalf of nearly 1,100 Loudoun employers that are Loudoun Chamber members, I would like to express our thoughts on the proposed Latin County budget that is now subject for review by this board.

[00:26:04] For more than a decade, the chamber has made the issue of attainable, affordable housing our top public policy priority. The chamber has successfully advocated for structural changes, many of those adopted by this board, that will provide greater affordability, diversity of housing options for our workforce at all income levels.

[00:26:23] we applaud the board's commitment to building a consistent funding stream for the housing trust fund that has been an important step towards increasing land's capacity to address the housing

shortages in our county the fy 2025 budget proposes approximately 7.4 million or equivalent of half cent of the real property tax rate toward the hdf we urge the board to consider increasing that allocation to the equivalent of a full penny of a real property tax rate and adopt additional policy changes that increase the opportunities for public-private

[00:26:59] initiatives that will increase the supply of affordable and attainable housing units in Loudoun. As our county continues to work through strategic strategies outlined in the Unmanned Housing Needs Strategic Plan, a well-funded housing trust fund is essential to the success of those strategies. Increasing the allocation to the fund now in the future years will allow Loudoun to build a stronger foundation and pipeline for future affordable, attainable housing and development. It will also allow for more flexibility and creativity to address the

[00:27:33] needs of our workforce at all income levels, including those earning as low as 40% of average median income. The chamber also supports additional manpower, Madam Chair, with one position being in DHCD, another one, a dedicated planner that will look at all the affordable housing projects that are coming into the pipeline, more to come there, but we advocate that you all take that into consideration.

[00:28:01] So thank you for allowing the chamber to speak to you all today. Mr. Tomatis, thank you. Thank you so much for that. Thank you. Stacey, on the, Lisa, we're going to go to the virtual, it's Stacey Muirson, I think it is, and then in the room would be Susan Cox, and that's the last speaker we have.

[00:28:20] Chair Randall? Yes. Pardon me. Our remote speaker, Stacey Mewson, has not called in, and I have no other callers online. Thank you. Then our last speaker will be Susan Cox. Good afternoon. Hello. My name is Susan Cox, and I live in Sterling.

[00:28:39] Both of my children are proud alumni of Parkview High School. I'm concerned about spending, budget, and taxes, like most concerned citizens. I implore you to be wise, be thrifty, make sound financial decisions, be good stewards of taxpayer money get rid of waste and redundancies make sure you don't fall into the trap that booker t washington feared quote there is a certain class of race problem solvers who don't want the patient to get well because as long as the disease holds out they have not only an easy means of making a living but also an easy medium through which to make

[00:29:17] themselves prominent before the public end quote booker t washington fund programs that unite over programs that cause division. Choose merit, excellence, and character. Pay particular attention to the Loudoun County Public Schools and school board issues. Listen to learn. And thank you.

[00:29:36] And thank each and every one of you for your service to this fine, wonderful, diverse community. And due to all the musical interest here today, I want to encourage everyone to support local live music. There is a big band. I want to invite everyone to come out. It's called Swing Shift.

[00:29:57] It's an 18-piece big band. They play the first Tuesday of the month at Trungo's, which is right up there, about a block away. There's no cover. They have great food, and they play the first Tuesday of the month from 7.30 to 9.30. Also, during their second set, musicians are welcome to sit in with the band.

[00:30:22] So there's a homeschooler who will drum pretty much all the time and other college students or high school students. You just talk with the band leader and you can find that it's a fun way to enjoy live music here. Thank you so much. Thank you, Ms. Cox.

[00:30:38] Appreciate that. Supervisors, that is our last speaker. Nobody will sign up, correct? That is our last speaker. So I will adjourn. We will adjourn and we will reconvene at 6 o'clock. We are adjourned.



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