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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee, Thursday, July 25, 2024

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- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7718

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[00:03:43] morning. Chair Randall, can you test your audio and video, please? I'm sorry? Oh, I just wanted to test your audio and video. Can you hear as well? I can. Are you asking me, can I hear you? Yes, can you hear us? I can hear you, but you sound a little brainy. You sound, you sound straight. Yes,

[00:04:05] I can hear you. Okay, thank you so much. Good evening, and welcome to the July meeting of the

[00:07:48] Finance, Government Operations, and Economic Development Committee. I will now call the meeting to order. This room has a hearing loop. If you need hearing assistance, switch your hearing aids to telecoil mode if you need a headset we have those available as well please see the clerk to request one pursuant to virginia code section 2-2-3708-3 and the board's rules of order chair randall has requested to participate in this meeting by electronic communication physical quorum of the finance committee is present in the boardroom and the committee's made arrangements for the voice of chair randall to be heard by all persons in the worm chair randall made this request within the required time frame and the county attorney determined that chair randall's

[00:08:25] request meets the qualifications to participate remotely the committee will record that chair randall participated remotely from a private location in her residence in loudon county due to personal reasons chair randall can you hear us okay i can hear you just fine all right excellent we have six items proposed for the consent agenda and they are item three quarterly report upcoming contracts first quarter fy25 item four 2023 animal advisory committee annual report Item 5, Amendment of Existing Home Ownership Loan Programs and Creation of New Home Ownership Loan Program.

[00:09:01] Item 6, Implementation of Intelligent Transportation System Equipment on Route 7. Item 7, Luckett's Community Center Structural Renovation Supplemental Funding Request. And item 8, Location and Design Endorsement, Route 7 and Route 287 Interchange Improvements. I will move adoption of the Consent Agenda.

[00:09:17] It's seconded by Supervisor Briskman, who beat me to even asking for it. any discussion on the consent agenda uh supervisor brisbane thank you no i just wanted to note the intelligent transportation system equipment on route seven um that's going from algonkian all the way out to catoctin and um i was excited to read about that i'll be interested in the updates and i was also excited to see that we actually are kind of recycling equipment for that so when i looked at the cost it was not astounding um and hopefully it helps things on route seven

[00:09:54] thank you any other discussion seeing none all unfair the motions say aye aye anyone opposed the motion carries 5-0 all right we have a pretty light agenda this evening i think we'll go pretty quickly but as always we are delighted to have mr riser here in person with us for our monthly department of economic development reports and i'll keep the theme with a light report tonight. Not with you, Mr. Reiser. Take as much time as you would like. We are a little over

[00:10:33] a year into the Launch Loudon program, and year one exceeded all targets, including counseling hours, event attendance, business visits, and minority business engagement. We hosted two cornerstone events, the Innovation Challenge and the Small Business Summit, and highlighted our entrepreneurs during Loudon's annual Small Business Week. Some of the metrics are included in your item today. The department, once again, this year exceeded every single tract metric throughout the department, ending the year with over 160 wins, more than 5,000 jobs,

[00:11:09] and more than \$7.8 billion in investment. Nationally, the economy grew 2.8% in the second quarter, slightly more than expected. And we won't have the information for the local for a couple of months from now, but we expect that we grew significantly more than that. Nationally, jobs increased by 206,000 in June, which was close to expectations. May is the most recent month for local unemployment data. The rate was 2.4 for Loudoun compared to 2.6 for Virginia, 4.0 for the U.S. The most recent jobs report released in early July showed unemployment ticked up to 4.1 for the

[00:11:48] U.S. in June. The next monthly CPI report will be released on August 14th. The July report showed prices in June were up 3.0 compared to the year before. That's down from 3.3 percent in May and 3.4 percent in April, so it's definitely heading in the right direction. An item of concern, according to today's U.S. drought monitor map, 86 percent of Loudoun County is under severe drought conditions, and all of the rural policy area is under severe drought or extreme drought conditions.

[00:12:23] Loudoun's rural policy area is comprised primarily of small to mid-sized livestock farms, hay, forage operations, and specialty crop farms, and the current drought is placing hardship on the county's producers. Producers are having to truck in water and install alternate water sources since creeks and

stockponds are drying up. One farmer we spoke with is spending money on extra labor to fill wagons from their well on the farm to deliver it to the pastures.

[00:12:50] Feed corn producers are in danger of losing significant portions of this year's crop. One producer notes that corn growth has been stunted at the tassel stage due to the lack of water and years of corns are not being produced. He estimates a 50 to 60 percent loss on feed corn.

[00:13:07] Blueberry producers have been seeing their production cut by 25 percent. beekeepers has seen a decrease in honey production and loss of hives. One beekeeper noted that his honey output dropped from 1,200 pounds in 23 to only 800 pounds this year. I had the conversation with Chair Randall the other day. She was very supportive of some initiatives that we were talking about. We are currently putting the finishing touches on a plan for a drought relief program that will include education, assistance, and grant funding. We will be announcing more

[00:13:44] details on this program in the next couple of weeks, hoping to leverage some of the USDA money that's out there and providing some short-term relief for our farmers. This is something that we think needs to happen as quickly as possible and hoping to get money into the hands of our farmers by early this fall. And with that, I'm happy to take any questions. Okay.

[00:14:09] Questions? Supervisor Bisper. Thank you. Have the drought conditions been recognized by the federal government? Do you think there'll be anything coming along those lines? We do, but we don't anticipate, you know, as with many federal grant programs, that the money will be available until after the first of the year. And so we think that it's important, like we did with the COVID relief, getting that money to them in the interim uh will be uh you know a lifeline to survival i'm fully supportive by the way um the the metrics look really great um would you say that the 2022 metrics were still a little

[00:14:48] bit depressed or or um sorry is it was it the 23 or the 22 i was looking at um well i'm sorry yeah so like retail sales q4 22 versus q4 23 would you say the 22 numbers were still a little depressed Yeah, it's been a steady climb back.

[00:15:08] I mean, the numbers right now are pretty strong. You know, there's been a lot of money put into the market through the federal government. You know, I do worry that some of that's been artificially, you know, inflated because there's so much money in the market.

[00:15:27] But we do realize that savings overall are down a little bit. So there should be a leveling at some point. But overall, the consumer sales have been pretty good and pretty steady throughout the last year or so.

[00:15:46] Okay. And the launch loud numbers are fairly impressive. Do you think we'll be getting some more, like, hard data out of that at some point? Like how many more employees were hired and how many more new businesses were started? How much revenue was, you know, infused into the economy because of Launch Loudon?

[00:16:05] Yeah, absolutely. We will have an annual report that will come out that will include all of that information. Oh, okay. Yeah, we're just now closing the books and doing a full audit on all of our information. So we'll have an annual report that will come out with all of that information in it.

[00:16:21] Perfect. And then did you use language assistance for some folks that might have language barriers in that? We do. We use full language assistance for all of our programming. Awesome. All right.

Thank you so much. Any other questions for Mr. Reiser? Supervisor Umstead. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[00:16:37] Hi, buddy. Thank you for focusing on the farmers in this time. I'll just get to all your other metrics look great. I compared your May 2024 metrics with your May 2019 metrics, and it looks like we're significantly ahead of where we were pre-pandemic, which is really great to see.

[00:17:04] Do you anticipate that your major effort in relief to the farmers will be focused on getting them water? Is that what the financial assistance would be? And I assume you're networking with Loudon Water on this effort?

[00:17:23] We actually think that there's multiple things that are probably going to be part of this. Certainly, there's some water issues that we'll need, and some farmers will probably need to get water. I think there's some that's going to, they're going to need manpower in order to, because they need extra labor to get the water, too.

[00:17:44] I mean, they have water in the wells or in their ponds, but they need the manpower to get the water to the crops. I think that there's some hay issues. You know, there's probably only going to be one round of hay this year as opposed to two rounds you would normally get.

[00:18:02] So some of our equine industry partners are going to probably have to buy hay from out of market, things like that. I think that there's going to be some feed issues with the corn not coming through this year. So I don't think it's smart to make it too narrow or to require a certain use.

[00:18:26] I think that things like this really is dependent on the kind of farm that it is and make it as broad-based for their uses as possible. Going forward, do you anticipate, I know you don't know for sure, but that we might face this issue for many years in a row?

[00:18:47] And do you think we need some kind of infrastructure project, not necessarily anything new built, but a way to get farmers relief during drought periods? Well, we haven't had a drought like this in recent memory.

[00:19:05] I mean, I think back to 2019 when our problem was the exact opposite. We had so much rain that we had too much water and we were losing especially the grapes because it was too wet. You know, I think that this is just, you know, it's a very cyclical thing.

[00:19:23] And our goal is just to be able to react as quickly as possible to whatever situation is faced in front of us. We work very hard to stay in front of our farmers, in this case, and try to make sure that we understand what the issues are.

[00:19:41] We were out walking the farms on Monday, talking to the farmers. We've been networking with them all week, trying to get their input on what we're doing, working with our partners at Farm Bureau and Soil and Water and VCE and, you know, all of the different organizations, just trying to understand where are the needs, where are the help, and, you know, talking with Chair Randall, talking with Mr. Hemstreet and Ms. McClellan, you know, trying to come up with the best possible solutions. So I think we have a pretty good plan in place. I can't

[00:20:17] speak to infrastructure at this point. I think we would be looking for more of a trend before we would make that kind of an investment. Thank you. Chair Randall, anything from you? No. Buddy and I have, Mr. Reiser and I, rather, I'm sorry, have had this discussion fairly in-depth.

[00:20:36] And so I absolutely support efforts. I think, you know, as we deal with climate change, we're going to see this a lot more, to be honest. And so we may need to get some ideas going forward. Okay. Thank you.

[00:20:51] Mr. Sainz. Yeah, real quickly, Mr. Buddy, You don't have to go into specifics, but I think a couple of weeks back, we received an unsolicited request for property out west for equestrian type of use. Did we ever follow up?

[00:21:07] And again, without going into much detail, were we able to connect with those folks and see what our prospects were? Yes. Ms. McClellan and I have responded to that request. And we might have a potential, possibly.

[00:21:24] I think we had 10. We had 10 properties that we responded with. Okay. Very good. All right. Well, please keep us updated. Okay. Will do. Good to hear. All right. Thank you. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Reiser. Thank you. Enjoy your evening.

[00:21:39] Thank you. Okay. Next up is our quarterly report on capital improvement projects.

[00:21:52] Do you have a presentation to start with? No presentation, but I do have a couple words to go through.

[00:22:10] Yep. So good evening, Chair Letourneau, members of the committee. We're here to present the quarterly report for capital improvement projects for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, which is the April through June timeframe. Along with me tonight are Nancy Boyd, Don Breedice, and Mark Hoffman.

[00:22:28] As we noted last quarter, to coincide with the new fiscal year next meeting, the next quarter of the report will be featuring a new format for the project pages, which we hope will more clearly deliver the project information. And lastly, following up on some comments from June's transit summit, as well as the strategic initiatives retreat.

[00:22:52] We wanted to highlight the status of a few of our transit and transportation programs and describe the progress meeting being made on each of them. The local fixed route bus stop improvement program, or sometimes referred to as the ADA bus stop improvement program, was created to upgrade existing bus stops within the transit system to meet current ADA accessibility requirements.

[00:23:19] The project designs and constructs landing pads for the bus stops as well as accessible pathways to the landing pads. The program consists of 273 bus stop locations where currently 51 of those projects have been completed, seven are under construction currently, and 92 are in land acquisition.

[00:23:39] 40 are in with the agency for review and 83 are in design. So as you can note, a bulk of those are in land acquisition phase, and a consultant has been brought on to assist the team in developing offers and getting through that land acquisition process.

[00:23:55] Once that's complete, they should break free a large portion of the projects, and our construction team is ready to take those on. The Silverline bus stop installation, this program constructs bus stop landing pads that are accessibility compliant at the bus stop pad, and it's for the new bus stops associated with the Silverline bus routes.

[00:24:22] The program consisted of 149 bus stop locations. Six of those were developer bus stops that we added signs to, so those were more or less the easier ones. 32 landing pads were entirely within right-of-way, and those have been completed.

[00:24:42] 32 are seeking right-of-entry agreements, and 75 have been accepted by VDOT and now are being transitioned to land acquisition. And there are four stops that are entirely on private property, and those are requiring agreements with those private property owners.

[00:24:58] Again, as I noted, a bulk of those are now with the land acquisition phase, and the team has procured a consultant to assist the management of that land effort to handle that large influx of negotiations and offers to be made.

[00:25:15] The bus shelter program, this added bus shelters to existing bus stops. And the program initiates 20 bus shelters per year, and the program envisioned those to be delivered in three-year cycles, with one year taking for design, one for land acquisition, and then the third year for construction.

[00:25:36] Funding for the design was first allocated in fiscal year 24, so we are through our first year now of that program. In that year, we have worked with DGS and Transit Services on developing a prototype bus shelter that we would use for our projects, and we are developing the specifications for that bus shelter.

[00:25:59] The prototype bus shelter will then be site adapted to each location with site plan and permits being developed or submitted for on those. So while we were slightly behind on that first year and moving into land acquisition, a lot of that upfront design work and initial effort to select the prototype will benefit us on the future shelters where we won't have to go through that process anymore.

[00:26:24] We can go straight to site adapting that to the actual stations, so bus stops. The sidewalk and trail program, this was established to develop three to five miles of sidewalks and trails per year on a continuous basis. The segments were prioritized based on need with initial funding starting in fiscal year 22.

[00:26:45] So we're now three years into that project. Fourteen projects have been initiated to have designs complete and are in the land acquisition and utility relocation phase, and 12 are in the design phase. The project was initially underfunded for issues that we were coming up against in the design and land acquisition phases.

[00:27:07] Overall, we're finding that these projects are much more difficult segments, and there's a reason they weren't constructed in the first place, and it's taking a lot more time and money than we had ever anticipated to originally to construct those. So some additional funding was added in fiscal year '24 to address some of those deficiencies, and the current CIP shows several other SDP projects that have design starting in the upcoming year per the latest fiscal year '25 CIP.

[00:27:33] So we are moving forward and pushing those as much as we can. Intersection Improvement Program. This program established to initiate intersection improvements projects on a continual basis as well with five intersections, approximately five intersections and one roundabout per year, and they were prioritized based on congestion and safety mitigation needs.

[00:27:56] And through this program, 26 intersection projects and two roundabouts since fiscal year 22 have been implemented. Two projects are complete. One is initiating construction this quarter, and five are in the land acquisition utility relocation phase.

[00:28:12] Five designs are being finalized, and those will move into land acquisition here shortly. And 15 are still in the design phase or have just recently entered the design phase. Also, several projects that are

in the planning phase that are ready to move into the design phase. in the next CIP development.

[00:28:29] So as you can tell, it's kind of, as each new set of projects come in, they move from phase to phase. So some of them are just gotten into the fiscal year 25, into the design team's hands. And that's all we have to highlight.

[00:28:45] So with that, we are happy to take any questions you might have on those programs or any other projects you might have. Okay, Mr. Sainz. Thank you. Let me get into my list here. All right, for Route 7, Compass Drive to Lakeland Drive.

[00:29:05] I got design completion was pushed from spring 2024 to summer 24. Obviously, we're at the end of July. Are we still on track for completion by end of summer, or does that need to be pushed to a different time frame now? Can you repeat which project that was? Compass Drive and Lakeland Drive.

[00:29:23] Route 7. Okay. The shared use path? Yes, Route 7 shared, yeah. Yeah, so we are essentially at 100% design, and there were a couple drainage issues that came up at our last review that we're working through, and really the bulk of the issues are at that intersection with Cardinal Glenn, and there's just a lot of underground utilities there.

[00:29:55] So we did have to rework some of the storm drainage there so we would not conflict with the gas transmission lines and the other large utilities. So it is, you know, done out of the need to make sure that we're not escalating the cost of it significantly by impacting those specific utilities.

[00:30:16] But we are in the process of transitioning into land acquisition for that project. Okay. And then I'm noticing also there's still some, it looks like we're just reading it on the surface, correct me if I'm wrong, it looks like we're still having some coordination issues with utilities and VDOT. Is there anything that we need to do on our end to help get these efforts moving forward? Is there any legislation that we need to put forward to speed things up or get better coordination? What else can we do? Or what can we do on our end to help with some stuff?

[00:30:50] So what I'd say on our end is, as Scott kind of alluded to in his initial comments, we initiated these programs in the last three years, and we've had some learning opportunities through this process.

[00:31:08] And although the projects are, we would call, relatively small compared to a large roadway project, The process and the interaction with utilities and land are just as complicated as with a large project.

[00:31:26] And so from our end, what we've taken from that is because the design actually goes a little bit quicker than on a larger project, we need to start coordination earlier with our utilities. We need to start coordination earlier with the land acquisition.

[00:31:44] And we are looking at some alternate delivery methods. When I say alternate delivery methods, I'm talking about we're dealing with 1Z, 2Z, 3Z projects close to one another. We may need to start bundling those together, get some economies of scale.

[00:32:01] And we're not doing coordination on each individual one, but doing it all at one time to have a little bit better efficiencies in how we handle these projects. I just wanted to recognize that the board did approve two additional utility manager coordination manager positions that are now funded as of July 1st.

[00:32:23] So we're in the process of hiring those. And so that's going to double our staffing to be able to do this sort of coordination. Okay. Well, whatever we can do to help facilitate meetings or if we need to call

some folks or whatever, because I think it's been a running theme, coordination and communication.

[00:32:40] I know you guys had some, you know, troubleshooting and some fine-tuning after going through a couple of processes, which is great. But still reading a lot of stuff being pushed back because of, you know, scenarios or VDOT didn't get to look at this thing or coordination with utilities and whatnot.

[00:32:57] So it's becoming a, you know, running theme here. So whatever you can do. And then also you mentioned that you guys finally sounded like you approved the design for the shelter, for the bus shelters. By any chance, can we get a copy so we can take a look at it as well on the supervisor end to see what that looks like or if there's an example from another locality or wherever you guys picked it from so we can see what it looks like?

[00:33:28] So I believe that the transit group from DGS is planning an item to share, but if not, we can be happy to forward what they provided to us when they selected that type. All right. That was it for me. Thank you. Supervisor Brisbane.

[00:33:44] thank you um and thank you for that update um appreciate the idea of bundling some of these things together and you know it it sounds so simple when we're when you're thinking about just doing a sidewalk right like it sounds on the face of it that it would be simple and it's turning out that it's really not simple and as i sit here i think i actually start thinking what can we do better in future development applications to make sure that we are doing this up front i think we are to a certain degree, but so that we don't have to kind of go backtrack as we are now

[00:34:20] trying to create a, you know, convert a car centric community to be a little bit more multimodal friendly. But I had a question about, you asked about the shared use path. So that's good. Oh, I know the Cascades Parkway, Estherbrook Circle and Corkwood Drive intersection. I was really frustrated to see. It seems like VDOT has sort of rejected all of our ideas about what to do

[00:34:52] at that intersection. Initially, when we brought the BMI, we heard that VDOT was positive about that it warranted a traffic light at that intersection. And then now I'm reading in here that not only are they saying now that it doesn't warrant an intersection, traffic light, crosswalks, But they don't even really want to do anything that we're suggesting, which is going to be really frustrating for me and my constituents, because as we've talked about, there are people trying to cross that street to get to the elementary school.

[00:35:27] So I'm just wondering, is there anything we can do? Are we totally blocked from doing an intersection improvement there? So I'm going to suggest on this one that a good next step might be to invite the VDOT traffic engineer to maybe meet with us in your office to have a little problem-solving session with them. Okay. Because I'm finding that sometimes they can be very creative in solutions when they are part of the solution. I see. And so I think that might be a good next step. Was I confused

[00:36:04] in the beginning when we read or they told us the signal was warranted? Was I confused in thinking that okay it's a done deal what uh so mr moserak isn't here with us today okay who can help us resolve recall back to when to when that happened but i do not believe that you are confused about that i think that is how that went so how does that happen um so i think a good next step is okay all right okay well we'll we'll leave it there and then have a meeting you know

[00:36:34] after recess or something like that um and then um i think i think that's everything i mean i was actually surprised i mean thank you i have to just say thank you because when i read through this i was like wow we we put in a good number of bmis and traffic calming measures and studies and all of that

and i know it's probably probably not your favorite thing to do i would imagine like these little projects are probably not your favorite thing to do, but I really appreciate all your work on these. Thank you. I'll just say that sometimes the small ones can be fun, too,

[00:37:11] because we get them done, and they can get done faster. True, and they are very, very appreciated by the community. Thank you. Supervisor Upstep. Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I have a compliment for all of you the presentation of each project now online in the CIP is really good I had a constituent contact me on one of them and I was able to send one of your your CIP pages to him and he loved it so he found that very helpful so it looks like a somewhat new format but it it works

[00:37:49] it's accessible and and very helpful i have a minor question but it keeps coming up so at some of our bus stops we have had trash receptacles it is my observation and understanding we don't have the manpower to keep those clean and so people keep just dumping trash there what do you think we should do should we just remove all of them if we if we cannot monitor and empty them or do we

[00:38:26] still or do we want to continue to have receptacles and try to get them cleaned up I don't think there's an easy answer on that I remember when the transit group was part of DTCI we did have some of those kind of philosophical questions I think that they are still discussing those things My understanding is that the prototype bus shelter that they've identified does include sort of an optional trash receptacle.

[00:38:53] But I can't answer, I'm not in a position to be able to answer how they're kind of viewing how that will be staffed for emptying the receptacles. All right. Thank you. That's all I've got. Thanks. Chair Reynolds, do you have anything? I do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00:39:10] And so first, I'm learning that I am going to need some kind of training in the new Granicus because I tend to write a lot in Granicus, but I don't think our iPad pencil can write in our iPad in the new Granicus.

[00:39:27] And if I'm mistaken, I need some kind of training. If we go to page four, I have two questions on the same page. First, the Arcola Forters for the Enslaved. Reading why this project is being delayed, can you explain what's going on with that a little bit more. It looks like it's been delayed just a couple of months, but I just want to understand these reasons, and so it doesn't get delayed any further. And if I'm clear about what I'm reading with the, oh gosh, it might have been a new page, the Shenandoah building, is the issue

[00:40:05] with the Shenandoah building is we can't find any place to put the employees while we work on the Shenandoah building. We can't find any place to put employees right now. And if that's the issue, how are we going to fix that issue? Because that's not an easy fix issue. So the Arcola and the Shenandoah building, I'm going to ask you a question. Yes, ma'am. So with regards to Arcola, quarters for the enslaved, the design got a little bit out of control and it exceeded our budget to

[00:40:43] a point where we needed to pull the project back into control. So our design team started working with the architecture and basically had to get things in that slowed our process down. So it was a little bit of kind of what the end users wanted. It was a little bigger than what we had the capability of doing. Okay. So there should not be any further delay. At this point, we've moved forward. We did reach out for some public comments. We really didn't get a whole lot of

[00:41:19] information from the public or any further desires than what the current conceptual design offered. Who do you see as the end user when you talk about the end user on that? When you say the end

user, who are you referring to? The public, anybody that's interested in coming and learning about the history of the facility. So when you say that the design got a little bit away from you based on what the end user wanted, are you saying that the public suggestions were just a little bit too much of what we could actually do? I think it was more of the vision of what the architect was

[00:41:58] thinking they could do throughout the entire area of the park. So it seemed to be a little bit of a disconnect between our staff and the architect. And then once they reached out and started putting a cost associated with the design that they had proposed, we determined that it was a little bit larger than what we could do within the budget that we had.

[00:42:25] So that wasn't really the end user, then that's more about what our staff wanted or didn't want based on the budget we have. Exactly. And a vision of the architect. Okay. All right. Okay. And we think that issue has been resolved and it will be ready by September of 25th?

[00:42:46] About a year from now? Yes, yes. Okay. All right. And then the Shenandoah question. And then with respect to Shenandoah, we were having a difficulty programming everybody to go back into the Shenandoah building.

[00:43:03] So we needed to somewhat reset. We got county admin involved along with some of the directors. We started working through some of other locations that some of the folks could potentially relocate to and not go back into the Shenandoah Building to allow for additional programming that would support the public.

[00:43:27] So that slowed us down a little bit in the process, but we've gotten things back on track, and we're moving forward very well. And again, that looks like September 25? Yes, I believe that's correct.

[00:43:43] Okay, all right. i was just going to add that we we do have swing space identified during construction now so just to clarify very good okay all right thank you mr chairman i'm going to remind you mr chairman that i'm going to be dropping off at about 10 till 7. okay okay thank you madam sure okay thanks thank you um okay just a couple other questions we we used to have a list of projects completed in this and i i think it got dropped from this this edition but it's probably a helpful thing to keep up with so um so that uh the list of projects completed was for the board term and

[00:44:21] so it's reporting on the the new term and what has been completed since the new term and so so you'll see that start to accumulate in future quarterly reports okay good um and then one other thing that's a little bit off off the reservation for this report but i just want it's been an topic for us have we or could we pursue the discussion with VDOT on signal standardization again and I'm bringing it up now because there's a new relatively new now district engineer and I've had some indications that it's a

[00:44:57] good time maybe to approach them with with a fresh request on that I think for those who aren't familiar we have to go through a unique design process with every single signal which I think really slows us down and also means we have to custom order every signal and wait for those to arrive so if we could have you know a standardization of that process but potentially even be able to accumulate some some signal heads and things like that ahead of time we could save a lot of time on that so we're following the VDOT process other places do it

[00:45:33] differently um but you know i think over the august break that would seem like a maybe a good project for us to pursue with them sure be happy to and i know that we've we've had some ideas about standardizing even the foundations like having an array of different types of foundations that could be

used in different cases okay yeah fantastic okay that's all i have um if there is nothing else thank you all very much chair letourneau oh uh yes miss mcclellan just a clarification question would you would the committee like to have general services come back

[00:46:10] um at the next meeting on the shenandoah no on the um the bus stops oh the support for those yeah so i know we had out of the transit summit there were a couple of motions on this one of which was sort of the opposite of what supervisor suggested with in which we were talking about putting trash cans at every bus stop.

[00:46:35] So it may be worthwhile to try to sort of have some clarity on exactly what our direction is on this. I mean, obviously, it's more than just the trash, but... Sure. All right. So we'll work with staff to put something on the agenda for the next meeting. Okay. Okay, we have two budget development items tonight.

[00:46:57] One of them is kind of a high-level economic overview, And then the other is a discussion on Loudoun County Fire Rescue Staffing. I wasn't planning on taking a dinner break because I think we can probably get through. You can continue.

[00:47:15] Get through these fairly quickly. We'll see how it goes. Food's arriving at 7 anyway. So my goal would be to just do both of them and then have a quick meeting. Mr. Chairman?

[00:47:31] Yes, Chair Randall. Since I do have to drop off, I will go back and look at the presentation. If I have anything I want to say to the board or the committee members, I'll send it to you all on email. Okay. Sounds good.

[00:47:47] Thanks. Thank you. Good evening. Item 9 presents the Finance Committee's first discussion of the FY2026 budget process, the economic outlook and high-level budget issues that we will be bringing to you throughout the fall during budget development.

[00:48:08] Next slide. The economic outlook for FY26 is positive at this point in the development process. The current outlook includes moderate growth in the economy and in employment, as well as continuing moderation of inflation.

[00:48:28] And overall, the economic outlook is positive, and FY26 is likely to be a relatively normal year for revenue growth. Next slide. Bless you. The chart here shows forecasted GDP. Despite the forecasted decline that you can see in FY24 versus FY25 and 26, Loudoun's performance is still expected to surpass that of other geographies.

[00:48:55] Next slide. As shown here, the unemployment rate is expected to hover around 3% for Loudoun County, as Mr. Reiser discussed earlier this evening during his economic development update. Next slide. And finally, after strong rates of growth in calendar years 2020 through 2022, the median price of existing single-family homes increased only modestly in 2023 due to rising mortgage rates.

[00:49:25] As the chart shows, prices began to grow at a faster clip in 2024, in part because of constraints on the supply side of the housing market. But for FY25 and 26, the rates of price increases are expected to diminish as borrowing costs still remain high and the economy slows.

[00:49:46] While this slide does focus on residential property, I do want to note that commercial construction continues to be very strong for Loudoun, and we'll be monitoring that throughout the rest of

the budget development cycle. And finally, inflation is forecasted to decrease but still remain above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

[00:50:06] So overall, at this point in budget development, we are forecasting, again, a typical revenue picture. While our numbers indicate a slower rate of growth for residential values, recall that the growth in this sector was at record highs over the last few years.

[00:50:27] Growth in commercial values is likely to still outpace residential value growth. And finally, staff continues to monitor the overall budget structural dependence on business tangible personal property tax revenue from computer equipment. This slide and the next two highlight revenue and expenditure policy considerations that will be discussed with the Finance Committee and the board during the budget development process. Staff would request any feedback from the committee with regard to the considerations on the next few slides this evening or throughout the fall. As I highlighted in the previous slides, staff

[00:51:06] continues to monitor power availability concerns that could impact outfitting equipment in data centers. Next, the board also indicated during FY25 work sessions its intention to discuss lowering the personal property tax rate for vehicles. Staff is collaborating with the commissioner of revenue on this topic, and the topic will come before the finance committee in this fall. While lowering the rate on vehicles is possible, staff will continue to recommend the board consider lowering the general rate for personal property tax to continue to address the

[00:51:44] imbalance caused by reliance on data center personal property tax revenue. And finally, the last bullet here reminds the board that they also discussed increasing the dedicated revenue to affordable housing from a half a cent to one cent in the FY26 budget. Next slide. On the expenditure side, the staff report notes that the growth of the budget has been on average about 9% annually. Preliminary inflationary-based assumptions on pay are targeting 4 to 5.5%

[00:52:18] for employees, plus the contractual obligations for the IFF for FY26. Staff also notes that the board held its strategic initiatives retreat earlier this summer, which is anticipated to result in new policy and program proposals throughout the fall, including a discussion of employee child care programs.

[00:52:39] And finally, as is typical at this time and throughout the budget process, staff has identified some major service-level discussions that could benefit from the Finance Committee's review and guidance prior to the budget proposal next February. The items are listed here on this slide, with additional background information provided in tonight's staff report.

[00:53:02] This is the first of many touch points with the Finance Committee during budget development. Formal action is requested of the Finance Committee in October with preliminary guidance and in December with final budget guidance. Staff requests the Finance Committee's recommendation for tax rate parameters and expenditure priorities and the board's direction at that time.

[00:53:24] This concludes my presentation and I'm happy to answer any questions. Okay, well, I'm sure if you asked all of us, we would all have slightly different takes on what we want to see out of the budget in the future. And you can probably guess what mine is and maybe some reservist ones, but I'll let her go first.

[00:53:42] Thank you. Yes, I was really excited to see that the item mentioned some environmental and energy initiatives and the child care initiative. So that's really exciting. A couple questions on the revenue

and the tax rate issue.

[00:54:03] So remind me what we decided to do with the reserve fund. Is that an automatic percentage going into the reserve fund, Or is it the entirety of what is over what we project? Sure. So the target for the Revenue Stabilization Fund is to be at a value of 10% of data center related real property and personal property tax.

[00:54:30] That is likely to end up being \$80 to \$100 million. So the board established that Revenue Stabilization Fund last fall and contributed \$15 million dollars of FY23 year-end fund balance and 40 million dollars in FY25. So you have a balance there of 55 million. And our recommendations will be continuing to add funding to that fund so you can reach your target. And then that will be a working reserve. So in years where we miss our revenue forecast, we can draw on that revenue stabilization fund. And years that we underestimate

[00:55:10] it, we can fill it back up. Right. And we want it to be 10% of our projected revenue. And our revenue from data centers in this item was projected to be about \$665 million. That's the personal property tax amount. Okay. Okay. So I guess my question is, why couldn't we not lower the tax rate and contribute more to that contingency, I know I'm saying it wrong,

[00:55:47] contingency fund reserve, reserve's not the right word either, you're calling it stabilization fund. Stabilization fund, right. So why couldn't we do that? The most powerful tool in your toolbox of ways to maintain and bring back balance to the general fund is of course that tax rate though if you can lower that rate that decreases the year-over-year increases in that revenue as a percentage of your whole budget yeah and just continues to reduce the dependence on that revenue source which is at its core what staff is concerned about and and bringing forth

[00:56:24] recommendations right because it's it's not the most reliable correct right okay okay chair I would probably add a little bit of a variation on that response. The main reason is money that's going into the reserve is not being spent.

[00:56:44] And so when we talk about the balanced budget, we would have to collect that much more money in order to put all of the 10% of revenue in one year, which would impact your real property tax rate, which is what we're using to balance the budget.

[00:57:05] So, we could have, as opposed to ramping up over a series of two or three years to get to the 10% reserve amount, we could have done it in one year. However, that would have required us to significantly increase the real property tax rate in order to do that because those funds aren't being spent.

[00:57:23] They're being placed inside into a savings account, if you will. And there are, I guess, restrictions on when we can dip into that. We can't dip into it for any other reason than we have over-forecasted our revenue from data centers.

[00:57:39] That's the only time that we can dip into that. So the rules that the board has set up assigned to that reserve is generally the way you've articulated it. Okay. Because we miss our forecast, and so we're short. Right. Okay. All right. Oh, that might be all of my questions, because we already talked about the separating of the two tax rates.

[00:58:04] So I think I am good. Oh, I know. Sorry, I did think of one other question. The declining office demand. Do we think that the declining office demand will impact potential mixed-use developments that

are in the pipeline, such as Ravonna?

[00:58:21] I don't know if Dulles Town Center is going to have office, but Waterside and those sorts of things. Do we think, are we nervous about that? That seems like a buddy question. Yeah. Okay. I don't want to answer for specific developments but I as noted in the staff report our portion of the commercial sector that's dedicated to office is very small true and so its risk to the portfolio is very low okay oh that's good to hear okay thank you that satisfies my curiosity thank you

[00:58:55] um thank you thank you mr chair Megan you mentioned um trying to deal with child care issues

[00:59:11] For county employees, have we begun to examine whether the most beneficial and effective way to help with child care costs is raising pay or by designating, perhaps in the new county government center, an area that's a child care area?

[00:59:36] Different companies handle these issues differently. are we looking into what might be the best option for Loudoun if the board wants to go in that direction based on the board's discussion at the strategic initiatives retreat we have taken that policy area as something to examine at the staff level and are still formulating kind of the parameters around that policy discussion for the finance committee okay thank you okay a couple

[01:00:09] thoughts. So obviously, generally speaking, I've been in the camp of wanting to start slowing our rate of growth a little bit and what I think is consistent with what we will probably see down the road in terms of lower revenue growth. But in terms of kind of our needs and topics that I want to sort of dive into a little bit more, internal staffing on site plan reviews, particularly with commercial opportunities, you know, continues. I know there's a, you know, we're having a broader look at that from a process standpoint, but I want to make sure that we're sort of in place

[01:00:46] if one of the results of that discussion is the need for additional staffing, that we're having that discussion from a budget development standpoint, as well as permit issuance, you know, and that may be something more about making those positions more competitive in the marketplace.

[01:01:04] I don't know but it just it's always been an issue for us but it seems like it's one that's kind of coming back up to a head a little bit certainly always design CIP project delivery is to me always always somewhere that we probably need potentially more resources another topic that the boards had some discussion about but I'll just raise in the public forum is is on land acquisition funding and sources of funding you know there's a lot of potential land out there that individual supervisors have interest in for various things, but I am a little

[01:01:39] concerned that we're not seeing the big picture on those, and we need to kind of ensure that we have appropriate funding sources for that, or we understand what the limitations are for that. And then, you know, obviously just echoing what you've already presented on the personal property tax on vehicles. So those are kind of my areas of interest to dive into a little bit this year.

[01:02:03] Okay, well, if there's nothing else, nothing further. Thank you. All right, thank you. We'll move into our last item, which is staffing for Loudoun County Fire Rescue. And it looks like a lot of this item is about a grant opportunity that we're pursuing. So that's always exciting.

[01:02:24] So Chief Williams, good evening. Good evening, Supervisors. Good evening, Mr. Chairman. As we're getting prepared, I'm joined by Mary McGuire, but also a shout out to my boss who is setting the example by taking two weeks off. Currently out of the area, enjoying himself. Yeah, I was going say so does that mean you get a vacation when he comes back week after next yes sir um thank you

[01:02:59] we are here of course with our first uh budget service level discussion to discuss the staffing for loudoun county fire and rescue started with the easiest one right that you knew we would never say no to is that i this is the first one that was ready so uh we are here to talk about the staffing that is called for for the series of facility openings that will be occurring for lcfr over the next two budget cycles i'm going to hand the presentation over to emily vasil and chief williams emily is a budget manager within the office of management budget thanks megan good

[01:03:36] evening as megan said item 10 provides an update regarding laden county fire and rescues operational staffing needs as they relate to capital facility openings in the next two budget cycles. In addition, we will share details about the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response or SAFER grant, including how it factors into planning for future staffing needs.

[01:03:59] This is the first time LCFR has applied for this grant. This slide presents an overview of LCFR's anticipated station openings in fiscal years 2026 and 2027, totaling 52 FTE over the two-year period. All three of these facilities are currently volunteer-owned. Upon replacement, the county will take ownership of the facilities. I will now pass it to Chief Williams to present the next two slides. Okay, as newer replacement stations open, LCFR seeks to incorporate the NFPA National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710

[01:04:35] into our staffing requests, and these include adding a fourth person to our engines and providing dedicated staffing to previously cross-staffed tankers and EMS units. Staffing requests also incorporate staffing factor positions or positions needing to bridge the gap between the required minimum staffing hours and the hours each employee can work while accounting for various types of leave, participation in mandatory trainings, and other operational needs. The county has applied for and is hopeful will receive a SAFER grant. The SAFER grant provides funding for fire

[01:05:14] departments to increase or maintain the number of frontline firefighters available in the communities. The grant supports compliance with NFPA, including for the reasons discussed in the previous slide and outlined here. In addition to the last two sub-bullets, independent heavy rescue staffing is included for ALDI. This staffing will support LCFR in more quickly assembling the effective firefighting force in all the and surrounding communities, Philmont, Middleburg, Brambleton, and even the Dulles South area. If awarded, the SAFER grant will support

[01:05:53] personnel costs associated with 34 firefighter positions for a period of three years, anticipated through mid-year fiscal year 2028. At that time, personnel costs will transition to local tax funding. Can you just explain briefly, like the grant is a federal grant? Yes, sir. You know, is it a competitive grant in terms of are we competing with other jurisdictions? Is there, you know, kind of how is it assessed? How is it awarded? So Loudoun County has been successful with

[01:06:28] several assistance to firefighter grants, whether or not that goes back to the upgrade of our self-contained breathing apparatus program, which was a \$2 million grant, as well as several other grants for overtime or equipment. So it is a competitive grant. They do cite, you know, financial need as one criteria, but also our ability to comply or bridge the gap towards 1710 is a significant criteria they look for.

[01:07:05] So we've been fortunate with receiving federal grants that perhaps we didn't necessarily have high hopes for. So we're very grateful for the staff who have put expert opinion into writing these grants.

[01:07:22] You want to ask about the safer grant? Yeah. Okay, Mr. Staines just has another question on the safer grant. So I see there's requirements and criteria, obviously, with the grant. So do we feel we have the staffing to hire the numbers that are required for the grant?

[01:07:43] Yes, sir. We look forward to some of you joining us tomorrow for the graduation of Recruit Class 45. 31 firefighters will graduate tomorrow. We'll hire a Recruit School September 12th, which is going to be an accelerator Recruit School.

[01:08:00] And then we're planning one for January 2025 as well as July 2025. So between our vacancies, as well as the potential for 35 or 34 people on this grant, we're confident that during the performance period of the grant, we can hire and train them.

[01:08:19] But do we have a wait list for folks waiting to get into our training program, where when we get through a training program, we put out a call for new recruits? So approximately a year ago, 18 months ago, we transitioned to more of an open recruitment. So while we're not accepting applications for all 12 months, we are accepting applications for probably 9 to 10 of those months a year.

[01:08:42] And what that enables us to do is start people through the process, which, as you know, can take several months between the written test, the physical agility test, the background test, et cetera. So we're able to, with it being more open or open for a more continuous period of time, we're able to almost do three or four mini-recruitments each year.

[01:09:06] Okay. All right. So if you're confident, then it's good to hear. Thank you. All right. Keep going. Thanks. All right. We are bringing this item now in early fiscal year 2025 to allow sufficient time to hire and onboard the additional firefighters.

[01:09:22] If the grant is awarded, staff will return to the board with a request to appropriate grant funds and authorize the additional 34 FTE. If not awarded, these positions will be incorporated into LCFR's fiscal year 2026 budget requests. Finally, operations and maintenance costs associated with the 34 positions are not supported by the SAFER grant funds.

[01:09:46] If grant funds are awarded and the board chooses to accept them, approximately \$1 million will be identified within current year appropriations to meet operations and maintenance costs needs. With that, we're happy to take any additional questions. I think I have any other than I really hope we get that grant.

[01:10:06] It's going to save us a significant amount of money, but we should be cognizant that eventually it will run out, and then we'll have to fund with local tax dollars. So, Supervisor Brisbane. Thank you. So, just to clarify, the grant would cover 34 out of the 52 that we need.

[01:10:26] Okay. Thank you. Okay. Well, when did you say we're going to know by January? We could know by the end of this month all the way into the fall. Okay. So if we start receiving phone calls, it's usually about six or eight weeks ahead of actual award, with the final award often coming out of the senator's office.

[01:10:53] Okay. Well, please send us an email when you find out. Yes, sir. Thank you. That's it. Have a good evening. All right. If there is no further business to come before the finance committee, I said 7

o'clock.

[01:11:09] We're not bad. We are adjourned, everybody enjoy the August recess.



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