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## Manassas City Council 7/21/2025

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-17. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:00] Thank you very much. We have a pretty short agenda tonight, so I want to try to work through it. We thank HMI for being here tonight. Before we start, I want to wish our city manager a happy birthday. I thought it before midnight, so that's from all of us.

[00:00:22] And on a more somber note, I want to make sure that I'm sure all of you are aware, i'm bob weir from princeton county um board of supervisors passed away um suddenly um he's only 62 i believe and um pretty quickly um progression of cancer i spoke to chair jefferson and she said they're just going through the process and they'll keep us all updated on services and things like that so please keep his family and and the entire board in your thoughts and prayers so with that we'll go ahead and get started um item one discussion items the first thing we have hmi here tonight and i guess ms keeper will be taking us down that road

[00:01:02] short timer anyway so no better way to spend your birthday than with us right mr burke so uh well so um thank you for having us we wanted to uh have the opportunity to talk a little bit with all that's sort of going on as it relates to HMI is developing a three-year strategic plan which will be done in August and we want to ensure that everything we're doing and everything that you know council in

[00:01:38] the city are working on aligns to our strategic plan and we're thinking about it through that lens additionally I know part of the conversation was sort of talking about the extra hundred thousand thank you for this fiscal year it hit the bank today, I think. So thank you very much, but wanted to be very transparent about our thoughts of, you know, kind of where that's going, as well as to just talk about some

of the things within the lens of the strategic plan and the additional funding, sort of our 18-month lookout. I'm trying to be really deliberate about some things we might talk about, kind of working with the city more

[00:02:18] closely on again bringing back things as well as adding some things that i think would allow us to diversify our financial portfolio beyond just city funding so that's sort of the context within which we're operating i do want it before i kind of launch into is make sure i acknowledge my wonderful board members who are here supporting and being a part of this tonight chair mark olson treasurer Ross Snare. I've got Liz Barahona, Patrick Small, our city liaison, and Nikki Merkel. So really appreciate everyone being here with us tonight as well.

[00:02:52] They're very invested in all of these things and have been with us along the way. So just talked about, okay so this is kind of the flow within which we're going to have some of these discussions but it really is open to being a work session with all of you being able to field any questions or just talk through some of the things we're thinking and and kind of have that dialogue so just really quickly strategic plan like i mentioned it'll go to our board in

[00:03:28] august it'll be a three-year plan through 2028 it's been a lot of work with both the outside facilitator who knows main street but also with the board and what we have come to find are there's really three focal areas for us sort of like your plan is one is community engagement the other is community building and the third is visibility messaging and storytelling so you'll you'll see us talk about it today and through the lens of those three things and it really is talking and kind of reflects the expanded role in tourism which

[00:04:03] i know is a conversation that's larger than than us storytelling business engagement building on what we've already been doing and community building through the main street model and we really ultimately just like you want to be in partnership to better serve residents building owners businesses and visitors who may not live here and all of this will be operationalized through the Main Street model and as you know what that means is we have four committees that you really kind of recruit and retain people who want to be involved in community and co-create that community together and we've made a lot of strides in increasing membership

[00:04:41] on those committees so very optimistic going in with this plan a couple of things you know also just I know you all like numbers rightfully so the strategic plan is also sort of shaped by what we've looked at in trends at least over the last couple of years for which I can vouch for the numbers part of the reason we're going with these three focal areas are because the number of visitors brought to town through HMI's efforts whether it's through visitor center promotion or through our signature events has increased by nearly

[00:05:16] twenty thousand just in a year alone you as you know our first Fridays have gone from nineteen thousand two years ago to fifty thousand five hundred this year so there is growth we are doing something collectively with the city and our communications to get people to come here volunteer engagement has increased I think that is because we really put effort into making people understand who we are in community and also trying to find volunteers and we have grown that from anywhere on average about 1,700 to 2,000 per year and that's probably a gross underestimate so we're really happy that we're able to get some of the

[00:05:55] work done that way as well our public private investment Ross and I were sort of looking at in fiscal year 23 about 52% of our funding was through the city we're now down to about 47% so we're trying to increase ways to diversify and we'll continue to do so as you'll see through some of the conversations today our network you know we've done city manager meetups we've introduced those this year some nix and mingles that will continue to sort of continue to slowly open up more broadly to community those are some new

[00:06:30] initiatives to bring about that community building and community engagement aspect of things and when started we had a distribution list of 135 people as of today we have 12,588 on all of our distribution of newsletters and whatnot so there's a lot of growth there a lot more to be had so with that I just wanted to within the vein of the the pillars I'm talking about these three things these are some of the things I sent in advance kind of what we're thinking and kind of building out 18 months of looking forward these are really reflective of some of the things

[00:07:08] that I think are love to have discussion about some forward-facing things we're not doing now but visibility and messaging there has been some conversation of [visitmanassas.org](http://visitmanassas.org) versus [historicmanassasinc.org](http://historicmanassasinc.org) is there too much repetition HMI is in a position I think that and we've talked with mr.

[00:07:33] small about this? Are we at a place that we kind of take it back, if you will? Or at least rethink it so there's not so much repetition and double effort going into things. We will be launching and developing a Friends of HMI plan, both as a way to get more community engagement, just more broadly in support of our historic downtown, but also as a revenue driver.

[00:07:57] So we're thinking through and building that plan this year. It's not yet in place, but we intend to launched that in early 2026. Another concept was that we've talked to Patrick about is resume the ribbon cuttings in historic downtown you know we started to do some of the anniversaries and such I think we're in a way you know we can be a resource there for the ones in historic downtown so that the chamber has fewer as well that they have to do because they're pretty loaded up as I understand it. The EFD gift card program was launched. We would propose we're in a position

[00:08:35] to kind of oversee that, both in terms of marketing, getting more folks, increasing the numbers. Since we've partnered with Patrick on that, we really have been able to drive more folks there. We HMI have spent some more time and resource in making sure we're promoting it as much as we can, so we think that that might be something to consider. Visitor center hours, the proposal for this is, I mean, we run 360 days out of the year, you know, and certain days aren't so busy. And the weekends, particularly Sundays, are not quite as busy. We don't have federal

[00:09:10] holidays off. We are proposing that federal holidays and Easter Sunday, they're very hard to kind of staff up, even with our part-time who are wonderful at filling in hours, as well as Sundays to change the hours from maybe noon till four. We're finding with, you know, church and family obligations on Sundays the traffic in and out and there aren't as many trains on the weekends which as you all know we like to help folks with the trains as well so those are for consideration as it relates to visibility and things for discussion community building this is really kind of how do we get people really excited about us you'll notice we're going to

[00:09:49] continue the year-round farmers market the winter market was successful and people did come out this year. We're going to add two taste of Manassas a year. We've had one already that we piloted.

We're in a position the businesses are on board with. We're going to add a family event to be determined in 2027. We figure we give ourselves a little bit of a breather.

[00:10:10] And we're going to implement two restaurant weeks and two small business weeks. So you have a focus on sort of merchants and restaurants, but thinking them through strategically about how they complement each other so those are more campaign related and we just think it'll bring more visibility especially with some of the surrounding competition we have going on so it'll distinguish us a bit keep the signature events as you see as well as things like these smaller promotional things that are really tried and true here in Manassas the spring hop around around Easter and Haunted Happen and lastly community engagement that really is sort of what I've

[00:10:49] mentioned in terms of how do we get the businesses the property owners and ultimately eventually the residents a little more involved mix and mingle networking events are for business and property owners who are still you know I guess get re-getting to know each other just getting to know that each other exists as well as our opportunity to know who's new in Manassas and what their needs are the city manager meetups we had agreed quarterly we'll continue until they're not effective anymore where people aren't clamoring to talk to the newish city manager but they've been a really good dialogue we've been able to do thanks to all of the the city staff and under Steve's leadership

[00:11:28] to get back to them pretty much the next day or two and we're seeing things happening and they're seeing it capacity building workshops are something we've been wanting to do we do have a partnership proposal from the George Mason innovation I never get her title right or her position but she's a an innovator who has proposed to put on workshops one might be for farmers market vendors who are looking to start, want to start a bricks and mortar business but don't know where. We're already coaching some of them, but we thought somebody who could really facilitate an actual workshop on that. But also one for the businesses, and that might

[00:12:07] be around marketing. We know a lot of them struggle with marketing themselves. So those are things we'd like to implement in the next year. And then, as mentioned, you can't do this without leadership. So, you know, both finding people who want to be volunteers and potential board members or committee members, and then keeping them around so you have that institutional knowledge. Should I pause or keep going? What is the preference here?

[00:12:36] Anybody have a question? Thank you for the presentation so far, and this might just be because I'm new, but can you just shine some light on what is the Main Street model, or in your words, how you would describe that? Sure. So Main Street is really, it's an accreditation where historic downtowns, the goal is to make sure they're economically viable. So some of them, unfortunately not us, you know, have a lot of boarded up storefronts and whatnot. So it's really kind of building the capacity of the organizations and businesses and property owners

[00:13:12] to both keep the, I guess, the design aspects of the historic downtown beauty. Things like we work on with Mr. Arcieri and his team, walkability, you know, things like the pavilion that are gathering spaces for the public and thinking through kind of from a design perspective what makes people want to come down here and you know be together it's about promotion of what we have to offer down here I think we would all agree historic downtown Manassas is a gem and it's something we need to shine more light on to bring people in and I think we're getting there in so

[00:13:48] many different ways collectively and just you know constantly thinking through what is it businesses need. Anything from welcome kits, which we're developing through one committee on, you know, who do you go to for what and what's next. So really just kind of it's a sense of community and underlying all of the communities that help develop the plans to get us from here to there.

[00:14:11] So it's kind of a co-creation mechanism or it's supposed to be the stakeholders. So that's where the capacity building workshop kind of falls into that to help educate the visitors. yes thank you thank you madam mayor and thank you for the presentation uh so far i know that you're not done but you did mention that uh the percentage has gone down to 47 will that include the extra money that was approved or how much will be all together that was for um fiscal year 25

[00:14:45] so the one that we just finished up based on actual numbers uh can you let me know later of the percentage. It's right there on that slide right now. I can do the math. So it's back over 50% right now. Okay, so it's over 50%. But it's proposed to go to have more earned income. Awesome.

[00:15:12] And then my, when it comes to, you know, old town, my biggest concern is always after the boom, which, you know, the holidays, you know, by itself, you know, the program is great for Christmas and the parade and everything, but when it comes to January and February, it's a huge struggle.

[00:15:32] I would say depending on the winter, it may be even March. So within the plan, I appreciate it. I see in the presentation changes are a little bit more vibrant event for the small business, but is there anything that as HMI or with the city that can be done?

[00:15:58] Because I really want to find a little bit more organic ways to bring people to that. But understanding that they may not have that money, you know, to spend, but, you know, I also want to make sure that we, in the way that we can as a program, that we're able to help them at least those two months.

[00:16:20] If you look at the community building slide that's up on the screen right now, we saw two restaurant weeks. One is in the early spring, and same with the small business week. But we're going to be constantly marketing the businesses.

[00:16:36] We're doing individual video promotion. I don't know if you've seen them. Ms. Barrow-Hohen has been, huh? Past the mic. Yeah, past the mic. And Mickey Marple. And Mickey Marple. I mean, and that's going to continue, and it's going to grow with that. Yeah, but I don't see January or February, And my concern is strictly to the business because that's when, like, it can really break a business.

[00:17:01] So, yeah, the spring, everybody's coming. You start, I mean, you even have the soup table. Well, the Super Bowl's in February. So a couple of things there. Yeah, because I know we've discussed this before. So we intentionally, as we were sort of thinking about what promotional things that, like, Mark is referring to, the timing of them are exactly that.

[00:17:23] The lead-up is just after the holiday and before the holiday, so it's a seasonal thing. The restaurant weeks are situated sort of in those time frames, too. So we actually, the team and I, did a retreat where we were literally kind of taking that to heart and hearing it and saying, let's do the weeks that are where there are more challenges for businesses.

[00:17:46] Additionally, it should be noted, we are bringing our marketing back in-house due to the wonderful, gracious, extra money. And that will make a difference because we're trying to hire a real strategist that can really think about campaigns year-long.

[00:18:05] It is a very proactive, both marketing, promotions. We did hire our events manager who will start tomorrow. So those two are really going to be working together to kind of claw at that a bit more than perhaps we've been doing up until now.

[00:18:23] So absolutely. And then ask on Madam Mayor. It will be the local, I think it was the local Saturday business. Do you have that or will that be part of the plan? The small business Saturday? Yes.

[00:18:38] So we've been working with the city because we know there's been something also on the lawn. So part of the conversation is about not having that moving forward. that will be part of that's exactly it the campaign leading up to the season is what we're working towards and that'll be one of the retail weeks will be in that time frame as well so yeah we're trying to be very deliberate about that and there's also something I think it's more for like the shops there's pink there's pink Thursday so we built that all into our plans so that there's

[00:19:18] kind of a nice beat leading up to all of these things. So that is just a very deliberate rollout with marketing in-house. Questions at this point? I'm sorry. Yeah, I just, not questions, more observations. Number one is I appreciate the emphasis on earned income because I know in the past there's been discussions about soliciting donations. Obviously a little bit of experience in the area. An organization like HMI, your pool of being able to attract donations is exceptionally

[00:19:58] limited and would not be a substitute amount in any real circumstance. The second thing is, I think, in terms of setting expectations. We can bring the horse to water, but we can't make it drink.

[00:20:23] Merchants, the businesses, have to share their responsibility and burden. We can't make them successful nothing the city will do can make them successful help and provide margins but at the end of the day they're gonna live and die on their business and what they bring to it I just don't want us to get into the situation where we're I say this not meaning that we're not supporting but we can't carry we can't subsidize you can't do everyone tomorrow can supplement but

[00:21:00] that's that that's the extent of what we can do shut up yeah I the capacity building workshops that you're going to launch i'm trying is that like leadership prince william is that the model you're you know these are six hour seminar four hour two hour okay and one is also um you know probably going to be geared towards farmer market vendors who might have an interest in a storefront so we're kind of building the pipeline for

[00:21:40] you know should a property become available um helping them navigate the city of monastas we have one right now who really actually three that really want to be here we don't have the spots but we're like they're like how do we get a small business loan so we use a lot of the resources through economic development so it's really just shepherding them as far as the one with the businesses i think that would be uh based on the need and again will they show up but uh it's offering and we've we've gone over a few potential topics for those but it would just be one it's based on their few feedback too we're not just going to say this is we're having this class we

[00:22:16] want to hear what they need so okay oh i'm sorry all right i wanted wanted everybody else have a chance to talk here whenever i have several things based on first few pages here before we get into maybe a little bit more robust discussion here of your last last slide here and so forth so Building on Sonja's item about winter, I have heard from businesses that winter is their toughest time

[00:22:56] because it's an old town. Not many events going on, not to the degree that they see in the spring and the summer, and even the fall, even December, quite honestly. So it's not my job nor this council's job to tell you what to do, but if I were running a business and I had three months or however months, and there aren't a lot of things that are going to be producing the kind of an opportunity to produce income that I get.

[00:23:31] The rest of the year, I think that would be of concern, first of all. And whether that's having tented events or something else, it's great to do the Super Bowl, and I'm denigrating any of the things that are done. But there's no question, there's no first Friday going on in January, February.

[00:23:55] Go ahead. February is Super Bowl. Super Bowl. Yeah, so that's the first Friday in September. Okay, right you are. Excuse me. Thank you for Correcting the hearing. Yes sir. So far. And first Friday started March? February. February, excuse me. So that's been an item that's been mentioned to me several times when I'm trying to eat.

[00:24:24] I mean that nicely. They're good about saying stuff, but one of those things here. I thought since, you know, you are looking at things, you know, while we had some problems with First Friday that were addressed and it seems things are going a little bit smoother, there is always that inevitable then comes up again.

[00:24:51] And so one of the things that I would certainly like to know that you have done or are doing, and that is rethinking First Friday, meaning is First Friday still the best way we do it? Is the time, the place, should it be broken up into smaller events? Should it be a Saturday?

[00:25:17] should it be? I mean, looking at these things and flipping them over and saying, what if we did it this way instead of the way we're doing right now? My concern with that would be killing the 20% growth that we've seen on the first Friday numbers and the number of attendees that are attending it. So, I mean, I get where you're coming from in terms of wanting to turn over to see if there's ways we can fix it. But, I mean, if it's not broke, they'll fix it. I mean, 20% growth is amazing one year to next.

[00:25:48] So I wouldn't want to be getting rid of first riders or moving around and changing the format up would probably end up screwing something up down the road and end up hurting our businesses more than helping at the end of the day. I guess what I'm really saying is you have a successful event. It grows.

[00:26:05] What can we bring from there? Like any business, let's look at it from business standpoint. I can, after a point, if I keep doing only this, the growth is not going to be as large. And good businesses are always trying to find other things to add to their portfolio or their offerings along the way.

[00:26:28] And I would think HMI would do no less. And I'm not saying you aren't. I don't attend your board meetings or anything, but, you know, at least raising that here. Some thought might be what's been mentioned to me in the past is during COVID there were some grants that were offered, I think, through the city at the time, some money that the city got through businesses.

[00:26:53] If they came up with some matching grants, if they did some kind of innovative, had a proposal for an innovative program along the way. so they had some skin in the game and so forth, and whether that might be one way, again, to get some of the businesses.

[00:27:11] They know they're going to get, quote-unquote, free money. They're going to get some money. They're willing to put some money forward. But more importantly, an idea might be worth exploring. That

seems to have been a good program from what I observed along the way here.

[00:27:27] And there are, sir, grants that we send to businesses that they're eligible for such things? pitch an innovative idea. In fact, Filigreen did and won one of them and was able to do some of the work we otherwise couldn't. So that will be part of, you know, with a little bit more of capacity that we'll be having on a go-forward basis, we'll be able to kind of make sure that the awareness is there, whether it's us writing the grants to disseminate or them, you know, continuing to become more aware of what's out there.

[00:28:02] Very good. That's good news in that regard there. Following up on Mark's thought, that we can't make, City can't make businesses successful no more than HMI, and I always am concerned that while I supported efforts to have blackout weekends on city properties for events in Old Town, I don't see that any, that I'm aware of, that any businesses have really seized the opportunity that that presents, doing

[00:28:37] anything to build upon the opportunity, that I'm quick to be reminded that some city events take away in their belief in business, and I know you're measuring that to find out whether that's true or not and to what degree it might be or not be. But I would certainly like at least the message to be that the businesses have, you know, we're going to do the things that we do, but, But having blackout weekends, if they're not proving successful or being taken advantage of, it does become a little worrisome

[00:29:17] where people cry wolf over nothing here, and I don't want that to be the case. Well, that's a whole part of this mix and mingle with the business owners is to get their input and work towards what we can do together.

[00:29:34] I got you. That would be the two mix and mingle networking events under community engagement. when are they twice a year the next one's in September okay so you had one like in April May so we're gonna cut it to twice a year yeah I got you that similarly the city manager meetups even if it's one person I think we've gotten at least some input that we might not otherwise being out there and again it

[00:30:11] goes to you know we offer them at different times of day because everyone's it's a very hard schedule with these small businesses in different realms so we'll continue to do that in addition Ms. Darciary and I have been talking about really looking at some of the analytics more closely on blackout weekends versus some of the others and the numbers and where people are going are they going in the parking garage so those analytics are underway as well to kind of help fuel these conversations about what makes sense. After a lot of these major events that we do we do have roundtable discussions with business owners in the community on ways we can improve things moving forward as well and with PD it's

[00:30:50] a community good good well I do a survey with businesses like we do with the city residents we have done some we we actually put out through our economic vitality committee of business sentiment survey and that includes canvassing to try to catch them if we can. It includes outreach via email, text, and the response has been minimal.

[00:31:16] So we'll keep cracking on that. So how has been the, these may not be the right verbs here, coordination, involvement with the city when it comes to how city properties in Old Town are reserved here, the events? The support from the city staff, Matt, Patrick, it's been wonderful.

[00:31:39] are working through the PD has been great you know so we're all in this together we're all equal shareholders and trying to tie the community part in the residents which are just as important as the businesses to tie all that stuff together so okay very good here um I think you have an opportunity with the

ice skating rink being worked on as you know this winter being delayed now to this winter to fill a void or encourage or figure out how businesses might, again, seize

[00:32:14] the opportunity to fill that void because that, you know, there's going to be fewer people down for that reason, and so how do you attract people to come down is something along the way, and I'm sure you have thought about that, but I'd like to show that I thought about too. Both ARB specifically and the Planning Commission can have an effect on Old Town.

[00:32:45] So how are you monitoring or interacting with those two commissions there in terms of, you know, representing Old Town and what have you? So I think there's a couple of things. One, ARB, we receive anything that's coming through to kind of look at it through the lens that we have to offer. Sean Porter has been chair of our design committee. We've done walk-arounds, which was something HMI did a while back, where we've identified things that either it's something HMI might talk to a business and property owner about from a beautification or anything else's point of

[00:33:22] view. We had city staff, including it was Patrick Matt, Public Works. I mean, we had a whole group of us with the committee identifying things. In fact, Matt just submitted a report on some of the progress that's been made with code enforcement and some other things and we're working on kind of our next street but committee members and I know Pechta is a co-chair on that committee will say that now you don't go out without looking at those things when you're out for dinner so the committee is invested and bought into that but I think back to the original portion of your question we do get their agendas we review it we're asked to comment on

[00:34:02] the ARB stuff. Planning Commission, not so much, but we are on receiving it. It's still on ARB, right? Yes. Very good. All right. And lastly, I think it's part of, what is it? Main Street's purpose overall is being a resource. And for instance, I will get an email or a phone call from a business that's got an old town prop. Usually it's a

[00:34:37] parking thing. My neighbor next door, you know, and what can I do and what have you. And I will admit, I don't call up HMI and say, you know, take over and so forth. I'll usually Matt to do that, but it can be between neighbors or these sorts of things here. So I know you can't deal with it unless you know about it, but how do you be, how are you proactive to sort of find those things out or at least create a conduit that they'll start thinking I need to go to HMI if

[00:35:14] you see it that way. So HMI attends the OTBA meetings. People can bring it there. They can call us. We walk around Old Town. A person has been visiting all the businesses once a week, twice a week. And you're right. If we don't know, we can't help. It's just establishing the communication lines and letting everybody know. You get which page is on but you talked about capacity building. Yes. The one with the budget overview there. Staff capacity. So what does that

[00:35:52] mean exactly and what is what will be happening? Sure and it's if you don't mind it's a I think a good segue into kind of the budget overview so I can talk a little bit more on the details particularly as it relates to the city's contribution. So one thing that I know you've all heard us say is capacity in terms of man or woman power has been a little limited in our ability to be able to do some of these things. We are able to, as I mentioned, bring marketing in-house. I think it's an opportune time.

[00:36:27] We're ready to do that. We're ready to do some of the campaigns. We also have not offered increases benefits or anything for the most part we are exploring options as it relates to health insurance

whether it's through the chambers newly instituted program for small businesses we are also trying to make it so that we're not turning over staff every one to two years so we are getting very serious with the board and talking with financial advisors and

[00:37:01] others just to see what the possibilities may be for a small nonprofit um so you know first focusing on that bring marketing in-house um we will also hopefully over time be able to have someone else who's supporting events and marketing kind of at a lower level so that we can do some of the promotional things um that i think are i'm hearing kind of bubble up here as well um as well as administrative assistant so that the executive director can kind of be freed up of some of the paperwork to be able to walk around more to your point and the goal being that

[00:37:36] all the team members will be doing that more so we got our red coats now we've got our HMI you know kind of shirts which I'm not wearing tonight as a evidence of that but we wear them it's our uniform now I'm everyone from the front desk at the visitor center throughout people know where we work and who we are and people also know to your earlier point Mr. Osina over time and I think as we've built kind of the credibility people know if it's a historic downtown issue the businesses more so than probably the property owners yet know to come to us first I've noticed an increase in that if I

[00:38:15] don't know the answer I'll either call Patrick or Mark Matt you know one of the things you know the city where if you have a specific issue there's the system you go and you get your response that way we have ensured that people know that's available to them as well as I've seen the businesses also say hey do you have a problem with the tree down or something here's that line so I think it's a we're starting to see a chain effect and I think the partnership and kind of these one-on-ones with Steve have helped as well so we're becoming ourselves more knowledgeable be able to be that resource and extension as well

[00:38:52] thank you mayor so yep so the budget mentioned you know revenue expenses I did put the in-kind just so it doesn't get lost in this so the donated office space in the train depot as well as the again and we're going to continue to grow the volunteer our contribution as an extension of us to get a lot of the work done they rethinking kind of the marketing and how we market the city of Manassas and or in addition to historic Manassas we've talked about sort of the

[00:39:29] personnel expansions and just program growth in general how do we enrich whether it's welcome kits or here's where you go for what are they workshops continuing to think through some of those Main Street things that you know we're ready to kind of bring back and dig into and that can include grant opportunities and more around that we did institute a business newsletter that's specific to the businesses that also give them information this month here's what's going on here's the street closures here's this we've offered one-on-one office hours with me to sign up if they ever want them I come to them any time of day. I haven't had a person take me up on it because I'm not that

[00:40:08] interesting apparently. It's like, I thought you said it, you only got four days. All right, I'm still there. Not everybody will run into it. Yeah, so we'll continue to pound the pavement but. How is relationship with OTBA? I know that you go to the meetings because I see you there and so are we incorporating? Are we just kind of Staying in our lanes.

[00:40:38] I mean, is there any crossover? This is Mark's. I'm not trying to start. I promise. I just. We help facilitate Hop Around and the audit happening. Because I know that's a big deal. You know, they really love those events and we help put them on.

[00:40:54] Yes, I know. We think they're great and they bring many people to the historic downtown. We're looking to help OTBA in any way that they would like to move the organization forward. Recruiting new members and so forth. We're going to take an act saying we're working together. Thank you So this is kind of some of the discussion that you know, I think from our perspective

[00:41:29] Has bubbled up both kind of in in conversations around just our strategic planning But also as we're rethinking part of this is also I know we're talking about kind of the new agreement the fiscal 27 if you can believe it budget and kind of our role and where we can be of best service as we think about the next year and years.

[00:41:52] And a couple of themes have come up that, you know, within city staff and us and even, you know, I think city manager and city council, our kind of tourism, us as a destination marketing organization, what does that really look like? What are the expectations?

[00:42:08] Because the budget may look differently if we are going more in that direction. As the visitor center, as somebody, you know, as the group that is really kind of representing Historic Manassas, what makes sense there with the Visit Manassas website as an example.

[00:42:25] Communications, I know Jeremy and others, you're all taking a look at kind of broadly how do you more seamlessly think about the various communications. How can we be complementary and not duplicating is another portion of this, whether it's our newsletters, websites, social media.

[00:42:44] Strategically thinking through that as well as kind of the business engagement. I think we've talked about This a lot is it the ribbon cuttings, you know, kind of what is our role? What what more can or should we be doing? To kind of continue with those relationships and also in the business engagement part There's a Manassas Business Council portion that maybe we can work with moving forward to

[00:43:22] I think it was a couple of years ago, we had more, if anybody wants to, volunteers or council or I think it was the school board to kind of participate or be active.

[00:43:40] It's something that can be helpful. I also recall a couple of years ago, we used to vote on the banners on the art because people worked really hard on that. I just don't know how that works. Leadership has changed in the communication area. I just wanted to bring it up.

[00:43:57] I thought that was something that residents may have. On the Banner Art Program, we still do. We're having the competition for next year right now. And we're working with the Art Guild on the judging. And the Art Factory.

[00:44:15] So we're involving our community partners in creation of the art. Yes, I was saying the council used to, no, yeah, I never had done that, but we used to be sending the link for the art so we could vote on the link.

[00:44:34] Oh, okay. And I haven't seen that in the last. Well, when the current prop is done. Yeah, it goes, when we receive them all, when the contest is closed, we'll make sure that you all have your input on that. So that'll be fine.

[00:44:50] Just a question about presentation. Are we going to go over the sheet about the proposed new city agreement? Okay, I don't have a question on it, but I just want to confirm when I brought this up at the retreat or asking that we do this, we are going to also look at the positive agreement in terms of the city's role and composition and so forth.

[00:45:22] okay and i agree that it doesn't have to be listed on one item i just want to make sure we haven't abandoned the idea that we need to take a broader look thank you this was just teeing up kind of directionally in our head from the strategic plan and that's where we'll kind of think from any feedback we get here today well i know i appreciate this is very aggressive and i think it's headed in the right direction strategic plan august said that we're bringing it to the board meeting in august the completed completed so we're taking community input right now economic

[00:45:57] development has looked at it in providing comments and we're working with them over our agreement too it will be the last one uh more like a comment you know i'm concerned as you know as a board i know you know it will continue but you know you have worked so hard to get us here and just to make sure that the transition there's two important positions and congratulations

[00:46:24] but also you know concerns me about transition and so the new executive director is on vacation tonight that's why she can't be here she planned on during the extended transition Kristen after she leaves is going to stay on in a part-time role and work with the new team and then she is also joining the board so she's going to be around

[00:47:02] we're going to keep moving forward does that answer your question yes yes it does but I sometimes you know our questions are more for the residents and the public to have a peace of mind even though we do know a little bit of what's going on i just wanted to make sure the residents and business alike not only they see the plan that they hear 26 27 but also they understand you have worked hard and to me leadership is also legacy making sure that you're living and people can uh you know take that forward so thank you absolutely no i remain committed to the mission to the city um and in

[00:47:42] In fact, one of the things that I haven't yet done that I had wished that Steve and I had talked about is getting more into, I don't know what you call it, the Friday at least once a month so that council kind of has the, you know, talking points. It's in the plan.

[00:47:58] It just didn't get executed until just yet. Maybe you'll have one this week or this Friday. Have one this week. You mentioned the website redundancy and all the work. I know our staff and you all, everybody is doing that has been an ongoing concern or complaint from not only business owners, but residents as well.

[00:48:21] So all the work you're doing there is greatly appreciated. I wanted to ask, though, are you also working with the museum and their calendar for that stuff? Jeremy does everything that comes into the city, either through HMI, any of the permits that the PD processes, Any of the events that Matt's group through parks and the museum all get funneled to Jeremy and incorporated at the city's website and that front page calendar.

[00:48:48] And that's been the conversation with HMI is how we can massage that, again, possibly transitioning the visit manassas to HMI, but then preserving the links so that there's one primary focus for events within the city.

[00:49:10] tourism expanded role and expectations so is this something you're also taken back to the board as to what that means exactly the word well i think we're through this strategic plan process the board has been involved with it all along they have the current document it's just not been officially approved yet so we're going to see that yeah and i think part of it is is conversations that are underway. So

right now with us, you know, serving as the visitor center, working, you know, with Patrick's team on the visitor guide, but making sure like dissemination

[00:49:50] used to go to like a hundred visitor centers. Now it goes to all the certified tourism centers in the Commonwealth because we mail them out, we print them. So just kind of thinking about how to use all of, whether it's websites and all of the other communications going on, where does it make sense to kind of do which pieces of that if that's fair Mr. Burke and that's kind of between you know the the events strategically we've been involved in around the table with the Starciary with PD you know to think about the policies and kind of what makes sense there similarly we're looking for

[00:50:27] communications and then I think out of that will be kind of what does tourism look like for the city of Manassas and what role can HMI help play in some of it. Does your visitor center keep track of what people are asking for?

[00:50:43] We do. A lot of Amtrak. Yeah, I remember that. In the kiosk, that works. But is it like the walking tours? Are people looking to see what we have or are they just looking for restaurants? It's a little bit of a lot of things. I think since we've revamped the visitor center, it's become quite more welcoming.

[00:51:02] like even residents didn't know we existed um so they're coming in and asking more questions it's not just about the restaurants although we have a map to all of the shops and restaurants now that the staff know how to pitch what's going on walking tours you know we're actually in the process of looking at an app that we've been working on for you know self-guided tours i think we're seeing a few more people coming in to ask about gift cards for the historic downtown definitely mainly train which i mean it's it's a good problem to have um given people are coming

[00:51:40] in and out um and amtrak virginia has reached out to us because they realized they didn't even have some of our own historic sites on their tours so we've been talking to them about promotion and getting folks into our city um because a lot of people will go through and say that's cute i wish i you know so now they're going to get a little more active and that'll be our marketing person and there'll be a first relationship we pass on.

[00:52:05] No thoughts of bringing in, like, a tour group. Most cities, so many cities have that. When you go to visit, you know, there's an option for, I guess you're talking about bringing a business in to do that. I think there are currently, isn't there currently a tour group?

[00:52:24] One gentleman who's marketing tours. Is that happening? Starting to, yeah. He's had a few, but not. Are you talking about bringing in, like, the van tour? Well, you know, like, if you go visit a city, like, I'm wondering why are people coming here?

[00:52:42] You know, what is the brand out there that people are actually, why are they here? And I guess with what you're doing with the board, maybe that thought process will come out. There's also the marketing that we're doing with, like, the walk-around tours and stuff.

[00:53:03] We're making those more accessible. You can get it right on your phone now. You have a walking tour there. So we're getting the information out and making it easily accessible. I think the other thing that Patrick and, you know, we've talked about over time, we haven't quite gotten there, is like more travel writers. We brought like a food influencers in for restaurant week and starting to think more broadly about other ways to get excitement.

[00:53:27] We do have a colleague who anytime in Prince William Tourism, he's trying to help us get a stop here. So we do, I think, in September have a bus that Ms. Darcie is helping us figure out the best place for the bus to, you know, kind of sit while they come and enjoy lunch and shopping here.

[00:53:44] And Lisa has been putting together, you know, kind of bags to hand out to them. So if those opportunities come, we are accommodating them. But it's not a formalized thing right now. But we have been developing, as you saw with the RV there yet, Prince William's starting to think about us.

[00:54:00] And we're trying to figure out how to complement each other. you know in what we're doing it might be important to stay open at the end of the day you know you were talking about cutting the hours back when holidays are going to be tourism that's when people are available to actually come to the city I don't know you would have the numbers yeah yeah we've looked we've looked at those numbers um sort of part of why we had said you know a lot

[00:54:29] of people are off but they're not coming in as much as one which stays I think RV there yet was great i'm still getting a lot of people commenting about it and that they saw it and they're still seeing it and so if you haven't go to youtube and put in army there yet and you'll see chris did a great job walking around and selling the historic downtown it was great i thought it was a long day but for like two minutes but it's okay it's two minutes we didn't have before so great so anything else i think the other thing that i'd like to address too was the covid grants that came out

[00:55:08] My understanding were those were mainly from the federal government, and the Economic Development Department under Mr. Small did a fantastic job being really innovative with the massive influx of money that came in at that time, so much so that other localities in northern Virginia and across Virginia copied a lot of what your Economic Development Department was doing.

[00:55:27] So I would love to have millions of dollars to hand out, but with the federal government cutting funding, I don't see that happening anytime soon. But if it happens again, we'll definitely want that to happen. but we are going to market the hell out of historic downtown i mean that's what we're here for yes to draw people here and it's we can get them here but they got to get them in their shops this is a partnership you know between the city historic manassas and the merchants in the historic downtown so chris we wish you all the best we thank you for stepping up and helping us out you really needed it so we're gonna miss you but you'll still be around so right right right so So thank you very much for the next time.

[00:56:07] Thank you. Thanks a lot. Thank you. Okay. And I'm going to move on to item 1.2, resolution number R-26-45, amending the FY26 budget by budgeting and appeal rating \$509,000 of state revenue, \$509,000 of capital reserve funds to repay Route 28 from Cockrell Road to Church Street.

[00:56:33] Mr. Morgan is here, but I don't know, are you coming forward? I didn't know if you and Steve were piggybacking. Do you just need a motion? You just need a motion. Please join us in this day. We'll do it the wolf way.

[00:56:50] Absolutely. Yes, for your consideration tonight, Madam Mayor, Vice Mayor, Mr. Burke, members of council, for your consideration, if we can transfer \$509,000 from a capital reserve account to match VDOT's SGR funding of \$509,000 so we can pave both north and southbound 28 between Church Street and Cockerell Avenue.

[00:57:14] We have a lovely slide with a line on it that shows us. We joked about that earlier. That's why I said that. We do. Woo! This is the drawing. The wonderful map. This is what you're trying to do. And what

Mike also has for you all is This road was actually included in your FY29 paving program.

[00:57:36] So by allowing public works, advancing funding for public works, we'll free up a million dollars in FY29 for your paving program that we might be able to identify additional local streets. Trinity Lane. So there is some additional benefit to the city by partnering with VDOT to make this happen.

[00:58:01] so that in 29, we'll be able to even augment our payment. That might make 29, 250. You'll see. Yes, ma'am. And if you could, please, sometimes our residents see a street, and the street might look good, but, you know, if you could explain a little bit on how the street and the pavement may look really nice, but the usage and how many people goes through, it might not be seen because it doesn't have to be broken to be ready to be replaced.

[00:58:38] I think that would be helpful for the residents. Yes, absolutely. The payment plan, it both takes in consideration the traffic flow on the roads as well as assesses the condition of the road to come up with the rating. And by the rating is when it falls into the scale for being a replacement. And the city does contract out the assessments of our streets every five years.

[00:59:01] There's a camera truck that goes through, and it actually does a video of all of our roads. It measures the bumps that it hits, and that's what gives each of our roads a rating. And then Mike and his crew are able to assimilate that.

[00:59:17] There's also weighing of the roads that do get additional traffic, and that's primarily because now VDOT is actually transitioning to the maintenance funding program. will be more heavily rated on the condition of our primary roads.

[00:59:34] And if they're in a worse condition, we may not receive as much VDOT funding until that happens. So there is method to the madness of street pavement. Timeline for this project?

[00:59:51] It's going to happen this year, by the fall. Okay. It's expected to be happening by the fall. All right, so by September? Yes, sir. That is the expectation. Gotcha. All right. And so you heard about from Sonia, for instance, you know, residents wanting to know when the streets are going to get paved and so forth.

[01:00:18] And I recognize, and I think we've said this enough, that most residents understand there's not enough money in the world in our budget to do all the streets all at the same time and so forth.

[01:00:35] However, it's particularly a notice in our residential streets, there are places where grass is growing between the concrete gutter and the asphalt edge there and so forth. So what sorts of things could be done, might be done, or are being done by your department to basically address that?

[01:01:02] Because clearly over time, it's going to break up the asphalt, cause the road to deteriorate even more. Are there things that are being done to kind of just, you know, kill the grass?

[01:01:21] Yes, sir, yes, sir. We have a crew right now, a two-man crew that is going around, and they're using our snow emergency routes as their sections for what they're in. So they've currently done three sections. They've started Section 10 this week, and they're going around there spraying the weeds that are growing up in the curb and in the roadways.

[01:01:38] And, of course, obviously we also have our crew that goes around and does the sealing of the cracks. Well, there, Councilman Smith, you're going to, I, well, I just spent yesterday killing weeds in the

middle of the street. I wish I had, and weed eating the circle, because it's growing, not only it's doing the curve, but also in the middle of the circle.

[01:02:02] Well, yes, the parts that the traffic, then I purchased a bucket of tar from Home Depot today. I won't use it. I'll wait until they come to see it. Oh, my goodness. The streets are actually separating. Yes, you'll see our guys going around in the UTV sprain.

[01:02:17] Okay, good. I'll wait. Or you can do it. Forty years I've been waiting, but I'll wait. You can do what happened on my street two months ago. A pothole started developing. And you widened it. No, I filled out and used the app, reported it.

[01:02:37] Next thing I know, they saw that, and they said, well, we need to really do all of this, and they put a big patch. So I've got a really nice part of it right in front of my house. That's all. I could deny it. Now you know that. Just get a pothole.

[01:02:53] You'll be good to go. Thank you for taking care of that. But that's good to know. I think our residents know it's good to know that you're going out there as time permits, obviously, to address that. And I hope that will just be an ongoing kind of thing, you know, every year. Because like my lawn, the weeds keep coming back.

[01:03:11] So I'm sure the grass does too. Yes, sir. They like to grow where they don't need to be. All right. Thank you. That's good news. Thank you, mayor. Well, if council's comfortable, we'll include this on your 28th agenda for consideration. Okay. Thank you.

[01:03:28] Thank you. Time 2.1, car wash operations. Yes, ma'am. A while ago, we had received some noise complaints about a car wash over on Ashton and the side street.

[01:03:47] Yes, thank you. And staff from both PD and code enforcement have been talking with the owner, and the owner has recently adopted a time where the operations of the car wash have been restricted from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m., in hopes of reducing some of the noise.

[01:04:14] so we're trying to work that route uh parallel to that uh councilman osin has been working with the city attorney's office to develop potential code amendments that would further any sort of enforcement or preclude operations during certain times for any future development of car washing facilities that could come to pass so effectively just wanted to give you all an update on where we

[01:04:46] are now and then where uh council could go if you desire to pursue code amendments what are the out what is he doing right now 11 to 11 to 6. it's 11 to 6. okay got a new time or is that what it's always been no no there had been no restriction yet no restrictions now it's 11 to 6. yes ma'am i'm sorry just claire that is not a restriction that is self-compliance he has to continue to

[01:05:25] Doesn't have to I mean on his own The again staff presented him with some of the concerns about noise and and he did undertake the the closing of the car washing facilities to Sorry, go ahead. No, go ahead. You may be asking what I'm asking It will be quick if it does come up. I would like to see the timing of the other places

[01:05:59] car washes it is across the board we have several car washes car washing facilities uh those uh there's some that close at six uh they're the the other ones are primarily folks where they have people that are working to to to clean the cars so there's one that closes at six there's one that closes at nine and there's one that closes so they're across the board right so thank you for all your hard work i truly appreciate it but

if it is something i would like to see like something that applies for everybody because if we're talking about the noise whether if they do

[01:06:36] it by hand or the machine it's still i think it will be important to you know use one for everybody so thank you mayor so our folks in the bristow station neighborhood had talked about it when i visited over multiple years and this has been an ongoing ongoing problem this isn't just something that just popped up because it is the only unattended car wash that is uh in the city

[01:07:08] uh it is the it is the car wash that comes the closest to a residential neighborhood uh for those of you who have actually you know been there and walked it for instance or you know driven by or even had your car wouldn't wash your car there you'll notice how close it is to the back of a whole row of townhomes and so you know from my standpoint we have a lot of quality of life issues in in this city that we hear about and to me this is one where i think we've become

[01:07:45] i think as a council a little more acutely aware that how i don't call them little in terms of uh that they're insignificant but how small things are annoyance to people trying to enjoy their house. So number one, I certainly appreciate the owner agreeing to some restriction on his time. I'm disappointed that it took going this far for that to happen, first of all. And secondly,

[01:08:21] to Sonia's point here, the hours of operation. I personally believe that 11 o'clock at night is way too late simply because if you've got school kids, for instance, and you're trying to get them to bed 11 o'clock is too late um not everybody works um you know a day shift so we have those situations i mean we could go down the list and so i i do think that first of all uh an earlier close time would be is is warrant would be appropriate let's put it that way i won't say

[01:08:58] warranted is appropriate i'm thinking like eight o'clock but again uh first for for and then secondly i think this needs to be uniform for all our car marshes we don't want to single any particular business out but i do think it needs to be uniform so all car washes are treated fairly equally and then lastly keep in mind that we who knows what may happen in the future where another car wash comes along say it's unattended and a unattended car wash and it wants to build And we have no formal ordinance on the time.

[01:09:37] And I think now's the time for that just to take place because that will solve, I think, a myriad of issues moving forward in that regard. So I would hope that we might be able to come to some kind of agreement where we would move forward with an ordinance.

[01:09:56] and earlier closing time in the evening, 6, 7 in the morning, I think is an appropriate time. I know we all have some variations along the way there. And then move ahead, ask the city attorney to draft something appropriately and move ahead with a public hearing, and let's hear from residents so we really do get an idea of what kind of situation is out there.

[01:10:27] public hearings serve that kind of purpose to make sure that we are attuned, that we're not trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. I think we'll find that there is a problem, and doing some things will be helpful. I do have one question, Mayor, if I may, and that is, Chief, in terms of noise complaints, have you looked at the statistics for this property and are able to share any statistics, like for the first half of this year or whatever time period you might be able to have i don't have the actual statistics i can tell you what we did do and when these

[01:11:04] complaints came in we worked with the community we followed the noise ordinance we went out and took decibel readings from the property line and they were in compliance but that is also one of the reasons he put restrictions on the automatic car wash section because that was one of the questionable areas as well so they are in compliance i believe on the residents some of the residents are here is that has been one of their frustration even though it's within compliance of the noise ordinance it's still disturbing them i got you on on that and i would

[01:11:43] just say to that as as we all all know um and and maybe you know i know we did a lot of work on the noise or just maybe we have the not the appropriate you know lower you know you know level we always have to make decisions I I get that sort of thing I just would suggest to to all of us here that it's evening it's quiet you're trying to go to sleep you're trying to get your kids settled down and you got that to to deal with here it's not like a I mean we we tell the trains they

[01:12:21] shouldn't be you know blowing their their their horns at certain times that some of them do and you know we we live with it and i know it's not as long or as constant and we don't have the police running out there you know ticketing them and these kinds of things but we do have i think there's some precedent for that uh along the way that dealing with noise um and these small things quality of life issues are just those sorts of things i think within our power we we can address by moving forward and hearing what our residents really have to say, I think will be the key as to whether we move ahead or not.

[01:13:00] So I'd be in favor of doing that. If I can clarify one thing, part of the noise complaint is not just the business. It's the noise that customers are making when they're there, whether that's them speaking, yelling at each other, or playing loud music as well.

[01:13:17] Thank you for clarifying. Yeah, for what it's worth, I agree we need to work and resolve this. I guess I would caution against a one-size-fits-all approach with regard to car washes because the issue that we have here is that it is an impact on a residential neighborhood that needs to be addressed.

[01:13:43] And that can be tailored in whatever ordinance we come up with. That might, and I don't know, that might not be the case for all of the other car washes. And I'm thinking the one on Centerville Road, it might be up within a certain distance of residential, or it might not.

[01:14:04] I would not, and I'm not going to make a federal case out of this by any stretch, but over-regulating or regulating when it's not really needed is maybe what it's worth.

[01:14:26] How long has he had this volunteer at 11 p.m.? About a month and a half, I think it started in June. With all due respect to his doing that, I like the thought process that Mr. Osina has presented.

[01:14:44] With the caution, that's a very good point that Mark has made. We have some insight as to our future in terms of future housing and streetscapes and all those other things. So we very well may need to be in a position to be concerned about an unattended car wash being somewhere close to Matthews Avenue or some other.

[01:15:08] We don't know the future of housing and so forth. I do think it's time for us to take a look at along the lines of his thought process. New zone or zone in or whatever. I wouldn't like to restrict him.

[01:15:23] I do like the point he made that we have to be very cautious about a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all. And that's for staff and Mr. Brown, I mean, to develop that. Right, to develop that. To keep us in line.

[01:15:40] Not tying their hands, not doing this in their hands, to do what we refer to as a harebrained session. just let it be all over the place Okay, so right now our noise ordering ordinance is close no noise 10:00 p.m. To 7:00 a.m.. Right?

[01:16:01] So why was he not following those rules and why are they different well? It wasn't that he wasn't following it's just when the Violation was made the city could enforce the noise ordinance if they exceeded the decibel readings, but even now it's 11:00 p.m.. Not 10 And again, the noise generated isn't exceeding the decibels.

[01:16:30] Oh, because of the decibels. Okay. For the train, is that also the same time? Yeah, I believe it is. Okay. Is there a fence? I've been over that car wash, but I can't remember. Is there a fence that has a buffer between the car wash and townhomes?

[01:16:47] I believe there's a fence, but there's not trees along all of it. there's some, some properties have landscaping, some don't. Has he been approached to try to put a buffer there? I'm sorry. We've actually worked with the owner and forwarded him to economic development to try to get a facade and or landscaping grant. We've informed him of that process and what that would take and what he could do with that as well. When was that? When was that

[01:17:21] given to him recently the June time okay okay um yeah I agree we need to look at this and maybe have more restrictions in residential make sure there's a strong buffer between them as well thank you I will support that but I will say if we do it for this and we don't apply it to the other ones that's fine but I do want to make sure that anybody in the future these ordinance applies

[01:17:51] And I believe the planning and the staff already do a great job when it comes to future and offerings and all of that. So I think that will take care of it. But yes, I'm concerned about the hours.

[01:18:09] I mean, one of the big priorities for me is to provide quality of life for people. And this is right there. Big priority. So move forward. We'll work on a draft. Thank you very much.

[01:18:27] Anything else to come before we are adjourned? Here we go. Yes.



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