TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dan Hoffman, Town Manager

FROM: Kirstyn Jovanovich, Deputy Town Manager

CC: Michael Mueller, Golf Course General Manager
Ben Schitter, Development Program Manager
Nick Maletta, Town Arborist
TJ Williams, Chief Project Management Officer

DATE: August 6, 2026 REVISED

SUBJECT: Golf Course Impacts – Burwick Drive/Estates at Eagle Lie; Data Review and Mitigation Options

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Revised – Sections I, V and VI have been revised to reflect updated estimates for netting solutions received on July 29, 2026.

I. Executive Summary

Staff has engaged with residents in the Estates at Eagle Lie community (primarily along Burwick Drive) regarding concerns about golf balls from Hole #9 at Herndon Centennial Golf Course entering adjacent properties. Town records indicate concerns have been raised by residents beginning in 2024, and the Town completed a tee box realignment project in June 2025, shifting Hole #9 alignment away from adjacent properties.

Following receipt of a formal complaint in April 2026, a cross-departmental team reviewed available data, conducted a site visit, evaluated mitigation options, and met onsite with community members. The data does not support the conclusion that active tee shots are the primary source of golf balls reaching adjacent properties. Wildlife, maintenance activity, and the April 2026 removal of invasive vegetation along the W&OD Trail corridor are also likely contributing factors. However, data is limited. According to Town records, one formal damage claim was filed (July 1, 2026) by residents in this area since tracking began in 2019, and the Town averages approximately three golf-related claims per year across the entire course, averaging about $1,000 per claim.

Residents also expressed concern about the risk of personal injury to trail users and adjacent residents from golf balls leaving the course during active play. Town records contain no documented incidents of personal injury in this area, and available data suggests this probability is low; this is addressed further in Section III.

Dominion is replanting the W&OD corridor behind the affected properties with a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, which is expected to restore some of the natural buffer that was lost in April 2026. Staff also reviewed opportunities to enhance vegetation along the W&OD corridor and the golf course tree line.

A netting solution was specifically requested by residents and staff reviewed several options that might offer increased protection from golf course activities to the homes along the W&OD in this area. The ROM cost for a minimum adequate netting installation (350-450 linear feet at 60 feet in height) ranges from $114,000 to $146,700. Staff is also launching a Golf Course Master Planning effort in the coming months and mitigation solutions for the course should be considered as part of that planning effort.

On June 24, 2026, staff held an on-site community meeting with Estates at Eagle Lie residents to present findings and hear directly about their experiences. A community meeting summary is provided in Section IV, and mitigation opportunities begin in Section V.

II. Background and Complaint Summary

As the Golf Course is classified as a park, the Town is generally protected by sovereign immunity for damage caused by errant golf balls, with liability resting with the individual golfer. As a courtesy, the Town established the *Good Neighbor Program*, an enterprise-funded program that reimburses property damage caused by Golf Course activities. When a claim is submitted, Risk Management investigates; if damage is determined to have been caused by an errant golf ball, the Golf Course General Manager may authorize payment under the program.

On April 14, 2026, staff received an email complaint from a resident at 1119 Burwick Drive regarding golf balls leaving the Herndon Centennial Golf Course and impacting adjacent private properties and neighborhood quality of life along Burwick Drive. The resident met with staff on April 17, 2026 to discuss these concerns in detail.

The resident specifically requested that the Town take immediate action to install a protective netting system along the golf course at Hole #9 to stop routine golf balls from exiting the golf course onto adjacent properties in this area.

Residents in the neighborhood have had previous discussions with Town staff regarding this issue. In July 2024, a resident at 1117 Burwick Drive emailed Mayor Olem and the Golf Course General Manager citing damage caused by stray balls in the neighborhood, including broken windows and damage to vehicles and siding, and requested that the town install protective netting along Hole #9. In addition, she provided a list of resident signatures to the Town, indicating it was a petition supporting installation of a protective netting. In August 2024, the Golf Course General Manager responded to the resident advising that the Town was finalizing a tee box renovation project that may address the issue by realigning the tee boxes further away from the adjacent properties.

In May 2025, several residents with properties on Burwick Drive attended a Town Hall meeting and again requested that the Town install protective netting along Hole #9. Staff at the time advised that the tee box realignment project was nearing completion and should reduce errant balls from impacting adjacent properties. The tee box project was completed in June 2025.

Town staff met with several residents of the Estates at Eagle Lie on June 24, 2026 to discuss their concerns and for staff to share findings to date. During this meeting, in an effort to collect data, staff encouraged residents to file claims for property damage and to report incidents of golf balls entering or impacting their property. Previously, the Town provided claim process information to the residents at 1119 and 1117 Burwick Drive. At the date of the meeting, no

claims from this neighborhood had been filed since the Town began consistently tracking claims in 2019. On July 1, 2026, the Town received a claim for damage to siding at 1117 Burwick Drive, which is being processed. To date, no other claims or comments have been received regarding golf course impacts in this area.

III. Data Review and Site Evaluation

Following the April 17, 2026 meeting, a cross-departmental team reviewed the complaint, examined available data, and conducted several site visits to the Golf Course and along the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail at the rear of the properties along Burwick Drive.

The following findings are relevant to evaluating the scope and appropriate response:

a. Location of Reported Claims

A review of claims records from 2019 to 2026 indicates that most damage reports related to golf balls are concentrated at two locations: the Community Center parking lot and Crestview Drive near the 7-Eleven. As of the date of the community meeting, no claims had been filed for the area along Hole #9. On July 1, 2026, the Town received a claim for property damage for 1117 Burwick Drive.



b. Trail and Resident Safety

Residents expressed concern about the potential for personal injury to W&OD Trail users and residents from golf balls leaving the course during active play. Town records contain no documented incidents of personal injury caused by errant golf balls in this area.

While no risk can be entirely eliminated, available data suggests the probability is low. Shot geometry indicates that reaching adjacent properties from active play would require an atypical deviation of more than 40 degrees off-line, well outside the range of an even severely errant shot. Combined with the absence of any injury record in this area, the data does not indicate a significant personal injury risk from active play.

c. Invasive Plant Removal Along the W&OD Trail and Dominion Replanting Plan

The W&OD Trail is NOVA Parks property, with an easement granted to Dominion for powerline maintenance. Under their agreement, Dominion conducts regular vegetation maintenance, including removal of invasive species, and replanting native species to support local wildlife.

In April 2026, Dominion removed invasive vegetation along the corridor behind the Burwick Drive properties as part of routine easement maintenance. This removal reduced the natural buffer between the golf course and neighboring properties and likely contributed to an increase in golf balls reaching adjacent private properties. On May 12, 2026, staff met with Dominion regarding replanting plans for the area behind 1117 and 1119 Burwick Drive. Dominion has prepared a planting plan, shared it with the Town, and has been in direct contact with residents.

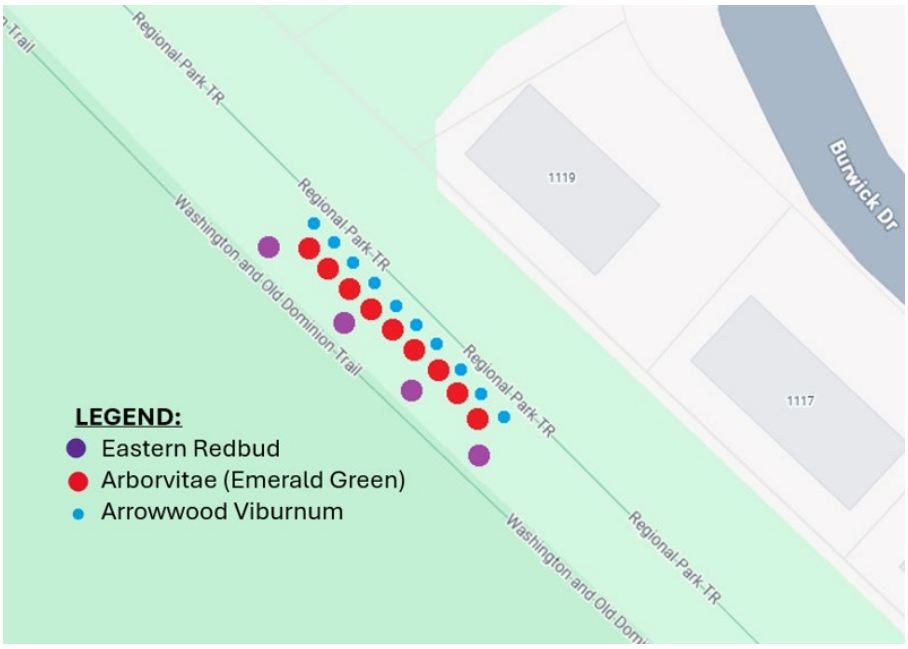


Vegetation along W&OD Trail rear of 1119 Burwick Drive facing Ferndale Drive, 2022.



Vegetation along W&OD, July 2026 – after vegetation removal.

Replanting is expected in Fall 2026. Prior to replanting, Dominion plans to spray for invasives along the corridor on both sides of the trail behind the Burwick Drive homes; specific replanting locations in those areas have not yet been finalized.



Dominion Planting Plan, rear of 1119 Burwick Drive

d. Tee Box Realignment Project

A tee box renovation and irrigation project was completed in June 2025. Regarding Hole #9, the hole immediately adjacent to the W&OD trail near the Burwick Drive properties, the tee box was realigned to reduce directional conflict between play patterns and neighboring properties, as well as conflicts with other holes on the course. During the community meeting, some residents acknowledged a decrease in golf balls entering their property since the realignment, but that impacts persist.

e. Golf Course Vegetation Buffer

A vegetation and tree buffer runs along the golf course adjacent to the W&OD Trail. A gap in this buffer near the 150-yard marker on Hole #9, located across the trail from 1119 Burwick Drive, serves as a Dominion utility access point from the golf course to the easement.





f. Hole #9 Cone of Safety

Staff reviewed the designated cone of safety for Hole #9, which defines the expected ball flight corridor and the buffer area intended to contain errant shots within the course boundary. The cone of safety was used as a reference point during site evaluation to determine where netting or other physical barriers would be most effective in intercepting balls before they exit the course perimeter.



Hole #9 Cone of Safety

g. Origination Analysis and Contributing Factors

The golf course hosts approximately 48,000 rounds per year. The Town averages approximately three (3) claims per year through the *Good Neighbor Program* related to golf course impacts, at a cost of roughly $3,000 annually.

Following the June 2025 tee box realignment, the standard 200-foot cone of safety for Hole #9, measured from the centerline of play, terminates in the wooded area between the W&OD Trail and golf course. Within that area, there is a gap in the vegetation that provides utility access from the golf course onto the utility easement on the trail. This gap is located near the 150-yard marker for Hole #9, located across the trail from 1119 and 1117 Burwick Drive. The tree line in this area is roughly 75 feet, verified during an on-site review.

Shot geometry is inconsistent with active tee shots as the primary source. Reaching the nearest affected property would require a deviation of more than 40 degrees off the fairway centerline from the white tees, well outside the cone of safety parameters for Hole #9.

Several additional factors may contribute to golf balls appearing on adjacent properties. Wildlife has been documented removing and relocating balls from the course into surrounding areas. Balls that come to rest in vegetation along the course perimeter, whether from errant shots or wildlife activity, may also be displaced by routine maintenance operations on the course, trail or on adjacent private property. In addition, the presence of range balls among those found on neighboring properties further supports these alternative explanations, as range balls are not used in active play on Hole #9. Taken together, the data suggests that the majority of golf balls found on neighboring properties are likely not the result of active play, and this context is relevant when evaluating both the Town's exposure and the appropriate scope of any mitigation response.

IV. Community Meeting Summary

On June 24, 2026, Town staff met with residents from the Estates at Eagle Lie community to hear directly from residents about their experiences and to share staff's findings to date.

- Some residents confirmed reduced frequency of golf balls entering their property since the June 2025 tee box renovation project completion, but expressed that impacts continue
- Residents indicated that incidents extended beyond properties bordering the trail into the broader neighborhood
- Residents expressed support for netting and vegetation solutions; some favored a combination
- Residents requested decision timeline; staff explained the Council process
- Staff encouraged residents to file claims and submit incident documentation to further support data collection

V. Mitigation Opportunities

As part of this review, staff, in coordination with outside contractors and agency partners, evaluated physical intervention options related to reducing the impact of golf course activities on adjacent properties.

Of note, no mitigation activity will eliminate golf balls from entering adjacent properties, including those caused by errant shots, wildlife activity, routine maintenance, or other causes.

a. Near- to Mid-Term Options

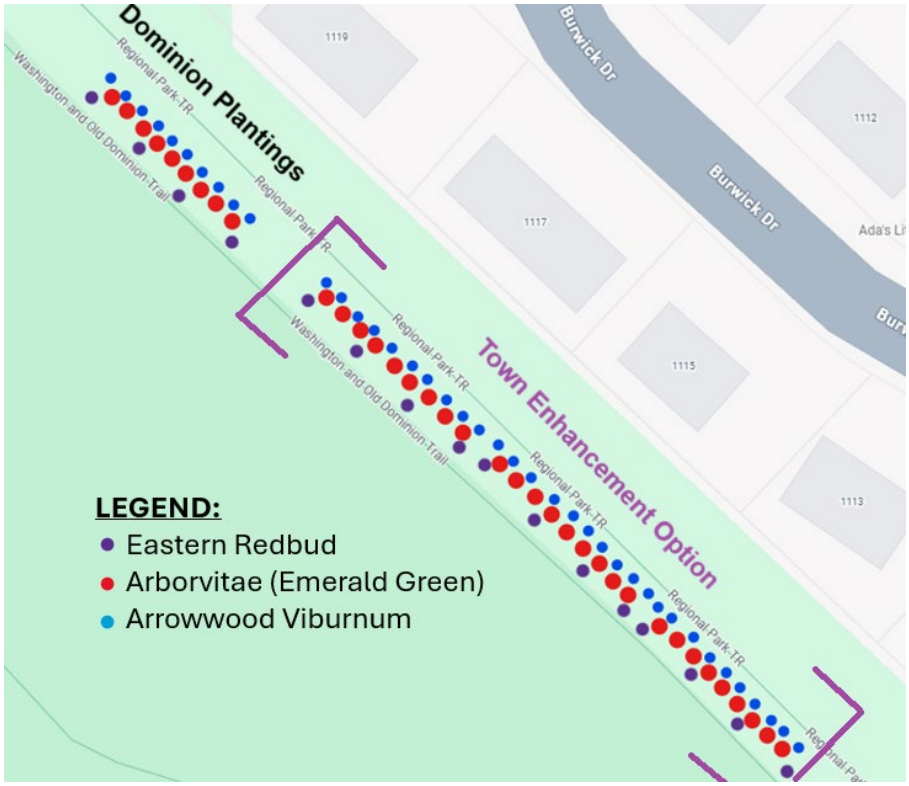
1. Vegetation Enhancements

- **Replanting along the W&OD Trail corridor (in progress) (Dominion action)**

- **Enhance plantings on slopes along W&OD trail to increase vegetative barrier (Town action, in coordination with NOVA Parks and Dominion)**

The below plan illustrates locations that Dominion will plant in Fall 2026, as well as locations that the Town may choose to plant additional plantings to further rebuild the vegetative barrier along the trail in this area. The design will replicate the screening installed by Dominion behind 1119 Burwick Drive. The estimate for the Town to install enhanced plantings in this area is $27,000 to $30,000. If the Town wishes to add plantings beyond 1113 Burwick, the cost is approximately $10,000 per house.

Plantings will have an immediate visual presence but will provide increasing benefit as vegetation becomes established over time.



- **Closure of vegetation gap near the 150-yard marker on Hole #9 (Town action, in coordination with Dominion)**

- **Addition of evergreen/canopy trees along existing tree line on golf course property (Town action)**

The Town may choose to add trees in the buffer along Hole #9 on the golf course in areas where there are gaps or thinning in the canopy. The addition of 10 to 20 trees in this area is estimated to cost $6,000 to $15,000, depending on total number of trees and size. This will not have an immediate impact, but will support long-term health of the buffer in this area. These are rough estimates and costs will likely be higher.

All cost estimates are rough and subject to change based on final scope, plant availability, and site conditions.

2. Course Signage

- **Installation of strategic signage on the course, in the clubhouse, and on score cards indicating golfer responsibility for damage caused by course play and to be good neighbors (Town action)**

The addition of signage at holes #1 and #10, as well as inside the club house and on score cards, that advise players of their responsibility for damage caused by course play may be helpful in bringing awareness to the Town policy, as well as encourage players to be mindful of their proximity to course boundaries and adjacent properties. Currently, signage advising players of their responsibility for damage to adjacent property is limited. Golf Course staff will

work with the Communications team to develop language and appropriate signage in alignment with the Town brand and with a positive tone. This will have minimal costs for materials and labor.

b. Long-Term Option (Capital Investment/Council Action Required)

In response to residents' direct request, Town staff evaluated netting options based on existing conditions, tee box alignment, and the cone of safety for Hole #9 and have identified Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) for several options.

Netting Systems

A netting installation of 350 to 450 linear feet at 60 feet in height would likely cover the location with the highest probability of balls exiting through or over the existing tree buffer along Hole #9. The ROM for this option ranges from $114,000 to $146,700.

At 350-450 linear feet, this represents the minimum span to address the highest-probability corridor for balls leaving the course.

A netting system that extends from the start point to the green, approximately 750 linear feet at 60 feet in height, would cost roughly $244,500. This configuration would represent the most comprehensive coverage and most closely aligns with the full scope of resident concerns.

As the existing tree canopy in some areas along the buffer exceeds 60' feet in height, staff evaluated the cost for a netting system up to 80' feet in height. Once the height exceeds 60 feet, the project changes from a standard fence installation to a fully engineered structural system requiring larger two-pole configurations, deeper foundations, specialized drilling, and site-specific engineering. As a result, the estimated cost per linear foot for an 80-foot-tall netting system exceeds $2,700.

A netting system at 450 LF in length and 80 feet in height is estimated to cost $1,248,874.

A netting system may provide a visible near-term response to resident concerns; however, it is a capital investment and requires Council action. These are rough estimates and costs will likely be higher.



Linear Feet (LF) from Start Point	40' w/ Fence $226/LF ($)	60' w/ Fence $326/LF ($)
350LF	$79,100	$114,100
450	101,700	146,700
750	168,596	244,500

VI. Mitigation Options

Utilizing the mitigation opportunities outlined in the previous section, below are options for consideration for short-term and long-term responses to this issue.

Option 1 – Vegetation Enhancement Focus + Course Signage + Golf Course Master Plan

a. Vegetation Enhancement: Add canopy and evergreen trees to existing tree line along the golf course, providing additional coverage where there are gaps or thinning in the canopy in this area. This will have both an immediate visual impact and a long-term benefit in support of the health of the buffer, as well as increasing the vegetative barrier between the course and adjacent properties.

After plantings are established, staff should re-engage with community members to assess whether vegetation improvements have meaningfully reduced impacts. During this time the Town should continue to seek data from residents on course impacts on their property, as well as track claims processed through the *Good Neighbor Program*.

b. Course Signage: Install appropriate signage on the golf course advising of the responsibility of the golfer for damage to adjacent property and encourage courteous play.

c. Golf Course Master Planning: The Town is preparing to begin a Golf Course Master Planning project. This effort should include a comprehensive evaluation of course impacts on adjacent properties and obtain resident and course user input. Netting solutions and other capital improvements should be evaluated as part of the Master Plan process.

Cost Estimate: $33,000 - $45,000 (Vegetation); Master Planning funds included in FY 2027 Budget; Signage costs minimal – operational

Timing: Plantings - Fall 2026 and/or Spring/Fall 2027; Resident Follow Up Summer 2027 and Summer 2028; Signage – immediate

Budget: FY 2027 Budget amendment and/or FY 2028 Budget request

Option 2 – Minimum Netting System + Vegetation Enhancement + Course Signage

Netting System + Option 1a and 1b: In addition to Option 1 (a. vegetation enhancement and b. course signage) install minimum span of netting system addressing the highest-probability corridor for balls leaving the course. A netting solution along Hole #9 was directly requested by residents adjacent to the course. The minimum installation that would likely address the highest-probability corridor is 450 LF at 60 feet in height, estimated at $146,700.

It is important to note that the height of 60 feet is less than some parts of the existing tree canopy and would primarily reduce balls leaving the course through the vegetation buffer as opposed to over the tree canopy. The cost to increase the netting height to 80 feet for a 450 LF span is $1,248,874.

After installation, staff should continue to monitor resident reported impacts on neighboring property and track claims filed through the *Good Neighbor Program*.

Cost Estimate: $179,700 - $191,700 (Vegetation, $33K - $45K + Minimum Netting, $146,700); Signage costs minimal – operational

Timing: FY 2027 Budget amendment or FY 2028 Budget request; Resident Follow Up Summer 2027 and Summer 2028; Signage – immediate

Budget: Golf Course Enterprise Fund, Capital investment – requires Town Council Action, budget amendment

VII. Closing and Next Steps

Given that the Golf Course Master Planning process is preparing to begin, capital investment decisions should be evaluated as part of that process rather than as standalone actions.

This review has also surfaced related concerns: staff met with a Fairfax County resident adjacent to Hole #6 who reported property damage from errant golf balls, and an existing netting

system along Hole #17 (recently replaced) protects a nearby Montessori school and playground from course impacts. Combined with claims data, these examples underscore the need for a comprehensive evaluation of course impacts on adjacent properties, rather than a series of isolated reviews and investments.

Current data includes an average claim rate of three claims per year valued at roughly $1,000 per incident. The Master Plan process provides a structured mechanism for incorporating community input and aligning any mitigation investment with long-term planning.

This memo was prepared to provide an overview of the history of the issue, data collected, and provide mitigation options for consideration. Next steps include:

- Town Manager review and feedback
- Schedule for Town Council work session (regarding capital investment)
- Advise residents of Town Council work session date once scheduled
- Continued incident data collection
- Ongoing vegetation work (near-term actions underway)

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.