TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

HERNDON TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 11, 2025

1. Call to Order

Mayor LeBlanc called the March 11, 2025, Town Council regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Herndon Council Chambers Building, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon, Virginia. In attendance were: Mayor Keven LeBlanc; Vice Mayor Clark Hedrick; and Councilmembers Naila Alam, Cesar del Aguila, Kelvin Garcia (arrived at 7:03 p.m.), Michael T. Lloyd, and Alex Reyes.

Staff present during the meeting: Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager; Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney; Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich and Scott Robinson, Acting Deputy Town Managers; Acting Chief Steve Pihonak, Herndon Police Department; Marjorie Sloan, Director of Finance; Maria Lee, Budget Manager; and Amanda Kertz, Acting Town Clerk.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

Mayor LeBlanc led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Determination of a Quorum

Mayor LeBlanc determined there was a quorum of all Councilmembers present.

Mayor Announcements

Mayor LeBlanc stated that Barbara Glakas, Herndon Historical Society Historian, is hosting a presentation on Early Herndon Female Leaders in honor of Women's History Month on Saturday, March 15, 4:00 p.m., at the Herndon Fortnightly Library.

Mayor LeBlanc stated that following the regular meeting agenda items this evening, the Council will take a brief recess and reconvene in the Hoover Conference Room for a work session on the FY 26 proposed budget. The work session will be recorded and live-streamed. The public is welcome to attend this work session. However, there are no public comments during work sessions.

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3. Presentations/Reports/Comments

a. Proclamation to recognize Women's History and Gender Equality Month

Mayor LeBlanc recognized Councilmember Alam to read the Proclamation to Recognize Women's History and Gender Equality Month into the record.

Mayor LeBlanc stated that members of the audience are invited to comment on the proclamations during the "Comments from the Audience" portion of the agenda.

b. Town Manager Report

Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, stated the Herndon Police Department is the first department in Virginia to train every officer in sensory inclusion through Culture City. He indicated that there will be sensory bags in each police cruiser in order to be better prepared for situations that the police may encounter.

Mr. Martino stated that staff issued the construction permit for an underground structure below 1256 Wilshire Drive. He provided an update on the underground structure, stating that it will not go beyond the footprint of the house. Staff will continue monitoring the project and inspect it, as necessary.

c. Councilmember Comments

Councilmember Alam: stated that she would be taking a short break at sunset to break her fast, which is shortly after the start of the meeting.

Councilmember Garcia: no comments.

Councilmember Lloyd: provided comments on the Police Promotional Ceremony held by the Herndon Police Department on Thursday, March 6. He congratulated the following officers who were promoted: Captain Carson, Corporal Richards, Corporal Wallace, and Communications Supervisor Morgran Hudnall were recognized. He expressed appreciation to the Herndon Police Department and Town staff for their continued dedication to maintaining Town operations and public service.

Councilmember Lloyd also shared that he regularly reviews public comments submitted to the Town Clerk, and expressed his appreciation to residents for sharing their views. He addresses concerns raised regarding the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the community and suggestions from some residents that the Town of Herndon pursue sanctuary city status. While expressing empathy for those concerns, he noted that elected officials are required to uphold both the U.S. and Virginia constitutions and must operate within the

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bounds of state and federal laws.

Councilmember Lloyd commented on the potential for budget reductions at the county, state, and federal levels. He expressed concern that, due to the region's significant population of federal employees, federal budget cuts could have a notable impact on the local economy.

Councilmember del Aguila: provided comments on the following:

Arts Herndon:
Councilmember del Aguila inquired about the status of Arts Herndon and the building it occupies, commonly known as ArtSpace. He asked the Interim Town Manager to provide information for the public.

Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, stated that the Town does not hold title to the Arts Herndon property and does not control its tenancy. He explained that while the property was previously leased to the Town, the building is now beyond its useful life. He stated that it would be in the Town's best interest for Arts Herndon to relocate to the renovated space at 397 Herndon Parkway, which was prepared using Town investment funds.

Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, added that the ownership of the Arts Herndon property remains unresolved due to pending legal matters.

Councilmember del Aguila asked whether an executive order issued by the Commonwealth could override constitutional provisions. Responding, Ms. Yeatts indicated that this would require legal research.

Meeting with Latino Community Members:
Councilmember del Aguila thanked Mayor LeBlanc for attending a recent meeting with Latino community leaders and acknowledged the concerns raised by residents. He noted that he and Councilmember Garcia met with Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay to discuss local housing needs. Chairman McKay expressed support for the Town's efforts and offered to assist with accelerating progress, while also sharing successful practices regarding police recruitment and performance in the County.

Councilmember Reyes: thanked Councilmember Alam for reading the proclamation recognizing Women's History and Gender Equality Month. He expressed appreciation for the contributions of all women, particularly his mother, whom he described as the backbone of society.

Vice Mayor Hedrick: stated that the Town is facing a number of important issues that are impacting the community, which should be tracked for follow-up. He stated that he is committed to a thriving arts community in Herndon.

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Vice Mayor Hedrick also addressed concerns raised about immigration enforcement, specifically regarding ICE presence at schools. He clarified that enforcement activities typically do not occur in schools and encouraged families to continue sending their children to school without fear.

Vice Mayor Hedrick joined Councilmember Reyes in thanking Councilmember Alam for reading the Women's History and Gender Equality Month proclamation.

Mayor LeBlanc: welcomed the public and expressed appreciation for their participation, highlighting the importance of proclamations that recognize individuals and groups who contribute to the Town's unity and diversity.

Mayor LeBlanc provided a summary of recent outreach activities including: (1) Herndon Police Department Promotional Ceremony on March 6; (2) meeting with the organization Virginia New Majority; (3) meeting with Delegate Shin to discuss the Town's legislative priorities; and (4) conducting meetings with Homeowner Associations, apartment communities, school district representatives, and the Herndon Police, to address community concerns.

Arts Herndon:
In response to public dialogue about the arts in Herndon, Mayor LeBlanc reiterated his commitment to finding a sustainable path forward for Arts Herndon. He noted that although the Town is unable to move forward with a formal agreement concerning the current Arts Herndon building due to legal mediation with Comstock, the Town has invested approximately $340,000 to renovate space located at 397 Herndon Parkway. He stated that this space matches or exceeds the size of Arts Herndon's current location.

Mayor LeBlanc stated that he is dedicated to discussing all options to allow Arts Herndon to continue thriving. While acknowledging that the organization is a private nonprofit and the Town cannot assume its financial obligations, he emphasized the Town's dedication to collaborative and mutually supportive solutions to help the arts continue to flourish in Herndon.

Comments and Disclosures for the Record

Mayor LeBlanc asked Amanda Kertz, Acting Town Clerk, if she had received comments for the record or signed disclosure declarations from Council. Ms. Kertz stated that comments were provided to the Town Council and entered into the record on work session item 6(a), FY 2026 Proposed Budget. The Town Clerk did not receive additional public comments or disclosures on any other items listed on that meeting's agenda.

4. Comments from the Audience

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Mayor LeBlanc reviewed the process and asked those who wanted to provide Comments from the Audience to come forward.

Comments about the downtown and Arts Herndon:

- Jasbinder Singh, 804 Third Street, Herndon: asked that all records regarding downtown development be made public.

- Barbara Glakas, 935 Barton Oaks Place, Herndon: also expressed concerns in the community about immigration enforcement.

- Demeter Capsalis, 1483 Powells Tavern Place, Herndon: also expressed concerns about immigration enforcement and the actions taken at the Federal government level. She requested that the town look into becoming a Sanctuary City.

- Guinevere Tulley, 1121 Cypress Tree Place, Herndon: echoed Demeter Capsalis' concerns about Arts Herndon.

- Newt Salamander, 2272 Astoria Circle, Herndon: also provided information about a community protest on Friday, March 14, encouraging individuals to attend.

- Rusty Budd 330 Reneau Way, Herndon.

- Steve Mitchell, 921 Monroe Street, Herndon: also provided comments on the upcoming FY 26 budget process.

- Jay Hadlock 515 Alabama Drive, Herndon: also provided comments about the upcoming FY 26 budget process, asked the Town to remove the "coming soon" banner in the downtown. He also encouraged the Town to utilize vacant office space.

- Julian Ho, 12642 Etruscan Drive, Herndon: also expressed concerns about immigration enforcement in the community.

- Christine Joachim, 741 Center Street, Herndon.

Comments on various topics:

- Spencer Fink, 221 Astoria Circle, Herndon: asked if more trees can be planted in Herndon.

- Bessie Denton, 495 Virginia Avenue, Herndon: provided comments on the following: (1) concerns about vehicle repairs on public streets and near her cul-de-sac; and (2) suggested holding a roundtable with Homeland Security to

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address ICE-related concerns and public communication.

- Alexander Burke, 910 Jorrs Place, Herndon: commented on Council attendance records; emphasized the importance of good governance.

- Susan Powell, 419 Madison Forest Drive, Herndon: provided an update on the "unity score" project and noted that she is continuing to review 2024 and 2025 events, with more updates to come.

5. Consent

a. Resolution 25-G-20 to award Contract IFB 25-03 Air Supported Structure Services – Tennis Bubble

b. Resolution 25-G-21 to award Contract RFP 25-03 Fireworks Display

c. October 15, 2024, Town Council Work Session Minutes

d. November 6, 2024, Town Council Work Session Minutes

On motion of Councilmember del Aguila, seconded by Councilmember Reyes the Consent Agenda items were approved and carried by a 7-0 roll call vote, as presented, without comment. The vote was: Councilmembers Alam, del Aguila, Garcia, Lloyd, Reyes, Vice Mayor Hedrick and Mayor LeBlanc voting "Aye."

Recess

At 8:12 p.m. Mayor LeBlanc called a brief recess, and at 8:22 p.m., the Town Council meeting reconvened, with all members present and Mayor LeBlanc presiding.

6. Work Session

a. FY 2026 Proposed Budget

Mayor LeBlanc recognized Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, who presented the proposed FY 2026 General Fund Budget. He noted that the Enterprise Funds and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will be reviewed at the next work session.

Mr. Martino stated that the General Fund supports ongoing, essential services; with limited capacity for emerging issues and strategic planning. He emphasized the alignment of the proposed budget with the Town's Strategic Plan and reviewed the following: (1) proposed expenditures; (2) personnel impacts; (3) operations and maintenance, and capital outlay costs; (4) FY 26 revenue projections; and (5) overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Stormwater Management, and

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Capital Projects funds. Mr. Martino highlighted the following aspects of the proposed budget:

- External Pressures and Constraints: Ongoing challenges include: (1) inflation; (2) rising health benefit costs; (3) Virginia Retirement System (VRS) obligations; (4) stormwater and environmental compliance; and (5) uncertainty around grant funding, including a substantial federal grant for the Town's Comprehensive Plan update.

- Revenue Adjustments: The proposed budget is balanced through: (1) one-cent increase in the real estate tax; (2) 0.25% meals tax increase; (3) increased Business, Occupational; and (4) Professional licensing (BPOL) fees; and small adjustments to other fees and rates.

- Expenditures and Investments: Key investments include: (1) capital equipment; (2) energy efficiency projects; (3) information technology; and (4) employee training and development. He indicated that modernized payment processing produced $72,000 in savings. Additionally, adjustments in the budget were made due to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to comply with federal guidelines.

- Personnel and Organizational Changes: The proposed budget supports realignments in Police, Parks and Recreation, Town Clerk, IT, and Community Development. Only one net position is included, which supports the formation of the Special Enforcement and Engagement Team (SEET). Recruitment and retention remain challenging in a competitive labor market.

- Unfunded Requests: Several departmental requests could not be funded, including: (1) bulk waste program reduced to one event annually; (2) citizen's survey postponed; and (3) the Deputy Town Manager position remains unfunded.

Following the presentation, Council and staff discussed the proposed budget, including: (1) concerns about uncertain economic conditions; (2) real estate and meals tax rates; (3) personnel costs and leadership development; (4) stormwater management for FY 2027 and beyond; (5) managing funding for projects post-ARPA; (6) highlighting the importance of technology and public safety; and (7) interest in energy-saving and exploring a tree-planting and sponsorship program.

Following the discussion, the Council requested additional information and clarification from staff at the next budget discussion, including:

1. Adjustments necessary to fund a Deputy Town Manager position;

2. The amount of road resurfacing that equates to $500,000;

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3. Increased surveillance on the W&OD Trail;

4. Impact on the police department if a systems administrator position (IT) is shifted to the SEET Team;

5. Bonding options for capital or other projects;

6. Details on a tree-planting and donation program;

7. Clarification on tree removal practices by Dominion Energy;

8. Staffing plan for filling vacant positions;

9. Head count of employees in comparison to the Towns of Vienna and Leesburg;

10. Projections for the stormwater fund; and

11. Greater visibility into FY 2027 planning, including unfunded needs and CIP priorities.

Following the discussion, Marjorie Sloan, Director of Finance, confirmed the Council's intent to advertise the proposed real estate tax rate. She clarified that the Council may adopt a lower real estate tax rate than advertised, but cannot adopt a higher rate without re-advertising.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor LeBlanc adjourned the March 11, 2025, Town Council Regular Meeting at 10:42 p.m.

Amanda E.M. Kertz
Town Clerk

Minutes approved by Town Council:

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