Town Council
Work Session
Agenda Item 3.b.

Agenda Item: **Community Cultural Festivals Donation Policy Revision and Special Events Briefing**

Meeting Date: July 8, 2025

Category: Discussion

Prepared by: Marjorie Sloan, Finance Director, Bob Williams, Parks and Recreation Director

Description:
This is a discussion on proposed amendments to the Community Cultural Festivals Donation Policy, as well as a briefing on the town's special events and established process to hold special events within the town.

Background:
Special Events - Briefing
The Town's Parks and Recreation Department holds and supports many special events throughout the year in various locations throughout town. The Town has also established a process by which community organizations and members may request the use of town-owned property, like the Town Green, Town Square, and Lynn Street, to hold community events that are free and open to the public. In addition, private property owners may go through the established Temporary Use Permit (TUP) process to hold events on private property within the town. This discussion will provide a briefing on the established special event application process for use of outdoor town-owned property that is coordinated through Parks and Recreation, and the TUP process for events on private property that is handled by the Town's Zoning Administrator. In addition, information on the town's event programming will be provided.

Community Cultural Festivals Donation Policy - Draft Revisions
During the April 1, 2025 budget work session, the Town Council directed staff to review the current Community Cultural Festivals Donation Policy and return with draft revisions for discussion. Specifically, the Council expressed interest in exploring policy changes that would allow organizations to remain eligible for donations through the program for the same event beyond its first year.

The Community Cultural Festivals Policy Statement was originally adopted by the Herndon Town Council on October 24, 2023 (Resolution 23-G-72) to support the development of community-oriented cultural events hosted by non-profit and not-for-profit organizations within the Town of Herndon. The policy provides a framework for the equitable distribution of Town funds to encourage inclusive, culturally enriching events

that reflect Herndon's community. It was first amended on January 9, 2024 (Resolution 24-G-01).

A second amendment was adopted on July 16, 2024 (Resolution 24-G-41), increasing the maximum donation amount per event from $10,000 to $15,000, or 50% of the total event budget—whichever is less—for first-year applicants. This change was intended to enhance initial support for new events under this policy and align with Town Council priorities to encourage new cultural events.

Since the program's launch in mid-FY 2024, the Town has awarded $68,007 in cash donations to non-profit organizations in support of events held within the town. This figure does not include any support services that may have been provided by the Town. The attached FY 2025 Quarterly Report identifies the events that qualified for funding under the policy.

During the FY 2026 budget process, the Town Council requested that staff review the existing policy and develop proposed revisions that would allow eligible organizations to request funding for recurring events beyond the first year. The resulting draft policy amendment introduces a tiered funding model to support the growth and sustainability of returning events while gradually reducing their reliance on public funding.

Under the proposed structure:

- First-year applicants may receive up to 50% of the event budget, with a maximum donation ($15,000);
- Second-year applicants may receive up to 25% of the event budget, with a maximum donation ($7,500); and
- Third-year applicants may receive up to 12% of the event budget, with a maximum donation ($3,750).

This proposed revision reflects the Council's intent to support the sustainability of successful events while gradually reducing reliance on Town funding in subsequent years.

Timing Impact
The Town Council approved $60,000 in the FY 2026 Adopted Budget for the Community Cultural Festivals Donation Program. To date, no applications for FY 2026 have been submitted. If the Town Council intends to amend the donation policy, any changes should be communicated and adopted as soon as possible to ensure they can be applied to eligible events occurring between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.

Strategic Plan Related Goals
Thriving Community: Goal 3 – Honor the Diversity of the Town; Objective 3.2 - Leverage Town resources to provide programs and amenities that serve the Town's diverse cultural and demographic populations.

Strategic Focus Area:
Thriving Community

Fiscal Impact:
As part of the FY 2026 Adopted Budget, the Town Council appropriated $60,000 to support Community Cultural Festivals through this donation program. These funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Legal Impact:
Donations must be in accordance with Va. Code Sec. 15.2-953

Staff Recommendation/Next Steps:
This is a discussion item; staff is seeking Town Council direction on the town's donation policy.

Regarding the Community Cultural Festivals Donation program, after discussion, the Town Council may choose to:

- Maintain policy – Maintain the existing policy, with staff continuing to administer the program as adopted and within the appropriated funding for the fiscal year;
- Amend the policy – Direct staff to prepare revisions and schedule the amended policy for consideration at a future regular meeting;
- Repeal the policy and create a new program – Direct staff to develop a new community donation program that is not event-focused; or
- Repeal the policy and discontinue the program – Eliminate community donations under this framework entirely.

Staff is also seeking direction from Town Council regarding granting authority to the Town Manager to waive certain fees up to a certain amount.

Attachments:
1. Donation Program Report, FY 2025
2. Policy Amendment, Draft
3. Community Cultural Events and Donations, Presentation