HERNDON TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
Tuesday, October 1, 2024

1. Call to Order

Mayor Olem called the October 1, 2024, Town Council work session meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Herndon Council Chambers Building, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon, Virginia. In attendance were: Mayor Sheila Olem; Vice Mayor Clark Hedrick; and Councilmembers Naila Alam, Cesar del Aguila, Pradip Dhakal, Keven LeBlanc, and Donielle M. Scherff.

Staff present during the meeting: Chrisopher Martino, Interim Town Manager; Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney; Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich and Scott Robinson, Acting Deputy Town Managers; Chief Maggie DeBoard, Herndon Police Department; Lisa Gilleran, Director of Community Development; Anne Papa, Chief Communications Officer; John Irish, Acting Director of Department of Public Works; and Amanda Kertz, Acting Town Clerk.

Determination of a Quorum

Mayor Olem determined there was a quorum of all Councilmembers present. Mayor Olem reminded the Council of the meeting decorum.

Mayor Announcements

Mayor Olem stated that the Town-wide leaf clean-up starts next week. She stated that Fall Clean-up is scheduled for October 14 to 18, 2024, with more information available on the Town's website.

2. Public Hearings

a. Resolution to approve a Right-of-Way Encroachment Agreement with Fairfield 555 Herndon, LLC, owner of real property described as Fairfax County Tax Map No. 0164 10 0002C, to allow certain improvements within Town of Herndon right-of-way proposed in the major site plan for 555 Herndon Parkway – Multi-family with Retail (MJP23-04); and

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3. Consent

a. Resolution to authorize the town manager to submit a grant application to the Virginia Department of Transportation for funding under the Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program (VHSIP) for the replacement of traffic signal heads and installation of high visibility signal backplates.

Mayor Olem stated that information was provided to the Council on next week's meeting in their agenda packet. She recognized Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, for comments.

Mr. Martino briefly reviewed the items that will be provided on the next week's regular meeting agenda.

4. Discussion

a. Rebranding Project - Presentation of Research and Resulting Brand Pillars

Mayor Olem recognized Anne Papa, Chief Communications Officer, who introduced the consultant to present the branding research.

Greg Fuson, Director of Research, Chandler Thinks, the Town's consultant for the Rebranding Project, reviewed the data gathered, and presented the brand pillars that were ascertained from their research. He reviewed the following related to the Rebranding Project: (1) objectives and process; (2) data gathering, including the community survey, focus groups, and human movement (tied to cell phone use) data; (3) results of the community survey; and (4) brand pillars. He stated that the brand pillars included: (1) importance of location; (2) historic downtown; (3) friendly welcoming small-town spirit; and (4) diversity, which is an integral part of Herndon's identity.

There was discussion among Council and staff on the brand research and pillar presentation, including: (1) data and visual information provided; (2) brand pillars; (3) data collection process; (4) how to tell the story of and preserve Herndon’s history; (5) languages provided for the survey; (6) focus groups data; (7) next steps in the project, which include presentations to the Branding Task Force and Town Council, with a marketing plan to follow; (8) reevaluating the brand every few years; (9) promoting community engagement; and (10) data related to the arts community.

Responding to Councilmember Dhakal, Mr. Fuson stated that he could provide demographic data from the survey respondents. He also stated that he could review and analyze the open-ended responses to see if further information could be gleaned from those answers.

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Responding to Councilmember del Aguila, Mr. Fuson stated he could provide a report of the human movement data gathered in the research.

Councilmember Dhakal stated that he is planning to bring forward an item at an upcoming work session related to community outreach.

Councilmembers del Aguila and Scherff emphasized the importance of the alignment of the brand with the adopted Strategic Plan.

Following discussion and with the concurrence of Council, staff was directed to proceed forward with the Rebranding Project, with the next steps as outlined that evening.

Ms. Papa stated that she would present an update to the Town Council at a future work session, following a presentation to the Brand Task Force.

b. Town of Herndon's 2025 Legislative Program

Mayor Olem recognized Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, who stated that the 2025 General Assembly will be starting soon. She stated that, as shared in the Town Attorney's last dispatch, the Virginia Municipal League's (VML) legislative agenda is going to be considered at the VML Conference on October 15. The VML legislative positions are a large portion of the Town's legislative agenda and the Town's program will need to be adopted after this date.

Ms. Yeatts reviewed the highlights from the VML proposed legislative positions, including support for the following items: (1) accessory dwelling units; (2) photo speed enforcement, which is the subject of a bill the Town put forward last year; and (3) assistance to local police departments. VML opposes the following items that could negatively impact localities: (1) land use controls against localities; (2) changes to sovereign immunity; and (3) reduction in control over taxes and revenues.

Ms. Yeatts stated that she received two items from Councilmembers for the Town's Legislative Program, which are: (1) continued from last year, request for the General Assembly to conduct a study of land value tax, from Vice Mayor Hedrick; and (2) requirement for food to have a warning about containing pork products, requested by Councilmember Alam. Ms. Yeatts is following up with Senator Boysko about how Councilmember Alam's request could be addressed at the state level.

Ms. Yeatts stated that she would circulate the draft agenda for the VML legislative positions once available, after which she will prepare the Town's Legislative Program for Council's review and action at a future regular meeting. Following adoption, staff will transmit the Legislative Program to the Town' state legislators.

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There was no discussion by Council on this item.

5. Roundtable

Councilmember Le Blanc: no comments.

Councilmember Dhakal: no comments.

Councilmember Alam: expressed thanks to those that supported her sister who was recently hospitalized; and stated that she was praying for those affected by Hurricane Helene.

Councilmember del Aguila: shared a photo with the Town Council and Town Attorney of a person who was on the side of Elden Street. He asked what the Herndon Police Department could do to address the individual who was lying by the road, who he was told had refused assistance.

Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, stated that if the individual is on public property, the police could not take the person into custody. She stated that it is a widespread problem across the country and explained the legal processes surrounding individuals on public property.

Responding, Chief Maggie DeBoard, Herndon Police Department, explained how the police handle situations like the one Councilmember del Aguila described. She stated that an officer took the individual in this instance to the hospital earlier today.

Vice Mayor Hedrick discussed the problem across the nation with drug use in communities, which can be a reason for individuals to lie by the road. He indicated that federal, state, and local agencies are all a part of addressing these issues.

Councilmember Scherff: asked staff for an update on Comstock's sign outside the downtown area, which she had asked to be changed. Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, and Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, stated that they had each asked Comstock about changing the sign. Mr. Martino stated he would inquire about the status of the request.

Councilmember Scherff asked for an update on affordable housing.

Mr. Martino stated that Town staff would be meeting with Fairfax County staff that next day. He indicated that the Town staff is planning to bring more information forward at an upcoming Town Council work session.

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Councilmember Scherff asked about the storage space at Arts Herndon, 750 Center Street, stating that the space that was supposed to be cleared out has not been, to which Mr. Martino said that he would follow up with the organization.

Vice Mayor Hedrick: no comments.

Mayor Olem: commented on her enjoyment of NatureFest which was held that past Sunday at Runnymede Park.

Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager: no comments.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor Olem adjourned the October 1, 2024, Town Council Work Session at 9:19 p.m.

Amanda E.M. Kertz
Acting Town Clerk

Minutes approved by Town Council:

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