TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

HERNDON TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
Tuesday, April 15, 2025

1. Call to Order

Mayor LeBlanc called the April 15, 2025, Town Council 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 (arrived at 7:01 p.m.); and Councilmembers Naila Alam, Cesar del Aguila, Kelvin Garcia, Michael T. Lloyd, and Alex Reyes.

Staff present during the meeting: Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager; Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich and Scott Robinson, Acting Deputy Town Managers; Chief Steven Pihonak, Herndon Police Department; Brent Heavner, Chief Communications Officer; Marjorie Sloan, Director of Finance; Mike Mueller, Golf Course General Manager; and Margie Tacci, Acting Chief Deputy Town Clerk.

Determination of a Quorum

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

Mayor LeBlanc recognized Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager, who introduced Brent Heavner as the Town's new Chief Communications Officer.

Mayor Announcements

Mayor LeBlanc reminded Council that from May through December, the Council would hold one work session and a regular meeting per month. He stated that the work session and regular sessions for May were scheduled for May 13 and May 27, respectively.

Mayor LeBlanc wished everyone a Happy Easter and Passover, and stated that Parks and Recreation was hosting the Hoppy Egg Hunt on April 19 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Registration information is available on the Parks and Recreation page of the Town’s website.

Comments and Disclosures for the Record

Mayor LeBlanc asked Margie Tacci, Acting Chief Deputy Town Clerk, if she received comments for the record or signed disclosure declarations from Council.

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Ms. Tacci stated that comments were entered into the record on Discussion Item 2(a), FY 2026 Proposed Budget. There were no additional comments or disclosures received on any other items listed on that meeting's agenda.

2. Discussion

a. FY 2026 Proposed Budget – Follow-Up Discussion

Mayor LeBlanc opened the discussion by stating that the goal of the work session was to conduct a follow-up on the FY 2026 proposed budget and work toward final consensus prior to the upcoming public hearing.

Mayor LeBlanc recognized Interim Town Manager Christopher Martino, who began by reviewing a budget Q&A document distributed earlier that day. He noted that there were two additional items to be addressed: (1) Fairfax County's meals tax would not apply to the Town under state law; and (2) a $1.00 per square foot real estate tax levy on commercial office space is not feasible following legal review.

The Council and staff briefly discussed the topics Mr. Martino mentioned along with the topics included in the budget Q&A document.

Mr. Martino then reviewed current and proposed tax rates. The proposed budget includes an increase in the real estate tax rate from $0.26 to $0.27 per $100 of assessed value, and a meals tax rate increase of 3.75% to 4%. Several budget scenarios were reviewed: (1) an $867,000 shortfall if neither rate is increased; (2) a $562,000 shortfall if only the meals tax is increased; and (3) a $305,000 shortfall if only the real estate tax is increased.

There was discussion among the Council and staff, including: (1) the financial impact of the proposed tax rates; including options to increase the meals tax to 4.5% or to 5%; (2) how tax policy impacts long-term investments; (3) fund balance ratios; and (4) rising costs expected to maintain the Town workforce.

Mr. Martino stated that while the deputy town manager position is not included in the proposed budget, it could be funded at approximately $220,000 through offsets including: (1) $90,000 reduction in staff training; (2) $40,000 reduction to Arts Herndon funding; and (3) $90,000 reduction to the urban forestry program. Council expressed interest in pursuing these offsets. Additionally, staff was encouraged to explore cost-offsetting strategies related to the urban forestry budget, and to look into launching a Memorial Tree initiative.

Mr. Martino presented additional budget reduction considerations, which included: (1) replacing the $119,000 budgeted for bulk waste pickup with a fee-for-service model; (2) a $40,000 reduction in funding for NextStop Theatre; and (3) delaying the hiring of the Economic Development Director for a $34,000 savings. Council discussed the feasibility of these reductions and expressed support for reallocating

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the bulk waste cleanup budget and postponing the economic development hire.

There was further discussion of potential funding shifts and additions in the proposed budget, including increasing the cultural events budget from $60,000 to $75,000. Council expressed consensus to retain funding for the Herndon Police Department's Special Enforcement and Engagement Team (SEET) for bike patrol efforts.

The Council also discussed future revenue-generating options, such as a personal property tax, car tax, or development impact fees, and reviewed infrastructure needs such as adding electric vehicle (EV) chargers at the Herndon Municipal Center. Council expressed interest in expanding the Town's tax base through long-term redevelopment.

Recess

At 9:25 p.m. Mayor LeBlanc called a brief recess, and at 9:30 p.m., the Town Council Work Session meeting reconvened, with six members present and Mayor LeBlanc presiding. Councilmember Garcia had not yet returned to the meeting.

[Note: Councilmember Garcia returned to the meeting at 9:32 p.m.]

Mayor LeBlanc suggested discussing costs related to Friday Night Live! (FNL) prior to wrapping discussions for the evening on the FY 2026. He noted that he and staff had recently met with representatives from the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce (DRCC) regarding the operational costs associated with the event. He recognized Scott Robinson, Acting Deputy Town Manager, for comment.

Mr. Robinson explained that FNL is a major fundraising event for DRCC, which hosts up to 17 concerts annually. Based on DRCC's 2023 tax filing, they reported gross receipts of $273,000 and a net profit of $91,000. Mr. Robinson noted that the Town incurred $75,000 in incremental staffing costs, plus $10,000 in additional costs for labor and equipment. He expressed concern about the sustainability of this support level and cited WinterMarkt as a successful model where shared costs reduced the Town's burden by 30 percent. Mr. Robinson also raised safety concerns due to extended work shifts for DPW staff during FNL and reported that DRCC is unable to assume costs related to trash collection and post-event cleanup.

There was discussion between the Council and staff regarding: (1) the Town's costs to support FNL; (2) the licensing of portable toilets and ice machines; (3) funding as compared to other events; and (4) Council's desire to continue FNL with more sustainable staffing and financial models.

Mayor LeBlanc introduced a proposal to hold a re-imagined Herndon Festival in

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2026 in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary. He envisioned a one-day event featuring booths, games, and music, without a carnival. Council expressed support for the initiative. There was brief discussion on possible funding sources, such as sponsorship, merchandise sales, and vendor booth fees. Mayor LeBlanc requested that staff develop a realistic budget estimate for this event.

The Town Council also discussed the need for departmental coordination on upcoming events, such as Brewbilee. Topics included the use of the Town Green, overlapping use with FNL, staffing requirements, ABC licensing, status of the application, and expectations for Town support.

Following discussion, and with the consensus of the Council, the following FY 2026 budget actions were supported:

1. The majority of Council supported the following tax rates: real estate tax rate at $0.27; meals tax rate at 4.5 percent;

2. Allocation of $500,000 for the annual fleet replacement program, with the remainder funded through reserves;

3. Allocation of $110,000 to contingency to buffer against economic volatility;

4. Removal of the second bulk waste pickup, with outreach planned to address printed calendar discrepancies;

5. Delay of the Economic Development Director's hiring for $34,000 in one-time savings;

6. Deputy Town Manager position via cost reductions on several line items;

7. The cultural events budget increased from $60,000 to $75,000; and

8. Planning and budgeting for a re-imagined Herndon Festival in FY 2026.

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3. Roundtable

Councilmember Alam: wished everyone a Happy Easter, and stated that the Embassy of Pakistan is hosting an Easter dinner on Saturday April 19th at 6:30 p.m. for anyone who was interested in attending.

Councilmember Garcia: wished everyone a Happy Easter, and thanked his colleagues for the discussions and collaboration on the budget.

Councilmember Reyes: wished everyone a Happy Easter and Spring Break.

Councilmember Lloyd: thanked everyone for the hard work on the budget.

Councilmember del Aguila: thanked everyone for a very productive meeting, and also thanked Mayor LeBlanc for his leadership and respectful discussions.

Councilmember del Aguila requested that staff research and explore the options and costs to move power lines or polls in Town, including if it is possible not to be charged all at once by the electrical company.

Vice Mayor Hedrick: echoed his fellow Councilmembers' comments on the leadership and effective collaboration among the Council.

Mayor LeBlanc: stated his appreciation for what the Council has done to collaborate and work together.

Christopher Martino, Interim Town Manager: stated that Parks and Recreation has partnered with Cornerstones and received a $7,500 grant to provide an additional day at summer camps in neighborhoods surrounding Alabama Drive.

Mr. Martino recognized Marjorie Sloan, Director of Finance, and Jerry Shulz, Deputy Director of Finance, for receiving the 50th consecutive award from Government Finance Officers Association for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the April 15, 2025, Town Council work session was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Amanda E.M. Kertz
Town Clerk

Minutes approved by Town Council:

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