



**HERNDON TOWN COUNCIL
Special Meeting Minutes – Council Initiatives
Monday, September 18, 2023**

The Town Council held a Special Meeting on Council Initiatives on Monday, September 18, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Herndon Police Department Community Room, 397 Herndon Parkway, Herndon, Virginia. In attendance were: Mayor Sheila Olem, Vice Mayor Clark Hedrick; and Councilmembers Cesar del Aguila, Pradip Dhakal, and Donielle M. Scherff.

Councilmembers Naila Alam and Keven LeBlanc were absent.

Staff present during the meeting: William H. Ashton II, Town Manager; Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney; Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich, Town Clerk; Anne Curtis, Chief Communications Officer; and Elizabeth Gilleran, Director of Community Development.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Olem called the Town Council Initiatives Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Determination of Quorum

Mayor Olem determined there was a quorum of five Councilmembers present. Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Comments for the Record

Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Clerk, stated that comments were received, provided to the Town Council, and entered into the record.

2. Overview of Meeting, Rules of Engagement and Check-in

Mayor Olem recognized the facilitators, Kristi Dooley, True Purpose Leadership, and Julie Rouge, with George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, to begin the meeting that evening. Ms. Dooley and Ms. Rouge provided an overview of the meeting, rules of engagement, and a check-in.

Ms. Rouge stated prior to that night's meeting, they were asked about how long to spend on each item and whether the Council wanted to end at 10:00 p.m.

There was brief discussion among the Council and facilitators about how long they wanted to discuss each item on the agenda. Councilmember del Aguila suggested

allowing 15 minutes per initiative listed under item five and spending shorter amounts of time on the other agenda items.

By consensus, the Council agreed to end the meeting at approximately 10:00 p.m., unless the discussion ended earlier than that time. The facilitators stated that the time spent on each item may vary depending on the discussion.

3. Review of Previously Adopted Council Initiatives Process – How and Why We Got Here

Ms. Rouge reviewed the initiative process that was established by the prior Town Council. There was brief discussion among the Council and facilitators about the initiatives, prioritization process, and expectations for the meeting. By consensus, the Town Council agreed to follow the established initiatives process.

During the discussion, Councilmember del Aguila asserted that he received approval from the Council at the May 16 and August 2, 2023 work sessions to present the five items he had on the agenda. He stated that he will present those topics that evening.

4. Update on Previous Council Initiatives

William H. Ashton II, Town Manager, provided an update on the status of the currently prioritized Council Initiatives, which are: (1) regional cut-through traffic, (2) traffic calming, (3) green initiatives – electric vehicles (EVs), (4) Town vision and branding, (5) stormwater management and flood planning, (6) mini-festivals, (7) green initiatives – trees, and (8) moving the Herndon Farmers' Market to the weekend.

5. Discussion of Submitted Council Initiatives

Ms. Dooley asked the Council about the order in which they wanted to discuss the initiatives. The Town Council decided, by consensus, to start with the Historic District items.

Develop a Greater Sense of Place in the Historic District – Vice Mayor Hedrick

Vice Mayor Hedrick introduced the initiative, which will continue efforts to help encourage individuals to visit the Historic District by enhancing its sense of place. This effort could include additions like increased and more consistent signage in the District. He stated that a 'Yes vote' will request staff to revive and make adjustments to the Historic District Plan that was suspended due to COVID.

Vice Mayor Hedrick indicated that he needed to temporarily leave the meeting. The Council agreed to table the discussion on the Historic District until Vice Mayor Hedrick returned.

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[Note: Vice Mayor Hedrick left the meeting at at 7:20 p.m.]

Councilmember Scherff provided brief comments. She stated that since there has been progress on the initiatives that she submitted in May, she did not submit additional items for the meeting that evening. She thought that several of the items she had submitted also fit under the topics of rebranding and the Historic District.

Town Rebranding – Councilmember del Aguila

Councilmember del Aguila introduced the initiative. He stated that the goal of this initiative was to promote and encourage new residents, businesses, and visitors to come to Herndon. He thought that a compelling brand could help generate more revenue for the Town.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and facilitators about rebranding, including: (1) application of the brand, (2) utilizing a consultant to assist the process, (3) obtaining community input, (4) considering a Cultural Tourism staff position, (5) current and planned Town events, (6) moving the Herndon Farmers' Market to Saturdays, and (7) hosting Town events on the weekend.

Anne Curtis, Chief Communications Officer, discussed the branding process and the previous steps taken in developing the current brand.

Following further discussion, the facilitators asked Councilmember del Aguila to describe what a 'Yes vote' would include. Councilmember del Aguila provided comments on the importance of inclusivity and diversity during rebranding. He emphasized his requests to move the Herndon Farmers' Market from Thursday to Saturday and for the Town to hold weekend events ~ like mini-festivals ~ once a month.

Responding to the facilitators, Councilmember del Aguila stated that he did not think the Council clearly committed to moving the farmers' market to Saturday and to redeploying one Friday Night Live concert a month to a Saturday event. He would like the Council to decide if they wanted to do this before the Town Calendar is printed in November so that these events can be included.

Ms. Dooley stated that she understood Councilmember del Aguila to be asking the Council to investigate decisions they can make as a precursor to rebranding, to which Councilmember del Aguila agreed.

Responding to Councilmember Scherff, Mr. Ashton confirmed that there is funding for the rebranding effort in FY 2024. He stated that the Request for Proposals (RFP) for rebranding is not ready for the Council to review at this time.

Responding to Council's discussion about moving the Herndon Farmers' Market to Saturday, Mr. Ashton stated that the Town will not know if the vendors will be available

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for a Saturday market until February 2024. Mr. Ashton stated that if the Town Council wanted to change the day that the farmers' market is held, they should do so by resolution to provide clear direction to staff.

Following discussion among the Council and facilitators, it was the consensus of Council that a 'Yes vote' requests staff to provide a list of the Town's existing events to the Council for their review and comments. Then, staff can look at the feasibility of making changes to existing events for Council's consideration.

Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Clerk, called the roll on moving this item forward, which passed by a 3-1 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff voting "Yes." Mayor Olem voting "No." Vice Mayor Hedrick was away from the meeting, and Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Combat Invasive Plants – Mayor Olem

Mayor Olem introduced the initiative. She thought that invasive plants are one of the biggest problems that Town faces and she would like to look at ways to combat invasive species. She said that a 'Yes vote' will ask staff to research options and costs for reducing or eliminating invasive plants. Staff would also be encouraged to connect with Fairfax County and HOAs in the Town that may already be working on this issue.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and facilitators about the Town's current efforts to combat invasive plants and what other options are available.

Ms. Rouge stated that a 'Yes vote' is to ask staff to investigate viability and options to deal with invasive plants on Town property.

Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving this item forward, which passed by a 4-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, Scherff, and Mayor Olem voting "Yes." Vice Mayor Hedrick was absent from the meeting, and Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Councilmember del Aguila left the meeting at 8:08 p.m. and returned at 8:10 p.m.

Increasing Council Terms – Councilmember Dhakal

Councilmember Dhakal introduced the initiative and stated that this proposal is to look at extending the Town Council's terms from two to four years. He thought that four-year terms could provide more continuity for the Town, and he said that the majority of the other localities he looked at had four-year terms.

Ms. Rouge recalled seeing this item as an initiative in the past, and she understood that it required a different process. She asked Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, to provide an overview of the process.

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Ms. Yeatts provided an overview of the process to change the Council terms from two to four years, which requires the General Assembly to approve a Town Charter change. She referenced a presentation that she provided to the previous Council that explained this matter in further detail. Ms. Yeatts thought talking to the Town's state legislators would be the most appropriate first step if the Council wants to move this forward.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and the facilitators about the process of changing the Town Council terms from two to four years.

After discussion, Ms. Rouge clarified that a vote on any policy change has to be taken at a regular meeting. She stated that a 'Yes vote' on this initiative is for a member of Council to discuss the potential Town Charter change with the State Delegate and Senator.

Responding to Councilmember Scherff, Ms. Yeatts stated that changing to staggered terms also requires a change to the Town Charter and it would follow the same process.

Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving this item forward, which passed by a 3-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff voting "Yes." Mayor Olem abstaining. Vice Mayor Hedrick was away from the meeting, and Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Uniformed Zoning/Setbacks – Councilmember del Aguila

Councilmember del Aguila introduced the initiative and stated that this request involves reviewing zoning setback regulations to consider making the standards consistent throughout the Town.

[Note: Vice Mayor Hedrick returned to the meeting at 8:25 p.m.]

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and facilitators about uniformed zoning/setbacks, which included: (1) existing zoning, (2) considering updates to the zoning ordinance, (3) how often the zoning ordinance should be updated, and (4) scheduling a work session to review zoning regulations.

After discussion between Council and staff on how much time is needed to prepare to present the information to Council, the information session on uniformed zoning/setbacks was tentatively scheduled for the November 2023 work session. Mr. Ashton encouraged Councilmembers to review the Virginia Municipal League (VML) handbook's chapter on zoning and to contact staff if they do not have it.

Ms. Rouge confirmed that a 'Yes vote' will be for staff to provide information on current zoning practices at a work session that is tentatively scheduled for November 2023.

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Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving this item forward, which passed by a 5-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff, Vice Mayor Hedrick and Mayor Olem voting “Yes.” Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Historic District – Councilmember del Aguila

Vice Mayor Hedrick agreed to combine the remainder of the discussion on his initiative with the discussion of Councilmember del Aguila’s initiative on the Historic District. Ms. Rouge stated that the Council can take separate votes on the two initiatives.

Councilmember del Aguila stated that this initiative will include looking at the Historic District boundaries and the contributing structures within the District to consider potential changes. He remarked on wanting to allow homeowners to be able to opt into or out of the District and about wanting the Historic District to be a positive experience for homeowners.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and facilitators on the Historic District, which included: (1) historic preservation and marketing of the District, (2) Historic District boundaries and contributing structures, (3) separating the Historic District initiative into several topics, and (4) public outreach.

Vice Mayor Hedrick stated that he thought the discussion on the Historic District could be separated into the following areas: (1) adding value to the Historic District, (2) assessing the contributing structures, and (3) considering amendments to the Historic District overlay, which he suggested could be part of the Comprehensive Plan update.

After discussion among the Council and facilitators, the Town Council agreed to incorporate the review of the Historic District overlay with the recently discussed initiative on uniformed zoning.

Ms. Rouge stated that the Council will take two separate votes, which are: (1) reviving the suspended Historic District Plan and looking at adjustments, and (2) directing staff energy and potential funding toward an inventory and assessment of the contributing structures.

Ms. Rouge stated that the first ‘Yes vote’ is to direct staff to revive and consider adjustments to the Historic District plan that was suspended due to COVID.

Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving the item on reviving the Historic District plan forward, which passed by a 5-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff, Vice Mayor Hedrick and Mayor Olem voting “Yes.” Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

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Ms. Rouge stated that the next 'Yes vote' will direct staff to come back to the Council with a strategy to take inventory of the contributing structures and to look at how the Historic District requirements are impacting the health of those structures.

Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving the inventory of contributing structures forward, which passed by a 5-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff, Vice Mayor Hedrick and Mayor Olem voting "Yes." Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

Affordable Dwelling Units – Councilmember del Aguila

Councilmember del Aguila introduced the initiative and stated that the goal of this item is to bring affordable dwelling units (ADUs) to the Town and to partner with Fairfax County on this effort.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and facilitators about ADUs in the Town, including: (1) the Town's housing stock as compared to the rest of Fairfax County, (2) previous and potential ADU projects, (3) looking at ways to engage the County in the ADU conversation, (4) where Virginia stands on requiring developers to set aside units for affordable housing, and (5) adding workforce housing to this initiative.

Mr. Ashton stated that he can work with Fairfax County and provide an update on ADU projects in the Town.

Mayor Olem stated that in 2019, the Council received an update on affordable housing at a work session. She can provide the Council with the presentation from that meeting.

Ms. Rouge clarified that a 'Yes vote' means a request for staff to provide information on: (1) housing stock in the Town compared to the rest of the County, (2) legal, tax, and zoning impacts related to ADUs, and (3) reengagement with County staff on ADU projects.

Ms. Jovanovich called the roll on moving this item forward, which passed by a 5-0 vote. The vote was: Councilmembers del Aguila, Dhakal, and Scherff, Vice Mayor Hedrick and Mayor Olem voting "Yes." Councilmembers Alam and LeBlanc were absent.

6. Prioritization of Council Initiatives

Ms. Rouge provided a summary of the initiatives that were advanced that evening. The Councilmembers present were asked to select their top two initiatives in order to help prioritize the items for staff.

After discussion among the Council and facilitators, the following initiatives were prioritized and are listed below in order of popularity:

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- (1) Historic District – Inventory/Audit;
- (2) Town Rebranding – Review Existing Events;
- (3) Historic District – Reviving the Historic District plan; and
- (4) Combat invasive plants.

The remaining initiatives discussed that evening were not prioritized at this meeting.

7. Next Steps / Wrap up

Ms. Rouge reviewed the next steps in the process. She stated that staff will take the list of priorities established that evening, start working on them, and provide an update at the next initiatives meeting.

Responding to Councilmember del Aguila, Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Clerk, stated that staff is looking at dates for the next several initiatives meetings in December 2023; March 2024; and June 2024.

With the concurrence of Council, staff was asked to move the December 2023 meeting to January 2024.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Olem adjourned the September 18, 2023 Town Council Initiatives Meeting at 9:52 p.m.



Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich
Town Clerk



Minutes approved by Town Council: October 10, 2023