

**HERNDON TOWN COUNCIL
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 30, 2024**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Olem called the Tuesday, April 30, 2024, Town Council Special Meeting - Strategic Planning to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, Herndon, Virginia. In attendance were: Mayor Sheila Olem, Vice Mayor Clark Hedrick; and Councilmembers Naila Alam, Pradip Dhakal, Keven LeBlanc and Donielle M. Scherff. Councilmember Cesar del Aguila was absent.

Staff present during the meeting: William H. Ashton II, Town Manager; Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney; and Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich, Town Clerk.

Determination of Quorum

Mayor Olem determined there was a quorum of six Councilmembers present. Councilmember del Aguila was absent.

2. Discussion

a. Strategic Planning Retreat: Thriving Community - Moderated by Julie Rouge and Kristi Dooley, True Purpose Leadership

1. Welcome, Overview, Check-in

Mayor Olem recognized the facilitators: Julie Rouge and Kristi Dooley, True Purpose Leadership, to begin the meeting that evening.

Ms. Dooley and Ms. Rouge provided an overview of the meeting and stated that this meeting will focus on the Thriving Community Strategic Focus Area of the adopted 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

Councilmember Scherff asked that the group be kept on track during the discussion in focusing on the Thriving Community Strategic Focus Area, stating that many initiatives overlap into several strategic focus areas. Ms. Rouge stated that they would bring to the group's attention any areas that may fit into other strategic focus areas.

The Council briefly discussed recent professional and personal achievements, including: (1) recent use of interpreter services at Town Council meetings, (2) Herdon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee diversity policy recommendation, (3) recognizing the community in different ways, (4) communication with State and local representatives, and (5) personal professional accomplishments.

The group reviewed the Strategic Plan Vision, Town Council Core Values, and the five Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs), with focus on SFA 5, Thriving Community. The group reviewed the four goals included within this SFA, including: (1) prioritize accessible government services, programs, and infrastructure, (2) encourage an engaged and informed community, (3) honor the diversity of the Town, and (4) ensure a variety of green and open spaces with recreation options accessible to all.

2. Update on current work on initiatives associated with this Focus Area

William H. Ashton II, Town Manager, provided an update on the status of the initiatives included within Strategic Focus Area 5, Thriving Community. Under each goal, he provided an update on the following action steps:

- Complete a road and sidewalk audit to create a plan to meet Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG): In FY 2026, funding for a survey and plan development will be requested, and a Townwide Roadway Safety Action Plan to provide input for accessibility plans will be completed. Paving and sidewalk plans will continue to be developed, reviewed, and implemented.
- Update building accessibility plan: In FY 2027, funding for an assessment will be requested, which will focus on conducting an assessment of town buildings and developing a plan to upgrade accessibility.
- Implement partnership with outreach groups to increase parks and recreation services participation by all town residents, including underserved populations: In FY 2025, (1) the Neighbors in Action program will be finalizing and refining elements to align Parks and Recreation more closely with those communities, and (2) complete hiring of a parks and recreation supervisor focused on collaborative outreach. In FY 2026, implementation of outreach programs will be implemented, serving identified recreational needs.

There was discussion among the Council and staff on the Town Manager's status update, including: (1) Neighbors in Action Program at the Herndon Community Center, (2) encouraging community engagement through increased outreach, (3) working with other community groups, e.g. Centreville Immigration Forum, to help evaluate how Neighbors In Action is being utilized,

and (4) looking at how to better engage with local schools.

Responding to Councilmember LeBlanc, Mr. Ashton stated that he did not have the information at that time, but he would follow up with statistics on the usage of the Neighbors in Action program.

Responding to Councilmember Scherff, Mr. Ashton clarified the responsibilities for the Recreation Supervisor position at the Herndon Community Center, and he stated that a bilingual language element was included in the position announcement. Councilmember Scherff requested that the person to fill the role be local to support outreach efforts.

Responding to Councilmember Dhakal, Mr. Ashton asked the Council to advise him on things they hear in the community, like not seeing any publicly posted notice about the Neighbors in Action program at the Community Center. He indicated that information could be posted at the Community Center. He further stated that staff was looking at other communication opportunities to provide information on this program, including through the school system.

Responding to Councilmember Scherff, Mr. Ashton stated that the Town can distribute information on the Neighbors in Action program through other community groups as well.

Ms. Dooley stated that the intent of this portion of the agenda is for staff to provide an overview of the work that is already happening, with the Council identifying areas for further discussion later in the agenda.

Following further Council discussion, Ms. Rouge stated that she and Ms. Dooley would identify the discussion of: (1) encouraging belonging, and (2) diversity policy as points of meaningful discussion to occur later in the meeting.

Mr. Ashton continued providing an update on current work and initiatives in the Strategic Plan:

- Develop and implement a rebranding initiative in the development of a clear brand and message for the Town of Herndon: in FY 2025, with facilitation by a brand consulting firm and under advisement of a brand task force, the Town will work on developing a new brand strategy for the town. In FY 2026, staff will execute a marketing plan and correlative communications strategy.
- Prioritize Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance in developing materials for public use: (1) the Town's website is ADA compliant and will be monitored to ensure continued compliance, and (2) marketing and

collateral materials, including social media, are being refined to meet ADA standards.

- Prepare resources that address the identified language needs of the community: (1) an interpreter and translator are on contract with the Town and are utilized at Town Council public meetings and in distributing public materials, (2) the Town's e-newsletter is translated and distributed for display biweekly at key locations where many residents congregate, (3) the Town's website is translatable into multiple languages, and (4) the biennial resident and business surveys are offered in multiple languages: Spanish, Urdu, Farsi, and Korean.

There was discussion between Council and staff about the language choices for the biennial survey and the languages Fairfax County uses in their communications.

Mr. Ashton continued providing an update on current work and initiatives in the Strategic Plan:

- Evaluate existing and proposed events for local cultural impact, neighbor connection, and resource needs, which will contribute to the initiation, revision, or conclusion of each event: in 2024, various cultural festivals are being planned, with collaborative efforts being coordinated between the Town and other organizations.
- Establish policy and procedures to engage local residents, with emphasis on the town's various diverse communities, regarding the 2050 Comprehensive Plan and future planning initiatives: in FY 2025, engaging with a consultant team with expertise and a successful track record of inclusive community outreach, which is being funded by a RAISE grant, with emphasis on historically under-represented communities for the rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan. In FY 2026, staff will work to incorporate the program into a new Comprehensive Plan, formally establishing these policies moving forward.
- Develop and implement Community Cultural Festivals Donation Policy and Program: established in FY 2024, the donation program has been implemented and underway, and staff will review and revise the process where appropriate.

There was discussion among Council and staff about the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update process, along with conversation about community engagement opportunities.

Mr. Ashton continued providing an update on current work and initiatives in the Strategic Plan:

- Develop a capital and stewardship plan for parks, infrastructure, and equipment: in FY 2025, planning stages to develop a plan with a more focused effort on planning how parks are managed and augmented, and ensuring it is part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Maintain park standards at a level that provides for the safety and engagement of the community: staff is in the planning stages of reviewing park maintenance, along with the Town's collaboration with partner agencies, and looking at parks management in a more holistic way. Parks and Recreation will be seeking industry accreditation in support of this action step.

There was discussion among Council and staff about: (1) the partnership with Fairfax County on several of the Town's parks, especially concerning Fairfax County's maintenance of those parks, and (2) resources needed to hold events in downtown Herndon on Saturdays in the summer.

Ms. Rouge asked the group to identify the main topics of discussion for this evening's meeting.

There was discussion between the Council, staff, and moderators on selecting the topics of discussion, and suggestions included: (1) increasing diversity of options offered at the Town's parks, as identified under Goal 4, e.g., (a) band shell, (b) accessible play structure/area, (c) splash pads, and (d) fitness trails, (2) process improvements related to assisting new businesses and outreach to the business community, to include working with the incoming Director of Economic Development, (3) affordable and workforce housing, (4) creation of a mechanism for ad hoc committees to obtain business input, and (5) Mason Enterprise Center economic development accelerator program as an example of a business resource.

In response to Councilmember Dhakal's suggestion to discuss workforce and affordable housing, Ms. Rouge indicated that those topics may be better suited for discussion during the Environmental and Economic Sustainability Focus Area meeting. Mr. Ashton stated that the Town is working with Fairfax County Housing Authority to provide a briefing to the Council at a future work session. The group agreed to table this topic until the next strategic plan meeting.

In response to Councilmember LeBlanc, Mr. Ashton stated that the incoming Economic Development Director could be prepared to have a concept plan regarding business outreach in mind as part of the discussion to be held during

the next Strategic Planning meeting on the Environmental and Economic Sustainability Strategic Focus Area.

After discussion, the group identified the following topics for meaningful conversation later in the agenda:

- Facilitate meaningful belonging;
- Herndon diversity policy;
- Equitable access to spaces in downtown;
- Diversity of services parks offer; and
- Process to ensure the Town is business-friendly.

In response to Councilmember LeBlanc, Mr. Ashton stated that the Director of Parks and Recreation is the ADA program coordinator for the Town, and that individuals can report access concerns through the ADA request form on the town's website.

After discussion, the group prioritized the following topics for discussion:

1. Herndon diversity policy;
2. Facilitate meaningful belonging and equitable access to spaces downtown;
3. Consider processes to ensure the Town is business-friendly; and the diversity of services parks offer.

Recess

At 8:15 p.m. Mayor Olem called a brief recess, and at 8:22 p.m., the Town Council special meeting reconvened, with six members present and Mayor Olem presiding. Councilmember del Aguila was absent.

3. **Identification of issues associated with Thriving Community focus area for strategic discussion; and**

4. **Discussion of concerns and ideas related to the above identified issues**

a. Draft Herndon Diversity Policy

Councilmember Dhakal introduced the discussion stating that the Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (HDEIC) developed the draft policy, inspired by the One Fairfax Policy, which he said was forwarded to Town Council for consideration. He stated the main intention of the draft policy is to promote equity and inclusion in the community by upholding our commitments to those values. He further noted that the purpose of adopting a diversity policy is to improve the quality of life, enhance social cohesion, and promote equal and fair opportunities for everyone in the community through: (1) providing a

benchmark from which to improve, (2) being intentional, (3) bringing social and racial equity, and (4) bringing diverse events to the community.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and moderators on the draft Herndon Diversity Policy proposed by HDEIC, including: (1) draft copy of the policy provided in the March 5, 2024, Town Council work session agenda, (2) basing the draft policy on the County's One Fairfax policy, (3) review of HDEIC's guiding principles and goals, and (4) the policy will be developed and refined if the initial resolution directing the formation of the policy is adopted.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and moderators on how to establish a diversity policy, including: (1) how to evaluate the policy's success, (2) working with diversity measures already implemented in the Town, e.g., (a) routine supervisor training, (b) annual diversity training, (c) workplace harassment, and (d) leadership training; staff will look at presenting this information to the HDEIC, (3) policy as a public-facing document demonstrating the Town's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, (4) how the Town will be held accountable, (5) tying the diversity policy to the Strategic Plan, and (6) minor administrative edits to be considered for the document.

Following the discussion, Mr. Ashton stated that this may be a policy that is included in the Strategic Plan as an amendment at the forefront of the document. The group concurred with that recommendation.

There was discussion among the Council and staff on the status of previous recommendations from HDEIC, including:

1. Women-only swimming hours at the Community Center: it was determined to not be feasible at this time due to staffing and support requirements.
2. Diversity Award program: Council did not give previous direction, but Mr. Ashton stated it could be included as part of the annual employee holiday luncheon award program.
3. Skateboarding event: status is not available; staff will revisit the topic and provide an update at a later date.

There was additional discussion about how to incorporate artwork from multiple cultures into this area of the strategic plan.

Following discussion, staff was requested to provide the following: (1) staff recommendation on the draft Herndon diversity policy, and (2) provide a draft resolution on the Herndon diversity policy for a future Town Council work session, following legal review.

b. Facilitate meaningful belonging and equitable access to spaces in downtown

Ms. Rogue stated that discussion on this topic will include looking at how the Town is providing a sense of belonging in a variety of ways, such as: (1) feeling comfortable with advocacy, and (2) equitable access to spaces.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and moderators about facilitating equitable spaces, including: (1) reinvigorating the community roundtables that the Town held in the past, (2) the status of public safety activities that used to be held, such as Coffee with a Cop and Citizens Police Academy; to which Mr. Ashton responded he can find out the status of those programs, (3) other community outreach events that the Herndon Police participate in, like Popsicles with Police, work with local organizations, and school-based outreach efforts, (4) gang prevention and concerns over Fentanyl in the community, (5) expressing concern that the entire community did not feel welcome in Herndon, (6) implementing cultural sensitivity training, (7) utilizing an expert to help cultivate a sense of belonging and to address social issues within the community, (8) engaging more with Opportunity Neighborhoods community ambassadors, and (9) building policy that encourages belonging and promotes inclusion.

Ms. Rouge indicated that it may help the group to think about different ways that the Town is communicating, noting that it might take some intentional work on what those communication tools are, which will look different in every community.

Ms. Rouge asked what are some of the areas that Council has influence over encouraging belonging, and there was discussion among Council and staff on the following: (1) acknowledging the Town's diversity and welcoming the diverse population, (2) asking partners who work with the Town to adopt the Town's vision, ensuring that it is open and welcome to anyone, (3) focusing on inclusionary aspects, including bringing in an expert on inclusion to talk to the Town Council, (4) looking at the Town's communication policies, (5) addressing problems within the community, considering socio-economic factors, and (6) highlighting the term "comprehensive inclusion."

Responding to Councilmember Scherff's question about the Town's partners adopting its vision, Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney, asked for clarification on the Town serving as a partner or sponsor, to which Councilmember Scherff responded "either." Ms. Yeatts stated that the Town does sponsor some events, but is not a partner on events held on Town property, and that anyone could have a special event on Town property. Councilmember Scherff responded that organizations that receive money from the Town should

espouse the same values as the Town, and Ms. Yeatts indicated that she would review the information.

The group reviewed the topics that were identified and discussed aspects of belonging and access, including: (1) event types and process, (2) establishing expectations with partners in embodying shared expectations, (3) inclusion audit, (4) transparency and effective communication to all communities, including public safety issues such as scams and Fentanyl, (5) how the Town is addressing concerns within the community, and (6) how to further engage and connect the community, to include ways to encourage volunteerism.

Ms. Rouge asked if there were specific tactical items that the group wanted to discuss addressing the topic areas identified, and discussion in this area included: (1) Councilmember LeBlanc's suggestion to bring in an expert focused on municipalities that can utilize research and translate what is happening in the world into policy, more specifically than diversity, equity, and inclusion training, (2) Councilmember Scherff's suggestion to form a committee of representatives from key community groups that could work with the Town on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, (3) Councilmember Dhakal's comments about involving the HDEIC with this committee.

Following discussion among the Council, staff, and moderators, Ms. Dooley asked the group if there was interest in the suggestion of forming a committee of experts in the government equity policy field or similar field to aid in guiding policy development around this topic, to which there were comments on: (1) understanding from the experts on areas that the Town is able to impact, (2) looking at other localities to see how they are addressing concerns within the community, and (3) to use a committee to see where the Town plugs in, and to not act in isolation.

Ms. Rouge asked for clarification on the direction of the discussion, noting that the original discussion focused on bringing in a few experts who could aid in thinking about the parameters, best practices, and what others have done in a one-time workshop, and now the discussion is around the formation of a Committee of experts to provide guidance.

Councilmembers LeBlanc and Scherff confirmed that the intent of the expert committee is to have a one-time discussion with a few experts and the Town Council, and inviting the HDEIC to listen to the discussion.

Ms. Rouge confirmed that the action item from this discussion is to get a meeting together with Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer, Fairfax County, and/or other leaders in the field to do some stage setting on practices, ideas, and innovations, and what and how impact can be made as policymakers.

Ms. Rouge stated that in summary, the group has identified six areas that the Town Council may want to continue to brainstorm and prioritize within this Strategic Focus Area.

5. Review and Prioritization of any new Council Initiatives within the Strategic Plan Framework

There was no discussion on new Council initiatives.

6. Wrap-up - Next Steps

Ms. Rouge stated that the next strategic plan meeting will focus on SFA 3, Environmental and Economic Sustainability, noting that affordable housing and workforce housing have already been included as discussion topics, and if there are other pieces of information that staff should provide as part of the next strategic plan discussion on this focus area.

There was discussion among the Council, staff, and moderators about discussion topics for the next Strategic Plan meeting.

Councilmember LeBlanc asked about the status of coordinating a presentation from Fairfax Housing Authority or Fairfax County Economic Development to the Town Council. Mr. Ashton stated that the Town requested to meet with the Housing Authority and staff has not contacted Fairfax County Economic Development. He stated that staff is working on coordinating with Fairfax County Housing Authority to provide a presentation at a future work session, depending on their schedule.

In response to Councilmember Scherff, Mr. Ashton provided a high level overview of the Town's incoming Economic Development Director's background and expertise, and indicated that he could provide a briefing at a work session prior to the next strategic plan meeting.

Councilmember LeBlanc asked if data could be provided on the town's current business profile, such as sector, sizes, etc. Mr. Ashton stated he would look into providing that data ahead of the next strategic plan meeting.

Following discussion, Ms. Rouge stated that the request is for the Town Council to think about what types of organizations and businesses they want to be in the community in the next 20 years and to bring that as part of the next strategic plan meeting.

Mr. Ashton provided a briefing on the current market conditions impacting business decisions.

Vice Mayor Hedrick requested a tree inventory update be included in the next strategic plan meeting. Mr. Ashton confirmed that an update will be provided as part of the Environmental and Economic Sustainability SFA discussion.

Ms. Rouge asked the group if they wanted to continue to have the strategic plan discussions as separate special meetings or incorporate these into work sessions.

After discussion, the group concurred to schedule the quarterly strategic plan meetings as part of scheduled work sessions with the next meeting being pushed from July to September 3, 2024, starting at 6:00 p.m., focused on the Environmental and Economic Sustainability SFA.

3. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mayor Olem adjourned the April 30, 2024 Town Council Initiatives Meeting at 10:01 p.m.

Amanda E. Monaw Kertz

Amanda E.M. Kertz
Chief Deputy Town Clerk



Minutes approved by Town Council: **June 11, 2024**