

Dulles Direct Newsletter April 2019

Welcome to the April edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. The Board of Supervisors has been busy this spring, with the completion of the FY2020 budget and work on the draft Comprehensive Plan. I'll discuss those in more detail later in the newsletter.

As is my custom, I offered a resolution that the Board support designating May 6-10 as Small Business Week. This year, I was joined by Drew Wiles, the head brewer at Solace Brewing, who represented our growing small business sector and shared some encouraging stories about how the County assisted him in building his business. Over 10,000 of Loudoun's 12,000 employers have twenty employees or less - meaning that small business makes up a very sizable portion of our local economy. More than a few of our small businesses have grown to become much larger ones. I am very thankful for entrepreneurs who invest in our County.

I encourage everyone to go out and shop at small businesses during the week of May 6. For information on participating business, please visit LoudounSmallBusinessWeek.org.

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A mini television documentary named "On Demand" began airing April 11 on several networks. The newest iteration of the show features Loudoun, including our strong economic development and thriving agritourism business. During the week of April 29, On Demand will be airing on public television and the segments will be hosted by popular actor Rob Lowe. In the meantime, the program will be distributed to channels such as PBS in all 50 states. You can watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/K1JmXwpLhzE>.

I am happy to announce that Loudoun County has officially earned its certification as a V3 Employer. The V3 program helps employers develop and implement long-term strategies and nationally recognized practices in recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans. V3 certified employers have been recognized as providing an occupational home for those who have engaged in military service. I'm proud that Loudoun has achieved this milestone in taking care of a critical part of our population.

Thank you to everyone who came out to discuss the draft Comprehensive Plan at my Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting last Thursday. The following day, a longtime County staff member who was in attendance called me and said it was one of the best public meetings he's ever been to. That is thanks to all the citizens who attended and participated. The questions and comments were really thoughtful and the respectful dialogue was refreshing in today's political



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climate. I was proud to be an elected representative of this district. Growth is not an easy topic, and I think the attendees understood that land use is not black and white. There are many shades of grey and sometimes no good choicess. All of us agree that infrastructure is not adequate for the amount of development we have. But these are the facts:

- A moratorium on new residential development is illegal.
- Under current zoning, 29,000 new residential units can be built with about half in the Transition Policy Area (between Northstar and Route 15) and the Rural Policy Area (west of Route 15).
- Housing supply is getting very tight, and a family must make over \$175,000 in household income just to afford the average new home in Loudoun, which prices a lot of people out and is hurting our businesses - especially those in the service industry that can't find employees
- If we follow a fully "slow growth" pattern and add nothing to the plan except in the Urban Policy Area around Metro, we'll see the continued type of sprawl that we've had for the last 15 years - lots of by-right development with big (and expensive) homes, no proffers, no schools, no roads, and no amenities available to the public like parks.

With that set of facts, which is the reality that I face on the Board, I think the consensus in the room was that the County ought to consider trying to control the type and timing of development better by allowing some higher density in certain areas. Doing so could lead to rezonings, which allows us to collect proffers, have a say in the type and size of units being built, and in general be able to plan better for growth. Almost everyone agreed that growth in the Metro areas makes a lot of sense, but the problem is that not everybody actually wants to live in a small urban type of unit. Some of us want to live in a traditional house with a small yard. It's just not realistic to expect that all of our growth is going to be accommodated around Metro.

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As the Board begins its in-depth work on the comprehensive plan, I can safely say that I do not support the densities that the Planning Commission recommended in all the places that they added them. However, they took those actions out of a desire to prevent development in western Loudoun and to meet future housing needs. If there is no outlet for growth demand, sprawl will continue, and it will begin to take over farmland and show up in places where we truly have no infrastructure.

There are some tough choices here. I do think I bring a unique perspective to this discussion in that unlike some, I'm not convinced the current land use plan has been a success. Therefore simply keeping the status quo isn't necessarily the answer for me (or for a lot of people at our meeting).

The Board of Supervisors saw almost 200 citizens testify at our comp plan public hearings, but less than five of those speakers were Dulles District residents. I was struck by how different the perspectives were at my Town Hall, which had over 100 constituents, compared to public testimony at the meetings. This process is complicated and it is difficult to convey all of it - even in our long newsletters - but I'll try to keep you updated.

[Loudoun County Traffic Incident Map](#)

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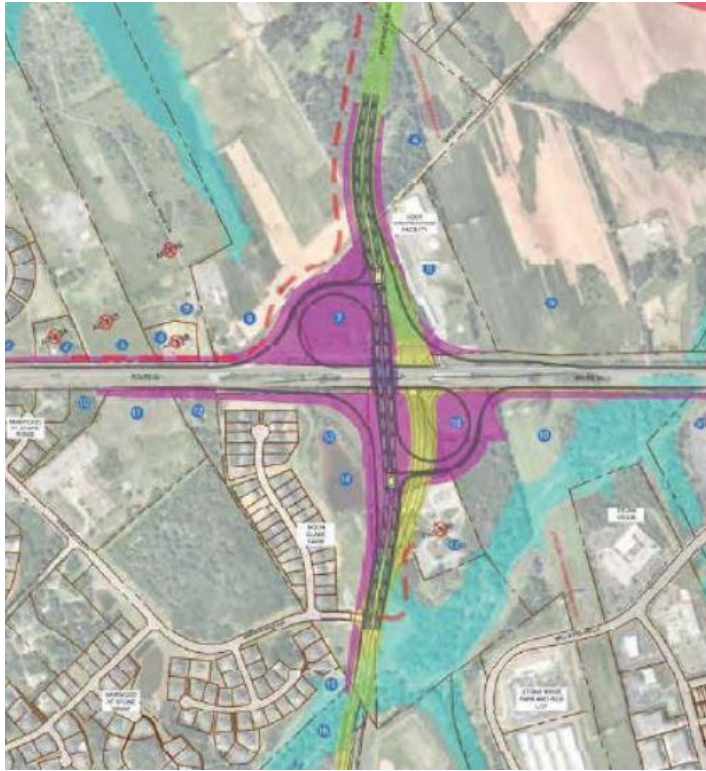
[Loudoun County Government Master Calendar](#)

DULLES UPDATES

Northstar Boulevard / Route 50 Interchange

As you may recall, the Board of Supervisors is working on a future interchange at the Northstar Boulevard and Route 50 intersection. This interchange will accelerate traffic through the area and increase safety measures. In early April, the Board endorsed a conceptual design for the interchange. Supervisor Buffington and I led the discussion about the option that was ultimately chosen. Since we differed from Staff's recommendation, I want to provide a brief justification for our decision. Staff recommended a Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI), but I felt the proximity of the SPUI to the Marrwood community was concerning. To be clear, all of the options are close, but I chose to support a higher capacity partial cloverleaf design with loop ramps to the northwest and southeast. It will cost slightly more than the staff recommendation but will be better able to handle traffic volume and will not interfere as closely with the neighboring residential community. However, there will be no increased cost to acquire right-of-way and relocate utilities for the 24 acres in question. The total estimated cost of the cloverleaf design, according to consultant Kimley Horn, is \$83 million - \$9 million higher than the estimate for the SPUI. I think the extra money will be well spent to meet higher VDOT standards for service, improve traffic flow, and keep ramps from encroaching on existing homes.

While the interchange is not yet funded and will likely not be built for many years (Northstar will be completed before the interchange is built), the County must go through this process earlier rather than later in order to start the right-of-way acquisition process. We can also prevent development from occurring at this location that would later interfere with the planned interchange. If you recall the Route 50 and Loudoun County Parkway intersection discussion from a few years ago, it followed this same model and was a success.



Route 28

I have been a member of the Route 28 Transportation Improvement District Commission since I've been in office, and this year and I have good news to report. The Commission authorized \$18 million to widen Route 28 northbound between Route 50 and McLearen Road. Work will begin this fall. It is my hope that this project will improve merging patterns from 50 Eastbound to 28 Northbound; we've had consistent problems over the years here and I'm glad there's finally a project on the books to provide relief.

The revenue for this widening project comes from the Route 28 Tax District, which corridor landowners pay into on a regular basis. The 28 Tax District is limited in the projects it can fund, but the Commission saw this widening as a top priority and acted accordingly.

The widening of 28 Northbound from Route 267 to Sterling Boulevard was also funded and is already underway.

LOUDOUN UPDATES

Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan

As I mentioned above, the draft Comprehensive Plan is now with the Board of Supervisors to review. We have 90 days to work through and approve the plan, which spent years going through a stakeholders' group and the Planning Commission. Everyone involved has worked incredibly hard on this project, so I want to respect their work while taking into account resident questions and requests. As I mentioned, there were two public hearings for citizens to state their positions on the Comp Plan. Over 130 speakers attended the Wednesday meeting with over 80 speakers at the Saturday meeting. The passion and energy displayed by these speakers is proof that we have concerned residents here in Loudoun that feel strongly about the future direction of the County. That's a good thing.

I am including the schedule for Board work sessions on the Comp Plan. While the public hearings have already passed, residents are encouraged to attend the work sessions as the Board discusses the draft and hears from County staff on the intricacies of the plan. All meetings, take place at the government center: 1 Harrison Street SE, Leesburg, VA 20175.

- Wednesday, May 1 / 6 PM / Work Session: Urban Policy Area
- Wednesday, May 8 / 6:30 PM / Work Session: Suburban Policy Area
- Monday, May 20 / 6 PM / Work Session: Transition Policy Area
- Wednesday, May 29 / 6 PM / Work Session: Rural Policy Area / Towns / JLMAs
- Wednesday, June 5 / 6 PM / Work Session: Countywide Transportation Plan
- Thursday, June 20 / 5 PM / Business Meeting (potential adoption)

Hanson Park

The Hal and Berni Hanson Regional Park (just west of Brambleton on Evergreen Mills Road) will be an excellent resource for Loudoun County residents with its athletic fields, trail networks, and other amenities. It is planned currently at 257 acres. It involves the renovation of an historic house, the construction of recreational amenities such as seventeen athletic fields, and the installation of trails, a nature center and activity lodge, park offices, picnic areas, maintenance shops, a splash park, a skate park, playgrounds, restroom and concessions facilities, parking, and other associated infrastructure.

Unfortunately the cost of capital programs in the DMV has been on the rise during recent years. Construction bids for this project have come in in \$12 million above our current budget. The good news is, the Finance Committee recently awarded the initial construction contract so that the actual park buildout can begin. I'm excited to see this project come to fruition as it's been discussed since all the way back in 2008, but the outlook is a bit of a mixed bag. Because the park was bid so far over budget, certain elements had to be reduced or eliminated altogether. These eliminations included all four proposed softball and baseball diamonds. Because of procurement laws, the were several pre-determined "deletes" and five separate phases were deleted. I am frustrated that all of the rectangle fields were kept in, and none of the diamonds. The Board of Supervisors should have had the opportunity to make that decision but we did not, and I have conveyed my feelings on that.

In May, the Finance Committee, which I Chair, will be examining the potential of using project contingency funding for projects like Hanson Park that have been reduced in size or scope due to budgetary restraints. I am hoping we can restore the baseball diamonds and maybe some other elements that were removed from the initial construction contract.

Intersection Improvement Program

Loudoun is launching a new Intersection Improvement Initiative, which will allow us to identify the most dangerous and inefficient intersections in the County and fix between five and seven of them per year. Over the last year, County staff and a traffic engineering firm have undertaken the enormous task of reviewing all 529 intersections in the County and ranking them on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the worst). The highest ranked intersections based on engineering and warrant analysis are then moved up our priority list for improvement in the near future. Most of the study was focused on intersections without current improvements like roundabouts or traffic lights. I get lots of emails and phone calls about intersections throughout the County that don't have lights, or crosswalks for pedestrians, or experience lots of accidents. This process gives us a methodical way of addressing them.

The number one ranked intersection in the whole county for needed improvements is right here in Dulles. I bet you can guess - that's right, Elk Lick and Tall Cedars! As discussed in previous newsletters and at a Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting, there is already a configuration change in place based on recommendations from a consultant, County staff, and VDOT. We are in the process of obtaining needed funding. As a reminder, we can't put a signal in so instead we are removing stop signs on Tall Cedars and making configuration changes.

I wanted to touch on the intersection at Tall Cedars Parkway and Nations Street, since I had a couple recent constituent questions. It did not meet warrant for a signal, although it is the fifth ranked intersection according to the aforementioned study. Engineers are recommending alternative configurations be considered, but I haven't delved deep enough into the background yet and will be holding internal meetings to discuss the nuances of the intersection. I will update you as this process continues and resolution is reached on various problematic intersections in the County and specifically here in Dulles.

County Budget Recap & School Board Budget Reconciliation

On April 2, the Board voted unanimously to officially approve the FY20 County Budget. The operating budget this year is \$3.2 billion with a \$2.4 billion six-year CIP. Unanimous votes on the budget are a relatively new phenomenon, but I am grateful that my colleagues and I found that our various interests were addressed in the budget well enough to be comfortable passing it. As you probably know, the tax rate for the fiscal year beginning on June 1 is \$1.045, a four cent reduction from the current rate. Staying below the equalized tax rate has been our priority since July of last year, when the Finance Committee (which I chair) began looking towards the FY20. The fact that we have been able to consistently stay at or below the current tax rate when jurisdictions all around us are raising taxes is a testament to the strong economy we boast here in Loudoun. For an in-depth report of the budget, check out my FY20 Budget Report at <https://www.loudoun.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/8543>.

The Board of Supervisors approved a \$1.2 billion operating budget for Loudoun County Public Schools as part of the FY20 budget process, but there remained a \$2.15 million shortfall in state funding in the budget passed by the General Assembly. At its April 23 meeting, the School Board reconciled the budget and made changes recommended by Superintendent Williams that include shifting certain expenditures to the current budget year. During my time on the Board, we have funded 98% of all LCPS requests and this year we were able to fund their budget since they came in at the equalized tax rate. Our per-pupil spending has also increased significantly during my time on the Board. I outline in my budget report how this increase represents a strong commitment to education and youth services on the part of the Board of Supervisors.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Assessment 101 Presentation

The Commissioner of the Revenue's Office will host a presentation called Assessment 101 at the Dulles South Senior Center. It begins at 7 PM on Monday, May 20. The presentation explains how real estate is valued for local tax purposes. I encourage you to attend if you're curious about this important process.

Public Safety Quarterly Meeting

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office will be holding upcoming quarterly meetings at each of the area's four service stations. The Dulles South meeting will take place on May 15 at 7 PM at the Dulles South Public Safety Center, located at 25216 Loudoun County Parkway. Items for discussion include recent area crimes and crime trends, traffic concerns, and other public safety-related issues. The meetings will be led by an LCSO captain, and either Sheriff Chapman or a member of his leadership team will be in attendance. Residents are encouraged to attend. For a full list of the meetings, please visit <https://sheriff.loudoun.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=4872>.

CTB Spring Transportation Meeting

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) of Virginia will be hosting a public meeting this spring to give Northern Virginia residents the opportunity to comment on projects and programs. The meeting will be an important one, as the CTB is working on its FY20-25 Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP), which will include highway, rail, and public transportation initiatives. The meeting will also serve as a required joint public meeting with NVTa, NVTC, and VRE. The meeting will start at 6 PM on Monday, May 13 at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office: 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax. It will be immediately followed by a public hearing listening session for region residents. The meeting will also be an opportunity for input on the I-95 Corridor

Improvement Plan, with a brief topical presentation at 5:45.

Comments can be submitted during the meeting or emailed after the meeting through May 27 to Six-YearProgram@vdot.virginia.gov. For public transportation and transit, send comments or questions to DRPTPR@vdot.virginia.gov. Prior to the meeting at 5 PM, there will be an open house with information and public feedback opportunity regarding the statewide multimodal transportation plan known as VTrans. If you have questions, please contact Maria Sinner at 703-259-2342.

TEDxYouth Talk

Brambleton Middle School (23070 Learning Circle in Ashburn) will be hosting a TEDxYouth Talk on May 18 from 10 AM - 3:30 PM. The topic will be the "Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs of the 21st Century Teen Experience." Attendees can get in for free and will hear from speakers on many issues related to youth experience. The event will be formatted with lectures and opportunities for dialogue, and is a great chance for young people to learn in a safe and welcoming environment. Please visit loudounteens.org/tedx-loudoun for more information on topics.

Walk-In Rabies Vaccination Clinic

Loudoun County Animal Services will be hosting a walk-in rabies vaccination clinic for household pets on Sunday, June 9 from 11 AM - 3 PM. The clinic will take place at Dulles South Recreation and Community Center, located at 24950 Riding Center Drive in South Riding. Dogs will cost \$20 and must be kept on a leash; cats will cost \$10 and must be kept in a carrier. The minimum age for vaccination is twelve weeks. For a complete list of rabies vaccination clinics happening around the County, please [click here](#).

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Drive

Loudoun will once again be operating its Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Program. This program provides a safe and free way for residents to get rid of hazardous material that may have accumulated in their homes. Household hazardous waste is any waste produced in the home that is dangerous or potentially harmful to human health or the environment. Please don't bring ammunition, propane tanks, motor oil and car batteries, electronics, medical waste, or paint. Most of these items are recyclable or accepted at other disposal events throughout the year.

The Dulles area drive will take place on Saturday, June 22 from 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM at Freedom High School (25450 Riding Center Drive in South Riding). More information, including a semi-comprehensive list of what does and doesn't constitute household hazardous waste, can be obtained by visiting [this site](#). For information on recycling, please click [here](#).

Dulles South Food Pantry

The Dulles South Food Pantry provides food assistance up to twice a month to any person who resides in the school attendance zones for Freedom High School, John Champe High School, Independence High School, Rock Ridge High School and Briar Woods High School. The Pantry also provides one-time emergency food assistance to anyone in need. The food pantry is open Wednesdays in the historic white chapel at Arcola United Methodist Church, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Dulles, VA 20166. Call 703-507-2795 or email info@dsfp.org to schedule an appointment. See the Dulles South Food Pantry's website at <http://www.dsfp.org/> for information on how you can help the food pantry fight local hunger. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry, Inc. are tax deductible.

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