

Dulles Direct Newsletter June 2019

Welcome to the June edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. This month has been one of our busiest as the Board wrapped up work on the comprehensive land use plan after a 3.5 year process. I have more on that below.

July 4 is fast approaching, so I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy Independence Day. There will be a local celebration at Star Spangled South Riding on the evening of July 3 from 5:30-9:30 PM. There will be a parade leaving from Town Hall on Center Street at 5:30, live music from 6:15-9:15 at the South Riding Golf Course, and a fireworks display to end the evening.

I also want to make sure that everyone has a safe holiday. I have personally been on the scene of a house fire started by fireworks in our district, and I have no desire to ever have to do that again. The Fire Marshal's Office has released some guidelines for enjoying the holiday safely. Please visit www.loudoun.gov/fireworks for public display schedules and tips on how to be safe around fireworks.

Thank you to the Dulles Area Association of Realtors for inviting me to speak at their "Bagels with the Board

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of Supervisors" event. I discussed how our economic and transportation programs are improving quality of life and attracting businesses. I also updated them on the Comprehensive Plan and fielded questions.



DULLES UPDATES

Signatures of Loudoun - Dulles South Rec Center

I'm pleased to report that the Dulles South Recreation Center won a Signatures of Loudoun award for design excellence at our June 4 Board Business Meeting. Signatures of Loudoun is an annual event that the Loudoun Design Cabinet holds to recognize top design and architecture in our community. This is a big deal for us, since our last Signatures of Loudoun award was back in 2013 for the Gum Spring Library. I joke that we don't often win awards for our infrastructure designs in the Dulles South area, but I am grateful that our district was recognized this time around.



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Dulles South Rec Center Maintenance Closures

Speaking of the Recreation Center, I want to address the recent closures and mechanical issues that kept the swimming pools down for longer than expected. First, the closures were part of a planned annual shutdown to complete maintenance on the pools and other facilities. The maintenance ranged from the installation of replacement flooring in the lobby, to maintaining hand and foot holds on the artificial climbing walls, to deep cleaning the pool and pool deck. Installation of new amenities also occurs during these closures, such as putting electrical outlets in the locker rooms for hair dryers. Now that the facility has been open for a year, we've had a chance to see how it is being used and to make some small improvements. Training opportunities for staff also occurred. I'm sorry for any inconvenience these closures caused. The entire center is shut down rather than smaller areas because the work goes much faster and can be done more efficiently.

We had several issues with the pools during the shutdown. The equipment to replace filters in the

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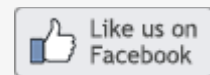
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filtration system did not arrive when it was supposed to. Because of that delay, the pools were closed longer than expected. After that work was completed and the leisure pool was being refilled, staff noticed a leak in the return line that goes from the pool to the filter. The leak was probably preexisting, but was not caught because there is an autofill system in the pool that automatically keeps water levels at a certain point. Fortunately, the leak was relatively minor and easy to repair. Once repaired, the leisure pool reopened shortly after the competition pool. All told, some portion of the aquatics area was closed for just over three weeks. After discussing with PRCS staff, pass holders will receive a one month extension on their passes to compensate for the extended closure.

A separate issue at the Rec Center this summer is the cancellation of a large number of swimming classes. These were unrelated to maintenance. The majority of these cancellations are due to the unexpected resignations of six swimming instructors in a short period of time beginning on May 31. I have looked into this matter and discovered that the reasons for their departures do not appear to be related, and range from a medical issue to several deciding to pursue full time employment rather than part time instruction. I am aware of how frustrating it can be for plans to change last minute. I am assured that PRCS immediately began advertising for these positions. Swim instructors are actually not a classified position in the County system, which allows our department to offer what is necessary to hire employees. Staff will be in touch with patrons to confirm rescheduled sessions at a later date. Between these unforeseen circumstances and issues with the pools, it was a bit of a perfect storm for swimmers in Dulles South. I'm glad that everything is back up and running and I apologize for the disruptions.

One other note - the Board of Supervisors included an enhancement in the FY20 budget for PRCS to add childcare in the Dulles South Recreation Center starting later this year

Avonlea Traffic Calming

[Loudoun County Traffic Incident Map](#)

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My office has been working with the Avonlea HOA, the Loudoun County Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure, and VDOT on traffic calming initiatives in the Avonlea community. Traffic studies found significant speeding on Avonlea Drive and recommended specific items to help encourage drivers to slow down. At our June 20 Business Meeting, the Board approved \$67,000 to fund the installation of "Watch for Children" signs at the community's entry points, two pole mounted speed display signs on Avonlea Drive, and a speed hump as approved by VDOT. I will be sure to update you when we have a timeline for installation of the measures, and I am hopeful that these solutions will address some of the safety concerns voiced by Avonlea residents. It is difficult to get through the traffic calming process, so congratulations to HOA leadership for getting the requisite signatures and sticking with the process.

Kirkpatrick Fire Station 27 Open and Operating

At long last, Loudoun County Fire & Rescue celebrated the opening of station #27, Kirkpatrick Fire Rescue Station on Northstar Blvd. As I mentioned last month, the station is in the Blue Ridge District but because of our layered service approach, will serve many residents in Dulles. We had major contractor issues on this construction project which delayed its opening, but I'm glad it is finally here and I appreciate the fine work that the men and women of our department do to keep us safe.



Whitman South Commercial Application

Van Metre has filed an application to make revisions to their already approved commercial development on the southeast corner of the Gum Spring and Braddock intersection. The current approvals allow for 35,000 square feet of commercial retail and service uses, a convenience store with gas pumps, and a 12,800 square foot child care center. They have decided not to pursue the approved child care center since attracting an operator has been difficult.

The proposed changes would allow for an increase in retail uses onsite up to 57,000 square feet, special exception applications for two automotive service stations (one with a convenience store, gas pumps, and a car wash), and one drive-through restaurant. All of this would be on a larger site than the original application because they have increased the acreage from 8.9 acres to 15.9 acres. The application was reviewed by the Planning Commission and they voted 7-1-1 to recommend Board approval. It is currently scheduled to come before the Board of Supervisors for Public Hearing on July 10.

For more information on the application, you can go to www.loudoun.gov/3362/LOLA. Click on "searchable list" and enter **ZMAP-2016-0023** in application number field. You will find all documentation related to the application and can even submit online

comments regarding the proposal at this site. You can also speak in person at the Public Hearing on July 10, 6:00 PM at the County Government Center (1 Harrison Street, Leesburg, VA). Advanced sign-up is available until noon the day of the hearing by contacting the Office of the County Administrator at (703) 777-0200. The hearing can be viewed via webcast at www.loudoun.gov/meetings. Copies of agenda items are available in the County Administrator's Office and also available online at <http://www.loudoun.gov/bosdocuments>.



Originally approved



Proposed

LOUDOUN UPDATES

Comprehensive Plan Update

At our June 20 Business Meeting, the Board voted 8-1 to approve the 2040 Comprehensive Plan - the first comprehensive update to the County's land use and transportation policies in over eighteen years. The vote came at the end of a long and often arduous process - three and a half years, to be exact. When we got the draft from the Planning Commission three months ago, there were 56,000 additional residential units recommended over the next twenty years. The finished product significantly reduced that number (we're waiting on the exact number, as it changed right up until the last day of votes) and targeted development into more favorable areas. I believe it reflects the best balance possible of preserving Loudoun's rural character while addressing the need for housing as

population growth continues and market demand rises. I said at the meeting that most of the interest groups that were involved in the process from both sides of the spectrum - developers on one hand, conservation groups on the other - were "a little bit mad" at the Board over the final result, which probably means that we got it mostly right, and I still believe that.

Land use is, by far, the most frequent and complicated issue that the Board of Supervisors deals with on a regular basis. The plan amplifies the intricacies of land use on a very public scale. While some people may try to paint land use issues as black and white, they rarely are. Some components of the plan I supported even though I'm not enthusiastic about them, per se. Those components were necessary to deal with realities on the ground and in our legal system. On the other hand, there were some emotionally appealing proposals that I didn't support because they would have been bad policy.

The notion of by-right vs. planned residential development was a common theme. In some cases I supported higher densities because I want to encourage rezonings, rather than allowing all properties to develop by-right. In the Dulles District, we've seen the impact of by-right development just to our west. Many of our issues from school crowding and infrastructure challenges have come from by-right development. The County receives no proffers for any infrastructure, schools, parks or other services when parcels are developed by-right.

One thing I think we got right was to start with a very detailed analysis of the transportation network in Loudoun - both current conditions, and conditions under various land use scenarios in the future. This allowed us to see where we are most vulnerable in the future. The area that really stood out the most, not surprisingly, was Dulles South. The transportation modeling paints a fairly bleak picture, especially if we are not able to move forward with the northern bypass to Route 50 that I have proposed. The biggest challenge is simply that our roads run right into Fairfax

County, and we don't have the capability to expand them on that side of the border.

One of the areas studied carefully for more development was the land containing the parcels south of Route 50. However, the transportation models showed that more density will cause the network to fail badly even with extensive proffers for roads on the Loudoun side. I have been making very slow progress on trying to get some changes to Braddock Road on the Fairfax side, but that is a tenuous discussion and there are no guarantees. Under the existing plan, about 800 units of housing can be built south of Braddock Road by-right, and the new plan maintains that level of development. The Planning Commission had considered up to 8,000 units in this area, with the caveat that the infrastructure must be in place to support it. Ultimately, I concluded that it never would be, and it would be irresponsible to start down that path.

Some of the other highlights of the plan include a new Urban Policy Area (UPA) near Loudoun's future Silver Line Metro stations. This area is planned for higher housing densities, taller buildings, and commercial development near transit. We also updated the Countywide Transportation Plan to continue building an infrastructure network best suited for the needs of commuters in Loudoun. For the first time, the Route 50 northern bypass I mentioned is officially a part of the long term County plan, though our ability to execute it remains to be seen. In our suburban areas, we changed some parcels to allow more mixed use development, and during the process the Board also adopted a new place type that I proposed, called Suburban Commercial. It does not allow either residential or data centers in an effort to try to preserve some land for conventional users that are having difficulty outbidding data centers and housing developers for land.

State law required us to review and make a decision on the plan after we got the draft from the Planning Commission within 90 days. Three months is not long to discuss and vote on something as complex and

critical as this work. The crunch led to a lot of late nights, conference calls, and meetings. Now that the Board has completed this phase, we begin the multi-year process of codifying all the changes we have made in an updated Zoning Ordinance. That process will also take several years, and will be in the hands of the next Board of Supervisors to complete.

The Board created a process to develop an Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan, which will deal with growing issues of affordability and lack of housing in our community. This plan will be based on some of the concepts that we initiated in the comprehensive plan, to be further fleshed out in the zoning ordinance.

Quite a few thank you's are in order. I'd like to start with Dulles District Planning Commissioner Jeff Salmon, who chaired the Stakeholder's Group that first worked on the plan, Deputy County Administrator Charles Yudd, who really got this process back on track when it got bogged down in the middle, and Director of Planning and Zoning Alaina Ray, whose calm demeanor and patience was a much needed virtue. This was a massive staff effort, and while there were bumps along the way, ultimately we got through it and produced a document that will help shape the County's future.

The text of the plan, along with links to the documents and discussions we had at our various work sessions, can be found here:

<https://www.loudoun.gov/4957/2019-Loudoun-Comprehensive-Plan>. When the plan is finalized, it will be uploaded to this link on the County website as well.

Bond Sales for Infrastructure Projects

As I mentioned, in May I was in New York meeting with credit rating agencies in preparation for the County's next bond sales for infrastructure projects. The County's AAA bond ratings were affirmed, and in early June, we completed our bond sales for infrastructure projects at a very favorable 2.28% interest rate. These low interest rates allow us to

receive the best possible interest rates on capital projects, saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

The County sold \$170.3 million in general obligations bonds, used to finance County and LCPS projects such as Shellhorn Road improvements and the future construction of two Dulles Elementary Schools (ES-23 and ES-29). The County was also able to sell \$24.7 million in lease revenue bonds, which will fund projects such as the Route 772 Transit Station Connector Bridge.

Metro Board Chair Ethics Investigation

As Chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, I led an effort to formally request on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia that the findings of a recent ethics investigation into the conduct of Metro Board Chairman Jack Evans be made public. Shortly after NVTC's official request, the Governors of Virginia and Maryland followed our lead and made the same request. The investigation was conducted by a subset of the Metro Board and found Mr. Evans violated Metro's ethics standards by financially aiding another company he worked for without disclosing the relationship. As you may have seen in the news, a federal criminal probe of this issue has been opened. As a result of our pressure, the ethics committee released the findings of an outside counsel, which found 16 violation of WMATA policy and even the Metro compact itself. Mr. Evans had originally agreed to not seek reelection as Metro Board Chairman (his term ended this month), but did not say that his decision was tied to the ethics investigation. Once the findings of the investigation were made public, Mr. Evans has agreed to step down from the Metro Board altogether. Earlier this week, Paul Smedberg, the appointee of the Governor of Virginia and a long time NVTC member, was elected Chairman of the Board to replace Evans. The DC Council will select Evans' replacement on the WMATA Board.

Many local jurisdictions, including Loudoun, are investing significant resources into Metro (as you

know, we have several Silver Line Metro stops coming to Loudoun next year). We should know when a Board member (especially the chairman) engages in unethical conduct, and what steps are being taken to remedy the situation. I am glad that Metro finally felt the pressure coming from many different angles and decided to release the findings. I remain disappointed that we as regional leaders were not briefed on the matter sooner and that the investigation's results were not made public until formal requests were submitted. I will continue to use my role as NVTC Chairman to push for transparency and accountability at Metro.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Northstar Boulevard Extension Location and Design Public Meeting

Loudoun's Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure (DTCI) is holding a public information meeting regarding location and design of the Northstar Boulevard extension. The meeting will take place on Monday, July 8 from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM in the cafeteria at John Champe High School (41535 Sacred Mountain Street in Aldie). Design staff and Loudoun representatives will be on hand to discuss these details, answer questions, and receive comments on the proposed project. Conceptual plans and environmental documents will be available for viewing at the meeting and at DTCI headquarters (101 Blue Seal Drive in Sterling). You can provide written or oral comments at the hearing or submit them to DTCI@loudoun.gov prior to the meeting.

Loudoun Mental Health First Aid Class

The Loudoun County Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Developmental Service will be offering a free Youth Mental Health First Aid class on July 15 and 16 at the Gum Spring Library (24600 Millstream Drive in Stone Ridge). The class will run from 10 AM - 2:30 PM both days. It is designed for adults who interact with young people, and seeks to review risk factors and warning signs of mental health

problems in adolescents age 12-18. If there are seats left, you can register online here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DNXLRPZ>.

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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