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NEWLY ELECTED
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District 1 Update: December 14TH, 2023

Preparations for taking office.

The latter half of November and early December was a very busy period.

- Met with our County Administrator and key staff.
- Scheduled one-on-one meetings with nearly all of the York County department heads.
- Met with 3 of the 4 incoming Board of Supervisors, with plans to meet with the 4th prior to year-end.
- Reviewed the FY 23 Financial Report, the FY 24 Proposed Budget, and the Proposed Capital Improvements Program for 2024 – 2029.
- Studied the budget surplus for 2023, and the allocation of those surplus funds.
- Reviewed the key issues facing the BOS: 2024 Property Tax Assessment, Princess Cruise Line proposal, Williamsburg/JCC/York County Regional Sports Complex, York 64 Trade Center proposal on Lightfoot Rd, and the need for tighter guidelines on the approval of Short Term Rentals.

KEY ISSUES OVERVIEW

Budget Surplus

As in previous years, the County's revenues exceeded its projections, and expenditures were less than budgeted this year. As a result, \$9.0 M was transferred to FY24 appropriated projects, returned to Capital Reserve, transportation Capital projects, as well as transfers into the Worker's Compensation Fund, Solid Waste funding and ongoing departmental needs.

The revenue surplus is made up of real property, personal property and local taxes as well as other revenue sources such as fees, interest income, and charges for services. Departments in the County are also encouraged to increase efficiencies, which can generate additional surplus.

While a breakdown in surplus sources, versus efficiency savings is not yet available, the fact that we continue to generate nearly \$10 M per year, is a disturbing trend.

As we enter 2024, the concern on the mind of nearly all residents is the impact of the property value assessments. The average rise in assessment value for homes and businesses in York County is 19% above the 2022 Assessment values. State laws require local Property Tax rates to be decreased by a similar amount. This will be a hotly debated and discussed topic as the Board prepares for budget discussions and workshops early in 2024.

Princess Cruise Lines

In February, Princess Cruises announced plans to stop in Yorktown beginning in 2024. The York County community is divided on this topic. Some support the arrival of the ships, believing the economic benefits will be worthwhile. Others, however, have spoken out against the plan, going so far as to participate in grassroots meetings and/or sign a petition in hopes of blocking Princess' arrival.

I view this as a transparency issue. The County was first made aware of the Princess Cruises concept in June/July 2022, and the EDA and BOS members were briefed in October/ November 2022. The first public disclosure was February 2023 despite York County having applied for State grants in December 2022.

We have yet to see a financial reconciliation of costs versus benefits to the County, or a detailed environmental assessment, nor have we been provided with a mechanism that allows the County to establish limits on number and size of vessels.

Until these steps are taken, it is my position the County should not agree to Princess Cruise using Yorktown as a port of call. Only when a viable cost/benefit analysis showing a positive outcome, and a satisfactory environmental assessment is approved, and a satisfactory mechanism is established to allow the County to limit the operations, will we consider moving forward toward a public forum to determine acceptability. Only then will there be a path to accept a limited number of ships.

Regional Sports Complex

Early this month Neil Morgan, York County Administrator, presented the plans for a Regional Sports Center to be located on the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center property. In his summary, he concluded that the operating expense that York County would pay, was almost entirely funded by the Tourism Tax collected by York County for hotel stays, meal tax, cigarette tax etc. This money (1/2 of 1% of the Sales tax applied in the Historic Triangle via the Tommy Norment Tax) must be spent on tourism related expenditures or forfeited back to the State.

Jim Icenhour, a James City County Supervisor, had the following comments in the Virginia Gazette: "Getting the Regional Sports Complex right is important."

Mr. Icenhour is concerned that JCC (and York County) pay an open ended Operating Fee to the City of Williamsburg for a 30 year period. He is concerned that there is no Exit Strategy. This agreement represents an irrevocable decision to commit up to 1.3 M\$ yearly of taxpayer money for a 30-year lease period.

He also expressed concern of the potential impact if the Tommy Tax were repealed, and the source of that funding evaporated. That is the major issue facing the York County BOS.

James City County approved the Regional Sports Center agreement by a 3:2 vote.

York 64 Trade Center – NorthPoint Mega Warehouse

Neil Morgan, York County Administrator, presented a letter from NorthPoint Development on June 30, 2023, informing the Board of their intention to build a warehouse facility on a section of the Williamsburg Pottery property.

Mr. Morgan went on to state, based on his understanding, this submission would be a "by right" development, which would be consistent with current zoning and both the current and draft revised comprehensive plan.

As we have learned since that date, a 2.3 M square foot warehouse and distribution center is planned for the site, requiring 8,000 – 12,000 trucks per day to provide transport services.

I have requested that at the very least the property have a private road entrance directly off Mooretown Rd.

In parallel, current District 1 Supervisor, Walt Zaremba has engaged the County attorney, highlighting that the basis for the Zoning Administrator's decision was in error, and in fact contravened the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. We continue to actively oppose the use of Lightfoot Rd for vehicle traffic entering the warehouse facility.

Short Term Rentals

BOS Chairman, Tom Shepperd placed a halt on consideration of any further Short Term Rentals, until the new Board is able to convene and engage on the matter of standards for Short Term Rentals.

As one would expect, the introduction of a new Regional Sports Facility is expected to put further stress on the County for review of Short -Term Rental applications.

My Platform remains unchanged.

I have repeatedly stated that I am against rezoning and rampant growth within the upper District. We need to stick to our Comprehensive Plan, it's thorough and well thought through.

WE MUST:

- Retain the character and quality of our neighborhoods, support revitalization where its most needed, freeze applications for whole house, Short Term Rentals within residential neighborhoods.
- Get control of our taxes – we need to spend responsibly and set our taxes to meet those requirements, not several million \$ in surplus as has been the case for the past 3 years.
- Support our Men in Blue, our EMT workforce and our Schools. Each of these has its own unique challenges, and the cost of maintaining an adequate service is climbing, as competition within the Hampton Roads area for these valued resources continues to increase.

Finally, I am committed to a higher level of transparency within our County Government. Surprises such as the York 64 Trade Center mega warehouse simply should not be acceptable.