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District 1 Update: April 2024

There were two bills in the current General Assembly that made their way to the Governor for approval.

HB 1461 was enacted by the Governor. This bill allows localities to restrict an Owner to one short-term rental (STR) in a community, and further, allows a tenant of a home to post the home as an STR (presuming the Owner agrees and the process is followed for issuing a Special Use Permit (SUP).

Senate Bill 544 was brought forward by Airbnb and the Virginia Realtors Association to promote (STRs). This is essentially a neighborhood hotel created out of homes within a subdivision and rented on a weekend or weekly basis. SB 544 seeks to eliminate local jurisdiction and take away citizen's ability to voice their position over STRs in residential neighborhoods. The Governor has returned the Bill to the Senate with further recommendations, so it is neither Passed or Vetoed as yet.

The BOS recently reviewed the status of York County's current guidelines and rules for STRs and reviewed proposed policy changes. Three revisions that will now be evaluated by the Planning Commission are:

1. For whole house rentals, Owner must be present onsite or in an adjacent home within 3000 ft. I call this 'having skin in the game'. The neighbors need to have confidence the Owner is present and managing the STR operation and is readily available.
2. We discussed a density limit or cap to be applied within each subdivision. The BOS has set limits on the distance required from each STR for an adjacent STR. The distance varies by the density of the subdivision.
3. Limit of 1 STR per Property Owner within a Locality. This is very similar to HB 1461 approved by the Governor.

OVERVIEW OF COUNTY-WIDE ISSUES

Capital Improvement Plan and Budget Discussion

The BOS is in final discussion and review of this year's proposed budget. The County has recommended a reduction in the real estate tax rate from \$0.77 to \$0.74 along with deletion of the decal tax currently assessed to all vehicles in the County.

I don't feel that this is sufficient. I've called for elimination of the budget line item for Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) repayment of \$750,000. Capital Improvement Plan repayment has traditionally been done in the fall once the previous fiscal year budget has been calculated and surplus money moved to cover Capital repayment. Why should there be a line item in the budget AND surplus money used in the fall to reduce CIP?

I've also called for a further 1 cent decrease in the real estate tax rate. This would result in an overall budget increase of 6.7% and an increase in real estate tax rate of 9.4%

You might ask why I differ from the County recommendation. We've generated over \$3.5 M in surplus in the past year from personal property taxes. In my view, this is money that should be returned to the taxpayer. This surplus and the reduction in the CIP repayment represents 3 ½ Cents on real estate tax. We've asked the County Administrator to demonstrate to the BOS where the County could reduce current expenses by a further ½ Cent.

Regional Sports Authority

The BOS undertook a review of the funding associated with the Regional Sports Authority earlier this month.

Concern that the Taxpayers of York County may be faced with payment of the County's share of this regional facility prompted the review.

The findings make it clear that revenues needed to support the Sports Authority will come strictly from the Tourism Tax currently collected by the County. No money from the General Fund (i.e. the taxpayer) is required to support the long-term costs of the regional agreement.

DISTRICT 1 SPECIFIC ISSUES

Queens Lake Dam, Spillway and Lake Funding

Dating back to last year, a MOU was approved between the QL Community and York County establishing the County as the overall lead on the improvement work needed to repair the dam and spillway as well as address erosion in several of the ravines feeding the lake.

State funding in the 2023 budget allocated \$1M to the County in this effort, added to money already set aside by both the County and the Queens Lake Community Association.

Dredging the lake will require additional funding, well beyond the current budget. Senator Diggs and Congressman Wittman met with members of the Community Association and me on April 3 to discuss Federal funding possibilities. The Congressman was quick to point out the work that the National Parks are currently undertaking to improve the Parkway. He will, with the County's help, address the water runoff into the Queens Lake basin attributed to the Parkway and seek their support and funding for the dredging costs.



York County Schools Division :

Dr. Shandor, Superintendent for York County Public Schools, has been asked to come before the BOS to address the YCSD proposed budget and the current Capital Plan. At this point he has declined the invitation (twice).

As I stated last month: In the past 10 years, the BOS has approved 12 rezonings in District 1. This has added an incremental 2,413

homes/townhouses or apartments over the number identified by the Comprehensive Plan. Several by-right developments (Fenton Mill, Waller Mill Heights, Country Club Acres, to name a few) account for an additional 800 homes. This has or will soon result in 340 additional students requiring instructional capacity at Waller Mill or Magruder Elementary.

So far, the solution has been to add temporary/portable classrooms. Six have been added to Magruder, six more will be added over the summer to Waller Mill. School capacity has historically been 563 at Magruder and 405 at Waller Mill. The portables will provide additional capacity for 300 students.

There is no proposed solution for getting our elementary school children out of overcrowded classrooms and portables and into real buildings. The York County School Division (YCSD) has no funding in their Capital Improvement Plan for permanent additions to instructional capacity at either of these two schools through 2030.

This is unacceptable in my view, and I have firmly expressed this concern to both the School Board and senior administration at YCSD. This is a topic that will continue to receive considerable attention in our upcoming York County budget.

The true cost of rezoning after rezoning over the past decade in this district is just beginning to impact our budgets. Schools, police, emergency services, roads and other public services are now starting to feel the stress of those decisions.

It's time we recognized the need for expanded facilities at both Waller Mill and Magruder Elementary.

York 64 Trade Center – NorthPoint Mega Warehouse

In the January 16th BOS meeting, I introduced a motion under New Business to address NorthPoint Development on Lightfoot Rd. and Rochambeau Rd.

NorthPoint, for those who have not previously read about it, is an Amazon type distribution warehouse complex, comprised of five buildings and 2.4 Million sq ft of floor space. This is the equivalent of 11 Lowes hardware stores in one location.

The project, if constructed, would add a staggering volume of traffic to Lightfoot Rd. At my request, VDOT agreed to review the applicant's Traffic Impact Assessment through an independent reviewer. They have now responded with their analysis.

VDOT has concluded that a high-capacity parcel distribution warehouse is inappropriate for this site and has eliminated that option with the Developer.

County staff are due to meet with me in late April to review the VDOT findings and ensure alignment.

I value your input, Become a regular recipient of this newsletter.

I value your input and am happy to address questions or concerns on these or any other topics for the district. Please don't hesitate to contact me.

You can reach me at my email address shared above.

Click on the link above to request my monthly newsletter or copy/paste the following link:

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