

**Village of Friendship Heights
January 12, 2026 Meeting Transcript**

[00:00:00.00] - Speaker 2

Seeing that our video link is not working, at least for now. Jason is kindly making efforts to your video and recording us, right? Okay. Welcome to the first meeting of the Village of Friendship Heights Council in 2026. Before we get started for our business, I'd like to note that there are three Council members who have had birthdays this month or tomorrow. That's Francine Klein, Elson Alt, and Roy Schafer. So please join me in wishing them a happy birthday and help yourself to a little bit of cake that's on the table over there to my left.

[00:00:42.05] - Speaker 1

Council member's cell is also January.

[00:00:44.24] - Speaker 4

We're forgetting about that. Okay.

[00:00:47.29] - Speaker 2

So we're convening our meeting at, it looks like 6: 33 on Monday, January 12th. Council members, if you would please speak your name into the microphone to facilitate transcription and recognition by our vision impaired residents. I'll start. My name is Martha Solt, and I'm chairman.

[00:01:12.25] - Speaker 1

Roy Schafer, may Here.

[00:01:17.14] - Speaker 4

Francine Klein, Council Member.

[00:01:20.20] - Speaker 3

John Conlin, Treasurer.

[00:01:23.28] - Speaker 2

Allison Alt, parliamentarian.

[00:01:26.13] - Speaker 7

Alan Mohler, Historian.

[00:01:29.00] - Speaker 3

And Vic Baisal.

[00:01:31.17] - Speaker 2

Yes. We've got six council members here and a seventh participating remotely. That's how you hear his wonderful voice there. I was about to boast about how we got our sound system improved and working again. But I guess if one thing gets better, something else gets worse. So I will skip those comments. There's a change, two changes to the agenda. In the new business, the discussion vote on proposals for repairing the fountain in Company Park that's being removed from this meeting. We are adding the nomination of John Heisle to the Climate Change and Environment Committee. As we usually do, we have our budget manager here, and we allow him to go first to be efficient with time. And Jim Wilson is going to tell us about Page Park and the Red House and permits and what is being done and what is not being done and everything in between. So thank you, Jim.

[00:02:46.01] - Speaker 3

Thank you. Good evening. I'll start with Page Park. Excuse me, I'll start with the Red House. The Red House construction began the roughly the second week of December, around about the 17th of December. The overall completion date is the April third, fourth, so they call the first week of April, which we don't see any reason why we're not going to meet that date to finish all of the ADA work associated with turning it over to the tenant. I do believe, I can't say this for certain, but I believe we're going to be done. Our goal is really to do everything possible to be done before the tenant begins their renovations. Currently, they finished framing out the new bathroom, the new handicap bathrooms. They're working on the demolition for the addition of the new stairs coming out the back, and everything seems to be going well. The communications are very good. The contractor is very plump, very thorough in all of his communications. We have We have bi weekly progress meetings, and we normally have them on Wednesdays, but we're going to have this one on this Friday. The tenant is also going to be able to come and attend those just so if there's anything that we're missing that they can deal with.

[00:04:20.09] - Speaker 3

That's all I have on the Red House. I don't know if you want me to pause and see if you got any other questions.

[00:04:25.24] - Speaker 2

I trust if something is going awry, you will immediately notify. Absolutely. Yeah, we don't want to have delayed surprises, as you might imagine. Are there any, and I think I see one hand. Council member Miller.

[00:04:44.26] - Speaker 7

Thank you, Jim. What's the latest estimate that the tenant has for his changes on the building?

[00:04:53.20] - Speaker 3

His changes? Oh, his work. You can just tell me his work. They have not given me their schedule, so they talked about it briefly, very loosely. And so hopefully Friday, we'll get them to give us his plans and how he... He wants to go as quickly as possible, but I don't know the status of his permits and his designs.

[00:05:19.26] - Speaker 7

Yes, it's not sure. Is he sure that any estimates of when it will be done? The reason I ask is that the village has to, the program directors have to begin planning for such things as opening day. We still have to... The council still has to look at what was proposed so long ago that none of them, except myself, was here. And that's the historical marker. That really can't go up and roll the construction is done and design and all of that.

[00:05:50.06] - Speaker 3

He has not given me his indications, but I would not expect to see that building occupied any earlier than the fall may fall. When there's kitchen equipment and mechanical work and stuff, those aren't snap your fingers kinds of things. So just generally, that would be my The experience will...

[00:06:17.11] - Speaker 7

Well, thank you because I was just presuming wrongly that it would be sometime in the summer.

[00:06:24.12] - Speaker 3

I'm sure they would love it, but I don't know that I see that that's going to take place that quick. As soon as they let me know, and otherwise, I will let you all know.

[00:06:34.06] - Speaker 1

So do we, and if we don't, should we or how do we have the DPS come in to take a look at the work as it's ongoing?

[00:06:45.19] - Speaker 3

You're talking about the county?

[00:06:48.17] - Speaker 1

Yes.

[00:06:49.09] - Speaker 3

They have to inspect.

[00:06:51.08] - Speaker 1

At the end?

[00:06:52.29] - Speaker 3

No, they have to inspect before you can close up any wall before. So the county requirement, there There's a preconstruction meeting with the contractor and the county. They have to inspect all the concrete, all the footings prior to being placed. They have to inspect all the wall electrical, plumbing, rough-ins before you're allowed to hang the drywall.

[00:07:13.29] - Speaker 1

And that, I assume, has been on the.

[00:07:17.08] - Speaker 3

There hasn't been any inspection. There hasn't been any work that is ready for those inspections yet. They're doing the rough ends now, and they're doing the rough-ins now, and they're doing the digging now. So Okay.

[00:07:31.03] - Speaker 1

So we're going to avoid, obviously, what we had.

[00:07:35.08] - Speaker 6

Yes, we will not. Yeah, that is. All right.

[00:07:36.29] - Speaker 7

Thank you. Excuse me, Jim, follow up. You said footings? What footings did they examine that house has been there? Would it's footing since 1906.

[00:07:47.15] - Speaker 3

The new entrance to the basement, the wall moves as you go down. The opening of the door to the basement is wider. And so we have to dig a new stairwell that goes down. And that stairwell is a concrete wall, and that concrete wall has footings on it.

[00:08:07.11] - Speaker 7

Well, I hope there won't be an unexpected problem with that, like with the program. I mean, the footings are going to be determined by the same county that said we were four inches short.

[00:08:18.00] - Speaker 3

Right. Well, those drawings have been submitted, and those drawings have been approved. So I do understand everyone's angst over moving a appropriately. We're in the drawings. Those are in the drawings. The inspections of building apartment has those.

[00:08:37.17] - Speaker 6

That's why we hired Jim.

[00:08:40.26] - Speaker 3

We will not have a.

[00:08:43.14] - Speaker 4

Yeah. Okay.

[00:08:45.08] - Speaker 2

Well, Are we ready for the Page Park?

[00:08:49.24] - Speaker 3

Yes. Page Park, we have resubmitted the... Well, the civil engineers have resubmitted the concept stormwater management plan. The process, just to remind everybody, there's a concept plan that is submitted, and the concept plan gets reviewed and approved. Then after the concept plan is approved, you can submit your design plans, your engineered plans, plans for review and approval and permits. The concept plans have been resubmitted, and they have to be resubmitted, you may recall, because of the geotechnical requirements that happened in the process of the first submission. Those have gone in, and we're expecting... I was hoping that the plans that I was going to see would have enough information that we could bid the job, which we do not in these plans. It's probably another week and a half before I have enough information, according to the engineer, enough information to actually put the RP out and get bids for the work. We still are going to get the bids back Can the enough time for you all to approve and to select before we get our actual permits to do the work. We're thinking that it's probably Now, again, I really hate to be so yellowish in my ability to nail the dates, but we are so much subject to the review time and the processes of the county.

[00:10:27.09] - Speaker 3

At this time, the engineers are thinking that we're going to get our permits in April. As soon as we would get permits, we'd have the contractor in place and be able to start shortly thereafter. That's the timing. From the contractors, it should not be more than... Again, this is my opinion. It probably should not take more than 4-8 weeks to finish all the work, but we're going to have to see what the contractor's proposals are willing to commit to.

[00:11:08.23] - Speaker 2

When you mentioned that step where we approve, are you talking Are you talking about the type of handrail, the surface of the walkway? Because I know they're digging up that beautiful blue stone, right? Yes. Is that what you're talking about, those specific things?

[00:11:30.10] - Speaker 3

Yeah, I'm not sure. I completely understand that you're going to approve the contractor. Okay. Right now, the approval that's in for... Is that what you're asking us about?

[00:11:41.07] - Speaker 2

You used the word that we would approve something, and I'm wondering, what are we approving.

[00:11:44.25] - Speaker 3

You would approve the contractor and their proposal to submit their bids to redo the work that's there.

[00:11:51.17] - Speaker 7

Okay.

[00:11:51.29] - Speaker 2

I was just asking for clarification on what we were supposed to approve, so it was poorly worded the first time.

[00:11:57.08] - Speaker 3

I apologize. The If anything out of the design looks like there's need for approval, I do understand what you see and what you feel, what you touch. You want to make sure that nothing goes past you without having an opportunity. In the next set of plans that I will get, I'll get a little bit more.

[00:12:23.19] - Speaker 2

Right. So you're thinking the contractors could be selected maybe after April then, after the permits are?

[00:12:32.14] - Speaker 3

No, I would like to get the contractor selected so that when the permits are on, I'm thinking the contractors are going to be selected sometime in March.

[00:12:40.28] - Speaker 2

Okay. So they're running at the same- They're running at the same time.

[00:12:43.14] - Speaker 3

I don't need to I don't need every comment back from the permit plans in order to select the contractor. Okay. Anything else on that?

[00:12:55.26] - Speaker 2

You have the demolition permit, and that's going to go forward?

[00:12:58.25] - Speaker 3

Yes. The pervola, we do have... The pervola, we do have the contract has been signed and sent back. We have the permit was. There's a number of steps that happen in the actual issuance of the final plan of permit, but it's imminent, and it's probably the total amount of work is probably not much more than a week. We're looking to, as soon as all those things fall into place, we can do that. As soon But once that happens, we will also then take the steps to cancel the building permit that was submitted for it.

[00:13:38.25] - Speaker 7

Right.

[00:13:40.03] - Speaker 2

Yes. You have to get rid of something you aren't permitted to have before you get rid of the thing that you no longer need, I guess.

[00:13:47.11] - Speaker 4

Is that about right?

[00:13:48.11] - Speaker 3

I didn't say that out loud.

[00:13:49.24] - Speaker 7

I guess I did.

[00:13:50.12] - Speaker 3

That's correct.

[00:13:52.00] - Speaker 2

Okay.

[00:13:52.16] - Speaker 1

Council member Schafer, you've got some questions? Well, I've just maybe covered this. I missed it. The house How soon can we submit an RFP for the contract?

[00:14:04.17] - Speaker 6

Use the microphone.

[00:14:07.14] - Speaker 1

I'm sorry. I was asking the earliest we could submit the RFP for this work.

[00:14:12.10] - Speaker 3

I'm hoping that it's in the next... Within the next two weeks, but I have to see the plans that I get from the engineer. Are they going to be sufficient to be able to do that? So the intent is in the next two weeks, we would have plans sufficiently developed that we could get real quality proposal.

[00:14:34.09] - Speaker 1

Because I see in this process, we've got a lot of weak links, and any one of which can hold up the process.

[00:14:42.17] - Speaker 3

Yeah, I think we will be okay there. I think the Civil Engineer has been very responsive, and I think he'll give me what we need.

[00:14:53.19] - Speaker 7

Thank you.

[00:14:56.24] - Speaker 2

Oh, I'm sorry.

[00:15:00.07] - Speaker 4

It's okay. He didn't note everything. Go ahead.

[00:15:05.18] - Speaker 7

I'm not sure, but wasn't there some discussion at the last meeting of notifying the buildings, especially the buildings, right close to the purgola so they don't think wrongly that someone's stealing the purgola or they haven't heard it's coming down?

[00:15:23.05] - Speaker 3

I'm not sure how internally you want to handle that. We will let you know when it's coming down so that you can communicate whatever you want to- Yeah, my understanding is the village manager will take out that, right?

[00:15:36.08] - Speaker 6

Right. As soon as we hear from Jim or the contractor directly, we'll alert the building managers and let them know that this is coming up so it's not a surprise to folks when they see the work happening.

[00:15:50.13] - Speaker 2

Council member Klein?

[00:15:52.03] - Speaker 4

Yeah, actually, that was my point, too. How are we going to make the public know? I would put out something general in addition to the specific buildings that are across the street or on either side, because it's the thing that people might ask about and want to know what's going to happen and what the plan is for what will be there after the furlough comes down. So thanks.

[00:16:23.11] - Speaker 3

I'm not sure exactly what the arena was. We We are not going to... When we take the purgola away right now, we are not going to fill it back up right now because when we do the work for the stormwater manager, the bio-retention facility, there's going to be excess dirt. And so we're going to use that dirt to fill what is now the purgola. We just did want to pay to have somebody bring dirt in and then haul more dirt out than we had to. That's currently the plan.

[00:17:00.00] - Speaker 7

What will the gap be? Excuse me. What will the gap be between the hole and the hole being filled?

[00:17:07.02] - Speaker 3

Well, no soon. The hole is what it is right now, but it just has a pergola on the top of it. So that's going to stay. It's going to look just like it does, but with no pergola. And that'll be there until the contractor would start sometime after 8: 00 AM.

[00:17:20.25] - Speaker 7

I think all of that should be whatever the manager puts out so people understand the pergola is going, and this is the next step. We will get lots of calls The Village Manager will get lots of calls.

[00:17:34.16] - Speaker 2

Any other questions from Council members? Julian, do you have anything to add or ask? No. Okay. Thank you very much, Jim.

[00:17:43.13] - Speaker 7

Thank you all.

[00:17:43.29] - Speaker 2

That's been very helpful.

[00:17:45.07] - Speaker 3

Collective happy birthday.

[00:17:46.16] - Speaker 7

Oh, thank you.

[00:17:50.03] - Speaker 2

Chairman's comments. I have a few thank you. We had a party in December to thank all of our volunteers and committee members. And honestly, a party is not enough to show our gratitude.

But thank you to all for your time and commitment to the community. Your efforts are really appreciated. Last month, as we heard here today, we had to make a very difficult decision about what to do about the improperly seated pergola in Page Park. Thank you to all the residents who gave their opinion on this. It really did make it easier for us to make a difficult decision. I'd like to express my gratitude, again, to all those people who told us what they thought. Now, I believe public comments are next. Thank you. Mr. Cuccidi, do you have a comment that you'd like to share?

[00:19:15.00] - Speaker 7

Roger. Coach Eddie, 5,500 French Boulevard. Two quick comments that are procedural and two just developments that I wanted to take note of. On the procedural comments, these are really in the category of what I call good government. Two suggestions I wanted to offer. One is I've noticed the announcement that several of the council committees or advisory committees have started doing online-only meetings. I think this is a mistake. I think the minimum requirement should be hybrid meetings. The reason is that there are many residents of Friendship Heights who don't have a computer, don't have high-speed Internet, don't have Zoom software, or are not facile in putting that whole thing together to join a video conference, and they should have the ability to participate as well as those people who do. Hybrid meetings are the norm these days, as this meeting is, and I would suggest that that be a rule with few specific exceptions allowed. Secondly, there are There are disclosure requirements for council members when they run for council, but there are evidently no disclosure requirements for members of council committees or advisory committees. I think it's important that if someone participates in an advisory committee or a committee of the council, and they are receiving compensation from any other entity that has an interest in policy or development in Montgomery County or Friendship Heights, that they should fully disclose the fact that they are receiving compensation.

[00:21:09.20] - Speaker 7

There's nothing wrong with it. It's just a matter of full disclosure. Having served as a I remember many federal and UN advisory committees while I was an employee of IBM and other companies. It's perfectly normal, but everybody should know that that person is receiving some compensation. Two significant developments that that have occurred, I think, are worth noting. One is, for those who don't follow this, Sacks Global, the parent company of Sacks Fifth Avenue, which acquired Neiman Marcus last year, borrowed \$3 billion to do so, missed its quarterly payment to the bondholders who lent them the money to do that. They are in a very stressful financial situation. Cash flow, they've already begun selling properties. They sold the Sacks property in Los Angeles, and it's quite possible that this property be sold as well. Lastly,

for those who don't know, the development that was scheduled to take place where Maggianos is located now, the financing for that development has collapsed. This is by my count, the fourth multi-use multifamily development on Wisconsin Avenue, I'm going to find that you just collect.

[00:22:31.03] - Speaker 2

Thank you very much.

[00:22:32.04] - Speaker 7

Yeah. Thanks.

[00:22:37.05] - Speaker 1

I just like to say, right, I think there's a lot of fair points in there. If you could email me the bullet points of what you said, we can follow up on some of this.

[00:22:47.06] - Speaker 7

Thank you.

[00:22:50.22] - Speaker 2

Bobby Pestron.

[00:23:01.11] - Speaker 8

Good evening. I listened with interest to the Council's discussion and action about the EV charging stations at January's meeting. Supporting information presented during the discussion appeared incomplete, if not an error. There seemed to be a conflict of interest by the maker of the motion, which included not charging any user, village resident or not, for logging in. I filed a request for public records with the village manager. In response, I was informed at first that there were no records responsive to the questions. I explored the village website, and there was a public record available, and the village manager has confirmed this. The document identified the council member who made the motion adopted by council, the vote was six in favor, none opposed, and one abstention. The video of the December Council meeting was also available. The video confirms that the originator of the motion owns an electric vehicle. That's a conflict of interest, the use of public funds for personal gain. I sent the same set of questions noted earlier to each village council member through their listed info mailbox. I confirmed that my questions

were shared with them. None of those six council members voting to approve the motion responded to me.

[00:24:14.13] - Speaker 8

I couldn't learn whether any of the other five members of council voted in support of the motion might also have a conflict. Non-response also seems inconsistent with the upper levels of the Dignity Index adopted by the council several months ago. I called the communities of Gaithersberg, Kensington, and Summer Village, each referenced during the December meeting, all charged for the use of their stations installed. Some had stations installed by a third party so it was not to incur the cost of the amenity themselves. Station users paid for air station and electricity through fees. This seems like a responsible business practice, but not one adopted by the village. Finally, residents listening to the meeting heard that presently no convenient charging stations are available to village residents. But the Whole Foods garage on friendship Boulevard and the Amazon Fresh store have stations available, as do other public parking stations surrounding the village. One village condominium has installed chargers in its garage. Other residential buildings could do the same. Software to enable costs to be charged to use this was readily available to the council and proposed by potential vendors responsive to the village's RFP. Likely, the village will not be considering installing a gas station on village property and giving to take away gas for free to those with hybrid vehicles, also an environmentally sensitive selection.

[00:25:36.27] - Speaker 8

I'm concerned about other conflicts of interest. I ask each council member who voted for the charging station. Now, do you own an electric vehicle which requires charging? And if so, why didn't you declare a conflict of interest and abstain from voting? Thank you.

[00:25:57.08] - Speaker 1

Okay, there's a lot to impact there. I might not get to all of it. But first of all, regarding the document request, our policy, and it's a long-standing policy, has been that only I think your time's up, so I'm going to respond.

[00:26:23.25] - Speaker 8

No, I can't stand here. Why don't you respond?

[00:26:26.13] - Speaker 7

Okay.

[00:26:27.17] - Speaker 1

So it's a long-standing policy. It's consistent with advice given to our attorney. To my knowledge, no Council member during the last village Council, including Mr. Robert Pestron, objected to that policy. So we continued to follow that policy. When Mr. Pestrung forwarded his document request to the Council members, we followed our policy and did not respond. The other point, since I was personally mentioned indirectly with all the other council members, I just like to point out that Mr. Robert Pestrung's statements regarding the charging statement are very inconsistent with prior actions. When Mr. Pestrung was a council member, he routinely voted in favor of village contracts, often for more money, without ever voicing these types of concerns. For example, Mr. Pestrante voted to approve a multi-year, multi-million-dollar shuttle contract. Mr. Pestrank, number one, suggested that council members disclose whether they rode the shuttle or if they might personally benefit financially from not having to pay for alternative transportation. Mr. Pestrack was also silent about his own or his family's use of the shuttle. Mr. Pestrack never questioned the practice of non-village residents receiving free shuttle rides or pushed for a discussion about whether shuttle users should be charged.

[00:27:58.03] - Speaker 1

And that's an example from one contract, and again, a much, much bigger contract going over five years. Now, after voting for a charging station and voting to fund the station twice, once at the Finance Committee level and again at the council level, Mr. Pestright is demanding answers about minor costs. Scrutiny, he did not apply to other expenditures during his two years on the council, including our largest contract. And one more I would also point out, at the discussion last month, because this is a new service, we did not rule out charging. We're going to see how it goes. I think all of us are open depending on how the station is used and what the realities of that are. We would be open to charging in the future.

[00:28:48.25] - Speaker 8

This is the typical deflection that the mayor, his former treasurer, does in response.

[00:28:54.11] - Speaker 2

I'm sorry, you're three minutes. Thank you.

[00:28:58.11] - Speaker 8

Deflection.

[00:28:58.21] - Speaker 2

Thank you very much. Council member.

[00:29:02.23] - Speaker 7

First of all, I wish we wouldn't start a new year with a back and forth. I really think it undermines our attempts to be collegial. I do agree with the mayor that our attorney has advised when people ask for documents that those requests go through the village manager. However, As I understood, the email that all of us got, it was asking specific questions. It wasn't asking for documents.

[00:29:37.11] - Speaker 8

It was asking whether each one of us had an electric vehicle.

[00:29:42.06] - Speaker 7

I don't personally see any problem with answering that question. If you don't want to answer it, you don't answer it. But I don't think that was a document request, and I hate to get into a back and forth over that. I abstained on that vote, as you remember. And the reason I abstained was because I had a concern, which I expressed in public, that this is something paid for with our resident and business tax dollars. And I would not want it to be used by anyone that was coming into the village unless we at least keep track of it. But I was told that we're not going to keep track of it, which Which raises another question of how we monitor the appropriate use of the station since there's only going to be one. And if somebody within the village or outside the village leaves their car way longer than it takes to recharge it, that means no one else could be using it. I think the management does, as the mayor suggested, need to be evaluated from time to time. But I think we need data. We need to know how many people are using it.

[00:31:07.08] - Speaker 7

Is this cost effective? So we should try to get back some costs. And are they the same people? I mean, if they're council members or not, if it's the same 35-year-old that lives in one of the buildings in or out of the village that is using it every week and no one else. And that's an extreme example. But I think we do need to monitor it, and I hope we will, that the manager will use his resources to somehow find out and report back to council. Again, I don't think, and I would like this not to be a cause of a personal Back and forth. Thank you.

[00:31:48.17] - Speaker 2

My only comment is I don't think we care what the age of the person is who takes advantage of any of our services. A village manager's report? Next.

[00:32:02.16] - Speaker 6

Thank you. Just a couple of quick items. One is to follow up on the removal of the fountain bit issue from the tonight's agenda. We did issue an RFP. We only received one proposal that was viable We're going to reissue the RFP, and we hope to come up with additional proposals to present to the council at next month's meeting. Also, we were preparing with the structural engineering firm for the project to to replace the waterproofing membrane in the courtyard behind the village center. We hope to have an update on that later this month and be able to give everybody an update on that project. It will involve replacing the waterproofing membrane that is causing a leak from the garage, and that will require an RFP with bids as well for a future council meeting. Thank you.

[00:32:53.04] - Speaker 2

Would you mind sharing what you know about the Internet outage that is applying to this meeting right here?

[00:33:00.13] - Speaker 6

Not a lot of details, but what we're told is it was apparently some type of accident with a truck that caused an outage to about 7,000 customers in the area. So beyond the village and the larger Chevy Chase area, it this afternoon. So we did not have internet as of about 1: 30 or so this afternoon. Crips were dispatched or working on it, but they did not give us an ETA for when it would be restored.

[00:33:27.26] - Speaker 2

Will a Wibi Will it become clear if it turns on during this meeting so Jason can stop recording? Will we be aware of that?

[00:33:39.01] - Speaker 6

I'm not sure how we're going to be aware of it inside this room. Not necessarily. They won't notify us directly.

[00:33:45.27] - Speaker 2

I figured that.

[00:33:46.28] - Speaker 6

But it's a very widespread system outage, so it's being worked on.

[00:33:52.28] - Speaker 2

So we should assume there's not the answer to the entire- We should assume we're out for the meeting, correct? Okay. Thank you. Mayor's announcement's next.

[00:34:04.16] - Speaker 1

I don't really have much. Just Happy New Year to everybody. If I could refer you to the Mayor's corner in the Village newsletter, we We have a lot of items we hope to tackle this year. It's a very ambitious list. If anybody wants to take a look at that, either online or at the hard copy of the newsletter. Thank you.

[00:34:30.00] - Speaker 2

On Treasurer's report.

[00:34:35.08] - Speaker 1

Thanks, Martha.

[00:34:36.08] - Speaker 3

For the first six months through December, things are looking pretty good. Revenues are down slightly compared to the same period last year.

[00:34:45.13] - Speaker 1

But adjusting for a one-time payment from Pepco in 2025, revenues are largely in line with where we were last year. Expenditures are up approximately 7% from the same period last year largely reflecting increases in salaries and benefits and a raft of maintenance issues, many of them related to the village center in Humphrey Park.

[00:35:11.08] - Speaker 3

Going forward, it is planned to address most remaining village the Center and Humphrey Park issues, primarily through next year's capital budget. The Village Center garage has column shoring and leakage issues, as we just talked about, as the village manager talked about. The fountain needs to be replaced and the fountain needs to be replaced and the fountain lighting, waterproofing in the courtyard or due for replacement. Our reserve funds continue to be robust at 5.1 million, down from last month, but still up 367,000 year to date. We have a Finance Committee meeting scheduled for later this month on January 20th, in which we will be reviewing preliminary operating budget estimates for the remainder of the year and the next fiscal year, starting in July. Those preliminary estimates suggest we are still in pretty good shape going into next year, although we expect to see a drop off in income tax revenues next year due to federal layoffs and the government shutdown. So our operating budget is expected to tighten up going forward. At the Finance Committee meeting on the 20th of this month, we will be looking at the first draft of a capital budget for FY 27, which includes a major new initiative to improve pedestrian safety throughout the village.

[00:36:29.11] - Speaker 1

We have a meeting on Wednesday to kick off the initial phase of the project, which includes a four-month study of most intersections in and around the village with recommendations on improvements and estimated costs to improve pedestrian safety.

[00:36:42.29] - Speaker 3

We will also be continuing discussion of options for improving our check signing and transaction review procedures, as well as next steps needed to fully implement Village investment policy.

[00:36:54.24] - Speaker 1

That's for discussion at the meeting on the 20th of this month. Thanks.

[00:37:00.00] - Speaker 2

Treasurer Conna, I have a question, and I don't know if it's answerable. I know you mentioned income tax revenue is expected to tighten on Is anyone estimating by how much? Or it's just we know it's going to happen and don't know yet?

[00:37:23.05] - Speaker 1

No, that's a good question. I think the state actually provided an estimate for the current year and preliminary estimate for next year. My recollection of that is, and I went back and looked at

it and it wasn't entirely clear, but our revenues are in good shape this year. In fact, we're doing better than we thought, but they're likely to tail off next year because of the impact of the layoffs and the shutdown.

[00:37:54.23] - Speaker 6

The good news is that, so far at least, the economy in Montgomery County has shown to be pretty resilient.

[00:38:05.23] - Speaker 1

We'll see how it goes, but it is like things are likely to tighten up next year.

[00:38:11.19] - Speaker 2

Because you're talking about income tax revenue, are they saying tighten up on a calendar year basis, or is that adjusted for a fiscal year?

[00:38:22.02] - Speaker 3

Adjusted for fiscal year. Council member Lott. Mr. Treasurer.

[00:38:31.19] - Speaker 7

What was the report that Julian got from the state? Because that's the only information that we could rely on, and that usually is conservative.

[00:38:49.05] - Speaker 6

The estimate for the current fiscal year is that we're going to have a surplus of several hundred thousand dollars. But again, that's based on 2024 tax returns. We will, because of some unanticipated capital gains income, the current year, FY 26, fiscal year income tax will be higher than expected by the end of this fiscal year. The estimate for FY 27 is just slightly higher than what our budget and approved number is. It will definitely tail off from this year's surplus amount, but it'll still be pretty close to the budget as what it's expected for FY 27, which is the 2025 tax year.

[00:39:41.06] - Speaker 7

When will they give the improvement I've been able to get a more accurate estimate to you?

[00:39:48.25] - Speaker 6

December. Of 2026. Right. We get an annual estimate in December, which is the estimate for the the rest of the current fiscal year that we're in plus an estimate for the next full fiscal year. We get those two numbers every December.

[00:40:04.08] - Speaker 7

Until then, is it fair to say that we're not looking for a deficit based on our present budget? Correct.

[00:40:18.26] - Speaker 2

Committee reports are next on the agenda. Advisory Committee on Development. Council member to decline, please.

[00:40:32.16] - Speaker 4

We're continuing to meet, and we decided that we will be inviting all of the candidates who are running for Delegate in district One to come to the Advisory Committee and talk to us over the next weeks and months. We'll see what their schedules are like. We talked a lot about bike lanes and the pros and cons of bike lanes. There's quite a bit of concern about Western Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue and Willard Avenue. People can have different views on this, but most of the members of the committee, I would say, supported the idea of not having bike lanes on Wisconsin Avenue and not having bike lanes on Western Avenue. So that's where we are currently. And on the 27th, we have a meeting. It's going to be a Zoom meeting with members of the planning staff to tell us what they are going to be recommending for Friendship Heights. So we're looking forward to that. That's my report.

[00:42:01.29] - Speaker 2

That's a lot going on, I think. I am on the phone from Florida, the policies and procedures committee updates, please.

[00:42:16.26] - Speaker 1

Sure.

[00:42:19.01] - Speaker 7

The policies and procedures committee met on December 16th, and again on January sixth, to consider several of the policies.

[00:42:27.25] - Speaker 1

They include data security, ADA website compliance, social media, ethics, travel, parking, and Village Center space rental.

[00:42:43.10] - Speaker 8

Over the course of the two meetings, four of the policies were approved by the committee, along with the recommendation that they be adopted by the full council.

[00:42:52.18] - Speaker 7

They include the policies on ethics, travel, space rental, and social media.

[00:42:58.27] - Speaker 1

All four of these policies are in your briefing book. A more in-depth discussion will happen when we get to new business.

[00:43:09.23] - Speaker 4

Thank you.

[00:43:10.14] - Speaker 1

That's our report.

[00:43:11.19] - Speaker 7

Okay.

[00:43:12.19] - Speaker 2

Thank you. Any questions for the chairman of the Policies and Procedures Committee. Okay. The next committee report is Parks and Grounds. We met on January sixth. I feel like I'm repeating myself over and over, but Page Park is our top priority. So we spend a lot of time getting an update on Page Park and the Red House. Separately, the village manager agreed to develop an inspection and maintenance plan for the village's properties and grounds. So that

concludes my report. Parks and Grounds. Any questions on that? Okay. Now we go to new business, and We have a discussion vote on the following policies. Did I understand you correctly that you wanted to just jump into them, or do you want to do an introduction?

[00:44:30.00] - Speaker 1

I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

[00:44:32.01] - Speaker 4

Yes.

[00:44:32.19] - Speaker 2

Did you want to provide any introductory comments before we introduced the individual policies, or should we just proceed?

[00:44:44.11] - Speaker 3

I think you should Yes, please proceed. Okay.

[00:44:50.05] - Speaker 2

I'm suggesting to do these a little bit out of order with the shorter ones first. The travel policy... Basically, I move to adopt the travel policy. Before I get a comment, I think they need a second.

[00:45:11.10] - Speaker 4

Yeah.

[00:45:13.05] - Speaker 2

So I move to adopt the travel policy, and Francine seconded the motion, just so you have that. And now we have discussion. I'll explain it a bit. Right now, most municipalities municipalities do, and we don't have any policy establishing either procedures or compensation amounts or requirements around business-related travel. So the purpose of this travel policy is to establish procedures for approving the amount and location of overnight business-related travel. And this policy does comply with the Montgomery County freeze on official county travel to certain states that strict reproductive rights. And we have included a waiver and an exception. The policy also limits the amount the village will spend for travel. And basically, we are using the IRS mileage Rehorsment Rate and the General Services Administration rates for hotel meals, incidental and

incidental expenses. But most, to my knowledge, of the travel in the village is to conferences, and there's a provision that the conference hotel, which is normally above GSA, is a permissible rate. There's a provision that there be a goal to fairly allocate the travel and training budget among professional staff. And this policy is also applicable is applicable to employees and to council members if and when we travel or go to the MML.

[00:46:57.17] - Speaker 2

So Can I have a proposal? Sure. We have a proposal for an amendment to the policy or to the motion. To the policy. Can I go? If you wait till I find it, okay? Okay. Yeah.

[00:47:30.15] - Speaker 1

I do support this policy. I have one minor change since we've talked about we want the reimbursement rates to comply with the GSA policy. In paragraph 2, there's a line that reads, In the event that the village traveler chooses to accept a hotel or event-provided meal. Well, under the GSA rules, a hotel-provided meal, which is generally considered breakfast, does not affect the perdia. So I would make a motion to amend the policy to strike out or hotel. Oh, no. Hotel or.

[00:48:09.10] - Speaker 2

So it should be to accept- Choses to accept- An event provider?

[00:48:14.02] - Speaker 1

Yeah, and event provider we own. And again, that will have our policy complied with the GSA. Okay.

[00:48:22.07] - Speaker 2

So, Bob, I accept that amendment? Yes, I second. My seconder accepts it? Any discussion?

[00:48:30.00] - Speaker 7

No, I'm confused. I went to the committee hearing, and I know the committee members, including the chair, spent a lot of time on this, and I thought they worked it out, and I'm not sure what this change will do, perhaps.

[00:48:46.24] - Speaker 4

Yeah. Well, it turns out that there's one little wrinkle in the GSA rules that I personally was not aware of, which is that they have made an exception for the hotel breakfast that we in the morning. They say that's not something that is considered anything that should affect the. So that's the GSA rule, which we, Roy, was able to point that out to me, and that's true, that if you get a free breakfast of cheerios or whatever, a hard-oiled day at the hotel, that GSA won't say that that's the equivalent of a breakfast per diem. Because when you get the per diem from GSA, most people don't know this, but there's a specific amount for every city that you travel to that you get for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And the overarching rule is that if you go to a conference that the government pays for and you get a lunch or a dinner at that conference, you're not supposed to get paid the per diem for lunch or dinner. But GSA has made an exception to what we get at many hotels these days, which is coffee and And as I said, a hard will be some cereal and milk or juice.

[00:50:20.03] - Speaker 4

And so that now has to be taken out, a slight modification to what was written.

[00:50:26.13] - Speaker 7

How do you respond? Because this came up at the meeting, which I listened to, how do you respond to the fact that the people that are relying on GSA many times simply don't use that privilege to have breakfast or lunch, and they end up essentially with a profit. I was never, like many of you, a government employee, except when I was in the army for two years. Then we had something called TDY, and I know exactly how it was used or misused. People would essentially get the cheapest thing everywhere, and they would get reimbursed. It was a nice little bonus.

[00:51:13.20] - Speaker 4

It's out Well, I understand what you're talking about. I can say that when I first started my career in federal service, which lasted 45 years, you needed to bring receipts for everything that you ate, and you would only get reimbursed first for what you actually had spent. And then at some point, the orders and the IGS, and the GSA leadership, decided that the amount of expense that was being rung up to keep track of everyone to the penny was not worth it. And so they said, You get your per diem unless, and this is a perfect example, you're eating dinner at a conference that you've registered for, and the registration fee includes dinner. We have so few people who travel, and the amount of money is so small. You could argue it either way, but I'm comfortable personally with saying, GSA decided to just do it in a flat way with these sorts of

exceptions, and That's good enough for me. From having no rules whatsoever to having standard rules, I think is helpful.

[00:52:39.13] - Speaker 7

I understand. I seem to recall that the staff here, this really applies only to two staff members who go on meetings that I know of, and they go to very few, like two or three. They They, in the past, have been reimbursed not for the hotel. That will continue. The village pays for the hotel. The village pays for the registration. We're talking about, essentially, dinner, and I don't know that that is a problem.

[00:53:19.17] - Speaker 4

I don't know what you mean by a problem. Well, the problem is- Well, first of all, it's not just the staff, actually. It's also the council members who go to at least one event, traditionally, Metropolitan, municipal. And there really hasn't been a rule as to what can be spent for dinner. What my experience was that I think we wound up having one dinner that we had or maybe two that we had to pay for ourselves. And there was a dinner that was a sponsored dinner. But you're better off, I think, having rules like this. I don't know how else you can set it up other than to have I don't have the rules at all.

[00:54:16.22] - Speaker 7

Well, what I'm trying to baton is not having any rules seem to not have any problems. Is this a solution for a non-problem? And who What you just said raises another question. The council members are going to get the equivalent of the TDY? Of course.

[00:54:38.29] - Speaker 4

We're going out on official business. I don't think Now, you were not there, so you didn't really see how it worked. But there's a good reason now for putting a limit on what is spent. I don't see this as increasing the amount of money that is spent. I see this, and that's where it was different view. I see it as decreasing the amount of money that is spent.

[00:55:04.07] - Speaker 7

Well, I will tell you, since I've been on the Council a long time, I went to a number of those meetings. The tradition, not a rule, because it was flexible, it was a guideline that one council member would go, and we report back. I personally, with all due respect to my colleagues, each of whom I respect, I don't see any reason for someone seven or six or however many council

members need to go to a meeting. The manager is required to give some report. I haven't heard any report from each council member on what they took back from meetings and Now you're telling me that essentially, the council members who vote for this will be potentially getting the payback, which I didn't realize there was any payback. I thought the council members and the staff had their rooms and their registration paid for. Completely support that. But I didn't think we were paying for council member dinners. I thought that was on their own. This is not a requirement under the and the other. Unlike TDI, this is not the government requiring council members to go there or even requiring staff to go there. It's a staff professional thing.

[00:56:28.12] - Speaker 7

But I know I I suspectfully disagree.

[00:56:31.21] - Speaker 4

I thought you were- I thought the conference was extremely important to me, especially as a new member of the council and being new to local government, the Training that you spent many hours at during the day, because this is not a blue docket, was designed for you to meet other people who were experts in the area, to sit in a room with them and listen to experts present representing PowerPoint, having an opportunity to bring up questions, meeting individuals who you then could contact after the conference to follow up on issues that we have. In fact, this whole last year for me has been one. It's not quite a year yet, but it's been one in which the opportunities to meet people who are engaged in the same work is becoming, I see, more and more important. I think it's a mistake to look at this as anything other than what it is, which is to put regularity for members of the council and also the staff with respect to travel. So I've said my piece.

[00:57:50.16] - Speaker 2

Okay. Does anyone else have a comment or question? I think we're ready to vote. Your ears are out of the big, right?

[00:58:03.05] - Speaker 7

Is he online? Yeah.

[00:58:05.29] - Speaker 2

Okay. So I'm asking, and we will repeat what you can't see, Vick. All in favor of adopting the travel policy as amended, right? As amended. Say, Aye, and raise your hands. I, I, I.

[00:58:26.16] - Speaker 1

One, two, three, four, five, six, eyes. Nay.

[00:58:31.29] - Speaker 2

Of one, day, and zero abstentions. Do you have that big? There was one negative vote? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. That was Council member Buller. 6 to 1.

[00:58:51.24] - Speaker 1

Okay.

[00:58:54.02] - Speaker 2

Thank you. We'll move to the next, what I call a A short policy. Let me give you a second to find my notes. I can't see the find my notes. But the policy on a village center rental. Currently, we do not have a policy. I heard that there are nonprofits that would like to use the space and feel that they're unable to do so for cost reasons. So this policy does reduce rates, and there's an available discount for 501(C)(3) organizations that are in the village or serve village residents. So the policy basically specifies who has a priority to use the space, and big surprise, priority is the village council and village committee meetings and so forth. And the policy includes rates for different times for the auditorium here, half auditorium in the classrooms. Do you have anything else to add on that?

[01:00:59.20] - Speaker 1

No, I don't think so.

[01:01:00.24] - Speaker 3

I think you covered it.

[01:01:02.00] - Speaker 2

Okay. We have agreed to review in six months and make any adjustments. Right now, really, there is very, very little rental use. Julian, do you have an estimate of what it is for John? It's very low. It's 3,600. Like, 3,600 for six months. The rental revenue we have received for six months is low. So this will make it lower. Well, I think more people will rent it if they can afford it. I realized I made an error. I didn't make a motion to adopt this policy before I described it. So I

think I need a second on the motion. That's Francine, the motion to adopt the policy on the Village Center rental. Open for discussion. Council member Holler. I'm sorry, Vick was saying something.

[01:02:12.02] - Speaker 8

Who seconded the motion?

[01:02:13.26] - Speaker 2

Francine. I'm sorry. Council member. That's on the line. Yeah. Thanks. I'm sorry to interrupt you.

[01:02:19.26] - Speaker 8

No, that's okay.

[01:02:21.03] - Speaker 7

I was unable to attend the meeting because of a conflict with another committee meeting, which we will discuss briefly and at the end for another item. But as I understand what was decided by the committee, essentially, the previous rule, which was a change from the original rule, was that the use of rental would be restricted to residents, that there would no longer be a higher rate for non-residents, meaning people in Somerset house, or Chevy Chase, Village, or wherever. And I support that. The unexpected change was, and I support this also, that the rates for residents have been halved. Instead of \$1,000 for eight hours, it's reduced to \$500. For the auditorium, instead of \$500, reduced to \$250. And I support that. The organizations, the nonprofit organizations, are now, though, entitled to a discount of 50 %. That's new. And if they're a nonprofit, which is located in the village, which so far have essentially been two organizations, FHNN and the Condominium Board. I don't know that they're a nonprofit. The Condominium Board- They are.

[01:04:00.00] - Speaker 2

They're not 501(C)(3), but they're nonprofit, right?

[01:04:04.02] - Speaker 7

Well, the way this discount is noted in the policy is nonprofit 501(C)(3). So is any nonprofit If it's, I don't know enough about these organizations. Is any nonprofit that's not a 501(C)(3) also entitled to discount 50 %? That's a question. I don't know.

[01:04:28.29] - Speaker 2

It So it's not... I'm sorry. Is that the question I can answer now or do you want to continue?

[01:04:35.14] - Speaker 8

No, that's the question I can answer now.

[01:04:37.02] - Speaker 2

It was not intended to cover a nonprofit like... What's it called? Fregilates Alliance, which is a business nonprofit. That is not eligible for the discount. Do you understand what I'm saying?

[01:04:56.21] - Speaker 7

I just don't know what Well, I don't know what organizations would come under this, and is this indeed what the committee wants? That only 501(C)(3) organizations, and I don't know what the definition or what is included, which organizations are included in that specific- Could I also note that a little further down, there are organizations in our community, like Condole Boards, that get one free meeting a year? Where?

[01:05:39.02] - Speaker 2

This is just a one-page. I took I'm on the wrong page. It's just the one page I'm looking at.

[01:05:58.23] - Speaker 4

I don't Can I ask a question? What's your concern? Are you concerned that there will be a nonprofit that's being left out or that too many nonprofits- The latter. Well, you have to be a nonprofit that's serving us who is located here.

[01:06:20.19] - Speaker 7

That's the second phrase.

[01:06:25.17] - Speaker 4

I thought when we talked about it, that it is Because that was specifically discussed. And it is supposed to be a nonprofit that is serving people in the friendship heights area or is resident in the friendship pipes area.

[01:06:45.03] - Speaker 7

Well, that's in addition. They would be getting... They're the ones that qualify for once a year a free charge.

[01:06:56.03] - Speaker 2

That's the second. That's the second. Did you have a clarification, Julian?

[01:06:59.13] - Speaker 6

Yeah, just Just on Council member Klein's point, the language states the 501(C), nonprofit groups have to be located in and serving residents in the village, not the work. If it's a nonprofit that's outside of the village serving a village, residents that doesn't work.

[01:07:15.18] - Speaker 4

Thank you for that clarification.

[01:07:17.08] - Speaker 8

Where does that say then? Under 4.

[01:07:20.26] - Speaker 6

0.

[01:07:22.26] - Speaker 2

What's the second bullet? 4.

[01:07:24.09] - Speaker 6

0 eligible users. The second bullet.

[01:07:31.11] - Speaker 4

These are one per year. This is one claim, and this is second. That's right.

[01:07:42.26] - Speaker 2

And I'm pointing out there's a one previous policy? At one time for your previous policy?

[01:07:50.08] - Speaker 7

Right. There's two different things we're talking about. The nonprofit, which Which I'm still not certain how this 501(C)(3) is defined, what organizations.

[01:08:06.06] - Speaker 2

Would you like condo boards specifically included here?

[01:08:11.20] - Speaker 7

Well, I have to think about that. I don't know why they would want to meet here rather than in their own building. I think it's far better for condo boards to meet in their own building so that more people would like it to come rather than come here. So if I was on the condo board, the reason the will of the use is that is because they are so big. Originally, they wanted to meet here. It's actually no longer necessary for that. I don't think it's necessary for the condo boards to be given an exception. What about the tenant organization? The Woon Towers? I think the Condor Board is that... Well, I mean, we have a Condu Board President here every night. Her opinion is more important than mine.

[01:08:59.05] - Speaker 4

Can I ask Julian, what has been the usage by nonprofits? Because I was under the impression when we discussed this that there's some flexibility and space for this system to accommodate more people rather than fewer.

[01:09:18.01] - Speaker 6

Right. But the usage has been restricted to essentially the Neighborhoods Network, FHNN, as the only nonprofit that we typically hear from. They regularly do an annual event here, which is their once a year free use. The Willowee Condominium Board has done their annual meeting and election here, not every year, but numerous years. I don't believe we've had another condominium board take advantage of that, but the Willowee has done it multiple times.

[01:09:50.19] - Speaker 4

So this, again, is putting structure behind something that's been a pattern of practice. And we can always change it if it turns out that the wear and tear or the burden on the system is too great.

[01:10:10.18] - Speaker 8

Well, I think it was a mistake in the first place to allow Essentially, one condominium ward to be here.

[01:10:18.22] - Speaker 4

But that was the one that wanted to. I mean, we've never asked it the Elizabeth because we've always had sufficient space for whatever reason, we're different sizes. To have a meeting. I don't see where this is going to pose a problem. And if it does pose a problem, then we'll back off and reorder the rule.

[01:10:46.13] - Speaker 2

Can I back up a second and offer an amendment to what was originally submitted, which is basically what you said is the organization is located in the village and to serve a It's the village residents instead of or.

[01:11:02.07] - Speaker 4

Would you second that amendment?

[01:11:04.09] - Speaker 2

Yes. So that's what we're talking about going forward. I'm going to turn it back. Okay. Any other comments?

[01:11:10.19] - Speaker 7

Under eligibility, I don't know how many of my colleagues have ever used the center and rented it. I have. Usually, it's for a birthday celebration, and I presume if I survive that long, I will possibly do that again. I don't feel comfortable, therefore, voting for a policy that I'm going to benefit from. So I will abstain because if you were raising the rate for keeping it the same, I could have supported. But I think it's a clear conflict of interest if any of us are planning to use the center to then vote on lowering rates. Not even Congress does that.

[01:11:56.09] - Speaker 4

I mean, it applies to everyone the same way. It applies to everyone who's sitting here, and they get the benefit of a lower rate. And the idea that we're lowering the rate to benefit ourselves goes back to the statement that Roy made earlier, which is that he voted on a lot of things that

may, incidentally, benefit us. That's just the nature of our being here and serving the population and giving amendments. When I come up here and I sit in the I may vote for more library books. It doesn't mean that I have a conflict of interest in doing that.

[01:12:38.04] - Speaker 7

Well, with all due respect, this is blatant. I'm not suggesting that anyone would vote for that, but it just doesn't look right, just as if you accepted a gift of \$50.

[01:12:52.12] - Speaker 4

Well, we have to pay the same amount. We're not paying any less than anyone else.

[01:12:57.26] - Speaker 1

You could vote for it and pay the higher rate.

[01:12:59.17] - Speaker 2

You You could choose to pay more if you wish. No.

[01:13:02.06] - Speaker 7

The point is that other people don't have a chance to vote on the rate, so they may be benefit.

[01:13:08.23] - Speaker 4

But what we've decided to do is lower the rate because we want to make back our expenses, but we don't want to make any profit. And so we have looked at what the maintenance is, and we've looked at what our expenses are to rent it out. And because it is an underutilized resource, we're at a time when other things are going up, up, up. We're trying to bring something down.

[01:13:38.05] - Speaker 7

I support that. I just can't tell you how I feel. I don't think I, and you can follow my believe or not, I don't think council members that are voting to reduce the fee, we, as council members, use it, should vote. They should abstain. I should abstain. I can only speak for myself.

[01:13:57.15] - Speaker 2

Another reason for this I guess if I might add, is this is a taxpayer-funded facility, and our goal is to have taxpayers in the village be able to use it. Are there any other comments before... Do you have any comments before we call for the vote?. Do you have any comments before the vote? No. Okay. All in favor of adopting the Friendship Heights Village Center Rental program as amended, please raise your hand and say, Aye. Aye. That is five, but six. Aye. Al Epstein. 6 to 0 to 1 to Al Epstein. Was it was a valid abstention. It was a valid abstention.

[01:14:50.16] - Speaker 4

It was a valid abstention. It was a valid abstention.

[01:14:51.21] - Speaker 6

It was an abstention by Dr. Horton. Okay.

[01:15:00.27] - Speaker 2

We can either do ethics or social media policy. What do you want to do? Next. Social media. Okay, let's do social media policy. Now, I hope Julian or Jason, you may need to correct me if I'm wrong. I believe this is a mandated policy, right? We must have one?

[01:15:22.27] - Speaker 6

No, it's not mandated by law. It is highly recommended as a best practice for local governments that engage in social media.

[01:15:32.09] - Speaker 2

If I could summarize what this is, and Jason was kind enough to draft it. This policy says what a staff member can communicate on our social media platforms, and that is factual information about the business of the Village of Friendship Heights. It is not about opinion. It is not endorsing products. It's not endorsing services. It's just sharing very concrete and specific information. It's a very long policy that basically communicates a tight restriction on permissibility. Would you say that's a fair description? What does that mean?

[01:16:18.28] - Speaker 6

So do you want to- I'm just not trying not to talk into that.

[01:16:22.12] - Speaker 2

Okay.

[01:16:22.20] - Speaker 4

Do you want to share with them?

[01:16:24.00] - Speaker 6

Yes. Just the other quick point is that the post on social media are public and open and are to be kept that way. So that's very specifically stated here.

[01:16:38.07] - Speaker 2

And once again, I feel to make the motion to adopt the social media policy before entering discussion. Council member Klein second in. I apologize about that mess up in order. So is there discussion on this proposed social media policy? V Rick, do you have any comment on it? Yeah. Rick, do you have any comment on the policy? No. I did not. Okay. I'm going to call for the vote. All those in favor of adopting the social media policy, raise their hands and say, Aye. That is six here.

[01:17:19.22] - Speaker 6

Julian.

[01:17:23.04] - Speaker 2

Okay, so that's the unanimous- Julian, your mic's not on.

[01:17:26.03] - Speaker 6

I'm sorry.

[01:17:26.17] - Speaker 2

Your microphone's not on. Did I miss something?

[01:17:28.04] - Speaker 7

No. A question, though. Do I remember correctly, was someone going to actually compose whatever the form is that we have to fill out on there?

[01:17:41.13] - Speaker 4

Yes. Are you talking about... I think it will come It'll come back to me. It'll come back to me. It's about the ethics.

[01:17:48.12] - Speaker 6

Microphones, please.

[01:17:49.11] - Speaker 7

I haven't introduced the ethics element.

[01:17:55.24] - Speaker 6

Microphones, please.

[01:17:57.23] - Speaker 2

I haven't introduced the topic on ethics Yes. We were doing social media. I'm sorry.

[01:18:04.22] - Speaker 7

They were our border on- I understand.

[01:18:06.28] - Speaker 2

I did. I'll entertain a motion. Yes.

[01:18:15.29] - Speaker 4

I move that we adopt this. I move that we adopt the Village of Friendship Heights public ethics policy.

[01:18:22.26] - Speaker 2

I know. Okay. So, Vick, did you get that? Council member Klein moved, and Council member Ruller seconded the motion to adopt the public ethics policy. You got that, Vick?

[01:18:40.25] - Speaker 7

I did get it. Okay.

[01:18:42.15] - Speaker 2

Discussion? Second.

[01:18:47.22] - Speaker 4

I moved it right.

[01:18:50.14] - Speaker 2

And now we're ready. And now we're ready.

[01:18:51.14] - Speaker 4

And now we're ready. And now we're ready for discussion. That's right.

[01:18:52.29] - Speaker 2

So now we're ready for discussion.

[01:18:54.24] - Speaker 4

Yes. Well, I have to say that as someone who is in charge of ethics programs- Excuse me. Francie, just have a microphone. Yeah. I have to say that as someone who is in charge of ethics programs at a variety of federal agencies, it came as a very big surprise to me when I learned that as a taxing district, We weren't specifically required by state law to have an ethics policy that prohibited conflicts of interest and actually governed gifts, had an anti-retaliation policy, insisted on work for full day's pay, or any of the other prohibitions and requirements that a good ethics policy has in place. I was asked to come up with one. I did contact the state ethics group, an attorney who works on ethics issues for all the municipalities. She confirmed that as a taxing district, we hadn't been specifically listed in the requirement to have an ethics policy, and that we were able to do what we wanted. I asked her what her suggestions were, and she then shared with me something that they call a Model Ethics Program. It was quite detailed. What I've done is and what the committee has accepted, is come up with and review, come up with a version of that that's a shorter, more succinct version than what a big municipality like Baltimore or Rockville would be required to have in place.

[01:20:51.16] - Speaker 4

But all of the basic requirements that you can't have a financial interest in the matters before you that you can't accept gifts from folks who are doing business with the Texan district are all in this. And then what the requirement that Al was talking about is we will, and this includes the members of the council, so this is an ethics policy for us, not just senior members of the staff. We will need to certify that we are in compliance with this or explain why we're not every year. I will bring back to the council for a vote what the certification form will look like.

[01:21:49.06] - Speaker 2

Thank you. I've got to offer my thanks to Council member Klein. I have thought this is long overdue, and I am much more comfortable being involved in a government entity that does have an ethics policy. I greatly appreciate it, and I fully support it. Any more comments or questions? I see none. I will call for the vote. I'll to adopt the Village of Friendship Heights Ethics Policy. All in favor raise their hand and say, Aye.

[01:22:25.22] - Speaker 4

Aye.

[01:22:26.19] - Speaker 2

Aye. So it's seven Aye's unanimous. Yes. Thank you very much. We'll see on the agenda that we've removed discussion vote On the fountain, which leads us to an introduction of proposed amendment to Village Bylaws. I would like to just give a little background that this is different than a regular motion at a regular meeting. Our current bylaws, Article 9, says these bylaws can be amended at any regular meeting of the council by the vote of at least five members. That's a suit for majority, provided that the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting. This meeting and this documentation meets the requirements of the submitted in writing at the previous meeting. So The normal procedure is the presenter explains, and at the next meeting, we have a discussion and vote. Council member Mulder, I think you have the floor on this.

[01:23:45.13] - Speaker 7

Thank you. Well, this really is an attempt to add the committee meetings to Article 4 of our bylaws, which describe in detail regular meetings, special meetings, work sessions, public hearings, but does not indicate anything more specific for the citizen meetings. We've had two committees, and now we have more, and the committees are meeting on a regular basis. The previous advisory groups were the Community Advisory Group and essentially the program advisory group.

[01:24:37.21] - Speaker 8

The special meetings and the work sessions and the regular meetings include in their description in the bylaws when a public announcement has to be made because all of these committees are open to the public.

[01:24:54.14] - Speaker 7

For instance, the regular meeting, this meeting tonight, there must be at least two days advancement before the meeting and has to be put in all the usual places, especially the website, no longer the Humphrey part, the bulletin board, but up on the front of the center. The work sessions at least two days in advance. And so this is simply an attempt to make the process more equivalent. I Well, when we get to the next item that was added, the Council will be voting on a new committee member, and I will have a suggestion there that we perhaps, when we include in the by law change for announcing when the committee is meeting, that we might also consider that, whether we to do it at the same time or whether we want to have yet another separate vote. That'll be up to the council. But right now, I'm just giving you an overview of what will be discussed, actually, and voted on, hopefully, next council meeting.

[01:26:19.11] - Speaker 2

Thank you. I think we're ready for our final item, which is the nomination of John Heisle to the Climate Change and Environment Committee, and I believe that's the mayor's job. I just handed out a description of Mr. Heisle's background and experience in the environmental area.

[01:26:47.22] - Speaker 1

Okay, so I nominate John Heisle to join as a member of the friendship Heights Climate Committee.

[01:26:57.00] - Speaker 2

Thank you. We can call for the vote on that. And you can hear me.

[01:27:03.16] - Speaker 4

I hope all in favor of supporting the mayor's appointment of Mr..

[01:27:13.13] - Speaker 2

John Heisle to the Climate Change and Environment Committee, please say Aye or raise your hand. Aye. Aye. Aye. Aye. Okay. That is seven unanimously for appointing... I'm sorry. Does Mr. Oh, you're saying Yes.

[01:27:30.06] - Speaker 4

Okay.

[01:27:30.17] - Speaker 2

Yes, but I had a follow-up comment on that. Okay, so that vote is being recorded, right?

[01:27:36.23] - Speaker 4

Yes.

[01:27:37.02] - Speaker 2

Okay. So, yes, sir?

[01:27:38.11] - Speaker 7

Number one, I fully support the credentials that were presented to us. And that reminds me that we have not been doing this consistently. So I think this opens another question, specifically, of how members of advisory groups are nominated. I think it was done perfectly. In this case, the mayor nominated the council got a description, a curriculum PT. That has previously been done, but it's gotten, sadly, sketchy. I can, without going into the specific people, can tell you we have not gotten resumes for most of the new advisory groups at all. I think that's not necessary because they're all qualified. I support everybody that's serving on the Community Advisory Group, on the Climate Change Advisory Group, on the Development Committee, but we haven't gotten any resumes from them at all. I think we should formalize it as the chair has been trying to do with a lot of other things. This was smooth as it has been in a long time, and I appreciate that.

[01:29:00.15] - Speaker 2

To clarify, you're suggesting that any person who seeks to be appointed to a committee provides at least a statement of interest or background or something like that in writing?

[01:29:13.14] - Speaker 7

Absolutely. So the whole council can look at it. Okay, I understand.

[01:29:19.17] - Speaker 2

Any other comments on the process? I think we'd entertain a motion to adjourn. All of us to move to adjourn, and all of us second I think. Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you. Yes, sir? Apologies for making you wait through all this business.

[01:29:36.29] - Speaker 5

It's okay.

[01:29:37.19] - Speaker 2

It's nice to hear. So welcome to the community.

[01:29:40.01] - Speaker 5

Thank you so much for the opportunity. Last month, on December first, myself and my business partner,. I'm Jürgen, and we bought the Friendship Gourmet Market. We have named it to Friendship Bier and Wine Deli. Our goal is to make it more of a hangout for the neighborhood. If you guys have been there since December first and last month, we've removed a lot of the shopping that that we had there, and we've added some more chairs and tables there. We're trying to have a couple more events where more members of the community are able to come. We are working with Lou, the architect for the building, finding permits with the county. We're going to do a lot of, actually not a lot of renovation. We're going to add a full kitchen with the hood system there as well and add a larger countertop. Then we're trying to make it more of a café vibe, like a bistro. So everyone in the neighborhood will be able to come by during the weekday or weekends, just hang out. It's not just a place where you can buy beer and wine, you can also sit down. We had a music show Saturday night with Emma G, who used to be a resident here.

[01:31:12.25] - Speaker 5

We had a great turnout. We had over 60 people that show up this week or something like that. We're trying to get as many members of the community to come by. We've had, thankfully, a lot of people come by and just share the experience of what they like, what they didn't like. That really helps us the most because what we wanted the place to be is a neighborhood hangout. We don't want it to be any more than that. Anything that helps the village, we're willing to look at it and see how we can make the place better. I'm not a chef, but to buy as an actual chef. He's

helped other people open restaurants, and this he wanted to do himself. He's a full chef. We had something that we do different with the wine tastings that we do provide food as well that's free. On Friday, we do it. Actually, I have the mayor come and join us. The food, it's always prepared on site. It's very delicious. We invite you guys to come at a future wine tasting we have, and we'd love to have you all there.

[01:32:23.14] - Speaker 2

Thank you very much. Good luck to your business success. Since I live across the street, I will be coming by. Again, if you come at the next meeting, we'll make sure you slide it in at the beginning. Thank you very much.

[01:32:37.07] - Speaker 7

You too.