

News aRound the Hill

A Community Newsletter for Round Hill, Virginia

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Council Advertises 35 Percent Cut in Property Taxes

If the Round Hill Town Council adopts the tax rate as advertised in the FY2021 budget, the new rate will be 35 percent lower than the 15.5 cent equalized rate, and average savings per household will be \$240.

The Council voted on Feb. 20 to advertise a property tax rate cut from the current 16.1 cents down to 10.0 cents, which would be the lowest of all the Loudoun County towns. The advertised budget will go to public hearing on March 19 before the formal vote to adopt.

"The Town has been generating operating surpluses in its General Fund for many years due to increases in lease and tax revenue as well as sound management of costs," said Mayor Scott Ramsey. "Our reserves have become very healthy and we will still be able to fund our capital projects after the tax cut with ongoing surpluses."

The Town Council discussed the positive impact the tax cut could have on town expansion during its budget deliberations.

"I have found property taxes to be a major sticking point for potential new residents," said Ramsey. "But expansion is not about taxes for us—we want the people, not

their money."

"With this lower tax rate there will be very few households that would not realize immediate financial benefit coming into Town due to lower water rates, free trash service, and the lowest town property taxes in Loudoun County," Ramsey said.

"I hope potential new residents study the numbers," he added, "because we need their help to keep Round Hill a great place to live. We are stretched too thin right now on volunteers and we need more voices at the table."

The Town also approved advertisement for a Meals Tax and a Transient Occupancy Tax, but with a 0 percent rate for each the first year. Round Hill is the only town in Loudoun that has not enacted meals or short-term rental taxes.

"All the other Towns have found the meals tax to be a great way to share the tax burden," said Ramsey. "Most meals taxes are from out-of-town visitors, and this gets them contributing to the infrastructure in Town in lieu of property taxes. We will establish a non-zero rate in a year but move slowly and monitor how it impacts businesses."

County Votes to Purchase Property for New Round Hill Fire Station

In an unanimous decision, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted on March 3 to approve the purchase of 41 West Loudoun Street, a 15.13 acre property on the west of Round Hill adjacent to the Sheriff's Substation. The purchase price is \$1,585,000.

The County plans to use the front of the property, which is currently owned by Carolyn Thomas, to site a new Round Hill Fire Station. The remainder will be held for a future County use.

The property is zoned JLMA-1 and is in one of the areas identified for future Town boundary expansion.

Town Asks for Help Combating Tunnel Graffiti

The Town of Round Hill is asking for the public's help in combating the vandalism occurring in the pedestrian tunnel that will be part of the trail connecting the Town to Franklin Park.

The tunnel passes under Route 7 behind the townhomes on Newberry Crossing and connects to Lake Point on the other side of the bypass. The tunnel has been routinely affected by vandalism, including graffiti, trash and other property damage.

To combat these issues, the Round Hill Town Council has implemented a new strategy that includes public awareness, education, physical upgrades and law enforcement.

Short-term goals include removing any existing graffiti, installing temporary lighting on the wing walls at



PHOTO BY NEWS AROUND THE HILL

The Rt. 7 pedestrian tunnel will be part of the Franklin Park trail.

each entrance and working with the Town staff and the Sheriff's Department to increase monitoring of the area.

Long-term goals include landscaping and maintenance plans along the trail, the addition of permanent lighting throughout the tunnel, and security cameras.

The community is encouraged to report any acts of vandalism or suspicious activity within the tunnel or in neighborhoods to the Loudoun

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The Town Council has revised the Comprehensive Plan to allow the possibility of utility service to the Weona Villa property east of Round Hill.

Amendment to Consider Utility Extension to Weona Villa Property Approved

The Round Hill Town Council approved a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM) after nearly a year-long process to consider extension of utility service to the Weona Villa property east of Town.

The CPAM requires any development to fill unmet housing needs such as assisted living, senior, disabled or workforce housing. It must also mitigate impacts to surrounding properties, not impact the historic character of the Town, not include townhomes, and the town utility system must have sufficient capacity to serve the proposed development.

A developer of the Weona Villa site may now submit a request for utility service that the Town Council would have discretion to approve or deny. The motel, which has been vacant for 12 years, is under purchase contract to Tree of Life Ministries, which has announced plans to develop micro-cottages for seniors and disabled adults on the site.

"While the Town Council liked what we had heard so far from Tree of Life, we needed to be sure any plan amendment was written appropriately for any future developer of that site, and that we had a process that considered all other surrounding properties with the same crite-

ria," said Round Hill Mayor Scott Ramsey.

The Planning Commission considered several additional parcels for inclusion in the CPAM, including a parcel across the street from Weona Villa and another off Airmont Road, but ultimately recommended only the old motel parcel as appropriate.

The next step for Tree of Life is to develop an application that can obtain County approval for zoning and Town approval for utilities. The site is not being considered for inclusion in Town, so any land use decisions will be made by the County Board of Supervisors. Tree of Life has already filed a request for a pre-application meeting for a county rezoning.

The plan amendment also allows the Town to extend its utility service to any property adjoining the Joint Land Management Area for a public facility (state, county or local).

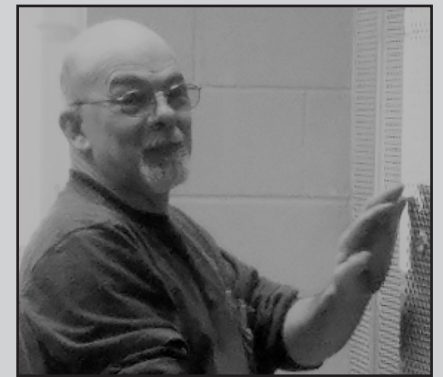
"We added this clause to give the County more latitude in site selection for future public facilities we want them to locate near Round Hill, such as a future library, community center or parks and recreation centers," said Ramsey. Extension of utilities would still be at the Town's discretion on a case-by-case basis.

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County Sheriff's Office's 24-hour non-emergency line at 703-777-1021.

If any person unlawfully destroys, defaces, damages or removes without the intent to steal any (Town) property, real or personal, he/she shall be guilty of (i) a Class 1 misdemeanor if the value of or damage to the property, memorial or monument is less than \$1,000 or (ii) a Class 6 felony if the value of or damage to the property, memorial or monument is \$1,000 or more.



Utility Technician George Mullis

TOWN WELCOMES NEW UTILITY STAFF MEMBER

The Town of Round Hill welcomes George Mullis to the utility staff as a maintenance technician. Mullis was hired in August.

Mullis lives in Martinsburg, WV, with his wife of 30 years. He has two adult sons and a 17-year-old daughter, as well as one granddaughter and one on the way. He also has seven dogs and two rabbits. Mullis loves the outdoors and enjoys setting up bird feeders and watching wildlife.

Before coming to Round Hill, Mullis assisted with maintenance and reading meters in the street utility system for the City of Winchester.

UTILITY PAYMENT PORTAL UPDATED

As a result of recent updates to the Town's utility payment portal

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COMMUNITY

ROUND HILL OUTDOORS PLANS 2ND ANNUAL APPALACHIAN TRAIL FESTIVAL

Round Hill will hold its second annual Appalachian Trail Festival this June. Last year more than 1,000 people attended the festival, and B Chord Brewing has, again, generously offered to host this free, family-friendly event.

This year, the festival will expand to two days, June 13-14. Saturday's events will include trail talks and tunes, a scavenger hunt, A.T. trivia contest, and a silent auction. Guests may also learn about the work of environmental groups protecting the A.T. and other natural resources. Saturday speakers include luminaries from the hiking world: author/adventurer Cindy Ross, A.T. guru and thru-hiking record holder Warren Doyle, and veteran section-hiker and author Jeff Ryan. Saturday's activities run from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday's events focus on hands-on activities for all ages. Examples include hikes, instruction on how to pack a backpack and preparing trail recipes, tips on hiking with a dog, informational sessions on knot-tying skills, wilderness first aid and stream monitoring, creation of nature-inspired masterpieces, and yoga for hikers. Sunday's events will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.



C'est Bon by Savoir Fare on West Loudoun Street

SAVOIR FARE INTRODUCES C'EST BON

Round Hill caterer Joan Wolford is transforming the Old Furniture Factory building on West Loudoun Street into a "pop-up restaurant" that will feature dinners-to-go from her award-winning kitchen across the street at Savoir Fare. Following the success of her Valentine's Day dinner, Wolford will be opening for St. Patrick's Day on March 17. The menu will include corned beef and cabbage, shepherds pie, and Bailey's Irish cream cheesecake.



PHOTO BY THE TOWN OF ROUND HILL

Round Hill Utility Supervisor Marty Feltner was recently recognized by the Town for 20 years of dedicated service to the Town. Feltner, center, is pictured with Town Administrator Melissa Hynes, right, and Vice Mayor Mary Anne Graham, who presented Feltner with his Public Service Award.

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customers can now see their account balances when paying their utility bills. In addition, the maximum payment allowed has been raised to \$1,000 per transaction.

When making a payment using the Customer Dashboard, please ensure that the account number matches the one that is on your utility bill. With the new update our payment system will no longer accept old utility account numbers.

The free payment portal is offered through Paymentus and is accessed via the Town's website (www.roundhillva.org). Please contact Kim McGaha, Utility Billing Administrator at 540-338-4772 with any questions.

CENSUS FORMS TO BE MAILED THIS MONTH

The 2020 Census begins in March. Federal funding for schools, healthcare, road projects, foster care, and more is based on the census. Round Hill recently received federal funding for sidewalk and drainage improvements in town; the amount received was based in part on census counts.

Representation at all levels of government is also determined by census numbers. Consequently, the more accurate the census count is in Western Loudoun, the more representation allotted.

Mailings from the Census Bureau are due out this month. The information provided is confidential and cannot be shared with any other government agency. Visit loudoun.gov/2020census to learn more.

TOWN ELECTIONS TO BE HELD MAY 5

Local municipal elections will be held on May 5. Mayor Scott T. Ramsey has filed for re-election, as have Council members Michael B. Hummel and Mary Anne K. Graham. Council member Melissa Hoffmann also intends to run for re-election but is not currently on the ballot. Council member Paula G. James has filed to retain her seat in a special election.

COMMUNITY

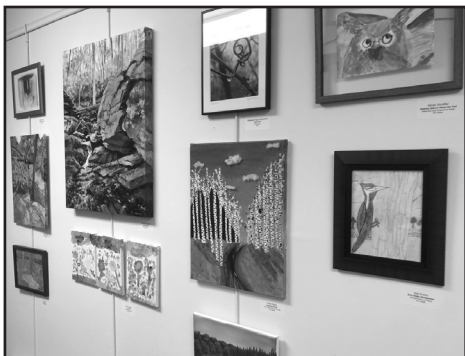


PHOTO COURTESY ROUND HILL ARTS CENTER

Appalachian Trail Art Show works on display at the RH Arts Center.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL ART SHOW WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Round Hill Outdoors would like to thank all the participants of the 3rd Annual Appalachian Trail Art Show. The submissions are on display at the Round Hill Arts Center from 12-4 p.m. daily until March 8.

The following winners were announced at the artists reception on Feb. 16:

Adult:

3rd - Pamela Smith "Trail Dreams"

2nd - Kathleen Howsave "A Zen Place"

1st - Dolores Goodson "Harpers Ferry National Park"

Middle/High School:

2nd - Kaden Evans

1st - Anaya Bellavy

Elementary School:

2nd - Tegan Nicklow

1st - Sophia Nicklow

PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR 18TH ANNUAL ROUND HILL HOMETOWN FESTIVAL, MAY 23

The Round Hill Hometown Festival will take place on Saturday, May 23.

The Festival is a day-long celebration that includes a 5k, parade, pie-eating contest, downhill soapbox derby-style race, and a community dinner. Stage entertainment in the Town Park begins with a Memorial Ceremony honoring local veterans, features local entertainment through the afternoon, and concludes with a concert and dancing under the stars.

The family-friendly event is free and open to the public. It is organized by a committee of volunteers and is funded through race proceeds and sponsorships from local businesses and families.

Local businesses and families interested in sponsoring the Festival should contact Katy Prime at *Prime.katy@gmail.com*. There are sponsorship levels at varying price points; the T-shirt logo sponsors tend to be the most popular and fill quickly.

The committee will also be recruiting volunteers to help run events on the day of the Festival. A Sign-Up Genius page will be posted with shifts and positions available; the link to this page will be publicized on the Festival's website (www.hometownfestival.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rhhometownfestival).



PHOTOS COURTESY ROUND HILL HOMETOWN FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

Scenes from the 17th Annual Hometown Festival in 2019.

ON THE AGENDA

Issues the Town Council and Planning Commission will address in the coming months include:

- Adopt FY21 budget, rates and fees
- Construction of Main Street/Franklin Park Trail
- Future well site acquisition
- Upgrades to Sleeter Lake Park
- Town Expansion
- Renovation of Utility plant offices
- Zoning ordinance amendments for non-conforming commercial lots
- Adoption of Meals and Transient Occupancy Tax ordinances

Upcoming Events

- **Town Council Meeting** March 19/Apr. 15
7:30 p.m., Town Office
- **Town Public Hearing on the Budget** March 19
7:00 p.m., Town Office
- **Town Council Work Session** Apr. 1/May 6
7:30 p.m., Town Office
- **Planning Commission** Apr. 7/May 12
7:00 p.m., Town Office
- **Town Elections** May 5

(Note: Town Council meetings will be held regularly on the first and third Wednesdays beginning in April.)