

News aRound the Hill

A Community Newsletter for Round Hill, Virginia

January 2023

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Priorities, Challenges, Upcoming Projects for 2023

Happy New Year, Round Hill! I am kicking off 2023 with my first ever mayoral State of the Town.

I will start off with the good news: Living in Round Hill is pretty special, and keeping it that way is our Town government's highest priority.

I volunteered to first serve on Town Council back in 2004 because I wanted it to stay a place my children would be proud to call their hometown.

The Town Council and Planning Commission feel the same, and our approach to realizing this goal is expressed best in our Town Comprehensive Plan, which is available on our website (www.roundhillva.org).



Mayor Scott Ramsey, Town Manager Melissa Hynes and members of the Town Council and Town Staff in front of the Town Office in December.

PHOTO FOR NEWS AROUND THE HILL

Round Hill is also officially 125 acres larger with our first boundary expansion since 2005. Please join me in welcoming the Round Hill Center, the Western Loudoun Sheriff's sub-station, Hill High Marketplace, as well as several other parcels to our wonderful Town. The owners of all of these properties requested to join the Town to benefit from lower utility rates and more appropriate local zoning.

We also continue to operate a major utility system, three area parks, sidewalks, stormwater system and a pedestrian tunnel on behalf of the entire Round Hill community, not just Town residents.

The successful operations of these facilities and execution of our proj-

ects is due to the most experienced and competent staff any Town in Loudoun has had the privilege of assembling. I want to recognize in particular our Town Manager, Melissa Hynes, who has been the key to attracting and retaining such great employees, but there is excellence at every level of our staff.

Our job as a Town Council has been to create conditions that attract quality staff, give them fulfilling projects to pursue, and try not to get in their way too much.

Hiring Melissa was one of our best ideas, but credit for the Town's success also goes to the office staff, utility operators, and many others who do the daily work of making this Town run.

I am also proud to report that Round Hill has the lowest real estate tax rate of all the Loudoun towns, at only 8 cents per \$100, and the lowest utility rates (see chart to the left). We have no general fund debt at all, and our utility fund debt and reserve balances are well within our adopted fiscal policy guidelines. Through sound management of our resources, we have been able to minimize the necessary burdens on our citizens

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**STATE OF THE
TOWN OF ROUND HILL
January 2023
Mayor Scott Ramsey**

Round Hill had several key achievements last year. Our highest priority project over the past decade—the very complex Franklin Park Trail and Main Street Enhancement projects—met substantial completion goals this fall. These stormwater and sidewalk upgrades were crucial to modernizing our streets and extending our regional trail network.

	Real Estate Tax Annual Bill		Water/Sewer Bimonthly Bill	
	Rate/\$100	\$500K Home	In-Town	Out-of-Town
Round Hill	\$0.08	\$400	\$169	\$254
Middleburg	\$0.1369	\$685	\$348	\$489
Lovettsville	\$0.1625	\$813	\$225	\$338
Hillsboro	\$0.17	\$850		
Leesburg	\$0.1774	\$887	\$173	\$233
Purcellville	\$0.24	\$1,200	\$274	\$516
Hamilton	\$0.26	\$1,300	\$210	\$272

Real estate total annual tax shown for a \$500,000 assessment and no tax relief programs
Utility bills shown for 150 gallons per day combined residential service including fixed charges
Leesburg bills quarterly and Lovettsville monthly; amounts shown prorated to 2 months

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and ratepayers.

However, and there is always a however, this requires continuous involvement by quality volunteers and a structure that can meet the emerging challenges of our suddenly very large community.

Round Hill's Mayor, Town Council, Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals are all volunteers. None of us are paid a salary to exercise the powers of local government; we are just a volunteer civic association of about 250 households with taxing authority and some mild policing powers that now finds itself planning regional parks and trails and running a large utility system for over 1,800 households.

I firmly believe that Round Hill is one community, and that community does not end at the Town boundaries. But 250 households cannot decide the regional priorities for 1,800 homes indefinitely. This abnormal situation has developed gradually over the course of 30 years but it must eventually be addressed, which is our first major challenge.

Current residents of the Villages, Lakepoint, Brentwood Springs, Hillwood Estates and other Round Hill neighborhoods need to be able to join our Town Council so we make the right decisions for everyone.

Our second major challenge is that our utility system is getting old. We are about to embark on several major utility projects to both deal with the recent growth in our service population and to rebuild some aging infrastructure. We will need to make some hard decisions on future utility rates to meet this challenge.

Unfortunately for Round Hill, state and federal programs designed to help fund local government are distributed based on the official Town population. This includes our share of state sales taxes, cable and phone taxes, and huge federal grants like ARPA and the CARES act.

By not accounting for the entire population of the larger Round Hill service area, the Town only receives 15% of its proper share of these out-

Major New or Ongoing Projects

Water Capacity and Treatment: Our highest priority projects for 2023 are the development of Well D (located behind Kedleston Court in RHOA open space) and rebuilding the Evening Star Water Treatment Plant (located at the base of the water tower). RHOA has been helpful in supporting both of these vital water capacity projects while minimizing the impacts to residents of Kedleston Court.

Sleeter Lake Park: The Town partners with Loudoun County in capital funding and operation of Sleeter Lake Park. We recently installed a handicapped-accessible kayak launch and are assisting the County in planning the future of both Franklin Park and Sleeter Lake Park. We want to eventually combine the parks but will be adding amenities such as a pavilion and permanent restrooms in the meantime.

Southern Greenway Pedestrian Improvements: With the completion of the Franklin Park Trail and Main Street projects, our attention has turned to improving pedestrian access for Hayman Lane, Lake Ridge Estates, Fallswood and Bluffs residents and extending our trail network south of Town. This project has challenging topography and wetlands that drive costs very high; we are engaged in engineering design and cost studies to find the best solution.

Airmont Water Tower: With the buildout of the Bluffs neighborhood, we need to add a second water tower for overall system resiliency and fire flow. We have a site and approval to construct a new tower off Yatton Road, and are working to find the best financing option while monitoring construction costs. A side benefit once constructed will be another site for leasing to cellular service providers.

Other Key Projects: An initiative to comprehensively address long-term utility maintenance, a new office building for our utility staff, advocacy for a new community center in Round Hill, and continued expansion of Town boundaries.

side revenues. In just the last several years with the federal ARPA and CARES act dollars, Round Hill missed out on \$5M of federal grants. And annually we miss out on over \$600K of state pass-through taxes due to our small boundaries.

Consequently, we are trying to fund our utility system and regional parks and trails with one big hand—state and federal support—tied behind our back.

Our annual priorities are presented in our Strategic Plan, which was just updated for the upcoming fiscal year (starting July 1) and can be found online at www.roundhillva.org. A summary of key current projects is shown in the box above.

A common theme to these projects is that they are driven by our larger community, not just the needs of in-town residents. While I would welcome the millions of state and

federal dollars that would arrive in Round Hill by changing our official population figures, we mainly need to include more existing residents so our Town has a pool of volunteers as large as the problems we are solving.

I urge everyone reading this to consider volunteering for our community in one way or another, be it for a Town event, the fire department, a Scout troop, church, local non-profit, or in many other ways.

While only Town residents can serve on the Town Council, we depend on volunteers from the entire community to keep events like the Hometown Festival, Appalachian Trail Festival and Tree Lighting going.

I will close this State of the Town with a promise that as Mayor I will continue to promote a vision of Round Hill as one larger community, not just one small Town. I hope you all find joy in the new year.

MAYOR, COUNCIL RECOGNIZE PETE GRAY'S CONTRIBUTIONS

On Nov. 2, 2022, the Town of Round Hill recognized Edward (Pete) Gray's service to the Round Hill community. At 86, Gray is one of oldest Town residents to have been born in Round Hill. He was a member of the Round Hill Town Council from 1988 to 1998.

Gray has also served as the self-appointed Historian of Round Hill for the last 35 years, collecting, preserving and sharing the heritage and history of the Round Hill community.

In October 2022, Gray donated to the Town his collection of artifacts and documents, including hundreds of historical photos of various Round Hill buildings and residents, as well as multiple maps, historic reports and newspapers.

"This treasured collection will be vital to educating the community today and into the future about the history of Round Hill," said Town Administrator Melissa Hynes. "Gray's legacy will inspire residents to carry on his passion to support the preservation of the Town's history by becoming volunteer historians and archivists.

"He truly has an encyclopedic knowledge of our history is a tremendous resource," Hynes added. "Round Hill has been fortunate to have had him caring for our past for so long."

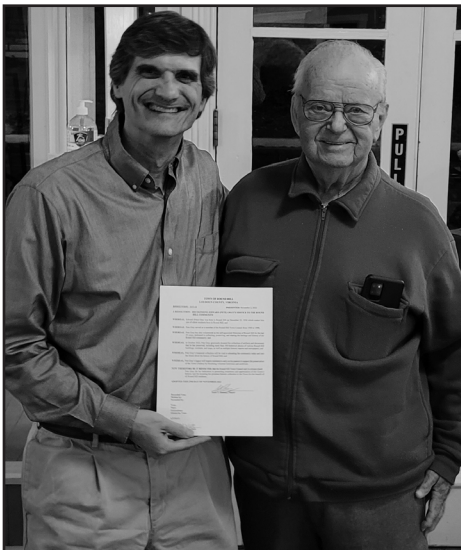


PHOTO FOR NEWS AROUND THE HILL

Mayor Scott Ramsey with long-time Round Hill historian and resident Pete Gray.



PHOTOS FOR NEWS AROUND THE HILL

Mayor Scott Ramsey recognized the following staff members for their many years of dedicated service to the Town at the staff Christmas Party on Dec. 14:

- **Kim McGaha, Utility Billing Administrator – 10 Years**
- **Timothy Kirby, Senior Wastewater Operator – 10 Years**
- **Nathan Harbin, Senior Water Operator – 15 Years**

Mayor Ramsey also recognized Maureen Gilmore for her 20 years of service as the Town Attorney.

UTILITY BILLING REMINDERS, INVOICE CLOUD PAYMENT

Water bills will be mailed the week of Jan. 9 and are due by Feb. 5. Below are important reminders about late fees and disconnections:

- Feb. 7 – 6% late fees applied
- Feb. 22 – Disconnections (\$125 reconnection fee for shut offs)

Don't forget to use the Town's online payment platform, Invoice Cloud, which gives utility customers enhanced, easy-to-use options to securely pay bills electronically.

Payment options include Apple Pay, Google Pay, PayPal, Venmo, and Pay by Text. Customers will continue to have the option to pay bills via phone, check, or credit card – including American Express – on the Invoice Cloud platform.

The Town absorbs all fees associated with credit card and e-check transactions, so there are no costs to customers.

For more information, go to www.roundhillva.org/water-sewer-billing/pages/bill-payment-options.

For information about financial assistance or to set up a payment

plan, please call the Utility Billing Administrator at 540-338-4772 ext. 2.

SAVE THE DATES!

The Town of Round Hill has a number of events in the planning stages for the upcoming months. Email Bobby Lohr at blohr@roundhillva.org for more information on any of the activities below.

Round Hill Outdoors Committee Meeting

The Round Hill Outdoors Committee is looking for new members to help volunteer to support recreation, nature and Appalachian Trail events. The next meeting is Jan. 26 at 6 p.m. at the Town Office (23 Main Street).

Round Hill Appalachian Trail Art Show

The drop off dates for the 6th Annual Round Hill Appalachian Trail Art Show are Jan. 27-29. Works from artists of all ages and in any medium are welcomed. The Art Show will be held throughout the month of February. For information and registration visit: roundhillartscenter.org/events-1.

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Protecting Water Pipes in Freezing Weather

Freezing pipes are one of the most expensive risks homeowners face. Pipes that tend to freeze are outdoor faucets and water supply pipes in unheated interior areas like basements, garages or kitchen cabinets.

Water meters are also subject to freezing.

To help prevent pipes and water meters from freezing, customers are urged to take the following precautions:

1. Allow a faucet to trickle cold water. Choose the faucet the greatest distance from the main water shut off valve and at the highest point in the home.

2. Open doors to kitchen and bathroom cabinets so warmer air can circulate around pipes (remove any toxic substances first if there are small children or pets in the home).

3. Keep the thermostat at 68 degrees or higher.

4. Disconnect garden hoses and, if possible, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.

If Your Pipes Freeze:

- Pipes do not always burst when

frozen. If no water comes out when the faucet is turned on, then pipes are probably frozen.

- Melt the frozen water by warming the air around the pipes by opening cabinet doors and using a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.

- Make sure the faucet is turned on so melting water can drip out.

- After pipes have thawed, look for cracks or damage and make sure to take necessary precautions to prevent freezing from happening again.

- Leaks or pools of water from pipes indicate a burst or crack.

If water pipes burst, immediately turn off the water at the main shut-off valve inside the home. Be sure to leave the water faucets turned on.

Call a plumber if you suspect a burst pipe or cannot find the frozen section.

Call the Round Hill Utility Department at 540-338-4772 ext. 1 (M-F 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) or 540-454-1975 (after hours) if you think the water meter is frozen.

Do not open the meter crotch or attempt to thaw it as this can damage the meter.



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The Hometown Festival is one of several upcoming events this spring.

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Arbor Day Ceremony

This annual event will be held on Friday, April 28. The time and location will be announced in the March issue of News aRound the Hill.

Round Hill Hometown Festival

The Best Day of the Year in Round Hill happens on Saturday, May 27. For up-to-date information on the full day of free, family-friendly activities in the heart of Round Hill visit www.hometownfestival.org or the Round Hill Hometown Festival Facebook page. Planning begins this month; anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to email info@hometownfestival.org.

Round Hill/Hillsboro Appalachian Trail Festival

This year the AT Festival will be held on Saturday, June 10, at The Gap Stage and Old Stone School in Hillsboro (37098 Charles Town Pike). For more information, go to www.roundhillat.org/

ON THE AGENDA

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

- Fiscal Year 2024 Town Council budget
- Water rate study
- Comprehensive Plan Amendment – expanded Central Commercial District
- Comprehensive Plan Amendment – western Town expansion
- Future well sites, Evening Star water treatment plant and Airmont water tank
- Southern greenway pedestrian access improvements

Upcoming Events

- ▶ **Town Council Meeting** Jan. 18/Feb. 1, 15
7:30 p.m., Round Hill Town Office and Zoom
- ▶ **Round Hill Outdoors Committee** Jan. 26
6 p.m. Town Office
- ▶ **Planning Commission Meeting** Feb. 7, Mar. 1
7:00 p.m., Round Hill Town Office and Zoom

(NOTE: Information for participating remotely is provided on the agenda for each meeting, www.roundhillva.org/minutes-and-agendas.)