



## Falls Church Pulse

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Dear Neighbors,

The Planning staff proposed a new accessory dwelling code that raised concerns among some City Council members and Planning Commissioners, especially about the lack of restrictions on short-term rentals. The devil is always in the details!

Planning Director Paul Stoddard announced his departure from the City. That leaves City Manager Wyatt Shields with three key leadership vacancies to fill while executing on several capital improvement projects and major planning and zoning revisions.

The new Chief of Police Shahram Fard presented the 2023 report (under former Chief Mary Gavin) showing Falls Church to be a safe City with some worrisome trends.

Underestimating the returns on investments and higher tax receipts led to a \$6 million budget surplus at year-end FY2024. The City Council approved a plan for using this money in October.

We publish the second part of the history of the West Falls development that looks at the negotiations and re-negotiations of the financial terms with the developers. This proved to be an interesting case study on a public-private real estate development partnership.

Thank you for your interest in our City and Happy Thanksgiving!

The Editors  
November 2024

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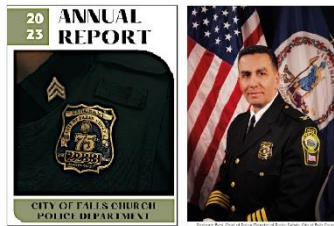
### **Staff's Accessory Dwelling Code Does Not Regulate Short-Term Rentals or Require Owner Occupancy**

Some on Council and Planning Commission have concerns about the proposed code that allows accessory dwellings of up to two stories and 1,000 sf, with no regulations on short-term rentals, occupancy nor parking reviews.



## Stoddard Exits Staff, Creating 3 Key Vacancies

Planning Director Paul Stoddard leaves Falls Church for Alexandria as of November 30. The City now has three senior positions to fill, including directors for Human Resources and the Department of Public Works.



## Chief Issues Annual Police Report, Seeks To Restore Department Accreditation

The Police Report for 2023 shows a 3.57% increase in crime overall, 22% increase in 911 calls and a third more crashes than 2022. Falls Church crime rate continues to be low, although theft, shoplifting and property damage are rising.



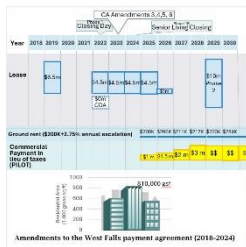
## The FY2024 Year-End Financial Report – a \$6 Million Surplus!

The FY2024 surplus was primarily due to a higher investment return than the 2% budgeted, and higher property tax and meals tax revenues. The capital reserve was \$13 million, and projected to go down to \$2 million by 2030.



## City Council Reviews Options for the \$6 Million FY2024 Budget Surplus

City Council decided to fund the long-awaited Fellows Park project and two EV school buses. The School Board was surprised that their share was only \$449,000. \$1.67M of the FY2024 budget surplus will go to capital reserves.



## The History of West Falls – Part 2. The Challenges of Negotiating a Public-Private Partnership (2018 to 2022 and ongoing ...)

The City's initial financial expectations from the public-private partnership were repeatedly revised downwards, primarily due to COVID. Higher returns from the West Falls project for the developer and investors were achieved by lowering payments to the City.



## Council Cuts Commercial Parking for First 1,200 Square Feet of Leased Space

City Council approved the zoning change to reduce the commercial parking requirement to attract small businesses to the City and enable adaptive reuse of older buildings.

# Posts you may have missed



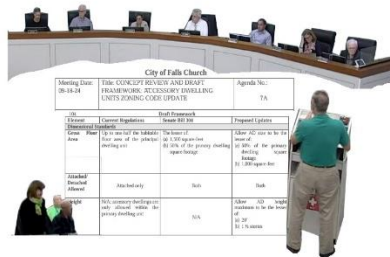
## Lee Park Townhomes is Approved, Planning Commissioners Reflect on the T-Zone Ordinance

At the September meeting, the Planning Commission conceded that the Lee Park Townhomes had satisfied all the T-Zone requirements. The Commissioners reflected on the projects enabled by the new T-Zone code so far – expensive and dense housing, little tree canopy onsite, lack of consideration for inadequate stormwater drains.



## The History of West Falls – Part 1. An Opportunity to Finance the Building of a New High School

The 2013 Boundary Adjustment Agreement created an opportunity for the City to finance a new \$120-million high school from lease payments and additional taxes by allowing 10 acres of land, now called West Falls, to be developed in a public-private partnership.



## Planning Commission, Citizens Urge Caution on Accessory Dwelling Framework during Community Discussions

At the September meeting, Commissioners urged caution and told staff that more data analysis was needed on housing, tax, privacy, parking and environmental impacts of the accessory dwelling code proposal. Staff held two community meetings in September that were poorly attended, showing low public awareness and interest.