

Loudoun Times-Mirror

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SIX FIGURES AND SMILING

Public employees' salaries at a glance **7**

\$281,068



County Administrator Tim Hemstreet

\$284,999



LCPS Superintendent Eric Williams

\$202,154



Leesburg Town Manager Kaj Dentler

\$154,498



Purcellville Manager David MekarSKI

GOVERNMENT

A LOOK AT PUBLIC SALARIES

It's budget season in Loudoun, with county supervisors currently reviewing the coming year's spending plan and the School Board recently signing off on the school system's nearly \$1.4 billion budget. Local towns are also reviewing their finances, with managers and administrators urging caution. Here's a look at the highest-paid workers in county government and Loudoun's two largest towns.

LOUDOUN COUNTY

- **Timothy Hemstreet**, County Administrator – \$281,068
- **Leo Rogers**, County Attorney – 253,790
- **"Buddy" Rizer**, Economic Development Director – \$248,023
- **Charles Yudd**, Deputy County Administrator – \$216,337
- **Visnja Novacki**, Psychiatrist – \$214,999
- **Michael Chapman**, Sheriff – \$213,860
- **Keith Johnson**, Fire Chief – \$207,198
- **John Sandy**, Assistant County Administrator – \$201,660
- **Debra Henry**, Psychiatrist – \$198,900
- **Gary Clemens**, Clerk of the Circuit Court – \$198,314
- **Buta Biberaj**, Commonwealth's Attorney – \$197,928
- **Chang Liu**, Library Director – \$192,509
- **Erin McLellan**, Chief Financial Officer – \$191,610
- **Kenneth Young**, Assistant County Administrator – \$191,576
- **Valmarie Turner**, Assistant



Sheriff Michael Chapman

- County Administrator – \$186,786
- **Wendy Wickens**, IT Director – \$182,912
- **Robert Wertz**, Commissioner of Revenue – \$182,828
- **Ernest Brown**, Director of General Services – \$181,513
- **Joseph Kroboth**, Director of Transportation – \$181,452
- **Mark Joseph Poland**, Col. Undersheriff – \$178,820

Note: Treasurer Roger Zurn, the only elected constitutional officer not included in the top 20, currently makes \$172,163.

LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **Eric Williams**, Superintendent – \$284,999
- **Ashley Ellis**, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction – \$211,552
- **Stephen DeVita**, School Board Attorney – \$210,552
- **Kevin Lewis**, Asst. Superintendent for Support Services – \$209,754
- **Asia Jones**, Asst. Superintendent for Pupil Services – \$208,732
- **Sharon Willoughby**, Asst. Superintendent for Financial Services – \$207,551
- **Vincent Scheivert**, Asst. Superintendent for Digital Innovation – \$204,006
- **Scott Ziegler**, Asst. Superintendent for HR and Development – \$192,000
- **Nyah Hamlett**, LCPS Chief of Staff – \$182,500
- **Nereida Gonzalez-Sales**, Director of High School Education – \$175,023
- **Tina Howie**, Director of Instructional Programs – \$175,023
- **W. Michael Martin**, Director of Elementary Education – \$175,023
- **Patricia Nelson**, Director



Superintendent Eric Williams

- of Special Education – \$175,023
- **Agustin Martinez**, Director of Middle School Education – \$175,023
- **Virginia Patterson**, Director of School Administration – \$175,023
- **Neil Slevin**, Director of Teaching and Learning – \$170,723
- **Ryan Hitchman**, Principal, Lightridge High School – \$164,343
- **Neelum Chaudhry**, Asst. Principal, Freedom High School – \$164,343
- **Gary Van Alstyne**, Director of Construction – \$164,343
- **Beverly Tate**, Director of Planning Services – \$164,343

TOWN OF LEESBURG

- **Kaj Dentler**, Town Manager – \$202,154
- **Clark Case**, Director of Finance, Administrative Services – \$175,446
- **William Ackman**, Director of Plan Review – \$172,072
- **Renee LaFollette**, Director of Public Works, Capital Projects – \$170,417
- **Gregory Brown**, Chief of Police – \$164,230
- **Richard Williams**, Director of Parks & Recreation – \$161,792
- **Susan Hill**, Director of Planning & Zoning – \$160,323
- **Amy Wyks**, Director of Utilities – \$159,610
- **Keith Markel**, Deputy Town Manager – \$152,081



Chief Gregory Brown

- **Barbara Notar**, Town Attorney – \$151,943 *

**Town Council recently voted to part ways with Notar.*

SCHOOL BOARD



Chairwoman Brenda Sheridan

- **Brenda Sheridan**, Chairwoman – \$22,000
- **School Board Members** – \$20,000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Chairwoman Phyllis Randall

- **Phyllis Randall**, Chairwoman – \$81,100
- **Koran Saines**, Vice Chairman – \$73,363
- **County Supervisor** – \$66,826

TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE

- **Sally Hankins**, Town Attorney – \$158,373
- **David Mekarski**, Town Manager – \$154,498
- **Liz Krens**, Director of Finance/Treasurer – \$124,644
- **Buster Nicholson**,

- Director of Public Works – \$123,599
- **Patrick Sullivan**, Director of Community Development – \$123,007
- **Cynthia McAlister**, Police Chief – \$121,736
- **Dave Dailey**,

- Deputy Police Chief – \$117,418
- **Scott House**, Wastewater Superintendent – \$112,168
- **Hooper McCann**, Director of Administration – \$107,735
- **Shannon Bohince**, Director of Information Technology – \$106,916

LEESBURG TOWN COUNCIL

- **Mayor Kelly Burk** – \$16,200
- **Town Council Members** – \$15,600

PURCELLVILLE TOWN COUNCIL

- **Mayor Kwasi Fraser** – \$7,025
- **Town Council Members** – \$5,750

Loudoun Times-News

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Courtesy Photos

Franklin Holmes, right, owner of Sharp Line Cuts Barbershop, is happy his business is back open following a forced months-long closure. Inset, The Sharp Line Cuts team in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

BLACK IN BUSINESS

As economy gradually comes back — and nationwide awareness heightens — Black business owners talk shop

Amid national unrest, Black business owners look to rise

BY NATHANIEL CLINE
ncline@loudountimes.com

Franklin Holmes, owner and operator of Sharp Line Cuts Barbershop and Barber School in Ashburn, has had his businesses hit hard due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that have come with it. Now he's looking to rebuild.

"A lot of people are just scared to come back, and I don't blame them," Holmes said. "It's really hard for the workers because they are making a living off of the number of clients they are getting, and so when the clients don't come out, they can't make the money they want."

With livelihoods at stake, Black business owners around the county have been seeking out all avenues to keep their operations afloat amid both the pandemic and heightened racial tension across the U.S.

Several local business people told the Times-Mirror they are struggling to make ends meet while also doing everything they can to keep customers safe by enacting new safety guidelines.

Nationally, the struggles of business owners are evidenced by data. The number of Black business owners across the country dropped by 440,000 since February 2020, according to The National Bureau of Economic Research June 2020 Working Paper. The number of small business owners took a significant hit, dropping by 22 percent overall and 41 percent for Black business owners. The number of Latinx small business owners dropped by 32 percent, and Asian small business owners fell by 26 percent.

In Virginia, salons were among the businesses that were ordered in March to close until May 15. Restaurants, bars and tourism services were — and remain — heavily impacted.

Renee Ventrice, who is Black and co-owns Cork and Keg Tours with husband Don Ventrice, said their tourism service was completely shut down for months. She said Cork and Keg Tours had to cancel close to \$8,000 worth of scheduled tours. With breweries and wineries closed for two months except for pickup, Cork and Keg Tours had to find creative ways to stay relevant by going virtual and adjusting their prices and services.

"I think what we have to figure out now is how do people respond to feeling safe in our vehicle and at the wineries and breweries," Ventrice said. "We're just kind of evaluating that, going with the flow, and letting the market determine what changes we might have to make."

Holmes, the barbershop owner, said his shop is stocked with personal protective equipment, and workers practice social distancing by spacing out barber chairs. He said appointments are required to minimize the number of people inside the shop, temperatures are taken and staff scrub seats and gear before each customer.

Ventriche, who received some economic aid from the government, plans to share her experiences with other Black business owners during a time of nationwide unrest. Ventrice said a couple of ways she has tried to help is mentoring Black entrepre-



Above, Franklin Holmes, right, owns Sharp Line Cuts Barbershop and Barber School in Ashburn.

Left, Renee Ventrice co-owns Cork and Keg Tours with her husband, Don.

Courtesy Photos

neurs and connecting with the Loudoun NAACP on how to spark change.

"I think if we do that, we [will] see less issues and less bias and prejudice down on the individual level," she said. "It doesn't affect our business directly, but it's affected how we are going to contribute to our community, and different things we can do to make it better for minorities, as well."

There has been a silver lining in the recent months of unrest: The country's newfound embrace and support for diverse entrepreneurship as the nation continues the racial reckoning following the death of George Floyd.

Vanessa Maddox, a Black business owner that operates a consulting operation in Loudoun County, said she's been on the frontlines advocating for social justice, voting rights and rights for women.

"I have never ever seen anything like what's going on right now in this country with the subject of racial upheaval, the allyship, and how this whole scenario is disproportionately affecting black women," Maddox said. "I'm definitely on the flight-line again, I am raising my voice every opportunity and I'm using all my influence on social media to affect change as well as outwardly."

In Loudoun, she and several Black business owners responded by connecting

with the Loudoun Chamber in an effort to improve its membership and support Black businesses.

Shortly before the Fourth of July weekend, Carmen Felder, founder of Authentic Connections and Black Businesses of the DMV and president of 89 Ways to Give Foundation, said the chamber is launching a Loudoun Black Businesses Empowerment Committee.

Felder said a common concern for Black business owners is the lack of Black membership in the chamber.

"There's several lanes and levels that we're going to have to address," Felder said. "Why aren't many Black businesses a part of the chamber? How are we going to get them to be a part of the chamber? How are we going to make them feel included? And ... how can we empower them so they are on the same levels of other non-Black businesses?"

Felder added, "I know that our allies want to help, but unless you've been through what we've been through and you understand what we go through, how can you assist or empower or uplift someone of color if you don't have any idea?"

Loudoun Chamber President and CEO Tony Howard said the empowerment committee and the chamber's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion group are a start.

“

I think what we have to figure out now is how do people respond to feeling safe in our vehicle and at the wineries and breweries. We're just kind of evaluating that, going with the flow, and letting the market determine what changes we might have to make.”

RENEE VENTRICE,
CORK AND KEG TOURS

He said he's had good conversations with Felder and other local business owners.

"The community of Loudoun County — I got here 14 years ago almost — has changed every day, and so we want to make certain that we have an organization that changes with it and meets the expectations of our business community," Howard said. "We want to make certain that we're creating programming and having community dialogue on the topics that are of most concern to our community, not just our members, because we think that our membership needs to become more diverse and needs to grow and evolve, just as Loudoun County has naturally."

Another way the local community is supporting Black businesses is through a new website called Loudoun Shops Black (LoudounShopsBlack.com). It includes businesses in arts and entertainment, consulting and financial services, dining, gifts and more.

Leah Fallon, who co-founded Loudoun Shops Black with local resident Danielle Nadler, said she was motivated to create the website after attending the silent protest walk in Leesburg on May 31.

"I just really felt compelled to do something, and I think that a lot of white allies are working through what can we actually do," Fallon said.

Fallon and Nadler published the website on July 7, now known as Blackout Day. The day of solidarity in America, which was launched to garner attention on police brutality and racism, evolved into efforts to support Black-owned businesses.

Fallon said many people have turned to books and podcasts to educate themselves on the concerns of Black people. She feels the best way to help is put money and generational wealth into the Black community.

She said the number of businesses promoted on the website continues to increase, nearing 100, and they have received just one negative response to the site — an email claiming it was "racist to white people."

Fallon said, "To me that shows us that we're doing right thing, that there are still people that don't understand how this might be helpful and my answer to them is this resource is not for you."

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UNITY AMID UNREST

Leesburg, Loudoun County take a strong stand against racism, injustice and police brutality

Coverage **12** | Commentary **14, 15**



At top left, Leesburg Town Councilman Ron Campbell was one of the lead organizers of the May 31 Leesburg march in solidarity with the late George Floyd and the black community. Many demonstrators held "Black Lives Matter" signs. Lower left, James Barksdale, a Louisiana native who recently moved to northern Virginia, holds an "I Can't Breathe" sign outside Town Hall, and a poster of a raised fist was left at the foot of the Confederate soldier monument in front of the courthouse.

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ANOTHER DELAY FOR
LOUDOUN, N. VIRGINIA

6 CORONAVIRUS
BUSINESSES TAKE
'LOUDOUN IS READY' PLEDGE

19 NEWS
BEATTY REMOVED
FROM EQUITY COMMITTEE

FROM THE COVER

‘This is an American issue, not just a black issue’

Crowds flood downtown Leesburg to speak out against injustices, racism

BY JOHN BATTISTON

jbattiston@loudountimes.com

The streets and sidewalks of historic downtown Leesburg were filled Sunday afternoon with more than 1,500 people exercising their right to peacefully protest in honor of George Floyd, a black man who died at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer earlier in the week.

Protesters of all ages and nationalities wrapped around the block comprising King, Loudoun, Wirt and Market streets beginning at roughly 3 p.m. Most wore personal face masks — in keeping with Gov. Ralph Northam’s (D) recommendations for “Phase 1” reopening in northern Virginia — and many carried signs.

On the Leesburg Town Hall Green, participants signed a poster-sized version of a painting by local artist Gertrude Evans, which depicts three people protesting police brutality. From there, participants began a short marching route through town, ultimately arriving at the feet of the Loudoun County Courthouse.

Loudoun County NAACP President Michelle Thomas, Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Phyllis Randall (D-At Large) and Leesburg Town Councilman Ron Campbell were among those who led the procession. Members of local law enforcement helped facilitate the event and kept the streets clear.

During the march, participants joined one another in songs and chants. Many of those chants, as well as many signs, referenced Floyd’s haunting last words, “I can’t breathe,” which he gasped as the attacking officer — who has since been charged with murder — knelt on his neck for several minutes.

From the front steps of the courthouse, Thomas shouted an introductory speech to the masses who saturated the surrounding lawn.

“Thank you so much for coming out today, for standing in solidarity like we always do,” she said. “This is nothing new for us. This is what’s true for us.”

Campbell, who founded sponsoring organization Citizens for a Better Leesburg, followed Thomas. Though he and other planners had previously said there would be no speeches during the event, he told crowds that their love expressed



Above, hundreds packed the Loudoun County Courthouse grounds in downtown Leesburg for a demonstration against racism, injustice and police brutality on May 31. Left, Pastor Michelle Thomas, president of the NAACP’s Loudoun branch, raises a fist during the May 31 demonstration in Leesburg.

Times-Mirror Photos/Nathaniel Cline

when it’s time to look at yourself in the mirror and ask, ‘Is there something else that you can do?’” she continued.

She then went on to paraphrase the Apostle Paul’s words from the book of Romans.

“I am fully persuaded that neither life, nor death — good God almighty — nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come ... [will separate me.] from the love of God and the truth in which he’s made us free,” Thomas declared. “Fight on, my brothers and sisters. March on, my brothers and sisters, and let’s get it done.

Randall followed, beginning with an appeal to her own beliefs when she said she would “talk to [the crowd] as a person of faith, because before I was anything else, I was a person of faith.”

“George Floyd was the tipping point ... but there were so many others who came before George Floyd,” she continued before listing the names of many high-profile black murder victims. These included

examples as historic as Emmett Till and as recent as Ahmaud Arbery, whose February murder sparked international outrage when video footage of it spread via the Internet.

“We are talking about hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people whose names you might not know, who may be buried in graves that are not even marked,” Randall said. “We are talking about people who were hung from trees like so much strange fruit, for generations and generations.”

She commended participants for keeping the day’s events from devolving into violence — as several protests across the U.S. have since Floyd’s death — and echoed Thomas’ petition to express their hunger for change by voting.

“This is good. This is peaceful. This is how it should be. But this is where it starts, not where it ends,” Randall said. “We’re going to stand together. We’re going to fight together. We’re going to hang together. We’re going to pray together. We’re going to support each other. We’re going to be nonviolent. We’re going to do it with love and justice and kindness, because that’s who Loudoun County, Virginia, is.”

Randall then handed the megaphone to Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton (D-10th), who called the people filling the courthouse lawn “a beautiful sight.”

“I have two teenage boys, and when I think about the lessons that I have to give them when they learn how to drive, it’s very different from those that Phyllis had to teach her kids,” Wexton, who is white, said. “It shouldn’t be that way.”

She also encouraged attendees to vote for racial justice advocates this fall, saying “we can’t pretend that we elected a black president and everything is fine, because it’s not.”

Thomas and Campbell each gave concluding remarks, reiterating the importance of civil discourse between all Americans amid such tumult.

“This issue is an American issue, not just a black issue,” Thomas said.

“We ask you to go home in love and in peace. We ask you to stick around — we’ve got some pretty good restaurants as well,” Campbell joked. “Just give somebody some love on your way home. Stay safe, stay brave.”

“

An incredible, peaceful event I was proud to be a part of.”

CATHERINE MARTIN THOMAS

“

Didn’t make it out there myself today but proud of my little town and its citizens, especially for keeping it peaceful and as it was intended. Very powerful driving through town tonight seeing all of the signs on the courthouse fences.”

TRACEY JARY TRACY

“

It was a well done, peaceful event. Proud to have been a part of it. Good job by the organizers and by Leesburg PD.”

CAROL BEBEE TURPIN