

W13_government_ROBIN

COVERSHEET

1. Planning commissioners express concerns at 1st meeting on data center

(Aug. 3, Robin Earl)

- **BOX: Town of Warrenton zoning for industrial districts**
- **BOX: 3 local groups host 'town hall' meeting to organize against proposed Amazon data center**

2. Developers propose townhomes, retail space and park for vacant lot next to

O'Brien's pub (Aug. 3, Robin Earl)

3. Warrenton Town Council sends budget back to staff to trim further (May 25,

Robin Earl)



Developers propose townhomes, retail space and park for vacant lot next to O'Brien's pub

By Robin Earl

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

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The restaurant building already has several apartments on the second floor. As part of the plan, these would be renovated as well. O'Brien's would also benefit from landscape improvements and the addition of a larger outdoor seating area extending into what is now a parking lot.

See **WATERLOO**, page 4



FARRISH PROPERTIES & ACQUISITIONS, LLC

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By Colleen LaMay

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Nayeli, 10, a rising 5th-grader, gets a haircut at the Back-to-School fair at Marsh Run Manufactured Home Community in Bealeton.

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See **BACK TO SCHOOL**, page 10

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FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

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WATERLOO, from page 1

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Susan Helander, chair of the Warrenton Planning Commission.



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Planning commissioners had a few questions about whether the park would or be reserved for residents. That has yet to be decided, Foote said. It would depend on questions of potential liability insurance.

Planning Commissioner Ali Zarabi expressed concern about upcoming construction on Broadview Avenue — unrelated to the Waterloo proposal — and how it might affect traffic congestion in the area. “I have a hard time seeing anything on that side [of Broadview] until we have a clear indication about traffic and congestion on that Broadview project.”

If the planning commission sends the project to the town council, and the council approves it by the end of the year, construction could begin in 2024, estimated Foote.

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AMAZON, from page 1

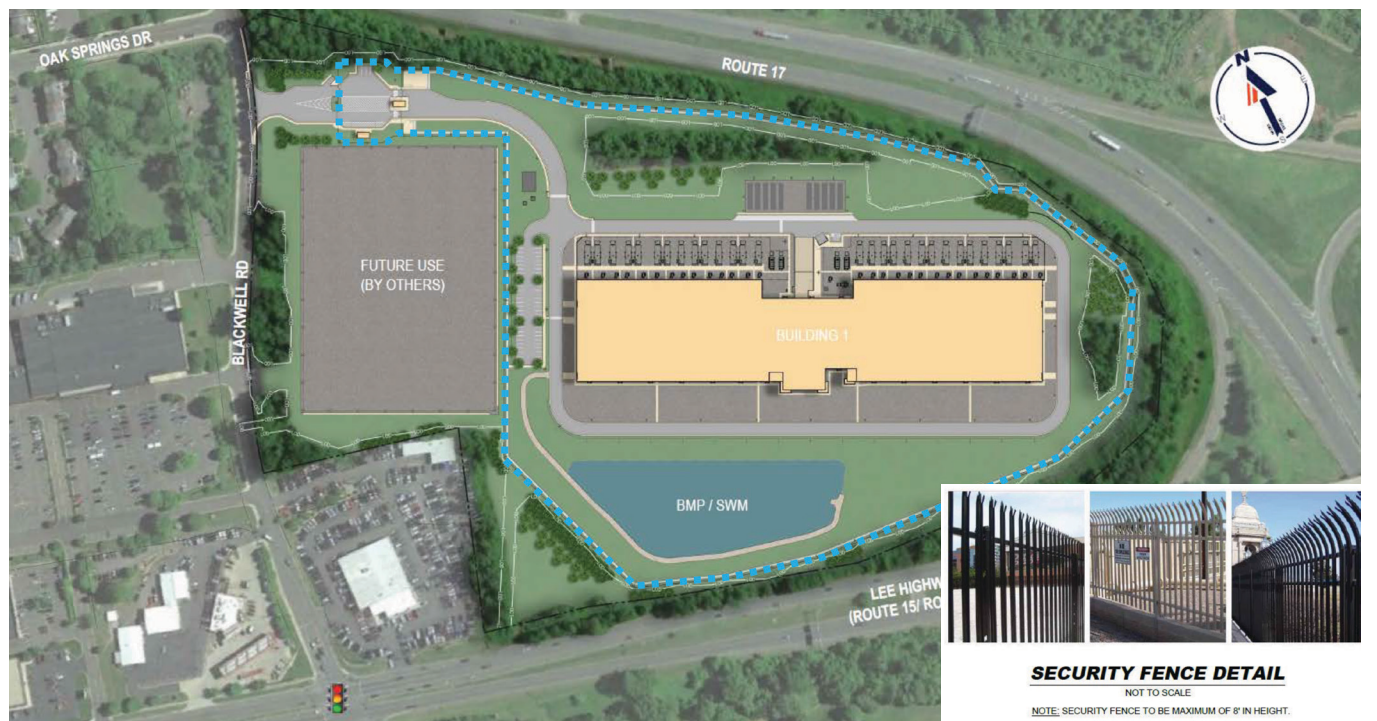
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Foote began his overview of the project with a brief history of the location. “This property has been undeveloped for decades, and it's been on the market for almost all that time. It has been zoned industrial for more than 30 years.” Known as the Weissberg property, it was considered as a location for a Target and for a Costco, but those projects never came to fruition, he said.

The SUP application reads, “This data center will be a new development on vacant industrial land and will finally put the land to a productive use that has escaped every other potential purchaser that has evaluated it over the last three-plus decades.”

Data center details

Foote explained to those assembled and in the data center application that the single building would be a 220,200-square-foot, rectangular, 37-foot-tall single-story structure.



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BOHLER ENGINEERING

This is a map of the data center's planned layout; the inset provides examples of what the security gates could look like.

Adding to the height of the building would be rooftop equipment that could extend the visible height up to 12 feet.

Also in the plan is a pad site reservation for a future Dominion Power substation on 8.17 acres. The facility would require an 8-foot-high lighted

security fence and a security gate accessed from Blackwell Road that would be staffed around the clock.

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See AMAZON, page 8

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AMAZON, from page 4

Foote briefly addressed the issue of noise from the data center. “The town of Warrenton has more stringent noise ordinances – for both decibels and frequency — than any jurisdiction I’ve worked with.” He said the data center will meet those requirements and added that the facility will be equipped with mufflers and any other necessary sound attenuating enclosures.

Up to 50 people could be employed at the Warrenton data center, with a maximum of 20 employees on site at any given time. Foote acknowledged that although there would not be many employees, they would be highly paid professional positions.

Although Amazon’s intention to build a data center at that location has been known since June 2021, the planning commission meeting was the first time the public was able to see the plan in any detail. Amazon submitted its special use application in April; it has already been revised a couple of times and will no doubt see more adjustments as it moves through the process. The Planning Commission will have to vote on the project before it goes to the Warrenton Town Council. Both boards will hold public hearings before making a final decision.

Data center opponents have objected to the idea of constructing a data center building at a “gateway” to Warrenton. Foote responded, “The design includes a variety of architectural features and colors to avoid the appearance of a solid wall.” He added that there are plans for landscaping that would provide “four-season screening” of the center.

Amazon’s SUP application states, “The design of the data center is ... intended to have the least possible impact on those residential areas in the vicinity, with substantial screening and buffering areas as depicted on the landscape plan, and where the facility itself is situated on the property. Although a degree of that design must follow the requirements of form following function, the proposed architecture is intended to avoid previous designs of other data centers that were less architecturally appealing, and to satisfy the purpose and intent of the town zoning ordinance with respect to building façade.”

A “balloon test” will be arranged, so that residents can get a sense of how tall the building will be and what they will be able to see from various vantage points. For the exercise, balloons are floated at the height that represents the top of the building and the top of the equipment positioned on the roof. When those tests are scheduled, that information will be shared with the public, said Planning Commission Chair Susan Rae Helander.

Planning commissioners follow up

When Foote finished his presentation, planning commissioners were invited to ask questions about the project. For this first meeting, Helander suggested that commissioners

Town of Warrenton zoning for industrial districts

The 42-acre Blackwell Road property owned by Amazon is zoned for industrial development. These are the uses of the land that would be permitted without a special permit (by-right) — and with a special use permit, which must be approved by the Warrenton Town Council.

Allowed by-right

- Accessory buildings
- Active and passive recreation and recreational facilities
- Banks and savings and loan offices
- Broadcasting studios and offices
- Business and office supply establishments
- Cabinet, upholstery, and furniture shops
- Cafeteria or snack bar for employees
- Clinics, medical or dental
- Commercial uses constituting up to 15% of permitted site or building area
- Conference centers
- Contractor’s office and warehouse without outdoor storage
- Crematory
- Dwellings for resident watchmen and caretakers employed on the premises
- Employment service or agency
- Flex office and industrial uses
- Health and fitness facilities
- Institutional buildings
- Janitorial service establishment
- Laboratories, research, experimental or testing, but not testing explosives, rockets or jet engines
- Light manufacturing uses which do not create danger to health and safety in surrounding areas and which do not create offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, lint, odor, heat, glare or electrical impulse than that which is generally associated with light industries
- Mobile food vendors
- Monument sales establishments with incidental processing to order but not including shaping of headstones
- Motion picture studio
- Nurseries and greenhouses
- Offices- business, professional or administrative
- Off-street parking and loading
- Open space
- Printing, publishing and engraving establishment; photographic processing; blueprinting; photocopying; and similar uses
- Private club, lodge, meeting hall, labor union or fraternal organization or sorority

- Rental service establishment
- Retail or wholesale sales and service incidental to a permitted manufacturing, processing, storing or distributing use
- Rug and carpet cleaning and storage with incidental sales of rugs and carpets
- Security service office or station
- Sign fabricating and painting
- Studios
- Transmission and receiving towers of height not exceeding 125 feet
- Utilities related to and necessary for service within the town, including poles, wires, transformers, telephone booths and the like for electrical power distribution or communication service, and underground pipelines or conduits for local electrical, gas, sewer or water service, but not those facilities listed as requiring a special use permit
- Wholesale establishment, storage warehouse or distribution center
- Furniture moving

Allowed with special use permit

- Automobile body shop
- Automobile and truck repair and service
- Commercial kennels
- Contractor’s storage yard
- Data center
- Farm equipment, motorcycle, boat and sport trailer sales and service
- Fuel, coal, oil distribution storage yards
- Lumber and building supply with undercover storage
- Maintenance and equipment shops with screened outside storage
- Outdoor storage of any kind
- Plumbing and electrical supply with undercover storage
- Restaurant or cafeteria, drive-thru or otherwise
- Self-service mini-warehouse
- Temporary fair and show grounds
- Tire and battery sales and service, tire recapping and retreading
- Transmission and receiving towers of height greater than 125 feet
- Treatment plants, water storage tanks, major transmission lines or pipelines, pumping or regulator stations, communications towers, storage yards and substations and cable television facilities and accessory buildings

Source: *Town of Warrenton zoning ordinance* (<https://www.warrentonva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/225/Article-3---Zoning-Districts-PDF>)

focus on aspects of the proposal that relate to the data center’s location at the entrance to Warrenton.

In the SUP’s application documents, the “Statement of Justification” acknowledges this issue: “Given the site’s importance as a gateway into the town, the applicant intends to screen the site with substantial landscaping to shield views of the buildings from the east and the west.”

Commission Vice Chair James Lawrence, who attended the meeting

remotely, immediately asked the question that seemed to be on the minds of everyone in the audience: “Can we address the tower lines that would be marring the landscape into town?”

Foote replied, “We cannot answer that.” He emphasized that the potential power lines were not part of Amazon’s proposal. “We are not involved. It is Dominion’s decision. Dominion answers not to me, but to the State Corporation Commission. The decision about the substation doesn’t lie with us.”



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL
Warrenton Planning Commissioner Ryan Stewart

Foote said that the data center could open portions of the facility if the substation were not built.

Lawrence replied, “That sounds like a fancy way of saying that Amazon will need the substation for the data center to be fully operational,” and Foote confirmed that was true.

In the SUP application, energy needs are addressed this way: “The data center can operate initially on the distribution lines that will be available on the site. The data center’s operations are projected to ramp up, and when this occurs the power needs will increase beyond the capacity of those distribution lines.”

Commissioner Ryan Stewart followed up by asking how coordination would work with Dominion, and Foote said that Dominion hoped to file a plan with the SCC this fall.

Stewart also wanted to know if Amazon had planned any community outreach around the data center plan. Foote replied, “Not yet.”

Zarabi began his time at the mic by emphasizing to Foote, “There is tremendous opposition to this project. It’s definitely different than what was envisioned in the comprehensive plan review, in meetings over many weeks and months. People of this town are concerned that the will of the people is being set aside.”

He continued, “Other data centers are in areas that have already been planned for this use. Here in little Fauquier County, it seems we are the oddballs.” He paused, then smiled. “And that’s a good thing,” he said to loud applause.

Zarabi also said he’d like to visit a data center that is similar to the one planned for Warrenton. Foote said he would work toward that with the town’s planning manager.

Gerald Johnston, who lives in a townhouse across the street from the designated site, was the final planning commissioner to address Foote. Johnston pointed out that the data center property is on a higher elevation than Lee Highway or Blackwell Road, so will be easier to see from a distance. “I want to know the day and time of that balloon test so I can stand on my deck and see what I’ll be able to see” if the data center is built. “And I want to stand in my daughter’s room on the second floor so I can see what she can see.”

A public hearing for the Amazon proposal has not been scheduled, but the planning commission will take

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AMAZON, from page 8
up the subject again at its Aug. 23 meeting. Helander explained that since the plan is complicated, it will require discussions at several work

sessions as well as a site visit before a public hearing is set.
Public comments are being accepted in writing through the town's website. (<https://www.warrentonva.gov/296/Submit-a-Public-Comment>)

3 local groups host 'town hall' meeting to organize against proposed Amazon data center

The local residents' group Protect Fauquier and activist organizations Citizens for Fauquier County and The Piedmont Environmental Council will jointly host a town hall-style meeting at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10, at the PATH Foundation, 321 Walker Drive, Room 301, Warrenton, according to a press release.
All three groups strenuously

oppose the proposed Amazon data center being considered at the corner of Blackwell Road and U.S. 29 and the resulting Dominion Energy substation and transmission power lines.
The press release invited "all community members concerned about the Amazon data center, substation and associated transmission lines to attend to learn more about the proposal and efforts they can take to stand against it."

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Alyssa D. Phillips
Family Law Attorney

Congratulations to Alyssa D. Phillips for 20 years of excellent advocacy on behalf of our law firm's family law clients.

Your expertise in negotiation and litigation has been invaluable to the clients you serve and Mark B. Williams & Associates, PLC.

We salute you and look forward to working together for many more years.

—Mark & Gloria Williams



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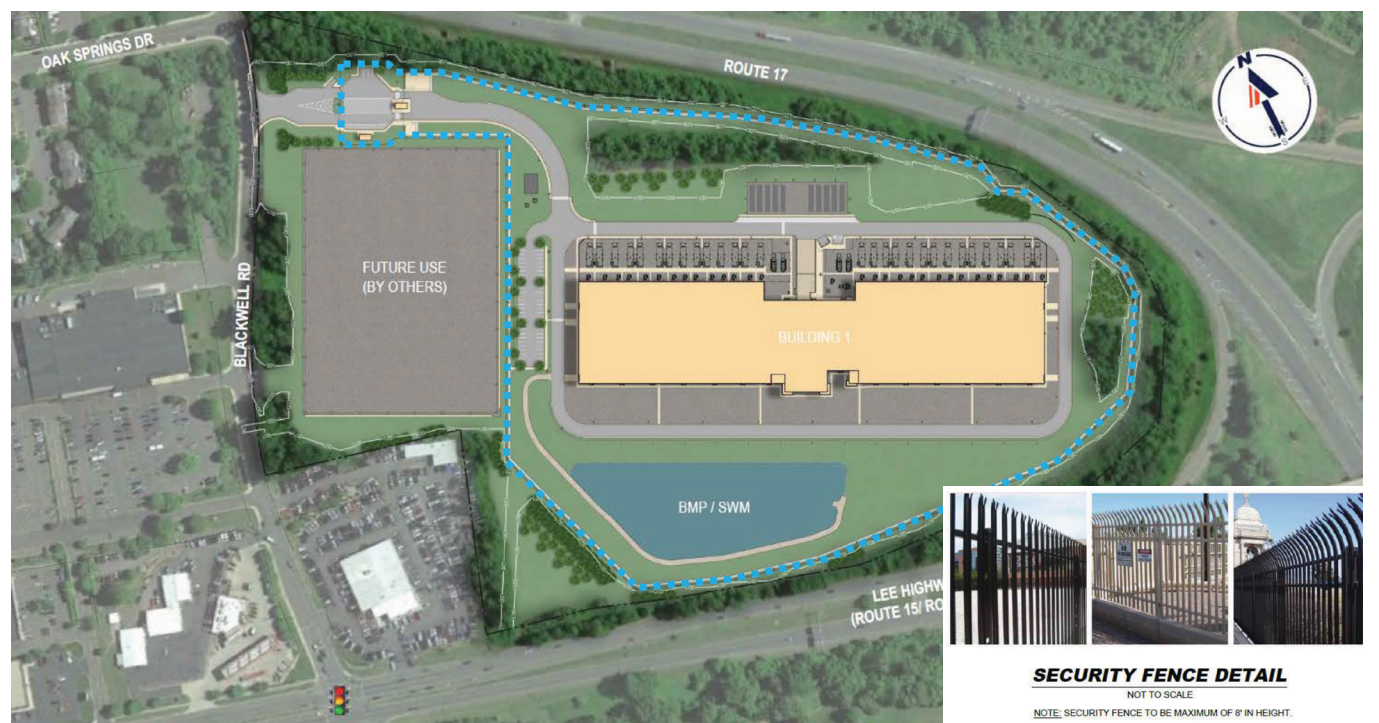
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Warrenton Town Council sends budget back to staff to trim further

By Robin Earl

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The Warrenton Town Council met for a budget work session May 18 to brainstorm about how to reconcile its May 10 decision to cut the town's real estate tax rate — from 5 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 4 cents — with its budget objectives. Although everyone seemed to agree that employee raises were a non-negotiable, there was no consensus on what to cut to make up for the reduced revenue.

The revised tax rate will already reduce the town's revenue by \$205,253 for FY2023, but will also affect FY2022 revenues, reducing them by \$95,000. At the meeting, council members said that they want to reduce or maintain other tax rates, which could force further cuts to their spending wish list.

The town's 2023 budget is scheduled to be finalized by mid-June and will take effect July 1.

Council members, ultimately responsible for passing a budget, had few concrete suggestions to pay for \$1.9 million in new general-fund expenditures this year without raising revenue, instead asking staff to find solutions. Council members directed staff to provide options for department-level cuts by its next budget meeting, tentatively set for June 7 or 8. Councilman Kevin Carter (Ward 5) said, "We have a responsibility to a number of constituencies: the staff and the taxpayers." He spoke of the inflation residents are dealing with at the gas pumps and the grocery store. "I cannot in good faith raise taxes until we determine any ways we can cut expenses."

He said, "My suggestion is to come up with a revenue source we are comfortable with, then

have the town manager decide how to make it work. It's not our job to get into the weeds to decide what gets cut."

In the current draft of the budget, employees would receive 5% cost-of-living raises along with additional merit-based raises of up to 2%. The proposed budget would also fund a "hazardous duty supplement" to first responders' retirement funds along with adding about six full-time-equivalent positions to the town payroll, including a police sergeant.

Councilman Bill Semple (Ward 2) and Councilman James Hartman (Ward 4) agreed that it was up to staff to make adjustments to the budget. "We need to maintain what we have, with raises in place, then go from there," said Hartman.

It's unclear how much will ultimately need to be cut from the budget to pay for those raises, however. The current proposed budget includes a 2% increase in the meals tax — from 4% to 6% — but several council members said they wanted to see a budget with no tax increases at all.

A 2% increase in the meals tax could raise an additional \$1.5 million this year, according to town budget officials. County supervisors adopted a 6% meals tax last year for businesses outside town limits; there was no public opposition from restaurants during the county budget process.

Councilman Renard Carlos (at large) said, "We came out of COVID better than we went in, thanks to our business community, our staff, a little bit of prayer and a little bit of luck. An increase in the meals tax would be an easy one, but we already lean too heavily on the meals tax for revenue. ... Before we add positions, before we raise taxes, where can we cut?"



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL
Councilmen Bill Semple (Ward 2) and Brett Hamby (Ward 3) listen to a budget presentation with Mayor Carter Nevill at a May 10 Warrenton Town Council meeting.

Councilman Sean Polster (at large) recommended raising the meals tax 1% this year and 1% next year.

All council members said they were comfortable with doubling the cigarette tax from \$.20 to \$.40 a pack. The cigarette tax increase, which council members agreed to on May 10, would add \$213,661 to the town's coffers, according to Stephanie Miller, finance director for the town.

Councilman Bill Semple and Councilwoman Heather Sutphin (Ward 1) refocused the discussion on staff compensation: "We need to ensure all existing employees receive raises. Everything else is on the table," said Semple.

Sutphin pointed out that town of Warrenton employees were facing the same levels of inflation that residents were dealing with and needed relief.

Semple looked around the meeting room at the 14 Warrenton Police Department officers and half dozen public works employees, and said, "All you guys come first, everything else comes second. Start with that, then have revenue as low as possible."

See **TOWN COUNCIL**, page 13

MEMORIAL DAY

JOIN US in a Day of Remembrance – a Day of Deep Gratitude
to the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice
and gave their lives in service of our country,
the United States of America, and **ALL** who live here.

When called upon, they stood and died for our DEMOCRACY.
Our way of life. Our rules of law.

NOT autocracy
NOT plutocracy
NOT theocracy

NOT the rule of a select few.

But DEMOCRACY as in "Government of the people, by the people, for the people."
ALL the people no matter what race, creed, color, religion, or sexual orientation.

We thank them deeply for their patriotism and for the oath they took –
to support and defend the Constitution of the United States
against all enemies, foreign and domestic,
and to bear true faith and allegiance to the same...

They are our heroes.

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Two suspects in car dealership thefts arrested, other suspects still at large

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Police are still looking for multiple suspects wanted in connection with the Friday, May 13 theft of four vehicles from the Country Chevrolet dealership in Warrenton. Two suspects, both from southeast Washington, D.C., were arrested shortly after the alleged theft. One allegedly told police that he was promised \$500 to participate in the theft.

Two stolen vehicles — a black Chevrolet Corvette and a silver Jeep Cherokee — had not been located as of Tuesday, according to the Warrenton Police Department.

Marcus Gray, 36, was arrested at about 6 a.m. May 13 after Fauquier County Sheriff's Office deputies engaged in a high-speed pursuit that ended in Prince William County. He was charged with several felonies, including grand larceny of a vehicle and conspiracy to commit grand larceny.

Richard Adgerson, 33, was apprehended at roughly the same time as Gray by sheriff's deputies near

the Mayhugh's convenience store in New Baltimore and charged with grand larceny of a vehicle and conspiracy to commit grand larceny.

Both men are being held without bond and are next scheduled to appear in court in July.

Details of the theft

Around 3 a.m. on May 13, security camera footage showed that suspects arrived in the dealership's lot and broke the windows of four Chevrolet Corvettes and a Jeep Cherokee, "taking the security box containing the key to the vehicles," according to a search warrant affidavit filed by a Warrenton Police Department detective.

Nearly three hours later, at approximately 5:40 a.m., the footage showed that an Acura RDX entered the used-car lot behind Sheetz, and the Acura and the Cherokee then "can both be seen leaving the area."

Footage then showed that the Acura drove across the street to the main dealership lot, where four people exited the Acura and then "walk[ed] to four respective Corvettes in the



Marcus Gray



Richard Adgerson

parking lot," the affidavit said.

One of the Corvettes had a dead battery, however, and an individual got out of that car and got into one of the other Corvettes on the passenger side, the affidavit said. The RDX, Cherokee and the three Corvettes "can be seen leaving northbound on [U.S. 15/29]," the affidavit said.

At about 5:45 a.m., a witness called 911 to report that individuals were "tampering with three different cars" in the dealership's lot and that the cars had driven north on U.S. 15/29, according to a criminal complaint filed by a Warrenton police detective. Warrenton police then alerted the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office, and sheriff's deputies quickly found three of the stolen vehicles at Mayhugh's in New Baltimore, according to the complaint.

Gray arrested

When deputies moved in, "two of the vehicles went around myself and other units," according to a criminal complaint filed by one of the deputies who responded to the call. The deputy pursued one of the vehicles, a Corvette later determined to be driven by

Gray, north on U.S. 15/29 "at a high rate of speed," the complaint said.

Gray made it across the county line into Gainesville where he "crashed into another vehicle" and drove behind a scrapyard there, according to the complaint, and the deputy arrested him. Gray "had a strong odor" of alcohol, the deputy reported, and a bag of burglary tools was found in the front seat of the Corvette.

A Warrenton detective later interviewed Gray, according to the search warrant affidavit, and Gray allegedly stated that an "an unknown individual" had dropped him off at the dealership and that "the Corvette he took and drove was already running when he arrived." Gray allegedly added that someone named "Will" or "William" had promised Gray that he would be paid \$500 if Gray "came, picked up and dropped off the car at a location in Maryland," the affidavit said.

Adgerson arrested

Adgerson had allegedly driven another one of the stolen Corvettes from Warrenton to the Mayhugh's parking lot but did not attempt to flee in the vehicle when deputies arrived at the convenience store parking lot, according to a criminal complaint filed with his arrest.

Leaving the car behind, a man — later identified as Adgerson — "was witnessed walking up Route 29" after deputies arrived, the complaint said. Assisted by K-9s, deputies soon located the man, later identified as Adgerson, behind a building near the convenience store and arrested him.

Warrenton Town Council sends budget back to staff to trim further

TOWN COUNCIL, from page 3

Venturing into the weeds

Although council members vowed to stay "out of the weeds," of the budget, they did float some ideas about possible places to make cuts: parks and recreation, community development and information technology, for instance.

Questions about the Warrenton Aquatic and Recreation Facility came up, and council members wanted to know why the WARF consistently operates in the red. "Can we get better performance there?" asked Semple. He suggested that a \$100,000 speaker system planned for the facility could be put on hold, for example.

"The WARF is a business. It should be run like a business," said Polster.

Town Manager Brandie Schaeffer pointed out that the WARF has never been a money maker, even when it was a brand-new facility in the early 2000s. Now that it's 20 years old, she said, expenses are higher because it requires more maintenance. She added that Tommy Cureton, parks and recreation director, has exceeded his projected revenue goals for the WARF, but the venture was never designed to make money. "It provides a very high level of service for our residents, and they love it," Schaeffer said.

Councilman Brett Hamby (Ward 3) agreed, "The WARF has never been above water."

Schaeffer also pointed out that when she took on the job of town

manager in 2018, there was no IT department. Employees were filling out weekly timecards on paper and records and documents were hard to find because they were not digitized. IT now employs four people and both hardware and support have improved, said Schaeffer. During the pandemic, IT innovations allowed employees to work from home when necessary and council meetings were livestreamed so that residents — and sometimes, council members -- could attend remotely.

Sutphin said, "IT has done a wonderful job in bringing us up to this level. We have made great strides."

Carlos wondered out loud if the town could partner with the county's economic development department. Schaeffer said the town already has a good working relationship with the county economic development department, and it has been beneficial to both localities.

Schaeffer said that her staff worked long hours to rework the budget after the tax rate decrease and would have to start over to make the numbers work without a 2% meals tax increase.

Overall, the draft FY 2023 Warrenton budget would increase general fund expenditures from \$16.3 million to \$18.2 million, largely driven by personnel costs. Total expenditures would increase from \$26.5 million to \$32.4 million, in part to address what town official say are necessary maintenance issues in the town's water and sewer infrastructure.

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EVENING ACTIVITY:

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DOORS OPEN & REGISTRATION STARTS 8:30AM

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HAMBURGER OF HOT DOG, BAKED BEANS AND CHIPS \$6

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