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Vienna Economic Development Director Steps Down

Natalie Guilmeus, the Town of Vienna's first ever Economic Development Director, has accepted a position as Deputy Director with the Virginia Beach Economic Development Department. Guilmeus' last day with the Town of Vienna will be Friday, Oct. 25, 2024.

"It's been an incredible opportunity to serve in this special community," said Guilmeus as she reflected on nearly five years of service in Vienna. "It was challenging establishing the department just as the pandemic was beginning but working with my colleagues, the Town Business Liaison Committee, the Vienna Business Association, local non-profit organizations and state and federal resources, we were able to creatively find ways to support our local businesses through that very difficult time."

Guilmeus came to Vienna in November 2019 and quickly facilitated an agreement between the Town of Vienna and Fairfax County that resulted in the distribution of \$2.7 million in relief grants to local businesses that were struggling during the pandemic. She also worked with the Vienna Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Department to implement emergency measures to allow outdoor dining at restaurants so that businesses could continue operating while adhering to pandemic-related social distancing guidelines.

"What I have tried to do in my role from the beginning is to make sure the business community felt loved, supported, and cared for, and understood the resources available to help them thrive," Guilmeus said.

Other notable accomplishments that Guilmeus helped lead during her tenure include:

- the "Ignite" virtual education series to help business owners and promising entrepreneurs establish and maintain a sound operational framework.
- Vienna Restaurant Week – to drive business by encouraging residents to dine at local establishments and take advantage of weeklong specials.
- Vienna in Bloom – an initiative to beautify the commercial corridor, creating a welcoming feel and contributing to the Town's goal of making Vienna a desirable destination for dining, shopping and special events.
- a culinary workforce certificate program to help 200+ food-based businesses with hiring and retention efforts.

Guilmeus also worked with an outside expert to establish the Town's award-winning economic development brand on social media and the web – www.exploreviennava.com, and established collaborative relationships with the Vienna Business Association, the Fairfax County Government and the Town Business Liaison Committee to help ensure the Town's economic



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infrastructure remains sustainable and vibrant. The work Guilmeus started will continue while the Town searches for her successor.

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