

ARLINGTON COUNTY FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMISSION
REPORT TO THE COUNTY BOARD

FY 2016 PROPOSED BUDGET

BUDGET AREA:	CPHD
FAAC REVIEWERS:	Rouleau, Peterson, Holland, Kinney
DATE OF FAAC ACTION:	March 9, 2015

FAAC Opinion

There is concern that staffing levels in the Planning Division are not sufficient to keep up with current planning studies and are preventing the start of or progress on others, for example: Lee Highway Visioning; Four Mile Run/Shirlington Crescent; Ballston Mall commercial area; Pentagon City Mall commercial area; and the Edge Study. Additionally, two unanticipated, but important and short-term, study/plans were announced in the current fiscal year: the Community Facilities Study and the impact of the cancellation of the street car on Columbia Pike and Crystal City. And CPHD is providing—and will continue to—significant support to APS planning efforts for multiple school locations.

Additional areas of interest to FAAC include:

1. CPHD’s proposed “one-stop shop” for the permitting and regulatory process. This will help improve the document management process and strengthen the tracking of permitting metrics.
2. The need to prioritize planning projects and stick to those priorities was directly conveyed to FAAC members. This would require clear direction from the Board and continuity—especially as the Chair position changes.
3. Presumably staff concerns about workload would be helped by the addition of positions—though staff was clear that even (new) “planner” positions required a corresponding level of support personnel.
4. One issue not discussed with staff but that could be explored is whether certain “functions” now performed by planners could be contracted out or shifted (example: the meeting planning, meeting facilitation and follow up paperwork for the many meetings CPHD planning staff is anchoring)
5. What is the future of the sector planning process in Arlington? There are a number of dated sector plans (including Virginia Square and Courthouse) that will potentially need to be updated in the near future.

Staff indicated that it had asked the Manager—but had not received—2 FTEs . These FTEs could be planning positions or they could fill project management roles within the department.

FAAC Recommendation #1

The FAAC supports the Planning Commission request and recommends that the County Board identify funds to support the CPHD request of two additional FTEs for the Planning Staff (for a total of approximately \$200K, the source to be identified at a later date).

Vote:	Yes: 8	No: 3	Abstain: 0
Comment:	There should be a clearer overview of the planning process, how priorities are established and project timelines. These recommended positions do not necessarily need to be planners, but could be project managers hired to improve project processes and timelines.		

FAAC Recommendation #2

The FAAC recommends that the County Board prioritize planning actions and where necessary place a temporary moratorium on additional planning studies and projects.

Vote:	Yes: 11	No: 0	Abstain: 0
Comment:			

FAAC Recommendation #3

The FAAC recommends that the County Board approve the County Manager's FY 2016 proposed budget for CPHD, as amended.

Vote:	Yes: 11	No: 0	Abstain:
Comment:	This budget includes the two FTEs supported by the Commission in Recommendation #1.		

Future Considerations

The FAAC looks forward to hearing about the implementation of the improved regulatory and permitting system. FAAC and is optimistic that the this permitting process will help eliminate costly delays in development as well as streamline the process for those interested in doing business in Arlington County. Ideally, FAAC would like to receive a briefing from the CPHD staff once they begin the rolling out these process improvements.

The interdepartmental work team for Columbia Pike and Crystal City will reflected the new priorities identified by the County Board in November 2014. The County Manager is scheduled to report to the Board in March, with a report going to the County Board by the end of FY 2015. The key question from this review will the proposal for an alternative transportation system. However, based on recent decisions, it is clear the Board remains committed to the Affordable Housing portion of the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Plan.