

2012

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Legislative Program

Representing the Local Governments of:

Albemarle County
City of Charlottesville
Fluvanna County
Greene County
Louisa County
Nelson County

December 2011

Joe Chesser Chairman
Steve Williams, Executive Director
David Blount, Legislative Liaison

THOMAS JEFFERSON PLANNING DISTRICT 2012 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

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ALBEMARLE FACTS

Area: 726 square miles
Population: 98,970 (2010 Census)
County Seat: Charlottesville
Incorporated Town: Scottsville
FY12 Operating Budget: \$215.6 million (including schools)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.742 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$4.28 per \$100 assessed value

CHARLOTTESVILLE FACTS

Area: 10.3 square miles
Population: 43,475 (2010 Census)
FY12 Operating Budget: \$130.3 million (includes schools—local contribution only)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.95 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$4.20 per \$100 assessed value

FLUVANNA FACTS

Area: 290 square miles
Population: 25,691 (2010 Census)
County Seat: Palmyra
Incorporated Town: Columbia
FY 12 Operating Budget: \$67.9 million (including schools)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.57 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$4.15 per \$100 assessed value

GREENE FACTS

Area: 157 square miles
Population: 18,403 (2010 Census)
County Seat and Incorporated Town: Stanardsville
FY12 Operating Budget: \$51.4 million (including schools)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.69 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$5.00 per \$100 assessed value

LOUISA FACTS

Area: 511 square miles
Population: 33,153 (2010 Census)
County Seat: Louisa
Incorporated Towns: Louisa, Mineral
FY12 Operating Budget: \$84.6 million (including schools)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.62 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$1.90 per \$100 assessed value

NELSON FACTS

Area: 474 square miles
Population: 15,520 (2010 Census)
County Seat: Lovingston
FY 12 Operating Budget: \$32.9 million (includes schools—local contribution only)
Real Estate Tax Rate: \$.55 per \$100 assessed value
Personal Property Tax Rate: \$2.95 per \$100 assessed value

PRIORITY ITEMS

SECONDARY ROAD DEVOLUTION

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities are strongly opposed to any legislation or regulations that would transfer responsibility to counties for construction, maintenance or operation of current or new secondary roads.

The Administration is examining the possibility for shifting the responsibility for certain functions of the state's secondary road system to localities. A report produced last summer for the Commonwealth Transportation Board bolstered the argument for this "devolution" by noting that the state's "secondary construction and maintenance budgets are declining, the system's condition is deteriorating, the cost to restore the system to a state of good repair is increasing, funds for new construction have evaporated, and VDOT is required to continue to accept new roads into the secondary system." Indeed, for FY11, VDOT allocated about \$410 million to secondary road construction and maintenance (down about one-third from the FY07 figure). Ever-increasing amounts of state construction dollars are being transferred annually to maintain existing infrastructure. Prior examinations have rated nearly one-third of secondary road mileage as having deficient pavement. With nearly 50,000 miles of roads, Virginia's secondary road system is four times larger than the network of roads maintained by cities, towns and the two counties that maintain their own roads.

Efficient and effective transportation infrastructure, including the secondary road system, is critical to a healthy economy, job creation, a cleaner environment and public safety. In the past 20 years, the number of miles travelled on Virginia roadways has steadily increased, while the attention to maintaining the secondary system has taken a back seat. Shifting the responsibility for secondary roads to local entities could result in vast differences among existing road systems in different localities, potentially placing the state at a competitive economic disadvantage with other states when considering business and job recruitment and movement of goods.

We question if it is less costly for Virginia taxpayers to have local governments, which lack the capacity, to maintain secondary roads, and lose the economies of scale of having those functions performed by a single state agency that has had that responsibility three-quarters of a century. What will be the costs to taxpayers of the inefficiencies of duplication arising from nearly 100 local transportation departments? While such a plan might buoy the state's transportation budget, it will only shift the burden of paying for these necessary transportation costs to homeowners' real estate tax bills, and the political liability for unpopular tax increases to local elected officials.

STATE/LOCAL FUNDING and REVENUES

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities urge the governor and legislature to 1) honor their funding obligations to localities; 2) resist shifting costs for state programs to localities; and 3) not further restrict local revenue authority. Further, the state and local governments should jointly examine contractual relationships for services the state requires localities to deliver.

Stagnant local revenues, along with disappearing federal stimulus dollars and coming teacher retirement rate increases, will present formidable challenges to local budgets this year. Two things that will be hard to come by: meaningful increases in state aid for locally-provided services and restoration of previous cuts in core programs. Unfortunately, recent state funding reductions have not been accompanied by program changes that could alleviate financial burdens on localities. Underfunded/unfunded state requirements and “cost shifting” by the state reduce local ability to meet local needs to pay for programs and services. Increased demand for services primarily funded at the local level present unique challenges to rural, urban and fast-growing localities alike (all present in our region).

Accordingly, we believe reduction or elimination of state funding for state-required services/programs should be accompanied by relaxation or suspension of the state requirement or flexibility for the locality to meet the requirement. Further, the state and localities should examine the concept of a contractual relationship for services that the state requires localities to deliver. This would be an important step, given that 1) most state aid to local governments pays for services localities are mandated to provide; 2) state standards prescribe how services are to be delivered; and 3) localities have to meet such standards regardless of the costs.

Local governments also are overly dependent on real estate taxes that continue to produce less revenue due to the sluggish housing market. Therefore, any changes to Virginia’s tax code or in state policy should not reduce local government revenues or restrict local taxing authority. This includes proposals to alter or eliminate the BPOL and Machinery and Tools taxes, or to divert Communications Sales and Use Tax Fund revenues intended for localities to other uses. Instead, the legislature should broaden the revenue sources available to local governments. The state should refrain from establishing local tax policy at the state level and allow local governments to retain authority over decisions that determine the equity of local taxation policy.

We also request the following:

The state should restore across-the-board reductions in aid-to-localities. These funds provide financial assistance for local implementation of state-required or state high-priority programs. If the state cannot meet this commitment, then program regulations, criteria, and administrative requirements should be adjusted to reflect the decrease in state resources.

The governor and legislature should protect the future integrity of the Virginia Retirement System, while exploring the viability and benefits of allowing local governments 1) to require Plan 1 employees to pay their share of retirement contributions, and 2) to offer defined contribution retirement plans to their employees. Finally, the General Assembly should ensure the appropriate collection of transient occupancy taxes from online transactions.

PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities urge the legislature to fully fund the state share of the realistic costs of the Standards of Quality without making allocation formula and policy changes that reduce state funding or shift additional funding responsibility to localities.

The state will spend nearly \$5 billion on public education in FY12, just under 30% of its general fund budget (a drop of over five percent from FY09). This level of funding for FY12 is expected to be over \$600 million less than the FY09 amounts. Meanwhile, local governments boost education funding by spending over \$3 billion more per year than required by the state.

Recent reductions in state funding for public education were accomplished in large part through a number of K-12 policy changes that will lessen the state's funding obligations moving forward. For example, the state "saved" millions of dollars by shifting costs to localities through making some spending ineligible for state reimbursement or lowering the amount of the payback. It also imposed a cap on state funding for education support personnel in FY10. While we oppose such actions, we believe localities and school divisions should be given flexibility to meet requirements and management their budgets when such reductions and cost-shifting occur. We also urge the state to resist further policy changes that would require localities to fund a greater share of costs. State funding should be realistic and recognize actual educational needs, practices and costs; otherwise, more of the education funding burden will fall on local real estate taxes.

The state budgeted teacher salary figure (on which it bases its share of teacher costs) trails the statewide and national averages. Teacher pay comprises the majority of K-12 expenditures, and local market conditions dictate the level of pay required to recruit and retain quality teachers. Accordingly, localities in our region should be included in the "Cost of Competing Adjustment" now available only to various localities primarily in Northern Virginia. This would help our localities to reach and maintain competitive compensation. Likewise, to help recruit, develop and retain a highly qualified and diverse teacher workforce, the state also should not eliminate or decrease state funding for benefits for school employees.

Concerning the Local Composite Index (LCI), we support 1) establishment of a mechanism for local appeal of the calculated LCI to the state; and 2) changes to redefine the local true values component of the formula to include land use taxation value, rather than fair market assessed value, for properties that have qualified and are being taxed under a land use value program.

Regarding school capital needs, we continue to urge state financial assistance with school construction and renovation needs, including funding for the Literary Loan and interest rate subsidy programs. The state should resist its customary seizing of dollars from the Literary Fund to pay state costs for teacher retirement.

CHESAPEAKE BAY TMDL

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities support the goal of improved water quality, but it is imperative that we have major and reliable forms of financial and technical assistance from the federal and state governments if comprehensive water quality improvement strategies for local and state waters emptying into the Chesapeake Bay are to be effective. We support fairness in applying requirements for reductions in nutrient and sediment loading across source sectors, along with accompanying authority and incentives for all sectors to meet such requirements. We believe fairness across sectors will require appropriate regulatory mechanisms at both the state and local government levels. The Planning District localities are in strong agreement that we will oppose actions that impose monitoring, management or similar requirements on localities without providing sufficient resources.

As the result of various court settlements concerning the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency is enforcing water quality standards in the Chesapeake Bay watershed by imposing a pollution diet (known as Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL) to reduce pollution to acceptable levels. Bay states submitted plans showing how they will achieve TMDL goals for reducing nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment flowing into the Bay. The proposed TMDL and Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan require two-year milestones for the state and localities. As local governments will be greatly impacted by initiatives to reduce pollutants into state waters of the Bay watershed, it is imperative that aggressive state investment in meeting such milestones occurs. This investment must take the form of authority, funding and other resources being in place to assure success, and must ensure that cost/benefit analyses are conducted of solutions that generate the greatest pollution reductions per dollar spent.

Local governments are particularly concerned about the various effects on their communities and their economic growth. There will be costs to meet reduced pollutant discharge limitations for localities that own/operate treatment plants. Local governments will be required to develop and implement nutrient management programs for certain large, public properties. Costs for stormwater management regulations will fall on both new development and redevelopment. There will be economic impacts due to increased cost for compliance by agriculture and increased fees charged by the permitted dischargers.

Accordingly, we recommend and request the following:

1. Sufficient state funds for the full cost of implementing TMDL measures that will be required of local governments, including those associated with revised stormwater management regulations and any new requirement for locally-implemented stormwater management programs.
2. Sufficient federal funds for grants and low-interest loans for capital costs, such as for permitted dischargers to upgrade treatment plants and for any retrofitting of developed areas, while minimizing the economic impact of increased fees.
3. Sufficient state funding for and direction 1) to the Cooperative Extension Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to aid farmers with best management practices (BMP) in their operations, and 2) to the Soil and Water Conservation Board for monitoring resource management plan compliance.
4. Any expansion of the Nutrient Exchange Program to allow trading and offsets of nutrients among stormwater, onsite septic, wastewater, agriculture and forestry should be contained within and be relevant to a particular watershed, and should ensure that monetary exchanges are equivalent to the costs of the applicable BMP offset.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities urge the state to establish separate, dedicated and permanent state revenue streams to expand and maintain our transportation infrastructure. We urge the state to restore formula allocations for secondary/urban construction and for unpaved roads, and to preserve urban street maintenance dollars.

Local governments need sustainable, dedicated, non-general funds from the state to support our transportation network. Absent such an investment, Virginia faces a congestion and mobility crisis that will stifle economic growth and negatively affect the quality of life of our residents. The need to fund a declining transportation infrastructure is dire and state dollars remain inadequate. Maintenance of the existing system continues to grow, with nearly \$2 billion being spent yearly on maintenance, of which one-half billion dollars is being transferred from the construction to the maintenance budget. In addition, formula distributions for unpaved roads and primary/urban/secondary construction have been eliminated.

We urge the state to fund transportation needs with stable and recurring revenues that are separate from the general fund and that are sufficient to meet Virginia's well-documented highways, transit and other needs. We believe the state should direct its funding efforts at all transportation modes, both statewide and regionally, targeting investments to solutions that put money to work on new ideas and in tandem with leveraging private investment. We urge the state to restore formula allocations for secondary/urban construction and for unpaved roads. We also support stable and increasing dollars for cities and towns to maintain roads within their jurisdictional boundaries.

We believe state funding should account for urban area needs where public transportation is important, the increasing traffic demands placed on fast-growing localities and ongoing improvements necessary on rural, secondary roads. We believe these improvements are vital to our region's ability to respond to local and regional congestion and economic development issues.

We support ongoing state and local efforts to coordinate transportation and land use planning, without eroding local land use authority, and state incentives for localities that do so. We urge VDOT to be mindful of local comprehensive, land use and bicycle/trail plans, as well as regional transportation plans, when conducting corridor or transportation planning within a locality or region. We also take the following positions:

- 1) We support enabling authority to establish mechanisms for funding transit and non-transit projects in the region, including funding for existing and future state-supported inter-city and high speed passenger rail.
- 2) While we opposed the closing of VDOT's Louisa residency facilities and support its reopening, we also support the option for the locality to purchase the property.

LAND USE and GROWTH MANAGEMENT

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities encourage the state to provide local governments with additional tools to manage growth, without preempting or circumventing existing authorities.

In the past, the General Assembly has enacted both mandated and optional land use provisions applicable to local governments in order to address growth issues. While some have been helpful, others have prescribed one-size-fits-all rules that hamper various localities that may approach their land use planning differently. Preemption or circumvention of existing local authority hinders localities in implementing the comprehensive plan or regulating land uses. Moreover, current land use authority often is inadequate to allow local governments to provide for balanced growth in a manner that protects and improves quality of life.

The General Assembly should grant localities additional tools necessary to meet important infrastructure needs that are driven by development. We endorse efforts to have impact fee and proffer systems that are workable and meaningful for various parties, but we oppose attempts to weaken our current proffer authority. Rather, we support the road impact fee authority, adopted in 2007, being revised to include additional localities and to provide the following: 1) a fair allocation of the costs of new growth on public facilities; 2) facility costs that include various transportation modes, schools, public safety, libraries and parks; 3) effective implementation and reasonable administrative requirements; and 4) no caps or limits on locality impact fee updates.

Further, to enhance our ability to pay for infrastructure costs and to implement services associated with new developments, we support localities being given authority to enact local ordinances for determining whether public facilities are adequate (“adequate public facility,” or APF ordinances).

We also take the following positions:

- 1) We support optional cluster development as a land use tool for local governments.
- 2) While we support the concept of urban development areas (UDAs) as contained in the Code, we also support making the use of UDAs optional for localities.
- 3) Concerning conservation of land, we support a) state funding for localities, at their option, to acquire, preserve and maintain open space; b) full authority to generate local dollars for such efforts; c) additional incentives for citizens to create conservation easements; and d) authority for localities, at their option, to enact scenic protection and tourist enhancement districts.
- 4) The General Assembly should define “lost profits” and lost access” in the proposed Constitutional amendment on eminent domain before submitting it to referendum. Any definitions should be fair to both property owners and taxpayers who pay for public improvements and not apply to temporary conditions.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES ACT

*Legislative Position of Charlottesville City and the
Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson*

The Planning District localities urge the state to be partners in containing costs of the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) and to better balance CSA responsibilities between state and local government. We also request increased state dollars for local CSA administrative costs.

Since the inception of the Comprehensive Services Act in the early 1990's, there has been pressure to hold down costs, to cap state costs for serving mandated children, to increase local match levels and to make the program more uniform by attempting to control how localities run their programs. After four years of steep increases (ranging from five to 16 percent) in state and local costs of residential and non-residential mandated services, CSA pool expenditures for state and local governments have declined the last several years. Costs remain challenging to forecast because of factors beyond state and local control (number of mandated children in a community, severity of problems, service rates, and availability of alternative funding).

In addition, localities pay the overwhelming majority (80%) of costs to administer this shared program. State dollars for administration have not increased since the late 1990's. At the same time, administrative costs have jumped due to additional data collection/compilation and reporting requirements.

Therefore, we support the following:

- 1) The state should either provide additional funding for administrative support or revise its data collection and reporting requirements;
- 2) The state should provide full funding of the state pool for CSA, with allocations based on realistic anticipated levels of need; and
- 3) The state should establish a cap on local expenditures in order to combat higher local costs for serving mandated children, costs often driven by unanticipated placements in a locality.

We believe that the categories of populations mandated for services should not be expanded unless the state pays all the costs. We also urge the state to be proactive in making residential facilities and service providers available, especially in rural areas.

In a further effort to help contain costs and provide some relief to local governments, we recommend that the state establish contracts with CSA providers to provide for a uniform contract management process, improve vendor accountability and control costs. We encourage the state to consider penalties for individuals who have had children removed from their care due to abuse or neglect. We also support local and regional efforts to address areas of cost sharing among localities by procuring services through group negotiation.

AREAS OF CONTINUING CONCERN

ECONOMIC and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Planning District's member localities recognize economic development and workforce training as essential to the continued viability of the Commonwealth. We support policies that closely link the goals of economic and workforce development and the state's efforts to streamline and integrate workforce activities and revenue sources. We also support increased state funding for workforce development programs.

- We support the state's Economic and Workforce Development Strategic Plan for the Commonwealth that more clearly defines responsibilities of state and local governments and emphasizes regional cooperation in economic, workforce and tourism development. We also urge re-enactment of a memorandum of understanding that outlines the expected cooperation by state-level agencies in effectively partnering with local Workforce Investment Boards and other entities in the operation of One-Stop delivery systems.
- We support enhanced funding for the Regional Competitiveness Act to continue meaningful opportunities for regional projects. We also support increased state funding for the Industrial Site Development Fund, the Governor's Opportunity Fund and tourism initiatives that help promote economic development in localities and regions.
- We encourage the state and local governments to work with other entities to identify, incentivize and promote local, regional and state agricultural products and rural enterprises, and to encourage expansion and opportunities for such products and enterprises.
- We support restructuring of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service (VCES) that preserves beneficial extension agents and the services they provide, and that increases state funding for VCES.
- We appreciate and encourage continuing state incentives and support for expediting deployment and reducing the cost of broadband technology, particularly in underserved areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The Planning District's member localities believe that environmental quality should be funded and promoted through a comprehensive approach, and address air and water quality, solid waste management, land conservation, climate change and land use policies. We are committed to protection and enhancement of the environment and recognize the need to achieve a proper balance between environmental regulation and the socio-economic health of our communities within the constraints of available revenues. Such an approach requires regional cooperation due to the inter-jurisdictional nature of many environmental resources, and adequate state funding to support local and regional efforts.

We believe the following:

- The state should not impose a fee, tax or surcharge on water, sewer, solid waste or other local services to pay for state environmental programs. To do so would set a disturbing precedent whereby the state could levy surcharges on local user fees to fund state priorities.
- The legislature should provide funding for wastewater treatment and other necessary assistance to localities as it works to clean up the state's impaired waterways. The state also should explore alternative means of preventing and remediating water pollution.
- We oppose legislation mandating expansion of the area covered by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Instead, we urge the state to 1) provide legal, financial and technical support to localities that wish to comply with any of the Act's provisions, 2) allow localities to use other practices to improve water quality, and 3) provide funding for other strategies that address point and non-point source pollution.
- We support legislative and regulatory action to ensure that alternative on-site sewage systems (AOSS) will be operated and maintained in a manner that protects public health and the environment.
- The state should be a partner and advocate for localities in water supply development and should work with and assist localities in addressing water supply issues, including investing in regional projects. Also, the state's water supply planning efforts should continue to involve local governments.
- We support legislation enabling localities, as a part of their zoning ordinances, to designate and/or reasonably restrict the land application of biosolids to specific areas within the locality, based on criteria designed to further protect the public safety and welfare of citizens. In addition, we support increased local government representation on the Biosolids Use Regulation Advisory Committee (BURAC).

HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES

The Planning District's member localities recognize that special attention must be given to developing circumstances under which people, especially the disabled, the poor, the young and the elderly, can achieve their full potential. Funding reductions to community agencies are especially troublesome, as their activities often end up preventing more costly services later. The delivery of health and human services must be a collaborative effort from federal, state and local agencies. We urge the General Assembly to ensure funding is available to continue such valuable preventive services.

- We oppose any changes in state funding or policies that result in an increase of the local share of costs for human services.
- The state should increase funding to the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA) program, which has cut in half the number of Department of Juvenile Justice commitments over the past decade. Further, the state should maintain a formula-driven allocation process for VJCCCA funding.
- The state should provide sufficient funding to allow Community Services Boards (CSBs) to meet the challenges of providing a community-based system of care, including maximizing the use of Medicaid funding. We believe children with mental health needs should be treated in the mental health system, where CSBs are the point of entry. We support state action to increase

investment in the MR waiver program for adults and young people and Medicaid reimbursement for children's dental services. We also oppose any shifting of Medicaid matching requirements from the state to localities.

- We support funding for mental health and substance abuse services at juvenile detention centers.
- We oppose new state or federal entitlement programs that require additional local funding.
- We support the provision of sufficient state funding to match all available federal dollars for the administration of mandated services within the Department of Social Services, and to meet the staffing standards for local departments to provide services as stipulated in state law.
- We support sufficient state funding assistance for older residents, to include companion and in home services, home delivered meals and transportation.
- We support the continued operation and enhancement of early intervention and prevention programs (and renewal of CSA Trust Fund dollars to support them), including school-based prevention programs which can make a difference in children's lives. This would include the state's program for at-risk four-year-olds, and the Child Health Partnership and Healthy Families programs.
- The legislature should provide full funding to assist low-income working and TANF (and former TANF) families with childcare costs. These dollars help working-class parents pay for supervised day care facilities and support efforts for families to become self-sufficient. We oppose any initiatives to shift traditional federal and state childcare administrative responsibility and costs to local governments. We believe the current funding and program responsibility for TANF employment services should remain within the social services realm. We also support a TANF plan that takes into account and fully funds state and local implementation and support services costs.

HOUSING

The Planning District's member localities believe that every citizen should have an opportunity to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing. The state and local governments should work toward expanding and preserving the supply and improving the quality of affordable housing for the elderly, the disabled and low- and moderate-income households. Regional housing solutions and planning should be implemented whenever possible.

- We support the following: 1) local flexibility in the operation of affordable housing programs, 2) creation of a state housing trust fund, 3) local flexibility in establishment of affordable dwelling unit ordinances, 4) the award of grants and loans to low- or moderate-income persons to aid in purchasing dwellings, and 5) the provision of other funding to encourage affordable housing initiatives.
- We support enabling legislation that allows property tax relief for community land trusts that hold land for the purpose of providing affordable homeownership.
- We support measures to prevent homelessness and to assist the chronic homeless.
- We support incentives that encourage rehabilitation and preservation of historic structures.

- We support retaining local discretion to regulate the allowance of manufactured homes in zoning districts that permit single-family dwellings.
- We encourage and support the use of, and request state incentives for using environmentally friendly (green) building materials and techniques, which can contribute to the long-term health, vitality and sustainability of the region.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Planning District’s member localities encourage state financial support, cooperation and assistance for law enforcement, emergency medical care, criminal justice activities and fire services responsibilities carried out locally.

- We urge the state to make Compensation Board funding a top priority, fully funding local positions that fall under its purview. It should not increase the local share of funding constitutional offices or divert funding away from local offices, but increase money needed for their operation. Local governments continue to provide much supplemental funding for constitutional officer budgets when state funding is reduced.
- We urge continued state funding of the HB 599 law enforcement program (in accordance with *Code of Virginia* provisions), the drug court program and the Offender Reentry and Transition Services (ORTS) (formerly Pre-Release and Post-Incarceration Services (PAPIS)), Community Corrections and Pretrial Services Acts. We also support continued state endorsement of the role and authority of pretrial services offices.
- The state should continue to allow exemptions from the federal prisoner offset and restore the per diem payment to localities for housing state-responsible prisoners to \$14 per day. Also, the state should not shift costs to localities by altering the definition of state-responsible prisoner.
- We support restoration of state funding responsibility for the Line of Duty Act.
- We urge state funding for the Volunteer Firefighters’ and Rescue Squad Workers’ Service Award Program and other incentives that would help recruit and retain emergency service providers. Further, the state should improve access to and support for training for volunteer and paid providers.
- We encourage shared funding by the state of the costs to construct and operate regional jails; however, we do not believe the state should operate local and regional jails.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE and LAWS

The Planning District’s member localities believe that since so many governmental actions take place at the local level, a strong local government system is essential. Local governments must have the freedom and tools to carry out their responsibilities.

- We oppose intrusive legislation involving purchasing procedures; local government authority to establish hours of work, salaries and working conditions for local employees; matters that can be adopted by resolution or ordinance; and procedures for adopting ordinances.

- We request that any changes to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) preserve 1) a local governing body's ability to meet in closed session, 2) the list of records currently exempt from disclosure under FOIA, and 3) provisions concerning creation of customized computer records. We support changes to allow local and regional public bodies to conduct electronic meetings as now permitted for state public bodies.
- We oppose any changes to state law that further weaken a locality's ability to regulate noise or the discharge of firearms.
- We support expanding local authority to regulate smoking in public places.
- The state should amend the Code to require litigants in civil cases to pay for the costs associated with compensating jury members.
- We support increased state funding for regional planning districts.
- We support legislation to increase permissible fees for courthouse maintenance.
- The state should ensure that local connectivity and compatibility are considered in any centralizing of state computer functions.
- We oppose attempts to reduce sovereign immunity protections for localities.
- We support enactment of an interest rate cap of 36% on payday loans, fees and other related charges.

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****Richmond telephone numbers are listed. Mailing address (session only) for Senate members is General Assembly Building, Richmond, Virginia 23219. Mailing address for House of Delegates members is P.O. Box 406, Richmond, Virginia 23218. All legislators’ offices are located in the General Assembly Building.**