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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Land Use Policy Committee, Tuesday, February 10, 2026

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[00:00:05] Good afternoon. I'm going to call the Land Use Policy Committee meeting to order. We have the minutes from our last meeting. If I don't see any corrections or additions, I will consider that accepted. Okay, we're going to move forward.

[00:00:23] A couple years ago when the budget came out, staff had been looking at raising fees, and some of them haven't been raised for a long time. So the board provided direction that these would be looked at every couple of years. And so this is, believe it or not, a couple of years have gone by.

[00:00:41] And so we are going to be having a presentation about the application fees. You know, next time we have the briefing meeting, would you guys please remind me to ask who I turn to first? I saw Bill reach, so Bill's going first. Super.

[00:00:57] Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the committee. My name is Bill Hicks. I'm the Director of Land Development Services. I'm joined at the table by Deputy County Exec Jennifer Miller. Chief Bill Vannoy, Tracy Strunk out of DPD, and Bill Malin also out of DPD.

[00:01:15] We're going to talk about the proposal for FY27 that affects fees that are collected for DPD fees, fire marshal fees, as well as land development fees. And I'm just waiting for my presentation to pop up.

[00:01:33] Thank you. Super. So as Supervisor Smith mentioned, we were back here before this body two years ago where we proposed fees. We had not raised fees in a number of years, and so at the time that was a significant makeup of kind of years as those fees had eroded.

[00:01:56] we raised DPD fees a nominal 35%. At that point, building fees went up 25% nominally. And site fees, I think we raised those 10% during that time. And there were some exceptions. But as Supervisor Smith said, we had a commitment to regularly revisit our fees. And so we are here today. During those last two calendar years, so we raised those fees by those nominal numbers I've just mentioned. We did it over the course of two years, so they were phased in over two years.

[00:02:33] So we have not been back before this body to talk about raising fees since that time. As you'll see on this slide from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CPI has raised during that period five percent, A little bit more than five, but not much more than five.

[00:02:50] And we have raised compensation for employees by kind of a nominal 8% across those two years as well. So we feel the pressure of the fees being eroded during that time. So our proposal before you today is a nominal 5% across all fees with some exceptions.

[00:03:17] Those are all zoning fees, land development fees, and fire marshal fees. And it's nominal because it's a little bit above or a little bit below, but it's right at 5% to make the numbers work. There are some exceptions, and we are going to go over what those exceptions are. What you get for that 5% increase is we pay for that staff compensation adjustment.

[00:03:40] We continue to pay for the technology that's used, the PLUS system, the Twilio phone system, those sorts of things. And it aligns with our cost recovery obligations and land development services. Our agreement with this body is that we try and recover 100% of our labor through all of our expenses through the fees that we raise.

[00:04:03] It's a little bit less in fire marshal and a little bit less in DPD. But we do have those philosophies that we move forward with, and this honors that. I will mention here, I'll mention it again, but the technology surcharge that really pays for plus and capital investments across the board is not raising during this time, but it's a percentage of all fees. So it does, it stays at 10% where we set it two years ago, but as fees increase, we do increase that money coming in. And I will also mention that our agencies are absolutely committed to continuous improvement. I think we've seen a couple board matters come out over the

[00:04:43] course of the last fall that really direct improvements. We've spent a lot of energy around those. You'll see the results from those in a couple months. That's the housing production initiative and the economic competitive initiative. So I'm going to briefly talk. This is a very complicated slide here, and I apologize for that, but there are really two or three things to note on there. The first probably 20 lines say that we are raising fees associated with RPAs and water quality impact assessments by 50%. It's those that are associated with public hearings. Our fees are

[00:05:22] not commensurate with the amount of time that staff put in to do those. So we are raising those by 50%. We see two to four of those a year. It's usually on the two side. So it really doesn't affect many and that's why those probably first 20 lines are like they are. Below that we are not raising elevator fees. The way we're structured with elevator fees there's no reason to raise those. It's a pass-through contract for

inspection so that remains the same. The technology surcharge as I mentioned previously is a percentage. It remains the same and it affects land development

[00:06:00] fees as well as fire marshal fees. It is not burdened on planning and development or zoning fees or health department fees, just LDS and fire marshal fees. And then the Code Academy levy, which is a 2% levy that's mandated by the state, remains the same at that. And then I'll just briefly mention that some of our fees are so low that when it did not, when 5% didn't work to the nearest, I forget what it was, nickel or whatever, we chose to adjust outside of that 5% to make

[00:06:37] that whole. But those are really small fees. With that, I'm going to turn it over, and we can do questions at the end. I was just going to turn it over to the fire marshal, and he can move forward. Thank you. Bill Vannoy, Deputy Chief, overseeing the Office of the Fire Marshal for the Fire and Rescue Department. Much like Bill Hicks and LDS, we're looking to raise our fees approximately 5%.

[00:07:02] It's a little bit above, a little bit below. The last time we adjusted our fees was two years ago and we spread over two years. It was approximately a 30% increase in our fees. For us, for our fire permit fees, we have a table of 102 items that we charge permit fees for.

[00:07:21] The vast majority of those would go up about 4.5% from \$195 to \$204. There are some exceptions to those, including the fire prevention permit fees for floor fishing hot works, which goes up from 104 to 109, which is, again, in that 4.5%.

[00:07:37] And then our permit fees for fireworks goes up a little bit higher, 4.6%, from \$936 to \$982. Most of these are representing, like I said, a little bit under the 5%. We wanted to make sure we were able to manage our costs, a little bit different system than LDS.

[00:07:55] So we want to make sure that we were trying to aim for that 90% to 100% threshold for cost recovery and trying to land at an even number. Our plan review fees will go from 208 to 216, representing 3.7%. We charge by the quarter hour when we do our plan review fees.

[00:08:12] We need to make sure it's divisible by four. So the next increment up would have been significantly over the 5%. So we were trying to make sure we were being conservative with our fees. Background, a little bit post-COVID. There was a little bit of a layoff because when we transitioned to plus, so there was a layoff, and then there was actually a spike in revenue based on we were catching up from the time we rolled out plus.

[00:08:35] We feel like this year is going to be the first year where we get a good average of what that cost revenue looks like. So based on what we see this year and this fiscal year, 27 is basically what we would do going forward. I'll go ahead and turn it up. Good afternoon. I'm Tracy Strunk, Department of Planning and Development, and I have Bill Maland with me here.

[00:08:57] I do not have Casey Judge because I'm happy to announce that sometime last night or this morning she has a new baby. So Blair Veen Judge has joined the DPD family. So for the zoning inspections, there's a few exceptions to the 5% that we're looking at and they're shown here.

[00:09:16] Both the limited writing or boarding stable fee and the signed permit application fee, we are proposing to increase to, I believe, \$140 to align with other similar fees. So that's more than 5%. I think they were 70 now. So that's about 100%, but it's not a very large fee.

[00:09:35] And that's to align those with some other applications that have a similar review time and that sort of thing. The family health care structures, and there's certain wireless review structures that are set by state code. So those are obviously not changing. They're remaining at, I don't have the number written down in front of me, but luckily Bill does, at, thank you, family health care structures at 100 and wireless reviews at \$500. We are not proposing an increase for a fee for appeals. If you remember two years ago when we

[00:10:10] came before you, we did a lesser increase on the appeals fee. That's really to make sure that fee is not a limiting factor if someone feels like a decision has been made in error and they want to appeal that to the Board of Zoning Appeals. So we're proposing that remain at the current \$660.

[00:10:27] We have a new reduced fee for nonprofits that are seeking an interpretation or a minor variation of approved rezonings. If you recall, not long ago, when we brought the PRC, Planned Residential Community, amendment through, we put in, we did this for our homeowners associations. So it's 50% of the application fee. And so to align that with other nonprofits, we're proposing that with this amendment. And also there are a few uses whose fees were all sort of within \$5 of each

[00:11:04] other that we're proposing to standardize, and we're also proposing to standardize. We have some administrative permits that have a renewal fee when those come up, and so we propose to standardize that at 75. So those are the exceptions to the 5%. Other than that, our fees are going up 5%.

[00:11:20] I also did want to note that the last time we came before you, we had a discussion about how we do our rezoning fees. Our rezoning fees right now have a base fee, and then certain of them come with the per acreage fee, which is different depending on the type of application.

[00:11:36] And so we, because that's a structure that obviously makes sense if small cases are simple and large cases are complex, and as what we've seen over time, especially in our more urban areas, small cases are actually the ones that are getting much more complex. So we wanted, with direction of the board, we have started, we started looking at that if there's a different way, but as we looked more into it, it gets really complex to kind to figure out how the burden is being shifted. Is the burden really being shifted in the right direction towards the more complex cases? Because that's the idea. And so we really felt that needed some more time. It wasn't something necessarily that we needed to do with this amendment. And so

[00:12:15] we'll keep looking at that and we'll bring that idea back to you all in the future if we need to do that. So on, thank you. Yes, now I'm ready for the, one of the things that we are proposing is a new fee reduction for affordable dwelling unit, or what we call ADU developments.

[00:12:32] And this would be for applications that are providing more ADUs or the equivalent of ADUs if they're not in the ADU program, based on more than what you would be required out of the ordinance. So based on a tiered system, so this would be inclusive of, as I mentioned, the base fee and the acreage fee.

[00:12:56] So it would apply to all of that. What you see on the chart before you hear is a four-tiered system, and I'll talk a little bit. We've continued having conversations around this and what is actually going to be in the staff report that we bring out. There'll be two options.

[00:13:12] We'll have this four-tiered system and then a somewhat simpler two with just two tiers. So I'll talk. That's not on the slide, but I wanted to let you know about it. So the first tier is looking for 30% to 49% of ADUs, and they would pay 75%. so they'd get a 25 percent break on the fee. The second tier, which is 50

to 74, would pay 50, so they'd get a half break. And then the third tier, which is 75 to 99, because we needed to get right up to the top, would pay 25 percent. And then if you did have a project that had 100

[00:13:47] percent ADUs, that would be a reduction in the full fee. So as I mentioned, a simpler two-tier would break that down. 30 to 74 percent would get half the fee, and then anything from 75 to 100 percent would get a full reduction in the fee. And so some of the complexity when we start looking at that is, are you talking about a single building? Are you talking about a development with multiple buildings maybe one of which is affordable and others which are not

[00:14:23] are you talking about a building with mixed use that has non-residential uses on the ground floor are you talking about a development that might have an office or commercial or hotel building associated with an affordable so we're trying to sort of juggle out what the right numbers are there and i would also say that our intention on this presuming the board accepts it and goes board with this is that we'll keep an eye on it and if we need to come back and adjust it we can do that and also as you all know the board has the ability to waive any fee that they want for for good cause shown and that's in fact why

[00:15:02] we've done this because most of our affordable dwelling unit developments that have come in have requested a fee waiver and have been granted some sort of fee waiver so if that's something that the board has been supporting over time then let's take sort of the process step out of that and and we want to do that but and i i say that also because if we don't quite get it right and we don't we have some strange um perambulation of of of situation where that we need to waive the fee and it didn't fit into our structure the board still has the ability to do that so we think it's a pretty a pretty safe a safe step to take

[00:15:38] on the first step. Okay. And our last slide, we also do the P district recreational minimum expenditure, which is a long name for something because it is not exactly a fee, but it is in the zoning ordinance. So our P districts or planned districts are developments that are more highly designed. They often actually tend to have smaller units and smaller amounts of personal open space or be multifamily. So there's not personal open space. And so with that, the board has had for, since I believe the 70s, a minimum recreational expenditure in those districts, which is

[00:16:17] intended to ensure that we're getting the commensurate amount of amenities for those developments. Almost anything large, that's all spent on site in what the developer is sort of providing as amenities. Every now and then, in a very small P district, sort of an infill situation, we might find someone where they don't quite meet it and provide some extra in cash. But this is generally part of the development and is just intended to make sure that it's, as I said, that the amenities that are provided are what's expected in that

[00:16:50] district. So we are also providing, proposing a 5% CPI-based increase in this from the current 2,400 to 2,520. And I believe that is my section for now. So we're working through this process that can't hear me we're working through this process in parallel with the budget process so you'll see our timeline kind of follows that so these would go into effect with the budget if sorry um our timeline looks like this we've already started this kind of vetting process

[00:17:30] we've been and met with land use attorneys already we've met with the big industry groups NVBIA and NAOP. We will meet with ESI. That's the site engineering partnership we have. We meet with them starting tomorrow, and we'll have a few meetings as we go. Thus far, industry has really not commented. It's a modest increase, I think very different than where we were two years ago. We are here

today at Land Use Policy Committee because we got snowed out a couple weeks ago, but we're here today, and then we follow the standard board process with authorization,

[00:18:07] a planning commission hearing, because this is land development applicable, and then a final board hearing in August. We will gladly field any questions you have. I'm going to say April, not August. Don't make my year go by too fast, Bill. Apologies. I don't have any questions. I appreciate the work of staff, and I think it's really good we're looking at this every couple years so thank you questions supervisor alcor uh thank you yeah i i support the approach i and thank you for being thoughtful about it and um and also looking at the adus it's that's something that's been discussed for a long time so formalizing that might well make sense if we can figure out

[00:18:44] how to do it um on a related question as you're looking at the budget i know we on the board have talked a lot about improving permit approval times, particularly in LDS and other agencies as well.

[00:19:03] And I'm also bringing this up because yesterday, Supervisor Lusk and I were in Richmond and actually had lunch with somebody we know well, Mr. Rolband, who has recently increased processing times at Virginia DEQ by 70 percent in the last three years. And he was talking about that through a permit transparency dashboard that frankly allows a lot more. So I'm curious, are you looking at anything in the budget, any initiatives like that? I'm not saying you're going to get a 70 percent reduction in permit approval times, but do you have anything sort of along those lines

[00:19:42] you're looking at? So I just want to offer that July 1st last year, the state mandated new timelines, and they were reduced from what we saw before, and we have implemented those. We have worked very hard with our partner agencies to assure that they are keeping in line with that.

[00:20:00] Another thing that we do, we have been publishing our metrics aligned with that. We adjusted plus. Our metrics come out weekly, so you can see that we're in line with what we say our level of service is. We also have, and we rolled this out in the fall.

[00:20:19] We haven't made a big deal about it yet because it only affects projects moving forward. But we have what's called a project workflow slip built right into Plus. And you can click on that for your particular project and see our target times and how your project meets with that.

[00:20:38] So we do feel like we have a lot of transparency. Because it only affects projects going forward, we're hesitant to talk about it a whole lot because if you submitted prior to that, it doesn't work right. So we're headed there. Great.

[00:20:53] But those are just part of initiatives. I think we have a lot more that are on the way that are coming. and you're working with deputy county executive miller i'm sure yes please yeah i was going to say sorry deputy county executive jen miller one of the things and bill's team has been doing this and one of the things that i really appreciate uh is the the composite timeline that they've been working on in an earlier meeting someone referenced the shot clock as a reference from the development community and that is something and we have uh as part of the whiteboarding sessions we'd committed to a timeline and we're also rolling that out as part of the two task force of the timeline when each of the agencies will be able to roll out the shot clock for the average timeline. One of the

[00:21:33] other things that we want to measure in that as well, though, is the element of the shot clock that is in the county hands, and then the element of the shot clock that is in the developer's hands to be able to tell that story and publish it. That's very helpful. Anytime we're increasing fees even a little bit,

knowing that we're going the extra yard to make it more efficient, that's great news. Thank you. Supervisor Stork and then Lusk.

[00:21:58] And on that point, I think that's critical. I know I hear from the Belmont community, and it always seems to be the county's fault. Well, we all know that that can't possibly be true because I worked with some of the attorneys that they work with and some of the others and the engineers and da, da, da.

[00:22:13] So we just need the facts that we can, even if it's every good facts that, you know, 50% of the time, whatever. So the shot clock, all those pieces, I think will help us as well as, and I always ask for this, And it doesn't seem to go anywhere, which I would appreciate whatever.

[00:22:33] We don't have to say who the best developers or the best engineers or the best are. We don't have to say who the best are. But we should have a star system of some sort that says who maybe consistently does something. Then it's not about us. It's about are they doing consistently what they're supposed to do.

[00:22:50] And I always talk about in relation to green business development and how do we urge and get homeowners to hire people that are very environmentally conscious and do good things. And, again, we're not picking and choosing. We're just identifying what they accomplish.

[00:23:08] And then the other piece of this was the, how do we, of course, how do we stack up with neighboring jurisdictions and not only time to run down the shot clock, but also our costs. And I know that you all are looking at it generally.

[00:23:23] I assume that this reflects some of that conversation of what we've looked at in the area, both the metro, DMV, et cetera. But those would be the things I just want to make sure that we're consistent on. Thank you. Thank you. I have supervisor less than Sizemore Heiser.

[00:23:40] Thank you very much. I really like the imagery of the shot clock, so thank you for sharing that. Great idea. The question I have, or first comment, then question, is on the slide that's page six and deals with the zoning application fee exceptions.

[00:24:00] And I'll make a point that back in December, the board adopted a zoning ordinance amendment that updated our setback requirements related to manufactured home communities. it was recognized that many homes would remain non-conforming and would require approval of a special permit or special exception.

[00:24:21] At that time, I raised concerns that the residents would have difficulty paying the application fees that were approved by the board, and now we're looking to impose an additional 5% increase, which I think would be even more of a disincentive.

[00:24:40] I would ask if we could consider an exception or a reduced rate in the fee structure for manufactured home residents, similar to the fee proposed by staff for minor modifications and variance applications filed by nonprofits.

[00:24:58] And I know you can't give me an answer on that today, but just acknowledging that there are some challenges, particularly with those residents in Harmony and also in Audubon as it relates to being able to file those applications.

[00:25:18] And we do want to encourage our residents to do that, and I just see this as being a little bit of a penalty or a difficulty that many might not be able to hurdle. So with that, I will take my response to that

question offline and later.

[00:25:38] Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm sure a little bit of research and work needs to be done. I don't know if you have any comments now, but we can wait for that. Okay? Okay. We'll get that information back. Any other comments from the board?

[00:25:55] Okay. I'm going to hurry up and get this meeting done since it's less than half an hour. I want to thank you all for your work, and the Land Use Policy Committee is adjourned. Thank you.



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