



Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 501
Arlington, Virginia 22201

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Libby Garvey
Chair, Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

RE: FAAC Recommendations for Proposed FY 2021 Capital Improvement Plan and Bond Referenda

Dear Chair Garvey:

The Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission (FAAC) submits the following letter for the consideration of the Arlington County Board. This letter provides FAAC's recommendations to the County Board for the County Manager's proposed FY 2021 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and November 2021 Bond Referenda. The FAAC takes seriously our responsibility to advise the County Board on fiscal matters, and that charge will be at the forefront of our minds during the coming months.

Given the developments associated with COVID-19, we commend the extraordinary efforts of the County Staff to develop a revised CIP. This letter outlines some high-level considerations related to the proposed budget and provides specific recommendations.

For the FY 2021 CIP, FAAC offers the following recommendations to the County Board:

Stormwater Management

Recommendation: The FAAC encourages the Board to support the Manager's proposal for stormwater funding.

Discussion: The FAAC notes that the stormwater proposal assumes additional investment in years beyond 2021, including funds beyond those that would become available if the Manager's bond referenda proposal is adopted. The FAAC believes it is essential that the Board be prepared to allocate sufficient funding to complete the projects that the Manager proposes. The FAAC also notes that some residents have expressed significant concerns related to equity and the level of funding allocated to projects in North Arlington and with the structure of funding for the repayment of the bonds. The FAAC encourages the Board to instruct the staff to develop and implement a plan around the stormwater proposal designed to address any equity concerns and educate County residents about the rationale for specific projects. The FAAC also encourages the Board to consider the relative funding burden on Arlingtonians living in multifamily housing, as we move forward with the Stormwater Utility Feasibility study.

FAAC also recommends the County Board direct the County Manager to explore opportunities to better manage our stormwater costs through sharing stormwater facilities or creating a utility with Fairfax (i.e. upstream, in McLean), consistent with the Community Facilities Study. Fairfax has also identified co-location and facility repurposing as a key goal in their adopted 2020-2024 CIP so this may be a unique opportunity to help control costs for stormwater management, combining cost control, co-location, and stormwater management priorities in both Arlington and Fairfax.

Future Considerations for the CIP

Recommendation: The FAAC recommends that the County Board ask the County Manager to evaluate how the proposed CIP has impacted the policy goals enshrined in these new positions, and to take the updated Bicycle Element of the Master Transportation Plan, updated Public Spaces Master Plan, Community Energy Plan; and Vision Zero policy into consideration when developing the medium-term CIP proposal in 2021.

Discussion: FAAC members encourage the County Board to monitor the implementation of these plans, by asking for the target metrics that were left as TBD when published, and by asking for clearer implementation plans.

In FY 2022 the County should also be prioritizing projects deferred that will help increase and improve outside spaces. Several deferred projects seem like good priority investments that fit this criteria:

- *Parks & Facilities Maintenance Capital:* FY 2022 CIP should include this deferred maintenance for non-critical infrastructure to ensure continued parks quality.
- *Bike Trail Enhancements:* FY 2022 CIP should end the delay on trail enhancements to ensure the County is providing walkable, non-street spaces for exercise and relaxation.
- *Parkland Acquisition Funds:* The FY 2022 CIP should strive to meet the goals established by the Public Spaces Master Plan and include dedicated funding for park land acquisition.

Additional Considerations:

1. In FY 2022 it may make sense to prioritize a review of the County's virtual meeting policies, procedures, and IT infrastructure as developed and applied during FY 2020. At this point solutions across the private and public sectors should have been developed and published. These solutions could improve the County's efficiency and preserve County resources. Investing time and funds into this review could ensure a robust IT infrastructure in the event of other unforeseen circumstances and in general as a promotion of accessibility.
2. In a world where working remotely has become much more expected, the County may have to be able to continue to provide platforms and capabilities to enable this. For FY 2022 it may be worth making telecommuting technology a key priority for the County IT organization.
3. Moving into FY 2022 the County should consider investment in areas that will allow the County to meet its 2019 Community Energy Plan goals. Some areas where investment may be able to help include energy storage facilities such as batteries and/or electric vehicle charging stations for the County fleet or public use.

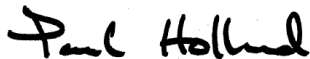
4. Other localities in the area are pursuing similar co-location and efficient space management priorities, such as in the District of Columbia's adopted FY 2019-2024 Budget and CIP which discusses several completed and upcoming investments in swing space, or space that can be quickly adapted for a range of short term uses during a construction period, to allow for needs to continue to be met during facility construction. Arlington County could benefit from identification and investment in development of swing spaces, given economic conditions and demographic projections discussed in the CFS.
5. The future of Neighborhood Conservation is currently being reviewed by the NC Program Review working group. As this working group continues to review the future of the program, FAAC remains interested in applying an equity lens to NC to address key questions such as who benefits, who is burdened, who is missing, and how do you know?

Conclusion

In addition to the recommendations summarized above, I have attached the three memos used to inform these recommendations. The memos provide additional details on these topics and display the depth and breadth FAAC's members and our commitment to strengthening the fiscal health of Arlington County. The FAAC remains committed to supporting the County Board following the approval of the proposed FY 2021 CIP. The County is entering an unprecedented period; FAAC encourages the Board to utilize the expertise of volunteers to help navigate through this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Paul Holland, Chair
Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission

CC:

Members, Arlington County Board
Arlington County Manager
Director, Arlington County Department of Management and Finance
Members, Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission

Attachments (3):

1. FAAC CIP What is Missing Memo
2. FAAC CIP Stormwater Memo
3. FAAC CIP FY 2022 Priorities Memo