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LOCAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES – 2025 SESSION OF THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ADOPTED OCTOBER 21, 2024

The following legislative priorities have been adopted by the Louisa County Board of Supervisors for the upcoming session of the Virginia General Assembly.

Local Zoning Control

The County firmly supports maintaining local control over land use and associated decisions. Local governments are the closest and most accessible form of government for their citizens, and are more connected with the land use issues and associated challenges facing their communities. As such, localities are best positioned to undertake planning and land use decisions. The Commonwealth should staunchly resist preempting or circumventing land use authorities and maintain/support for local authority in this regard.

Broadband

Internet has become a necessity, yet citizens in many localities have insufficient connectivity. Louisa was the first locality in the region to partner with multiple utility providers to provide end-user fiber on a County-wide basis, and the County supported the effort with a commitment of up to \$15 million in local dollars.

The County supports state (and federal) efforts to offset further funding requirements and to bolster cooperative efforts (among utility providers and other entities) and concerns such as easement usage associated with deployment.

State Funding Levels and Flexibility

The Commonwealth has funding responsibilities for several local services such as law enforcement (through the State Compensation Board) and education (through the Standards of Quality). In many cases, localities supplement this funding, and in some cases that supplement is significant. In Louisa, the state funds only 26 of the 55 full time and 16 part time deputy positions in the Sheriff's Office. When the state provides salary increase funding, it calculates the state funding amount on that number of positions, but sometimes compels the same increases for non-state funded positions. This is an unfunded mandate.

It is requested that the state allow flexibility in the application of state revenues (Compensation Board and otherwise) for compensation increases across all positions. Local governing bodies would have the choice (and therefore bear the responsibility for their decision) to either match the state amount for all positions or to spread state funding across all positions.

The County also urges the state to continue efforts to increase funding for compensation board-funded and Standards of Quality-funded positions and functions.

State Library Funding

State aid for public libraries in the Commonwealth has not been fully funded since 2001. Libraries rely on this funding for books, media, and digital content. Progress toward full funding has been made over the past several years and year two of the governor's biennial budget includes full state funding. The County supports this effort.

Buoy Maintenance and Hydrilla Treatment on Public Waters

The Lake Anna Advisory Committee (LAAC) is responsible for buoys on the public waters of Lake Anna, and also treats the lake for hydrilla, an invasive and submerged aquatic weed which can clog waterways, damage infrastructure, and reduce flows. With regard to buoys, the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) compels ongoing maintenance and standards for placement. The presence of hydrilla is a statewide issue, and mitigation in each body of water plays an important role in minimizing transference to other resources.

The costs associated with buoy maintenance and hydrilla mitigation are below. The County requests state support for funding of these efforts.

	Year										10 Year Total	Annual Average
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
Buoys	\$ 8,877	-	1,716	4,535	5,177	3,579	4,591	3,206	4,062	4,924	40,667	4,067
Hydrilla	\$ -	7,732	4,654	3,695	7,050		1,758	1,694		15,620	42,203	5,275

Freshwater Harmful Algae Blooms

The County is home to Lake Anna, the third largest freshwater lake in Virginia. The lake has experienced Harmful Algae Blooms (HAB) over the past several years. HAB's are also materially impacting other bodies of water in the Commonwealth, including Lake Gaston and the James River. HAB alerts have a material impact on public usage of our natural assets and this in turn impacts economic assets which rely thereon. These impacts include tourism-based operations such as vacation rentals, restaurants, marinas, and many related offerings. Costs to mitigate HAB in Lake Anna have been estimated at ~\$20M, and the County is grateful for the past funding support by General Assembly. Ongoing support in future years is requested to combat this issue.

Furthermore, freshwater monitoring in the state is minimally funded and decentralized. The County supports state efforts to formalize freshwater monitoring and adequately fund the same to keep public waters safe and protect those enjoying these resources.

Equal Revenue Authority

The County of Louisa gratefully acknowledges prior efforts by the General Assembly to address revenue generation inequalities, and fully supports further county rights to raise the same revenues as cities.

Jail Costs

Louisa County is a member jurisdiction of the Central Virginia Regional Jail (CVRJ) and is grateful for the recent increases in jail per diem rates approved by the General Assembly. Actual daily costs are nonetheless still significantly higher than reimbursement levels, and the County supports further improvements.

To offset future surprises and to fairly share future cost increases, the County supports continued increases in cost sharing, or indexing per diem costs as a fixed percentage of the actual statewide daily expense average as set forth by the state in the annual Jail Cost Report.

Small Modular Reactors

Virginia is a leader in clean energy production with over 30% of the state's power based on zero emission nuclear generation. Nuclear power provides reliable, competitively priced electricity to consumers in the Commonwealth, and low energy costs play a critical role in maintaining Virginia's stature as an attractive location for business. The Commonwealth is also home to numerous facilities and operations in the nuclear energy sector including BWX Technologies (engineering), Framatome (industrial computing and regulatory compliance), Newport News Shipbuilding and many others. These entities sustain thousands of jobs throughout the Commonwealth which support Virginia families, generate substantial tax dollars, and trigger beneficial relationships with higher education in the state to train the future nuclear workforce.

Dominion Energy operates the North Anna Nuclear Power Station in the County, and has set "net zero" emissions goals for its overall generation portfolio. Achieving these goals represents a substantial benefit to the environment and will require diversification of generation resources beyond that which is achievable by wind, solar, and energy storage alone. Additional nuclear generation represents a viable path forward in this important effort. Small Modular Reactors (SMR) represent an innovative, safe alternative to traditional nuclear power stations. Ranging from 50-300MW and fabricated in a factory environment, SMR's incorporate advanced features including scalable output and safe shutdown even in the absence of operator action, and their reduced complexity results in lower infrastructure requirements. HB894 (2022) directed the Department of Energy to study the development of SMR's and convene a stakeholder group for "promoting the development of advanced small modular reactors in the Commonwealth." Louisa County supports this effort.

Development Road Reviews

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) formerly provided reviews of the internal roads, entrances, and related transportation aspects of development proposals. Following an opinion from the state's Attorney General, this practice was discontinued and localities must now have internal/contract staff to perform these functions. The County supports state efforts to move funding from VDOT to localities to support this increased workload.