

MEMO

To: TJPD Commissioners
From: David Blount, Director of Legislative Services
Date: May 6, 2021
Re: Legislative Update

Purpose:

To provide an overview of the recent General Assembly session and an update on expected, upcoming legislative activity.

Summary:

The General Assembly concluded its regular/special sessions on March 1, approving amendments to the current biennial state budget that included salary increases for state-supported local employees and teachers, additional broadband funding, and more state dollars for K-12 education. Additional funds also were targeted to the state's Housing Trust Fund and for wastewater treatment plant upgrades, and a transportation funding initiative was approved.

As for legislation, only a few locally-requested bills were introduced due to limitations on the number of bills legislators were allowed to submit. The General Assembly did approve legislation to legalize possession of small amounts of marijuana this July, with retail sales to be allowed in 2024. Localities are authorized to hold a referendum in 2022 on whether to prohibit retail sales. A bill to codify budget provisions that allow public bodies to meet electronically to conduct normal business, if there is a state of emergency declared by the State or a locality, was adopted. There are multiple studies of affordable housing that are taking place this year, as well as a two-year JLARC assessment of the costs to implement the (education) Standards of Quality.

Upcoming Legislative Activities:

The General Assembly is expected to convene this summer for a special session. There could be several purposes, including the primary task to appropriate monies coming to Virginia from the federal American Rescue Plan approved in March. Also, judicial vacancies may be taken up, and a third issue could be to address provisions in the Code that may be impacted by not having census data in time to redistrict and hold elections in November.

Also, be aware that state revenue collections have increased nine percent through the first three-quarters of the fiscal year (the forecast is for three percent growth), so expect another large state revenue surplus at the end of FY21. This will drive budgeting decisions leading up to the next legislative session in January.