

June 16, 2020

The Honorable Jeff McKay and Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

c/o Clerk of the Board  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Suite 530  
Fairfax, VA 22035

RE: Uncodified Ordinance to Establish Methods to Assure Continuity in Fairfax County Government and Conduct of Board of Supervisors Meetings during the Novel Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) Emergency

Dear Chairman McKay and Members of the Board,

The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (the Federation) is an association of homeowners, civic, and community organizations working together to promote the interests of association members and to further the common good and general welfare of the residents of Fairfax County. This includes ensuring residents have access to information that helps them make informed decisions as well as the opportunity to provide feedback on programs, services and decisions that impact their lives.

We recognize the County identified the need to increase accessibility via electronic access due to the limitations set by the COVID-19 restrictions and applaud the Board for their rapid response and coordination to ensure critical County matters continue to move forward. However, the Federation Board feels that new land use and zoning cases should be deferred until the County is able to ensure all stake-holding residents have the opportunity to safely participate in person in the decision-making process. This includes document review, access to staff and Board members, and submitting comments for consideration, both in-person and virtually.

A few years ago, the Board identified a need to develop innovative approaches for expanding the public engagement in the land use process and created the Community Council on Land Use Engagement (CCLUE). The Council was tasked "to produce a set of recommendations that would improve Fairfax County's public outreach and community engagement in the land use and development process." The Council met six times, and during those discussion identified flaws which resulted in the exclusion of portions of Fairfax County's residents along with steps to correct and improve the

process to ensure all residents could be involved (i.e. non-HOAs communities, renters, Limited English Proficiency, etc.).

The Federation Board feels that issues discussed during CCLUE meetings may not have been adequately addressed and that a public engagement program relying solely on electronic transactions does not sufficiently ensure participation opportunities for all applicants and county residents.

Furthermore, other Federation members including: the Great Falls Citizens Association Land Use & Zoning Committee, Mason District Council of Community Associations, West Fairfax County Citizens Association, and the Providence District Council have expressed concern about the current process and have requested, through another form of communication, that these cases be deferred until adequate participation as described below is implemented.

The federation requests the following:

- the Board of Supervisors defer all land use cases until a comprehensive public engagement in land use decision making process can be deployed or until all COVID-19 restrictions for in-person meetings are lifted and protection procedures are fully incorporated;
- the County develops a multi-technology public involvement program which ensures accessibility by all residents, using traditional and electronic options;
- the County Attorney General works with community members to develop an emergency operations plan on how best to address community participation on non-emergency issues/land use issues; and
- the County improves online multi-language options for information review, meetings, and public testimony.

The Federation applauds your work during these unprecedented times in ensuring the continuity of critical County business but we remain critical of the non-emergency land use decision process.

Thank you,

*Karen Campblin*

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