

# COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE



## MEMORANDUM

**TO: Planning Commission**

**FROM: Steven A. Allshouse, Manager of Forecasting and Performance**

**DATE: January 25, 2021**

**RE: DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FEES UPDATE.**

---

### Background

The Department of Community Development charges fees for development-related services that CDD provides to the public. The purpose of these fees is to help the department pay for a portion of the costs associated with the services that CDD provides. Chapter 18 (Zoning) of the Albemarle County Code contains the current list and amounts of the fees. Nearly all of the fees shown in Chapter 18 were last updated in 2015. Per policy adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2008, the dollar levels of the fees that the Department of Community Development charges are to be updated every two years, based on overall changes in Board-adopted staff salaries. If, for example, staff salaries increased by 4% between the two years, the CDD fees also would be adjusted upward by 4%. As alluded to previously, however, these fees generally have not been updated since 2015. This absence of increases has resulted in an increasing disparity between CDD revenues and costs. In addition to that situation, staff has identified a number of services which CDD provides but which are not currently identified in Chapter 18, i.e., for which the department collects no revenue. In order to remedy this latter situation, staff has proposed some new fees. The rest of this memorandum outlines staff's work on the fees updates, public outreach efforts related to the updates, remaining tasks, and the timeline for upcoming fees-related PC and Board meetings.

### Discussion

Staff has determined that, between November 1, 2015 (the last update to all but two of the fees listed in Chapter 18) and the present, Board-adopted salary increases cumulatively have come to 10.05%. Two new fees in Chapter 18 were adopted on November 15, 2018. Staff has determined that, between that latter date and the present, salaries overall increased by 3.00%. The proposed increases to existing fees, shown in red text in the attached document, reflect these numbers for the respective revenue streams. Staff also has identified services pertaining to work related to architectural review for which CDD currently does not charge a fee but which, nonetheless, generate costs to the department. The proposed fees are based on an estimate of the amount of time needed for staff to complete these tasks, relative to other existing tasks. The proposed fees would help compensate CDD for the costs associated with these functions and appear in green font in Section 35.1(d) of the

attached document. Finally, staff has identified the need to replace CountyView, the software system that CDD has used for the past sixteen years to track development-related activity. CountyView, unfortunately, has become dated since the time that the County purchased the software package and, due to the installation of several add-on functions over the course of the past several years, CountyView cannot be updated to meet the department's current and anticipated future needs. For this reason, staff has proposed a technology fee that would help pay for a portion of the cost of a new enterprise reporting system that staff anticipates would be shared with other departments in the County. The proposed technology fee is based on similar fees that currently exist in Fairfax County and Montgomery County. The proposed technology fee appears in green font in Section 35.1(i) of the attached document.

In order to get a sense of the public's thoughts regarding the proposed CDD fees, staff has engaged in several outreach efforts. Staff has sent out mass emails to people who are on the County's A-mail list, as well as anyone who has done planning and/or building business with CDD in the past two years. These emails introduced the recipients to the proposed fees via the following link, and invited feedback from people who accessed the information found on the link:

<https://www.albemarle.org/government/community-development/community-development-fees>

As of January 25<sup>th</sup>, approximately 650 people have visited this site, but only one visitor has commented on the proposed fees. In addition to the CDD website referenced above, staff met with representatives of the Blue Ridge Homebuilders Association (Jenny Tapscott), the Free Enterprise Forum (Neil Williamson), Southern Development (Charlie Armstrong), and Great Eastern (David Mitchell) on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Staff also met with representatives of the Southern Environmental Law Center (Travis Pietila) and the Piedmont Environmental Council (Christopher Hawk) on January 21<sup>st</sup>. The purpose of these meetings was to hear participants' comments and suggestions regarding the proposed fees. Two common themes emerged from these meetings. The first theme involved the extent to which the proposed fees align with development-related fees charged by other jurisdictions. The second theme involved the potential impact that the increase in fees might have on affordable housing. With regard to the first theme, participants proposed a list of localities that staff should look at (in addition to the jurisdictions that staff had already examined). As for the second theme, participants proposed that staff undertake case studies of a few of the projects that had been built in the County in recent years and determine the difference between the total level of the fees that the County charged for these projects versus the total level of fees that the County would charge under the proposed fees.

These jurisdictional comparisons and historical case studies represent remaining work that staff will complete in coming weeks. Note that the proposed fees currently represent a starting point with regard to the updates. The proposed fees potentially could change as additional information becomes available or as policy input is received. With regard to the CDD fees update, staff will be meeting again with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors on the following dates: **March 3, 2021** – Staff presentation to the Board of Supervisors; **March 23, 2021** – Planning Commission Public Hearing; and **April 21, 2021** – Board of Supervisors Public Hearing.

CDD Fees Update  
January 25, 2021  
Page Three

Conclusions

Staff welcomes comments and suggestions from members of the Planning Commission and will take those comments and suggestions into account as staff moves forward with the update to Chapter 18 of the Albemarle County Code.

SAA/saa

Attachment 1: [Draft of Chapter 18 Update](#)

Attachment 2: [Letter from Free Enterprise Forum](#)