



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of December 9, 2006**

DATE: November 15, 2006

SUBJECT: Request to Advertise “On the County Board’s Own Motion” Public Hearings on the Five Year Review of Arlington County’s Comprehensive Plan.

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize advertisement of the Five Year Review of Arlington County’s Comprehensive Plan for a public hearing at the tentatively scheduled January 27, 2007 County Board meeting and the associated Planning Commission meeting.

ISSUES: None.

SUMMARY: Arlington’s Comprehensive Plan consists of eight elements, including the General Land Use Plan, the Master Transportation Plan, the Storm Water Master Plan, the Water Distribution System Master Plan, the Sanitary Sewer System Plan, the Recycling Program Implementation Plan and Map, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and Plan and the Open Space Master Plan, now the Public Spaces Master Plan. At its December 2006 meeting, the County Board will also be considering the adoption of a ninth Comprehensive Plan element, the Historic Preservation Master Plan, which is the subject of another staff report. The State Code requires that all comprehensive plans be reviewed every five (5) years to determine if it is advisable to amend the plans. This report is designed to satisfy that requirement by providing a summary of the reviews and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that have taken place during the previous five (5) years and a list of planning initiatives which are on-going or are likely to occur within the coming five years that may result in amendments to one or more elements of the Comprehensive Plan or its supporting documents.

DISCUSSION: The State Code (Section 15.2-2230) provides that “At least once every five years the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.” The statute does not describe what constitutes a review of the Comprehensive Plan or how it should be conducted, nor does it require the plan to be amended. In Arlington County, the elements that comprise the Comprehensive Plan are

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reviewed and amended on a continuing basis as needed. However, in accordance with State law, every five (5) years, the Planning Commission and the County Board receive a report which summarizes the reviews and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that have taken place during the previous five (5) years and identifies areas where further amendments may be appropriate. In preparing the report, staff and the Planning Commission analyze the current state of the Comprehensive Plan to determine whether or not immediate or future amendments are needed. To this end, the report contains a list of planning initiatives which are on-going or are likely to occur within the coming five (5) years that may result in an amendment to one or more elements of the Comprehensive Plan or its supporting documents. The last such report was provided to the County Board in May 2000.

In preparing the current Five Year Review of Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan, staff met with the Long Range Committee of the Planning Commission on September 26, 2006. The comments on the draft Five Year Review at this meeting were largely editorial in nature and staff worked to address them. The committee members did, however, decide to engage the County Board vis-à-vis the Planning Commission's role in determining the criteria for selecting and prioritizing the projects to be undertaken during the coming years. Hence, on October 10, 2006, staff presented the draft document at a Planning Commission – County Board work session. Discussion focused on the Planning Commission's role regarding decisions about the projects to be initiated during the next few years. It was agreed that the Planning Commission should work to develop general criteria for determining the selection and timing of projects for future reviews. Staff is scheduled to brief the Planning Commission at its November 29, 2006 meeting on the few, minor updates to the document and to discuss in greater detail the projects to be undertaken during the next five years.

CONCLUSION: Staff recommends that the County Board authorize the advertisement of the Five Year Review of Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan for a public hearing at the tentatively scheduled January 27, 2007 County Board meeting and the associated Planning Commission meeting.