



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 22-101, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 1/19/2022

TITLE:

Comprehensive Plan Working Group - Overview of Application & Selection Process

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Information about the application, selection, and outreach approach for the Comprehensive Plan Working Group

ITEM TYPE: Regular Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, Filardo, Rapp, Falkenstein, Accardi

PRESENTER (S): Rachel Falkenstein, Planning Manager; Michaela Accardi, Senior Planner II

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: On November 3, 2021, the Board adopted a Resolution of Intent to implement an innovative community engagement approach for the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update that integrates the County's new 'Community' Value and centers equity in the engagement process (Attachment A). A key aspect of this engagement approach includes the formation of an approximately 8-12 member Working Group.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Mission - to enhance the well-being and quality of life of all community members through the provision of the highest level of public service consistent with the prudent use of public funds.

DISCUSSION: A team of staff from the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI), Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE), the Climate Protection Program, and Long-Range Planning collaboratively developed this Working Group (Attachment B) based on best practices and the projects goals to:

1. Conduct outreach and collaborate with community members whose perspectives have not historically been well-represented in County processes (e.g., age, race, place, income, and other demographic factors are considered).
2. Develop and implement a transparent community engagement process.
3. Provide consistent and varied opportunities for community input throughout the update process.

Option A: Create a Working Group comprised of community members working as temporary project support

The Working Group's role will be to advise staff on Plan recommendations and engagement methods and to support community outreach efforts by sharing information with their networks. The expected time commitment for the Working Group members is approximately 10 hours per month, including time to review materials in advance of meetings, attend monthly meetings, attend Comprehensive Plan engagement events, and allocate time to sharing information with others in their networks. Working group members will be selected via a competitive application process that considers applicants' local, historical knowledge, community building

skills, and other forms of non-technical expertise.

Staff recommends that Working Group members be compensated for their time and expertise at a rate equivalent to the County's minimum wage (approximately \$15 per hour). For Phase 1, this is estimated to be around \$1,000 per person and, depending on the size of the group, would have an estimated total cost of \$8,000-\$12,000. This funding is available in the Plan budget, which was reviewed by the Board at work sessions in the winter and spring of 2021. If the Board is supportive of this approach, Long-Range Planning staff will collaborate with Human Resources and Finance & Budget staff to structure compensation.

Compensation of Working Group members is based on several factors, including 1) integrating equity and inclusion into the planning process, 2) alignment with best practices in Virginia and across the nation (Attachment C), 3) the expected labor and time commitment for individual members, and 4) an opportunity for the County to pilot a new engagement approach.

Without compensation, Working Group membership is likely to consist of individuals who already have the access and means to participate in the Comprehensive Plan update engagement activities. Recruiting members whose perspectives are typically not represented in County processes will be challenging, and the County is likely to experience similar results to Richmond300's initial volunteer-based participation approach (Attachment C). For these reasons, staff recommends only establishing the Working Group if compensation can be provided.

Option B: Additional resources for outreach & engagement

In addition to the Working Group, the Phase 1 Engagement (Attachment A) includes outreach and engagement activities such as workshops, neighborhood pop-ups, and online engagement for specific topics. Resources allocated towards the Working Group could be used for additional focused engagement opportunities in underrepresented areas of the County and collaboration with existing community groups to attend already planned group meetings or events.

This type of focused and dispersed outreach is effective but requires more time than the Working Group approach. Conducting individualized and dispersed outreach that frequently engages the wide diversity of County residents (including rural residents, non-native English speakers, people of color, and low-income households) for each engagement topic and opportunity will require a longer project timeline and additional resources. Option B has not been fully scoped yet, due to the Board's previous support of the Working Group as part of the Phase 1 Engagement Plan. If the Board prefers Option B, staff will come back with a revised Phase 1 Engagement Plan that includes an updated project timeline and budget request.

BUDGET IMPACT: The Fiscal Year 2022 budget identified \$665,000 from the Board of Supervisors Strategic Priority reserve to fund work associated with the Comprehensive Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board review and affirm or recommend revisions to the Working Group Approach and Application (Attachment B) and the compensation recommendation contained within this Executive Summary.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A - Phase 1 Engagement Plan & Timeline
- B - Working Group Approach and draft Application
- C - Best Practices and Local Project Examples