



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 16-648, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 10/24/2016

TITLE:

Development Options for County Court Project

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Public discussion to review development options for the Court expansion project

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Foley, Letteri, Catlin, Henry

PRESENTER (S): Tom Foley, Trevor Henry

LEGAL REVIEW: No

REVIEWED BY: Thomas C. Foley

BACKGROUND: Albemarle County has been engaged for some time in a thorough analysis and assessment of the County's future court needs and the best way to meet those needs. In 2011, the Board of Supervisors authorized issuance of Request for Proposals to conduct a needs assessment and develop renovation and/or new building options for the provision of court facilities, to include the Circuit, General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts. The results of that study initiated the very focused effort underway since then, involving significant conversation with court stakeholders and representatives from the City of Charlottesville as various options have been identified and evaluated.

Given the status of discussions with the City and the results of various studies and analyses since 2011 regarding potential expansion options, the Board of Supervisors feels it is now appropriate to schedule a public review and discussion of potential options with an opportunity for public comment. Court stakeholders have had various opportunities to provide feedback on the Court expansion project. The Board is particularly interested in giving County taxpayers an opportunity to review the identified options and provide comment as the court expansion project reflects a very major investment of County funds and is in fact the most expensive project in the County's Capital Improvement Program budget. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to present information on available expansion options at a special meeting scheduled for October 24, 2016. This meeting will provide an overview of major milestones in the evaluation of options since 2011 and a review of information for each expansion option. Complete background materials related to the court project are posted on the County website at www.albemarle.org/courts <<http://www.albemarle.org/courts>>. Members of the public will have an opportunity to provide comments to the Board as part of this meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: Court Development Options (attachment B) and Comparison Matrix (attachment C) have been updated as of October 21, 2016 to reflect more precise cost comparison related to phasing between options one and four.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Goal 2 - Provide community facilities that meet existing and future needs.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of this meeting is to share information on the five identified court expansion options with the public and provide an opportunity for feedback as the Board determines its preferred direction. Staff will provide background on the key characteristics, opportunities and challenges associated with each alternative.

Project Justification:

A Courts Master Plan Study completed by Dewberry Architects in 2012 (available at www.albemarle.org/courts <<http://www.albemarle.org/courts>>) demonstrated that the County's court facilities are inadequate in size and quality to meet present and projected future court needs. Security and space concerns include insufficient courtroom space, multiple unsecured access points, poor circulation/separation of activities, lack of public waiting space and inadequate ADA compliance. Other issues include inadequate storage and growing maintenance requirements. The study findings were presented to the Board in February, 2013, which initiated the series of major actions listed below.

Project Background (full milestone timeline is provided as Attachment A):

The Board of Supervisors and County staff have been engaged in an extensive process of study and analysis of potential development options for the Court expansion project for a number of years, with the most active phase beginning in early 2013 with the presentation of results of the Dewberry study. That study identified expansion options for the existing downtown location and for possible relocation of the Courts into the County. After receiving feedback from the most impacted court stakeholders, including the Judges, Commonwealth Attorney, Sheriff, Public Defender and Clerks, the Board directed staff to focus on the downtown option and to work with the City on resolving issues including the need for additional parking. These County/City discussions continued through 2013.

Following the election of new Supervisors in November, 2013, the reconstituted Board held a work session to consider all the options that had been identified in the 2011 Dewberry study and again discussed those options directly with Court stakeholders. The Board directed staff to pursue both the downtown and the potential County site options to determine how best to meet community needs and to maximize the value to County taxpayers. A County/City subteam was formed and met a number of times to talk about the possibility of co-locating the General District Courts and potential parking solutions, and a joint feasibility study was conducted. This study led to the concept of co-locating the General District Courts as outlined in Option 1, however Court parking issues remained unresolved. These efforts continued through early 2016.

In early 2016, with two new members on the Board of Supervisors as a result of the 2015 election, the identified options for Court expansion were again discussed. For the next six months, representatives from the County and City met to develop various options that were considered by the Board and City Council. Also during this time, the Board identified urban redevelopment/revitalization and related economic development as the top priorities of the County's FY17 - 19 Strategic Plan. These priorities emerged as very important factors in how options were developed and considered by the County, as the Courts expansion project became an obvious opportunity for major strategic investment in furthering economic development possibilities in the County's urban areas. Finally, on October 12, the Board asked staff to bring the five developed options to a public meeting on October 24 to allow for a full review and discussion of the opportunities and challenges presented by each option, with time for public comment provided.

Expansion Options:

Based on extensive review of court needs and reasonable options for location/relocation, staff has identified and developed five Court development alternatives for consideration as listed below. A full review of each option is provided as Attachment B.

- *Option 1 - Downtown/Levy* - renovate Levy Opera House, demolish an existing building and construct a new three story Court facility on Levy site to accommodate General District court needs for the County and City, and renovate existing County Circuit Court building at current Historic Courthouse location.
- *Option 2 -City and County General District Courts Co-location at COB McIntire* - construct addition at COB

McIntire to accommodate General District Court needs for the County and City, and renovate existing County Circuit Court building at current Historic Courthouse location.

- *Option 3 - County General District Court at COB McIntire* - construct addition at COB McIntire to accommodate general district court needs for the County; County Circuit Court renovation at current Historic Courthouse location.
- *Option 4 -County General District and Circuit Courts at COB McIntire* - renovate existing COB facility and construct larger addition at COB McIntire to accommodate County General District and Circuit Courts
- *Option 5 - County General District and Circuit Courts to new location in Albemarle* - construct new court complex at a site to be determined in Albemarle County

Evaluation Criteria:

Staff has undertaken significant assessment and analysis to understand and quantify potential challenges and opportunities associated with each of the identified expansion options. The list below reflects major criteria for comparing the merits of each alternative. A full evaluation matrix is provided as Attachment C.

- project costs
- parking availability
- convenience for court stakeholders and county residents
- operational efficiency for courts and county administration
- economic development potential for county taxpayers
- support of county strategic and policy priorities
- historic courthouse preservation
- future expansion possibilities

In addition to these criteria, the matrix outlines critical implementation factors that must be considered for each alternative.

BUDGET IMPACT: The total CIP request for the Courts Project is approximately \$47 million over a seven year period based on the original downtown Levy renovation/expansion option, budget impacts of other alternatives are included in the matrix in Attachment C and will be presented as part of this discussion.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board discuss and consider the information presented on expansion options and provide direction regarding the preferred location and next steps.