



# Albemarle County

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 17-594, **Version:** 1

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**AGENDA DATE:** 11/1/2017

**TITLE:**

Building Inspector Request

**SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:** Mid-year request for additional building inspector in response to increased workload and recent Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of the building inspection program

**ITEM TYPE:** Regular Action Item

**STAFF CONTACT(S):** Walker, Graham, Dellinger

**PRESENTER (S):** Mark Graham

**LEGAL REVIEW:** Not Required

**REVIEWED BY:** Douglas C. Walker

**BACKGROUND:** The purpose of this agenda item is to request the Board authorize Community Development to increase staffing by one Full Time Employee (FTE) who will serve as a building inspector. This request is in response to a much higher workload than anticipated when the FY 18 budget was developed, as well as a recent review of the Building Inspections program by the ISO indicating a lower rating of our program is likely without additional staff being put in place.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:** *Quality Government Operations:* Ensure County government's capacity to provide high quality service that achieves community priorities

**DISCUSSION:** 1) Recent Building Activity Reports and Community Development data (Attachment A) demonstrate the workload for the building inspectors has significantly jumped in the last two years. Staff is not seeing any evidence this trend is changing. It is also noted that permit fee revenues have significantly increased and exceeded budgeted amounts by about \$282,000 in FY16 and \$362,000 in FY17.

2) The ISO performed a review of the Building Inspections program in spring 2017. The last ISO review was done in 2013. This information is used by many insurance companies for setting rates with both commercial and residential structures, based on the measured effectiveness of the County's inspections program. If the County's score drops, many property owners would see their insurance costs increase. While the County has always received scores that are comparable to its peer communities, preliminary results suggest the County's program would be downgraded; the primary factor was the number of inspections and plan reviews per inspector. Fortunately, this was offset by the experience and certification levels of the current staff and the County's score was maintained.

3) Three of the eight building inspectors are currently eligible for full retirement and two more will be eligible in the next two years. Experience has shown it typically takes two years for a trainee to become fully proficient as a building inspector. Staff retirements are anticipated to significantly reduce the County's experience level for the building inspection program and that reduction would adversely impact our program's ISO rating.

Considering all three points, staff recommends the Board authorize Community Development to add an inspector position. The cost of this position is anticipated to be fully offset by the increased permit fees seen in recent years. Additionally, given the anticipated retirements in the next few years, Community Development can easily adjust staffing levels should building activity significantly drop.

**BUDGET IMPACT:** This position is anticipated to be a Grade 12 or 13 building inspector, with a first-year cost of \$98,510. This includes a recurring expenditure of \$67,610 and a start-up expense of \$30,900 for a vehicle, furniture, computer, phone and other equipment. Recognizing building fee revenues exceeded budget by about \$282,000 in FY16 and by about \$363,000 in FY 17, it is anticipated the cost of this position is fully offset by building permit fees.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Board authorize Community Development to increase its staffing level by one building inspector position. If the Board supports this request, staff will immediately begin advertising for this position, but it will not be filled until the Board approves an appropriation request that covers this expense at a future meeting.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A - Building Permit and Inspections Workload