

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2009
TO: The Board of Supervisors
FROM: John E. McDonald, Manager, Financial and Management Services
SUBJECT: Capital Improvements Planning

The Planning Commission has recommended changes in how the Commission reviews the five-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and makes its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Financial and Management Services staff members have been involved in this process and support the following changes to improve and enhance the process:

Modify Timeline

Currently the Policy Committee of the Planning Commission is appointed in early February after the annual organizational meeting of the Commission. Reviewing and ranking the CIP projects before a mid-March release of the budget recommendations by the County Administrator has not proven productive. The proposed change would change the CIP submissions/review process to a longer period in the fall and should allow the Commission additional time for public input and review.

Present the CIP comprehensively

Currently the CIP is presented in fragments and it is difficult to review the several components (County, Schools, JCSA, VDOT) in any consistent way against the expectations in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Reviewing each component of the CIP at the same time and in the same way should improve recommendations regarding the CIP for the Board of Supervisors.

Create a Capital Maintenance Program

The County, JCSA, and Schools currently have capital maintenance programs for many existing public facilities. Staff agrees that it would be beneficial to improve, combine, and publish a capital maintenance program that sets out expectations of future spending needed to protect and maintain all current public facilities. Capital maintenance items would not be part of the amended CIP review process by the Planning Commission which should further improve and streamline the CIP review process.

Create a separate CIP document with a five-year rolling budget

In the interests of making the CIP as understandable and as accessible to County residents as possible, staff agrees that a separate document that focuses on the CIP would be helpful. The County, JCSA, and VDOT already have multiyear budgets but combining them in a similar format with similar information is an appealing improvement.

One other recommendation adopted by the Planning Commission has to do with proposed changes to the public facilities plan component in the Comprehensive Plan.

Budget staff has not been involved in the discussions leading to that recommendation.

Conclusion

Improvements in the budget process that expand the opportunity for public input and improve the visibility of both the CIP and the process that creates it are welcome ones. These changes should improve the flow of information that the Board of Supervisors considers when it adopts the CIP.

John E. McDonald

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