

AGENDA NOTE – HRPDC ANNUAL COMMISSION MEETING

ITEM #8: LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

SUBJECT:

Review of draft 2016 Legislative Agenda.

BACKGROUND:

The HRPDC Legislative Ad-Hoc Committee met on Thursday, September 24, 2015, to discuss the draft Legislative Agenda.

Ms. Julia Hillegass, HRPDC Public Information and Community Affairs Administrator, will provide an overview of the proposed 2016 Legislative Agenda developed by the Committee, and discuss additional emerging issues.

Attachment 8

Note: This item is for informational purposes only.

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission 2016 Legislative Agenda

REGIONAL COOPERATION

The HRPDC encourages the General Assembly to continue to develop and implement incentives for local governments to work together in regional cooperative efforts to provide services to citizens at a lower cost, and to enhance the region's opportunity for future economic development. PDCs are a natural, existing statewide mechanism to coordinate and implement these efforts, provided the Commonwealth can provide resources for adequate capacity to do so.

GOVirginia

Regional collaborative innovation will be required for significant economic recovery and job creation. The GOVirginia initiative encourages voluntary, business-led collaboration on economic and workforce development in each region, with educational institutions and government engaging effectively as full partners.

- The HRPDC supports this effort for enhancing efficiencies and creating cost-saving collaboration and requests that GOVirginia recognize the important role that Planning District Commissions can play in this process.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

The HRPDC recognizes the important role that public institutions of higher education play in contributing to the economic vitality of the Commonwealth and the well-being of its citizens. Hampton Roads is home to several public institutions with clear commitments to providing access to a top-quality and affordable higher education experience.

- The HRPDC urges legislators to strengthen state investment in higher education to promote college affordability and quality, ensuring that Virginia and Hampton Roads have the educated workforce needed for future economic vitality.

K-12 Education

The lack of adequate state funding support for K-12 public education has placed an inordinate burden on localities. A strong public school system is essential to economic development and prosperity.

- The HRPDC opposes legislative efforts to further shift K-12 per pupil funding responsibility away from the Commonwealth and onto local governments. Specifically, the HRPDC urges a realistic alignment of Standards of Learning and Standards of Accountability with state Standards of Quality funding levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Support Adequate Funding for Agricultural Best Management Practices

Robust and reliable funding of Virginia's agricultural best management practice cost-share program is essential for meeting the Commonwealth's water quality goals. Agricultural BMPs are the most cost-effective way to reach our TMDL goals.

- The Commonwealth should increase cost-share funding for these practices through the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Support Stormwater Grant Funding Initiatives

Funding to support localities' work to implement urban stormwater controls has been instrumental in reducing pollution into the Chesapeake Bay.

- The Commonwealth must substantially increase funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) to \$50 million per year, a program that provides matching grants to localities for effective stormwater management projects.

Support Funding for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades

Modernizing wastewater treatment has been a major success story in Virginia. The installation of nutrient removal technology at numerous wastewater treatment plants has reduced the flow of pollution to the Bay and Virginia rivers, dramatically improving local and regional water quality in accordance with established TMDLs. Finalizing the upgrades for the next group of plants will require an additional \$58 million.

- We urge Virginia to live up to its commitments by ensuring funds are available to complete the projects, improve water quality, limit utility rate increases on citizens and businesses, and protect jobs.

Statewide Land Cover GIS Data Development Project

Establish a funding mechanism to continue the land cover mapping initiative (currently being led by the Virginia Geographic Information Network) to produce regular land cover data updates.

- Updated land cover mapping should be coordinated with the Chesapeake Bay Program's updates, which are anticipated every 3 years.

HOUSING

Virginia Housing Trust Fund

Housing trust funds are distinct funds established by city, county, or state governments that receive ongoing dedicated sources of public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing opportunities for families and individuals to access decent affordable housing.

- The HRPDC supports legislation that would continue to appropriate funding to VHTF for continued future housing programs and projects.

OTHER

Unfunded Mandates

The HRPDC opposes unfunded mandates by the Commonwealth. When funding for a mandated program is altered, the mandate should be suspended until full funding is restored. When legislation with a cost to localities is passed by the General Assembly, the cost should be borne by the state, and the legislation should contain a sunset clause providing that the mandate is not binding on localities until funding by the Commonwealth is provided. Furthermore, HRPDC opposes the shifting of fiscal responsibility from the state to localities for existing programs.

- Any unfunded mandate or shifting of responsibility, such as maintenance of state transportation facilities or litter control, should be accompanied by a full fiscal and program analysis to determine the relative costs to the state and to the locality and to assure the state is meeting its full funding responsibility before taking effect.

EMERGING ISSUES

- SJ235 Housing Study Recommendations to be released this fall
- Economic impact of Virginia Housing Trust Fund
- Proposed legislation reallocating locality nutrient allocations currently assigned to existing municipal wastewater facilities