Policy Committee Recommendations

As part of the Business Friendly initiative and a top five priority of the Board of Supervisors, the *Policy Committee* was created to review and amend internal policies that hamper business friendliness. The first meeting was held on October 12, 2018, and met periodically until the final meeting on January 25, 2019. Those agencies in participation include Community Development, EDA, Health Department, VDOT, and the Commissioner of Revenue. A summary of the resulting recommendations are below:

Currently being implemented:

* Addition of monthly “Pre-Application Meetings” to the public hearing schedule – does not increase the time frame to approval, gives applicant the chance to hear from agencies first what may be required prior to committing, minimizing potential surprises for those seeking to develop a property
* Example: The first Pre-Application meeting was held on January 11, 2019 – the applicant was considering buying property for a special exception use. The applicant learned that a bathroom would be required for the desired use, and therefore a soil test would be needed for drainfield assessment. The applicant was able to have a soil test completed prior to the submittal deadline, which indicated that there were no adequate soils present to support a drainfield. Because of access to this and other information, the applicant was able to avoid the public hearing process and $300 fee for a project that was not viable in that location.
* Community Development purchase of plan scanner – now requiring less full size plan sets for submittal – can accept digital copies
* Work session for staff – VDOT and Health Department will be informing and refreshing Community Development staff on topics that are frequently part of day-to-day operations, as well as their role in the office, allowing staff to effectively communicate with customers as opposed to “sending them on” – scheduled February 27, 2019

Community Development:

* Online applications being updated to be more user friendly – before, zoning had to choose between online payments OR file uploads; these applications will allow both – also instead of text links to applications, they will be icons
* Contractor portal will allow contractors to check on the status of their inspections and even schedule them
* Standardizing erosion and sediment control policies and practices for consistency – expectations set for inspectors and contractors – hand out on site

VDOT:

* Continued participation in monthly pre-application meeting and Development Review Committee meetings
* Provide Community Development with copies of correspondences with the development community
* Promote the opportunity for joint meetings with County staff regarding development interest and questions by land owners and the development community
* Provide alternate means to reserve sight distance easements for commercial development which would not necessitate dedication to the County – this can be a time consuming process
* Encourage the County to provide written notification of business reoccupation request and zoning/special use request to allow VDOT the opportunity to review and provide input for consideration during application
* Include on the Community Development website a VDOT tab to include local land use office contacts, as well as links to the Land Development Information Center and Land Use Permits

Health Department:

* Continued participation in monthly pre-application meetings and Development Review Committee meetings
* Distribution of handouts for customers such as list of potential service providers or sewage disposal system maintenance guidance
* Inclusion of a Health Department tab on the Community Development website with contact information, links to forms, etc.
* Yearly Health Department Orientation/ Update on any changes that effect staff, contractors, developers, or new business