



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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November 16, 2011

Ms. Susan Williams
Commission on Local Government
Department of Housing and Community Development
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Ms. Williams:

The City of Roanoke is appreciative of the opportunity to provide input for consideration by the Governor's Task Force for Local Government Mandate Review. At my request, leadership of the organization has reviewed the many state mandates under which we operate and present several for consideration of the Task Force for suspension or elimination.

Veterinarians required to provide rabies vaccination information to Treasurer (Section 3.1-796.87:1)

Currently, veterinarians are required to send all rabies certifications to the Treasurer in the locality in which the veterinarian office is located. Once the Treasurer receives this information, he/she must determine which locality the dog owner resides in and send the information to the Treasurer in the locality that the dog owner resides in. Compliance with this mandate causes the locality to incur additional expenditures (staff time and operating expenses).

The more beneficial process would be the requirement that the rabies certificate be sent by the veterinarians to the treasurer of the locality in which the dog owner resides. An additional consideration would be allowing dog owners to transfer current dog license to other Virginia localities. This provision would be viewed as a customer service improvement to citizens as well as a benefit to the locality.

Mandates to publish legal advertisements in local newspaper The City and its citizens expend significant sums annually to publish legal ads in newspapers, as required by various State

laws for various types of notices. Such requirements often double or triple the cost to a citizen seeking a rezoning or special exception. For example, Section 15.2-2285. Notice of all zoning text amendments and rezoning must be advertised twice before they are considered by the planning commission, then twice again before being considered by the governing body. The City of Roanoke has included such legislation in its legislative program for three consecutive years including for the upcoming 2012 session.

State law should be changed to permit alternatives to the current requirements for newspaper publishing. Such alternatives would reduce costs to citizens and are likely to be more effective in notifying affected property owners:

Alternatives include:

- (1) Publish on the locality's web site and on local access television and;
- (2) Post the property with a public notice.

Other alternatives that would help citizens include:

- (1) Reduce the number of required advertisements and;
- (2) Reduce the required content of a legal advertisement which requires a lengthy descriptive summary of the change. Instead, the required information should be limited to a simple statement of the location and nature of the request with a reference to a source where more details can be obtained.

Tax Sale Procedures

Section 58.1-3975 establishes a less costly and more expedient non-judicial process for tax delinquent real properties based on their size, value and/or suitability for building. The non-judicial process applies only to unimproved parcels assessed at less than \$10,000 and either less than 4,000 square feet or determined to be unsuitable for building due to the size, shape, zoning or soils of the parcel by the zoning administrator. It would be beneficial to the locality if the criteria were modified (increasing the square footage or property value limit).

Serving Emergency Custody Orders, Temporary Detention Orders and all Protective Orders

Modification of Section 37.2-810 which requires local police departments to serve all such documents impacts the availability for a police officer for extended periods of time and may result in frequent overtime costs when officers must remain with patients beyond the normal work hours. Localities would find relief if the mandate were modified such that the responsibilities were shared with or distributed to the State Police.

Cleanup Costs of Methamphetamine Labs

Necessary expenditures related to cleanup costs associated with methamphetamine labs is an unfunded mandate on local governments. Enabling legislation would serve to allow localities the opportunity to recoup costs against individuals charged with manufacturing of methamphetamines if that individual is convicted or if the charges are reduced to a lesser offense (distribution or possession).

Disposal of Non-Suspicious Dead Bodies (Section 32.1-283)

The Medical Examiner's Office is allowed to refuse unclaimed non-suspicious dead bodies. Exempting localities from this responsibility when no local funeral home is willing to take possession of the unclaimed body for disposal will revert the duty back to the Medical Examiner's Office.

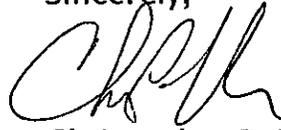
Emergency Veterinarian Care (Section 3.2-6507)

Localities must provide emergency veterinarian care for stray animals that are injured. Often, following the provision of care, the injured animal must be eventually euthanized. An amendment to State Code to allow the locality to euthanize any animal that is not micro-chipped or wearing an identification tag would decrease the costs incurred by localities.

In addition to the mandates noted above, the Task Force is also asked to consider recommending the repeal/elimination of the approximately \$60 million Local Aid to the Commonwealth that is imposed on localities. Given the challenges that local governments face due to a sluggish, recovering economy, the Commonwealth of Virginia can have its' most significant positive impact on localities by eliminating this burden. As the City of Roanoke launches into the development of its FY 2012-2013 budget, planning efforts would certainly be bolstered by the elimination of this requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the crucial discussions of the Task Force on Local Government Mandate review. The City of Roanoke looks forward to the progress they will make on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the localities as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Morrill', written in a cursive style.

Christopher P. Morrill
City Manager