

**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS
FOR THE 2024 REGULAR GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION**

A. Expand the Option for a One-Cent Local Sales Tax Increase for Construction and Renovation of Public-School Facilities to All Localities

Our most important legislative priority is legislation to allow all localities the option of enacting a one-cent sales tax increase to provide local revenue for the construction or renovation of public-school facilities. Currently, only a few localities have been designated as “qualifying localities” under the provisions of Va. Code §§ 58.1-602, 58.1-605.1, and 58.1-606.1 to raise revenue in this manner, yet the need for this additional revenue source extends beyond those few localities that have it. If legislation allowing all localities this option is not successful, we would support legislation giving Charlottesville this option.

B. Continue Funding of Virginia’s Home Visiting Programs

We support funding Virginia’s home visiting programs with general funds to the extent necessary to prevent any reduction in funding due to the Commonwealth’s declining TANF balance.

Funding for Virginia’s Home Visiting Programs is at risk because of a decline in the Commonwealth’s TANF balance which is projected to decline from over \$46 million at the end of the last fiscal year to approximately \$4 million in the current fiscal year. This decline will adversely impact funding for home visiting programs which connect pregnant and parenting families to trained family support professionals. Those programs include the Comprehensive Health Investment Project (CHIP), Healthy Families, Resource Mothers and Early Impact Virginia.

C. Salaries for Members of Local Governing Bodies

We support legislation to amend Code of Virginia § 15.2-1414.6 to remove the limitation on annual salaries for city councils. City councils in Virginia should be permitted to establish the annual salaries for councilors at the local level. Each locality’s needs are unique and maximum compensation should be a local decision, based on the will of the electorate and the financial resources of the locality.

D. Funding for Regional Transit Authorities

We support legislation which would permit localities to impose an optional one cent local sales tax increase to fund regional transit authorities. This legislation would permit Charlottesville to partner with neighboring jurisdictions to address transportation needs on a regional basis.

E. Amend Land Use Ordinance Advertisement Laws Which Unduly Restrict Council's Ability to Deliberate

We support an amendment of Code of Virginia § 15.2-2204 and other similar provisions in the Virginia Code which require advertisement of land use ordinances within 14 days of intended adoption. This provision constrains the City Council because it may wish to consider whether to adopt a land use ordinance not only at the meeting at which it is first advertised, but at a subsequent meeting. This is particularly true when the issue is complex. In addition, in those cases in which the City Council and the Planning Commission conduct a joint public hearing, this provision may require Council to act on an ordinance before it has received a recommendation from the Planning Commission.

F. Allow Greater Flexibility for Certain Boards and Commissions to Conduct All-Virtual Meetings

We support enactment of legislation that would allow certain boards and commissions to expand the use of all virtual meetings under policies adopted by those boards or commissions.

Currently, all City boards and commissions, like many other public bodies in the Commonwealth, are limited in the number of all-virtual meetings they may conduct to two times per calendar year or 25% of their meetings in any calendar year. This can sometimes present challenges to assembling a quorum in a physical location. Adding flexibility to the number of all-virtual meetings City boards and commissions may conduct pursuant to policies those bodies adopt at least annually would help address this issue and potentially expand the number of individuals who would be willing to serve on municipal boards and commissions.

This change would not affect current limits on all-virtual meetings for local governing bodies including the City Council, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards or boards with the authority to deny, revoke or suspend a professional or occupational license.

G. Increasing Affordable Housing Accessibility by Enhancing Tenant Rights

We support legislation which would increase affordable housing accessibility by enhancing the rights of tenants, including: 1. amending the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to allow tenants to raise unsafe or unsanitary conditions as an affirmative defense to non-payment of rent; 2. allowing indigent tenants to waive their appeal bond in landlord-tenant disputes; 3. requiring landlords to disclose a complete list of additional fees in a separate document prior to the signing of a lease; and 4. authorizing localities to pass rent stabilization ordinances for residential rent in mobile home lots and multi-family dwellings.