

Commission on Local Government

Estimate of Local Fiscal Impact

2020 General Assembly Session

Bill: SB977

Patron: Suetterlein

Date: 1/23/2020

In accordance with the provisions of §30-19.03 of the Code of Virginia, the staff of the Commission on Local Government offers the following analysis of the above-referenced legislation:

Bill Summary:

Local governing body meetings; public comment. Requires a governing body to provide members of the general public with the opportunity for public comment during at least half of the regular meetings held each fiscal year.

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**Executive Summary:**

Almost all localities responded that they are in compliance with the proposed requirements of the bill, therefore, it appears the bill would likely not have any fiscal impact. One locality noted that the impact of the bill is indeterminate, but they are not fully compliant with the requirements of the bill because their number of public meetings with opportunities for public comments is less than half of their total number of public meetings. They noted that they need to have additional public meetings with public comments to comply with the provisions of the bill, and that would have minimal fiscal impact in terms of overtime of clerks and staff covering the meetings.

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**Local Analysis:**

**Locality:** Augusta County

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

County includes public comments on regular board meeting schedule with minimum of 10-11 regular meetings per year. No further notice needed. Board meets 2x per month, except for December meets 1x.

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Locality: City of Danville

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

All regular Danville City Council meetings have a public comment period at the commencement of the meeting.

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**Locality:** City of Emporia

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

The City of Emporia provides an opportunity for public comment at all of its meetings. There is no fiscal impact.

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Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

No fiscal impact as the city already provides a public comment period.

Locality: City of Norfolk

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

No impact to the city.

Locality: City of Roanoke

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

At the present time, the City of Roanoke provides for public comment at all regular meetings. The City should not incur any additional costs if this bill is passed.

Locality: City of Virginia Beach

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

The official "Time Limits for Speakers at City Council Meeting" policy for the City of Virginia Beach includes "time shall be allotted after the conclusion of the first formal session of each month for non-televised public comments on non-agenda items." Therefore, based on this policy alone, the practices of the City of Virginia Beach are in compliance with the proposed requirements contained within this legislation. In addition, the City always has a general public comment hearing for speakings to discuss regular agenda items at each of its 2 formal meetings per month. Since Virginia Beach already adheres to standards envisioned by this bill, there will be no added cost or fiscal impact to the City.

Locality: City of Winchester

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

No impact to City of Winchester, we allow for public comment at every meeting already

Locality: Fairfax County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Fairfax County is unable to estimate a precise fiscal impact. In calendar year 2020, the County has 9 of 21 regular Board of Supervisors meetings with public comment. Based on the requirements of SB977, the County would have needed 11 meetings with public comment, or an additional two public meetings with public comment to meet the bill's threshold. There would be minimal fiscal impact in terms of overtime of clerks and staff covering the meetings.

Locality: Frederick County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

We do not anticipate the proposed bill to increase administrative costs or to increase the workload for staff. Frederick County currently provides two opportunities for citizen comments at its meetings. The first opportunity is at the beginning of the meeting for agenda items that are not subject to public hearing. The second opportunity is at the end of the meeting and is an opportunity for citizens to address any topic. The proposed legislation would not affect how we conduct our business.

Locality: Henrico County.

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

A public comment period is provided for every regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

Locality: King William County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Already implemented within KWC.

Locality: Prince Edward County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

This will not have any fiscal impact

Locality: Prince George County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

The Prince George County Board of Supervisors already allows public comment at all regular meetings. This has no fiscal impact.

Locality: Rappahannock County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Regular meetings of public bodies must be open to the public to satisfy FOIA open meeting laws (2.2-3700 et. seq.) so with that basis no additional financial effort is needed to provide an opportunity for public to speak.

Locality: Richmond County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

I can't say i am clear on what half means? Does it mean if we meet 12 times, during 6 of those meetings there has to be a time for public comment, or does it mean that if we meet for 4 hours each meeting, public comment shall be for at least 2 hours?

Either way, there is no fiscal impact to the County of Richmond. Public comment is allowed at every meeting we have, and is allowed for as long as it takes to hear from everyone interested in being involved.

Locality: Town of Ashland

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

no impact because this is already offered at every regularly scheduled Council meeting

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Locality: Town of Blacksburg

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

We do provide the opportunity at every regular meeting held by Town Council and Planning Commission.

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Locality: Town of Buchanan

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Zero fiscal impact for our Town as we currently follow this practice.

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Locality: Town of Luray

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

No issues

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Locality: Town of Marion.

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Marion allows public comment at each of it's bimonthly meetings already.

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Locality: Town of Scottsville

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Adding a public comment period has no significant cost to the small-town governing body. For this locality, there would be no change to current practice. Each meeting includes a general public comment opportunity.

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Locality: Wise County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

We already allow public comment at all public meetings.

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**Professional and Other Organization Analysis:**

**Organization:** Northern Neck PDC

No negative fiscal impact on local government.

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Organization: Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional
Commission

For the exception of the City of Salem, all localities in the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region (Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke; Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem; and the Towns of Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount, and Vinton) have public comment periods built into regular meetings of the governing body, there is no perceived fiscal impact from this legislation.

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