



FY 2019 Recommended Budget Budget Question

Board Question #: 29

BUDGET QUESTION: Page 89 of the summarized version of the budget document has a commercial/residential plans reviewer for public safety position. What is the justification for this position? Doesn't the Fire Marshal handle public safety plan review?

RESPONSE: The Spotsylvania Building Safety Department is a state mandated governmental function. Its primary core purpose is to protect our citizens through plan review and inspections of structures within the County for compliance with adopted codes. These structures include hospitals, schools, fire stations, homes, day care centers and retail spaces to name a few. The individuals required to review plans, perform inspections and conduct code enforcement of these structures are highly qualified and experienced individuals. Not unlike FIREM and the Sheriff's Office, the Building Safety professionals exist for public safety purposes. The International Code Council refers to building safety professional as "First Preventers" because of their efforts in assuring that buildings have structural integrity, smoke detectors, fire sprinklers, protection of the public water supply, and other life safety elements.

Along with the increase in construction activity we are experiencing in the community comes the review of additional permit applications and plans. Building permit applications have increased by 20% when compared to activity in recent years. Additionally, number of projects being prioritized by Economic Development continues to increase, delaying other permits. To meet the increased demand for timely services, the Building Department's overtime account was increased by the Board during the course of FY 2018. However, continued use of overtime creates staff burnout which can negatively impact the quality of the plan review.

Due to this increased workload, the Commercial/Residential Plans Reviewer was included in the FY 2019 Recommended Budget. Without this position, plan review times will be delayed. This position will not be responsible for Fire/Rescue's plan review. Yes, Fire/Rescue continues to be responsible for review of site plans for ingress and egress for fire response and suppression.