

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2024 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 6, 2023

Question: What would be the fiscal impact of funding childcare services at Board & Commission meetings?

Response:

Council members have expressed an interest in offering childcare to members of City Boards and Commissions while they are attending monthly meetings.

Staff's estimate of the cost to provide childcare at City town halls and board, committee, and commission (BCC) meetings is provided below based on limited-scale childminding services that have been provided at some recent public meetings mostly by City staff. The childcare cost information was provided by Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, who have historically provided the service. The cost per hour is \$19.02 for a Recreation II Staff member (on average). The costs would vary depending on the duration of the meetings and the number of staff members required. For example, providing a minimum of two staff members for a maximum of three hours per meeting provides for an annualized cost of \$1,141 per BCC assuming 10 meetings per year. The City currently has 50 active BCCs that this scenario may be applied to.

Childminding refers to a service that may be delivered by unlicensed providers in unlicensed facilities under limited allowable circumstances. Those circumstances include a parent being in close proximity and the duration being less than three hours. For events lasting more than three hours, licensed/regulation childcare would be required in licensed facilities. Other conditions may also necessitate licensed childcare such as parents with infants. For events lasting more than three hours, private babysitting is another option. Virginia does not require private babysitters to get licenses or to get certified in childcare and the care can be provided on-site, in the babysitter's home or in the home of the child. Local funding could be designated to cover the costs of either of the three options (childcare, child minding or babysitting). If the City significantly expands the option for childminding, childcare, and babysitting to all public and BCC meetings, it is unlikely existing staff could continue to meet the demand and additional staff and/or contract providers would be required as well as additional resources to coordinate those services. The cost of a BCC pilot program would be similar to the limited-scale services recently provided but could help identify some of the policy, administrative, financial, logistical, legal, and risk management considerations need to be addressed to expand to a broader use.

The costs could change considerably if contracted childcare is used, if any type of food/snacks is provided for the attendees, or if rental space is required (if meeting is not in City-owned facility).