

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

**April 14, 2023**

**Question:** In an effort to expand participation at City town halls, what is the cost of providing food and/or childcare?

**Response:**

The cost of food and childcare for community meetings ranges widely depending on the time of day and type of event, and staff typically host a range of events to attract a diversity of stakeholders when convenient for them to participate.

At the higher end of the cost range is an in-person community meeting held in the evening during mealtime. For these meetings, the food budget is approximately \$500 for 50 people. Smaller scale events not held during mealtime cost less, as staff typically provide small snacks (fruit, granola bars, etc.).

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 would cost approximately \$114 per meeting.

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/regulated 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.

For these types of events, to the degree feasible, staff ask that participants register in advance to best anticipate the amount of food and childcare needed.