

**PROPOSED-Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations
Electronic County Meeting Public Meeting Notifications Resolution
(ER) 2022-02**

WHEREAS, the Fairfax County Government (the County) conducts numerous public meetings during the course of any fiscal year, including meetings of its Board of Supervisors (BOS), Planning Commission (PC), and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), as well as of other County boards, authorities, and commissions; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Code § 2.2-3707, a section of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA) requires all meetings of public bodies to be open to the public; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3707 requires the County to provide a public notice of the date, time, and location of its meetings, the public notice to include a listing of the proposed agenda; and

WHEREAS, the County fulfills the public notice requirement of Section 2.2-3707 by publishing notices of meetings and their agendas of at least the BOS, the PC, and the BZA in editions of the Washington Times newspaper; and

WHEREAS, publishing of notices of meetings in the Washington Times newspaper complies with Virginia Code § 8.01-324; and

WHEREAS, the average circulation of printed editions of the Washington Times is about 50,000 copies total, encompassing at least the entire metropolitan area of Washington, D.C., meaning that print circulation in Fairfax County is a small fraction of total circulation; and

WHEREAS, while publication of meeting notices in the Washington Times technically complies with the notice requirements of Virginia Code §§ 2.2-3707 and 8.01-324, given the small circulation of the Washington Times, such notice falls well short of notifying the general populace of Fairfax County of meetings and their agendas so that Fairfax County residents can participate in the decision making processes of the County boards, authorities, and commissions; and

WHEREAS, in FY 2020, the County expended approximately \$107,000 for print newspaper ads for public hearings during that fiscal year, which is about 0.0024% of the total County budget; and

WHEREAS, the public has moved toward relying upon the Internet and away from printed newspapers to obtain news; and

WHEREAS, the County operates a website accessible at www.fairfaxcounty.gov where information as to meetings of County boards, authorities, and commissions may be accessed including access to meeting agendas; and

WHEREAS, the County website is difficult to navigate and we believe the average citizen has difficulty finding out about various meetings of County boards, authorities, and commissions where issues of interest to citizens are being debated and decided; and

WHEREAS, print advertisements in the Washington Times do not provide links to locations in the County website to information about meetings; and

WHEREAS, facilitating easier access to information about meetings of boards, authorities, and commissions will make it easier for residents to participate in and engage in issues of interest; and

WHEREAS, a separate website administered by the BOS and dedicated solely to providing notices of meetings of County boards, authorities, and commissions, complete with meeting agendas and other meeting materials as required by the VFOIA would be helpful in facilitating greater public notice of those meetings and understanding of them; and

WHEREAS, were such a separate website to be created by County staff under the supervision of the BOS, small print advertisements could be placed in numerous local newspapers such as, for example, the Connection newspapers, notifying the public of the existence of the separate website and explaining that members of the public should navigate to the separate website to find information concerning upcoming meetings; and

WHEREAS, the small print advertisements described above would likely cost less in the aggregate over the course of a fiscal year than the large advertisements currently published in the Washington Times on a weekly

basis, while providing better notice to a higher percentage of County residents concerning upcoming meetings and their agendas.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Association (MVCCA urges the BOS to instruct County staff to create a new electronic mechanism to publish upcoming public meetings to County citizens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the MVCCA urges the County to develop both a static web presence where meetings shall be posted and advertised for County citizens to access.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the MVCCA urges the County to utilize a Calendar Subscription service so that Citizens may subscribe to various calendar feeds of interest and have the information automatically populate in their electronic calendars

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the MVCCA further urges the BOS to place on the newly created website information about all upcoming meetings of all County boards, authorities, and commissions, complete with agendas and other meeting materials required to comply with the VFOIA, to inform the public about the subject matters to be discussed in those meetings including, but not limited to, staff reports and other information.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the MVCCA further urges the BOS to periodically place print advertisements in local community newspapers advertising the existence of the newly created website so that members of the public will be informed of its existence and can access the website to be better informed about upcoming meetings and facilitate increased participation in County decisions by County residents.

APPROVED UNANMOUSLY TO BE POSTPONED INDEFINATELY
BY THE MVCCA GENERAL COUNCIL ON FEBURARY 23, 2022