



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB Date: 10/10/2013

Agenda Item #6

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 4, 2013

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Gwen Wright, Planning Director *GW*
Montgomery Planning Department

FROM: Rose Krasnow, Acting Deputy Director, Planning Department
Anjali Sood, Budget Manager, Planning Department

ACTION REQUESTED

Planning Board approval to prepare the Planning Department's FY15 budget at the Base plus Essential Needs level.

BACKGROUND

On September 19, the Planning Board provided general guidance to Departments for development of the FY15 budget. If the preliminary assessable base information from Montgomery County OMB is accurate, major known commitments costs will grow faster than revenues. At the same time, the Planning Board recognized that we have mandated requirements and essential needs to meet our work program and asked that we include them in our budget request knowing that the County Council has the authority to increase our tax rate to meet our expenditure level.

As requested, the Department has prepared two budget scenarios 1) Base Budget and 2) Base Budget plus Essential Needs.

The following summary depicts changes in key areas in the Base Budget request. These changes include:

1. Salary increases
2. Increases in Benefits
3. Chargebacks to CAS (TBD)
4. Other Operating changes
5. Reduction due to onetime funding in FY14
6. Transfer to DR Special Revenue Fund

Items 1-2 pertain to employee compensation and were discussed at the September 19 Planning Board meeting.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT		
PRELIMINARY FY15 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST		
	FY14 Adopted Budget*	\$18,033,605
FY15 Base Budget		
	Salaries	\$495,191
	Benefits	\$137,861
	Chargebacks (CAS)	TBD
	Other Operating Changes	\$0
	Reduction due to onetime funding in FY14	(\$525,000)
	Transfer to DR Special Revenue Fund	\$0
	Subtotal Increase Base Budget Request	\$108,052
	Estimated Percent Change in Base from FY14 Adopted	0.60%
Base Budget Plus Essential Needs Request		
	Information Technology (IT) Upgrades	\$318,400
	Consultant funding for Functional Plan for Public Facilities	\$100,000
	Consultant funding for Functional Plan for Housing	\$250,000
	Travel Demand Forecasting - One new staff position	\$120,000
	Consultant Funding For Travel Demand Forecasting	\$125,000
	Subtotal Essential Needs Request	\$913,400
	Total Increase in FY15 Proposed Budget Request	\$1,021,452
	Estimated Percent Change in Total Request from FY14 Adopted	5.66%
* Note that FY14 Adopted Budget does not include \$70,000 in Special Appropriation for FY14 for GIS Virtualization Project.		

FY 15 BASE BUDGET

Chargebacks

Chargeback costs are pending from the Commission's Central Administrative Services (CAS).

Transfers (Out)

The Department has, for several years in the past, requested a transfer from the Administration Fund into the Development Review Special Revenue Fund in recognition of the fact that revenues may not cover the costs of review. The fund however has performed well in FY12 and FY13, primarily due to the fees collected for various large projects in CR zones. This has resulted in a significant fund balance. Due to this large balance, Council did

not approve a transfer in FY14. We will be able to eliminate the need for a transfer for one more year (FY15). We anticipate needing at least a partial transfer in FY16.

FY 15 ESSENTIAL NEEDS AND DISCUSSION OF NEW INITIATIVES

The FY15 budget for the Planning Department reflects only a few changes to the organizational structure of the department. Specifically, the IT and GIS functions are being combined into one new division that will be called Information Technology and Innovation (ITI). IT staff from Management Services and GIS staff from the Center for Research and Information Services will be shifted into this new division. The division that was previously called the Center for Research and Information Services will be reframed as the Research and Special Projects Division, and will be expanded to include staff who had been assigned to the Director's Office.

In addition to these organizational shifts, there are a number of new initiatives that are being proposed. These new initiatives focus both on ways to reimagine and reinvigorate our master planning activities, as well as ways to address significant planning issues and concerns that face Montgomery County.

To the first point, Montgomery County is a maturing community. MNCPPC was founded as a bi-county regional planning agency and, because of this, much of the master plan emphasis of the Planning Department over the last 80 to 90 years has been on looking at large planning issues and networks that affect the county as a whole. However, the time has come to begin focusing on planning activities that reflect the maturity of the county. To create the vibrant mixed use communities that we desire, we must begin focusing on a finer grain type of plan – similar to what is done in local municipalities like Rockville and Gaithersburg and in nearby cities like the District of Columbia and Alexandria. At the same time, we need to continue functional planning for larger, overarching issues that do affect many areas of the county.

Attached, there is a draft work program for the next several years for the Board to consider. The work program that is being recommended includes three types of plans: 1.) plans that update older plans for larger geographic areas such as Bethesda CBD and Aspen Hill, 2.) a number of smaller neighborhood plans that focus on more limited geographic areas and allow for a more detailed type of planning, and 3.) several larger functional planning efforts that focus on critical issues such as housing and public facilities. Consideration has been given to spreading the work efforts equally among divisions within the Planning Department and producing three to four deliverable products to the Council each fiscal year. Please note that this draft work program does not yet incorporate additional work that may be necessary on the White Oak Plan or potential Minor Amendments that may be considered. Based upon our discussion on October 10, a revised chart will be developed.

In terms of new initiatives that require additional funding, we are proposing four. The first relates to IT upgrades and updating of our IT Strategic Plan. The second is a major effort to take a new look at travel demand forecasting. This work will require both consultant dollars and one new transportation planner position. The third is a proposal for a functional plan that looks at new ways to make the most efficient use of public facilities - consultant dollars are being requested. The fourth initiative is a proposal to look at housing in Montgomery County, with a focus on several different issues including affordable housing and appropriate treatment of older garden apartment complexes. Again, consultant dollars are being requested.

And last, but not least, there are two smaller new initiatives that can be accommodated within our existing staff workyears. One is an update of the Rustic Roads functional master plan. We have received a number of requests from citizens to take a look at rustic roads particularly in the Olney/Sandy Spring area. The final new project, which also can be accommodated within the existing staff workyears, is an effort to continue working on sustainable neighborhoods. The Planning Department has been looking at ways that large development projects can be designed to reduce the carbon footprint, conserve energy, and preserve the natural environment. This effort will be an examination of the current practices and recommendations for improvements and new practices in the effort to make new developments more sustainable.

More information about each of the essential needs and major new initiatives is included below:

Information Technology (IT) Upgrades - \$318,400

Technology is advancing rapidly. Increasing numbers of staff are moving away from desktop computer to using smart phones, laptops and tablets to work more efficiently. Advances in software and communications systems allow staff to perform more intricate analysis and provide better customer support both internally and externally.

The IT upgrades request includes funding for desktop virtualization software move towards new technology and eliminating the need for desktop PCs; software to remotely manage mobile devices; a monitoring system for all AVAYA communications servers, gateways, and networks in real time; upgrading the Tamberg video conferencing units; upgrading the VOIP for E911; Most of these requests are split between the Department of Parks and the Planning Department.

The last time Departments of Park and the Planning Department developed an IT Strategic Plan was in 2005. In order to keep current, the request also includes funding from each department to hire a consultant to upgrade the IT Strategic Plan.

Functional Plan for Public Facilities - Consultant: \$100,000

During FY 14, staff has begun working in collaboration with the Montgomery County Public Schools on a study about co-location of facilities. The Council budgeted \$50,000 towards this and staff is actively working on this project.

A natural and important extension of this effort is looking at other types of public facilities in the county and opportunities for co-location. There are many exciting projects in the region and across the country that demonstrate how creative use of public facilities and co-location of different uses can provide many public benefits. Just as mixing commercial and residential uses is becoming the norm for new development, finding ways to go beyond stand-alone public facilities to create a mix of beneficial uses on public land is a worthwhile issue to study.

Staff anticipates that this effort would need to involve many different public sector stakeholders – including DGS, the Police, the Fire Department, MCPS, DPS, and others.

Functional Plan for Housing – Consultant: \$250,000

According to our latest research fact sheets on regional demographic shifts, we are losing population to Frederick and Howard Counties – some of which is being driven by housing costs – and this contributes to sprawl and traffic congestion. A county-wide functional plan for housing is necessary that would address a wide variety of issues including developing new models to preserve existing affordable units, looking at ways to appropriately address existing older garden apartments, and providing more opportunities and incentives to create new affordable units.

Staff anticipates that this effort would need to involve close collaboration with and partnership between Planning, DHCA, HOC, and private non-profit housing groups.

Travel Demand Forecasting – Consultant: \$125,000 and One new staff position \$120,000 per year

The current LAM tool we use to forecast local intersection performance has served us well. However, our LAM process needs to be updated to accommodate both Critical Lane Volume (CLV) and Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) analyses. The current process was initially set-up only to address CLV. Staff is exploring a couple of options to replace this tool. One option is to integrate the LAM into our regional transportation model and “post-process” the results using a set of customized scripts and spreadsheets that would yield forecasts we need. The other option is to adopt an enhanced version of a micro-simulation travel demand modeling tool developed by the University of Maryland (UMD) or their software provider. The UMD approach, based on the TransModeler software, has been applied at the corridor-level (on behalf of MDSHA) in support of the evaluation of the impact of the ICC on local traffic. This tool appears to have potential to be applied at the subarea-level, as well. Funds would be needed to adapt our more detailed network and data to integrate the regional and local area models. We would need consultant

resources to support the continued evaluation and refinement of these options, with the goal of providing a fully operational tool by the end of FY 15.

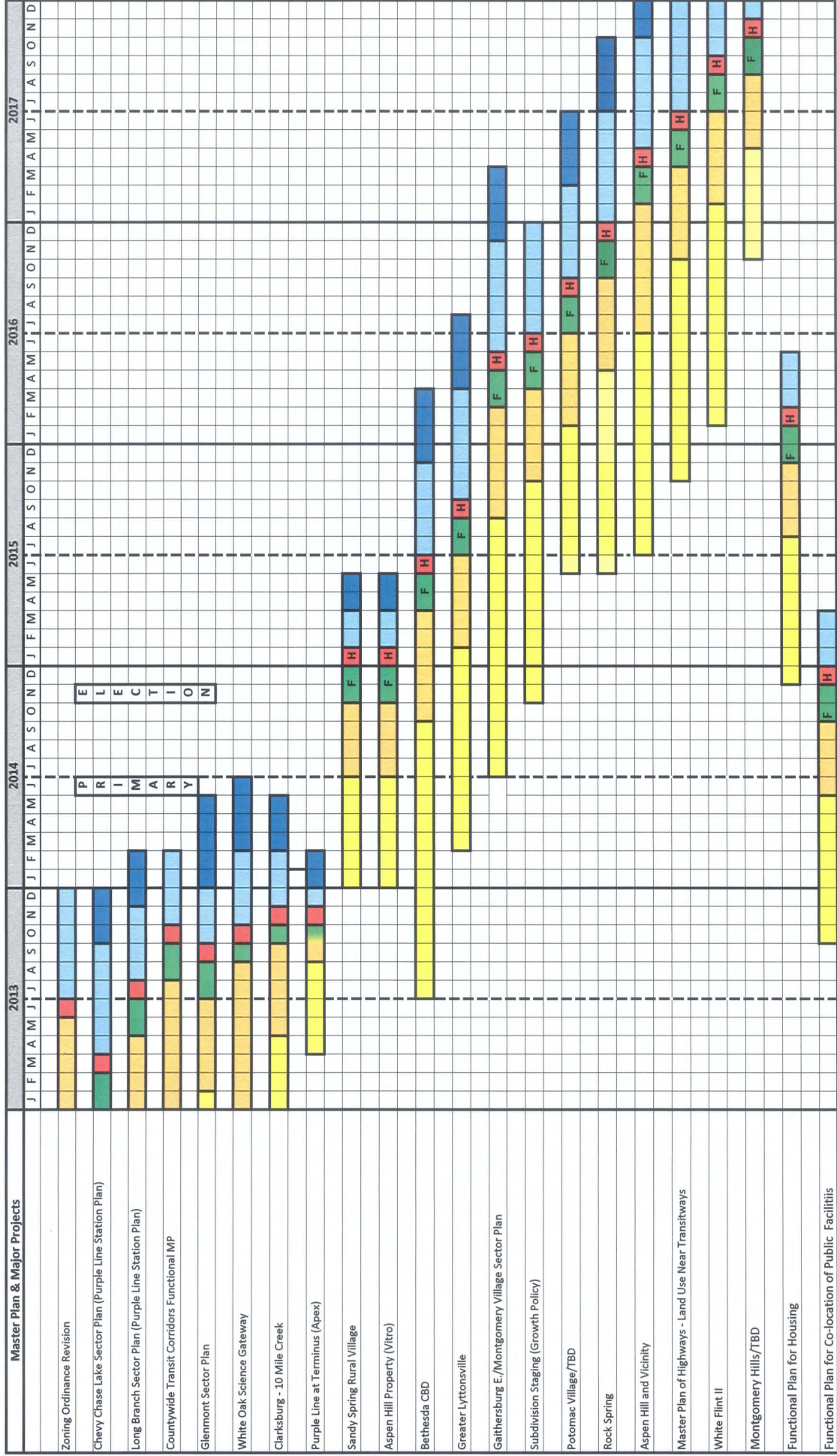
As a result of staffing changes and work program demands within the FPP Division, we have limited staff to take on much of the responsibility to apply the current LAM tool. In support of the application of the updated LAM process described above, it would be highly desirable (and more efficient) to hire a “true” transportation planner/modeler with local area modeling experience and a skill set that includes both CLV and HCM/Synchro analysis skills.

SUMMARY

In developing the FY15 Proposed Budget, the Department is mindful of the county’s financial situation, as well as the challenges facing the county as it grows and matures. The county is transitioning in many ways and the new plans and the new initiatives proposed focus on some of the central issues that must be addressed: transportation, housing, and public facilities. The Department has the opportunity to take the lead in some of these important areas by providing the research, the analysis and the recommendations to move the county forward.

We remain committed to delivering consistent and high quality products and understand that we cannot address every issue in FY15. We also recognize that the anticipated budget may not be able to fund all of the work program additions and critical needs proposed. However, we wanted the Board’s input as to which ones you might wish to prioritize so that we can continue finalizing the budget document for your approval.

Master Plan and Major Projects Schedule FY 15



Legend:

- Staff
- Planning Board
- CE Review & Council Noticing Period
- Hearing
- Council Review
- Commission Adoption, SMA
- Hold until Election
- Planning Board Draft
- Mid-month delivery, follow by review/noticing
- Designates Fiscal Years (July to June)