

## **County Seeks Protection on Immigration Enforcement; Jail Funds, Construction Part of Legislative Plan**

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### **Body**

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Prince William County is looking for backup in its fight against illegal immigrants.

The Board of County Supervisors will ask the General Assembly, which reconvenes next month, to give local governments the "broadest level of immunity" when it comes to the enforcing federal immigration law.

It also will ask the state to promote uniformity of federal immigration laws by Virginia localities and "lessen the burden of housing illegal immigrants in local and regional jails."

Supervisors approved the measures Tuesday as part of the county's legislative program. Counties generally adopt a generic guide for what they plan to advocate during the session while also taking a defensive mode, opposing any legislation that would scale back local authority.

"We have specific things we are looking for, or specific things we are trying to avoid," said Dana Fenton, the county's director of legislative affairs. "This is one of several things we do in order to navigate the General Assembly."

One of the initiatives Prince William has attached a price tag to is partial reimbursement for the county's 200-bed expansion to its adult detention center once it is completed. It is also asking the General Assembly to appropriate \$43 million to expand Bull Run Hall at the George Mason University Prince William campus and another \$43 million to finance the construction of a second instructional building at the Woodbridge campus of Northern Virginia Community College.

The county will request continued state funding for the design and construction of SciencePort, an addition to the science center at Belmont Bay. It seeks \$40 million this year and plans to ask for more funding for programs, equipment, an endowment and other items to build the 200,000-square-foot facility.

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Prince William wants the General Assembly to meet the commonwealth's statutory 95 percent share of transit operating and capital costs, which would require about \$175 million a year in new **funds**.

The board usually approves its **legislative** package before it meets with the local delegation. But this year the board met with members in advance to make sure they were on the same page.

Supervisor Maureen S. Caddigan (R-Dumfries) asked the board to amend the **plan** to include a request to help **fund** the **county's** Manassas Senior Adult Day Program. Earlier this year, the board considered scaling back the program because of lack of participation. But Del. Robert G. Marshall (R-Prince William) and his wife pleaded with the **county** to keep it open. Marshall's father-in-law used the program.

"The delegate reminded us on several occasions that he could have helped if we asked," Caddigan said. "Let's see if he'll help."

In other business, the board got a preview of the **county's** soon-to-be updated strategic **plan**. **County** staff members conducted a survey earlier this year, in which residents ranked the issues most important to them. Eight issues remained on the list, as they did four years ago, including improving **county** roads and the quality of public education, but in a slightly different order.

Keeping the **county** safe from crime remains the No. 1 issue for Prince William residents. Meeting the basic needs of low-income residents and promoting economic development fell off the top 10, replaced by better public transportation and affordable housing.

The new strategic **plan** will provide policy guidance for the **county's** budget and operating decisions from 2010 through 2013. Nearly 1,300 residents participated in the survey, conducted from May to July.

Tracking this fall's campaign season, **immigration** made its first appearance on a list of priorities among those who attended community meetings in October and November. It came in fifth to transportation, schools and education, environment and parks and recreation. Supervisors will select goals in April of next year and adopt the final **plan** next fall.

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