



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 13, 2024

TO: Consumer Protection Commission

FROM: Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Department of Cable and Consumer Services

SUBJECT: Consumer Protection Commission Meeting for February 20, 2024

DS
RLM

Please find attached the Consumer Protection Commission meeting packet. The next scheduled meeting is **Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Room 8** of the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia.

Due to the County holiday on Monday, February 19, 2024, please RSVP with your attendance to Susan Jones by **COB on Friday, February 16, 2024**, at Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-5877.

cc: Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive

Amanda K. Kastl, Director, Consumer Services Division
Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch



**FAIRFAX COUNTY
CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION
February 20, 2024 AGENDA**

Call to Order by the Chairperson (7:30 PM)

Remote Participation Motions

Minutes

- Approval of the draft January 23, 2024, meeting minutes

Report of the Director

Old Business

- 2024 Items of Interest

New Business

- Authorization to Advertise a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.
- Fraud Presentation by Fairfax County Police Department Financial Crimes Unit

Commissioner Matters

Report of the Chairperson

General Interest

- Consumer Protection Commission Calendar
- Consumer Protection Commission Membership
- Consumer Affairs Statistics
- Community Outreach
- Consumer Resources

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

January 23, 2024

7:30 PM

Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Chairperson Kratovil, presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners: Belkowitz, Gasimov,
Gulakowski, Kratovil, Rosier, Springer, Svab

Absent:

Commissioners: Kirk, Kharat, Roark

Staff:

Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 PM by Chairperson Kratovil.

Minutes

Chairperson Kratovil moved to accept the October 17, 2023, minutes without objection. The minutes for the November 28, 2023, meeting were adopted unanimously, 7-0-0.

Report of the Chairperson

Chairperson Kratovil announced the resignations of Commissioners Freedenthal and Hargraves.

Report of the Director

Susan Jones, Branch Manager, Consumer Affairs informed the Commission that Fairfax County Police Department Financial Crimes Unit will provide a fraud presentation at the February 2024 meeting.

Commissioner Matters

Commissioner Gulakowski had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Gasimov had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Springer had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Rosier spoke about signing up for activities through Parktakes with Fairfax County Park Authority.

Branch Manager Jones mentioned the *Consumer Connection* program with the Fairfax County Public Library will air on the Consumer Affairs Facebook page on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 11:00 a.m.

Commissioner Belkowitz had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Svab had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Chairperson Kratovil mentioned he heard on the news that there is talk of building a casino in the Tysons area near a metro station.

A discussion ensued on traffic concerns, location, MGM proximity, and sports betting. Chairperson Kratovil asked Commission to remember this issue as it might be relevant for future discussion.

Old Business

There was no old business before the Commission.

New Business

1. 2024 Items of Interest. Branch Manager Jones mentioned at the February meeting that staff will request Authorization to Advertise a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established. If the motion passes, then the Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established will be held at the March meeting.

A discussion ensued on inviting the cable companies to discuss cost of services and the impact on subscribers, panhandlers, solicitors, Consumer Affairs high school presentation, contractors, and insurance companies during a disaster.

Chairperson Kratovil requested each Commissioner think about items of interest that are relevant to the Commission.

2. Election of Officers. Commissioner Springer opened the floor for nominations. Commissioner Springer moved to accept the slate of candidates.

Chairperson – Jason Kratovil
Vice-Chairperson – Denis Gulakowski
Secretary – Jaqueline Rosier

Commissioner Belkowitz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-0.

3. Standing Committee Resolution. Chairperson Kratovil stated the resolution was emailed inside the Commission packet for review. Chairperson Kratovil opened the floor for discussion.

A discussion ensued on Commissioner Belkowitz’s misspelled name, providing a six-month committee update, logistics of the meetings, staff support, development of committee criteria and goals, and supporting the work provided by staff.

Chairperson Kratovil moved to adopt the Standing Committee Resolution, as amended. Commissioner Springer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-0.

Chairperson Kratovil made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gulakowski seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.

CPC Calendar

Consumer Protection Commission

2024 Planning Calendar

February 20, 2024

- January 23
 - Election of Officers
 - 2024 Items of Interest
 - Committees' Resolution

- February 20
 - Authorization to Advertise a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, March 29, 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.
 - Fraud Presentation by Fairfax County Police Department Financial Crimes Unit

- March 19
 - Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established.

- April 16
 -

- May 21
 -

- June 18
 -

- July 16
 -

- August 20
 -

- September 17
 -

- October 15
 -

- November 19
 -

- December 17
 -

CPC Membership

Commissioners

Fairfax County Resident #1
Jacqueline Rosier (Secretary)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2025

Fairfax County Resident #2
Michael J. Roark
Appt. Expires 7/31/2026

Fairfax County Resident #3
Jason J. Kratovil (Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #4
Dennis D. Kirk
Appt. Expires 7/31/2025

Fairfax County Resident #5
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #6
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #7
Pratik J. Kharat
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #8
Harold G. Belkowitz
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #9
Vacant

Fairfax County Resident #10
Josef Gasimov
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #11
Paul Svab
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Fairfax County Resident #12
Denis Gulakowski (Vice-Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/ 2024

Fairfax County Resident #13
Maurice B. Springer
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Staff

Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Department of Cable and Consumer Services
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Amanda K. Kastl, Director
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Consumer Affairs Branch
703-324-5877
Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov

Main Number 703-222-8435, TTY 711
Fax Number 703-653-1310
consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov

Consumer Affairs Statistics



Department of Cable and Consumer Services
Consumer Affairs Branch
Monthly Summary Statistics

1/1/2024 Through 1/31/2024

	Current Month		Fiscal YR to Date	
Cases Received	60		451	
Cases Closed	51		422	
Resolved	35	69%	284	67%
Unresolved	7	14%	34	8%
Referred	3	6%	28	7%
Legal	0	0%	4	1%
Other	6	11%	72	17%
Advice Inquiries Closed	318		2489	
Amount Recovered	\$32,532.27		\$341,207.95	

Top Complaint Types

Tenant-Landlord	36%
Automotive	18%
Housing Services	11%
Communications Media	5%
Internet Sales	5%
Others	25%

Community Outreach

Outreach Event Calendar February 2024

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
2/10/2024	37th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting	Mount Vernon High School 8513 Old Mount Vernon Road Alexandria, VA 22309	300	7:45 a.m. - 9:25 a.m.	SCJ PNB
2/12/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Chantilly High School 4201 Stringfellow Road Chantilly, VA 20151		8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP CH AB
2/13/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Chantilly High School 4201 Stringfellow Road Chantilly, VA 20151		8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP SW AB
2/16/2024	LifeSmarts Competition	Virginia Housing 4224 Cox Road Richmond, VA 23060		8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP SCJ
2/23/2024	Northern Virginia Housing Expo Consumer Booth	Charles Colgan High School 13833 Dumfries Road Manassas, VA 20112		10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	CH SW
2/23/2024	Black History Month Celebration Consumer Booth	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax, VA 22035		5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	AB
2/26/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Langley High School 6520 Georgetown Pike McLean, VA 22101		8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP AB
2/26/2024	Consumer Connection Romance Scams National Consumer Protection Week	Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Facebook		11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	SCJ SW
2/27/2024	Consumer Knowledge	Langley High School 6520 Georgetown Pike McLean, VA 22101		8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP AB

Outreach Event Calendar
March 3-9, 2024
National Consumer Protection Week

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
3/4/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Sully Community Center 12809 Wall Road Herndon, VA 20171		9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	PNB AB
3/5/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Gerry Hyland Government Center 8350 Richmond Highway Alexandria, VA 22312		12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	MDP CH
3/6/2024	NCPW Consumer 101 Medical Billing Your Smart TV and Privacy	Lincolnia Senior Center 4710 N. Chambliss Street Alexandria, VA 22312		12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	SCJ CH
3/6/2024	NCPW Consumer Booth	Lincolnia Senior Center 4710 N. Chambliss Street Alexandria, VA 22312		10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	MDP SCJ
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Welcome/Consumer Affairs 101	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	AK SCJ
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Tenant-Landord Leases	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	SW
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Tenant-Landlord Maintenance	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	MDP
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Medical Billing	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	CH
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Vehicle Purchase and Maintenance Issues	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	AB
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Scams	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035 Live on Channel 16		11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	PNB
3/7/2024	NCPW Consumer Affairs Day Consumer Booth	Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22035		8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	CS
3/8/2024	Scam Slam Consumer Booth	Greenspring 7430 Sping Village Drive Springfield, VA 22150		11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	SCJ SW

Consumer Resources

Resource Items

Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/consumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyconsumer/>

Consumer Connection: Free at the Fairfax County Public Library (January 24, 2024)

<https://fb.watch/pW37krUKtL/>

Information Items

Bird to continue e-scooter operations in Fairfax despite bankruptcy filing ([more](#))

Bird to continue e-scooter operations in Fairfax despite bankruptcy filing- Tysons Reporter ([more](#))

Scams Continue to Evolve-Gift Cards, Crypto and AI Grandchildren ([more](#))

Fairfax County sees increase in crypto-based scams; how you can avoid them ([more](#))

Fairfax County may extend fee waivers for installing electric vehicle chargers ([more](#))

Bird to continue e-scooter operations in Fairfax despite bankruptcy filing

[Melanie Pincus](#) January 22, 2024 at 9:30am



A Bird e-scooter on the sidewalk in Tysons (staff photo by Angela Woolsey)

Fairfax County's only electric scooter provider will continue operating even after [filing for bankruptcy](#) last month.

The company, Bird, will also maintain its scooters in Fairfax City, where it's one of two companies in a pilot program.

"We expect to continue operations in Fairfax and Fairfax County as normal and we look forward to working with the city and county administration as a partner into the future," a Bird representative wrote in an email to FFXnow.

The county and city have both been told by the company that service will go on. Bird has permission to operate 300 devices in Fairfax County, while the City of Fairfax generally permits up to 250 devices per company.

Bird and Superpedestrian's LINK got permission to bring their products to Fairfax County in [July 2021](#) following a November 2019 county board ordinance regulated shared mobility devices. Superpedestrian recently stopped all U.S. operations, though it had already been dropped from the county's operator list after failing to renew its permit in [January 2022](#).

The county doesn't appear to have any new partners in the offing at the moment.

"Anyone may submit a [Shared Mobility Device Operator Permit Application](#) for review," wrote Rebecca Makely, director of the county's department of cable and consumer services, in an email to FFXnow.

Bird's shared mobility devices saw nearly 20,000 rides between July and December 2023, according to data provided by the county, with an average ride distance of just over a mile during that period.

Fairfax City authorized a shared mobility pilot program of its own in May 2019, but has yet to establish a permanent program. Bird and San Francisco-based Lime are currently authorized under the pilot, which the city council [unanimously voted to extend](#) through June 30, 2024 at a Jan. 9 meeting.

City staff expects to develop a proposal for a more permanent program by the time this extension ends.

"There was a lot of bumpiness during Covid, but a lot of the operations and usage have stabilized, and we feel like we can now begin to transition to a more permanent, long-term program," Chloe Ritter, the city's multimodal transportation planner, said at the meeting.

While the city doesn't expect Bird's bankruptcy filing to have immediate effects, it could inform program planning.

“We can’t predict what’s going to happen in six months or two years, but I think it’s a good reminder for us to keep our program flexible to respond to those kinds of things,” Ritter said.

In neighboring Arlington County, scooter and e-bike provider Veo [recently declined to renew its permit](#), citing market conditions. Superpedestrian is also exiting Arlington as it shuts its U.S. business.

Bird and Bird-owned Spin still operate in Arlington, as does Lime, which announced near the end of 2023 that it had logged 500 million total rides on its devices.

Bird to continue e-scooter operations in Fairfax despite bankruptcy filing

[TysonsReporter.com](https://www.tysonsreporter.com) January 22, 2024 at 9:34am



Bird e-scooter on the sidewalk in Tysons (staff photo by Angela Woolsey)

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Scams Continue to Evolve – Gift Cards, Crypto and AI Grandchildren

Published on
01/11/2024

[Older Adults](#)

[Public Safety and Emergencies](#)



Scams are not new, but scammers are always finding new ways to take your money or identity (among other things).

Recently, there have been some new flavors of scams in our community, which are highlighted below.

GIFT CARDS

[Our Police Department arrested two men](#) who were altering gift cards at the Target in Springfield Town Center on Dec. 20 (and had done the same thing earlier in the day at a Target store in Manassas). Officers saw the two men stocking the shelves with gift cards and detained them. They were found to be in possession of altered Target gift cards. The cards are suspected of being linked to an outside account, which takes money from a would-be buyer and

deposits it into the fraudster's gift card account instead of the buyer's. A search of the suspect's vehicle uncovered numerous altered Target gift cards and evidence of a larger fraud ring in the region and extending into states across the country.

We suggest following the below tips whenever purchasing a gift card from a retail store:

1. **Inspect the Packaging:** Check the gift card packaging for any signs of tampering or resealing. Look for broken seals, loose corners or any other indications that the packaging has been altered.
2. **Check the Activation Sticker:** Many gift cards have an activation sticker or label on the back. Make sure the activation sticker is intact and has not been peeled off or replaced. Altered cards may have a different activation sticker or a sticker that looks suspicious.

CRYPTO PAYMENTS

Our Police Department recently [noted an increase in Bitcoin and crypto-related scams](#) reported within the county, with the majority of victims being elderly. In almost a dozen reported cases since the end of October, our investigators have observed a trend in scams involving cryptocurrency. For example a 76-year-old person was scammed into depositing \$21,000 into a crypto ATM.

How can you or a loved one/friend avoid being the next victim?

Verify Caller Identities: Always confirm the identity of the person or organization contacting you, especially if they request personal information or financial transactions. Apple, Microsoft, Norton, MacAfee, eBay, PayPal, Amazon or Google will never call you on the phone and ask for any kind of payment. It is a good idea to hang up and call the institution using their known contact information from official websites.

Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Calls: Anyone who calls you on the phone asking for payments with gift cards of any kind (Greendot, iTunes, Google Play, Target, Walmart, etc.) should be considered suspicious and it is likely a scam. Other fraud indicators are requests for money through wire transfers (MoneyGram, Western Union, Walmart to Walmart, Zelle, Venmo, CashApp).

AI GRANDCHILDREN

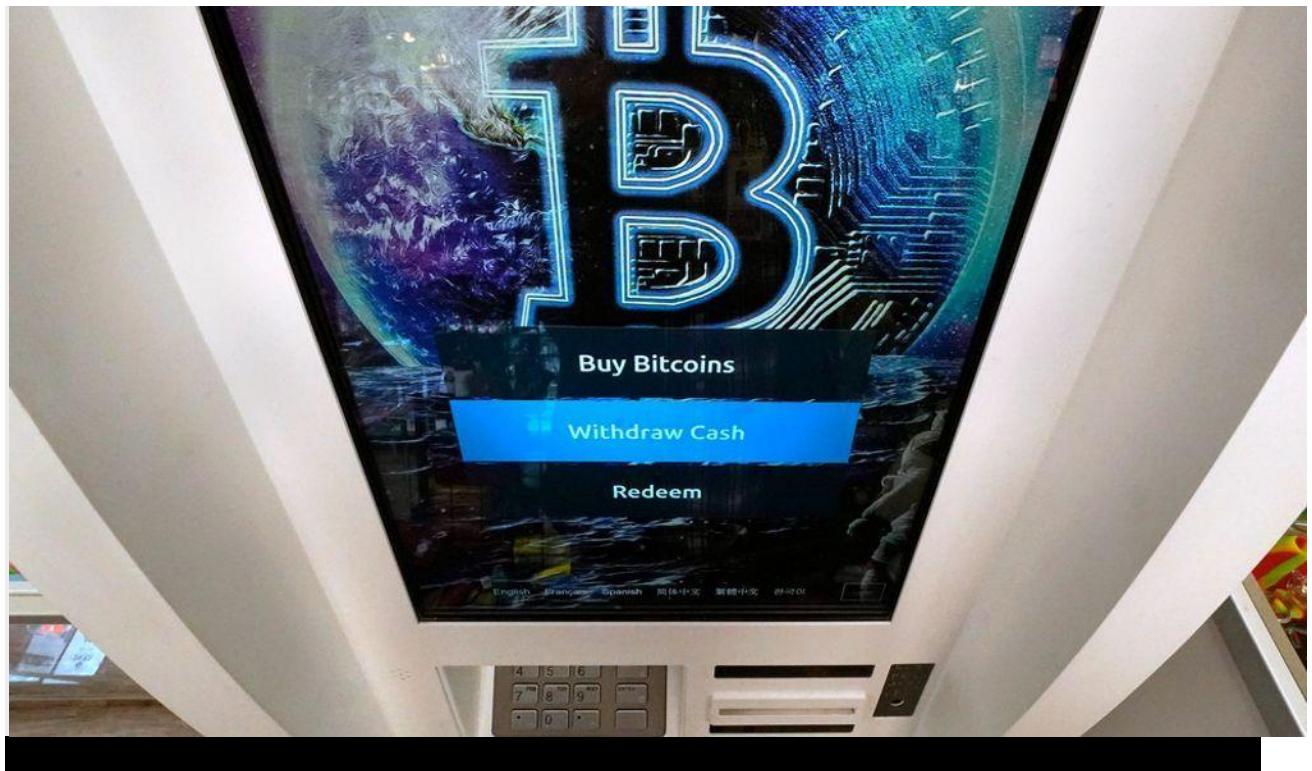
You may have heard of the grandparent scam. If not, it goes like this: the phone rings and you pick up, only to hear the voice of a person you believe is your grandchild. They explain that they have been in an accident, or arrested, or kidnapped, and are begging you to immediately send money to help them.

This scam originally relied on a scammer's ability to do a decent impersonation of your loved one's voice, but scammers are now using artificial intelligence (AI) to make the scam even more convincing. To clone a voice, a scammer needs a sound bite between three and 30 seconds long. The longer the sound bite, the better the clone. The scammer uses AI voice-generating software to analyze what makes a person's voice unique, then produces a very convincing cloned voice that they employ in the scam. Think about all the times our voices and the voices of our loved ones have been recorded and are available online, especially on social media such as TikTok, Instagram and Facebook.

Fairfax County sees increase in crypto-based scams; how you can avoid them

by Lindsey Mastis

Mon, January 22nd 2024



FILE - In this Feb. 9, 2021 file photo, the Bitcoin logo appears on the display screen of a crypto currency ATM at the Smoker's Choice store in Salem, N.H. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File)

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. (7News) — Fairfax County police said they're seeing an uptick in scams involving cryptocurrency. 7News On Your Side's Lindsey Mastis has put out the warning about various scams, including the jury duty scam and scammers pretending to be businesses.

PREVIOUS COVERAGE:

- [Jury Duty Scam](#)
- [Police Impersonation Scam](#)
- [Scammers impersonate Best Buy's Geek Squad](#)
- [Scammer pretends to be relative](#)

Since October 2023, Fairfax County police said they've seen nearly a dozen scams involving Crypto. In one case, a 76-year-old victim was scammed into depositing \$21,000 into a crypto ATM.

TIPS FROM FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Verify Caller Identities: Always confirm the identity of the person or organization contacting you, especially if they request personal information or financial transactions. Apple, Microsoft, Norton, MacAfee, eBay, PayPal, Amazon, or Google will never call you on the phone and ask for any kind of payment. It is a good idea to hang up and call the institution using their known contact information from official websites.

Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Calls: Anyone who calls you on the phone asking for payments with gift cards of any kind (Greendot, iTunes, Google Play, Target, Walmart etc.) should be considered suspicious and it is likely a scam. Other fraud indicators are requests for money through wire transfers (MoneyGram, Western Union, Walmart to Walmart, Zelle, Venmo, CashApp).

Consult with Family or Friends: Before making any financial decisions, especially those involving large sums or unfamiliar technologies, consult with trusted family members or friends.

Don't Share Personal Information: Never share personal or financial information over the phone unless you initiated the call and are certain of the recipient's legitimacy.

Use Trusted Platforms: When dealing with Bitcoin or other digital currencies, use reputable and well-established platforms for transactions.

Law enforcement will never call you on the phone and ask you to pay money to avoid arrest or post a bond. Other common scams include notices of missing jury duty or a Federal Agent calling you and saying that your name and identity has been discovered being involved in criminal activity or money laundering. The FBI, DEA, SSA, DHS, ICE, FTC, IRS, or any local police, just to name a few, will never call you on the phone and ask for money for any reason.

Never let anyone "remote" into your computer. Scammers pretending to be from Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Google (or others) will ask for remote access to your computer to "fix" the issue or attempt to refund money to you for an alleged fraud charge. Do not allow remote computer access, this is a scam. Scammers will claim they are going to refund money to your bank account, but instead they will steal it.

Fairfax County may extend fee waivers for installing electric vehicle chargers

[Fatimah Waseem](#) February 2, 2024 at 11:45am



An electric vehicle charger and designated parking space in Tysons (staff photo by Angela Woolsey)

Fairfax County may continue waiving permitting and installation fees for electric vehicle chargers, following an [initial trial period](#) of 18 months that showed mixed results.

At a land use policy committee [meeting](#) on Tuesday (Jan. 30), Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay said he hopes to extend the trial period by one year.

Despite losing revenue from the waived fees, the county should find ways to reduce barriers for EVs, particularly since there are already many existing barriers, McKay argued.

“From a value statement standpoint, being able to say that we do not charge [for] permits to encourage people to adopt EVs, I think, should be our standard,” he said.

It was unclear how much eliminating the fees incentivized installation of EV charging equipment — if at all, county staff said in [a presentation](#). Between October 2022 and October 2023, fees for 38 commercial permits and 858 residential permits were waived.

The Dranesville and Sully districts had the most residential permits issued, while the Providence District led the way when it came to commercial permits. The 38 commercial permits issued during the waiver period represented an increase from 19 permits in 2021, 11 in 2020 and just one in 2019.

The data doesn’t include the number of chargers installed through each permit.

John Friedman, an engineer in the county’s Department of Land Development Services (LDS), said it’s difficult to directly correlate the fee waiver with EV utilization.

“We had hoped to be able to collect enough information to determine whether or not having a zero permit fee actually incentivizes installation. We weren’t able to do that because you don’t actually know why people are doing things,” Friedman said, adding that staff were surprised by the relatively high number of residential permits.

The county missed out on \$125,000 in revenue over the trial period — a loss that Friedman was concerned likely needs to be offset by increases in other LDS fees.

“The big issue for us is the lost revenue,” Friedman said.

Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw said the societal benefits of EV further the county’s [equity goals](#).

“Everybody benefits if even an affluent person decides to move forward with an EV,” Walkinshaw said.

McKay hopes to file a board matter for consideration at the board’s May meeting, giving county staff time to continue evaluating the impact of the fee waiver on utilization. The current fee waiver pilot program will end on May 1.