

Response to Questions on the FY 2006 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Chairman Connolly

Question: Please identify agencies/offices requiring pre-employment background checks. Does the County contract out these background investigations? Who is performing these within the County? What are the costs and potential savings of privatizing this function?

Response: Every agency has at least some positions which have been declared “sensitive,” and require a criminal history background check. Some agencies, such as the Office for Children, Community Services Board (CSB), Department of Community and Recreation Services, Park Authority, Finance, Tax Administration, County Attorney, Purchasing, Department of Human Resources, Office of the County Executive, Equity Programs, Internal Audit, and Public Safety agencies consider all of their positions to be sensitive. When considering all summer and exempt, limited-term positions and volunteers that are checked for criminal history, the total number exceeds 19,000.

The background checks for regular merit sensitive positions, which are done through the Virginia State Police and the FBI, are based on fingerprint identification. Nearly all of the fingerprints for agencies other than CSB and Public Safety (who do their own) are taken in the Government Center, in the Security Office (Suite 150). This is through an agreement made with the Facilities Management Department to hire a Security Specialist to take the fingerprints. The Security Specialist is paid through the County security contract with MVM Consulting, with oversight and funding from the budget of the Department of Human Resources. The cost for each check is \$37.

To deal with the short-term, accelerated hiring surge of some 1,200-1,500 seasonal, limited term employees for the Department of Community and Recreation Services, background checks will be done based on name and birth date utilizing an external vendor. The cost for each check is \$13.

The program requiring background checks for sensitive positions was approved by the Board of Supervisors last year and has recently been fully implemented. The potential savings for privatizing the function have not been determined at this time, but the Department of Human Resources has indicated to the Chief Financial Officer that this program would be the subject of an RFP next year for outsourcing. Savings could be significant because of the unanticipated response by agency directors regarding the numbers of individuals who meet the criteria of being in sensitive positions and the supplemental background checks based on name and birth date for many of the County’s limited term seasonal workers.