

## Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

**Request By:** Supervisor Cook

**Question:** How much revenue could be raised if the meeting rooms in libraries and/or at Supervisors Offices were charged for at the same rate as at the Government Center? What decline, if any, in use would be expected as a result of such a change?

**Response:** As part of the FY 2010 Adopted Budget Plan, the Facilities Management Department implemented a rental fee for facility use at the Government Center Conference Room Center including a fee of \$85 per hour for use of the Board Auditorium and \$60 per hour for use of conference rooms. No fees are charged to Boards, Authorities, Commissions, or Fairfax County agencies. Implementation of these fees results in greater consistency with surrounding jurisdictions.

FMD anticipated a revenue increase of approximately \$221,500 from the implementation of these new user fees. However, since July 1, 2009, a total of 258 meetings have been scheduled at the Government Center by non-profit organizations, compared to 1,198 in FY 2009 with no fees. This has resulted in a reduction of 78 percent in total usage of the conference room center for non-profits and a reduction in anticipated revenues. Due to the implementation of these fees, organizations are now seeking facilities with no user fees.

Within the Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) system of 23 branches, there are 38 meeting room facilities (provided by 18 branches); and 19 conference rooms (provided by 15 branches); available at no charge for use by nonprofit organizations and individuals for educational, cultural and informational community meetings and programs. These rooms are available during regular operating hours. Additionally, there are meeting rooms in 13 branches, and conference rooms in 3 branches that are available during expanded hours when the library is closed.

Charging user fees for FCPL meeting room use was attempted in the 1990's. The Library Board of Trustees originally imposed meeting room fees as an additional revenue source in 1992. In 1994, these fees were eliminated due to: 1) low usage, 2) minimal fees actualized as a result of the fees, 3) and to remain consistent with the Board of Supervisor's (BOS) decision to waive user fees for meeting rooms at the Government Center. From 1994 to present, FCPL has not imposed user fees for meeting room and conference room facilities.

During calendar year 2009, FCPL meeting rooms were used for 17,980 non-library sponsored meetings and events. The usage composition was as follows: Educational Organizations (tutoring, home school groups, study groups), 30 percent; Civic Organizations (Lions, Kiwanis, church groups, 2010 Census), 26 percent; Art and Craft Events (knitting, quilting clubs), 7 percent; Scout Troops, Health and Exercise Activities, and Homeowners Associations, 6 percent; Study Groups, 5 percent; Literacy Organizations, 4 percent; Security Clearance Review (Federal Government), Book Discussion Groups, Sports Registration, and Toastmasters, 2 percent; Investment Clubs

and Theater Groups, 1 percent; and Plant Clinics (Master Gardeners), less than 1 percent. (Please note that the total does not add to 100 percent due to rounding).

Based on FCPL's prior history of low usage as a result of a user fee being imposed; the recent decline in projected revenues and similar change (decline) in demand for services demonstrated by FCPL patrons as a result of FCPL's FY 2010 revenue enhancements, (increased overdue fees and new card lookup fee); and the Facilities Management Department's recent experience of a 78 percent decrease in usage as a result of user fees; FCPL projects that demand/usage of its meeting rooms would also decline significantly if a user fee was imposed. As such, assuming: 1) the new fee to rent FCPL meeting rooms is \$60/hour, and 2) the demand for FCPL meeting rooms declines in the same magnitude as the decline experienced by FMD regarding its facilities, FCPL projects that an additional \$237,336 would be generated if a user fee was imposed.

As a cautionary note however, the estimated decline in usage is speculative based on FMD's experience. In addition, the decline of this magnitude means that the availability in the community of this service is severely impacted.