

Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Mission To mediate consumer and tenant-landlord issues, provide consumer educational information, regulate taxi and towing industries, and issue licenses for certain business activities. To support County and community meetings and events at the Fairfax County Government Center. To protect and maintain the fiscal integrity and financial solvency of the department.

Focus The Department of Cable and Consumer Services is the umbrella agency for three distinct functions: Consumer Services, Communications Policy and Regulation, and Communications Productions. The total agency staff is distributed over two funding sources, the Cable Communications Fund and the General Fund. Communications Policy and Regulation and Communications Productions are presented in Fund 40030 (Volume 2). Consumer Services is presented within the General Fund (Volume 1). The diverse functions of the Department of Cable and Consumer Services provide quality customer service to the community and work collaboratively with County agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and professional organizations.

Consumer Services includes Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing, Meeting Space Management and Event Support, and Administrative Services.

Consumer Affairs investigates and mediates consumer complaints, tenant-landlord disputes, and cable television issues. Staff works with businesses and consumers to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties. In addition to mediation, staff develops conciliation agreements to resolve complex disputes, offers binding arbitration when mediation efforts are exhausted, and provides an advice line for consumers to speak directly to staff about consumer issues. Consumer Affairs provides education to the community by conducting presentations and distributing educational information on a variety of consumer topics. Educational meetings are conducted with the public to provide information about current consumer trends and ways to avoid consumer scams, frauds, and other problems. Consumer Affairs publishes the quarterly Informed Consumer e-Newsletter and posts weekly tips on Facebook; provides staff support to the Consumer Protection Commission and the Tenant-Landlord Commission; educates and supports over 2,000 homeowner, condominium, and civic associations; publishes an annual *Community Association Supplement Guide* with information on current common interest community laws and services; and hosts the *Your Community, You're Connected* television program shown on Fairfax County Government Channel 16 and the *Consumer Connection* program shown on Facebook.

Regulation and Licensing is responsible for issuing licenses, permits, certificates, or registrations to taxicab operators, taxicab drivers, canvassers, peddlers, solicitors, vendors, promoters, massage establishments and therapists, pawn brokers, precious metal and gem dealers, going out-of-business sales, solicitors representing charitable organizations, trespass tow operators, and shared mobility devices for hire operators. Regulation and Licensing also conducts taxicab inspections to ensure vehicle safety and accuracy of taximeters. Regulation and Licensing reviews new taxicab certificate applications and recommends to the Consumer Protection Commission and Board of Supervisors the appropriate number of taxicabs required to service transportation needs in the County. Regulation and Licensing investigates complaints and develops rate recommendations for taxicab services and certain rate recommendations for trespass towing within the County. Regulation and Licensing provides staff support to the Trespass Towing Advisory Board which makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on towing industry regulations and rates.

Meeting Space Management and Event Support provides reservation and scheduling services and meeting support for spaces throughout the Government Center Campus, supporting the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; Fairfax County boards, authorities, and commissions; County agencies and non-profit organizations. Staff processes all reservation requests, stages furnishings and equipment, and configures meeting rooms for an average of 30 meetings and events each day. Technical support for presentations, conference calls, audio-visual playback, public address systems, and assistive listening for individuals with hearing impairments is also provided during meetings and events. Engineering staff oversees the J. Hamilton Lambert Conference Center audio-visual systems and staff identifies requirements; recommends solutions; and installs, tests, and maintains audio-visual equipment.

Administrative Services develops and oversees the agency-wide budgets and is responsible for fiscal administration of both the agency General Fund and the Cable Communications Special Revenue Fund. Administrative Services directs all purchasing and contract activities, overseeing the department procurement card program, office supply program, and accountable equipment inventory. Administrative Services includes the role of department Human Resources Manager, with responsibilities in the areas of human resource management, training and development, compensation, and employee relations. Administrative Services coordinates the training and development activities for the department. Administrative Services manages the agency computer replacement programs and assists with information technology requests and acquisitions. Administrative Services leads the strategic planning efforts for the agency, including the development and coordination of agency performance management.

Pandemic Response and Impact

The efforts and work by the Department of Cable and Consumer Services to respond to COVID-19 has been accomplished with the majority of staff teleworking, and those required to be onsite have adjusted working conditions and arrangements to conduct work in a socially-distanced manner. In early March 2020, the Department of Cable and Consumer Services began creating Coronavirus-related consumer advice posts on social media. Consumer Services continues to have a strong social media presence, posting consumer information in reference to COVID-19, scams, price gouging, evictions, utility providers, and more. Consumer Services has written several articles for the Fairfax County Emergency Information

Stay Informed about Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Fairfax County
DCCS Announcements.

The Department of Cable and Consumer Services (DCCS) will continue to be available to the public by telephone at 703-222-8435, TTY 711, or email at consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov.

If you have an open complaint, please contact the assigned Consumer Specialist preferably by email.

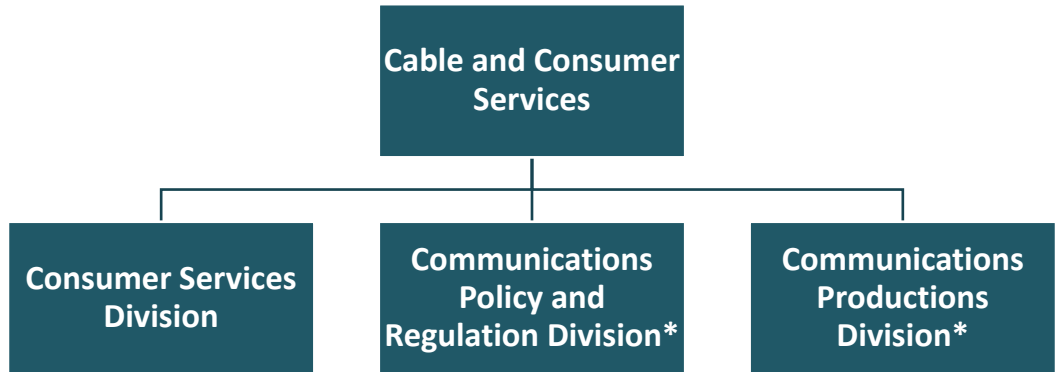
- **CONSUMER COMPLAINT:** File an online consumer [complaint form](#).
- **TENANT-LANDLORD:** Read the updated [Eviction Process](#).
- **SCAMS:** Stay alert for Coronavirus (COVID) [Scams](#).
- **UTILITIES:** Review the list of [utilities](#) suspending service disconnections, offering other billing options.
- **PRICE-GOUGING:** Understand the [Virginia Disaster Anti-Price Gouging Act](#).

Blog on these same topics and provided *Assistance from a Distance* with online complaint filing. Consumer Affairs has also participated in virtual consumer outreach events and produced a special edition of the television show, *Your Community, You're Connected*, to provide resources to homeowner and community associations on how to navigate electronic meetings and other member issues. Regulation and Licensing has continued to process license applications on an as-needed basis and has been a resource for the community on towing and solicitation during this time. Meeting Space Management and Event Support coordinated with customers to cancel and/or reschedule public meetings, community events, and County events and training. Staff have also prepared the

Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Government Center Conference Center for electronic meetings and necessary staff and resource support required to televise and stream such meetings. The Department of Cable and Consumer Services remains responsive to the changing conditions and requirements in order to fulfil the agency mission during the pandemic.

Organizational Chart



* All staffing and operating support for the Communications Policy and Regulation Division, as well as the Communications Productions Division, is found in Fund 40030, Cable Communications, in Volume 2.

Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2021 Adopted	FY 2021 Revised	FY 2022 Advertised	FY 2022 Adopted
FUNDING					
Expenditures:					
Personnel Services	\$624,641	\$585,972	\$592,972	\$585,972	\$591,833
Operating Expenses	131,592	174,747	175,255	174,747	174,747
Total Expenditures	\$756,233	\$760,719	\$768,227	\$760,719	\$766,580
Income:					
Massage Therapy Permits	\$41,950	\$55,182	\$55,182	\$55,182	\$55,182
Precious Metal Dealers Licenses	6,975	8,625	8,625	8,625	8,625
Solicitors Licenses	5,852	8,961	8,961	8,961	8,961
Taxicab Licenses	49,925	76,600	76,600	76,600	76,600
Towing Permits	1,050	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Income	\$105,752	\$150,868	\$150,868	\$150,868	\$150,868
NET COST TO THE COUNTY	\$650,481	\$609,851	\$617,359	\$609,851	\$615,712
AUTHORIZED POSITIONS/FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)					
Regular	9 / 9	9 / 9	9 / 9	9 / 9	9 / 9

Department of Cable and Consumer Services

FY 2022 Funding Adjustments

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2021 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2022 program. Included are all adjustments recommended by the County Executive that were approved by the Board of Supervisors, as well as any additional Board of Supervisors' actions, as approved in the adoption of the Budget on May 4, 2021.

Employee Compensation **\$5,861**
 An increase of \$5,861 in Personnel Services is included for a 1.00 percent market rate adjustment (MRA) for all employees effective July 2021.

Changes to FY 2021 Adopted Budget Plan

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2021 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2021 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2020 Carryover Review, FY 2021 Mid-Year Review, FY 2021 Third Quarter Review, and all other approved changes through April 30, 2021.

Carryover Adjustments **\$508**
 As part of the FY 2020 Carryover Review, the Board of Supervisors approved the encumbered carryover of \$508 in Operating Expenses primarily associated with translation services.

Third Quarter Adjustments **\$7,000**
 As part of the FY 2021 Third Quarter Review, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$7,000 in Personnel Services for a one-time compensation adjustment of \$1,000 for merit employees and \$500 for non-merit employees paid in May 2021.

Position Detail

The FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan includes the following positions:

DEPARTMENT OF CABLE AND CONSUMER SERVICES - 9 Positions			
Consumer Services Division			
1	Director, Consumer Services Division*		
1	Administrative Assistant IV*		
Consumer Affairs			
1	Consumer Specialist III	1	Administrative Assistant II
2	Consumer Specialists II	1	Consumer Specialist II*
2	Consumer Specialists I	1	Consumer Specialist I*
1	Administrative Assistant IV	2	Administrative Assistants II*
Regulation and Licensing			
1	Consumer Specialist III		
1	Consumer Specialist II		
2	Administrative Assistants III*		
Administrative Services			
1	Financial Specialist III*		
1	Financial Specialist II*		
Conference Center			
1	Administrative Associate*	1	Administrative Assistant III*
1	Video Engineer*	1	Administrative Assistant II*
*	Positions are supported by Fund 40030, Cable Communications		

Performance Measurement Results

The Consumer Affairs Branch responded to 8,507 case inquiries in FY 2020, a decrease of 1.6 percent from FY 2019, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the period of March-June 2020. Consumer Affairs conducted 255 consumer educational seminars in FY 2020. These outreach events provide information about current consumer trends and ways to avoid consumer scams, frauds, and other problems, which in turn, can reduce the number of consumer inquiries filed with Consumer Affairs. Staff responded to all case inquiries within 48 hours, closing 98 percent and recovering \$541,986, for consumers, an increase of over \$83,000 from FY 2019.

The Regulation and Licensing Branch issued 1,320 permanent licenses in FY 2020, a decrease of 28 percent from FY 2019. Some fluctuation occurs among the various types of licenses issued year to year, with the majority of the change occurring within the taxicab industry. However, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted several businesses licensed and/or permitted. Massage establishments, massage therapists, pawnbrokers, precious metal and gem dealers, food trucks, and some solicitors were deemed non-essential services by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia; and therefore, were ordered to be closed for several months under Executive Order No. 53. Taxicabs, while deemed an essential service, experienced a 90 percent drop-off in ridership in the Washington Metropolitan area during this same period.

The Meeting Space Management and Event Support Branch processed 8,897 reservations in FY 2020, representing 100 percent of all reservations requested. Reservations were down 16 percent from FY 2019 due to several COVID-19 pandemic impacts. On March 27, 2020, the Government Center was closed to the public through July 6, 2020, resulting in the cancellation of most reservations held by non-County entities. Additionally, due to the Executive Orders issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth of the Virginia on gathering sizes, the majority of reservations during March-June 2020, were transitioned from in-person reservations to virtual meetings. Lastly, as a result of the disruption of service caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the FY 2020 Customer Satisfaction Survey was not conducted. The department will survey customers again in FY 2021 and FY 2022.

The Accounting and Finance Branch processed 1,494 fiscal documents with 98.5 percent accuracy in FY 2020. The decrease in documents processed in FY 2020, as compared to FY 2019, was due in most part to the moratorium on all non-emergency spending during the last quarter of FY 2020.

Indicator	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Estimate	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2021 Estimate	FY 2022 Estimate
Consumer Services						
Percent of case inquiries closed	99%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Percent of consumer educational seminars meeting objectives	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent of permanent licenses issued within 60 calendar days of application	100%	100%	98%	100%	98%	100%
Cumulative County savings due to utility case intervention (in millions) *	\$122	\$122	\$122	NA	NA	NA
Percent of reservation requests scheduled	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*This function has been transferred to the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination in Agency 02, Office of the County Executive, and, as of FY 2020, is no longer a measure for Cable and Consumer Services.

A complete list of performance measures can be viewed at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2022-adopted-performance-measures-pm>