



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

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## TESTIMONY OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE April 29, 2020

Good Afternoon. Thank You Mr. Chairman and Board members for this opportunity to speak with you. I am Edward Blum, Chairman of the County's Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee, known as ITPAC. The Board established ITPAC over 20 years ago as an advisory public body to help the County government keep pace with critical and beneficial IT trends and policy insights. Its 15 members are Fairfax County citizens with IT knowledge, expertise and experience. (Each is appointed by a member of the Board of Supervisors, or the Fairfax County School Board, the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Civic Associations, the League of Women Voters or the Northern Virginia Technology Council.)

First, ITPAC would like to commend the Board, the County management team, and DIT Director Greg Scott and his team for leadership and professionalism in these unprecedented times. ITPAC has been impressed with the County's adaptability and ability to address changing requirements as County needs grow and technology and circumstances rapidly evolve.

Now, flexibility and capacity are especially needed and apparent as the County works to maintain constituent well-being and other essential County functions. Tools such as expanding remote access and participation, virtual meetings, and enhancing and increasing mobility options have become key.

ITPAC appreciates Board members' understanding that IT enables and enhances substantial parts of County services and must play a significant role in handling the current challenges. We strongly commend the Board's recognition that even in the midst of emergency reductions in revenue and serious community needs, it is important to strengthen IT investments.

The pandemic's massive disruption has emphasized the importance of ensuring that all elements of the County's technology structure are current, capable, modernized, secure, and mobile friendly. Moreover, we expect that strengthening these urgent capabilities will greatly benefit County citizens and businesses long after this crisis.

Normally, ITPAC prepares detailed budget letters with comments and recommendations on overall IT policies and specific programs, challenges and efficiency/effectiveness options. We send one to the County Executive in December, and one to the Board of Supervisors in March. Given the rapidly changing environment, this testimony replaces this year's March letter.

Many expect some version of the current situation to be the “new normal” for many months. Even once something like the “old normal” returns, the family-friendly and environmentally positive trend toward remote service delivery and participation in meetings as well as flexible, mobile work is likely to continue. Robust, resilient, secure, high-performing IT services are increasingly essential.

ITPAC strongly endorses the need to aggressively increase mobile options and improve the ability to conduct work and County business remotely. Maintaining a secure, mobile workforce will be more challenging than ever. A malware attack or other intrusion could be dangerously disruptive. The criticality of managing Cyber Security and reducing risks of disruptions to operations and services is paramount. Timely strategic investments in this area are crucial.

ITPAC encourages the Board to focus on projects and expenditures that increase secure mobility both short-term and long-term. Key to this is converting the County’s mostly desktop computer system to one that is primarily mobile. This will require significant baseline budget increases for licenses to enable full mobile capacity. The County Executive, CFO and DMB have agreed.

They have already provided emergency funding to procure an additional 2900 laptops and 1000 mobile phones for immediate deployment. They also supported additional funding for licenses in the FY 2020 Third Quarter Review and the revised version of the FY 2021 Advertised Budget. However, more such investments in future budget processes will be needed.

In addition, ITPAC supports ongoing investments to upgrade the County's phone system. Demand for decentralized IT-based services is expected to increase significantly as more people work from home and use remote access to services. To handle this and growing citizen desires for convenience, additional County services will need to be available and performed online. This trend may also require funding for DIT to develop the necessary applications and interfaces. The County increasingly needs a more flexible and mobile workforce and to keep up with online service demands by both businesses and constituents.

ITPAC appreciates the opportunity to present directly to the Board our recommendations regarding the County’s IT processes. As a high-performing organization, the County’s reliance on technology continues to increase and the County must consistently stay abreast of the latest technologies. The County should prioritize efforts to become more mobile and agile, protect against constantly evolving cyber threats and maintain high quality as the use of information and technology to deliver services advances rapidly.

ITPAC looks forward to continue working with DIT and the Board. As citizen experts, we support and help advance Fairfax County’s best practices for technology governance and implementation. And we will aim to help the County grow even stronger in whatever may become the “new normal.”