

Request for the Office of Public Affairs to Advertise the Mount Vernon Ides of Bark Festival at Grist Mill Park

Background

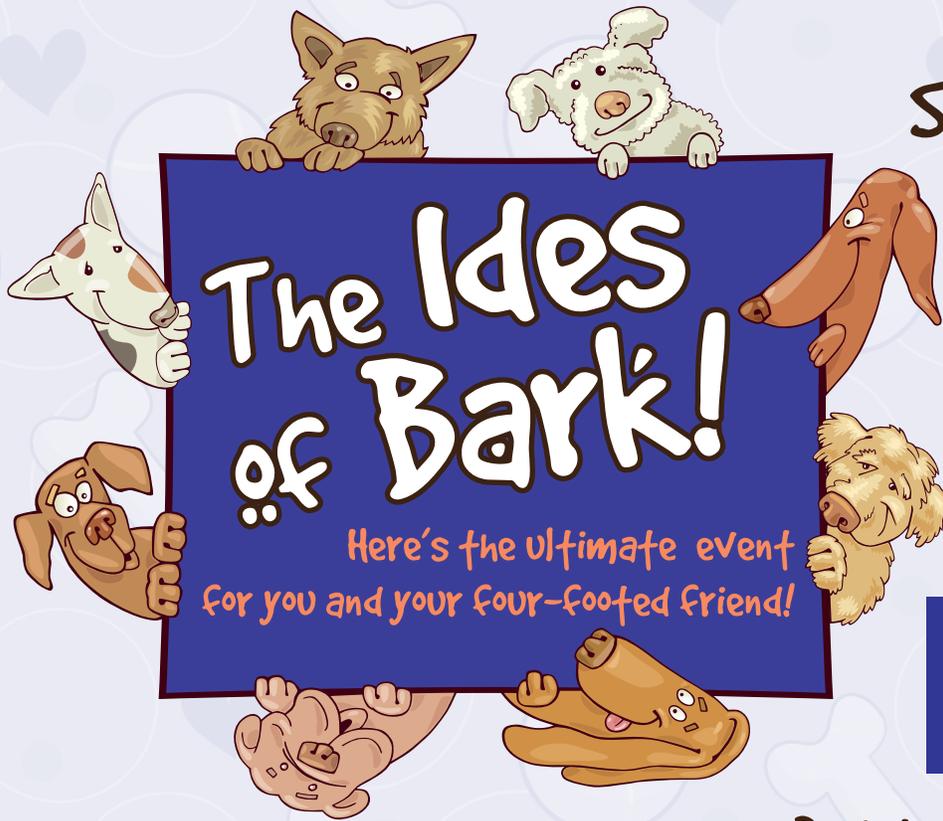
This Sunday, March 24, 2019, the Mount Vernon District and the Fairfax County Park Authority are hosting the annual Ides of Bark Festival from 1:00 – 4:00 pm at Grist Mill Park. This year, participants will receive many treats from local canine businesses, watch demonstrations by the Fairfax County Police Canine Unit, learn pet care and pet CPR from pet technicians, and even have the opportunity to participate in a canine obstacle course. It makes for a great day with our furry, four legged friends.

I also want to mention that we will miss K-9 Doby, who recently tragically lost his life while serving in the community. He will certainly be in our thoughts on Sunday.

This amazing community event could not happen without the incredible support of the Fairfax County Park Authority, Fairfax County Police Department, Fairfax County Fire Department, local dog park groups and our wonderful vendors. My sincerest appreciation goes out to each of these groups and I invite everyone to join us on Sunday!

Proposed Action

Therefore, Madame Chairman, I ask with unanimous consent, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Office of Public Affairs to advertise and promote the Ides of Bark.



Sunday, March 24, 2019

1-4 p.m.

Admission is FREE!

Grist Mill Park

4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy., Alexandria

Games • Prizes • Food
Fun • Vendors

Demonstrations by the
Fairfax County Police K-9 Unit

Register your dog with Fairfax County.

Fee is \$10 (cash or check). Owners
must show proof of a current rabies shot.



Supported by Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck 



 Inclusion and
ADA Support
703-324-8563.
TTY: Va Relay 711.



www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks



Telephone (703) 971-6262
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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX



6121 Franconia Road
Alexandria, VA 22310

JEFFREY C. MCKAY
LEE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

Joint Board Matter

Supervisor Jeff McKay
Supervisor Dan Storck

March 19, 2019

Madam Chairman — During the recent General Assembly (GA) session, the Board spent a significant amount of time discussing legislation regarding the undergrounding of utility lines near transportation projects. As the Board will recall, SB 1759 was introduced to require any existing overhead electric distribution, cable, or telecommunications lines to be replaced with underground lines to accommodate a transportation project in an area of transit-oriented development (TOD) if the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) determined it was necessary. The costs would have been borne by the CTB or by an electric utility through an electric rate adjustment clause. Though the County did not request that legislation, the County did support the introduced bill, as it provided a possible mechanism for funding the high costs of undergrounding utility and telecommunications lines.

However, the bill changed significantly throughout the legislative process. The final bill that passed the GA establishes a pilot program in Fairfax County allowing undergrounding of electric utility distribution lines in TOD

areas in conjunction with transportation infrastructure improvement projects (the projects must be identified by the CTB as reducing congestion, improving mobility, incorporating transit systems and improving safety). The bill allows Fairfax County and an electric utility to enter into an agreement providing that: Fairfax County pays upfront the utility's full cost of relocating and converting lines underground that is not recoverable under applicable rates (net of relocation credits); Fairfax County imposes a levy on electric utility customers to recoup those costs (residential utility customers will only be charged up to \$1 per month); and, the utility converts, operates, and maintains the agreed portion of the line underground. The final bill is silent on whether telecommunications and cable providers must similarly underground their lines, and who would bear the responsibility of paying for that undergrounding.

Though SB 1759 provides a helpful tool for financing certain undergrounding projects, the bill raises some significant implementation concerns. First, if Fairfax County enters into the type of agreement outlined in the legislation, the County would also be required to pay the full costs of undergrounding as determined by the utility, including associated feasibility costs. The bill does not include the type of review by the State Corporation Commission (SCC) that accompanies other utility rate increases or any new construction or renovation. The County should not be dependent on the utility's estimate of the total project cost without the ability to ensure that costs are reasonable. Without such safeguards to protect County customers included in SB 1759, ensuring that the utility's estimate of the total project cost is reasonable will be particularly challenging.

Second, the bill also requires the County to pay for an undergrounding project upfront, recovering a substantial portion of the costs over a long period of time by adding a utility surcharge – however, not all undergrounding costs could be recovered through this legislation. The impetus for the bill is the Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1) widening project from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to Napper Road, and the projected cost for undergrounding that section is approximately \$60 million, with approximately \$15 million covered as general utility relocations to be paid for by the project.

As the Board will remember, throughout the Legislative process we proposed amendments that would make the language of the bill more helpful to the County. Unfortunately, those amendments were not entirely included in the final bill. The attached letter reiterates the important changes that would improve the likelihood of implementation.

Therefore, Madam Chairman, we move that the Board send the attached letter, under the Chairman's signature, to Governor Northam requesting that he amend SB 1759 to provide safeguards for the County in entering into an agreement for undergrounding utility lines, as well as ensuring that the upfront costs of such a project are borne equally by the Commonwealth, the utilities, and the County.

March 19, 2019

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to you about an important issue – legislation that passed the 2019 General Assembly (GA) relating to undergrounding utility lines as part of transportation projects in Fairfax County.

As introduced, SB 1759 (Surovell) would have required any existing overhead electric distribution, cable, or telecommunications lines to be replaced with underground lines to accommodate a transportation project in an area of transit-oriented development (TOD) if the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) determined it was necessary. The costs would have been borne by the CTB or by an electric utility through an electric rate adjustment clause. Though the County did not request this legislation, the County did support the introduced bill, as it provided a mechanism for funding the high costs of undergrounding utility and telecommunications lines.

However, the bill changed significantly throughout the legislative process. As passed by the GA, SB 1759 establishes a pilot program in Fairfax County allowing undergrounding of electric utility distribution lines in TOD areas in conjunction with transportation infrastructure improvement projects (the projects must be identified by the CTB as reducing congestion, improving mobility, incorporating transit systems and improving safety). The bill allows Fairfax County and an electric utility to enter into an agreement providing that: Fairfax County pays the utility's full cost of relocating and converting lines underground that is not recoverable under applicable rates (net of relocation credits); Fairfax County imposes a levy on electric utility customers to recoup those costs (residential utility customers will only be charged up to \$1 per month); and, the utility converts, operates, and maintains the agreed portion of the line underground. The final bill is silent on whether telecommunications and cable providers must similarly underground their lines, and who would bear the responsibility of paying for that undergrounding.

Though SB 1759 provides a helpful tool for financing certain undergrounding projects, we continue to have concerns about the County's ability to implement this legislation – in particular, there are two elements of the legislation we would like to bring to your attention. First, if Fairfax County enters into the type of agreement outlined in the legislation, the County would also be required to pay the full costs of undergrounding as determined by the utility, including associated feasibility costs. We would like the bill to be clear that the costs of such an undergrounding project would have to be approved by Fairfax County. As you know, currently the State Corporation Commission (SCC) reviews requests by a utility to assess rate increases and authorizes any new construction or renovation – SCC staff provide detailed analysis, require

extensive supporting documentation from the utilities, and are able to compare the utility cost estimates with projects across the Commonwealth. SCC proceedings are open to the public, and any interested person (individuals, businesses, homeowner's associations, localities, among others) may participate, including requesting the underlying data to support the utility's cost figures. SB 1759 does not contain such required reviews, and the County should not be dependent on the utility's estimate of the total project cost without the ability to ensure costs are reasonable. Therefore, the County requests language requiring that the costs of projects pursued utilizing this legislation be approved by the County. Without such safeguards to protect County customers included in SB 1759, ensuring that the utility's estimate of the total project cost is reasonable will be particularly challenging.

Second, the bill also requires the County to pay for an undergrounding project upfront, recovering a substantial portion of the costs over a long period of time by adding a utility surcharge (it is important to note that not all undergrounding costs could be recovered through this legislation). The impetus for the bill is the Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1) widening project from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to Napper Road, and the projected cost for undergrounding that section is approximately \$60 million, with approximately \$15 million covered as general utility relocations to be paid for by the project. Advancing such a large sum of money for one project may not be possible, as County resources are already stretched thin by increasing needs for core services (including K-12 education, public safety, and human services) as well as the reduction in regional and local transportation revenues used to address Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority funding needs, pursuant to the enactment of HB 1539/SB 856 (2018). Because this project is a joint effort, the County believes that all parties should participate in its costs. It is our hope that, given the funding mechanism included in the legislation, the upfront costs could be shared by the Commonwealth, the utilities, and the County, with all entities being repaid equitably over time.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please contact me, or have your staff contact the County's Legislative Director, Claudia Arko, at (703) 324-2647, if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bulova
Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors