



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 16, 2018

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Second Reading and Final Passage of an ORDINANCE to enact Section 3-2-55 (ELECTRONIC SUMMONS SYSTEM FEE FOR PERSONS CONVICTED IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT OR CIRCUIT COURT) of Article E (ASSESSMENT OF COURT COSTS AND FEES) of Chapter 2 (TAXATION) of Title 3 (FINANCE, TAXATION, AND PROCUREMENT) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to enact Section 3-2-55 (ELECTRONIC SUMMONS SYSTEM FEE FOR PERSONS CONVICTED IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT OR CIRCUIT COURT) of Article E (ASSESSMENT OF COURT COSTS AND FEES) of Chapter 2 (TAXATION) of Title 3 (FINANCE, TAXATION, AND PROCUREMENT) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive the proposed ordinance which would allow the assessment of an additional \$5.00 as part of the court costs for each criminal or traffic case for second reading and final passage on Tuesday, May 22 (the public hearing was held on May 12).

BACKGROUND: In 2014, Chapter 325 of the Virginia Acts of Assembly added a new provision to state law, Virginia Code § 17.1-279.1, which permits a locality's governing body to adopt an ordinance that will assess up to an additional \$5.00 as part of the costs in each criminal or traffic case in the locality's district or circuit courts. The law specifies that the funds shall be held for disbursement to fund software, hardware, and associated equipment costs for the implementation and maintenance of an electronic summons ("esummons") system. This ordinance allows for collection of costs associated with funding an esummons program. It does not mandate when or how such a program should be implemented. Several localities, including Arlington and Fairfax County, have already adopted this into their Code. Since adoption, such jurisdictions have collected significant revenue to assist in the funding and maintenance of their esummons programs.

DISCUSSION: Electronic citation/summons systems significantly improve efficiency and accuracy in the process of issuing citations. With an operational esummons system, officers can write citations in a fraction of the time it takes to hand write paper citations. Additionally, the need to transfer voluminous paper among multiple City agencies and the Courts is greatly reduced. Citation data is electronically entered at the point of activity and personnel would no longer have to re-enter data from hand-written tickets. This will improve accuracy of ticket information as well as create a real-time database of summonses issued. Once the citation is completed, the transaction data is sent electronically to the courts case management systems.

The Court data systems will automatically receive a digital copy of the esummons in 24 hours or less. This will allow violators to prepay their fines promptly and aid the Courts in managing their dockets and tracking their caseloads. The utilization of the esummons system will also reduce data entry errors by enforcing business rules via technology. Improvements in the accuracy and completeness of the ticket information will greatly reduce the need for manual ticket information follow-ups between the courts and police.

Funding from the proposed ordinance will support the purchase of new equipment such as handheld devices, portable printers, driver's license scanners, and barcode readers. It will also help mitigate, if not completely cover, ongoing maintenance costs.

This proposal has been vetted through the Police Department, City Attorney, Information Technology Services, the Clerk of the General District Court, and the Finance Department.

FISCAL IMPACT: According to Virginia State of the Judiciary Reports, calendar years 2011 through 2016, an average of approximately 24,700 new cases were processed each year through the Alexandria Circuit and General District Courts. Given these numbers, if the \$5 fee is assessed for all circuit and general district court cases, approximately \$123,500 would be generated annually.

We anticipate additional savings in staff hours once an citation/esummons system is fully integrated. Currently, employees in the Police Department Information Services Section enter citation data into the records and Court system computers by hand. This workload is handled by one full-time employee and one part-time employee. During periods of greater citation production, more employees are utilized to enter the data in a timely manner. These staffing needs would be substantially reduced once the citation data is entered electronically.

The approximate costs to implement an esummons program and outfit 50 officers with the appropriate equipment are estimated at approximately \$115,000 (vendor estimate). Once the software and hardware are purchased, the ongoing annual maintenance costs would be approximately \$14,000 for 50 units. Funds collected as a result of this ordinance would cover most, if not all, of the implementation and ongoing costs to maintain and periodically upgrade or replace an esummons program.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

Adrienne Sakyi, Assistant City Attorney

Michael L. Brown, Chief of Police, Alexandria Police Department

Shirl Mammarella, Captain, Alexandria Police Department