

# **2019 City of Roanoke Legislative Program**

## **Fiscal Policy**

Any proposed comprehensive tax reform must be based on the fundamental principle that local revenue sources cannot be further limited or restricted by the General Assembly without the enactment of legislation that will authorize localities to establish meaningful and viable alternative sources of local revenue.

The General Assembly should enact measures to ensure that localities may collect local sale tax revenue due from internet sales as recognized by the United States Supreme Court in *South Dakota v. Wayfair*. These legislative initiatives should include participation in the Streamline Sales and Use Tax Agreement in which more than 25 other states are signatories.

The General Assembly must vigilantly and effectively avoid enactment of any further unfunded mandates to localities and initiate procedures to review, assess, and eliminate existing and burdensome mandates imposed on localities. Unfunded mandates include mandatory tax exemptions to specific groups of individuals, as worthy and deserving as they may be.

## **Technology and Infrastructure Policy**

The General Assembly should eliminate impediments facing localities from bringing 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology to their citizens.

The Commonwealth and the City must develop partnerships among federal, state, and local constituencies to expand highway infrastructure development throughout Virginia's Blue Ridge, including the expansion of I-73 which incorporates improving the safety and economic development worthiness of US Rte. 220.

## **Environmental Policy**

The City opposes any efforts by the General Assembly to mandate further exemptions from payment of local stormwater utility fees. In addition, the City requests the General Assembly to hold localities harmless from any costs associated with increases in the load of sediment and other pollutants of concern that enter waters of the Commonwealth, including rivers, streams, and tributaries, where such increases in the Total Maximum Daily Load for a locality are attributable to projects and developments approved by the Commonwealth that include crossings of bodies of water within the Commonwealth.

The City supports providing localities with the option, not the mandate, to regulate the use of plastic bags and disposable extruded polystyrene (Styrofoam) food and beverage containers within their communities.

## **Economic Development Policy**

The City encourages the General Assembly to maintain existing tools, including historic tax credits, to encourage development and redevelopment throughout the City and Virginia's Blue Ridge Region.

The City supports continuation and increased funding for the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund (COF). This important economic development incentive program has played a major role in several Roanoke job creation projects. The COF is an essential tool when competing with other states who often offer lucrative incentive packages to prospective companies.

The City encourages the General Assembly to refrain from enacting further limitations on planning, development, and zoning tools that localities may use in regulating and promoting development within their communities.

Public transportation is an important economic development tool for the regional economy. The General Assembly should increase funding for transit services and create opportunities for regional localities to collaborate in expanding public transportation throughout the region.

The General Assembly must address the issue of annexation and consolidation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as an economic development tool to assist cities like Roanoke. The General Assembly should enable counties to adopt local revenue sources and incur debt following procedures currently available to cities.

## **Education Policy**

The City of Roanoke and Roanoke City Public Schools strongly urge the General Assembly to amend current school funding programs to fully fund its obligations under the Standards of Quality (SOQ) by securing a sustainable state revenue source to assist localities and school divisions in modernizing and maintaining public school facilities to provide more equitable educational opportunities for all Virginia students. This recommendation will require amendments to establish transparent criteria for equitable distribution of such funding, including funding to support the technology needed to meet the Standards of Learning (SOL) requirements and enhance learning by all children.

The City and Roanoke City Public Schools urge the General Assembly to maintain the ability of Roanoke City Public Schools to set the start date for its school year.

## **Public Safety**

The City supports legislation that preserves law and order and promotes public safety throughout the City, including legislative initiatives to assist localities in protecting the public from gun violence.

## **Community**

The General Assembly should consider measures to improve community relations, including the adoption of legislation to recognize sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes within our society.

## **2019 VML Legislative Program**

The City endorses and supports the 2019 VML Legislative Program and VML Policy Committee Statements.

## **2019 Legislative Priorities**

The City requests its legislative delegation to patron and support the following legislative initiatives:

1. **Authorize localities to adopt ordinances limiting smoking within designated areas of outdoor public spaces.**

This proposal requires reenactment of Chapter 799, Acts of the General Assembly (2018).

2. **Establish real estate lien status and priority for unpaid local solid waste collections fees in a manner similar to the lien for unpaid stormwater utility fees.**

This proposal requires an amendment to Section 15.2-928.

3. **Authorize localities to prohibit firearms at places where the local governing body is meeting.**

This recommendation will require an amendment to Section 15.2-915.

4. **Enact measures to fully fund the Standards of Quality (SOQ) to include a sustainable state funding source to assist localities and school divisions in modernizing public school facilities to provide more equitable educational opportunities for all Virginia students.**

This recommendation will require amendments to current school funding programs to secure a reliable source of revenue and establish transparent criteria for equitable distribution of such funding. Fully funding the SOQ requirements by the General Assembly will necessarily include funding for much needed modernized school infrastructure.

5. **Authorize treasurers and localities to retain third party collection services to collect any delinquent amount due a locality, including local taxes and any other charges.**

This proposal requires an amendment to Section 58.1-3919.1