

Water and Wastewater Utility Cost of Service and Rate Design Study

Charter for the Rate Study Community Advisory Group (Revised August 2019)

Overview

In 2019, the Arlington County Department of Environmental Services (DES) will commence a Water and Wastewater Utility Cost of Service and Rate Design Study (Study). The Study will help ensure that sufficient revenues are recovered through our rates and that our rate and fee structures are aligned with the County's financial objectives and the community's values. DES' most recent cost of service and rate design study was conducted from 2003 – 2004.

One component of the communication and engagement strategy for this Study is the formation of a Rate Study Community Advisory Group (RSCAG). The RSCAG will serve as one of several channels through which our customers and community can provide feedback on the Study. The RSCAG will serve in a representative and advisory capacity. Members will be selected to represent various segments of the County's water and wastewater utility customer base and encouraged to offer feedback on the Study, as it progresses. County staff will consider the RSCAG's input when developing its recommendations and submitting them to the Arlington County Board for review and consideration for approval.

This Charter describes the RSCAG's charge and membership. It also provides information on meeting topics and how meetings will be conducted.

Advisory Group Charge

The RSCAG should:

- Represent the interests and views of their respective interest groups. Members are encouraged to communicate regularly with their interest group; convey the opinions of their interest group to County staff and consultants; and keep their interest group informed about the Study's progress.
- Work collaboratively with each other, County staff, and consultants to inform the development of rate and fee structures that effectively balance the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

The RSCAG is not responsible for producing a written report. A facilitator will document the RSCAG's comments and the group's feedback will be reviewed and considered by staff as recommendations are developed.

Members

The RSCAG will be comprised of 10-15 members. County staff, with input from the County Manager's Office (CMO) and others, will identify RSCAG members to represent the following interest groups:

- Residential Customers – Single Family/Townhome Dwelling
- Residential Customers – Multi-family Dwelling
- Residential Customers – Vulnerable Populations (e.g., senior citizens, lower-income households)
- Commercial Customers – Large and Small Businesses
- Property Managers
- Development Community
- Environmental
- Fiscal Matters

Members are expected to attend meetings and participate in group discussions. Members should serve as a liaison between their interest group and the County project team and be a sounding board as the Study progresses.

Non-members are encouraged to communicate through their RSCAG representative, as well as through other communication and engagement opportunities available throughout the Study (e.g. surveys, pop-ups, etc.). Non-members may attend meetings as observers; however, they will not participate in group discussions or deliberations.

Meetings

Meetings will be facilitated by County staff or the County’s communication and engagement consultant. The facilitator’s primary responsibility will be to ensure an open process where RSCAG interests, opinions, and views are heard and thoughtfully considered. All meeting participants, including RSCAG members, County staff, and consultants, are expected to listen respectfully and to engage in positive and productive communication when speaking with others.

Meetings will commence in the fall of 2019 and staff anticipate that 5-7 meetings will occur during a 12-month period. A preliminary list of topics for RSCAG meetings is summarized in the table below.

Study Phase	RSCAG Meeting Topics
Project Initiation and Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Objectives and Approach • What is a Rate Structure? What Alternative Rate Structures are Common in the Industry?
Revenue Requirements Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and Wastewater System Overview • Historical Consumption/Usage Patterns • Forecast for Future Consumption/Usage
Cost of Service Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Values to Inform Rate Structure Design
Alternative Rate and Fee Structure Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Water and Wastewater Rate and Fee (e.g., Infrastructure Availability, Miscellaneous) Structures
Recommendation Development and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Rate and Fee Structures • Summary of RSCAG’s Consolidated Feedback • Summary of Feedback from the broader Arlington Community