



## COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

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Potomac District

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August 31, 2011

Serafin Alorro, President  
Hampstead Landing Homeowners Association  
17548 Summer Duck Drive  
Dumfries, VA 22026

Dear Serafin;

I am writing to you today because I understand you have been working with Councilman Jerry Foreman, to get a street light placed in your subdivision. First, let me say that working with the Town of Dumfries on this issue is the appropriate process for your Homeowners Association. As residents and taxpayers of both Prince William County and the Town of Dumfries, it is probably confusing as to which services are received from which entity. Recently, there seems to be quite a bit of confusion on the matter and I appreciate that as the Hampstead Landing Homeowners Association, you might feel caught in the middle, so let me try to help.

Dumfries has long been an Incorporated Town and as such, they have certain responsibilities for provision of services to their residents. To pay for these services, the town levies a \$.3333 tax rate on top of Prince William County's \$1.204 rate. This means that as a homeowner in the Town of Dumfries, you are paying taxes to both the county and the town. Based on the average value of a home in the county, homeowners pay \$893 on average per year in taxes to the town on top of county taxes. By virtue of its town status and using this tax revenue, the town has primary responsibility to its residents for certain services. These include all the roads within the town and all land use decisions, including zoning and site plan approval. As part of this, the town must hire a Building Inspector.

Other services are optional. For example, the town has the option to operate their own Police Department using the tax revenue collected from town residents. However, the residents of the Town of Dumfries still get the same level of County Police services as all residents in the county. Dumfries also had the choice to have its residents pay both the Solid Waste Fee and the Stormwater Fee which all county homeowners pay in addition to their real estate taxes. These fees provide stormwater services and landfill access to county residents. The Dumfries Town Council chose not to participate in these

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programs, which is why town residents have to pay a fee every time they use the landfill and why the county does not provide storm water services in the town.

The county is responsible for providing town residents with those services for which the town does not have direct responsibility and at the same level they do for all other residents in the county. Town residents get the full range of county services including schools, parks, human services and public safety.

With this as background, let me comment on your specific issue – the request for a street light and make the following points:

What does the Commonwealth of Virginia fund for street lights? - The Commonwealth of Virginia VDOT does install streetlights. However, they typically only install them along interstate roadways, ramps leading to and from the interstate and within Commuter Parking Lots. They are starting to look at various sites throughout PW County that have high crash rates or safety concerns. For example, VDOT is looking to light two portions of Old Bridge Road to improve nighttime safety. A question to ask the town council is whether the town has requested VDOT to look into the placement of a street light in your subdivision.

Does the County fund street light placement? The County has a very modest street light program that provides funding to each Magisterial District. Typically, this funds five street lights *total* per year in each district. However, this can be fewer, depending on the cost of any one light. In the Potomac District, this funding has been used primarily to provide street lights in some of the older sections where the land use process did not provide for the developer to construct lights and to address significant safety issues. As you can imagine, the district office receives many, many requests for streetlights each year.

So what happens in new subdivisions? For new subdivisions within Prince William County, county planners work with the developers during the planning approval process to get them to construct street lights in their proposed developments. The county believes that street lights should be a cost of doing business for these developers and not for all taxpayers. Of course, the Board of County Supervisors has the final vote on land use issues within the county.

How does this impact the Hampstead Landing Subdivision? Because your subdivision is totally within Dumfries Town limits, it was approved solely by the Dumfries Town Council with no input or review by the county. County transportation staff has asked Dumfries staff whether the developer was required by the town to construct street lights. The answer we received was that your development was approved without a lighting design. Therefore, lighting at the entrance to the community as well as the internal lighting was not included in the plan approved by the Dumfries Town Council. The developer would typically have been responsible for installing lights but, since the plan was approved without a lighting design the town cannot require the developer to install them. We have also been informed that the developer has been released from their bond.

I believe an appropriate question to ask of the council is how town planners and the council ensure that developers are constructing and paying for these street lights, thus not adding a cost to all taxpayers in the town.

Does the Town of Dumfries have a street light program similar to the county's program?

- We cannot verify that a similar program ever existed within the town. It is also our understanding that streetlight issues are typically handled within the town's annual budget process. I believe an appropriate question for the council is whether this issue has been brought to the town's budget sessions or can it be brought there in the future? Another question for the council might be whether it can fund its own street light program similar to the county's program.

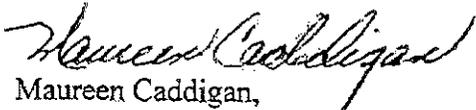
Who is responsible for the placement of the light? If the placement of a street light was not required by the council when the development was approved, then because the council is responsible for all roads within the town, this issue is best resolved by the town. Since they collect taxes from town residents for road maintenance, this seems only right

Although rightfully a town issue, the county has offered to help. Obviously, there are two parts to putting up a streetlight – the initial construction and the ongoing operation and maintenance including the electricity costs. The county has actually assumed responsibility for the cost of the electricity for 162 streetlights within the town. Last year Prince William County paid \$20,667 to maintain those lights.

In recent communications with Councilmember Foreman, the county offered a partnership with Hampstead Landing. There have been occasions where homeowners associations have had streetlights installed and then the county accepts the monthly service/maintenance charges. If this is something that the HOA would like to consider, we will be happy to work with you. Also, the Town of Dumfries, by virtue of being responsible to its taxpayers for roads, could have the light installed and the county will pay the ongoing operating and maintenance costs. This offer is certainly still available to the Hampstead Landing Homeowner's Association. I believe this offers a partnership that benefits the Homeowners Association and the town without shifting the burden of this issue to all taxpayers in the county.

If you have any further questions on this, please contact Tom Blaser, the County's Transportation Director at 703-792-6824 or Melissa Peacor our County Executive at 703-792-6898.

Sincerely,



Maureen Caddigan,  
Vice Chairman, Board of County Supervisors

cc: Dumfries Town Council  
Dan Taber  
BOCS  
Melissa Peacor, Tom Blaser, Steve Stevens