




County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 6, 2021

TO: Consumer Protection Commission

FROM: Michael S. Liberman, Director 
Department of Cable and Consumer Services

SUBJECT: Consumer Protection Commission Meeting for August 17, 2021

Please find attached the Consumer Protection Commission meeting package. The next scheduled meeting is **Tuesday, August 17, 2021, 7:30 p.m.** This meeting will be held via a video connection due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To join the meeting:

Click: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83332099417?pwd=QkYzNi9Ja1NkTFJqZW53UIVoMHUwZz09>

Enter Password: 577252

Audio-only participation:

Dial: 888-270-9936

Enter Code: 584548

Please RSVP with your attendance to Susan Jones by COB on Monday, August 16, 2021, at Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-5877.

Enclosures

cc: Joseph M. Mondoro, Chief Financial Officer
Office of the County Executive

Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Consumer Services Division, DCCS



**FAIRFAX COUNTY
CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION
August 17, 2021 AGENDA**

Call to Order by the Chairman (7:30 PM)

Remote Participation Policy

Minutes

- Draft of the June 15, 2021, meeting minutes attached.

Report of the Chairman

Report of the Director

Commission Matters

New Business

- Staff Report on Trespass Towing Fees

General Interest

- Consumer Protection Commission Calendar
- Consumer Protection Commission Membership
- Consumer Affairs Statistics
- Community Outreach
- Consumer Resources

**THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION POLICY
FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

1. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

a. This policy is adopted pursuant to the authorization of Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2 and is to be strictly construed in conformance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA), Va. Code §§ 2.2-3700—3715.

b. This policy shall not govern an electronic meeting conducted to address a state of emergency declared by the Governor. Any meeting conducted by electronic communication means under such circumstances shall be governed by the provisions of Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2(A)(3).

2. DEFINITIONS

a. “CPC” means the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission.

b. “**Member**” means any member of the Consumer Protection Commission.

c. “**Remote participation**”, “**remotely participate**”, or “**participate remotely**” means participation by a member of the Consumer Protection Commission via telephonic, video, or other audio or combined audio and video electronic communication method where the member is not physically assembled with the other members of the Consumer Protection Commission.

d. “**Meeting**” means a meeting as defined by Va. Code § 2.2-3701.

e. “**Notify**” or “**notifies**,” for purposes of this policy, means actual notice, including, but not limited to, email, text, telephone, or in-person notice.

3. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of the reasons why the member is participating in a meeting from a remote location by electronic communication means, the following conditions must be met for the member to participate remotely:

a. A quorum of the Consumer Protection Commission must be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location; and

b. Arrangements have been made for the voice of the remotely participating member to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location. If at any point during the meeting the voice of the remotely participating member is no longer able to be heard by all persons at the meeting location, the remotely participating member shall no longer be permitted to participate remotely.

**THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION POLICY
FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

4. PROCESS TO REQUEST REMOTE PARTICIPATION

a. On or before the day of the meeting, and at any point before the meeting begins, the requesting member must notify the Consumer Protection Commission Chairperson (or the Vice-Chairperson if the requesting member is the Chairperson) that they are unable to physically attend a meeting due to (i) a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance or (ii) a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance or (iii) a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter.

b. The requesting member shall also notify the Director of the Department Cable and Consumer Services of their request, but their failure to do so shall not affect their ability to remotely participate.

c. If the requesting member is unable to physically attend the meeting due to a personal matter, the requesting member must state with specificity the nature of the personal matter. Remote participation due to a personal matter is limited each calendar year to two meetings or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. There is no limit to the number of times that a member may participate remotely due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or that of a family member that requires the member to provide care.

d. The requesting member is not obligated to provide independent verification regarding the temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or the family member's medical condition that prevents their physical attendance at the meeting.

e. The Chairperson (or the Vice-Chairperson if the requesting member is the Chairperson) shall promptly notify the requesting member whether their request is in conformance with this policy, and therefore approved or disapproved.

**5. PROCESS TO CONFIRM APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF
PARTICIPATION FROM A REMOTE LOCATION**

When a quorum of the Consumer Protection Commission has assembled for the meeting, the Consumer Protection Commission shall vote to determine whether:

a. The Chairperson's decision to approve or disapprove the requesting member's request to participate from a remote location was in conformance with this policy; and

b. The voice of the remotely participating member can be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location.

**THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION POLICY
FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

6. RECORDING IN MINUTES

a. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition, or a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care to the family member the Consumer Protection Commission shall record in its minutes (1) the Consumer Protection Commission's approval of the member's remote participation; and (2) the remote location from which the member participated.

b. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a personal matter, such matter shall be cited in the minutes with specificity, as well as how many times the member has attended remotely due to a personal matter, and the remote location from which the member participated.

c. If a member's request to participate remotely is disapproved, the disapproval, including the grounds upon which the requested participation violates this policy or VFOIA, shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

7. CLOSED SESSION

If the Consumer Protection Commission goes into closed session, the member participating remotely shall ensure that no third party is able to hear or otherwise observe the closed meeting.

8. STRICT AND UNIFORM APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership, and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting.

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

June 15, 2021

7:30 PM
Zoom Video Meeting
Chairman Fee presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners: Callender, Fee, Gulakowski,
Hargraves, Hine, Kirk, Kratovil, Rosier

Absent:

Commissioners: Belkowitz, Roark

Staff:

Michael S. Liberman, Director
Cable and Consumer Services
(Fairfax)
Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Consumer Services Division
(Aldie)
Susan C. Jones, Branch Chief
Consumer Affairs Branch
(Springfield)

The electronic meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM by Chairman Fee.

Quorum, Location, and Audibility of Members' Voices

Chairman Fee conducted a Roll Call to verify that a quorum of members were participating; and that each member's voice was clear, audible, and at appropriate volume for all of the other members; and the location from which each member was participating. The roll call was as follows:

Chairman Fee, Burke
Commissioner Callender, Great Falls
Commissioner Gulakowski, Burke
Commissioner Hine, Fairfax
Commissioner Kirk, Falls Church
Commissioner Kratovil, Mount Vernon
Commissioner Rosier, Great Falls

Chairman Fee passed the virtual gavel to Vice Chairman Gulakowski. A motion was made by Chairman Fee that each member's voice was adequately heard by each member of the Consumer Protection Commission (Commission.) This motion was seconded by Commissioner Kirk. This motion passed 7-0 with Commissioner Hargraves absent from the vote.

Need for an Electronic Meeting

A motion was made by Chairman Fee that the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made it unsafe for the Commission to physically assemble and unsafe for the public to physically attend any such meeting, and that as such, FOIA's usual procedures, which require the physical assembly of the Commission and the physical presence of the public, could not be implemented safely or practically. Chairman Fee further moved that the Commission conduct the meeting electronically through a dedicated audio-conferencing line, and that the public can access the meeting by calling 1-888-270-9936 and entering access code 584548. The motion was seconded by Commissioners Kirk and Callender. This motion passed 8-0.

Need to Dispense with FOIA's Usual Procedures to Assure Continuity in Government/Continue Operations

A motion was made by Chairman Fee that all of the matters addressed on the agenda addressed the Emergency itself, were necessary for continuity in Fairfax County government, and/or were statutorily required or necessary to continue operations and the discharge of the Commission's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Kirk. This motion passed 8-0.

Minutes

The minutes for the May 18, 2021, meeting were approved with an edit to the meeting date.

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Fee had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Report of the Director

Director Liberman stated it was anticipated Governor Northam will announce that the State of Emergency will end on June 30, 2021. The Commission will meet in person in July. Guidance from the County Attorney's Office on the remote participation policy is in process for future meetings.

Director Liberman informed the Commission that the Trespass Towing Advisory Board has recommended a trespass towing fee increase. At the July meeting, the Commission will be asked to make a motion to approve a public hearing meeting on the fee increase to be held at the August 17, 2021, meeting.

Director Liberman mentioned the discussion of the appeals process in old business. He indicated staff is still gathering information and asked the matter to be deferred to the July 20 meeting.

Director Makely, Consumer Services Division, stated in the Spring of 2021, Regulation and Licensing Branch (RALB) received a Shared Mobility Device Operators Permit application and issued its first Shared Mobility Device Operators Permit (SMD) to Link in June 2021. Link now holds a Fairfax County SMD Operators Permit and applied for the maximum number of Shared Mobility Device certificates which is 300. Link was issued 300 SMD device certificates. Link is not yet mobilizing their fleet in Fairfax County. Today, RALB received a SMD Operator Permit application from Bird. Bird filed for a Shared Mobility Device Operators Permit and applied for

300 SMD certificates. Staff is working with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation Public Information Officer and the County's Office of Public Affairs to share communications with the public and the BOS. DCCS plans to update the Shared Mobility Device Web page and will add operator information. The SMD Operator's Permit is valid for the entire County. The ordinance strongly encourages equitable distribution of SMD devices across the County. The companies are required to provide quarterly data. Staff will keep the Commission updated on the industry.

Commission Matters

Commissioner Callender referenced a Letter to Industry he received regarding PLUS features that are launching soon, specifically massage parlors and food trucks. Commissioner Callender inquired whether staff was involved in the process. Staff will provide a response.

Commissioner Gulakowski had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Hargraves stated the complaint he filed against Republic Services has been resolved and thanked staff for their assistance.

Commissioner Hine had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kirk stated he received scam billing emails from Norton.

Commissioner Kratovil stated he looked forward to the discussion on the appeal process at the July meeting.

Commissioner Rosier thanked everyone for the well wishes last month. She mentioned she continues to receive scam calls about Dominion Energy billing.

Chairman Fee stated he had to have his car towed from his home. He said he had a plan with AAA that allow four free tows within five miles of his home. He watched the entire tow process and his car was secured properly.

Old Business

Appeal Process Discussion was deferred to the July 20 meeting.

New Business

1. One Fairfax Policy Video. Chairman McKay asked all County Boards, Authorities, and Commissions members to read the County's One Fairfax Policy; watch the One Fairfax thirty-minute video; and submit an online One Fairfax Acknowledgment form by June 30, 2021.

The Commission watched the One Fairfax Video.

Chairman Gulakowski made a motion to adjourn. Commissioners Hine and Callender seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM.

CPC Calendar

Fairfax County
Consumer Protection Commission
2021 Yearly Planning Calendar
August 17, 2021

- January 19 | Election of Officers
- February 16 | Bylaws
| COVID-19 Scams Presentation
- March 16 | Bylaws Approval
| Legislative Update
- April 20 | Appeal Hearing-Massage Therapist Permit Denial
- May 18 | Fairfax Area Agency on Aging
- June 15 | One Fairfax Policy Video (30:36)
| Appeal Process Discussion
- July 20 | Meeting Canceled (lack of quorum)
- August 17 | Staff Report on Trespass Towing Fees
- September 21
- October 19 | Annual Report
| Appeal Process Discussion
- November 16
- December 21

CPC Membership

Name	Staff
Harold G. Belkowitz <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2021</i>	Michael S. Liberman, Director Department of Cable and michael.liberman@fairfaxcounty.gov
Wes Callender <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2021</i>	Rebecca L. Makely, Director Consumer Services Division 703-324-5947 rebecca.makely@fairfaxcounty.gov
John Fee (Chairperson) <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2021</i>	
Denis Gulakowski (Vice-Chairperson) <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2021</i>	Susan Jones, Chief Consumer Affairs Branch 703-324-5877 susan.jones@fairfaxcounty.gov
Dirck A. Hargraves <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2023</i>	
Dennis D. Kirk <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2022</i>	Main number: 703-222-8435 Fax number: 703-653-1310 consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov
Jason J. Kratovil <i>Appt. Expires: 7/31/2021</i>	
Michael J. Roark <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2023</i>	
Jacqueline Rosier (Secretary) <i>Appt. Expires 7/31/2022</i>	

CAB Statistics



Consumer Affairs Branch
Monthly Summary - All Activities
June 2021

	Current Month		Fiscal Year-to-Date		Prior Fiscal YTD	
Cases Received	95		911		946	
Cases Closed	67		762		815	
Favorable	28	42%	412	54%	472	58%
Unfavorable	4	6%	56	7%	49	6%
Invalid	12	18%	36	5%	51	6%
Other	23	34%	258	34%	244	30%
Advice Inquires (closed)	387		4755		7860	
Case Inquires over 90+days (open)	15		227		352	
Amount Received	\$64,221.00		\$404,649.00		\$541,986.00	

CLOSED COMPLAINT CATEGORIES

FISCAL YEAR-TO-DATE	% FYTD	PRIOR FISCAL YTD	% PRIOR FYTD
Towing	22%	Tenant Landlord	32%
Tenant Landlord	21%	Housing - Services	11%
Housing - Services	16%	Automotive - Towing	11%
Retail Stores	7%	Cable Television (Regulated)	8%
Automotive	6%	Communications Media	5%
Other	28%	Other	33%



Consumer Affairs Branch
Monthly Summary - All Activities
July 2021

	Current Month		Fiscal Year-to-Date		Prior Fiscal YTD	
Cases Received	93		93		92	
Cases Closed	46		46		74	
Favorable	26	57%	26	57%	41	55%
Unfavorable	6	13%	6	13%	9	12%
Invalid	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
Other	14	30%	14	30%	23	31%
Advice Inquires (closed)	354		354		418	
Case Inquires over 90+days (open)	15		15		15	
Amount Received	\$9,419.00		\$9,419.00		\$47,426.00	

CLOSED COMPLAINT CATEGORIES

FISCAL YEAR-TO-DATE	% FYTD	PRIOR FISCAL YTD	% PRIOR FYTD
Tenant-Landlord	36%	Tenant-Landlord	34%
Retail	13%	Housing - Service	25%
Housing - Service	11%	Automotive - Sales	6%
Communications	7%	Utilities	5%
Medical	4%	Communications - Media	5%
Other	29%	Other	25%

Community Outreach

Outreach Event Calendar July 2021

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
7/6/2021	YCYC: 2021 Virginia Legislative Review	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA	0	8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	MLT
7/21/2021	Financial Tune-Up	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA	43	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	VFJ
7/26/2021	Consumer Connection: Homeowners' and Condo Associations	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA	2	10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	SCJ

Outreach Event Calendar August 2021

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
8/11/2021	Financial Fitness Virginia529	Fairfax County Government (virtual) 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA		11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	VFJ
8/23/2021	Consumer Connection	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA		10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	SCJ
8/31/2021	Building a Better Credit Report	Financial Empowerment Center 8350 Richmond Highway Alexandria, VA		6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	VFJ

Consumer Resources

Resource Items

Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/consumer>

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyconsumer/>

Fairfax County Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates

[Fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/)

Ways to Stay Informed About Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://fairfaxcountyemergency.wpcomstaging.com/>

Ways to Donate and Help During COVID-19

<https://fairfaxcountyemergency.wpcomstaging.com/2020/03/25/ways-to-donate-and-help-during-covid-19/>

What to Know About Tenant-Landlord Rights During COVID-19

<https://fairfaxcountyemergency.wpcomstaging.com/2020/11/17/what-to-know-about-tenant-landlord-rights-during-covid-19/>

DCCS Operating Status

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/status>,

Consumer Connection: Homeowners' and Condo Associations (July 26, 2021)

<https://bit.ly/2WU1MtM>

Your Community, You're Connected: 2021 Virginia Legislative Review (July 6, 2021)

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/your-community-youre-connected>

Information Items

Beep, beep: E-scooters are coming to Fairfax County

E-scooters will soon be hitting the roadways and sidewalks of Fairfax County. [[More](#)]

E-scooters will soon be available to ride in Fairfax Co.

E-scooters will soon be available to ride in Fairfax County, Virginia, for the first time, [the county announced Friday](#). [[More](#)]

E-scooters coming to Fairfax County

E-scooters will soon be hitting the roadways in Fairfax County. [[More](#)]

Shared e-scooters now available in Fairfax County Hundreds of electric scooters have started popping up around Fairfax County after the county announced last week that it had approved two vendors for its shared mobility device program. [[More](#)]

Virginia renters facing eviction can get thousands in aid, but must apply quickly

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. — Gladys Suarez has lived in her Reston apartment for 20 years with her daughter and 4-year-old grandson. When she fell behind on rent after COVID-19 affected her housecleaning job, a federal eviction moratorium gave her some peace of mind. [\[More\]](#)

Have You Seen E-Scooters and Other Shared Mobility Devices Around Fairfax County?

The Board of Supervisors approved the ordinance governing devices such as e-scooters after the state passed a law allowing locally regulated devices in 2019.

[\[Video\]](#)

Beep, beep: E-scooters are coming to Fairfax County

by Don Parker

Friday, July 23rd 2021

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. (7News) — E-scooters will soon be hitting the roadways and sidewalks of Fairfax County.

The county has approved a plan for [LINK](#) and [Bird](#) to operate 300 e-scooters each with the possibility of expanding to 600 based on usage.

The e-scooters, like bicycles, will be allowed on highways, sidewalks, shared-use paths, roadways, or crosswalks, according to a statement released Friday by the [Fairfax County News Center](#).



(7News)

[RELATED: DDOT approves permits to put 10,000 scooters on DC streets in 2020](#)

But the speed limit for e-scooters will be 10 mph.

[RELATED: 7News I-Team report: E-Scooter riders have little, if any, protection in case of injury or accident](#)

The e-scooters will be regulated and permitted under the county's [Department of Cable and Consumer Services](#).

[RELATED: Why Arlington County leaders are creating clearer rules for electric scooters](#)



A Bird e-scooter in Arlington. (7News)

Fairfax County's ordinance governing e-scooters and other shared mobility devices was approved after the state passed a law allowing the devices locally in 2019.

For more information go [HERE](#). Or call the Department of Cable and Consumer Services at 703-324-5966, TTY 711.

E-scooters will soon be available to ride in Fairfax Co.

E-scooters will soon be available to ride in Fairfax County, Virginia, for the first time, [the county announced Friday](#).

Fairfax County's Department of Cable and Consumer Services approved the deployment of 600 e-scooters throughout the county — 300 [LINK](#) scooters and 300 [Bird](#) scooters. This is part of the [Shared Mobility Device](#) program.

These scooters will have a speed limit of 10 mph, and can be used on roads, sidewalks, pathways and crosswalks.

When done with a ride, the scooters must be left in an area that does not impact normal car or foot traffic.

The county approved the ordinance to allow e-scooters in Nov. 2019.

Bird [offers a 50% discount](#) for low-income riders, veterans, senior citizens, Pell grant recipients and certain nonprofit organizations.

E-scooters coming to Fairfax County

by: [Christy Matino](#)

Posted: Jul 25, 2021 / 05:34 PM EDT / Updated: Jul 25, 2021 / 06:20 PM EDT

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. (WDVM) — E-scooters will soon be hitting the roadways in Fairfax County.

600 scooters have been approved for use in the county from manufacturers LINK and Bird. Operators are allowed a maximum fleet of 300 devices per operator permit.

The county has released some regulations for scooter usage:

- Scooters can be used on a highway, sidewalk, roadway or crosswalk
- Scooters cannot be operated over 10 miles per hour in the county
- Once riders reach their destination, the scooters should be parked in an area that does not impede car or foot traffic.

Learn more about the new program on [Fairfax County's website](#).

Shared e-scooters now available in Fairfax County

[David Taube](#) July 28, 2021 at 9:30am

Hundreds of electric scooters have started popping up around Fairfax County after the county announced last week that it had approved two vendors for its shared mobility device program.

[Bird](#) and Superpedestrian's [LINK](#) can each have up to 300 scooters in the county, but depending on usage, that number could go up to a combined 1,200 scooters for the two companies. The devices are available for rent, costing \$1 to unlock with rates depending on ride time.

Bird **has discounts** for low-income and older residents as well as veterans and other users, and the company already listed the devices on its app, including six scooters in West Falls Church as of mid-morning Tuesday (July 27). Other clusters are farther south and southeast in the county.

Superpedestrian says it plans to make its scooters available this fall.

“Like bicycles, e-scooters can be used on a highway, sidewalk, shared-use path, roadway, or crosswalk,” the county said in [a news release](#).

The [county required companies](#) to limit scooters' maximum speeds to 10 miles per hour, and they can't be used on sidewalks or crosswalks with signage banning shared mobility devices. The county said Tuesday such signage hasn't been placed so far.

The county says users should leave scooters parked in areas that don't impede normal car or foot traffic. People who violate the county's rules can face a misdemeanor and fine up to \$50 for the first offense and up to \$500 for each subsequent offense.

“When riding an e-scooter, use the sidewalk when possible,” county transportation spokesperson Anna Nissinen said in a statement. “Remember, if you're riding on the sidewalk, you are required to yield the right of way to pedestrians! If there is no sidewalk or other off-street path to use, you may ride a scooter on the road if the speed limit is 25 mph or less.”

She also noted that e-scooter users should stay as far to the right as practicable and use the bike lane if there is one.

The Board of Supervisors [approved the devices](#) in November 2019. They were allowed to start Jan. 1, 2020, but no companies applied for permits until the spring of 2021.

During the approval process, supervisors placed rules on operations as it noted concerns about scooters possibly being abandoned.

To help address issues, the board is requiring \$5,000 bonds from companies operating in the county. The money can be used if county staff have to remove and dispose of abandoned scooters.

“If you notice an e-scooter parked in an inappropriate place or left on private property, you can contact the device operator listed on the e-scooter and the operator must remove it,” the county said, noting that people can email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov to report any issues.

Near Arlington National Cemetery, pedestrians and cyclists can at times see rideshare scooters abandoned along trails, scattered horizontally on the grass.

Bird spokesperson Courtney Black said in a statement that the company looks to educate riders with proper scooter etiquette, reminding them to not leave scooters in the public right-of-way, ensuring that sidewalks, driveways, and fire hydrants are accessible.

The company also allows members to use its **Community Mode** feature to report issues, which can involve things such as damaged or poorly parked scooters. Bird reviews the reports and sends someone to respond.

When asked about the county’s concerns with abandoned scooters, Superpedestrian says it has worked with cities across the U.S. with similar requirements where it operates.

“We’re proud that we’ve never been asked to leave a city or stop operation,” spokesperson Jamie Perkins said in a statement.

To address potential issues, the company has an in-house fleet team of local workers to manage operations in a timely way, using technology to make sure scooters are parked according to requirements and re-parked when needed to ensure availability and prevent them from stacking up in one place.

Superpedestrian is assessing how many scooters it will place in the area, working with Fairfax County as it scales up operations.

“We prioritize our service to areas with critical connections to public transit, areas with parking congestion and business demand, and also serve underserved areas,” Perkins wrote.

Virginia renters facing eviction can get thousands in aid, but must apply quickly

Virginia courts ramping up eviction cases while legal aid attorneys explain how to apply for federal money.

Author: **Nathan Baca (WUSA9)** Published: **3:59 PM EDT August 2, 2021**
Updated: **6:07 PM EDT August 2, 2021**

FAIRFAX COUNTY, Va. — Gladys Suarez has lived in her Reston apartment for 20 years with her daughter and 4-year-old grandson. When she fell behind on rent after COVID-19 affected her housecleaning job, a federal eviction moratorium gave her some peace of mind.

Now that the moratorium has ended, Virginia eviction courts are busy processing the pandemic backlog of cases, and Suarez has found herself packing all her family's belongings into boxes, with her scheduled eviction just days away.

"I need to leave this house, it doesn't matter if I have a place or not," Suarez said. "I have pain because I don't know what is going to happen with us." There's good news and bad news for people in similar situations. The good news is that federal assistance in the form of tens of thousands of dollars is available, but the deadline to apply is rapidly approaching. And the bad news is that due to a change in the law, your landlord is no longer required to help you apply.

Until the end of June, Virginia landlords were required by law to apply for federal assistance on behalf of their tenants, but that's no longer the case. Renters are responsible for securing their own federal aid. And unlike other Virginia counties, Fairfax rental assistance has to be applied for over the phone (call 703-222-0880 Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), not online as landlords were able to do.

Suarez was visited by a caseworker from Floris United Methodist Church on July 29 who told her that with an eviction notice already filed in court, it was too late to help her keep her apartment.

But Angela Brosen is an example of someone who did receive help in time, receiving \$3,500 from a federal program run through Fairfax County after having to stop working her two jobs.

"I did contract coronavirus, but I was at home for 14 days, I had to quarantine," Brosen said. "The county was there for me, and there are people there for you."

Brosen reiterated that anyone facing eviction should reach out and take advantage of the resources available to them.

"Don't feel bad about asking for help," Brosen said. " You don't have to feel like a failure. You don't have to feel like there's no one that's going to help you. You don't have to feel like you can't pay your bills."

If you face eviction, attorneys say the following three steps can give you more time to potentially make a deal with your landlord:

1. Ask the judge for a continuance of the case to apply for rental assistance.
2. Ask for a trial date, which will usually be one to two weeks later.
3. Ask for a "bill of particulars" to compel the landlord to show exactly what you owe.

"We've seen that the money has started to flow for landlords from the portal," attorney Nermin Abdelwahab with Legal Services of Northern Virginia said. "We have had people approved from the rental assistance program who are tenants applying directly, but it is slower than say the landlord portal."

Abdelwahab estimated that from start to finish the process could take less than a month, but he encourages anyone who needs help to apply as soon as possible.

For instructions to apply for rental help in Fairfax County, [click here](#). If you want free legal assistance from Legal Services of Northern Virginia, call 703-778-6800 or [click here](#).

There is also a bill before the Virginia General Assembly meeting to once again require landlords to file for federal rental assistance on behalf of their tenants.