




County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 8, 2022

TO: Consumer Protection Commission

FROM: Rebecca L. Makely, Acting Director 
Department of Cable and Consumer Services

SUBJECT: Consumer Protection Commission Meeting for February 15, 2022

Please find attached the Consumer Protection Commission meeting packet. The next scheduled meeting is **Tuesday, February 15, 2022, 7:30 p.m.** This meeting will be held via a video connection due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To join the meeting:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Audio-only participation:

Dial: 571-429-5982

Enter Conference ID: 695 758 847#

Please RSVP with your attendance to Susan Jones by COB on Monday, February 14, 2022, at Susan.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-5877.

Enclosures

cc: Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive



**FAIRFAX COUNTY
CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION
February 15, 2022 AGENDA**

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

Electronic Meeting Motions

Minutes

- Approval of the draft January 18, 2022, meeting minutes

Report of the Chairperson

Report of the Director

Commission Matters

Old Business

- Chapter 28.1

New Business

- Consumer Affairs 101

General Interest

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

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

January 18, 2022

7:30 PM
Video Meeting
Chairperson Fee, presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners: Callender, Fee, Gulakowski, Hargraves, Kratovil, Roark, Rosier, Springer, Svab

Absent:

Commissioners: Belkowitz, Kirk

Staff:

Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy
County Executive
Michael S. Liberman, Director
Cable and Consumer Services
Rebecca L. Makely, Acting Director
Cable and Consumer Services
Susan C. Jones, Branch Chief
Consumer Affairs Branch
Melissa Pickham, Consumer Specialist I
Consumer Affairs Branch

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 PM by Chairperson Fee.

Quorum, Location, and Audibility of Member's Voices

Vice Chairperson Gulakowski 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 member was participating. The roll call was as follows:

Conduct Roll Call:

Chairperson Fee, Burke
Commissioner Belkowitz, Absent
Commissioner Callender, Great Falls
Commissioner Gulakowski, Burke
Commissioner Hargraves, Kingstown
Commissioner Kirk, Absent
Commissioner Kratovil, Mount Vernon
Commissioner Roark, Lorton
Commissioner Rosier, Great Falls
Commissioner Springer, Oakton
Commissioner Svab, Fairfax

Vice Chairperson Gulakowski passed the virtual gavel to Chairperson Fee. A motion was made by Chairperson Fee that each member's voice was adequately heard by each member of the Consumer Protection Commission (Commission.) This motion was seconded by Commissioners Callender and Springer. This motion passed 9-0-0.

Need for an Electronic Meeting

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Gulakowski 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. Vice Chairperson Gulakowski further moved that the Commission conduct the meeting electronically through a dedicated audio-conferencing line, and that the public access the meeting by calling 571-459-5982 and entering access code 655 484 033#. The motion was seconded by Chairperson Fee. The motion passed 9-0-0.

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

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Gulakowski 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 Hargraves. The motion was passed 9-0-0.

Minutes

The minutes for the November 16, 2021, meeting were approved without objection.

Report of the Chairperson

Chairperson Fee reminded the Commission that Michael S. Liberman, Director, Department of Cable and Consumer Services (DCCS) is officially retiring today. He thanked Director Liberman for his leadership and guidance to the Commission over the years.

Report of the Director

Director Liberman introduced Deputy County Executive, Ellicia Seard-McCormick.

Director Liberman let the Commission know that Rebeca L. Makely, Director, Consumer Services Division, became temporary Acting Director for DCCS on Saturday, January 15, 2022.

Commission Matters

Commissioner Callender had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Gulakowski requested to test video connection prior to the next electronic meeting.

Commissioner Hargraves had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kratovil inquired on the status of edits to Chapter 28.1 massage ordinance and CPC involvement in the process. Director Makely stated the Board of Supervisors has a task force of County agencies reviewing the issues and will keep the Commission updated.

Commissioner Roark had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Rosier spoke about the COVID-19 test kits. Director Makely stated Virginia Department of Health will be at the Government Center Parking Lot B for COVID testing appointments Saturday through Wednesday 9:00 to 5:30 p.m. for the next month. Commissioner Rosier stated that she emailed the FY 2021 CPC Annual Report to several groups.

Commissioner Springer had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Svab had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Chairperson Fee had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Old Business

There was no old business before the Commission.

New Business

1. Nomination of Officers. Vice Chairperson Gulakowski, Nominating Committee Chairperson provided a Slate of Candidates:

Chairperson-John Fee
Vice Chairperson-Denis Gulakowski
Secretary-Jacqueline Rosier

Vice Chairperson Gulakowski asked if any other Commissioners would like to serve as an officer. No additional nominations were made.

Election of Officers will be held at the March 15, 2022, meeting.

2. 2022 Items of Interest.

The following topics were suggested: Bitcoin/Cryptocurrency, Area Agency on Aging, Peddlers/Solicitors, Pawnbroker Scams, High School Presentation, Impact of Gambling on the Elder Community, Non-Carbon Vehicles and Incentives, Solar Panels, and Police Civilian Review Panel.

Chairperson Fee made the motion to adjourn. Commissioners Gulakowski and Callender seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM.

CPC Calendar

Consumer Protection Commission

2022 Planning Calendar

February 15, 2022

- January 18
 - Nominations of Officers
 - 2022 Meeting Calendar
 - 2022 Items of Interest

- February 15
 - Consumer Affairs 101

- March 15
 - 2022 Elections

- April 19
 - 2022 Legislative Review

- May 17
 - Regulation and Licensing 101

- June 21
 - Police Civilian Review Panel Presentation

- July 19
 - FY 2022 Annual Report

- August 16
 - Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP)

- September 20
 - Silver Shield Task Force Presentation

- October 18
 - Bitcoin/Cryptocurrency

- November 15
 - Nominations of Officers

- December 20
 -

CPC Membership

Name

Staff

Harold G. Belkowitz
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Wes Callender
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

John Fee (Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Denis Gulakowski
(Vice-Chairperson)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Dirck A. Hargraves
Appt. Expires 7/31/2023

Dennis D. Kirk
Appt. Expires 7/31/2022

Jason J. Kratovil
Appt. Expires: 7/31/2024

Michael J. Roark
Appt. Expires 7/31/2023

Jacqueline Rosier (Secretary)
Appt. Expires 7/31/2022

Dr. Maurice B. Springer
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Mr. Paul Svab
Appt. Expires 7/31/2024

Rebecca L. Makely, Acting Director
Department of Cable and Consumer Services
703-324-5947
rebecca.makely@fairfaxcounty.gov

Susan Jones, Chief
Consumer Affairs Branch
703-324-5877
susan.jones@fairfaxcounty.gov

Main number: 703-222-8435
Fax number: 703-653-1310

CAB Statistics



Consumer Affairs Branch
Monthly Summary - All Activities
January 2022

	Current Month		Fiscal Year-to-Date		Prior Fiscal YTD	
Cases Received	93		653		552	
Cases Closed	63		454		472	
Favorable	35	55%	255	56%	262	56%
Unfavorable	6	10%	48	11%	38	8%
Invalid	1	2%	18	4%	19	4%
Other	21	33%	133	29%	153	32%
Total (Checks column totals)	63	100%	454	100%	472	100%
Advice Inquires (closed)	197		2301		2852	
Case Inquires over 90+days (open)	17		127		125	
Amount Received	\$11,156.00		\$311,545.00		\$295,075.00	

CLOSED COMPLAINT CATEGORIES

	FISCAL YEAR-TO-DATE	% FYTD	PRIOR FISCAL YTD	% PRIOR FYTD
Tenant Landlord		29%	Cable Television (Regulated)	30%
Housing - Service		22%	Tenant Landlord	21%
Automotive - Service		8%	Automotive - Towing	10%
Utilites		6%	Housing-Service	8%
Cable Television (Regulated)		5%	Retail Stores	5%
Other		30%	Other	26%

Community Outreach

Outreach Event Calendar
January 2022

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
1/24/2022	Consumer Connection: Tax Fraud Scams	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax, VA	41	11:00 a.m. -11:23 a.m.	SCJ

Outreach Event Calendar

February 2022

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	# of Guests	Event Time	Staff
2/12/2022	35th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting	Mount Vernon High School 8515 Old Mount Vernon Road Alexandria, VA		7:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	SCJ/ PNB
2/14/2022	Consumer Connection: Romance Scams	Fairfax County Government 12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax, VA		10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	SCJ

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>

Your Community, You're Connected: Ombudsman Association Complaint Procedure **(November 4, 2021)**

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

Consumer Connection: Tax Season Scams (January 24, 2022)

<https://bit.ly/3sYFdly>

Information Items

IRS tries to reassure pandemic-panicked taxpayers

"In many situations, the tax return may be part of our current paper tax inventory and simply hasn't been processed the agency said. [[More](#)]

Investment scammers on social media ran off with \$285 million in 2021

A January FTC report said 37 percent, or roughly \$285 million, of all social media scam losses last year were investment related. [[More](#)]

IRS tries to reassure pandemic-panicked taxpayers

"In many situations, the tax return may be part of our current paper tax inventory and simply hasn't been processed," the agency said.

Jan. 31, 2022, 2:10 PM EST / Updated Jan. 31, 2022, 8:18 PM EST
By Corky Siemaszko

It's tax time and the IRS is trying to reduce some of the pandemic-induced panic many people are again likely to be feeling this year.

Still struggling with a backlog of about 6 million unprocessed individual returns going back as far as 2019, the agency announced last week it would suspend sending out automated warnings to filers that their taxes are overdue.

"In many situations, the tax return may be part of our current paper tax inventory and simply hasn't been processed," the IRS said in a statement. "Stopping these letters — which could have been sent to thousands of taxpayers — will help avoid confusion."

It will also avoid angst, Charlotte Crane, a law professor at Northwestern University, added.

"Ordinarily, the IRS has computers set to send notices to taxpayers warning them when a tax return is overdue," she said in an email. "But right now, there's a big backlog of taxpayers' returns that have been filed but have not yet been processed."

Many of these taxpayers, Crane said, "are actually in good standing with the IRS because they have received credit for paying the taxes shown due on those returns — whether through withholding, estimated payments or on filing the return since those deposits are made before the returns are processed — even though their returns have not been fully processed."

So, instead of sending "an alarming automated notice to a taxpayer who has filed a return that has not yet been processed," she said, the agency is opting not to send out an alert "even if the IRS computers think the return is still missing."

"It's a prudent move on the IRS' part," said Brian Marks, who leads the entrepreneurship and innovation program at the University of New Haven.

“With this enormous backlog of unprocessed tax forms as a result of the pandemic, this is a wise approach,” he said. “It helps to minimize the confusion and will help the IRS get on with their main task, which is processing tax forms.”

Hobbled by the largely Republican refusal under Trump to increase its budgets so it can hire more workers and modernize its computer system, coupled with pandemic-related constraints, the IRS has been struggling for several years to process tax filings in a timely fashion.

Most years, the IRS starts the filing season with about a million returns yet to be processed. This year, it’s six times that amount, according to the agency.

“Our employees have worked hard, long hours during the pandemic to assist taxpayers and successfully modify our systems, despite lacking the funding that we need to adequately serve the American people,” IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig said.

This year, the agency has stopped sending out what’s known as CP80 notices to taxpayers “who have made a payment and appear not to have filed,” spokesman Eric L. Smith said.

“Due to processing delays for 2019 and 2020 tax returns, the issuance of CP80 and CP080 (Unfiled Tax Return — Credit on Account) notices has been suspended,” the IRS said. “If you receive a notice for your 2019 return and you filed more than six months ago, please refile the return. If you receive a notice for your 2020 return DO NOT refile.”

Many in-person IRS centers where paper forms are processed were forced to close because of Covid. And the coronavirus, coupled with budget cuts, resulted in a 25 percent decline in the size of the staff.

Meanwhile, the IRS workload dramatically increased when the federal government put into place programs designed to help the country get through the pandemic, such as the expanded child tax credits and the stimulus payments.

“By definition, no matter how much more efficient you are, you can’t lose 25 percent of the workforce and assume you can do the same volume of work,” John Koskinen, who served as the IRS commissioner under Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump, told The Washington Post. “It’s a problem across

the board — information technology, revenue agents, people answering the phones.”

The tax filing deadline for income earned in 2021 is April 18. There are no plans to extend that deadline this year, the agency has said.

Investment scammers on social media ran off with \$285 million in 2021

A January FTC report said 37 percent, or roughly \$285 million, of all social media scam losses last year were investment related.

Jan. 31, 2022, 7:44 PM EST
By Tim Fitzsimons

The Federal Trade Commission said fraud artists used social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram to scam about \$770 million from people in the U.S. last year, "a stunning eighteenfold increase over 2017" that has ballooned to account for about a quarter of all fraud losses nationwide.

And, the FTC said, a recent surge in online investing was a particularly lucrative target for scammers, accounting for 37 percent, or about \$285 million, of all social media-related fraud losses. The scams involved not only standard investments like stocks, bonds and cryptocurrency, but also art, precious metals and stones, investment advice, stock options and more.

The FTC said, 64 percent of those targeted on social media in such scams paid their attackers in cryptocurrency.

The FTC pointed to a May report that outlined how crypto scams had risen to be the most common type of investment fraud experienced by people younger than 50, whose median loss was \$1,900. Typical investors ages 50 or up were less likely to be victims of crypto scams, but when they were, their median loss was \$3,250.

Together, losses from investment scams and romance scams — which were far fewer in number but costlier per capita — accounted for over 60 percent of the \$770 million social media scammers stole last year.

Another common fraud for those targeted on social media were shopping scams — 70 percent of which involved buying merchandise that never arrived — which accounted for nearly half of all loss reports but a smaller proportion of total monetary losses. Nine of 10 of those victims said they were targeted on Facebook or Instagram, according to the FTC report.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Some general tips from the FTC to avoid social media-targeted scams include limiting who can see your posts, opting out of targeted advertising, verifying any requests for money from trusted contacts with telephone calls, slowing down romantic relationships started on apps and researching companies before purchasing any merchandise online.

The FTC encourages victims of online fraud to report scams at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov).