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The Council Connection

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Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

December 1, 2013

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Events/Updates

Old Town To Mount Vernon--By Trolley

The Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association will be [running trolley service from Old Town to George Washington's Mount Vernon](#) on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for the remainder of the year.

The service departs from Market Square from 9 AM until 3 PM on the hour, and

With events and celebrations around our City, this is an amazing time of year in our hometown.

A record number of runners continued the Thanksgiving tradition by participating in Alexandria's 38th Turkey Trot. In doing so, they collected tons of food for those served by [ALIVE](#).

Next Saturday, the [Scottish Christmas Walk](#)

returns to Old Town, with a weekend full of events to benefit the great work that the [Campagna Center](#) does for our children.

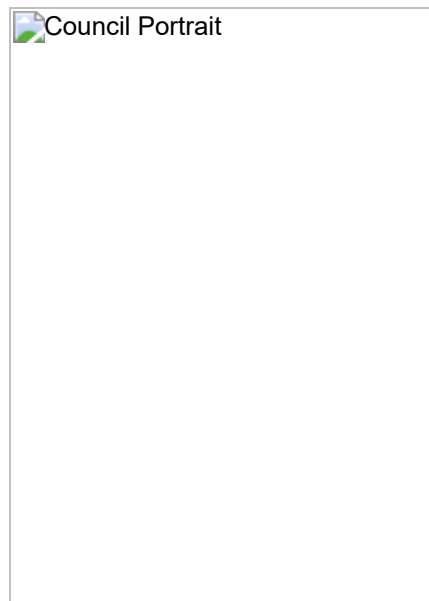
If you have the resources, [please take the time to assist an Alexandria non-profit](#) of your choosing. Our non-profit organizations are working day and night to serve those in need in our community. They could certainly use your help especially during this time of year.

My best to you and your family during this holiday season.

Please let me know how I can be of assistance. [Contact me anytime.](#)

Council Initiatives

Our Next Budget



admission to Mount Vernon is included in ticket prices.

Holiday on the Avenue

[Del Ray recognizes the Holiday season this Friday with the lighting of the Christmas Tree and decorating Mount Vernon Avenue with hundreds of luminarias.](#)

The events get started at 6 PM!

Buy Art, Help Alexandria's Women

[The annual Holiday Art Sale, sponsored by the Friends of the Commission for Women, returns next Sunday the 8th at Charles Houston Recreation Center.](#)

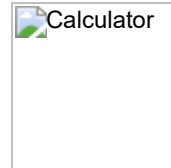
More than 30 artists will be showing and refreshments will be available, with the benefits going to the Alexandria Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs.

The most important decision the Council makes is one that it makes annually: the adoption of our budget. The budget is where the Council translates the values of our community into numbers on a spreadsheet. It's the most basic function of governing.

While our budget is not adopted until early May, the Council formally begins this process in the Fall with the adoption of guidance for the City Manager. This guidance provides direction to the Manager as he works to prepare both the Operating Budget and the Capital Improvement Program.

The detail of the guidance varies from year to year, shaped by the circumstances facing the Council.

During last year's budget the Council [devoted a significant portion of new tax revenue to address the City's deteriorating capital infrastructure](#). We did this both as a means to protect the infrastructure as well as preventing future, much more expensive, costs.



In every newsletter I sent during last year's budget process, I warned of [our forecasts](#) that showed an ever-widening gap between our expected revenues in future years, and the escalating costs of our current services.

[That future is now.](#)

We have received our preliminary revenue estimates for next year, and they show anemic growth at best. While these estimates are preliminary, they show that Federal budget austerity is hitting our local economy hard.

While our real estate market is showing limited growth, our consumption-based taxes, our sales tax, our hotel tax, and our business license tax, are dropping or stagnant.

At the very same time, we are continuing to see blistering growth in student enrollment, escalating costs for benefits for our employees, and unmet needs from across our community.

The very same pressures that are straining the City's resources are also straining the resources of our residents. The resolution adopted by the City Council is sensitive to that fact, and mindful of last year's 4 cent real estate tax rate increase. The [guidance resolution](#) requests that the City Manager present a budget in February that does not include an increase to the real estate tax rate or the vehicle personal property tax rate.

Additionally, it does not allow a roll-back of our commitment to our capital budget to resolve our funding constraints within our Operating budget.

Taken together, this guidance will result in the proposal of significant service reductions when the budget is presented to the Council.

I look forward to [your input](#) as the Council begins its process in February.

Compost at the Farmers Market

Utilizing a portion of the savings from the City's recent renegotiation of the operating agreement for our Waste to Energy facility, the City has expanded several recycling efforts.

In addition, the City created a [new pilot program](#) by operating Resource Recovery Stations at four of the City's Farmers Markets ([Del Ray, Old Town, West End and Four Mile Run](#)).

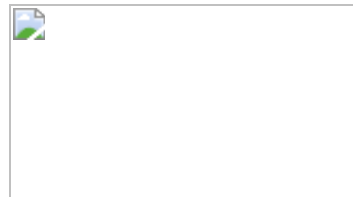
For \$5, you can pick up a compost tub, fill it up with food waste over the week, and bring it back the next weekend. In exchange, residents receive a mini-bag of compost.

So far the demand for this new effort has been very strong. The program will be formally launched in the Spring.

Pay-By-Phone For Parking Comes to Alexandria

Starting in a little over a week, the ability to [pay for parking meters by phone](#) comes to Alexandria. The service will be operated by [Pango USA](#).

The new service, which supplements the City's existing multi-space meters will allow payment by dialing 855-547-2646 or by downloading the app which is available for [Apple](#), [Android](#) or [Blackberry](#).



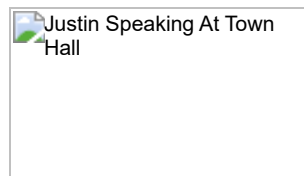
While eventually the service will include a 29 cent convenience charge, Pango will waive the convenience charge until March 1st as part of the launch.

Please give it a try and let me know your thoughts!

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings are back!

You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply a member of the Alexandria City Council (me) with the answers to any of your questions about our City.



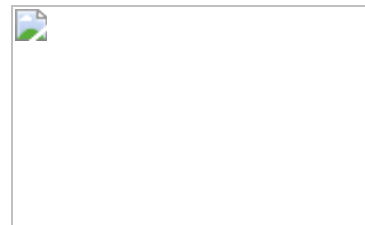
Just [drop us a line](#) and we'll get a Town Hall on the calendar! Thanks for the interest!

Upcoming Issues

Parking Lot or Park/Flood Mitigation?

In recent months, I have written about the numerous efforts the City has taken to implement the [Adopted Waterfront Small Area Plan](#). We have taken measures to end pending litigation and ensure that the City evolves our precious waterfront in fidelity with the vision laid out in the adopted plan.

Last month, the City Council held a special public hearing to discuss implementation of the approved plan, [specifically the portion of the public access/flood mitigation plan that requires a portion of the Old Dominion Boat Club parking lot](#).



This hearing solicited input on a variety of solutions to this impasse, including the use of eminent domain.

As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, my preference remains a negotiated solution to resolve this situation and achieve the community vision for public access on our waterfront.

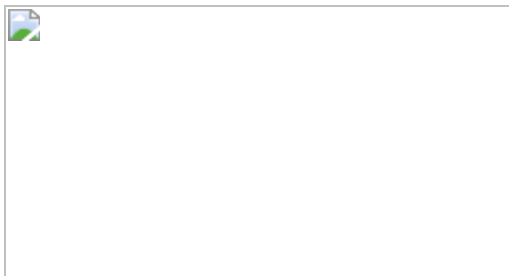
We received a significant amount of very passionate input relating to the potential use of eminent domain, and in many cases thoughtful

alternatives to implement the shared goals.

In the end, the Council decided to begin a new [90-day intensive negotiation period](#), to bring resolution to the impasse. I am hopeful that with urgency and will, we can agree upon a solution that preserves the Boat Club's role on our Waterfront, while giving our residents the safe and accessible Waterfront they deserve.

Our New Superintendent

The Alexandria City School Board is working to hire a new leader for our Schools.



In order to build the description of the qualities and characteristics that the Board would like to see in a Superintendent, the Board is seeking input from the community.

There is an [online survey](#) that can be completed between now and January 10th, and there will be [three community forums](#) scheduled this week.

Regardless of your connection with our Schools, please take the time to voice your opinions about the future leadership of the ACPS.

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