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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

December 1, 2018

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This is the holiday season, but this is also a season of change in our community.

With [the elections](#) now in our past, we turn a page in the New Year.

I am excited to have been elected to serve as your Mayor and I am looking forward to the challenge. I congratulate my colleagues Del Pepper and John Taylor Chapman on their reelection to the City Council. Together we will welcome Canek Aguirre, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Amy Jackson and Mo Seifeldin to the dais as we get to work on behalf of the residents of our City.



With a majority new City Council, we will partner with a majority new School Board as well. Congrats to Cindy Anderson, Ramee Gentry, Veronica Nolan and Margaret Lorber on their reelection to our School Board. I look forward to working with you and our newest members Meagan Alderton, Jacinta Greene, Heather Thornton, Michelle Rief and Chris Suarez on behalf of our kids.

As we move into 2019, we have gratitude for those who have served our community with distinction. On the City Council, we thank our Mayor Allison Silberberg, and my colleagues Councilman Paul Smedberg, Tim Lovain and Willie Bailey.

On the School Board, we thank Ronnie Campbell, Bill Campbell, Karen Graf, Chris Lewis, and Hal Cardwell.

Our community is lucky to have dedicated public servants who give of their free time in service to our

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Scottish Christmas Walk Today!

[The 48th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk returns this Saturday to the streets of Old Town!](#)

Today, from 11 AM to 1 PM, the parade begins at St. Asaph and Wolfe Streets and concludes at Market Square.

I'll see you at this can't miss event!

Metro Closure Survey

[Last month I wrote in this newsletter](#) about ongoing planning efforts for next summer's planned Metro station closures.

To solicit input and collect ideas as the City continues planning for this significant event, the City is now conducting a short online survey.

[Please provide your feedback today to assist our planning!](#)

Stormwater Fee Credit Application

[Last month I wrote in this newsletter](#) about the credit structure for the recently enacted residential stormwater fee.

Beginning today, residential homeowners can apply for credits that they are eligible for. [Click here to begin the process.](#)

Buy A Christmas Tree

community. Thank you.

[Contact me anytime.](#) Let me know how I can help.

Council Initiatives

Virginia Tech Expanding in Alexandria

Last month, in conjunction with the announcement of Amazon placing a portion of its new "HQ2" in the Crystal City section of Arlington County, Governor Northam announced that part of the Commonwealth's incentive package will include state funds to [support the creation of a new Virginia Tech "Innovation Campus" in Alexandria.](#)

Integral to the Commonwealth's attraction of Amazon was access to the talent Amazon will require to grow. The creation of a [new \\$1 billion graduate campus in the Oakville Triangle area of Alexandria will provide a pipeline of talent for our entire region.](#) In doing so, this new investment in our City will spur new job creation, catalyze redevelopment in Oakville Triangle, Potomac Yard and beyond, as well as open up new educational partnerships for our schools and non-profit organizations.

Combined with the attraction of Amazon, this is a big win for our region and is a major step forward in our region's efforts to diversify our economy.

In 2005, the Department of Defense initiated its fifth "Base Realignment and Closure" (BRAC) initiative. Authorized under Federal Law, this process allows the Department of Defense to close military facilities around the nation with a lessened level of interference from Congress.



When the dust cleared in this process, both Alexandria and Arlington were hard hit, with leased and owned space vacated in both jurisdictions.

[In Alexandria, we lost 7,200 jobs and 1.4 million square feet of office space](#) was vacated. On the other side of Four Mile Run, our friends [in Arlington were harder hit, losing 27,000 jobs, with 4.2 million square feet of office space vacated.](#)

In many ways, the 2005 round of BRAC marked a turning point for the region's economy. The closures and moves that were implemented demonstrated quite clearly that the "permanent" base of Federal employment in this region could no longer be relied upon to support our economy in the future. Economic diversification was going to be the key to our region's success in the future.

In the fall of last year, Amazon announced a search for a new headquarters. [The solicitation envisioned \\$5 billion of investment and nearly 50,000 employees slated for these new facilities.](#)

Almost 240 jurisdictions around North America responded to this solicitation.

[While the Commonwealth ultimately submitted a response on behalf of numerous jurisdictions, the City worked with Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties to respond to this solicitation.](#)

[For over 60 years, the Alexandria Police Youth Camp has sent 20,000 children to Kilmarnock, Virginia for summer camp.](#)

This unique program gives many children the summer experiences that they otherwise would be denied.

The biggest fundraiser for this program is the annual sale of Christmas trees.

The trees are on sale now at 110 Callahan Drive (across from the Masonic Temple).

Trees are available for purchase from 4 PM until 8 PM from Monday through Friday. On the weekends, trees are for sale from 10 AM until 8 PM.

Please support this worthwhile cause by purchasing their Christmas trees.

Buy Another Christmas Tree

[The North Ridge Citizens Association is selling Christmas Trees this weekend!](#)

Tree sales will benefit the Association and the good work they do in the North Ridge neighborhood.

Sales will occur in the parking lot at Trinity United Methodist Church at the corner of Cameron Mills Road and Allison Street.

Today, trees will be available from 8AM until 5:30 PM. Tomorrow, they will be available from noon until 5:30 PM.

Helping Out Four Mile Run

The Four Mile Run Conservatory has added winter events to the calendar for 2019.

The Commonwealth's response included sites in Potomac Yard (partnered with Crystal City) and the Eisenhower Avenue area.

[In January Amazon narrowed down the areas under consideration to 20 finalists.](#) Included in that list were three locations in our region: Washington, DC, Montgomery County, Maryland and our Northern Virginia response.

With Amazon coming to Arlington and Virginia Tech expanding within our City, we have work to do. [While the Commonwealth did provide performance-based cash incentives for Amazon tied directly to the durability of Amazon's job creation, most of the incentive package is focused on investments in transportation, higher education and affordable housing](#) designed to prepare the region for this investment.

For transportation, the Commonwealth's package includes funding for new entrances at both the Potomac Yard and Crystal City Metro stations, improvements on Route 1, a connector bridge from Crystal City to Washington National Airport, and expansions to the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway.

For housing, the Commonwealth's package includes new resources for the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to partner with both Alexandria and Arlington to support creation and preservation of affordable housing.

For education, the Commonwealth's package not only makes the investment in Virginia Tech's expansion, but also provides resources for George Mason University to support a renewable pipeline of tech talent.

[The City Manager executed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the City indicating that the City would be expected to provide some financial support for the Virginia Tech campus development in the form of tax abatement, financing and other support.](#) While the proposed use aligns closely to what was envisioned in the approved [Oakville Triangle Corridor Vision Plan](#), all development for Virginia Tech will go through the normal land-use process with public hearings and approvals before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Just before Thanksgiving the City hosted a live "virtual meeting" to address questions and concerns from residents about this historic new investment. [You can watch the full session online.](#)

There will be a lot of time over the next few months and years to unpack and analyze the effort to bring Amazon, and by extension Virginia Tech's expansion, to this region.

Yet there are a few things we can conclude quickly:

- When jurisdictions in this region work together on economic development, instead of in competition, good things happen.
- Innovative employers are looking for talented employees. Areas that cultivate and retain an educated population will attract new investment.
- Public infrastructure investments attract private investment.

Throughout this process, I have encouraged residents to review the Request for Proposals (RFP) that Amazon issued at the beginning of this effort. [When one of the most innovative companies on the planet puts out a very clear blueprint for how it approaches choosing where to invest, it would be foolhardy for jurisdictions not to pay attention .](#)

The solicitation validates some of the policy we have made in our community in recent years, and should prompt us to redouble our efforts in other policy areas.

Land-based clean-ups will focus on some areas that are more accessible when the vegetation is dormant, and on locations where we can get to larger items, such as shopping carts, at low tide.

[Full details and sign-up are available online.](#)

Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

[Wrapping up an amazing evening in Alexandria, the Holiday Boat Parade of Lights returns to the Alexandria waterfront tonight!](#)

The event gets started at 5:30 PM and culminates with Santa on waterskis!

Del Ray Tree Lighting

Tomorrow night at 6PM (delayed a day due to the weather forecast tonight), the holidays begin in Del Ray!

[The Annual Del Ray Tree Lighting will occur, followed by carols and Santa!](#)

All activities begin at Mount Vernon Avenue and Oxford Avenue at the site of the Del Ray Farmers's Market.

Participants are encouraged to bring nonperishable food and diapers to benefit, gift cards, or Metro cards for Carpenter's Shelter.

Pocket Park Survey

We are working to plan the City's pocket parks, and we need your opinion.

[Please fill out our survey to help us address your needs!](#)

Menorah Lighting

Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington will again host a Chanukah Menorah lighting open for the public.

To begin, Amazon wanted to be in a Metropolitan area. They know that their workforce of the future will be drawn to urban communities.

They wanted connectivity. The solicitation specifically cited: "sidewalks, bike lanes, trams, metro, bus, light rail, train." The City's efforts to invest in new transit alternatives, enhanced pedestrian infrastructure and transit-oriented communities are not just efforts to improve the quality of life of our existing residents, but significant economic development efforts. These are valuable things to people and businesses, big and small.

They wanted sustainability. Amazon is the largest purchaser of renewable power in the nation and they are looking for a new headquarters that gives them the opportunity to expand their leadership in this important area. Their existing headquarters uses "district energy" that recycles heat from data centers to warm nearby offices. Three of the City's recently adopted small area plans ([Eisenhower West](#), [North Potomac Yard](#) and [Old Town North](#)) call for district energy as a sustainability effort in planned redevelopment. We are [updating our green building standards](#) to ensure sustainability is a critical component in future private development.

They wanted a community with superior information connectivity. They sought details on fiber and communication infrastructure.

They wanted an educated workforce. They were looking for areas with strong institutes of higher education.

They wanted an area where their employees would want to live. They cited the need for a diverse community with a variety of housing types and recreation opportunities.

We will now work to welcome these new investments to our region. Yet the process should be instructive. The innovative companies of this decade and beyond will all seek a similar model for their future investment.

Growing sustainably while preserving our neighborhoods will require the City to be responsive to this roadmap for the future.

School Enrollment

Six years ago, the City convened the Joint [Long Range Educational Facilities Work Group](#). The group was given the essential charge to understand our recent increase in student enrollment, better project enrollment growth in the future, and to decide what to do about it.

The School Board Chair and Vice Chair at the time, the previous Mayor, and I joined a group of community members and staff to steer the effort.

[The day after Labor Day, 15,737 students started in the Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\). That constitutes a 1.3% increase from the previous year or about 203 additional students.](#)

While this year's increase is among the smallest we have seen in over a decade, this year is the twelfth straight year of enrollment growth. During that period, ACPS has added over 5,000 students.

The last time we had this [many children attending our schools was nearly 50 years ago in the early 1970s.](#)

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. For example, we learned that now low-rise apartments generate nearly three times the students as high-rise or mid-rise apartments do. We learned that single family homes generate nearly double the students as townhouses. We know that public housing and other income-restricted units far outpace any other property type for student generation.

[This year, the event will occur in a new location, at the Lyceum at 201 S. Washington Street, the City's history museum.](#)

This year's event will be at 6:30 PM on Tuesday December 4th.

Ring in the New Year!

[Tickets are now on sale for First Night Alexandria!](#) Ring in the New Year in style in Alexandria.

[Enjoy family friendly performances throughout our community culminating in fireworks to ring in the New Year!](#)

Be A Snow Buddy

[Volunteer Alexandria and the City work together to recruit "Snow Buddies."](#)

Snow Buddies work across our City to help residents who are unable to clear snow during inclement weather.

Sign up today!

George Mason Observatory

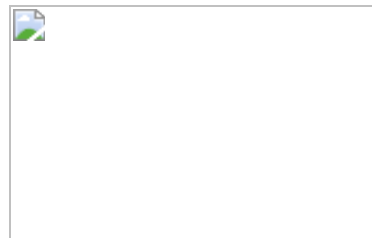
[George Mason University's astronomical observatory, located atop Research Hall on Mason's Fairfax Campus, houses one of the largest diameter telescopes among college campuses in the mid-Atlantic region.](#)

Night sky observing sessions led by faculty and graduate students are preceded by informative talks.

Sessions open to the general public are held during the fall and spring semesters, weather permitting.

[We now know that housing units built over 30 years ago account for four times the student generation as those built in the past 30 years.](#)

These data points remind us of the need to address this enrollment growth head-on.



In June of 2015, the City Council and the School Board adopted the [Joint Long Range Educational Facilities Plan](#). The Plan is the culmination of the group's work in conjunction with the efforts of both ACPS and City staff. The Plan looks at each elementary school building in the City, assesses the facility's educational adequacy, and provides a roadmap for increasing capacity and addressing deficiencies.

Earlier this year, the Council and School adopted phase two of this effort, [planning for additional capacity at the high school level and in pre-school](#).

Construction for a [new Patrick Henry Elementary and Recreation Center is nearly complete](#). The new school building, scheduled to open next month, will add additional capacity and is the first in a series of significant capacity projects scheduled in this era.

With the pressure of elementary enrollment increases continuing unabated, urgency has remained to identify new capacity. This pressure is particularly acute on the West End of the City. With funding and support from the City Council, the School Board purchased 1701 N. Beauregard Street, a vacant office building.

In September of last year, [the Council provided the land-use approvals necessary for the conversion of this building into a new elementary school](#). This school year, [that new building opened as Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School](#).

[The City's approved 10 year capital improvement program for the Alexandria City Public Schools includes \\$474 million over the next decade](#). This provides the funding for both new and renovated facilities, as well as non-capacity infrastructure investments. Only 5 years ago, [the 10 year capital improvement program for our Schools was less than half as much at \\$203 million](#).

The largest single investment in the existing Capital Improvement Program is \$124 million to address high school capacity. At just about 4,000 students, T. C. Williams High School is the largest in the Commonwealth, and both campuses are strained to accommodate the enrollment.

The [School Board is presently engaged in deliberations and community consultation around what the future of high school will be for Alexandria](#).

My view remains that a new \$124 million investment in our City's only high school is one of the most significant undertakings we have addressed in recent years. Determining the correct way to make that investment is a decision that the entire community should make after reviewing the many considerations that shape a decision of that importance.

While capacity will remain the focus of the investments we must make in our school facilities, we have seen far too many examples of the perils of systemic under-investment in our school facilities. Returning our school facilities to a state of good repair while sustaining a preventative maintenance cycle must be a priority of our collective investment. There can be no excuse for poorly maintained learning environments for our children.

It can be perilous to overreact to one year of enrollment growth. Yet after more than a decade of growth, it is clear that this is our "new normal." While the enrollment growth does present a costly challenge for the City and its taxpayers, it is a good challenge to have.

Budget Guidance

The most important decision the City Council makes each year is the adoption of the annual operating budget and capital improvement program. The operating budget generally funds the on-going costs of government (primarily personnel), while the capital budget funds one-time expenditures that provide the community with an asset (new schools, new roads, new playing fields, transit buses, etc).

It has always been my view that the most important part of the budget process is the [adoption of our annual budget guidance for the City Manager](#). While the budget is not presented until February, City Council adopts a resolution in the fall which provides the City Manager with direction as to how to prepare that budget.

The guidance typically provides direction on tax policy, expenditure priorities, debt policy, and other emergent issues. To prepare the Council to provide this direction, a retreat is scheduled.

On the second Saturday in November, the Council had our annual budget retreat and [received the first glimpse into next year's financial picture](#). This is the beginning of the Council's process to adopt the Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020) Operating Budget and the Fiscal Year 2020 - Fiscal Year 2029 Capital Improvement Program.

The initial projections are that next year's revenues will grow at a rate of a 1.9% overall. If that estimate holds, that would provide the City government with about \$14.2 million of new revenue.

With real estate taxes generating most of our resources, that growth is driven by a modest projected increase in residential real estate, but lower growth in our commercial real estate and drops in our consumption based taxes (sales tax, dining tax, utility tax, communications tax, etc).

On the expenditure side, we quickly begin to see our challenge. Given student enrollment growth, the initial request from the Alexandria City Public Schools is for an additional \$22.3 million of operating funds. Our estimates include \$6.2 million of additional funds for transit services, most of which will be required for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Metro). Increases in spending required to support merit increases for City employees will total \$4.5 million. Costs to address increases in healthcare costs total another \$1.3 million.

When all requests and anticipated costs are included, that creates an estimated shortfall of \$27.5 million before we start the process. By the time the Council adopts its budget in May, that gap must be addressed by tax increases, expenditure reductions, or some combination of the two. The Council begins to set that direction with the adoption of its budget guidance.

It is always easier to cut the budget in the fall, than it is for the Council to cut the budget in the spring during its budget process. As such, my preference is that the City Manager be directed to present a budget without an increase in the real estate tax rate.

This year I again proposed that the Manager be instructed to prepare a budget without an increase in the real estate tax rate . I was more successful in amending the guidance and the guidance was adopted unanimously by the Council.

This guidance does present the City Manager with a steep challenge in requiring that he present a balanced budget that addresses the \$27.5 million shortfall without utilizing any real estate tax rate increase. That will likely require additional service reductions in the proposed budget.

The City Manager's proposed budget is scheduled to be presented on Tuesday February 19, 2019 shortly after real estate assessments are complete and final revenue projections prepared.

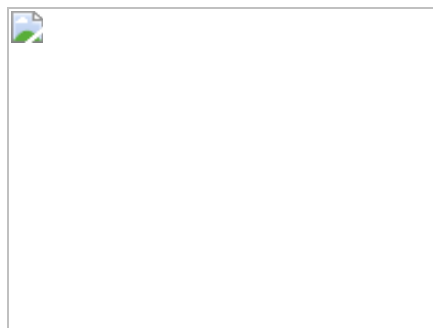
[You can watch the full Council budget retreat online here.](#)

Making Intersections Safer

Each year, an average of 37 people are killed or seriously injured on Alexandria's streets. Each of these tragic incidents change the lives of the victims and their families in dramatic ways. But for each tragedy, there are also countless close calls and near misses that don't get reported.

In Alexandria, we are fortunate to have pedestrian scale, walkable neighborhoods with urban amenities throughout our City. Yet if residents do not feel they can safely traverse the streets of our City, then all the urban amenities are for naught.

The City [has invested millions of taxpayer dollars to improve pedestrian safety throughout our community](#). Those resources have included improving pedestrian access to schools, building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming efforts, bike lanes, new signalization, and more.



With the recent large increases in road resurfacing budgets, [the Council has also steered new dollars into our "Complete Streets" efforts, the City's program for improving non-vehicular transportation infrastructure](#).

Yet there are still areas of our City where sidewalks are non-existent or unusable, intersections are unsafe and unsafe driving is rampant. We must improve the safety of our streets for all users. Doing so requires changing the behavior of all users of our roads.

[In the current budget the adopted last spring, the Council added 6 new sworn traffic safety officers.](#)

Our Police Chief has worked to increase the focus of existing resources on traffic enforcement efforts. This has resulted in significant increases in traffic citations being issued throughout our City.

Two and a half years ago, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#).

We kicked-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While this initiative will involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. [At the end of last year, the Council approved our Vision Zero Action Plan](#).

One of the components of the City's Action Plan was to remove the ability to make right turns on red lights at a selection of intersections. Removing this turn movement reduces the complexity of intersections and improves safety for pedestrians and other users. The City [recently announced the initial intersections that will have](#)

[this turn movement banned](#) following a review of crashes, usage and efficiency. These restrictions will be implemented shortly.

[Allowing right turns on red was pushed by the Federal Government during the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis](#) . Some [communities in the country are banning right turns on red to improve pedestrian safety](#). The [District of Columbia is now considering similar changes](#).

My view is that in order to significantly improve pedestrian safety in our City, we will have to be willing to make trade-offs in the pursuit of safety. The data show that the changes that will most significantly improve safety are also the most controversial in our community. We have to follow the research.

For instance, [the first phase of the King Street Complete Streets](#) effort involved the removal of parking, narrowing of travel lanes, improved crosswalks, signage, new bike lanes, etc., to reduce speed and improve safety. [The initial analysis showed that the project has reduced speed, reduced crashes and improved safety](#).

[The second phase of the work on King Street](#) was an even more dramatic overhaul of the corridor, including reductions of travel lanes, pedestrian islands, crosswalks, etc. [In September of last year the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes](#). As with the first phase, crashes have been reduced, average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. [The initial review of this action has indicated a reduction in speed and accidents](#).

We have also looked at signalization efforts that can improve safety. At a few problem intersections, the City added a "[Leading Pedestrian Interval](#)" to the traffic signal to allow residents to get a head-start crossing before traffic can move.

We have also explored the creation of additional "[pedestrian scrambles](#)" to create an "all pedestrian" phase at problematic intersections. One example can be found at the intersection of W. Mt. Ida and Commonwealth Avenues.

[We have HAWK \(High Intensity Activated crossWalk\) signals in place](#) to ensure high visibility of pedestrians in high traffic corridors.

In response to concerns among several neighborhoods in the center of the City, the City just conducted an extensive data collection effort to help guide future traffic mitigation response.

[The Central Alexandria Traffic Study](#) involved the collection of origin and destination data, traffic volume and speed data in numerous locations around the City.

[The data that was collected was presented to the community task force and it provides a clear depiction of the impact of cut-through traffic on our neighborhoods](#).

The [initial set of remediation efforts](#) were published in the Spring. Some of the [proposed turn restrictions were brought before the City's Traffic & Parking Board](#) shortly thereafter, and they were approved.

I do believe there is more we can do.

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash](#). Lowering speed limits where appropriate will likely be in our toolbox around the City.

[Reducing traffic lanes, or so-called "road diets," can improve safety](#) . As we approach future road resurfacing, removing lanes will likely be

an option we consider.

It has been the City's practice to [announce enforcement efforts for intoxicated driving in advance](#) , as well as [announce the results afterwards](#) . We should do the same with our traffic enforcement. I believe greater transparency will help get the message out and improve safety throughout our City.

We need your input!

Are there particular areas of our City that you feel are unsafe and need attention? Are there intersections that are unsafe? Are there incomplete sections of sidewalk? Are there places where signage can be improved? [Please use the Alexandria Vision Zero Safety Map to report these areas.](#)

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Let me know your thoughts.

BAR Consolidation

Our City government conducts many vital functions. It's important that they do so effectively and efficiently.

In an effort to reduce the impact on the City's staff, as well as improve the customer service for our property owners, my colleague [Councilman Paul Smedberg and I jointly proposed combining the Old & Historic District and Parker-Gray Boards of Architectural Review into a consolidated Board of Architectural Review for both districts](#) .

Last month our City Staff [brought a formal recommendation consolidating the City's two Boards of Architectural review into one.](#) After hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council, both bodies unanimously adopted this proposal.

Alexandria has two historic preservation districts, the [Old & Historic District](#) and the [Parker-Gray District](#). Both of these districts have a Board of Architectural Review (BAR) charged with preserving the historic fabric of each area.

The Old & Historic District and the BAR were created originally in 1946.

In 1984, there was an effort to expand the existing Old and Historic District to include the areas that are today part of the Parker-Gray District. While that was ultimately rejected, a decision was made to create a separate district with its own board.

Once the General Assembly took action, City Council appointed the first Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review in 1986.

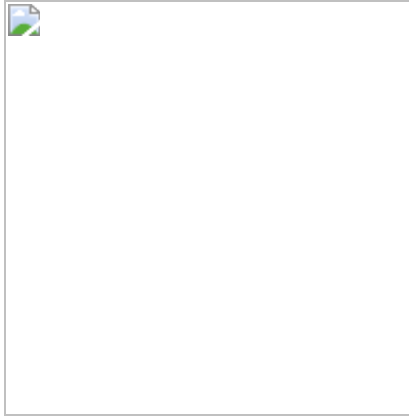
Today, both boards are responsible for hearing applications for permits to demolish or certificates of appropriateness.

In 2011, the Parker-Gray Ad Hoc Design Guidelines Work Group was formed to streamline the approval process, expand the use of more modern materials, and reduce the fees.

This group agreed upon a series of [recommendations](#) that were [adopted by the City Council in the Fall of 2013.](#)

A consequence of those changes has been to shift many requests that required a full public hearing before the BAR, to be able to be approved administratively by City staff.

The meetings of the Parker-Gray BAR have reduced significantly in duration, and two meetings in the past year have been cancelled due to a lack of agenda items.



I believe this change will make our government more efficient and effective, and I'm pleased that it was endorsed unanimously by my colleagues.

Extra Public Hearing

The work of the Alexandria City Council continues to evolve as the City changes. [The Council officially meets three times a month, two Tuesday "legislative" meetings and one Saturday Public Hearing where we accept testimony from the public and take final action on items.](#) Nearly every other day, there are community meetings, committees, commissions, etc.

The Council does not meet officially during July and August. For a part-time Council, this is a useful time for the members to reconnect with families, our "day" jobs, and sleep. It's also a time for our City staff to catch up on significant policy work that can be hampered by the pace required to prepare for Council meetings and respond to Council actions.

Yet, I do think we have reached the time where the Council should entertain the possibility of summer meetings.

In June of 2016, [I originally asked my colleagues to begin this conversation.](#)

[In September, I formally proposed, along with the support of four of my colleagues, that we add a July Public Hearing in the summer of 2019.](#)

[Last month, the City Council voted to add an additional public hearing in July.](#)

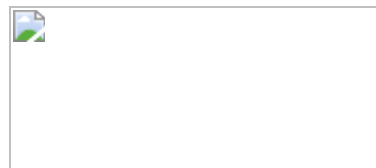
While it has long been a quaint practice of the City to take July and August off, the current schedule comes at a cost.

For land-use applicants, if Council approval is required, failure to get on a June docket requires that an applicant wait until September. That delay can be dangerous for the viability of a small business.

The last minute rush to squeeze items into the docket before our break can also be troublesome.

We are also an anomaly. Alexandria is the only jurisdiction in Northern Virginia to take a 2 month summer recess.

We have recently made changes to improve the efficiency of our meetings. During the last Council term, at the suggestion of myself and Councilman Smedberg, we formalized the "Oral Report" process, to better organize individual members' reports from the boards and commissions they serve on. We also changed the timing of our executive sessions; moving them before the open meetings, instead of after.



Previous Councils have limited the number of proclamations to make the meetings more efficient.

While these efforts have been helpful, I do believe more must be done. The length of our meetings now challenges members of the public to both participate and follow our proceedings. It limits the quality of our deliberations, and burns out our staff who must wait until the wee hours of the morning for their docket items to be addressed.

I believe we can better organize our dockets to focus our discussions on the matters that require Council deliberation and quickly dispatch with the pro forma work of the municipal corporation.

But I do believe those efforts can start with the addition of a 11th public hearing meeting. I'm pleased that this suggestion was approved.

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings continue!

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

Municipal Facilities

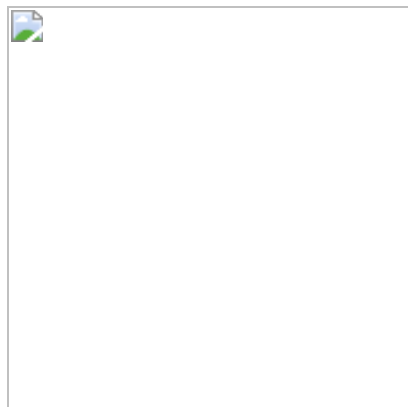
Our City Government and the Alexandria City Public Schools together utilize 151 buildings comprising 4.3 million square feet of space. Over half of this square footage is located in 19 school buildings. The balance is a myriad of municipal facilities, including fire stations, museums, bus maintenance facilities, a firing range, recreation centers, and more.

Rather than rely on anecdotes and intuition, the the City began a multi-year effort to assess the condition of City facilities. Designed to provide objective data to guide City investment decisions, this process has now concluded with the presentation of [the draft Strategic Facilities Plan](#). This plan will be before the City Council for adoption on December 11th.

This plan assessed 109 City facilities. These facilities have an **AVERAGE** age of 62 years old. Of those, 12 of them are over 100 years old, and five of them are over 200 years old. [Our oldest is Gadsby's Tavern, which was built in 1785.](#)

Each facility was assigned a score of A through F.

Only 35 of the facilities were assigned a score of "A" or "B." Most facilities received a "C," "D," or "F." Included with a failing score was our own City Hall.



Simply maintaining the existing facility conditions will require \$20 million per year for the next decade. To bring these facilities to an A grade would require \$35.1 million per year.

When we are discussing such significant amounts of new investment, I believe that we would be irresponsible not to have a full deliberation as to alternatives and trade-offs.

[Sadly, attempts in 2015 at reasonable discussion on these issues got lost in election year politics.](#)

With the election behind us (and hopefully the politics), I'm optimistic that reasoned decision making is now possible. The significant need for investment in this infrastructure also creates opportunities for the City. We have the ability to assess collocation with other City (and non-City) services, more balanced geographic delivery of City services, and relative service prioritization.

Our use of City facilities can and should evolve over time. [Our City Hall previously housed our Police Department, our courts, and our Fire Department.](#) Those services are now elsewhere in our community. At one point, our City ended at Quaker Lane. Now, most of our population lives west of Quaker Lane.

This process is designed to look holistically at our facility needs, including those of the Alexandria City Public Schools. The goal will be to effectively invest in our municipal facilities to provide the infrastructure necessary to serve our residents.

Investing in our municipal infrastructure is vital. Leveraging those important investments to improve efficiency and effectiveness is an opportunity we should not squander.

Status of Women

Eleven years before she was our City's first female City Manager, [Vola Lawson](#) led the "Alexandria Ad Hoc Committee on Women." In 1974, this group provided the very first report on the status of women in our community.

That report described widespread discrimination against women in every facet of life in our City. It led to the creation of the [Commission For Women](#), and shined a light on a myriad of challenges that relegated women and girls to second-class citizens in Alexandria.



A short 45 years later, the

Commission has provided the City Council and our community with [an updated Status of Women report.](#)

Designed to provide the very same introspection initiated in 1974, this new report looks at economic security, opportunity, healthcare, leadership, and safety.

This report is thoroughly researched, and advances recommendations that touch every facet of Alexandria life. The recommendations are achievable and provide a useful set of objectives to ensure the advancement of women and girls in our City.

Potomac Yard Metro

On Thursday evening the Planning Commission will hear [amendments to the Development Special Use Permit \(DSUP\) for the construction of the Potomac Yard Metro](#). These very same amendments will come to the City Council on Saturday December 15th.

While recent announcements may allow the subsequent restoration of a southern entrance to the station, these amendments reflect the changes that have been made to the original design in removing the second mezzanine and inclusion of a ramp to connect the planned northern entrance and East Glebe Road to the south.

In September, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) announced the latest and most significant milestone in the the City's 4-decade long effort to bring a new metro station to Potomac Yard. WMATA [announced the selection of Potomac Yard Constructors as the prime construction contractor](#).

Potomac Yard Constructors is a joint venture of [Halmar International](#) and [Schiavone Construction Company](#). The bid was ranked the highest technically during the procurement process and had the lowest price. A week ago WMATA provided Potomac Yard Constructors with the formal "Notice to Proceed," and the formal design and construction of the new station has begun.

On the front page of the [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) for the Potomac Yard Metro Station are the seals of four entities: Federal Transit Administration, Department of the Interior, WMATA and the City of Alexandria. Later in the report there is additional input from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission.



The breadth of the entities involved clearly demonstrates the complexity of the project.

[The Potomac Yard Metro project will facilitate the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs and will bring up to \\$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City \(over 30 years\). It removes thousands of vehicles from one of the most crowded corridors in our City. It promotes the creation of the kind of walkable community our City has long desired in Potomac Yard.](#)

For decades, the City has discussed, planned, and just plain hoped for a Metro Rail station at Potomac Yard.

In 2008, along with then-Councilman Rob Krupicka, I proposed a new start to efforts to bring Metro to Potomac Yard. [We included language in the City's Transportation Master Plan](#) explicitly calling for a new station at Potomac Yard. We also tied the construction and funding of Metro to the development occurring in the Yard.

The result is [a funding plan for Potomac Yard Metro](#) that not only leverages the development activity in Potomac Yard, but also does so without requiring the contributions of General Fund taxpayers.

The largest environmental, [economic development](#), and transportation initiative in our City's history is being accomplished using [one of the most innovative funding mechanisms used anywhere in the country](#).

The funding package today consists of a [special tax district](#), tax increment funding, [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority regional funding](#), a [Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Board loan](#), and a developer contribution. Council did vote to remove one of the special tax districts if a portion of money from the proposed Dominion 230KV transmission line easement could be used to replace the resources. With the transmission line not proceeding, the City Manager now believes that the pace of Potomac Yard development is such that the second tax district can be removed without threatening the financing of the station.

With \$50 million of funding from the Commonwealth now proposed in support of the Amazon economic development attraction, we have the opportunity to improve the access to the station from the south.

Our staff is now working with the construction contractor, WMATA and the Commonwealth to determine how and when this can be accomplished.

The schedule calls for the station to open in late 2021/early 2022.

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