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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

December 1, 2019

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Last month saw the conclusion of election season in our City.

Congratulations to Senator Saslaw, Senator Barker, Senator Ebbin, Delegate Herring and Delegate Levine on their re-elections to the General Assembly.

Additional congratulations are in order for Greg Parks, who was elected as our City's next Clerk of Circuit Court.

Special congratulations are due to Delegate Herring, who will become the Majority Leader of the new House of Delegates, and to Senator Saslaw, who will become the Majority Leader of the new State Senate.

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

As we begin the holiday season, there are many ways you can support those in need in our City.

Alexandria's Department of Community and Human Services administers our "[Holiday Sharing Program](#)," which allows residents to sponsor families, senior citizen or disabled individuals, and foster children.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season!

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

## Council Initiatives



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## Events/Updates

### Scottish Christmas Walk on Saturday

[The 49th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk returns to the streets of Old Town!](#)

Saturday, 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!

### Buy a Christmas Tree

[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,

## New Broadband For Alexandria

Over [6 years ago](#), I [proposed that the City develop a broadband plan to bring true competition to Alexandria's broadband market](#).

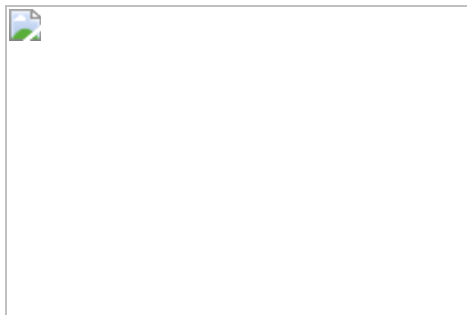
It has taken far too long, but the City is finally moving ahead on an effort to bring new broadband capacity to our community.

[Last month](#), the City [issued a solicitation to select a vendor to construct a municipal fiber network to serve City and School facilities around our community](#).

Nearly 5 years ago, the City issued a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI solicited concepts from the private sector for partnership with the City in expanding broadband options, availability, and capabilities. We received 10 responses from potential private partners and those responses shaped the approach the City is now taking.

For years, Alexandria has sought new private investment in broadband infrastructure. For most of our residents, we have one company providing Internet connectivity and television. With new [Verizon FIOS deployment plans shelved](#) around the country and [Google Fiber largely dead](#), the investment in broadband infrastructure must fall to local governments.

Regardless of the performance of incumbent providers, technological innovation and reliability thrives on competition.



This is an issue that impacts not only residents but also our businesses and the ability of our community to attract new investment.

Concurrent with the FY 2017 budget process, the City completed the [initial financial estimates for the first phase of the infrastructure build-out](#). The plan is designed to replace the City's existing connectivity agreement for City facilities with a City-owned fiber network.

By [leveraging E-Rate funding from the FCC](#), achieving operating savings from the costs of the existing agreement, and the potential for private leases of our infrastructure, the effort may be able to pay for itself.

In the fall of 2016, [the Council unanimously took the next step](#) in this important process, as we requested that the City Manager formally solicit for new providers to partner with the City.

One of the core components of the original proposal I made was that the City [adopt a "Dig Once" policy](#). Essentially that's a policy that makes the City more efficient by leveraging existing underground infrastructure work to also make broadband infrastructure investments. With hundreds of millions of dollars of sewer and transportation work scheduled over the next decade, we should sequence and combine that work to be the most efficient.

This is an exciting project and one that gives the City the best chance to leverage its assets to bring new broadband services to our residents and businesses.

## Potomac Yard Metro Groundbreaking Scheduled

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.

Trees will be available on Friday from noon until 8 PM, on Saturday from 7:45 AM until 5:30 PM and on Sunday from 11:45 AM until 5:30 PM.

### **Holiday Boat Parade of Lights**

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

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

### **Del Ray Tree Lighting**

A week from today (Sunday December 8th) at 6PM, the holidays begin in Del Ray!

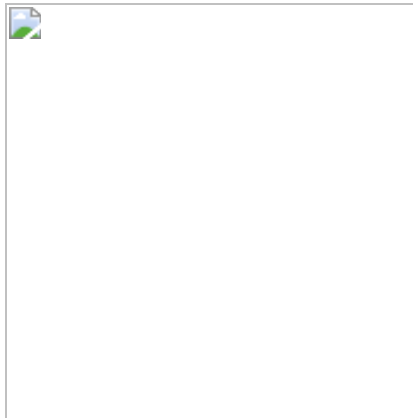
[The Annual Del Ray Tree Lighting will occur, followed by carols and Santa!](#)

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

[For a quarter of a century, the City has been working to bring an inline Metro Rail station to Potomac Yard. On Thursday December 19th we will break ground to formally begin construction to make that station reality.](#)

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. This project is deeply complex and has been challenging to bring to reality for decades.

In September, one of the final permits required for construction of the station to proceed was approved. [The State Water Control Board approved a permit which reflects the mitigation required for impacts on the wetlands by the construction of the station.](#)

Last month, the [US Army Corps of Engineers issued the final permit approval required.](#)

As the design efforts have continued, [there are "virtual tour" videos of the future station available online for review.](#)

Two months ago, [Council authorized the issuance of General Obligation bonds to support the construction activity related to the new station.](#)

Since November, [when the Commonwealth of Virginia announced the investment of \\$50 million into the Potomac Yard Metro Station,](#) the City has been working to apply that investment to improve access to the station. Adding a \$50 million+ investment to a \$320 million capital project, after the contract has been awarded, is not an insignificant undertaking.

With the active engagement from the Potomac Yard Metro Implementation Group (PYMIG), [three alternatives for improving access were developed](#) and ultimately submitted to the contractor to be priced.

Option 3 was clearly the most favored option of PYMIG and the community members who provided input into this process. [Unfortunately, the City received the pricing on each of the three alternatives, and all three are over the \\$50 million allocated by the Commonwealth.](#) In the case of the preferred alternative, the estimate was \$100 million.

There is some belief that the first alternative can be further value-engineered to bring the cost down. It will be a few more weeks until we can determine whether that is possible or even advisable.

[Concurring with the recommendation of the PYMIG, the City Council voted in June to pursue further value engineering of Option 1, while looking at options to apply the state investment to improving the plan for the station approved by Council in the fall.](#)

cards, or Metro cards for Carpenter's Shelter.

## Menorah Lighting

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

[This year, the event will occur on Thursday, December 26th at 6:30 PM at the Lyceum at 201 S. Washington Street, the City's history museum.](#)

## Ring in the New Year!

[Tickets are now on sale for the 25th Anniversary 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!

## Leaf Collection Continues

The annual City's leaf collection effort are continuing throughout the City.

[The full schedule of leaf vacuuming efforts is available online and will continue for the next few weeks.](#)

## Backflow Preventer Installation

Backflow preventers can protect a home or business from sewage backflow.

Over a year ago, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) announced the 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. WMATA provided Potomac Yard Constructors with the formal "Notice to Proceed," and the formal design and construction of the new station has begun.

[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 current schedule calls for the station to open in early 2022, but that will be refined as we move forward.

## Virginia Tech Campus Takes Shape

It has now been over a year since, 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](#) .

Last month, the Virginia Tech Foundation [submitted its first concept plans to the City for the construction of the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus and related office, retail and residential development.](#)

To obtain early community input, [a meeting was held with a presentation detailing the submission](#). You can [watch the video of the full public presentation online](#).

While originally announced to be in Oakville Triangle, Virginia Tech decided that a property in North Potomac Yard (where the movie theater currently is) made more sense given their future growth plans. In June, [the leadership of Virginia Tech was back in Alexandria to announce the new location they had selected the property for their future "Innovation Campus."](#)

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 will provide a pipeline of talent for our entire region.](#)

The City recently extended our program to provide financial assistance to property owners installing these devices.

The deadline to seek reimbursement is the end of this month. [Full details are available online.](#)

**Eisenhower East Plan**

The City is in the process of considering updates to the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan. This area includes Carlyle.

[The draft plan is now posted and we would like your input!](#)

The plan comes before the Planning Commission and City Council in January.

**REVIVE Training**

[Twice a month the City offers free training to residents seeking to learn how to spot and reverse an opioid overdose.](#)

No RSVP is required, and attendees receive a free medical kit upon completion.

Help become a lifesaver in our community!

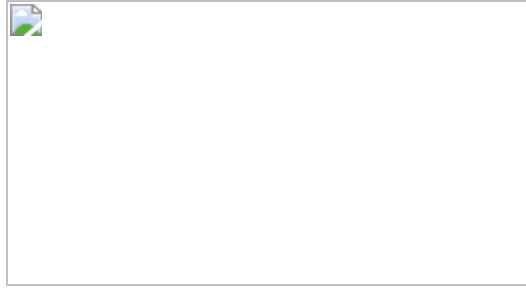
**Census Jobs**

As part of the preparation for the 2020 Decennial Census, the United States Census Bureau is already hiring in our area.

Click [here](#) or [here](#) to review the various jobs listed for hiring.

Thanks for joining our effort to ensure a full and complete count!

In doing so, this new investment in our City will spur new job creation, catalyze redevelopment in Potomac Yard, Oakville Triangle and beyond, as well as open up new educational partnerships for our schools and non-profit organizations.



Last month, [I wrote in this newsletter about our partnership with Arlington to ensure that the benefits of these new investments accrue to all in our communities.](#) As this campus begins to take shape, our work continues.

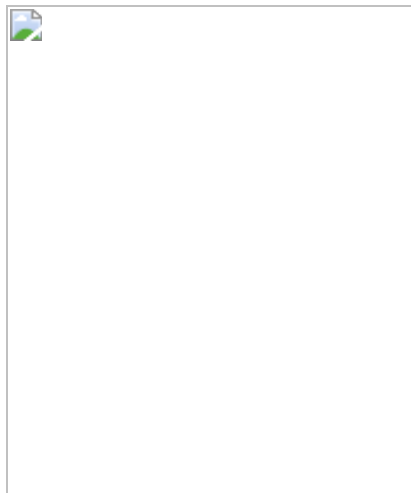
**AAA/Aaa Bond Ratings Renewed**

[Last month, S & P Global Ratings and Moody's Investor Services both reaffirmed the City's bond ratings of AAA and Aaa respectively.](#) The confirmation of these ratings, in advance of the City's largest bond-issuance in our history, allows the City to access the lowest possible borrowing costs, saving the taxpayers millions over the life of our bonds.

[Last month, the City Council unanimously voted to authorize the issuance of \\$200 million of new General Obligation bonds.](#) This new borrowing will be used to finance the construction of the Potomac Yard Metro station as well as other projects in our Capital Improvement Program.

Each time the City goes to borrow money for its capital budget, it must go before the rating agencies to have its credit worthiness evaluated, which guides market valuation. Last month, I accompanied our staff to New York to meet with the agencies and present information on the City's newly planned borrowing.

Much like individuals must have a credit check performed before acquiring a mortgage, a car loan, or a new credit card, the City must go before Standard & Poor's and Moody's to have the two organizations assess whether we are doing a good job managing the City's finances.



In May, [the Council adopted our 10 year Capital Improvement Program, covering fiscal years 2020 - 2029.](#) Over the 10 year period, the program calls for \$1.618 billion in capital investment throughout the City. A third of this funding goes to City and School municipal facilities. Another third goes to transportation initiatives.

Our capital budget is funded primarily through a mix of debt and current year funding also known as "cash capital." Relating this to your home mortgage, the cash capital is the down payment. We also pay interest each year on the debt that was issued in previous years.



In issuing the City's rating, Moody's wrote: "The stable outlook reflects the likelihood that the city will maintain its healthy financial given strong operating trends and conservative budgeting practices and that the sizable tax base will continue to grow and diversify."

Standard & Poor's similarly cited that "We view the City's management as very strong, with strong financial policies and practices..."

Over the past few years, I have pushed for new policies to make the City's balance sheet even stronger. [Nearly five years ago, the Council unanimously adopted a new "cash capital" policy, which served to reduce debt levels and the risk of our borrowing.](#)

[This year, the Council approved amendments to our "Spendable Fund Balance," essentially expanding the amount of reserves we have available.](#) This new policy was recommended by the City's Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, and it was specifically cited by the rating agencies in support of our ratings.

### **Alexandria is very conservative with our use of debt.**

Arlington County limits its debt to 4% of its Fair Market Real Property Value. Both Fairfax and Prince William Counties limit their debt to 3%. [Alexandria's self-imposed limit is 2.5%, and this budget year we achieved 1.60%](#) .

The median for other similarly rated and sized jurisdictions is 2.42%.

In fact, in the Standard & Poor's analysis, they noted that the City was rated higher than the "sovereign" (the US Federal Government) because "we believe the City can maintain better credit characteristics than the U. S. in a stress scenario."

Debt is a tool that allows us to balance the costs of large capital investments across the generations of Alexandria taxpayers that will benefit from them and to pay for our investments from the returns we reap from them.

It is important for us to maintain the careful stewardship that will protect our taxpayers and our City's infrastructure long into the future.

### **Budget Preview & 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, an annual budget retreat is conducted.

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 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021) Operating Budget and the Fiscal Year 2021 - Fiscal Year 2030 Capital Improvement Program.

The initial projections are that next year's revenues will grow at a rate of 2.1% overall. If that estimate holds, that would provide the City government with about \$15.9 million of new revenue.

With real estate taxes generating most of our resources, our projected growth is driven by a modest increase in residential real estate assessments (2%-3%) and lower growth in our commercial real estate and consumption based taxes (sales tax, dining tax, utility tax, communications tax, etc).



On the expenditure side, we quickly begin to see our challenge. Given continued student enrollment growth (highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter), the initial projection from the Alexandria City Public Schools is for an additional \$8.1 million of operating funds. The Superintendent has not yet presented his proposed operating budget. Once he does, and the School Board has adopted an operating budget we will have a better understanding of the pressures.

Our estimates now include the impact of the recently approved collective bargaining agreement for DASH Bus employees, which will be nearly \$4 million in FY 2021. Increases to operating budget support of our capital spending for this year requires an additional \$5.1 million.

When all requests and anticipated costs are included, that creates an estimated shortfall of \$5.9 million before we start the process. As context, that is one of the smaller estimated shortfalls the City has projected at the outset of a budget process in years.

Yet that gap does not include:

- Potential salary adjustments to address competitive pressures, particularly in our public safety agencies
- [The impacts of proposed additional capital spending, specifically large increases in capital expenditures proposed to address school facility needs.](#)

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 and winter, 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. Yet, in adopting the guidance resolution this year, a majority of the Council did wish to provide the City Manager with the flexibility to propose a real estate tax rate increase.

I was however successful in amending the proposed guidance resolution to allow the City to take another step towards multi-year budgeting, by asking our staff provide more detail on the proposed expenditures for FY 2022 in addition to FY 2021 budget being proposed. It is my view that adopting a long-term approach to operating expenditures is a best practice, and prudent budgeting for the City.

The City Manager's proposed budget is scheduled to be presented on Tuesday February 18, 2019 shortly after real estate assessments are complete and final revenue projections prepared.

[Once the budget is presented, the City will hold a full schedule of budget worksessions and public hearings to provide our residents the opportunity to learn more and provide input on the proposed budget.](#)

### Government Transparency

Less than a year ago, the City unveiled [our public Performance Dashboard](#) , allowing the residents of our City to assess the performance of critical City services based on meaningful performance metrics.

With that data available, it's important for the Council and public to review performance periodically.

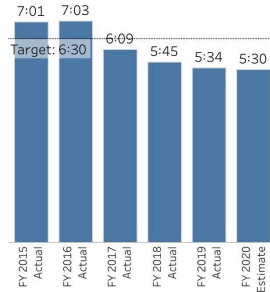
[You can watch last month's presentation to the Council of the performance highlights from these dashboards](#) and Council's discussion.

Providing accountable results to the residents of Alexandria for their tax investment is a role of government. To support that accountability, government must have good data. We have now made another large step forward as we work to better collect more relevant data to measure how we provide City services.

[Over a decade ago, then City Manager Jim Hartmann introduced the Managing for Results Initiative, known as "MFRI."](#) MFRI categorized

### Emergency Medical Incident Response Time

Response time to emergency medical incidents that occur for 90 percent of emergencies (from the time the unit is dispatched to the arrival at the scene)



our City services into programs and activities that could be measured and reported. The budget format was then revised so that the proposed budget aligned expenditures to those programs and activities. This allowed the City to measure the performance and efficiency of services during the annual budget process.

Our previous City Manager, Rashad Young, then created the Office of Performance and Accountability (OPA). OPA was designed as an internal consultancy to implement performance improvement and efficiency throughout city government operations.

Four years ago we took the next step, as OPA unveiled the first draft of our regular Performance Reports. These reports cover each of the service areas of the City's Strategic Plan. They provide the performance and quality measures that are expected of City departments, while assisting the Council and City management to make good, data-driven decisions about those services.

The [Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\) also has a similar performance accountability system called iDashboard](#). ACPS provides a consolidated dashboard of its key performance indicators to allow parents and community members easy access to this data.

While identifying and reporting the metrics to measure the services we provide is an important innovation, we have a long way to go. We must improve the quality of our data, increase the frequency of when it is reported, and use the data to make better decisions about how we allocate resources. I look forward to continued progress in this area.

### New Transit For Our City



A little over a decade ago, the City adopted its latest [Transportation Master Plan](#). At the time, the plan was a significant transition in that it shifted from a plan focused on roads and vehicle traffic, to a plan that prioritized transit.

[We are now in the process of updating that 2008 Transportation Master Plan and we can use your input on the updates.](#)

One of the most significant changes that came from the 2008 Master



Plan was the designation of three transit corridors for high-capacity transit. The three corridors were Transit Corridor A, which was nominally north to south on Route 1 on the east end of the City, Transit Corridor B, which was intended

as east to west on Duke Street and Transit Corridor C, which was north to south on the west end of the City using Van Dorn and Beauregard.

After the adoption of the 2008 Master Plan, [a community task force was assembled to provide some more details around the vision for each of the transit corridors.](#)

[Transit Corridor A began service as "Metroway" over five years ago, and was the region's first bus rapid transit service, providing service to Potomac Yard and Crystal City, which further enhancements planned.](#)

Transit Corridor C, now called the "West End Transitway" will be the next to come to reality. The West End Transitway has now been awarded [\\$73 million of State and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority \(NVTA\) funds.](#)

[The slower pace of redevelopment in the Beauregard corridor will necessitate multiple phases to implement this project. With funding now in place \(although not until 2024-2025\), work begins to plan the implementation.](#)

Transit Corridor B, will be the final corridor implemented. With planning money now awarded, the City will conduct community engagement next year to update the decade-old plans for this transit service.

High capacity transit provides our residents with alternatives to congestion and delay. I am optimistic that we will be able to bring these projects to reality.

## **Aging in Alexandria**

The fastest growing population in Alexandria are those over 60 years of age. As the "boomers" age, their numbers are projected to double in our City from 15,473 in 2000 to over 30,000 in 2030.

Facing this population growth and their changing needs was a central focus of the Alexandria Commission on Aging's strategic planning effort almost 8 years ago. The result was the ["The Alexandria of our Future, A Livable Community For All Ages; Strategic Plan on Aging 2013 - 2017."](#)

Last year, the City built on this effort [by adopting an "Age Friendly Plan for a Livable Community 2019-2021."](#) This plan proposed more aggressive actions.

One of the goals adopted in the plan committed the City to address housing needs to ensure a place for our aging population in Alexandria in our future. While typically the highest and best use of any parcel of land in Alexandria is going to be market-rate residential housing, the City can implement policies to encourage the development of places for our aging population.

Accommodating these uses under our existing land-use regulations can be difficult. Almost 5 years ago, after hours of divided testimony,



[the City Council approved by a vote of 6-1 the development and operation](#) of a new "memory care" facility on King Street between Ivy Hill Cemetery and

the existing Woodbine Rehabilitation. [Silverado was selected to operate this facility and it open a year and a half ago to provide care for 65 residents with Alzheimer's or other memory impairments.](#)

In approving this facility, the applicant agreed to provide two units at deeply subsidized rates to income-eligible residents of our community.

In other situations, this use has been easier to accommodate. [Two years ago, the Council voted unanimously to approve a facility proposed by Sunrise Senior Living at 400 N. Washington Street.](#) In this facility, there will be a maximum of 93 assisted living units, including 27 memory care units.

In approving this facility, the applicant agreed to provide two studio units supported by ["auxiliary grants,"](#) to ensure that not only the housing, but the services are affordable for some of Alexandria's residents.

A year ago, [Council also unanimously approved a proposal by Silverstone Senior Living for two buildings of senior housing, including seven auxiliary grant units, to be located in Potomac Yard.](#)

While these new investments are positive developments for seniors in our community, an aging population means the demand will continue to grow.

[To facilitate land-use approvals for these uses, Council considered a text amendment to create a new "Continuum of Care" facility in the City's land-use code.](#) This new definition consolidates uses that are today referred to as an "Elder Care Home," "Home for the Elderly," or "Nursing or Convalescent Home or Hospice."

With the adoption of this text amendment last month, Council eased the approval of this use in zones across the City. I am hopeful that we will continue that progress by modifying regulation of this use across the City.

As we work to encourage a place for our growing aging population in our community, aligning our land-use policies to those goals is crucial. I believe this change will assist that work.

### **Student Enrollment Increases Continue**

[This year, 16,062 students started in the Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\). That constitutes a 2% increase from the previous year or about 325 additional students.](#)

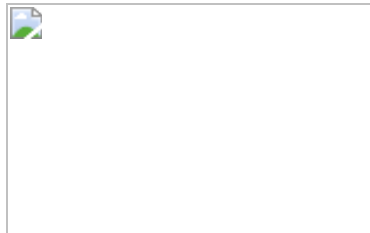
This year is the thirteenth straight year of enrollment growth. During that period, ACPS has added over 5,000 students.

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

Seven 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 Mayor at the time, and I joined a group of community members and staff to steer the effort.

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. For example, we learned that 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.



[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.

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

Last school year, the ACPS opened the first net new school building in nearly two decades with the [opening of Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School on the West End](#). Almost a year ago, ACPS [opened the newly rebuilt Patrick Henry K-8 School](#). Both of these new buildings added badly needed capacity in areas of the City with rapidly growing enrollment.

Last month, [the City Council unanimously approved land-use modifications to allow the old Patrick Henry Elementary School building to be temporarily used at "swing-space"](#) to facilitate a planned rebuild of Douglas MacArthur Elementary School.

[The City's approved 10 year capital improvement program for the Alexandria City Public Schools includes \\$479 million over the next decade](#). This provides the funding for both new and renovated facilities, as well as non-capacity infrastructure investments. **Only 6 years ago, the 10 year capital improvement program for our Schools was less than half as much at \$203 million.**

The Superintendent has proposed his 10-year Capital Improvement Program to the School Board, and the Board is in the process of deliberating on his proposal. This plan proposes a significant increase for the next decade, to require \$530 million. Once adopted by the Board, this will be one of the areas of discussion in the City Council's upcoming budget process.

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 dangers 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.

### Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

As Mayor, I am continuing my regular series of Town Hall Meetings.



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply the Mayor who will hopefully have 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

### Legislative Package

Next month the Virginia General Assembly returns to Richmond for the so-called "long-session." The General Assembly alternates between a 45 day session in odd number years and a 60 day session in even number years.

Given the results of the elections last month, this session is shaping up to be one which can significantly alter the trajectory of the Commonwealth. For the first in 8 years, Democrats will now control the State Senate and for the first time in 22 years, Democrats will now control the House of Delegates.

For Alexandria specifically, our delegation will now boast BOTH Majority Leaders (Senator Saslaw leading the State Senate and Delegate Herring leading the House of Delegates) and a few committee chairs. That will be an unprecedented level of influence for our City.

Every year, the City Council adopts a Legislative Package for the upcoming General Assembly session. While the state government is certainly a significant financial supporter of the City's budget, Richmond also sets a legal environment that affects how we provide services to our residents.



For years, most of our legislative priorities have not fared well in the General Assembly. Our priorities have rarely aligned with those leading the majority caucuses in either house.

Given the large changes in Richmond, we took a different approach to our Legislative Package this year. Along with Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, I serve on the City's Legislative Committee, which recommends the Legislative Package each year to our colleagues.

[This year, we have chosen to prepare a "Statement of Legislative Principles" and a "Statement of Legislative Priorities."](#) Given the breadth of legislation likely to be filed, and potentially enacted, we felt it more appropriate to weigh in on the broader themes that we

wished to see addressed on behalf of the City in the upcoming session.

Yet we do have specific asks within the legislative priorities, including:

- The City will be again seeking funding from the Commonwealth to assist in funding the implementation of new state mandates for combined sewer remediation work in Old Town. We were fortunate to receive \$25 million during last year's session, and we will be seeking additional investment by the Commonwealth.
- This City is requesting that the Commonwealth make a significant investment in school facilities construction and maintenance. Jurisdictions around the state (including Alexandria) are struggling with the costs of growing student enrollment and aging school facilities.
- The City is requesting increasing funding for P-12 education, including expanded resources for children who are more expensive to educate, and changes to the local match requirement for early childhood education.

We are optimistic that this upcoming session will result in new legislation adopted in alignment with the City's values and supporting our delivery of critical services.

The City is represented in the State Senate by [Senator Richard Saslaw](#) , [Senator George Barker](#) , and [Senator Adam Ebbin](#) . In the House of Delegates, the City is represented by [Delegate Charniele Herring](#) and [Delegate Mark Levine](#) .

[Click here to determine who represents you.](#)

### **395 Express Lanes**

In 2012, the City Council worked to clarify the City's position regarding a then-proposed connection from the Interstate 395 HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) Lanes onto Seminary Road.

At the the time the Council held serious concerns about potential adverse impacts to cut-through traffic if all vehicles were allowed to use the exit onto Seminary during rush hour.

Ultimately, the City Council [adopted a resolution limiting the connectivity and certain turn movements.](#)

The new ramp [opened nearly 3 years ago to operation.](#)

A year ago, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) notified the City that Transurban (the concessionaire for the Interstate 395 Express Lanes) wished to evaluate the existing HOV operations on the south-facing ramp and consider whether a HOT (High Occupancy Tolling) ramp is more appropriate.

This would be a significant change and holds the potential to have negative impacts on Seminary Road and other City streets.

[To fully evaluate those potential impacts, Transurban commissioned an extension study on the impacts of any change on streets through the City.](#) They have now completed that study and have provided that data to the City to analyze.

On Monday December 9th at 6:30 PM at Minnie Howard School, VDOT and Transurban will host a public meeting to review their findings and receive public input.

Following the public engagements, the City Council will ultimately adopt a position on this proposal on behalf of the City.

### **Dockless Scooters**

Disruptive technologies have been especially "disruptive" to local government. Whether it's Uber and Lyft or food trucks, when these new businesses come to municipalities, they typically precede laws that govern their use,

This was undoubtedly true when dockless scooters began showing up in Alexandria last year. After some discussion with our regional neighbors and community engagement, the Council approved a 9-month (and later extended through the end of the year) pilot program a year ago.

The pilot program required each company to execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City. [This agreement imposed rules and requirements on the companies and their customers](#). This pilot program was designed to help the City determine if these devices have a place in our City.

The pilot was slow to get started, but today there are seven companies who have executed the MOU with the City, each allowed to operate 200 scooters in our City. [Over 230,000 scooter trips were taken in the City during the first 9 months of the pilot](#).

The City Council has heard a substantial amount of input on these



dockless scooters from many residents in our community. While there is certainly support for these devices being in our community, I have heard significant concerns about scooters blocking sidewalks, being operated on sidewalks, the aesthetics of the devices, riders without helmets, scooters creating

accessibility issues, and general concerns about enforcement.

Our staff returned to the Council [with updated recommendations for creation of a Phase 2 pilot for all of 2020](#). You can [watch the staff presentation of the recommendations and the Council's discussion of those recommendations online](#).

Council will be holding a Public Hearing on these recommendations on Saturday December 14th beginning at 9:30 AM at City Hall. Public testimony is welcome, and we'd love to have you there!

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