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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

January 1, 2018

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## Happy New Year!

I hope you are having an enjoyable holiday season. I am excited to be into 2018 and hopeful the year will be full of accomplishment for our community.

Later in this new year the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) will bring on a new leader. [The School Board has hired Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings Jr. as our new Superintendent.](#)



While Dr. Hutchings currently leads the Shaker Heights, OH schools, he is no stranger to ACPS. Having grown up in Alexandria, graduated from our schools, and later worked in our schools, his hiring is a homecoming.

I look forward to working with Dr. Hutchings as we collaborate to ensure every child has an opportunity at success.

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

## Council Initiatives

### Fueling the Bus

Motor vehicles are the largest non-stationary sources of greenhouse gas emissions. One of the City's most significant efforts to reduce emissions and fulfill our obligations in battling climate change are our investments in mass transit. While most of that investment goes to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), for over 30 years the City has run the [DASH Bus system](#) to serve our local needs.

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

## Events/Updates

### The Next Campaign

[In November, I made a significant announcement about my political future: I announced that I will be running to be Alexandria's next Mayor.](#)

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.

If you have not been receiving my campaign updates and you wish to receive updates on this new campaign, [please drop my campaign a line](#) and we'll get you on the list for campaign updates.

### Community Police Academy

Sign up now to participate in the Alexandria Community Police Academy.

This acclaimed program is one of the Police Department's key public outreach efforts.

There are now two options for participation: the full 10-week program and a new abbreviated 1-day version.

[Sign up today!](#)

### Helicopter Study

[As part of last year's National Defense Authorization Act, Congressman Don Beyer inserted language requiring the study of helicopter noise in the region.](#)

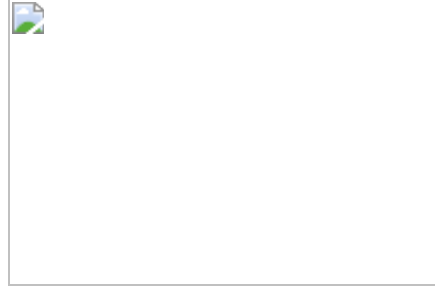
To provide a forum for community discussion a feedback to the Department of Defense on this issue,

Wildly popular with its riders, DASH also achieves operational and financial performance that is the envy of systems around the country. DASH carries a little over 3 million passengers per year.

In 2011, the [City made a decision to purchase hybrid diesel/electric buses to begin replacing the all-diesel fleet of buses that was in operation at that point](#). At that time, a diesel bus cost \$450,000

apiece, and the hybrid buses cost \$700,000. Yet it was believed that the combination of the fuel savings and potential maintenance savings would cause the total cost of ownership to be lower over time for the hybrid buses. With reduced emissions, fuel

consumption and particulate matter, this switch was in alignment with the City's [Environmental Action Plan](#).



After years of hybrid purchases, 52 of the 86 buses in the current fleet are now hybrids. [With a recent change in leadership at DASH](#), the Board of Directors delayed scheduled bus replacement to allow the new leadership to reevaluate the replacement plan.

With a few years of replacement money awaiting this decision, the Board had assembled \$13 million. Continuing the previous policy of hybrid purchases would have allowed the purchase of 17 hybrid buses with these resources. Given improvements in the technology of the diesel buses, as well as cost considerations, the DASH General Manager proposed to the Board of Directors using the funds to instead purchase 27 diesel buses, which would allow the replacement of all of the much dirtier, older, diesel buses remaining in the fleet.

Currently some buses on the road in the City are nearly 18 years old. This is far longer than their normal life and these buses are significant polluters compared to the remainder of the fleet.

[The City's Environmental Policy Commission provided a substantial amount of input both to the DASH Board and later to the City Council on this issue](#). The Commission pushed for full electrification of the City's bus fleet, and urged for a smaller diesel replacement to facilitate such a transition.

The Council had a detailed conversation on this plan and the opportunities and challenges for transitioning the full bus fleet to a more sustainable power source. [You can watch the discussion online](#).

I am certainly not excited in taking a step backwards in the sustainability of our bus fleet. I am hopeful that we can use the savings from these diesel purchases to accelerate the electrification of our fleet. The City Manager will propose a path forward for such a transition as part of his proposed Capital Improvement Program in February. DASH also believes that this may be a good project for funding under the forthcoming [Volkswagen Settlement funds](#).

As electric transit bus technology matures and comes down in cost, the City can and should lead the way by putting these cleaner transit vehicles on the streets of Alexandria. I am committed to making this happen.

### Paying For Cleaner Water

Some municipal government efforts see quick results. Some efforts take a few years. Our efforts to achieve cleaner waterways will take decades, but the payoff will be for multiple future generations.

Congressman Beyer is hosting a meeting on Tuesday January 16th from 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM at Arlington's Abingdon Elementary School at 3035 S. Abingdon Street.

### **Become A Police Officer**

The Alexandria Police Department will be hosting exams to evaluate those who wish to become Alexandria Police Officers.

On Saturday, January 20th, the Department will host exams at 8 AM at 3600 Wheeler Avenue.

This is the first step in the hiring process. [Find out more details online!](#)

### **Drug Take Back**

Do you have unwanted or expired prescription medications?

The Alexandria Sheriff's Department, in cooperation with the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria and The Neighborhood Pharmacy, will be conducting another "Drug Take Back" event.

[On Saturday January 6th, there will be collection events occurring at four different locations in the City.](#)

The event is free and anonymous.

### **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!

### **Christmas Tree Recycling**

Early in the last Council term, the members grappled with the challenges that the City faced from Federal environmental regulations that govern how we handle sewage from homes and businesses. Those efforts culminated in the adoption of the [City's Sanitary Sewer Master Plan](#).

I have written regularly (including later in this newsletter) about [our challenges in addressing the Combined Sewer System \(CSS\) which serves Old Town](#).

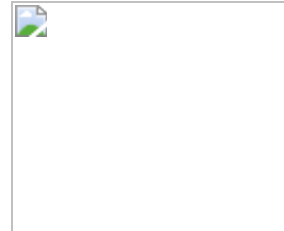
Our federal obligations for cleaner water do not end with waste water. The City also has significant obligations to protect waterways from polluted storm water. The [City's MS4 Permit Program](#) spells out specific pollutant reductions that the City must meet over a 15 year time period.

There are [a variety of ways the City can meet these obligations](#). Redevelopment can help, in that it can convert impervious surfaces into areas that can handle stormwater. For example, [a residential project in the Eisenhower Valley](#) that was approved by Council in 2013 has created a new pond. That pond **alone** will account for a substantial portion of our pollutant reduction obligations from its construction until this year.

In the end, meeting these obligations will be expensive. Current estimates have the costs at \$65 - \$100 million dollars over the next 15 years, including \$33 million over the next five years.

[In 2008, the City Council appointed a citizen group to review the costs and funding mechanisms available to address the City's responsibilities](#). In the spring of 2010, one of the City's previous City Managers proposed the creation of a Stormwater Utility Fee to fund these obligations.

As proposed in 2010, the fee would apply to all property owners (regardless of their taxable status) and be assessed based on the **impervious** surfaces on their property. Essentially the fee would be structured to be a user fee for the City's stormwater handling.



In adopting the budget in 2010, the Council instead chose to simply raise the real estate tax and dedicate a portion (a half cent) of the rate to stormwater projects. Essentially, the decision was to fund stormwater management based on the value of properties rather than the amount of stormwater runoff they create.

That funding has proven insufficient to cover the City's obligations. Based on the staff's current projections, the City will need to spend an additional 1.27 cents beyond the dedication, for a total of 1.77 cents on the City's current real estate tax rate. Ultimately, to address our obligations, annual spending will need to rise to \$6.67 million per year. To address this mandate in later years, the annual spending will need to be even higher.

In [December of 2014, the Council first discussed these obligations and the possibility of using a Stormwater Utility Fee](#) instead of the existing real estate tax dedication.

Alternatively, the Council could have increased the real estate tax dedication to continue funding these costs using that mechanism.

There are pluses and minuses of both approaches.

With the current real estate tax funding approach, 58% of the costs are today paid by residential tax payers and 42% by non-residential tax payers. Yet stormwater runoff is caused by impervious areas. The

[Starting Tuesday and continuing through January 12th, residents receiving City trash service may leave a Christmas tree out for recycling.](#)

The tree must be placed in your normal trash collection location on your regular collection day.

Remove all ornaments, tinsel and stands.

All trees will be ground into mulch and made available to residents in the spring.

distribution of impervious areas is 63% non-residential property and 37% residential.

Funded as a component of the real estate tax, it is tax deductible on federal and state income taxes (subject to the new limitations on these deductions).

[In February of 2016, the Council again reviewed this issue and gave our staff the direction to pursue a Stormwater Utility Fee in lieu of the existing real estate tax dedication.](#)

With a Stormwater Utility Fee, the cost burden would shift. Residential fee-payers would pay 37% of the stormwater costs and non-residential fee-payers would pay 63% of these costs.

For many property owners, this will reduce their cost. This will also require non-taxable property owners (places of worship and non-profit properties primarily) to cover their impacts on the City's stormwater system.

The fee would be assessed on the impact the property has on stormwater runoff in the City as opposed to simply the valuation of the property.

For residential properties, our staff devised a relatively simple tier structure with 4 tiers (Condo, Townhouse, Typical Single Family and Large Single Family) for different types of residential properties. For non-residential properties, a calculation based on impervious areas on a property was implemented.

City staff will also propose a series of available credits for fee-payers based on actions property owners can take to reduce their impact on the City's stormwater system. [The non-residential credit structures will be implemented this year.](#) The residential credit structure will be implemented in 2019.

With billing of the new fee beginning this calendar year, [the City has now calculated the fee for all properties.](#) By searching for your property in the [real estate tax assessment system](#), you can learn the fee that has been calculated.

## Transparency in Policing

In August of 2016, [I wrote a piece in this newsletter attempting to relate the national conversation on policing to our experiences in Alexandria.](#)

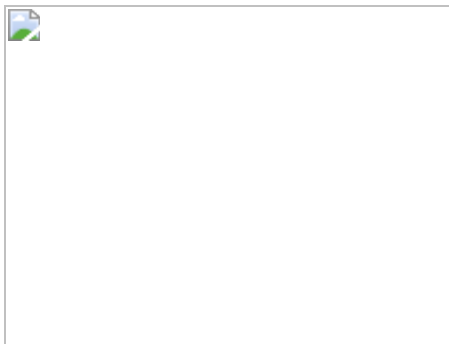
At the time, the murders of police officers and controversial uses of lethal force by police officers had prompted a furious national conversation. Communities around the nation were drawn into a polarized debate unnecessarily pitting the lives of those who protect and serve against the lives of persons of color.

In the past year, the national conversation has only intensified with further tragedies and injustices capturing the nation's attention and demanding local response.

Just last week in our region, [two Loudoun County Sheriff's Department deputies were shot during a dangerous domestic dispute.](#) Fortunately, they will survive, but it is a reminder of the danger they face every day.

Here in Alexandria, we have worked to address the issue from a position of strength.

We have a highly skilled police force that draws on the diversity of the community that they police. The department is taking new steps to improve the diversity of the workforce in future recruiting efforts.



We are fortunate to have a Sheriff's Department with a sworn workforce that similarly represents our community's diversity.

Our officers participate in training aimed at de-escalation of volatile situations. We outfit our police officers with non-lethal force options to

assist in the de-escalation of these incidents.

We have officers that participate in [training designed to address implicit bias in policing](#).

[The Alexandria Human Rights Commission conducts a review of each police](#) use of force incident. The Commission also reviews internal investigation data to question and provide accountability of the department.

Last year, the Council approved the FY 2018 to FY 2027 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). A [placeholder was included within the CIP to fund the deployment of body-worn cameras for our police officers](#). Although a few years away, the planning for this endeavor has begun.

Believing as Justice Brandeis did, that "sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants," the City has worked to improve the transparency of data related to policing in Alexandria.

In April of last year [the City released a first of its kind external study and analysis of five years of Alexandria Police traffic citation data](#). Conducted by the [Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University](#), this effort looked at over 91,000 citations issued from 2011 - 2015.

The goal of this review was to identify possible areas of biased policing. While the study authors provide significant detail as to the challenges of bench-marking this type of data, the result of the study should prompt further analysis and conversation.

To ensure that the conversation does not end here, [our new Police Chief Michael Brown has appointed a new Community Advisory Team to advise the Police Department on these issues](#).

With the report and the [release of the actual raw data](#), our Police Department has gone beyond what most departments not under consent decrees have chosen to do.

Yet the efforts continue as we work to provide a level of transparency that increases public confidence in the great work done by the men and women who serve our community every day.

In October, Chief Brown provided a formal response to [community proposals for increased transparency around policing data](#). Chief Brown announced a [series of measures that have already been implemented](#) and will be implemented to align with the community suggestions.

These changes include expanded data collection, expanded public reporting, and continuation of resident oversight for use of force data and complaint review.

At a challenging time for the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve in many jurisdictions around the nation, it's incumbent upon Alexandria to continue to lead the way. I'm confident that these proposals are positive steps in that effort.

## Reacting to Federal Change

A year ago I used this newsletter to write about the need for our City and region to better prepare for dramatic reductions in Federal spending and the impacts those reductions will have on our economy.

As a result of the Federal [Budget Control Act of 2011](#) and the failure of the resulting "Supercommittee," the nation was introduced to the so-called "[Sequestration](#)." The Sequestration imposed across-the-board spending cuts to a variety of Federal spending. It was designed to never happen, but it did.

There is [no state in America where the Federal Government spent more per capita than the Commonwealth of Virginia](#). As such, the imposition of the Sequestration cuts had panicked the entire Commonwealth. [Then-Governor McDonnell formed a Commission to prepare the Commonwealth for the significant economic impact of the cuts](#). The impact of the reductions rippled through the economies of jurisdictions across the Commonwealth, [including Northern Virginia](#). Bond rating agencies [placed many Federally-dependent governments on notice that possible downgrades were imminent](#).

Overall, [the Sequestration cuts reduced Federal spending by a little over \\$1 trillion over nearly a decade](#). Regardless of whether you felt as though the cuts to spending were necessary, the reductions left a mark on the region's economy.

A year ago, the new Administration was preparing to make their own mark on Federal spending. [Significant reduction were proposed](#) that would dwarf the Sequestration cuts of 2013. If cuts of over \$1 trillion per year are enacted, the consequences for our region and our City would be catastrophic.



Again, the relative merits of these spending reductions are a discussion for another time. The impact of them will be dire for our City. We must prepare for the worst and respond accordingly.

[While the Administration has now lifted their hiring freeze, directives for deep agency cuts are being implemented across the Federal government.](#)

[We can also expect reductions to Federal employee benefits.](#)

All of these reductions will disproportionately affect our region and our City. They will impact direct Federal revenues to the City, consumption taxes paid to the City, and eventually our real estate market.

Rather than panic, I suggested to my colleagues that the City should develop an "Emergency Plan" to respond to this threat.

I believe that any such plan should include tactics to prepare the City's fiscal condition, deploy new economic development tools, and provide for land-use initiatives.

Yet the proposed spending changes are not the only threats. To this day, [1,274 low-income Alexandria children are at risk of losing their healthcare coverage](#) due to the failure of the Congress to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). While the City is



exploring possible alternatives, it's unlikely there will be good options available.

With the recent passage and enactment of the ["Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,"](#) the challenges continue. While some of the challenges associated with this legislation were removed during the process, it still contains changes that threaten our region and our City.

The cap on the deductibility of State and Local taxes (so-called "SALT") is aimed at high-income/high-property value areas around our nation; including most of the jurisdictions in our region.

The City did see about \$6 million of real estate tax pre-payments late last month as homeowners rushed to maximize deductions in 2017 before they will be limited in 2018. [Recent IRS guidance](#) largely ended that activity, and the City [is now processing any refunds that are requested.](#)

[The legislation also largely eliminated Advance Refunding Bonds.](#) Essentially, these are municipal versions of a mortgage refinancing. The City has aggressively taken advantage of lower interest rates to replace more expensive debt with lower interest debt. These changes have saved Alexandria's taxpayers millions.

The legislation also more strictly limited the mortgage interest deduction. [That change will also impact expensive real estate markets such as Alexandria's, with most analysis suggestions reductions in values.](#)

Unfortunately, the City is very much on the defense with the changes currently coming from Washington. I'm hopeful that the City can move quickly to address these threats.

## Route 1 Affordable Housing

Later in this newsletter, I write about the challenges in preserving public housing units. Equally as challenging is the preservation of affordable housing units that are ending their designated affordability periods.

In the southwest corner of our City there are 319 affordable housing units that are for various reasons at risk. For 215 of the units, they are under [Project Based Voucher agreements](#) that are on the verge of expiring or have expired. For the remaining 104 units, they are market-rate affordable units that currently accept [Housing Choice Vouchers.](#)

Inaction likely means the loss of these affordable units over time. In an attempt to devise proactive measures to maintain the affordability of the housing, the City applied for and received grant funding from the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to launch the new [Route 1 South Housing Affordability Strategy planning effort.](#)

This new planning effort began last month and you can [watch the meeting](#) as well as [review the presentation](#) from that kick-off session.

There will be [four community "pop-up" sessions](#) this month to discuss the plan area and its opportunities and challenges.

The planning process will culminate in a 5-day planning "charrette" from February 26th - March 2nd.

## 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!

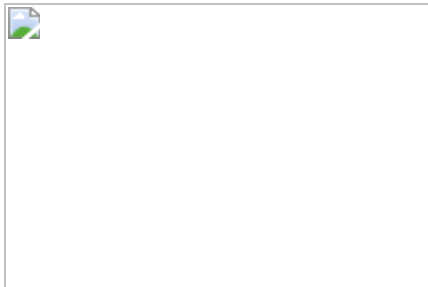
## Upcoming Issues

### Andrew Adkins

The [Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority \(ARHA\)](#) is an independent entity, with a City Council-appointed Board, but separate from the City. ARHA utilizes Federal funding from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing to low-income residents of Alexandria.

ARHA directly manages and controls 1,079 units of affordable housing. In addition, ARHA manages the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, which utilizes Federal funding to provide assistance for another 1,906 low-income families to reside in privately-owned housing units. Together, this is approximately 4% of the City's overall housing stock.

At the federal level, we have seen dramatic changes in how public



housing is managed and developed. In the past, the Federal Government had been a proactive participant in bringing about the redevelopment of public housing. This was demonstrated in Alexandria when the City used [HOPE VI funding](#) to redevelop 100 units of

Public Housing into [Chatham Square](#). This mixed-income development incorporated both market-rate and public housing.

Going into 2017, the Federal Government was forcing changes in public housing with its inaction. Today, HUD only funds 73% of every dollar required to operate Alexandria Public Housing units. The balance of revenue that ARHA collects as rent is not sufficient for sustainable management of their properties, and this is likely to get worse. The impact of [current Federal budget proposals on housing programs](#) could be cataclysmic.

With aging properties sitting on valuable land, ARHA must look at the highest and best use of its land to preserve housing for low-income residents in our City.

Over 30 years ago, the City Council adopted [Resolution 830](#), which committed the City to the replacement of any public housing unit that was displaced by redevelopment. In past redevelopment efforts, replacement units have been obtained and created throughout our City.

In 2008, the City Council adopted the [Braddock East Master Plan](#), which called for redevelopment of several aging public housing properties. By allowing additional density near existing transit, it was designed to encourage private partnership in the redevelopment of this housing.

Aligned with this Plan, James Bland Homes [have become Old Town Commons](#). This redevelopment activity has proven successful in providing a sustainable model for mixed-income housing in our City.

In the fall of 2014, with these experiences and lessons behind us,



[ARHA issued an RFP \(Request for Proposals\) to solicit proposals from private developers for the potential redevelopment of seven additional properties: Cameron Valley \(built in 1985\), Andrew Adkins \(built in 1969\), Samuel Madden \(built in 1945\), Ramsey Homes \(built in 1942\), Hopkins Tancil \(built in 1945\), Ladrey \(built in 1968\), and the ARHA Headquarters building on North Fairfax Street.](#)

As they continued through the process, ARHA narrowed the number of properties down to five: Andrew Adkins, Samuel Madden, Hopkins Tancil, the ARHA Headquarters building, and Cameron Valley.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group, on which Councilman Chapman and I serve, along with the ARHA Chair, the ARHA Vice Chair, and the Planning Commission Chair, is tasked with coordinating the work between the City and ARHA.

ARHA has chosen development partners for each of the five remaining properties:

Andrew Adkins: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Samuel Madden: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Hopkins Tancil: EYA/Penrose/JBG

ARHA Headquarters: EYA/Penrose/JBG

Cameron Valley: Bozzuto/Wesley Housing

Each of these redevelopment efforts will rely on [Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#) (LIHTC) and will need to compete successfully for those funding sources. [The LIHTC program has also been impacted by potential changes at the Federal level.](#)

Given resource constraints at the staff level, as well as the need for Federal tax credits to make redevelopment feasible, these projects have now been sequenced.

Redevelopment of Andrew Adkins, a property located on West Street facing Braddock Road Metro, is proceeding first.

A little over a year ago, the [Andrew Adkins process began](#) with a [kick-off meeting](#) for the community to meet with the redevelopment team. Since that time development partners have been submitting concepts to the City's Planning and Zoning staff for review and comments.

In early June of last year, [the revised concept plan was presented to the City Council](#) in a worksession for comments and discussion. Since that time, there has been substantial discussions between the City, ARHA and ARHA's private development partner. These discussions have focused on concerns regarding:

- The number of public and committed affordable housing units to return to the site
- The integration of committed affordable housing and market development in the new complex
- The application of the City's Affordable Housing Density Bonus program

These concerns have been voiced from within City government as well as [from outside advocacy efforts](#). ARHA [has worked to be responsive to these concerns](#).

Unfortunately, we were unable to get the City, ARHA and ARHA's private development partner all on the same page to proceed with the original schedule for approval of the project last year. We are now

aiming for next year's tax credit cycle, which is also coming up quickly.

At the direction of the Work Group, the City staff, ARHA staff and private redevelopment partner recently produced [a new financial model showing the financial feasibility of different redevelopment scenarios for Andrew Adkins](#). This will help guide the process as we work to settle on an approach for moving forward.

Associated with this process is discussion of the modernization of [Resolution 830](#) itself. The resolution was adopted 36 years ago, and itself was an update to a resolution adopted in 1972. [In 2009 the Alexandria Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group, co-chaired by then-Councilmen Rob Krupicka and Ludwig Gaines provided a series of recommendations, including a suggested update of Resolution 830.](#)

In the past 36 years, much has changed about the way the City approaches affordable housing. In 2016, the City Council approved a project done in partnership with [Carpenter's Shelter](#) and the [Alexandria Housing Development Corporation \(AHDC\)](#), [to create 98 new affordable rental units](#). AHDC is the City's affordable housing non-profit. AHDC was [originally created by the City in 2003](#).

Much of the new affordable housing creation the City does today is in partnership with non-profits. One of the goals of a modernization of Resolution 830 will be to reflect that reality and ensure that our preservation commitments do not just apply to public housing units, but across the spectrum of affordable housing.

[The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group along with a stakeholders group will be tackling this issue in consultation with the many City boards and commissions that advise the City on housing issues.](#) The first meeting of this effort will be on the 10th of this month.

We have an historic opportunity to partner with the private sector and provide new housing for a variety of income levels near existing transit in our City. This effort will also provide financial stability for ARHA in the face of continued change at the Federal level.

### **230 KV Transmission**

About 3 years ago, [I wrote about Dominion Virginia Power's proposal to construct a new 230 KV transmission line through the northeast corner of our City.](#)

In June of 2014, the [City formed a community group to begin reviewing Dominion Virginia Power's proposal](#) and offering feedback to the Council and directly to Dominion Virginia Power on their proposed routes.

The most important occurrence at the first meeting was the release of Dominion Virginia Power's [proposed routes](#). Each of these routes have negative impacts for our community.

The group concluded its work at the end of 2014 [with a series of recommendations to the City Council, State Corporation Commission and Dominion Virginia Power.](#)

As this process concluded, Dominion believed that the urgency behind the proposed transmission line had subsided. The process was then delayed for some time to allow them to analyze their studies.

Ultimately, the decision about the necessity of this transmission line and its routing will be made by the State Corporation Commission. However, the City and its residents will have some opportunity to help shape that decision.

The City continues to have significant concerns about this proposal and the potential impacts on Alexandria.

The City reconvened the community group and a series of meetings were again held.

[The group returned to the City Council in May of 2016 with a recommendation of the "least objectionable" routes](#) as well as a request for opposition to any above ground route.

The Council adopted a resolution opposing any above ground routing, and identifying the "least objectionable" routes as ones that either:

- Used the existing CSX railroad right of way
- Used waterways, both Four Mile Run and the Potomac River
- Used the George Washington Parkway

Dominion then formally notified the City that they will finally file with the State Corporation Commission. That filing was to include two routes, the route utilizing the CSX railroad right of way, and an alternate scenario where Dominion "reconductors" an existing route primarily outside of the City.

Yet that did not happen.

[In November, Dominion returned to the City with another update.](#) Given the extensive costs of utilizing the CSX railroad right of way, Dominion would now like the City to consider whether we could support their utilization of a route along or near Potomac Avenue. In exchange for this change, Dominion indicated a willingness to "significantly" increase the compensation they will provide to the City.

Use of Potomac Avenue would potentially have a several adverse impacts to the City that would need to be considered carefully.

To consider the potential trade-offs associated with such a change we are again reconvening the community group.

[They will be meeting on Thursday the 11th at 7 PM at in Room 1101 at City Hall.](#)

## **Clean Water**

Late in February of last year, the General Assembly adjourned "sine die," thus concluding their session. [Prior to adjourning, after considering a variety of different bills, they unfortunately adopted a piece of legislation that requires the City to do something that our engineers indicate is not possible.](#)

In 95% of our City, stormwater (run-off) is collected and returned to rivers and streams with very little treatment to remove pollutants accumulated from roads, parking lots, and other surfaces upon which it falls. Separately, sanitary sewage is sent to the [Alexandria Renew Enterprises wastewater treatment facility](#) where it is treated and later returned to waterways as clean water.

However, in a 540-acre section of Old Town, a Combined Sewer System still collects both sanitary sewage and stormwater together and sends it to the wastewater treatment facility for its final disposition.

[During most rain events, due to capacity and design issues, this system experiences a Combined Sewer Overflow condition. This is where a mixture of stormwater and sewage flows untreated into waterways via stormwater outflows.](#)

In addition to the impact that this has on the cleanliness of our rivers and streams, this type of overflow is strictly regulated by law primarily the Clean Water Act.

The City operates this Combined Sewer System [under a permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality \(VDEQ\)](#). In 2013, the City was issued a new five-year permit for the operation of the system.

The City has always been in compliance with all permits for the operation of the system, releasing amounts of sewage within the limits permitted and has conducted targeted sewer separation activities along with redevelopment and other planned activities.

Essentially, this permit requires the City to work with the community to adopt a new Long Term Control Plan. The plan reduces the presence of dangerous bacteria in the flow that is returned to the water. The new plan was submitted to the state last year. The Plan, to be implemented over the next two to three decades, is a significant undertaking. It will be disruptive to some areas of our City and it will require \$125 - \$188 million, primarily funded by ratepayers as an addition to bills from Alexandria Renew Enterprises.



[Politico recently ran a very comprehensive look at St. Louis' efforts to address their combined sewer issues.](#)

[Marketplace had a review of the Baltimore Combined Sewer System.](#)

[National Geographic covered the Combined Sewer challenges in Washington, DC.](#)

These cities, and many others face similar challenges to the task we face in Alexandria. While there are some differences, we all share the immense complexity and costs. [Washington's "Clean Rivers" Project is expected to take 20 years and cost \\$2.6 billion](#) to cover 53 outfalls.

Over [two and a half years ago, the Council created a new stakeholder committee](#) to monitor the creation of and offer feedback on the Long Term Control Plan.

The [committee made its recommendations](#) which came before the Council in May of 2016.

The Combined Sewer System has four outfalls:

- CSO-001 which discharges into Oronoco Bay
- CSO-002 which discharges into Hunting Creek
- CSO-003 and CSO-004 which both discharge into Hoofs Run

The permit requires that the City address CSO-002, CSO-003, and CSO-004.

The plan proposes to use a variety of solutions between now and 2035 to reduce pollution from CSO-002 by 80%, from CSO-003 by 99%, and from CSO-004 by 99%. This would provide for a total pollution reduction of 86%.

This reduction is achieved by:

- Construction of a 10-foot, 1.6 million gallon tunnel to address CSO-003 and CSO-004
- Construction of a three million gallon storage tank to address CSO-002
- New "green" infrastructure (improvements to the permeability of surfaces)
- Targeted sewer separation (typically funded by developers in the context of redevelopment)

As a result of the new legislation, the City must work to engineer and implement a solution to CSO-001 on a more accelerated timeline than we believe feasible.

The challenge is significant. We certainly did not plan to rectify CSO-001 on the timetable that the Commonwealth has provided. Even with the unreasonable timetable, Alexandria remains ahead of many jurisdictions around the nation on this issue. Stormwater planning and work coordinated with redevelopment activity has left us better situated than most. This is not a new issue for Alexandria.

[Under the assumption that some form of this legislation would be enacted, the City Manager's proposed budget included \\$370 million of new capital funding to address Combined Sewer remediation.](#)

To fund these obligations, the City Council adopted a 30% increase in the Sanitary Sewer Maintenance fee that is paid on Alexandria Renew Enterprises bills across the City. The estimates are that ANNUAL 30% increases will be required going forward.

While the Governor proposed amendments to the legislation, the General Assembly rejected the amendments. [Despite a request by the City to veto the un-amended legislation, the Governor signed the legislation into law.](#)

[In June, prior to our summer recess, the Council approved a funding agreement with Alexandria Renew Enterprises and Fairfax County.](#) This agreement combines planned work at the Alexandria Renew facility to reduce wet weather overflows into Hooff's Run with the remediation required to address CSO-003 and CSO-004. These projects are now under the same umbrella and have been labeled the "West Side Wet Weather Facilities."

These projects will cost a little over \$100 million in 2017 dollars. With Fairfax County now sharing roughly a quarter of the cost, the City's commitment is expected to be \$76.5 million.

We did have good news in the past month. Governor Terry McAuliffe presented his proposed biennial budget for the Commonwealth. [Included in his proposed budget is \\$20 million in bond proceeds to be used to support the City's combined sewer remediation efforts.](#)

While this money will only materialize if it survives the upcoming legislative process, it is a good start in raising the necessary resources.

To determine the new direction for remediation of CSO-001, the City reconvened the community stakeholder committee. [In November they met and received new engineering alternatives to address the challenge.](#) Our City staff also made [a presentation early last month to the State Water Commission.](#)

The committee will work to narrow down the alternatives and make a recommendation in the early part of the new year.

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