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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

January 1, 2020

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Helping Small Businesses](#)

[Combined Sewer Remediation](#)

[Potomac Yard Metro Under Construction](#)

[Future of Scooters](#)

[Glass Recycling](#)

[Rethinking the Bus](#)

[Bullying Prevention](#)

[New Seminary Road](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: King Street Pedestrian Zone, Upcoming General Assembly Session & 395 Express Lanes](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Call.Click.Connect](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

Happy New Year! I hope you and your family had a wonderful holiday season.

[As we begin 2020, Alexandria is saying goodbye to Coach Herman Boone, who passed away last month.](#)

Coach Boone is a legendary Titan, having coached the T. C. Williams High School football team to the state championship after integration.



While Coach Boone was immortalized by Hollywood, he was larger than life here in Alexandria. He will be remembered as a coach and educator, with legions of fans in our community.

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

Council Initiatives

Helping New Small Businesses

Any new small business owner is taking an enormous risk. They are betting their resources on the future success of an idea. It's a risk that our system relies on. It results in businesses that provide products and services that enrich our lives. As taxpayers, it supports tax revenue that eases the burden on residential taxpayers. For individuals, it provides careers.

[In government, we have an obligation to provide a regulatory process that is efficient, predictable, and expedient. Sometimes our existing processes fall short of that mark.](#) Throughout my tenure on Council, I have worked to improve processes to make Alexandria to best place for small business in our region.

[Real-Time Traffic Data](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

[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

Christmas Tree Recycling

[Starting tomorrow 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.

Teen Law Enforcement Academy

Do you know of a teen aged 14 to 18 who is interested in a career in law enforcement?

The Alexandria Police Department is introducing the "Teen Law Enforcement Academy."

[The program starts later this month and further details are available online.](#)

Stormwater Fee Credit Application

Are you an Alexandria property owner who is implementing [stormwater](#)

[The Council will soon be considering a comprehensive package of reforms that will streamline the ability of new businesses to open up and begin their sales.](#)

The new package of reforms proposed would significantly accelerate the process of approval for:

- Restaurants
- Outdoor dining areas
- Daycare centers
- Outdoor food and crafts markets
- Health and athletic clubs
- Food and beverage production
- Amusement enterprises
- Convenience stores
- Social Service uses
- Home occupations

[In June of 2016, by a vote of 6-1, the City Council took a significant step in improving the process that businesses must go through to get started in Alexandria.](#)

The changes adopted three and a half years ago impacted many areas. They created additional areas eligible for administrative special use permits, and reduced the number of applications that require any special use permit.

Many new businesses seeking to operate in Alexandria require a Special Use Permit by virtue of the zoning of the property they have chosen. Our zoning code allows certain uses in many zones but only under special conditions.

A normal Special Use Permit first undergoes a thorough review by our City Staff. The City Staff then makes a recommendation to the City's Planning Commission. The Planning Commission ultimately makes a recommendation to the City Council.



At any step in that process, the application can become bogged down, can be substantially modified, or rejected. It is an unpredictable process that introduces both cost and uncertainty to a nascent small business who can rarely avoid either.

Two years ago, Council took another significant step in improving the processes for these small businesses. Over 40% of the Special Use Permits heard by Planning Commission and City Council had been when a business requires a parking reduction, a request to reduce off-street parking requirements.

Up until two years ago, the City's commercial parking standards were based on legislation adopted in 1963. These standards apply when a new business seeks to operate in an existing space and when a landowner seeks to build new commercial space. For new development they provide for how many off-street spaces must be created and for a new business in an existing space, they provide for how many off-street spaces must be found.

The City Council and Planning Commission have routinely adopted deviations from these standards to eliminate the need of newly opening small businesses to provide off-street parking that in most of our business corridors simply does not exist. Yet the process of making that request is time-consuming and uncertain.

[best practices](#) on your property?

Between now and February 15th, you can apply for credits against your fee. [Full information including the online submission form is available.](#)

MLK Day Event

The City has traditionally held a Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration each year in January. Each year the event is held at a different faith institution in the City.

[This year, our event will be held on Wednesday January 15th, 2020 at 7:30 PM. The commemoration will be hosted by Beth El Hebrew Congregation at 3830 Seminary Road.](#)

Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Spencer Crew, who is the interim director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

I hope to see you there.

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!

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

[Upon the recommendation of a community task force, the City Council voted 6-1 to approve new parking standards for commercial properties.](#) These new standards streamline the process for new businesses to open and facilitate shared parking arrangements. These new standards are also more realistic and reflect the amount of parking actually needed for businesses.

Over the years, City government has worked to make changes to our processes to support small business growth.

[In 2003, the City Council approved the Arlandria Plan](#) , which pioneered the use of Administrative Special Use Permits. Under the Administrative Special Use Permits, the staff can apply defined criteria and provide a new business with permission to operate (if it operates under a pre-approved set of restrictions), avoiding the necessity for hearing before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Over a decade ago, the City [created the Small Business Task Force, which recommended expansion of the Administrative Special Use Permit process.](#)

[In 2008, the City Council approved a package of reforms](#) to further ease the impacts on new small businesses. In 2010, the Council [approved a separate package of additional reforms.](#)

[In 2009 the City opened the Multi-Agency Permit Center to streamline permitting for new businesses and residents alike.](#)

Every day of delay is money for a new business. These new changes will help our small businesses be successful in Alexandria. I look forward to continuing our efforts to ensure that small business can thrive in our community.

Combined Sewer Work Advances

Last year, when the Virginia House of Delegates and the State Senate completed action on the Governor's proposed amendments to the Commonwealth's biennial budget, [remaining in the budget was \\$25 million to support work on the Alexandria combined sewer system.](#)

When the Governor rolled out his proposed budget for the next biennium, [we were very pleased that he has proposed an additional \\$65 million of state support for this effort.](#)

With remediation expected to require nearly a half billion dollars, the City has requested funding from state coffers to assist in this challenge. Other jurisdictions in Virginia with similar systems have benefited from such funding, and this proposed additional investment is a significant accomplishment.



[Three years ago, the General Assembly enacted legislation that required the City to address remediation of our Combined Sewer System by July 1, 2025. This is a timeline far more aggressive than what the](#)

[Commonwealth's own environmental regulator had agreed was reasonable.](#)

[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 June of 2018, [City Council approved transferring the ownership of the four Combined Sewer outfalls to Alexandria Renew Enterprises](#) to allow the City to leverage their capacity and capabilities to address these issues.

At the end of that same month, [the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality approved a plan jointly prepared by the City and Alexandria Renew to meet the more stringent timeline](#) imposed by the General Assembly.

The City is now well on our way to meeting this new timeline.

[During the summer of last year, Alexandria Renew conducted a Request for Qualifications \(RFQ\) process to pre-select the vendor teams that will be qualified to bid on this extensive work. Alexandria Renew will issue a Request For Proposal \(RFP\) in February, with a contract award expected by the end of 2020.](#)

In October, three teams were short-listed to bid on the RFP. These three teams are led by:

- Clark/Atkinson/Michels
- Kiewit/McNally
- Traylor Shea

As the procurement process continues, the engineering work has allowed cost estimates to be refined. The current estimate for all of the work being performed is now \$464.5 million, with estimates to potentially rise as high as \$597.5 million.

The construction work will occur primarily at 4 sites, the three outfall locations and the location of the Alexandria Renew treatment facility. [Haul routes have now been developed to remove the soils that will be excavated during this work](#).

The Alexandria Renew Board of Directors has also determined their preferred method of financing these investments for the next two years. This year, average residential bills will increase by 13% and next year they will increase again by 11%. At that point, the Board will have a better picture of what the overall costs will be, and will be able to set a long-term financing plan.

The challenge is significant. We certainly did not plan to rectify this outfall 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.

We have significant work ahead of our community to make these important investments in cleaner waterways.

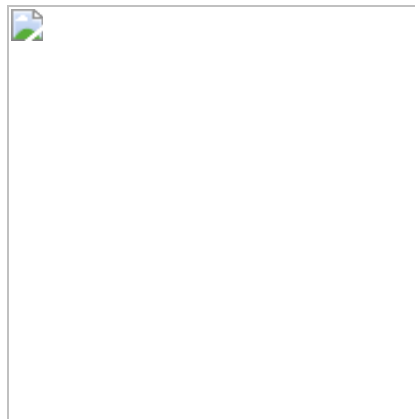
Potomac Yard Metro Construction Underway

[For a quarter of a century, the City has been working to bring an inline Metro Rail station to Potomac Yard. Last month, we broke ground and formally began construction of that station.](#)

[You can watch my remarks at the groundbreaking, as well as other remarks from those who participated, including the Governor, in the video the City has posted from the event.](#)

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.](#)

In November, 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.](#)

Three months ago, [Council authorized the issuance of General Obligation bonds to support the construction activity related to the new station.](#) Once our AAA/Aaa ratings were affirmed the City returned to the bond markets. [Last month, the City successfully sold the bonds at a record low rate of 2.67%.](#)

Since November of 2018, [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 of 2018.](#)

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.

[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.](#)

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.

The Future of Scooters

We have now completed the first year of the City's pilot "dockless mobility" program. According to the input I have received, the scooters have either destroyed our City as we know it, or are a welcome transportation alternative. To attempt to provide a factual basis to the discussion, [our staff prepared a report evaluating the pilot.](#)

The data provides numerous findings, but the most compelling is the usage of the devices, with 230,000 trips being taken in the City during the first 9 months of the pilot, and 15,000 users registered.

Last month, the City Council unanimously voted to continue the pilot for another year with a new set of rules, including:

- A prohibition of riding the scooters on public sidewalks
- Significant increase in the fees paid by the companies
- New obligations to message safety and usage rules
- Requiring more equity in the deployment of scooters within the City
- New fees for impounded or inappropriately parked devices
- More requirements for the exchange of data

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 proceed laws that govern their use.

This was undoubtedly true when dockless scooters began showing up in Alexandria two years ago. After some discussion with our regional neighbors and community engagement, the Council approved the original pilot in 2018.

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 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.

The legal landscape is also changing rapidly. The General Assembly has adopted new legislation, with some laws already enacted and others going into effect at the end of last year.

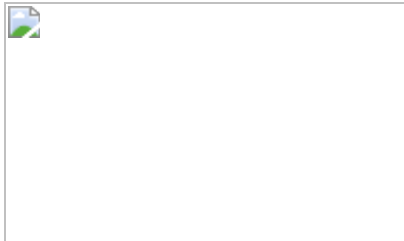
The City will continue to work to balance the benefit of these devices with the challenges they have created.

Glass Recycling

[Recycling markets are now in crisis](#) . The glass we collect in our single stream recycling cannot effectively be recycled. Challenges also exist for some plastics and other material. We will need to determine new ways to effectively address these materials.

[Last Spring, the City announced the implementation of one of the short-term tasks in the WasteSmart Strategic Plan. In partnership with Fairfax County and Arlington County, the City unveiled four new glass recycling drop-off locations. Each of the four locations is open 24 hours per day.](#) We just recently added a fifth in Arlandria in partnership with Mom's Organic Market.

[In two weeks we will join our neighbors and remove glass from the single-stream curbside recycling collection.](#)



Policy changes in China have roiled recycling markets. These changes have prompted local jurisdictions around the country to even eliminate recycling altogether.

A year ago, the City Council unanimously adopted the

[WasteSmart Strategic Plan](#). This plan sought to chart a new course for trash and recycling services.

Waste removal is one of the most visible and traditional of local government services. A service that at one point simply involved a trash truck on a route picking up a resident's waste has now evolved into a complex portfolio of services.

While the City provides curbside trash and recycling collection for a tad over 20,000 households, we also provide:

- Yard Waste Collection
- Leaf/brush collection
- Metal and appliances collection
- Spring Clean-Up
- Bulk Trash Pick-Up
- Electronic waste collection
- Recycling Drop-Off Centers
- Public Space Trash and Recycling
- Farmers Market Composting

Each of these services has evolved to address defined needs in our City, but each has associated policy choices. Several of these significant policy questions are now before us.

It is no accident that one of the chapters of the City's recently [adopted Environmental Action Plan Phase 1 update](#) is Solid Waste. Alexandria's handling of its solid waste is a core area of environmental stewardship.

Please let me know your thoughts on these important issues!

Rethinking the Bus

On an average weekday, about 14,500 people board Metrorail at one of our four stations (Braddock Road, King Street, Eisenhower Avenue and Van Dorn Street). It is certainly an important part of transportation in our City.

Yet our four Metrorail stations (soon to be five) serve only a small portion of our 15.5 square miles. On an average weekday, almost 24,000 people board a bus, either [DASH](#) or Metrobus.

The tool our City has used for decades to serve the transit needs of most of our neighborhoods has been the bus.

[The Alexandria Transit Vision Plan](#) is the City's effort to rethink our buses. Last month, [DASH approved the most significant "re-imagination" of its route structure in its history.](#)

The route structure approved has a short-term 2020 vision and a longer-term 2030 vision. This restructuring is designed to:

- Increase the number of Alexandrians near frequent transit (a bus or train arriving every 15 minutes or better) from 27% to 79%.
- Increase the number of jobs in Alexandria near frequent transit from 40% to 75%.
- Increase the number of jobs accessible by transit (within 45 minutes) to Alexandrians by 18%.
- Increase the number of residents in poverty near frequent transit from 29% to 89%.
- Increase the number of seniors near frequent transit from 23% to 74%.

Earlier last year, DASH celebrated 35 years of serving Alexandria.



What started with 17 buses and served less than a million passengers, today serves over 4 million passengers with 85 buses. While new routes have been added, and existing routes tweaked at times, the basic construct of DASH's route network has largely been unchanged.

Communities around our nation have done the difficult work of rethinking

their bus route networks to improve frequency of service, reduce route duplication, and ultimately serve more riders. [Houston's overnight route network transformation helped spur growth in ridership at a time when transit ridership was dropping elsewhere.](#)

Our effort is similar, designed to re-imagine our bus routes and ultimately increase ridership and route efficiency.

To provide a factual basis for this effort, [a "Transit Choices Report"](#)

[was developed](#). This report is a compendium of data on our existing transit network, designed to support this significant undertaking.

Throughout the two-year process, DASH incorporated public input to shape the final recommendations. Changes were made to accommodate concerns voiced about changes proposed to the existing AT-3, AT-4 and AT-2 routes.

While implementation is not planned to begin for another 18 months, the planning effort informed service enhancements that were recently made to the AT-1 and the AT-9.

This is an important step forward as we create a transit system that serves more of our community with more efficient service.

Bullying Prevention

Nationally, 71% of youth identify bullying as a problem in their school. Social media and technology can serve as an amplifier of bullying activities.

Former Mayor Bill Euille initiated the [Mayor's Campaign to End Bullying](#) in 2014. The partnership brings together those that serve youth in our community in a public/private effort to improve awareness and prevention of bullying.

In October, Council recognized Bullying Prevention Month, with a proclamation at our first legislative meeting of the month. [You can watch Councilwoman Amy Jackson presenting the proclamation on behalf of the Council.](#)

In November, the Campaign [hosted two community workshops to educate youth on dealing with conflict and challenges that may arise in life.](#)

[Please contact Alexandria Safe Place at 703-746-5400 for 24-hour help and assistance for any young person.](#)

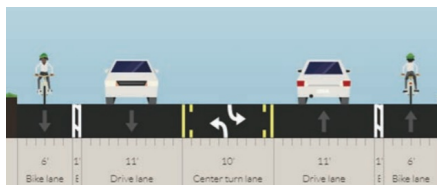
A New Seminary Road

The art of governing is largely consumed with the act of allocating scarce resources. Never is that more evident than when we are adopting a budget. The same scarcity and budgeting is present when we are allocating the asphalt on our roads.

Over time, we have changed the way we allocate our right-of-way; as we made way for cars, eventually made way for sidewalks, and grew right-of-way to accommodate highways.

In September of last year, the Council voted 4-3 to change the way we allocate the scarce right-of-way on the portion of Seminary Road from Quaker Lane to North Howard. With the scheduled repaving of Seminary, we had the opportunity to affirm or modify the status quo.

[The Council adopted Alternative 3](#), which removed an eastbound and



westbound lane, added a center turn lane, new pedestrian islands, crosswalks and bike lanes. On the westbound side of Seminary a shared bike/pedestrian area was installed as an

interim treatment until a permanent sidewalk can be installed.

The transition to new traffic patterns can be difficult, and with the heightened attention of proponents and detractors, this one was as

difficult as they get. During the peak travel times, we saw increased congestion on Seminary and some adjacent streets.

As the patterns have adjusted, we are now seeing an easing of this congestion with travel time reductions each week since implementation.

During the evening rush, the peak travel period has been 5:15 PM to 5:30 PM. Prior to the change, the average travel time from the intersection of Quaker Lane and Seminary Road to Jordan Street and Seminary Road was 3.5 minutes. In November, after the changes were implemented, we saw a 40% increase in this travel time, with an average of 4.9 minutes. In December (excluding holidays and days when school is not in session), the average travel time was down to 3.9 minutes, an increase of 24 seconds from before the changes.

During the morning rush, the peak travel period has been 8:15 AM to 8:30 AM. Prior to the change, the average travel time from the intersection of Quaker Lane and Seminary Road to Jordan Street and Seminary Road was 3.6 minutes. In November, after the changes were implemented, we saw a 98% increase in this travel time, with an average of 7.1 minutes. In December (excluding holidays and days when school is not in session), the average travel time was down to 4.7 minutes, an increase of a bit over a minute from before the changes.

[Real-time traffic monitoring data is available online for the public to review and compare to your own experiences.](#)

I am appreciative of the patience of our residents as these adjustments occur.

The City has committed to ensuring that this project is successful and [meets the goals](#) set out in advance of the changes:

- The City will continue to collect travel time data to ensure that the changes do not result in unreasonable increases in congestion.
- The City identified 28 intersections and road segments where the City collected "before" data and will later collect "after" data to ensure that there were not adverse impacts on other streets in the City.
- The City has not seen any adverse impacts to public safety agencies utilizing the corridor and we will continue to monitor that activity.

[In my October newsletter, I wrote more extensively about the process and my approach to this issue.](#) Decisions in this line of work will sometimes leave a large group of residents in our community unhappy. This one certainly did.

While we will be unable to make everyone happy, I'm hopeful we can expeditiously make the correct decisions for our City's future and ensure that all of our residents feel as though their opinion is heard and respected.

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!

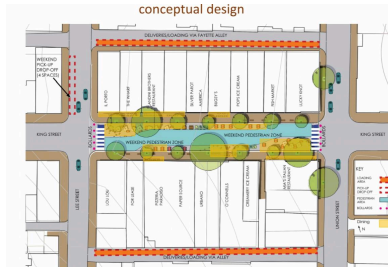


Upcoming Issues

King Street Pedestrian Zone

Thirteen years ago, [the City spent a summer experimenting with a closure of King Street to vehicles on weekends](#). By giving the road space over to pedestrians, the City attempted to replicate numerous cities around the world who have created new vitality from asphalt.

Now, over a decade later, a newly expanded Waterfront Park, with



public art, active programming and adjacent businesses has created expanded visitation.

[Councilman John Chapman and I have proposed](#) that the City prepare a new recommendation for a pedestrian zone in the unit, 100-block and potentially 200-block of King Street in

Old Town.

In response to this proposal, our staff recently brought an initial recommendation to the Alexandria Waterfront Commission and the Alexandria Transportation Commission for feedback and review. [You can view the concepts and proposals online](#).

We view this moment as the perfect time to see these blocks, connecting Market Square with our Waterfront, as not just roads to carry cars, but vital space to support commerce, visitation and the history of our community.

I am optimistic that such a proposal would expand outdoor dining in the corridor, provide active programming in the area, and become a signature area for our City.

Our staff will be bringing this proposal back to the Transportation Commission and to the Traffic & Parking Board, with opportunities for public comment at both bodies. It will then come to Council for approval with implementation proposed for next Spring.

2020 General Assembly Session

A week from today 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.

Pre-filed legislation for the upcoming session has begun to be published for public review. [The public can review the proposed legislation that will be considered online](#).

Given the results of the elections in November, 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.

Early last month, [the City Council unanimously adopted the City's 2020 Legislative Package.](#)

[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.

In advance of the session, the Governor addresses a joint session of the Finance Committees of each body to present his proposed budget for the session. [Two weeks ago, the Governor presented his proposed 2020 - 2022 budget.](#)

While budgets for the Commonwealth are large and comprehensive documents with pluses and minuses for the City, it is safe to say that the Governor's proposed budget is one of the most advantageous to the City, its priorities and its taxpayers, than we have seen in some time.

Included in the Governor's proposed budget are new investments in:

- At-Risk Add-On, a supplement for K-12 school funding that benefits school system who have large populations in poverty, as Alexandria does.
- Combined Sewer remediation work
- Affordable Housing
- Regional transportation funds (restoring the funds removed two years ago)
- Early Childhood Education
- Several African-American history resources in the City.

This represents an amazing start to the upcoming session. I am 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.

[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.

Last month, VDOT held a public meeting to present their findings and solicit input from residents on this proposed change. [You can review the presentation and information online.](#)

Following this process, the City Council will decide whether to change its previous position. [Let me know your thoughts on this proposed change.](#)

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