

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

July 1, 2017

## In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Innovating Emergency  
Medicine](#)

[Water Rates](#)

[Policing In Alexandria](#)

[Opioid Abuse](#)

[72 Hour Rule Reform](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues:  
Municipal Facilities,  
BID & Airport Noise](#)

## 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](#)

[Alexandria Health Department  
Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat  
Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation  
Request](#)

Last month, our community unwittingly had the eyes of our nation on it.

Violence was brought to a place where we are accustomed to having the joy of sport and competition.

In the aftermath of the horrific shooting, the nation saw something in our community. They saw our community refuse to let hate divide us. They saw our community come together. They saw us build up rather than tear down.

This community response was led and inspired by the response of our first responders. Working with the personnel from the United States Capitol Police, the Alexandria Police Department, the Alexandria Fire Department, the Alexandria Sheriff's Department and the Alexandria Department of Emergency Communication saved lives and protected our community that day.

Federal and state law enforcement joined the effort, along with a myriad of public agencies, private non-profits, businesses and residents.

While the incident showed the worst in our humanity, the response showed the best in our people.

Please keep the survivors of the events of June 14th in your thoughts and prayers. They will need the help of our community and their community to fully recover.

**[If you can, please make a contribution to the charities benefiting from this year's Congressional Baseball](#)**



[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

## Events/Updates

### Alexandria Birthday Party Next Saturday

[The summer tradition continues as we celebrate in style Alexandria's 268th Birthday at Oronoco Bay Park on the Waterfront.](#)

The festivities kick off at 6:30 PM with 9:30 PM fireworks accompanied by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, and the men and women of the United States Marine Corps from Quantico.

I will see you there and I look forward to serving you some cupcakes to help celebrate the City's birthday!

### Tons of Trucks

[Back by popular demand! On Saturday July 15th, the City will hold our "Tons of Trucks" event at Chinquapin Park \(3210 King Street\) from 10 AM until noon.](#)

This family event brings 30 different vehicles from 7 City departments, including a fire engine, police cars, front end loaders, dump trucks, buses and more!

Food truck vendors will be on hand. The event is \$5 each or \$15 for the entire family.

### Del Ray Music Festival!

[On Saturday July 22nd, the Del Ray Music Festival returns!](#)

From 3 PM until 8 PM, music will take over the neighborhood. Admission is free. Performances will be on stages at Pat Miller

## Game.

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

## Council Initiatives

### Innovation in Emergency Medicine

The City's residents have long enjoyed highly trained and qualified personnel within the Alexandria Fire Department protecting the health and safety of residents and property.

In the fall of 2014, the City's then new Fire Chief [came to the Council with an entirely new model](#) for cross-trained firefighter/medics.

At that point, the department was one of the few in the area to use single-role paramedics staffing ambulances. Since the beginning of the conversion process, we have worked to hire new dual-mode firefighter/medics, while cross-training existing personnel.

[The goal of this conversion was to improve service to the residents of the City by getting paramedics on the scene of incidents more quickly and improving the efficiency and versatility of the department's workforce.](#)

[In December of 2015, the 24/7, four-member Basic Life Support \(BLS\) engine company became operational at Fire Station 210 on Eisenhower Avenue .](#)

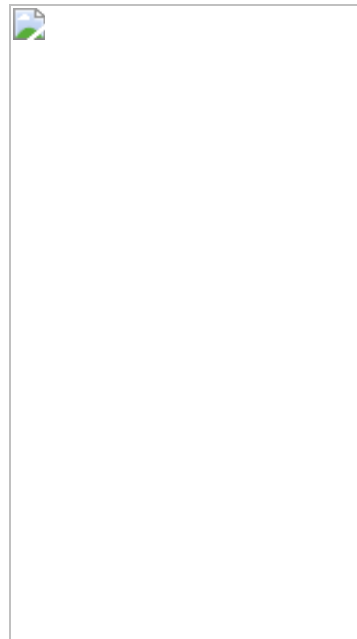
Today we have 33 remaining single-role providers (There were 65 when the City began the conversion.). We have another 29 new dual-mode providers in various stages of training.

This is not the only area where the Fire Department is working to provide better services at greater efficiency. The department responds to 22,000 calls a year. Over 70% of those calls are for medical issues, not for fires. Many of those medical calls are not true emergencies. Given that emergency medical services are funded by ambulance fees, and those fees are only charged if a patient is transported, these calls can strain limited resources.

[To address this strain and improve the medical outcomes for our residents, the Fire Department has explored Mobile Integrated Healthcare/Community Paramedicine.](#) While this can mean many things, the City's initial foray is implementing new ways to reduce recurring calls due to falls by residents in their home.

The data shows that a small number of residents in the City received multiple visits from the Fire Department for help after a fall in the home. Beginning today, a full-time community paramedic will be visiting residents in their homes to assess and help eliminate fall risks. Ideally this effort will reduce calls for service and dangerous injuries.

This is only the City's initial effort in this area of Mobile Integrated Healthcare. The department is continuing to explore other ways to improve outcomes and efficiency in our emergency medical services.



Square (the location of the farmers market).

I'll see you there!

### Half Day Citizens Police Academy

The Alexandria Police Department introduces the new "Half Day Summer Citizens Police Academy."

Building on the success of the 10 week Citizens Police Academy, this program provides an abbreviated half-day session to learn about the inner workings of the Alexandria Police Department.

[Sign up online!](#)

### Cinema Del Ray Returns!

Thanks to the generosity of Realtor Jen Walker, Cinema Del Ray returns on Saturday July 15th.

The monthly free outdoor movie on the field next to Mount Vernon Recreation Center has become a summer tradition.

[This month's movie is "Zootopia" and it starts when it's dark enough!](#)

I am excited to see the innovation and I'm hopeful that it continues to result in a safer and healthier Alexandria.

### Water Rates

Alexandria remains one in a relatively small list of Virginia jurisdictions who have a private water utility. [Virginia American Water Company](#) (VAWC), a subsidiary of a large national company, provides the water supply to Alexandria's residents and businesses.

As a private utility, VAWC is subject to the authority of the [State Corporation Commission](#) in Richmond. In 2014, VAWC applied to the commission in order to create a new "Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Service Charge."

As proposed, the new charge was to assist VAWC in collecting the resources to perform system-wide maintenance.

While the City certainly supports the maintenance efforts that are badly needed to protect our City's water supply, we do have concern about the mechanism.

At my request, the City filed with the Commission in opposition of



VAWC's request. The City's concern was that the change proposed by VAWC removes a significant "check" (the review by the State Corporation Commission), that exists to ensure the proper process is followed before rates are raised.

The Commission appointed a hearing examiner to look at the facts in the case and make a recommendation. The [response of the hearing examiner](#) in June of 2015 supported the City's perspective.

Then, the City filed [a response urging the Commission's support of the findings of the hearing examiner](#).

In September of 2015, the [Commission concurred with their hearing examiner and that case was closed](#).

Yet at the end of October 2015, [VAWC applied to the State Corporation Commission for another rate increase](#). The increase took effect on April 1, 2016 and increased the typical residential customer's bill by approximately \$4 per month. Additionally, they again applied for permission to create the new infrastructure services charge. Under state law, the increase goes into effect, but if the Commission lowers or eliminates the increase, every customer will be entitled to a refund.

In April of last year, [the City Council voted unanimously to oppose the proposed increase](#).

Another hearing examiner was appointed. [At the end of last November, this hearing examiner provided his report](#). While the examiner did not accept all of the rate increases proposed by VAWC, he did approve a 3 year pilot of the new Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Service Charge. In [December, the City provided its response to this recommendation](#).

In May, [the State Corporation Commission rendered their final decision](#). In their decision, the Commission limited VAWC's rate increase. Given the proposed rate increase was put in place in April of 2016, all customers will be entitled to refunds of the difference between the adopted and proposed increases. These refunds must be issued before the end of August.

To support the City's view on the inappropriateness of this type of unchecked rate increase mechanism, Senator Adam Ebbin [proposed legislation last session to prevent such a fee structure in the future](#). Unfortunately, the legislation did not survive the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee.

I'm hopeful we can continue our efforts working with VAWC to improve our aging water infrastructure but respect our ratepayers and good processes at the same time.

### Transparency in Policing

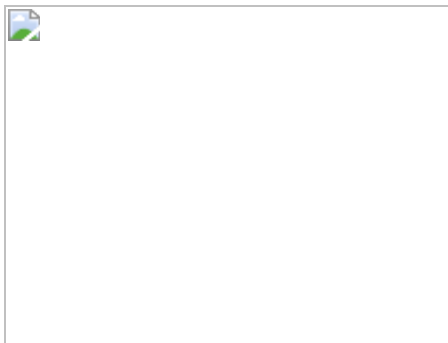
In August of last year, [I wrote a piece in this newsletter attempting to relate the national conversation on policing to our experiences in Alexandria](#).

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.

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

We have a highly skilled police force that represents 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 month, 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, [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 will 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.

## Opioid Abuse

[Last year there was a 38% increase in drug overdose deaths in the Commonwealth of Virginia. For the fourth straight year these deaths outpaced motor vehicle accidents and gun-related incidents.](#)

[From 2012 to 2016, 44 Alexandrians died due to Opioid overdoses.](#) The current trend suggests that we will have another double-digit increase this year in Alexandrians being treated for overdoses.

The nation's crisis of drug abuse has been well-publicized in the media. Within Virginia the increase has been driven by heroin and fentanyl, and the combination of the two.

[The Governor declared the opioid addiction issue a public health emergency late last year.](#) New resources are being focused on the problem at every level.

[During last year's budget process, I asked our staff to provide some analysis as to how we can expand resources to address this issue.](#)

In Alexandria, we have long provided funding support to the City's Department of Community and Human Services to work to address the underlying causes of addiction.

Today our department has the capacity to serve 125 to 135 clients per day. On top of the available capacity, the department maintains an extensive waiting list.

Our City Manager is now working to identify new resources to potentially expand our capacity mid-year.

While we have seen increases in overdoses in our City, we have been fortunate to not see the same levels of overdose activity as around the country. We must maintain vigilance and awareness, as well as invest in prevention programs with real results.

## 72 Hour Rule

As an old City we have old laws. I have worked with our City Attorney over the past few years to modernize or repeal several old laws.

We [repealed antiquated laws that banned many massage services](#).

We [repealed laws that required bicycle registration](#).

We [got rid of laws prohibiting "for sale" signs on vehicles](#).

We [struck out code sections that required new streets to be named after Confederate Generals, banned cohabitation, and prohibited shoeshiners](#).

While it's relatively easy to repeal anachronistic laws, it becomes more challenging when the laws need to be modernized.



In the summer of 2015, I [proposed that the City take a look at the so-called "72-hour Rule."](#) The 72-hour Rule [is officially 10-4-8 of the City Code](#). This code section has been on the City's books for many years and was last revised 30 years ago. This is in addition to any existing on-street restrictions.

Essentially the 72-hour rule provides that a vehicle cannot be parked on a City street for longer than 72 hours. The rule was enacted to prevent abandonment and long-term

storage of vehicles on our streets. Unfortunately, today it is primarily used as a tool in "neighbor versus neighbor" disputes.

From 2000 to 2015, our Police Department has been asked to check a vehicle for compliance 7,500 times and they have issued roughly 1,300 citations for violations. This is a law where enforcement is primarily initiated by complaint. That was true 87% of the time.

In neighborhoods without off-street parking, the rule can become particularly problematic when residents are on vacation or on a business trip, without any place or anyone to move their vehicle.

[Our City staff worked with the Traffic and Parking Board to conduct the review. They distributed an online survey to collect input. Over 700 participants provided input on the survey. Public meetings were also held to solicit input.](#)

In March, [the Traffic and Parking Board unanimously endorsed a reform proposal](#) that allows for residents to electronically request extensions to the 72 hour period to avoid ticketing during leisure and business travel. The proposal is to try this change as a pilot.

Ultimately, the City Council also adopted this proposal, and [you can now register your vehicle using the City website in the event your car will be parked for greater than 72 hours](#).

## 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

### Investing in Our Municipal Facilities

[The City Council's adoption of the City's Operating and Capital Improvement Budget last month included making a new 10 year commitment to invest in our municipal facilities.](#)



In adopting the budget, we knew that doing things the way we had always done them was not sufficient. In addition to new investment, we had to take a dramatic step forward in

bringing together the disparate visions of the City and School municipal facilities plans.

To do so, we created the [new Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force](#). This blue-ribbon group brings together significant expertise to help the City prioritize and streamline a municipal facilities vision that ensures the success of City and School services for decades to come.

Despite large efforts to address deferred capital investment in recent years, the City stands at a crossroads. With a perfect storm of infrastructure needs for school, sewer, city facilities, transportation and recreation, the practices of the past will not sustain us in the future.

- [Only three school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia have grown more than ours in the last decade. We're the only one of the top four growing systems to have not constructed a new building \(only renovations\) during that period.](#)
- [The City's sanitary sewer, stormwater sewer and combined sewer remediation challenges are not areas that can be deferred any longer.](#)
- [Our city facilities reflect decades of neglect and require millions in maintenance.](#)
- [The challenges of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) have demanded dramatic increases from each member jurisdiction. For Alexandria, those increases have dominated our local transportation funding sources.](#)
- [The little funding that has remained for basic recreation services to support quality of life in our community has fallen victim to budget reductions.](#)

[The City Manager's proposed Capital Improvement Program](#) included \$2 billion of investment over the next



decade. Yet the constraints of the Council's guidance and paltry revenue growth left over \$500 million of recommended, but unfunded, capital investments.

That \$500 million of unfunded capital investments serves as a hidden debt on our municipal balance sheet. Yet instead of the 2.12% rate (the true interest cost of our most recent debt issuance) that we are paying for the City's actual debt, this hidden debt is costing us much more.

With construction costs [climbing at an annual rate of nearly 5%](#) and the costs of patching, retrofitting, and otherwise "buying time" with existing aged infrastructure growing regularly, this hidden debt is far more onerous than the well-managed municipal debt load the City carries.

Last month the City Manager constituted the new Ad Hoc group, and they held their first meeting last week. [You can watch the meeting online.](#)

The Ad Hoc group has their next meeting on Thursday July 13th at 8:45 AM in the Council Workroom at City Hall.

This group has arguably one of the most important tasks of any recent City group. They will be hard at work throughout the summer, and welcoming public input throughout the process.

### **Bidding on a BID**

The spirited community debate as to whether a Business Improvement District (BID) should be created in Old Town Alexandria continues.

If the City Council were to authorize a BID, commercial property owners in the district would pay a higher real estate tax rate. With many commercial leases set up to pass taxes through to tenants, business owners would likely pay the assessment. The additional revenue would support a new entity that would annually provide a budget to the City Council for approval.

This idea was pursued several years ago, but efforts ended when there was not sufficient support from the businesses who would ultimately pay the tax.

[The idea is back again, with business community support.](#)

Business Improvement Districts have been very successful tools across the country. They help leverage private investment and encourage small business growth.

For this proposal, the focus has been on new marketing initiatives, improved programming, and better care-taking of the public spaces.

Ultimately, it will be up to those who would fund this proposed BID to support this proposal.

After a community worksession and a lengthy public hearing, the Council took its first formal action on this matter last Tuesday. [You can watch the Council's discussion online.](#)

[The Council voted unanimously to refine the proposed Business Improvement District, distribute a proposed budget and set of performance metrics, and hold a vote of the impacted businesses to determine if there is sufficient support to proceed.](#)

I look forward to further consideration of this concept.

### **Airport Noise**



It is the City's proximity to transportation infrastructure, especially Washington National Airport, that is one of the reasons that so many residents love living in Alexandria. Yet it is our proximity to the airport that also causes many residents consternation due to the noise from the aircraft activities.



[In 2015, a new Community Working Group was created to organize input from the region to be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration.](#)

While the group has now made 7 recommendations, the recommendation [requesting that air traffic remain over the Potomac River](#) (as opposed to land) as long as possible seems most likely to reduce impacts on Alexandria residents.

In May, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that its review of the suggestions will begin in August and last for 18-24 months.

Congressman Beyer's office has been instrumental in working with the FAA to maintain progress in this discussion.

[Residents can submit complaints about specific noise from airport operations online.](#)

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson  
703.746.4500  
[justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov](mailto:justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov)  
[www.justin.net](http://www.justin.net)  
Alexandria City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Paid for by Wilson For Council