

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

July 1, 2019

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Virginia Tech
Innovation Campus](#)

[Welcome Tall Ship
Providence](#)

[Metro Shutdown
Update](#)

[Transportation
Funding](#)

[Potomac Yard Metro](#)

[Early Childhood
Education](#)

[Community Health
Assessment](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: July
Public Hearing &
Environmental Action
Plan](#)

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](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt
Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

**Alexandria Birthday
Party!**

Welcome to summer!

Last week the Council had our last Legislative Meeting of the fiscal year. We have a public hearing next Tuesday and then we will be on recess for the summer.

Last month I had the honor of attending the graduation of the Class of 2019 from T. C. Williams High School. [This year we celebrated 757 students receiving their diplomas.](#)



[The Class of 2019 is an impressive class led by this year's valedictorian, Ana Humphrey and this year's salutatorian, Caroline Bates.](#) Both Ana and Caroline have distinguished themselves both inside and outside of the classroom. Ana will continue her studies next year at Harvard University, while Caroline will head to Johns Hopkins University. We wish Ana and Caroline, as well as all of the graduates, well as they pass this important milestone.

There were other major transitions in our City as well, as [our Fire Chief Robert Dube will retire after 5 years of service as our Chief.](#) Chief Dube presided over an era of significant change and growth in the Fire Department. We have a Fire Department that is better organized and equipped to protect the lives and property of the residents and visitors to our community thanks to his leadership.

Assistant Chief Corey Smedley has been appointed as our Acting Chief, and I look forward to working with Chief Smedley in his new role.

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

Council Initiatives

Virginia Tech Gets Room To Grow

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

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

Integral to the Commonwealth's attraction of Amazon was access to the talent Amazon will require to grow. The creation of a [new \\$1 billion graduate campus will provide a pipeline of talent for our entire](#)

[The summer tradition continues as we celebrate in style Alexandria's 270th and our nation's 243rd Birthdays at Oronoco Bay Park on the Waterfront](#) on Saturday July 13th.

The festivities kick off at 6:00PM with 9:30 PM fireworks accompanied by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, and the men and women of the Presidential Salute Battery from the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard).

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

FutureHaus

[Fresh off its win in Dubai at the Solar Decathlon, FutureHaus is now set up in Potomac Yard!](#)

This futuristic home was designed by the Virginia Tech Center for Design Research and is now at 2602 Main Line Boulevard.

Tours will be conducted until August 16th. Tours are available on Thursdays and Saturdays from 11 AM until 5 PM and Fridays and Sundays from 11 AM until 8 PM.

Rosemont 4th of July

[The Rosemont Citizens Association is back the annual Independence Day celebration!](#)

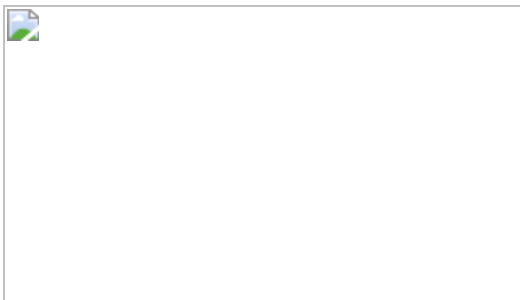
This year the event gets underway at 10 AM on Wednesday at the Maury Elementary field.

Complete with a baby beauty contest, bike decorating contest, lots of food and more, this event is not to be missed!

Del Ray Music Festival!

[On Saturday July 13th, the Del Ray Music Festival](#)

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



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

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

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

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

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

In the fall of 2017, Amazon announced a search for a new headquarters. [The solicitation envisioned \\$5 billion of investment and nearly 50,000 employees slated for these new facilities.](#)

Almost 240 jurisdictions around North America responded to this solicitation.

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

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

[In January of 2018 Amazon narrowed down the areas under consideration to 20 finalists.](#) Included in that list were three locations in our region: Washington, DC, Montgomery County, Maryland and our Northern Virginia response.

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

For transportation, the Commonwealth's package includes funding for new entrances at both the Potomac Yard (discussed later in this newsletter) and Crystal City Metro stations, improvements on Route

[returns!](#)

From 3 PM until 8 PM, music will take over the neighborhood. Admission is free.

I'll see you there!

Half Day Citizens Police Academy

The Alexandria Police Department is continuing 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!](#)

Mason Speakers

Is your club or organization interested in having a speaker?

The George Mason University speakers program is comprised of over 100 faculty and staff who provide lectures and guest presentations on hundreds of topics to organizations and businesses free of charge.

[Available speakers can be reviewed and reserved online!](#)

1, a connector bridge from Crystal City to Washington National Airport, and expansions to the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway.

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

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

[The City Manager executed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the City indicating that the City would be expected to provide some financial support for the Virginia Tech campus development in the form of tax abatement, financing and other support.](#) All development for Virginia Tech will go through the normal land-use process with public hearings and approvals before the Planning Commission and City Council.

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

Over time, there will be much written about this successful economic development attraction effort. Yet there are a few things we can conclude quickly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tall Ship Providence Arrives Home

Late this evening, [the Tall Ship Providence](#) will pass under the Wilson Bridge and take her place on Alexandria's Waterfront.



The [approved Waterfront Small Area Plan](#) had a recommendation that stated "Attract a tall ship or other ship of character to be berthed" on our waterfront.

[Through the leadership of local business leaders, a new foundation was formed to acquire, restore and host a tall ship on the waterfront.](#)

[The Providence](#) is a full-scale replica of the Continental Navy's first warship. Once settled in her new home, the ship will host tours, events, and educational efforts.

Welcome home, Providence!

Metro Shutdown Continues

We are now a little over a month into the Metro shutdown. This has been a challenging period for our City and its residents, our visitors, and our businesses and their employees.

While riders are beginning to settle into new routines, there are still challenges impacting our City. The shuttle buses have had issues with capacity and traffic flow. Some Metro Bus and DASH routes have had similar problems as well. Traffic impacts have exacerbated existing congestion. Some businesses have seen reductions in revenue.

The work itself has been progressing on schedule. [Last week Metro announced the elimination of the "hump" in the platform at the Braddock Road station.](#)

For a year we have known there will be no Metro Rail Blue or Yellow line service south of the airport from Memorial Day to Labor Day 2019. Our staff has been working closely with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Commonwealth of Virginia to prepare for this event.

While the past month has not been without challenge, so far the mitigation put in place by WMATA, the City and our regional and

private partners have allowed for residents, visitors and our businesses to continue somewhat normal, albeit delayed, operations.



The City [has posted summaries of the early weeks, as well as traffic cameras and traffic sensor data for review by the public](#) .

The mitigation plan for the closures relies on four pillars:

- [WMATA service \(shuttles and expansions of existing bus service\)](#)
- City/DASH alternatives
- Mobility alternatives (transportation network companies and transit modifications)
- Communication and outreach

The bedrock of this plan is the WMATA shuttles and service expansion. These shuttles are running 5 minute headways (intervals) during peak periods and WMATA has now sized them to accommodate 97% of the typical "peak of the peak" ridership through the corridor.

While the shuttle network is designed to carry the bulk of the ridership, I would encourage residents to examine existing bus service options that serve their neighborhood and can allow you to get around the closure.

The City's plan is not set in stone. We will continue to make adjustments throughout the closure period.

The work to restore Metro back to the level required to support this region continues. In the short-term, additional sacrifice will be required. As a daily Metro rider myself, I know the service challenges first-hand. I'm optimistic that these efforts will result in a more reliable system for Alexandria and the entire region.

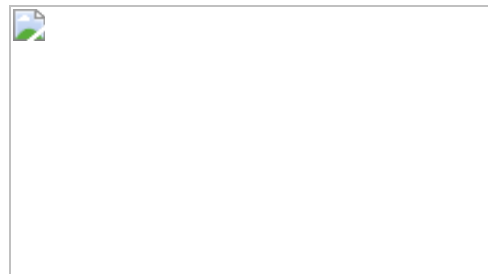
Transportation Funding

[Last month, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved \\$83.3 million of funding for the City.](#)

Over the next decade, the City plans on spending \$1.6 billion on infrastructure spending, based on [our existing approved Capital Improvement Program](#) . Of that, just a little over \$380 million is to support transportation initiatives. Of the transportation funds, nearly \$100 million is intended to come from non-City sources, primarily state and regional transportation funds.

In 2014, then Governor Terry McAuliffe signed [legislation](#) that created new criteria for the evaluation of transportation projects for state funding by the [Commonwealth Transportation Board](#). The implementation of this legislation has resulted in [SMART SCALE](#).

The acronym stands for "System Management Allocation of Resources for Transportation" and



then the scoring attributes "Safety Congestion Mitigation Accessibility Land Use Environmental Economic Development."

In June of 2018, the City Council approved [the City's application for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 funding](#). The City applied for \$88.7 million of funding in support of the following initiatives:

- West End Transitway: \$60 million
- Landmark Transit Hub Improvements: \$10 million
- Safety and Capacity Enhancements at Duke/Taylor Run/Telegraph: \$4.5 million
- DASH Zero Admission Fleet Program: \$12 million
- Transit Signal Prioritization: \$2.1 million

A few months ago, the Virginia Department of Transportation staff posted [their recommended funding scenarios](#). These staff recommendations went before the Commonwealth Transportation Board for approval.

[Many of the City's projects were among the highest ranked projects in the state](#). These important resources will help bring these important projects to reality.

Potomac Yard Metro

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

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

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

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

[Concurring with the recommendation of the PYMIG, the City Council voted last Tuesday 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.](#)

Additionally, the final permits required for construction of the station to proceed are moving forward. [The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has published a draft permit for consideration by the State Water Control Board](#). This permit reflects the mitigation required for impacts on the wetlands by the construction of the station. Public comment is now being accepted and a public hearing will be held in Alexandria on Tuesday July 16th at 7 PM at the Durant Center at 1605 Cameron Street.

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

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

While I am frustrated with the challenges that rising construction costs have created in finalizing the scope of this project, I remain committed to seeing this project to reality.

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

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

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

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

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

The current schedule calls for the station to open in late 2021/early 2022, but that will be refined as we move forward.

Alexandria's Children--Ready to Learn

Last month, the City Council voted to allocated \$200,000 of funds set aside in our recently adopted budget. [These funds will allow the City to extend the pre-school year for 62 4-year olds in the state-sponsored, Virginia Preschool Initiative \(VPI\), support the costs associated with creating 2.5 new VPI classrooms and build the capacity for two existing VPI providers.](#)

[Improving the availability of early childhood education is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of our children.](#)



In nearly every budget that I have been a part of on the City Council, I have worked to expand the availability of early childhood services for our kids. [With the support for these investments by City Councils of the past, we have significantly](#)

[narrowed the number of children seeking services and being forced to wait.](#)

This effort prepares more kids for Kindergarten and improves their academic outcomes for years to come.

Community Health Assessment

When a resident of our City faces an emergent health issue, the Alexandria Fire Department sends personnel to stabilize the patient and transport them to the hospital.



Yet the work of protecting the City's public health is the product of numerous public and private entities in the City. For the past year, the Alexandria Health Department has been

undertaking an ambitious effort to quantify public health challenges throughout our City.

The result of this effort is [the updated Community Health Assessment](#). This assessment compiles a variety of data from throughout our community to gauge the health of our residents.

The document itself reminds us that there are real and significant disparities in health around our community. The uncomfortable realities revealed by the report are that socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, national origin, education and even a resident's zip code can predict, among many other factors:

- Life Expectancy
- Access to healthcare, including mental health services
- Hospitalization rates
- Experiences with chronic conditions
- Cancer outcomes
- Fitness levels and obesity rates
- Access to healthy food

Yet we know how to address these disparities. In nearly every plan the City has, from land-use plans, to park plans, to pedestrian and bicycle safety plans, to early childhood initiatives, school nutrition efforts, mental health reforms, etc, we are addressing these disparities.

But there is clearly more work to do. With the conclusion of assessment, the City will now move to creating a Community Health Improvement Program (CHIP).

There will be more opportunities for community involvement in the development of the CHIP. [Check the project website for details!](#)

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

Alexandria's Climate Change Policy

[In November, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change again sounded the alarm.](#) Their report gave the world about 12 year to take meaningful action to mitigate catastrophic impacts of rising temperatures.

With our Federal government currently disengaged from international efforts to address climate change, how can Alexandria take meaningful climate action?

A week from tomorrow, the City Council will consider final adoption of the [Phase 2 Update of our Environmental Action Plan](#). This ambitious plan does not commit or appropriate money, but it does set the strategic direction to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Expand Open Space
- Reduce water pollution
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Reduce ozone

To be successful, this work necessarily involves the public and private sector and will ultimately require a state government fully committed to the cause.

Led by an incredibly motivated and knowledgeable group of residents, the City vaulted to the lead among local governments by adopting the [Eco-City Charter](#) a decade ago. The charter defined a comprehensive vision for our City to improve environmental sustainability.

The Eco-City Charter then led the City to adopt the [Environmental Action Plan](#). The plan laid out specific actions the City should undertake. It detailed how we should measure success and it began to define the next phase of our Eco-City evolution.

With a decade under our belt, it is now time to take our plan to the next level. [In October, the City Council adopted the Phase 1 update,](#) including significant new commitments in air quality, transportation, waste, green buildings and water. And this Phase 2 update continues that push.

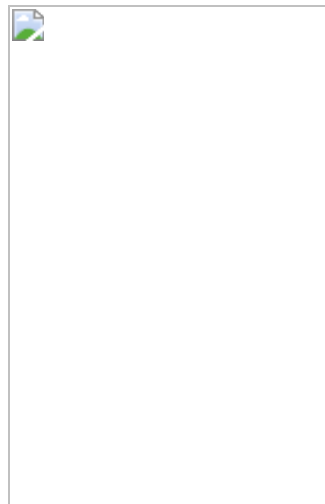
With any plan the City adopts, the test is not simply whether we will accomplish what we laid out in the plan (although that is an important test). The City plans that have transformative impact are the plans that end up cutting across multiple City policy priorities. The Eco-City Environmental Action Plan has had that impact. It has fundamentally transformed City operations in numerous policy areas.

With the Federal government now choosing to decline its traditional global leadership role in climate policy, the responsibility falls to local and state governments to lead the way.

[A little over two years ago, the City staff released the latest report detailing our progress in achieving the items defined in the plan.](#)

We have seen great progress in the City in furtherance of our goals:

- The City government has reduced energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The percentage of new construction utilizing green building components has increased.
- The City's tree canopy has increased.
- We have protected over 100 acres of new open space.
- We have doubled our solid waste recycling rate.
- We have increased transit ridership.
- We have adopted smart-growth oriented residential parking standards.
- We have improved the walkability of our neighborhoods.
- We have implemented stormwater infrastructure around our City.



Despite a constrained revenue environment, we have used non-General Fund revenues to continue to make progress.

In recent years we created and sustained a very successful farmers market compost program.

In adopting last year's budget the Council funded a new program to provide proactive maintenance of the City's urban forest.

We are bringing a new Metro station to Potomac Yard and a new dedicated Transitway to the West End.

We recently created a new stormwater utility to address our obligations to the Chesapeake Bay.

We identified hundreds of millions of dollars to address combined sewer modernization to address our obligations to the Potomac River.

We created a new Sustainability Coordinator position.

Our approved Housing Master Plan recognizes the importance of energy conservation as a component of housing affordability.

Our Complete Streets investments have continued to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility throughout the City.

Our recently approved [Eisenhower West](#) and [Old Town North](#) Small Area Plans included substantial sustainability chapters. As these plans are implemented, the City will have opportunities to achieve more significant sustainability initiatives, including district energy and other large-scale efforts.

[On the recommendation of our parking standards task force we recently adopted an ordinance to "right-size" our commercial parking standards](#) .

Yet, we can do more.

Last month, the Council [unanimously approved our new Green Building Policy](#). This new policy reflects the collaboration of a [Task Force](#) that met for several months to arrive at this new direction.

[Buildings account for 39% of total energy use, 68% of electricity consumption and 38% of all carbon dioxide emissions](#). When

buildings are built efficiently, redevelopment can be a powerful force to reduce our energy demands and improve our environment.

In 2009, the [City Council adopted Alexandria's first Green Building Policy](#). The policy laid out a series of expectations of the development community, including [LEED Silver for non-residential development and LEED Certified for residential development](#). The policy included flexibility so that developers could utilize other standards to ensure environmental sustainability of their development.



Meeting the standard requires a myriad of different techniques. Simply put, green building reduces the energy and water usage of buildings, while creating more livable homes and better spaces for work.

While these efficiency improvements are certainly positive for the environment and livability of these spaces, they are also extremely important to the affordability of residency. For those reasons, they were included as components of our [recently adopted Housing Master Plan](#).

Since the adoption of the policy, 95% of the development constructed or under construction has met this policy. This equates to about 10 million square feet of green building.

Yet a lot has changed in the ten years since the approval of this policy. Green building strategies have gone from being a novelty and luxury to being a market standard.

The new policy proposes to raise the bar, with all private development being requested to meet a LEED Silver standard, and all public development being required to meet a LEED Gold standard. In addition to LEED, the proposed policy also allows for alternate certification options, including [Green Globes](#) and [Earthcraft](#), with a process for use of alternate standards.

While the task force supported the notion that public construction activity to lead the way in sustainability, there was some disagreement as to whether LEED Gold was sufficient or whether the City should set [Net-Zero construction](#) as the goal. Ultimately Council chose to set Net Zero as the goal for public facility construction.

In February, the Council unanimously [adopted long-awaited updated to our Landscape Guidelines](#) to reflect the Environmental Action Plan and the City's Urban Forestry Master Plan.

Constrained budgets make it more challenging for our City to continue its leadership in sustainability practices, but we can and should work to lead the region in this policy area. These efforts are critical given recent Federal policy changes, but are also good for our economy and our quality of life. I look forward to working to see them to reality.

July Meeting

Next Tuesday, the 9th, the City Council will hold our 11th public hearing meeting of this term. This will be our first ever July Public Hearing.

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

[items](#). Nearly every other day, there are community meetings, committees, commissions, etc.

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

Yet, I did conclude a few years ago that we had reached the time where the Council should entertain the possibility of summer meetings.

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

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

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

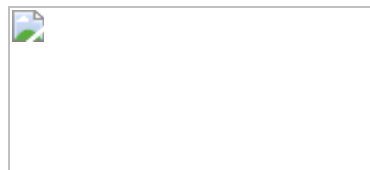
While it has long been a quaint practice of the City to take July and August off, the current schedule comes at a cost.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Mayor Justin M. Wilson
703.746.4500
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov
www.justin.net
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Paid for by Wilson For Mayor

