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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

March 1, 2018

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[Last month the
Alexandria City School
Board voted to name
Alexandria's first new
school in 18 years after
Ferdinand Day.](#)

Just a decade after Brown vs. Board of Education ordered integration of our nation's schools, Ferdinand Day was appointed to our School Board. He ultimately became the first African-American to chair a school board in Virginia.



His moral leadership provided stability and progress during a very tumultuous time in our City and within our Schools.

Ferdinand Day is a fitting namesake for this new school and will be an inspiration to the thousands of students who will begin their learning in the building.

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

Council Initiatives

Budget Process Begins

From 2002 until 2009 the City was enjoying the run-up in the residential real estate market. Our General Fund budget increased by an average of 6.5% per year. The work force in City Government grew from 2,229 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) to 2,660 FTEs during that period.

There were [even campaigns calling for Council to limit spending growth to 3% per year.](#)

[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

The Next Campaign

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

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.

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

St. Patrick's Day Parade

[The Ballyshanners host their Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade this Saturday!](#)

The Alexandria tradition steps off at 12:30 PM in Old Town.

The festivities begin in the morning with the Classic Car Show and Fun Dog Show.

I'll see you there!

Salute to Patsy Ticer

[On Monday March 19th, the Alexandria Commission for Women and the Friends of the Alexandria Commission for Women will be hosting a salute to our former Senator and Mayor Patsy Ticer.](#)

The event will be held from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the

In Fiscal Year 2010, the bottom fell out as the Great Recession took hold. The City adopted its first negative budget in at least 40 years, reducing spending from Fiscal Year 2009 to 2010 by over 2%. From 2010 to 2017, the General Fund budget increased by an average of 2.9% per year.

Sustaining an average budget growth of less than 3% per year with 4% annual student enrollment growth, employee healthcare costs increasing far above rates of inflation, long-deferred infrastructure needs, and ever-escalating funding challenges from Metro is impossible.

The most important decision the City Council makes each year is the adoption of the annual operating budget and capital improvement program. The operating budget generally funds the ongoing costs of government (primarily personnel), while the capital budget funds one-time expenditures that provide the community with an asset (new schools, new roads, new playing fields, transit buses, etc).

Last week, [the City Manager presented his proposed Fiscal Year 2019 budgets](#) to the City Council and our budget process is now underway.

Under current rates, projections are that we would experience an anemic 1.9% revenue growth. That would provide an additional \$14 million of new revenue available for both the operating and capital budgets.

[The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) is tentatively requesting an additional \\$3.6 million of operating funds from Alexandria next year.](#) This is to support existing operations and safety initiatives.

[The School Board's proposed operating budget for the Alexandria City Public Schools has requested an additional \\$10.9 million,](#) about 5.1%, driven largely by enrollment increases and the planned opening of a new West End Elementary School.

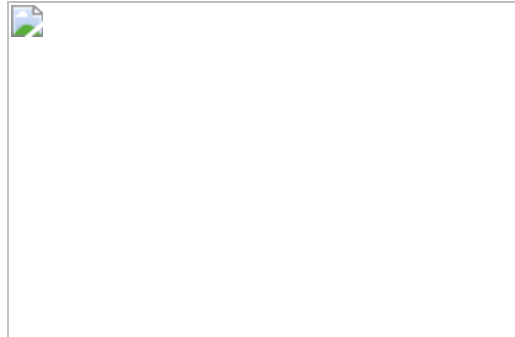
Providing City employees with scheduled "merit" increases alone costs an additional \$5 million.

The combination of the increases for WMATA, our schools and our employees' scheduled merit increases depletes ALL of the new revenue available for this upcoming fiscal year.

In the fall, the City Council approved budget guidance that required the City Manager to present a budget that included no increase in the real estate tax rate of \$1.13.

As a result, the City Manager was forced to make significant choices to present a balanced budget as required by law. The proposed general fund operating budget is \$742.3 million, an increase of 1.9% from Fiscal Year 2018. With \$4.3 million of reductions, the City government spending is itself only proposed to increase by 0.3%.

That restraint on the City side allowed the City Manager to propose full funding of the Alexandria City Public Schools Superintendent's requested operating transfer.



George Washington
Masonic Memorial.

Please join us as we honor
Patsy's legacy of service to
our City.

Mental Health First Aid

To improve our community's
response to those in mental
health crisis, our City
sponsors free Mental
Health First Aid training.
[There are two dates
available later this month.
You may sign up online](#)

The City Manager has proposed 69% of the new revenue to go to the Alexandria City Public Schools, 22% to transit programs and only 7% to the remaining City budget.

For the past two years the City Council has directed significant new resources into our Capital Improvement Program to address decades of under-investment in our City's infrastructure.

The City Manager's proposed 10 year Capital Improvement Program continued the focus on expanding infrastructure investment. The 10 year plan proposes spending \$2.1 billion driven largely by \$453.8 million to address Sanitary Sewer projects, \$601 million for transportation projects including WMATA capital funding, \$438.1 million of funding for Alexandria City Public Schools capital projects, \$153 million for City facility needs and \$60 million for land acquisition for both City and ACPS facilities.

[The City Manager has incorporated the recent recommendations of our Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force in his proposed Capital Improvement Program.](#) This group has assisted the Council in not only synthesizing the considerable facility investment for both the City and the Schools, but also making serious policy recommendations for the governance and implementation of this spending.

We have just begun the budget process. [We have a series of work sessions to dig through each portion of the budget](#) ,

We must make the adjustments to City spending to better align our long-term projected revenue growth with the projections for the growth in expenditures. That means addressing long-deferred capital maintenance and restraining the growth in the operating budget. Neither of these efforts are small tasks.

On Monday, March 12th at 4 PM, the City Council will be holding a public hearing to accept testimony from residents on the proposed budget. [You can sign up in advance online to speak to the Council.](#)

On Wednesday, March 14th, the Council will be adopting the highest real estate tax rate that we might consider this year. Under state law, once we choose this rate we can go lower, but no higher.

I look forward to working with the residents of this City to adopt a budget that is reflective of our values as a community.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

In adopting the Fiscal Year 2018 budget last year, the Council continued a multi-year effort of devoting new capital resources to a variety of deferred infrastructure projects. One of the efforts that was increased was the City's road surfacing budget. [This allowed for \\$5.2 million to be directed to address road conditions around the City.](#)

The City has 560 lane miles of roads for which it is responsible. Periodically, our Transportation and Environmental Services



Department assesses every street in the City [assigning each a Pavement Condition Inventory \(PCI\) score.](#) Based on that score and available resources, our paving plan for each year is formulated.

The City recently completed a new citywide survey which has prompted revisions to this schedule. Yet assessments continue and the schedule will be revised as needs dictate.

The City Manager's proposed Capital Improvement Program includes \$5.2 million for Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019), \$5.5

million for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020) and \$5.5 million for Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020).

If the currently proposed funding level is approved, we are scheduled to resurface the following roads next fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2018):

- E & W Maple St from N View Terr to Little St
- Timber Branch Drive from W Braddock Rd to E Timber Branch Pkwy
- Crescent Dr from Wellington Rd to Enderby Dr
- Little St from E Braddock Rd to E Linden St
- Woodland Terrace from Davis Ave to Virginia Ave
- Oval Drive from Cameron Mills Rd to cul-de-sac
- Church St from S Washington St to S Patrick St
- E Howell Ave from Clyde Ave to Mt Vernon Ave
- Ashby St. - Entire Length
- Oakland Terr. Entire Length
- Stonnell Place- Entire Length
- Wilkes St. from Patrick St. to the dead end
- E & W Chapman St from Russell Rd to Wayne Street
- S. Payne St. from Wilkes St. to Dead End
- Diagonal - Entire Length
- Montgomery St from N Henry St to Dead-End
- S Fayette from Jefferson St to Wilkes St
- W Braddock Rd from N Van Dorn St to Beauregard St
- Wilkes St from S Columbus to S Lee St
- Wythe St from West St to N Fairfax St
- Clifford Ave. from Commonwealth Ave. to Jefferson Davis Hwy.
- Wolfe St. Entire Length
- Mt. Vernon Ave. from Hume Ave to Leadbetter St
- Seminary Rd from N Quaker Ln to 395
- Michigan Ave from Bernard St to Bashford Ln
- Devon Pl Entire Length
- Chetworth Pl Entire Length
- Avon Pl from Michigan Ave to Dead-End
- Bernard St from Powhatan St to Michigan Ave
- Jefferson Davis Hwy from Maskell St to Four Mile Run Bridge
- Jefferson Davis Hwy from Howell Ave Maskell St.
- Duke St from Somerville St to N Jordan St
- Duke St from Walker St to Somerville St

For Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020), we are scheduled to resurface the following roads:

- Polk Ave from N Naylor St to N Pegram St
- Princeton Blvd from Vassar Rd to Dartmouth Rd
- North View Terrace from W Rosemont Ave to Rucker Pl
- E/W Abingdon St. from First St. to Dead End
- Commonwealth Ave from E Braddock Rd to King St
- Bishop Lane from N Quaker to Circle
- Mansion Dr. Entire Length
- Vermont Ave from S Gordon St to S Jenkins St
- S Jenkins St from Venable Ave to Holmes Run Pkwy
- N & S Fairfax St from Jefferson St to Third St
- Eisenhower Ave. from Mill Rd. to Holland Ln.
- E & W Rosemont from King St to Commonwealth Ave
- High Street from W Braddock Rd to Russell Rd
- Virginia Ave. Entire Length
- N & S Union St from Pendleton St to Franklin St
- Dartmouth Rd. from Crown View to Dead End
- Valley Dr from Martha Custis Dr to Gunston Rd
- Powhatan St from Washington St to Slater Ln
- W Reed Ave from JD HWY to Mt Vernon Ave
- Jasper Pl from S Jenkins St to cul-de-sac
- King Street from Callahan to Daingerfield
- Allison St. Entire Length
- N Pitt St from Oronoco St to King St
- Norwood Pl from Cameron Mills Rd to cul-de-sac

- W. Taylor Run Pkwy. From Janney's Ln. to Dead End
- N Pegram St from Holmes Run Pkwy to N Pickett St
- N. Van Dorn from Holmes Run Pkwy to Kenmore Ave
- Roth St - Entire Length from Duke St to Business Center Dr

For Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021), we are scheduled to resurface the following roads:

- Duke St from S Patrick St to Strand St
- Hume Ave. from Commonwealth Ave. to Jefferson Davis Hwy.
- N Floyd St from Duke St to N French St
- N & S Washington Street from First St to Church St
- Fendall Ave from Duke St to S Floyd St
- Wellington Rd from Beverley Dr to Chalfonte Dr
- Bryan St. from W. Taylor Run Pkwy. To Dead End
- Fillmore Ave. from Cul-de-sac to Seminary Rd
- Farm Rd. from Beverley Dr to Circle Terr
- N Gladden St & N Grayson St from Uline Ave to Uline Ave
- Tulsa Place from N Gordon to cul-de-sac
- Uline Ave from N Gordon St to N Furman
- West Street from Duke St to Wythe St
- Skyhill Rd. from Janney's Ln. to Dead End
- Daingerfield - Entire Length
- Morgan St from N Chambliss St to Circular Parking space
- N/S Alfred St. from First St. to Church St.
- Reading Ave from Rayburn Ave To N Beauregard St
- Rayburn Ave from N Beauregard St to Reading Ave
- Lomack St from cul-de-sac to Dead-end
- S Iris from Venable Ave to Vermont Ave
- S French St from Duke St to cul-de-sac
- Cameron Mills Rd from Virginia Ave to Allison St
- Marlboro Dr. - Entire Length
- Fort Ward Pl. - Entire Length
- Ellicott St. - Entire Length
- Moncure Dr from S View Terr to Hilton St (Base failure)
- N Howard St from Raleigh Ave to W Braddock Rd
- Crown View Dr. from Clover Way to Dartmouth Rd.
- Jewell Court & Anderson Court from N Chambliss St to cul-de-sac
- N & S Saint Asaph St from First St to Dead-end

We continue to play "catch up" throughout the City from deferred road maintenance during the worst of the Recession.

I'm hopeful we can continue (and hopefully increase) these investments in this very basic infrastructure.

The Evolving Alexandria Waterfront

Our Potomac River waterfront is the reason Alexandria exists as a community. [The history of our waterfront](#) is the history of Alexandria. It is what has brought people and commerce to our community for generations.

The implicit compromise of the [approved Waterfront Small Area Plan](#) was as simple as it was controversial. Can we allow some increased development on three derelict sites in exchange for the following: new waterfront parks, public accessibility throughout the shoreline, new flood mitigation, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality?

While achieving this vision has not always been easy, we now stand closer than ever.

Three years ago, [the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in favor of the City](#) in the final litigation related to the Waterfront Plan. A short while later [the Court denied a request for the case to be reheard](#), thus ending the litigation.

Almost three years ago, the property exchanges occurred between the City and the Old Dominion Boat Club. The [City now owns the](#)

[previous Club property](#) and the Club [now owns properties farther south along the waterfront](#). Creating a seamless, uninterrupted park along the waterfront required this exchange.

With City funds from our settlement, the Boat Club recently [completed construction of a new club for their members on the new site](#).

The [demolition of the long-shuttered Beachcomber Restaurant was completed](#). In March of last year [the City's Board of Architectural Review for the Old and Historic District approved demolition of the existing Boat Club location](#). That demolition should occur over the next few weeks.

Upon conclusion of the project, the City will create a landmark park at the base of King Street. With integrated flood mitigation, it will address flood challenges that have long plagued the corridor. Almost two years ago, the Council [received the plan for the first phase of this park implementation](#).



Almost four years ago, the Council approved [Phase One of the Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design](#). This exciting design marries the vision of the Olin Group and the input of hundreds of

residents who participated in the planning efforts. It also received input from the [Art and History Report](#) to ensure our history is a key component of the future of our waterfront.

The City Manager's proposed budget includes new resources, intended to be matched by private resources, to begin programming of these new public open spaces.

[Through the leadership of local business leaders, a new foundation was formed to acquire, restore and host a tall ship on the waterfront](#). In the Summer of 2019, [The Providence](#) will arrive to its new home in Waterfront Park. The Providence is a full-scale replica of the Continental Navy's first warship.

Elsewhere on the waterfront, [the new Indigo Hotel](#) is open and is serving customers with a brand new restaurant facing the Potomac River. [Construction of this hotel yielded exciting historical discoveries](#) and provided some international acclaim.

Just next to that, on the site of the Robinson Terminal South, [Robinson Landing](#) is completing archaeological work and will soon be under construction. [This effort will conclude in 2019/2020](#). [On the other side of the Indigo Hotel, on Saturday the Council unanimously approved new condos and retail adjacent to the new open space](#).

In the fall of 2015, the [Council unanimously approved the redevelopment of Robinson Terminal North](#) at the other end of the waterfront. A year and a half ago, the [City was notified that the developer wished to place the project on hold](#) due to the market conditions. We later [learned that the property is on the market to be sold](#).

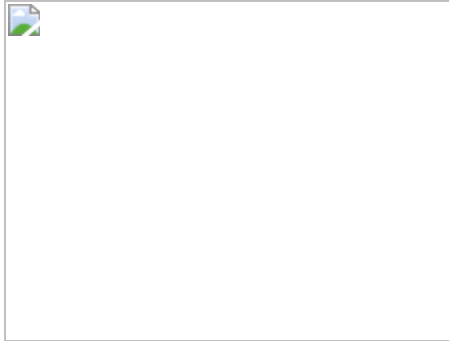
The pending sale certainly slows down the process of achieving the approved vision for Robinson Terminal North. However, a new owner, with a lower cost basis and better capabilities for redevelopment, will likely be a good thing for all involved.

Please [let me know your thoughts](#) as we work to achieve the vision of a more vibrant and accessible waterfront for our City.

Partnering For Our Community

Politicians of nearly every stripe extol the virtues of "Public/Private Partnerships," sometimes called "P3" for short. While the partnerships come in many flavors, it usually involves the blending of private and public resources to achieve a community good.

[An amazing group of residents and organizations raised money to build the Miracle Field next to the Lee Recreation Center to help provide recreation opportunities for the special needs community.](#)



Residents in Arlandria are continuing [to raise money to support Four Mile Run Park](#), and have used private donations to create the park plaza that hosts the [Four Mile Farmers and Artisan Market](#) on recently acquired public space. [Recently, these efforts were nationally recognized as the City](#)

[Parks Alliance touted the results of these partnerships.](#)

Residents and business leaders worked together to [raise significant resources to build the Alexandria Police Memorial](#).

The Del Ray Citizens Association [came forward to sponsor some park improvements in the pocket park at the corner of Commonwealth and E. Del Ray Avenue](#), which was renamed the Judy Lowe Memorial Park.

Residents and businesses have partnered to make improvements at [Ewald Park](#).

Last year, [we dedicated a brand new playground at Maury Elementary School](#). The playground was the result of public money, donated money, donated services and the support of non-profit organizations.

[In the fall, we dedicated a new teen center at Charles Houston Recreation Center. The center was the result of private fundraising, in-kind donations and countless volunteer hours.](#)

[A group of parents at Mount Vernon Community School are working to renovate their playground as well.](#)

[Another group of residents continue to work to match City funds and raise money to light up basketball courts in Potomac Yard.](#)

Faced with dwindling public resources, and enthusiastic Alexandrians seeking to take matters into their own hands, I asked that we create a consistent approach to City participation in these partnerships.

[The result was the "PARKnership" program created by our Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department.](#)

[The summary report](#) from FY 2017 shows all of the good this new effort has launched around our City.

A component of this new attempt at partnership is the [City's Community Matching Fund](#), which provides public resources to supplement private efforts to improve our community.

[The City is now accepting applications for funding for the new year.](#) Applications are due on April 5. On March 5th, the City will be hosting an online information session. [Register online to participate and learn more.](#)

Our City is fortunate to have residents willing to contribute sweat and resources to make our City a better place. I'm excited to see the City partner with them to make it happen.

Eco-City Alexandria

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.

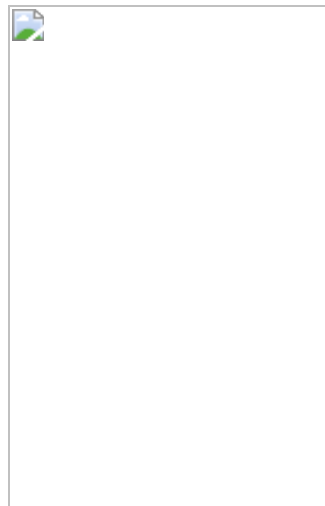
With a decade under our belt, it is now time to take our plan to the next level. We recently commenced an effort to revise our Environmental Action Plan, and we want your involvement!

[On Saturday March 10th, the City will host an "Eco-City Cafe" to involve the community and get your ideas about this important Action Plan update](#). The event will be 9 AM until noon at the Durant Center at 1605 Cameron Street.

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.

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

We are actively 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.

Last year's approved budget included 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.

We have now begun a process of [updating our Green Building standards](#). These standards set the obligations of developers for incorporating sustainability into their new construction.

Our planned municipal facilities work gives us an opportunity to raise the bar for sustainability practices in our own facilities construction.

We are now working to update 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.

The Commonwealth Giveth and Taketh Away

Virginia is a [Dillon Rule state](#) , which is the opposite of a Home Rule state. Simply, the Dillon Rule means that local governments in Virginia cannot do anything that is not specifically authorized by the General Assembly and the Governor.

As a consequence, what occurs in the annual General Assembly session is significant for the City and how it operates. This particular session is shaping up to be more consequential than most.

One of the major pieces of legislation being debated during this General Assembly session relates to the potential expansion of

Medicaid under the Federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). The proposed expansion would extend healthcare coverage available to low-income residents. This extension would provide coverage for residents up to 138% of the Federal poverty level.

In Virginia, the proposed expansion would provide coverage to 400,000 additional Virginians. With 13% of Alexandria residents currently uninsured, [there are approximately 5,900 Alexandrians who could benefit from this expansion.](#)

In addition to the benefit to individual Alexandria residents, City government and the Alexandria City Public Schools are able to draw on Medicaid resources. In 2017, the City government received \$3.2 million in reimbursements from Medicaid, and the Alexandria City Public Schools received another \$2 million.

In past years, efforts to expand Medicaid have failed in the Virginia General Assembly. Due to the changes brought by last November's election, there has been optimism this would change.

Last month efforts to expand Medicaid failed in the State Senate. However, similar efforts passed in the House of Delegates. [The version of the state budget adopted by the House of Delegates includes amendments expanding Medicaid.](#)

Those budget amendments now go to be reconciled with the version adopted by the State Senate. I am hopeful that Virginia will finally take this opportunity to expand healthcare coverage to so many low-income Alexandrians and Virginians.

The General Assembly appears to also be inching closer to addressing Virginia's share of money to support the stabilization of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

There are now two different pieces of legislation still alive on this issue: [a bill from Senator Saslaw](#) and [a bill from Delegate Tim Hugo](#). Neither bill is perfect but they do acknowledge the important need to protect Metro as the linchpin of the region's economy.

At the very same time as the General Assembly was potentially moving closer to making Medicaid expansion and state transit money finally happen, they also appeared closer to removing funding Governor Terry McAuliffe proposed in his final budget [to address the City's Combined Sewer System \(CSS\).](#)

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a much more aggressive timeline for remediation of the City's Combined Sewer System. With



remediation expected to require hundreds of millions of dollars, the City requested funding from state coffers to assist in this challenge. Other jurisdictions in Virginia with similar systems have benefited from such funding.

[Then-Governor McAuliffe proposed \\$20 million to assist the City in addressing these challenges.](#) Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House of Delegates have removed this funding.

While there is still a chance this funding could be restored as the budget is finalized, this is not a positive development.

This is now the second time that Virginia's Governor has recognized the importance of state funding assistance for Alexandria to tackle

this significant clean water initiative by providing funding. But now Governor McAuliffe and previously Governor Bob McDonnell have both had the General Assembly remove that funding.

I'm hopeful that this pattern will change in the near future.

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

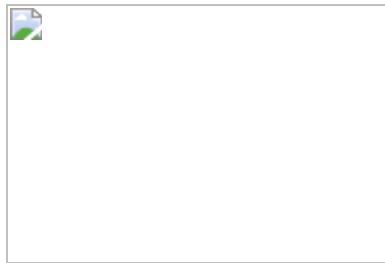
Measuring the Value

Nearly 60% of the costs of Alexandria's government come from residential and commercial real estate taxes. As such, the announcement of our annual real estate tax assessments is the most important indicator for the upcoming budget process.

Last month, the City mailed assessment notices to each property owner and you may [view valuations online](#).

[Overall, the City's real property tax base increased by 2.34% to \\$39.90 billion. While still positive territory, it is the lowest tax base increase since the Great Recession, and it's the second lowest increase in the past eight years.](#)

The average assessed value for a single family home increased 3.4% to \$752,585. Of those properties, 82% of single family homes increased in value, 13% decreased, and 5% stayed the same.



The average assessed value for a condominium increased 3.15% to \$324,024. Of those properties, 72% of condominiums increased in value, 12% decreased, and 16% stayed the same. This is a big change from the previous several years where condos have lagged behind

our single family housing stock.

The status of commercial real estate continues to be bleak. Commercial property assessments increased 0.93% to \$16.4 billion.

In Virginia, multi-family residential housing is considered commercial and can dominate our assessment results and mask underlying weakness.

Last year, multi-family rental properties grew by 7.68% led by \$174 million of new growth. Our existing office assessments dropped by 8.66%, yet half of that reduction was due to the implementation of a partial tax abatement used to lure National Science Foundation to Alexandria.

Overall, new construction added \$299,99 million to our tax base. Over the past five years, \$1.95 billion of new growth has been added

to the tax base. This generates \$22 million in annual new revenue. **Said another way, your real estate tax rate is about six cents lower as a result.**

If you have concerns about your assessments, you have multiple options to have the assessment reviewed. First, contact the Real Estate Assessment office at 703-746-4646. Our staff is happy to discuss your specific assessment.

Until March 15th, a resident can submit a request to have assessments reviewed for modification by the City Staff. [Those requests can be submitted online.](#)

If the review process does not yield a satisfactory result, an appeal can be filed to be heard before the City's Board of Equalization and Assessment Review. Those requests must be filed prior to June 1st.

Growing Student Enrollment

Over five years ago, the City convened the Joint [Long Range Educational Facilities Work Group](#). The group was given the essential charge to understand our recent increase in student enrollment, better project enrollment growth in the future, and to decide what to do about it.

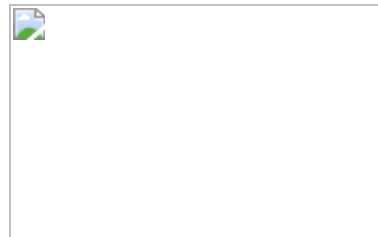
The School Board Chair, Vice Chair, the previous Mayor, and I joined a group of community members and staff to steer the effort.

[The day after Labor Day, 15,493 students started in the Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\). That constitutes a 2.8% increase from the previous year or about 435 additional students.](#) Placed in perspective, last year ACPS added a quantity of students equivalent to the total enrollment of Charles Barrett, Cora Kelly, Lyles-Crouch or Maury Elementary Schools!

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

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

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. For example, we learned that low-rise apartments generate nearly three times the students as high-rise or mid-rise apartments do. We learned that single family homes generate nearly double the students as townhouses. We know that public housing and other income-restricted units far outpace any other property type for student generation.



[We now know that housing units built over 30 years ago account for four times the student generation as those built in the past 30 years.](#)

These data points remind us of the need to address this enrollment growth head-on.

In June of 2015, the City Council and the School Board adopted the [Joint Long Range Educational Facilities Plan](#). The Plan is the culmination of the group's work in conjunction with the efforts of both ACPS and City staff. The Plan looks at each elementary school building in the City, assesses the facility's educational adequacy, and provides a roadmap for increasing capacity and addressing deficiencies.

We are now concluding the [next phase of this effort, planning for additional capacity at the high school level and in pre-school](#). We have recently released the draft chapters for High School and Pre-School.

[The City's AlexEngage system is now collecting input on these two chapters. The deadline to submit your views for consideration is March 11th.](#)

With important decisions for the Council and School Board ahead over how to address capacity challenges at both campuses of T. C. Williams, this process has urgency to it.

Construction for a [new Patrick Henry Elementary and Recreation Center is under way](#). The new school building, scheduled to open at the end of this year, will add additional capacity and is the first in a series of significant capacity projects scheduled in this era.

With the pressure of elementary enrollment increases continuing unabated, urgency has remained to identify new capacity. This pressure is particularly acute on the West End of the City. With funding and support from the City Council, the School Board purchased 1701 N. Beauregard Street, a vacant office building.

In September, [the Council provided the land-use approvals necessary for the conversion of this building into a new elementary school](#). Construction efforts are now under way to complete the conversion of this property to a new school in time to open for the 2018 - 2019 school year. The opening of this new school will be the first new school building (not a replacement) opened in the City in 18 years.

It can be perilous to overreact to one year of enrollment growth. Yet after more than a decade of growth, it is clear that this is our "new normal." While the enrollment growth does present a costly challenge for the City and its taxpayers, it is still an important positive change for our community.

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