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The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:
Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

March 1, 2020

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Budget Presentation](#)

[311 Launches](#)

[Real Estate Tax Base Growth](#)

[Road Paving Plan](#)

[Holmes Run Trail](#)

[Accessory Dwelling Units](#)

[General Assembly Session](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues:
Planning Work
Program & Cut-
Through Traffic Safety](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Alex 311](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Real-Time Traffic Data](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

[In a few weeks, you will receive an invitation from the Census Bureau to participate in the 2020 Census.](#)

It is very important that you take the time, either online, by phone, or using the mail, to complete the survey.

Resources in our community, including education, public safety and human services, will be determined by this count. We need everyone in our City to participate to ensure a full and complete count!



[The Alexandria Health Department is leading the City's response to the novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak.](#) The Department has been in contact with healthcare providers to ensure that they are prepared to screen and test patients, as well as protect their staff and the public.

The City has conducted exercises and planning to ensure that we are prepared to address such an outbreak if it does come to our community.

At this point, [there has not been a patient positively diagnosed with the virus in the Commonwealth of Virginia.](#)

To prevent the spread of this virus, as well as others, follow these tips:

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds.

[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

Presidential Primary

On Tuesday March 3rd voters across Alexandria will go to the polls to participate in the [Democratic Primary to choose our next President](#).

Voting locations will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM. [The sample ballot is available online for review](#).

The Republican Party will not be holding a primary in Virginia to nominate a candidate for President. A statewide convention will be held later this year.

St. Patrick's Day Parade

[The Ballyshanners host their Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade this Saturday the 8th!](#)

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

I'll see you there!

Beatley Book Sale

The Friends of the Beatley Central Library have been collecting donated books for their [annual book sale](#).

Check out the books they have collected from March 25th - 29th (with a members-only sale on the 24th).

Free Tax Assistance

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Stay home when you are sick. Avoid close contact with others who are sick.**
- **Cough and sneeze into your elbow, not into your hand.**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**

Together, we can limit illness and the spread of this virus, particularly to vulnerable populations in our City.

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

Council Initiatives

City Manager Presents Budget

Last month, the [City Manager presented his proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Operating budget and the 10-year Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Year 2021 - Fiscal Year 2030](#). The City Council's annual budget process has begun and we need your input.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed budget on Monday March 9th at 5:30 PM at City Hall. [All are welcome to testify at the public hearing or attend any of the City Council's budget work sessions as we work to dig through every portion of the budget.](#)

You can [sign-up on-line in advance to speak](#) at the March 9th public hearing.

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 on-going 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).

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 Equivalent (FTE) to 2,660 FTEs during that period.

In Fiscal Year 2010, a decade ago, 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 2019, the General Fund budget increased by an average of 3.7% per year. The budget that Council adopted last year grew 1.7% from the previous year.

The work force in City Government is now 2,643 FTEs, essentially what it was a decade ago. That's in spite of the fact that our population has grown significantly during that period of time.

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

It was in this context that the City Manager prepared and presented his budget. The City Manager's proposed operating budget is \$799.9 million. This represents a 4.5% increase in spending versus the current approved budget.

To fund the City Manager's proposed budget, he has included the

Starting today, eligible Alexandria residents can receive assistance in completing their Federal taxes.

[Sessions are held on Saturdays and Wednesdays between now and April 11th.](#)

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 is training for youth and adults. [Sign up online today.](#)

Street Sweeping

At the beginning of spring, crews increase efforts to clean city streets, helping to keep our neighborhoods and commercial corridors clean and protect our waterways.

Litter, debris, and leftover grit from winter road maintenance can clog storm sewers and pollute our lakes and rivers.

[This year's street cleaning season begins today and will continue through the end of October.](#)

Residents may see temporary "No Parking" signs in some neighborhoods, especially along commercial corridors.

Residents can help street cleaning efforts by clearing the curb in front of their home and ensuring that nearby storm drains are not blocked.

Street sweeping debris can be thrown away as regular trash.

REVIVE Training

[Twice a month the City offers free training to residents seeking to learn how to spot and reverse an opioid overdose.](#)

first real estate tax rate increase since 2017, bringing the rate from \$1.13 to \$1.15.

With the impacts of average assessment increases included, this means the average single-family homeowner would pay \$560 more in 2020 than in 2019. The average condo owner would pay \$285 more in 2020 versus 2019.

In addition, the City Manager has proposed an increase in the Residential Refuse Fee of \$49 annually to cover increases in recycling costs and yard waste collection. This fee is paid only by the 20,450 homeowners who receive City trash collection.

The stormwater utility fee is also proposed to increase, by \$6.30 to address stormwater management and Chesapeake Bay clean-up mandates. This fee is paid by all property owners, including non-taxable properties.

The City Manager has again prioritized our schools, with 40% of all new revenue proposed to go to our schools, and [full funding of the School Board's approved operating budget request.](#)

The City Manager has proposed new operating budget investments in:

- Early Childhood Education
- Fire Department Staffing
- Regional economic development
- Employee Compensation
- DASH Employee Compensation
- Recycling Services

While the City Manager was able to balance the operating budget without the need of a real estate tax rate increase, the scale of the capital facility needs facing the City, specifically in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), required the use of the proposed two-cent tax rate increase.

Within the proposed Capital Improvement Program, the City Manager proposed funding for:

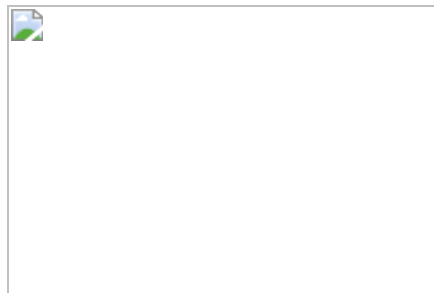
- The largest-ever ACPS capital budget, including funding for rebuilds of:
 - Minnie Howard campus of T. C. Williams High School,
 - Douglas MacArthur Elementary School
 - George Mason Elementary School
 - Cora Kelly Elementary School
 - Construction of an unspecified additional school
- A full renovation of City Hall
- Replacement of two fire stations
- Affordable housing development
- Implementation of Waterfront Flood Mitigation Plans
- A full DASH bus replacement funding plan
- WMATA (Metro) Capital Contribution
- Construction of the West End Transitway
- A road paving plan that maintains a state of good repair
- Stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure
- Investments in Recreation Infrastructure and Open Space
- Critical Information Technology systems

In the fall, when the City Council adopted our guidance for the City Manager, I was successful in amending the proposed guidance resolution to allow the City to take another step towards multi-year budgeting, by asking our staff provide more detail on the proposed expenditures for FY 2022 in addition to FY 2021 budget being proposed. [That has given the Council a better view into next year's budget.](#) It is my view that adopting a long-term approach to operating expenditures is a best practice, and prudent budgeting for the City.

No RSVP is required, and attendees receive a free medical kit upon completion.

Help become a lifesaver in our community!

In addition the budget documents linked above, [all questions asked by members of Council during the process are posted, along with answers, online for the public to review](#). Any request to change the proposed budget must be initiated with a budget question, so it is a good window into the thoughts of your elected representatives.



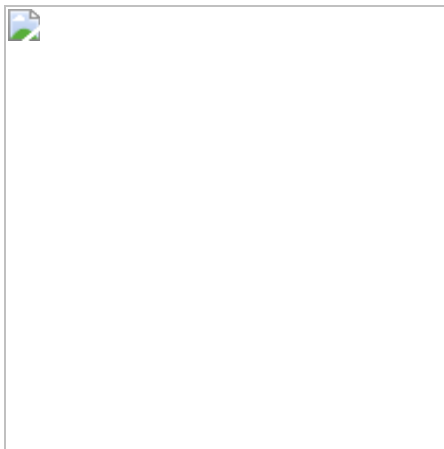
There is no more important process than the adoption of our annual budget. The budget is a reflection of the values of our community and I look forward to working with our residents and my colleagues to craft a budget that is reflective of those collective values.

[Let me know your thoughts!](#)

311 Launches!

[Last week the City officially launched Alex311](#). By dialing 311 (or 703-746-4311) on your phone, submitting requests through our [Alex311 website](#), using the Alex311 app, or using social media, you can access a variety of City services.

Our goal is to make accessing a responsive City government as easy as possible for the residents of the City.



When I began my first stint on the City Council in 2007, a resident who wanted support with a specific City service would navigate to the City's website and then send an e-mail to all seven members of City Council. One by one, we forwarded the e-mail to the appropriate member of the City staff who would then handle the request. It was inefficient at best.

About 7 years ago, [the City launched "Call, Click, Connect" as a new way for residents to submit for support for City services](#).

With the launch of Alex311, we hope to bring the process of accessing the services of your government further forward. Let me how you like it!

Real Estate Tax Base Grows

Twenty years ago, the City Council of Alexandria received its assessment report from our City Assessor. The City Council learned that between 1999 and 2000, the City's real estate tax base grew by a little over 9%. For the next 6 years, annual tax base growth never went below double digits, as the City AVERAGED 15.3% ANNUAL tax base growth between 1999 and 2006. This was an unprecedented appreciation in our tax base.

From 2006 to 2007, the City's real estate tax base grew by just a little over 4%. For the next 12 years, annual growth in the tax base never again reached 4%. From 2008 until 2019, the City's tax base grew

annually by an average of 1.47%. There were two years during this period where the tax base actually shrunk.

Last month, the City Council received the City's 2020 real estate assessments. They showed that for the first time since 2007, our real estate tax base has grown 4.15%. [This brings the City's real estate tax base to \\$42.7 billion](#). Of the \$1.7 billion increase in the real estate tax base this year, \$428.6 million, about a quarter, was from new construction.

Notably, the new construction activity in the City since last year has not resulted in the significant increase in housing units in the City. Since last year, the City has added a net total of 30 single-family housing units (including detached, semi-detached, and row homes) and a net total of 9 condo units (Garden, High-Rise, Co-Op and Townhouse). On the multi-family rental side, we did lose 1 Garden-Style apartment complex, but we gained 1 mid-rise and 4 high-rises.

Over 61% 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. For the ability of the City to fund the government the residents of our community expect, this growth is a good sign of health.

Last month, the City mailed assessment notices to each property owner and you may [view valuations online](#). Included online is information about comparable transactions that were used to calculate individual assessments.

The average assessed value for a single family home increased 4.13% to \$800,025. Of those properties, 88% of single family homes increased in value, 4% decreased, and 8% stayed the same.



The average assessed value for a condominium increased 5.84% to \$348,234. Of those properties, 94% of condominiums increased in value, 0.2% decreased, and 5.8% stayed the same. This is a big change from the previous several years where condos have lagged behind

our single family housing stock.

If City Council maintains the real estate tax rates at the current \$1.13 rate (the budget process is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter), the average single-family homeowner will pay \$400 more in real estate taxes than they did last year.

For owners of condominiums, if the City Council were to maintain the existing tax rate, those homeowners would pay \$215 more in real estate taxes than they did last year.

Commercial real estate is continuing to make recovery in the City. Commercial property assessments increased 2.80% to \$17.5 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 4.98%. This was led by \$72.4 million of multi-family residential development. Our existing office assessments shrunk by 0.2%.

Since 2016, \$1.82 billion of new growth has been added to the tax base. This generates \$21.8 million in annual new revenue. Said another way, your real estate tax rate is almost 5 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 16th, 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.

Road Paving Plan

The City Manager's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021) continues a multi-year effort to address the condition of the City's roads. [The proposed budget includes \\$5.5 million for this upcoming fiscal year \(\\$58.3 million for the next decade\) to pave miles of roads around our City.](#)

The City has 561 lane miles of roads for which it is responsible. Every 3 years, 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. This year's schedule is based on

the 2019 survey rankings.

Including the money budgeted for Fiscal Year 2021, the proposed budget includes \$58.3 million for road paving over the next decade.

If the currently proposed funding level is approved, we are scheduled to resurface the following roads next fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2020):

- Callahan Drive from King Street to Duke Street
- North Pitt Street from Oronoco Street to King Street
- King Street from Callahan Street to Dangerfield Street
- North and South Union Street from Pendleton Street to Franklin Street
- North and South Fairfax Street from Jefferson Street to Third Street
- South Walker Street from Duke Street to Stevenson Avenue
- West Taylor Run Parkway from Janneys Lane to Duke Street
- East Abingdon Drive from Second Street to Slaters Lane
- Commonwealth Avenue from E/W Braddock Road to King Street
- Duke Street from South Patrick Street to Strand Street
- Hume Avenue from Commonwealth Avenue to Richmond Highway
- North Floyd Street from Duke Street to North French Street
- Fendall Avenue from Duke Street to South Floyd Street
- Wellington Road from Beverley Drive to Chalfonte Drive
- Fillmore Avenue from Seminary Road to End
- Farm Road from Beverley Drive to Circle Terrace
- North Gladden Street from Uline Avenue North Grayson Street
- North Grayson Street from North Gladden Street to Uline Avenue
- Tulsa Place from North Gordon to End
- Uline Avenue from North Gordon Street to Taney Avenue
- North and South West Street from Duke Street to Wythe Street
- Skyhill Road from Janneys Lane to End
- Daingerfield from King Street to Duke Street

- North Morgan Street from North Chambliss Street to End
- North and South Alfred Street from First Street to Church Street
- Reading Avenue from North Beauregard Street to End
- Rayburn Avenue from North Beauregard Street to Reading Avenue
- South Iris Street from Venable Avenue to Vermont Avenue
- Cameron Mills Road from Virginia Avenue to Allison Street
- Marlboro Drive from West Braddock Road to End
- Fort Ward Place from Ellicott Street
- Ellicott Street from Marlboro Drive to End
- Moncure Dr from S View Terr to Hilton St
- Crown View Drive from Clover Way to Dartmouth Road
- Jewell Court from North Chambliss Street to End
- Anderson Court from Jewell Court to End
- North and South Saint Asaph Street from First Street to End

For Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022), we are scheduled to resurface the following roads:

- Eisenhower Avenue from Mill Road to Holland Lane
- West Braddock Road from King Street to Russell Road
- North and South Washington Street from First Street to Church Street
- North Howard Street from North Jordan Street to Raleigh Avenue
- Executive Avenue from Kentucky Avenue to Mount Vernon Avenue
- Kentucky Avenue from Old Dominion Boulevard to Russell Road
- Alabama Avenue from Kentucky Avenue to Carolina Place
- East and West Luray Avenue from West Braddock Avenue to Leslie Avenue
- Beverley Drive from Valley Drive Washington Circle
- Allison Street from Valley Drive to Old Dominion Boulevard
- Echols Avenue from Seminary Road to North Stevens Street
- Burgess Avenue Entire Length (Exclude Service Road)
- Aspen Street from Landover Street to Russell Road (Exclude Service Road)
- Guthrie Avenue from Landover Street to Mosby Street (Exclude Service Road)
- Lomack Court Entire Length
- Holly Street from Aspen Street to West Mt Ida Avenue
- Birch Street from Holly Street to Russell Road
- Pine Street from Holly Street to Russell Road
- Evans Lane from Richmond Highway to East Reed Avenue
- Lynhaven Drive from Wilson Avenue to End
- Diagonal Road from King Street to Duke Street
- Montrose Avenue from East Raymond Avenue to Richmond Highway
- Stewart Avenue from Mount Vernon Avenue to East Randolph Avenue
- Anderson Lane from West Windsor Avenue to Richards Lane
- Richards Lane from Anderson Lane to West Windsor Avenue
- North Garland Street from Fort Worth Avenue to End
- Richenbacher Avenue from North Van Dorn Street to North Pickett Street
- Lowell Avenue from North Chambliss Street to End
- South Gordon Street from Duke Street to Wheeler Avenue
- Venable Avenue from South Jordan Street to South Iris Street
- Underwood Place from South Ingram Street to End
- Cathedral Drive from Trinity Drive to End
- Benning Court from North Chambliss Street to End
- South Ingram Street from Duke Street to Vermont Avenue
- Greenwood Place from Seminary Road to End
- Knox Place Entire Length
- Rutland Place from North Pickett Street to End
- East and West Nelson Avenue from Russell Road to Leslie Avenue
- George Mason Place from Monticello Boulevard to End
- Westminster Place from Monticello Boulevard to End

- Terrett Avenue from East Mt Ida to East Randolph Avenue
- Usher Avenue from South Floyd Street to South Early Street
- Colfax Avenue from Seminary Road to North Rosser Street
- North Beauregard Street from Seminary Road to King Street
- King James Place from Seminary Road to End
- Dulany Street from Duke Street to End
- North Early Street from West Braddock Road to End

For Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023), we are scheduled to resurface the following roads:

- Eisenhower Ave Concrete from 1000' W of Cameron Park Place to Lake Cook Entrance
- Gibbon St from South Payne Street to South Union Street
- Griffith Place from Fort Williams to end
- John Carlyle Street from Eisenhower Avenue to Duke Street
- North Dearing Street from King Street to end
- Sanger Avenue from South Van Dorn to end
- Quantrell Lane from Lincolnia Road to Beauregard Street
- Templeton Place from Fort Williams Parkway to end
- Bennett Street from Saylor Place to End
- Sterling Avenue from North Quaker Lane End
- Earl Street from Oronoco Street to Princess Street
- Tower Court from South Whiting Street End
- Florence Drive from West Glebe Road to End
- Four Mile Road from Mount Vernon to Florence Drive
- West Caton Avenue from Sanford Avenue to Commonwealth Avenue
- Reinekers Lane from Diagonal Road to Duke Street
- Albany Avenue from King Street to End
- Arell Court from Duke Street to End
- Calhoun Avenue from North Rosser Street to End
- Chelsea Court from Fort Williams to End
- Clermont Avenue from Eisenhower Avenue to End
- Cockrell Court from Duke Street to End
- Coventry Lane from Gibbons to End
- East and West Oak Street from Mount Vernon Avenue to Russell Road
- East Uhler from Mount Avenue Commonwealth Avenue
- Englehardt Lane from Jamieson Avenue to End
- Farrington Avenue to South Van Dorn to the City Limits
- Fendall Avenue from Duke Street to South Floyd Street
- Furman Avenue from Taney Avenue to Uline Avenue
- Garden Drive from Usher Avenue to Vermont Avenue
- South 28th Street from King Street to End
- North Stevenson from Fillmore to End
- Palmer Place from Polk Avenue End
- Pender Court from Palmar Place to End
- Hancock Avenue from West Braddock Road to End
- Key Drive from Francis Hammond Parkway to End
- Jackson Place from Woodland Terrace to Tyler Place
- Valley Drive from Preston Road to West Braddock Road
- Lasalle avenue from North Pickett to Juliana Place
- Longview Drive from Duke Street to End
- Loyola Avenue from North Howard Street to Stonebridge Road
- Mark Center Drive from Seminary Road to North Beauregard Street
- Maris Avenue from North Van Dorn Street
- Monticello Blvd from Cameron Mills to Russell Road
- Moss Place from Fort Worth Avenue to End
- Notabane Drive from Old Dominion Boulevard to Four Mile Road
- North Quaker Lane from Duke Street to West Braddock Road
- Pommander Walk Street from Franklin Street to South Union Street
- North Frost Street from Lawrence Street to Seminary Road
- Potomac Greens Drive from Slaters Lane
- Pine Street from Russell Road to Holly Street
- Queen Street from North West Street to North Union Street
- Raleigh Avenue Entire Length

- Richmarr Place from North Latham Street to End
- Rosecrest Avenue from West Custis Avenue to Russell Road
- South Floyd from Duke Street to Wheeler Avenue
- Sunset Drive from King Street to Commonwealth Avenue
- Surry Place from North Latham Street to End
- Suter Street from Earl Street to End
- Sweeley Street from Duke Street to Colvin Street
- Talbot Place from North Pegram Street to Prospect Place
- Edsall Road from South Van Dorn to Cameron Station Road
- Jamieson Avenue from Anderson Lane to End
- Vasser Road from Cambridge to End (Vasser Place)

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

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

Holmes Run Trail Repairs

Almost 12 years ago, the City worked with the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District to assess a flooding event from 2006 and prepare a [new inundation study for the area](#).

Lake Barcroft is a 135 acre man-made lake just outside the City's border. There is a dam which has controlled releases during heavy rain events. That water flows down Holmes Run into the City of Alexandria, and at times that flow can overwhelm the Run.

On July 8th, an unprecedented rain event affected the entire region with significant impacts on the City. [The equivalent of a month's worth of rain fell in one hour](#). This volume inundated our City's stormwater sewers, and caused flash flooding and sewer backflow in many areas of the City.

Intersections, streets, and parking garages flooded. Our Fire



Department was called upon to conduct rescues of drivers who became stranded. The City was lucky to not experience any serious injuries or loss of life.

One of the most significant areas of damage was along

Holmes Run on the trail, in four locations, including two bridges.

There had been a storm previously in 2018 which had caused some damage, but the July 2019 storm had significant impacts.

The four sections that require repair are:

- Replacement of trail and streambank restoration north of North Morgan Street and west of Beauregard (Dora Kelley Park)
- Replacement of Trail Bridge east of Beauregard Street and west of I-395 (Holmes Run Scenic Greenway)
- Repair access ramp and embankment to the stream crossing at Ripley Street
- Repair of trail bridge support structure at 4600 Duke Street

The City has submitted for partial reimbursement for this damage to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. However, there will still be significant local cost. The City Manager's proposed budget includes \$6 million to address these repairs.

While the Council is working with our staff to accelerate (as well as segment) this significant work, but unfortunately it is not believed it will be fully restored for up to 3 years.

Housing For Alexandria's Future

Last month, [I wrote an op/ed in the Alexandria Gazette opposing proposed state legislation](#) that would impose zoning policy changes on communities around the Commonwealth as a method to address affordability challenges. While the legislation was well-meaning I was fearful it would exacerbate other challenges faced by our community and remove local authority over land-use policy.

[One of the pieces of proposed legislation would have required the City to allow Accessory Dwelling Units \(ADUs\) by right.](#)

While the legislation failed, this month, the City will kick-off its [study of Accessory Dwelling Units](#) and we want your input!

On Thursday March 12th at 6:30 PM in the Mount Vernon Recreation Center (2701 Commonwealth Avenue) and Monday March 30th at 6:30 PM at Beatley Library (5005 Duke Street) we will host community meetings for residents to learn about the concept and offer their input.

An accessory dwelling unit, affectionately known as a "granny flat" for its inter-generational living attributes, is an independent living unit attached or separate from an existing primary residence.

Accessory dwelling units were originally identified in the [City's Housing Master Plan in 2013](#)



as a strategy to allow inter-generational living, provide supportive housing for disabled adults and support market-based housing creation. At our most recent Housing Summit, an Alexandria architect gave an interesting presentation on his effort to bring an ADU to

his property nearby. [You can watch the video online.](#)

[In September, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments \(COG\) unanimously adopted new regional housing creation targets.](#) This is the first regional commitment to accelerate the development of housing supply as a means to address our affordability crisis.

These targets commit the City to the creation of additional units, with most of those units committed to be affordable for low to middle income households. To ensure that this housing creation does not exacerbate existing transportation challenges, most of this new housing must be located near job centers and high-capacity transportation infrastructure.

In September of last year, the Board of Directors of COG [accepted a report that identified that 100,000 additional housing units will need to be constructed within the region just to meet expected job growth.](#) That is 100,000 units BEYOND what is already planned to be developed.

The COG analysis focuses on the housing production required to meet the economic competitiveness and transportation efficiency goals for the region. Even with increased housing production at the levels recommended, it's unlikely to be sufficient supply to address affordability challenges.

[In response to requests earlier last year by Council, our Interdepartmental Work Program includes a comprehensive review of zoning tools available to advance affordability, including Accessory Dwelling Units, inclusionary zoning, conversion policies and beyond.](#)

When the City attempts to address housing affordability, it is going up against powerful economic forces. Employing market-based solutions to these affordability challenges is where the City can be most effective.

As we work to implement the City's Housing Master Plan, we must seek to comprehend and be willing to address all of the factors that challenge affordability in the City. Amazon's arrival and Virginia Tech's expansion doesn't dramatically change the affordability challenge in our region, but it does perhaps give us the impetus to make the difficult decisions to address it.

[Let me know your thoughts!](#)

The General Assembly Session

Next weekend the Virginia General Assembly should conclude their so-called "long-session" and adjourn for the year. The General Assembly alternates between a 45 day session in odd number years and a 60 day session in even number years.

Given the results of the elections in November, this session has been on that significantly alter the trajectory of the Commonwealth. For the first in 8 years, Democrats controlled the State Senate and for the first time in 22 years, Democrats controlled the House of Delegates.

Alexandria's delegation has enjoyed an unprecedented level of influence during this session. Our delegation now boasts BOTH Majority Leaders (Senator Saslaw leading the State Senate and Delegate Herring leading the House of Delegates) and a few committee chairs.

Every year, the City Council adopts a Legislative Package for the upcoming General Assembly session. While the state government is certainly a significant financial supporter of the City's budget, Richmond also sets a legal environment that affects how we provide services to our residents.



For years, most of our legislative priorities have not fared well in the General Assembly. Our priorities have rarely aligned with those leading the majority caucuses in either house. This year, things have been very different.

Given the large changes in Richmond, we took a different approach to our Legislative Package this year. Along with Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, I serve on the City's Legislative Committee, which recommends the Legislative Package each year to our colleagues.

In the fall, [the City Council unanimously adopted the City's 2020 Legislative Package.](#)

[This year, we chose to prepare a "Statement of Legislative Principles" and a "Statement of Legislative Priorities."](#) Given the breadth of legislation filed, and potentially enacted, we felt it more appropriate to weigh in on the broader themes that we wished to see addressed on behalf of the City.

While budgets for the Commonwealth are large and comprehensive documents with pluses and minuses for the City, it is safe to say that the Governor's proposed budget was one of the most advantageous

to the City, its priorities and its taxpayers, than we have seen in some time.

The "money" committees in the House of Delegates and the State Senate are now working to conclude their work so that the budget can be enacted.

Included in the budget that is nearing adoption are new investments in:

- At-Risk Add-On, a supplement for K-12 school funding that benefits school system who have large populations in poverty, as Alexandria does.
- Combined Sewer remediation work
- Affordable Housing
- Early Childhood Education
- Funding to support the [City's expansion of the Freedom House museum](#).

Two years ago, the General Assembly adopted legislation to provide Virginia's share of money to support the stabilization of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

The legislation that was adopted was [a bill from then-Delegate Tim Hugo](#). While that legislation did acknowledge the important need to protect Metro as the linchpin of the region's economy, it also had significant flaws. The key flaw in the Metro funding legislation was that while it did come up with \$154 million of money for WMATA, [it did so by removing \\$100 million of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority \(NVTA\) resources](#). For Alexandria, these funds are used primarily for transit initiatives, including Potomac Yard Metro, the [West End Transitway](#), and DASH Service expansions.

During this year's session, both the Senate and the House of Delegates are advancing legislation that would restore a significant portion of that money. While the Governor proposed an approach in his budget, both bodies are exploring variations on the exact mix of funding sources.

Alexandria, along with the other jurisdictions in the region have been very pleased to see this effort to restore the funding that was redirected two years ago. Given that the money that was redirected during the 2018 session was generated in Northern Virginia by taxes on this region, our position has been that the restoration should come primarily from statewide revenue sources, to reduce the impact on our taxpayers.

At this point the legislative vehicles for correcting this problem is [a bill from Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn](#) and [a bill from Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw](#). Both the House of Delegates and the Senate have "insisted" on their versions of the "fix," so conferees have been appointed from each body to come to a compromise before the General Assembly adjourns.

It is definitely a big change in the General Assembly. I look forward to continuing working with our delegation in the House of Delegates and the Senate to successfully conclude this session.

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

Planning for What is Next

Sometimes when an elected body creates its calendar, it is making it policy. With limited time among the City Council, our City staff and the community, how we choose to prioritize that time is a policy-making activity in and of itself.

Last month the City Council [adopted its second-ever Council Work Plan](#) for this calendar year. We also received [the draft of our staff's Interdepartmental Work Program](#) for the upcoming fiscal year.

In the City Council work plan, we prioritized policy areas for particular focus in the months ahead, including:

- Environment/Climate Change
- After-School Services
- Workforce Development
- Housing Affordability
- Torpedo Factory Art Center Vibrancy Plan
- Economic Development

City Council will work to shape the parameters of these policy discussions as we get closer to each discussion, to ensure that we provide appropriate oversight on ongoing policy initiatives or to direct new policy direction.

In May of 2011, the City Council adopted a ["Long-Range Multi-Department Planning Work Program" for Fiscal Year 2012](#). This document was the first attempt to evolve the work program that Council has previously adopted for the Planning & Zoning Department into a document that now incorporated multiple departments engaged in long-range planning and policy efforts.

Today, the "Long Range Interdepartmental Planning Work Program"



is adopted each year and serves as a schedule and framework for planning and policy initiatives. As a focal point for prioritizing initiatives and ensuring adequate

resources for those initiatives, this document has been quite successful.

This Multi-Departmental Work Program is typically discussed by Council early each year and then adopted post-budget adoption in June.

[You can watch the presentation of this year's work program and the City Council's discussion online.](#)

This year's plan includes numerous critical priorities for the City including:

- North Potomac Yard/Virginia Tech campus planning
- Arlandria/Del Ray Plan Update
- Duke Street East Plan
- Open Space Planning
- Mobility Plan
- "Zoning for Housing"
- Public Housing Redevelopment

We have important work ahead of the City as we work to manage change and protect the future and quality of life of our City. These planning efforts help shape that future and communicate priorities to our community.

Residential Cut Through Traffic Prevention

As the City continues its outreach efforts as part of [the Alexandria Mobility Plan update](#) one of the most consistent areas of input we have received is concerns about the impacts of congestion on quality of life.

[The data collection that was performed for the Central Alexandria Traffic Study revealed that relatively small number of residential streets were carrying inordinate amounts of "cut-through" traffic,](#) mostly using those streets to access the Telegraph interchange with the Beltway.

During last year's General Assembly session, the General Assembly [enacted legislation that would allow Fairfax County to enact turn restrictions and utilize a permit structure to exempt residents from those restrictions.](#)

With the assistance of Senator Adam Ebbin, the Virginia Attorney General's office has determined that the City's existing charter provides the City with the authority to impose a similar regime.

[Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Councilman John Taylor Chapman and myself have proposed that the City look at developing a program that would bring this tool into our toolbox.](#) Additionally, we have also proposed that the City look to exercise existing authority that the City has to impose higher fines for those drivers that exceed the speed limit in residential areas.

Taken together, we hope to advance our safety initiatives and address quality of life concerns.

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