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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

March 1, 2021

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A year ago today, I wrote to all of you in this newsletter and I mentioned, perhaps naively, that we had not yet seen a case of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

March of 2020 changed everything, for our City, our Commonwealth and our nation.

The City remains in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, but with real hope for the first time for an end to this horrific experience:

- In December, the City began administering COVID-19 vaccines.

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)
[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)
[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)
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[As of yesterday 29,319 doses have been administered to Alexandrians and 9,656 Alexandrians are fully vaccinated \(6%\).](#)

- [ANY resident of Virginia can now register for vaccination!](#) The Commonwealth launched a new statewide registration system last month and ALL residents are encouraged to sign-up. You may also verify your registration if you had previously signed-up.
- The City is vaccinating residents in [Phase 1A](#) and [Phase 1B](#). You can [review how our Health Department is prioritizing within the Phase 1B category.](#)
- The City was in the first group of jurisdictions in Virginia allowed to enter Phase 1B. The City currently has a waiting list of over 45,000 Alexandrians signed up for vaccination.
- Unfortunately, we expect to receive only 3,000 doses next week (combined 1st and 2nd doses). Vaccine supply continues to be very constrained.
- Last week, [we released information regarding the demographics of those who have received the vaccine in Alexandria so far.](#) Our Health Department has implemented several efforts to ensure equity in access to the vaccine.
- In October, our COVID-19 case volume began increasing considerably. It remains high, but is dropping again.
- [Alexandria has continued a free COVID-19 testing initiative, with kiosks available daily at 3 locations.](#)
- Over the weekend we surpassed 122,000 COVID tests performed in the City.
- Hospitalizations in Northern Virginia increased considerably after the holidays and matched all-time highs. They are now decreasing again.
- Our hospital capacity has remained stable.
- Our 7-day testing positivity rate peaked two months ago, reaching our highest point (13.3%) in over 6 months at the beginning of

January after reaching our lowest point ever in October (3.3%). As of yesterday we are now at 5.4%.

- **The Governor last month announced that some of the new COVID restrictions put in place before the holidays will be eased effective today.**
- **In August the Commonwealth released the free COVIDWISE exposure notification app for iOS and Android devices. Download it today!**

The ACT Now COVID-19 Response Fund has now re-branded as the Alexandria Resilience Fund., which is distributing money into our community to support the many needs this crisis has created. Please join me in supporting this fundraising effort.

The latest updates will continue to be posted regularly on the City's Coronavirus website.

The Virginia Department of Health posts data daily online regarding positive tests, hospitalizations and deaths.

The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association is posting daily updates regarding hospital capacity and capabilities.

I continue my monthly Virtual Town Hall meetings on the first Thursday of each month.

You can watch last month's Town Hall online and please join me at this link on Thursday the 4th at 8 PM to watch and participate live.

Volunteers are needed throughout our community. Please refer to Volunteer Alexandria for opportunities to give back to those in need.

We are still actively recruiting volunteers to join our Alexandria Medical Reserve Corps. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers, both with and without medical training, have been critical to our efforts throughout this pandemic.

We recently launched our "Adopt-A-Hand Sanitizer" partnership program. We

are looking for private partners to host hand sanitizers throughout our community.

Contact me anytime. Let me know how I can help.

Initiatives and Updates



Budget Presentation

Last month, the City Manager presented **his proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022) and his proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Fiscal Year 2022 through Fiscal Year 2031.** This begins City Council's annual budget process, which will culminate in the adoption of the budget on May 5th.

You **can watch the City Manager's presentation of the budget to the public, which was recorded shortly after the presentation to the City Council.**

A week from today, the City Council will hold our public hearing on the proposed budget. The public hearing will be held on Monday March 8th beginning at 5:30 PM. **If you wish to address the Council on the proposed budget, you can sign-up to speak online.**

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).

The budget is being considered and adopted against the backdrop of an extraordinary set of constraints and uncertainty. **In November, the City Manager presented his initial outlook for the upcoming budget at our annual Council retreat.**

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.

In Fiscal Year 2010, a little over 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 2020, the General Fund budget increased by an average of 3.2% per year. The budget that Council adopted last year, at the beginning of the COVID crisis, shrunk spending 1.6% from the previous year.

The work force in City Government is now 2,674 FTEs, essentially what it was over 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. Layering in the challenges caused by the ongoing pandemic and the hill becomes even steeper.

It was in this context that the City Manager prepared and presented his budget. The City Manager's proposed operating budget is \$767.7 million. This represents a 1.9% increase in spending versus the current approved budget.

In preparing this budget, we experienced a run of good luck, in an otherwise challenging year:

- Residential real estate values increased at a higher rate than we expected
- Our City staff identified \$11.8 million of expenditure reductions, including leaving 38 positions vacant
- Our Employee health insurance and retirement contributions remained steady or declined
- Student enrollment within our Schools is down for the first time in a decade and a half
- The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has proposed a budget that does not assume more resources from local governments

Given these factors, the City Manager was able to propose the first reduction in the real estate tax rate in 15 years, bringing the rate from \$1.13 to \$1.11.

With the impacts of average assessment increases included, this means the average single-family homeowner would pay \$283 more in 2021 than in 2020. The average condo owner would pay \$228 more in 2021 versus 2020.

In addition, the City Manager has proposed no increase in the annual Residential Refuse Fee of \$460, which covers the costs of trash, recycling and yard waste collection (among other services). This fee is paid only

by the 20,647 homeowners who receive City trash collection.

The stormwater utility fee will be doubling (as addressed later in this newsletter) to address stormwater management and Chesapeake Bay clean-up mandates. This fee is paid by all property owners, including non-taxable properties. The new annual fee will be \$78.40 for condos, \$117.60 for townhomes, \$280 for small single-family homes and \$467.60 for large single-family homes.

The City Manager has again prioritized our schools, with 35% of all new revenue proposed to go to our schools, and **full funding of the School Board's approved operating budget request**.

This was not the year for large increases in the operating budget, but the City Manager has proposed some new operating budget investments in:

- Early Childhood Education
- Community Policing
- Language Access
- Employee Compensation
- Higher Education for Alexandria Students
- Police/Behavioral Health Co-Response
- Yard Waste Services

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

- The largest-ever ACPS capital budget (\$551 million), including funding for rebuilds of:
 - Minnie Howard campus of T. C. Williams High School,
 - Douglas MacArthur Elementary School (already funded last year)
 - George Mason Elementary School
 - Cora Kelly Elementary School
 - Construction of an additional 600-student school
- A renovation of City Hall
- Replacement of two fire stations
- Affordable housing development
- Implementation of Waterfront Flood Mitigation Plans
- Landmark Mall Redevelopment
- Holmes Run Trail Restoration
- Municipal Fiber Deployment
- A full DASH bus replacement funding plan
- WMATA (Metro) Capital Contribution
- Construction of the West End Transitway and Duke Street 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 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!



Flood Plan Advances

Last month, the City Council unanimously adopted an **an ordinance to double our Stormwater Utility Fee.** to significantly increase the resources available for investments in our storm sewer infrastructure. This increase will cost a condo owner an additional \$39 annually, a townhouse owner an additional \$58, a small single-family homeowner an additional \$140 and a large single-family homeowner an additional \$233.

The Stormwater Utility Fee revenue, paid by all property owners in the City (including non-taxable properties), will allow for an acceleration of major capacity projects and "spot improvements," an increase in channel maintenance, new "state-of-good repair" investments, property owner grants and new staffing in support of these projects and the system.

The Council also created a new Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group. This new committee will help advise the Council and our staff as we work to implement these important investments. **We are accepting applications for this committee now. Applications are due by 5 PM today.**

Recently enacted state legislation, sponsored by Senator Adam Ebbin at the City's request, gives the City the flexibility to use these resources to address all of the challenges facing our residents.

This increase will bring in an additional \$8.5 million annually and **support a newly accelerated 10-year program of investments.** While these funds will address many smaller "spot improvement" projects, this funding will allow the City to undertake 11 of the top priority storm sewer capacity projects over the next decade:

- Commonwealth & Glebe: \$34 million

- Ashby & Glebe: \$16 million
- Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: \$60 million
- Edison & Dale: \$13 million
- Dewitt Avenue: \$15 million
- East Mason Avenue: \$1 million
- Notabene & Old Dominion: \$4 million
- Mount Vernon, E. Glendale, E. Luray & E. Alexandria: \$10 million
- E. Monroe & Wayne: \$3 million
- Russell & W. Rosemont: \$6 million
- Russell & W. Rosemont (south): \$8 million

Over the last several months, the City Council has worked to accelerate efforts to address chronic flooding issues, this time due to more frequent and more intense rain events. These storms are causing our residents and businesses to suffer significant financial loss due to damage from flooding and sanitary sewer backflow.

Addressing this challenge requires immediate and sustained action in the following areas:

- Infrastructure Investment and Maintenance
- Financial and Technical Assistance to Residents
- Development Policy Reform

In November, the City Council [received the initial output from our recently-formed interdepartmental team](#) working to address these challenges. You can [watch the full worksession online](#).

In June of 2018, [property owners in Alexandria paid a Stormwater Utility Fee for the first time ever](#). The creation of this fee was driven by the need for additional revenue to comply with [the City's MS4 Permit. The permit reflects Alexandria's obligations to reduce pollutants contained in storm run-off which makes its way to the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways](#).

The fee applies to all properties (regardless of their taxable status). For commercial properties, it is assessed based on the impervious surfaces on the property. For residential properties, there are four tiers (apartment, townhome, small single-family home and large single-family home). [There is a credit system in place to encourage actions that assist the City's storm sewers](#). Essentially the fee is structured to be a user fee for the City's stormwater handling.

[Prior to this increase the stormwater utility fee brought in \\$8.4 million this year \(which grows to over \\$11 million when that revenue is borrowed against\), and \\$200 million over the decade \(assuming modest, regular increases\)](#)

While important, these efforts are insufficient to address the capacity issues that remain throughout the City and

will not protect the City from the impacts of this flooding in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

For over 3 decades, **Alexandria has designed and planned for our storm sewer system to withstand a "10-year" storm event.** Said another way, a storm that is expected to have a 10% chance of happening every year, is the designed capacity of our system.

For Alexandria, a 10-year storm event constitutes one that will drop 2.28 inches of rain over a 60-minute period or 4.81 inches over a 24-hour period. This is a capacity that is at, and in many cases above, that of neighboring jurisdictions.

Yet, now three times in the past 18 months, we have had rain events that far exceeded this capacity. This is not sustainable.

Alexandria spends a significant amount of money on infrastructure designed to manage water. **In April of last year, the City Council approved a \$2.1 billion, ten-year Capital Improvement Program.** Of that, over \$150 million is to address stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure. **Alexandria Renew Enterprises, the City's sewer authority, plans another \$593 million of capital investments over the next decade,** primarily the RiverRenew project to remediate the Combined Sewer (sanitary and stormwater) system that serves Old Town.

Together, nearly \$750 million is planned for water investments. This spending dwarfs planned investments in schools, transportation and other major priorities. Only a decade ago, **planned investments in water infrastructure were less than a quarter of this total,** but addressing these challenges will require a sustained increase in that investment level of a long period of time.

The investments required in our Sanitary Sewer system are funded by maintenance fees paid by existing customers (on the Alexandria Renew Enterprises bills) and by connection fees paid by developers.

In 2016, the City conducted a comprehensive Storm Sewer Capacity Analysis. This exhaustive study looked at each of the City's eight watersheds (Backlick Run, Cameron Run, Four Mile Run, Holmes Run, Hooff's Run, Holmes Run, Potomac River, Strawberry Run and Taylor Run) and identified problem areas where current capacity does not meet our 10-year storm design standard.

The study identified 90 separate deficiencies in the system, and estimated \$61 million of construction costs required to address those deficiencies (construction costs are approximately half of expected budget costs).

Over half of these deficiencies are concentrated in the Hooff's Run and Four Mile Run watersheds. The reports of flooding from our residents during these most recent events align closely to these deficiencies. It is that study that has informed the list of priority capacity projects listed earlier.

From the maintenance perspective, it is also clear that we have work to do. The City is currently undertaking a \$2 million effort to clear approximately 7,000 feet of the Hooff's Run Culvert. This 70+ year old urban culvert is designed to be "self-cleaning." After the July 2019 flooding event, the City commissioned a firm to do a **robotic assessment of the condition of the culvert**. That assessment showed an average of 5% obstruction across the culvert and some areas of 15-20% obstruction. The clearing of the culvert commenced last year and is expected to take several months. It does not appear to have been done before, certainly not in recent memory.

We will also work to expand efforts to assist homeowners in making their properties more resilient. **The City has long had a program in place to fund the installation of Sewer Backflow Prevention devices**. These devices help prevent sanitary sewer backflow from entering homes during severe rain events.

In addition to maintaining this program, the City will create grant programs to assist property owners in making improvements. The budget the City Manager has proposed has included the creation of a new Floodproofing Grant Program, to provide grants of up to \$5,000 to residents and businesses making improvements to their properties to improve flood resiliency.

For development, whether large-scale, mixed-use development or a small residential addition, **Alexandria's stringent stormwater requirements** stipulate that conditions after development to be the same and oftentimes better than they were. As a consequence, the flooding we have experienced in the City is typically in established neighborhoods, areas of our City where we have not seen new development (aside from infill) in decades. Yet, there may be options to further strengthen these existing requirements. We have sought additional authority from the General Assembly for these expanded requirements.

A climate-resilient City requires investments and potentially new policies to ensure that residents of our City do not suffer devastating damage with such frequency.

Putting in place the infrastructure that can support a changing climate will be a significant undertaking for our community. It will involve a large commitment of new resources and possibly private property impacts. I am pleased that the City has made this new investment.

Property Assessments

Twenty one 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 year, 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 grew 4.15%.

With the impact of COVID over the last year, our real estate tax base appreciation has reverted to the pattern seen over the past decade and a half.

This year, our overall real estate tax base grew by 2.69%. **This brings the City's real estate tax base to \$43.83 billion.** Of the \$1.1 billion increase in the real estate tax base this year, \$227 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 6 single-family housing units (including detached, semi-detached, and row homes) and a net total of 77 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 3 mid-rise and 1 high-rise.

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.

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.

This year, there were two very different stories in our tax base, as the residential tax base increased by 6.02% and the commercial tax base, ravaged by COVID, dropped by 1.96%. This is the largest increase in the residential tax base since 2006.

The average assessed value for a single family home increased 4.54% to \$839,961. Of those properties, 93% of single family homes increased in value, 1% decreased, and 6% stayed the same.

The average assessed value for a condominium increased 3.98% to \$375,070. Of those properties, 95.6% of condominiums increased in value, 0.3% decreased, and 4.1% stayed the same.

Commercial real estate was particularly hard hit. Commercial property assessments decreased by 1.96% to \$17.2 billion. Offices dropped 6.52% and hotels lost nearly a third of their value.

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 3.53%. This was led by \$110.1 million of multi-family residential development.

Since 2016, \$1.74 billion of new growth has been added to the tax base. This generates \$19.6 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 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.

Road Paving Plan

The City Manager's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022) continues a multi-

year effort to address the condition of the City's roads. The proposed budget includes \$6.3 million for this upcoming fiscal year (\$60.3 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.

While the PCI score informs the schedule, our staff must also coordinate these investments with utility work planned by private and public entities, as well as other projects.

If the currently proposed funding level is approved, we are scheduled to resurface the following roads next fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2021):

- 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
- Monticello Blvd from Cameron Mills to Russell Road
- 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
- Guthrie Avenue from Landover Street to Mosby Street
- 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 Dangerfield Road to King 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
- 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
- Dulaney Street from Duke Street to End
- North Early Street from West Braddock Road to End

For Fiscal Year 2023 (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
- 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 1
- 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
- Saylor Place Entire Length
- 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 Palmer 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

- Beverley Drive from Valley Drive Washington Circle
- 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)

For Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024), we are scheduled to resurface the following roads:

- Duke Street from Dulany St to Route 1
- S Washington Street from I-395 to Duke Street
- N Washington Street from Cameron Street to First Street
- King Street from Janney's Lane to Dangerfield Rd
- Cloverway Drive from Dartmouth Road to Janney's Lane
- Holland Street from Duke to Eisenhower Avenue
- Dale Street from Edison Street to End
- Oakley Place from East Timber Branch Parkway to end
- Orleans Place from N Gaillard Street to end
- Ormond Avenue from North Gaillard Street to North Howard
- Sylvan Court from Trinity Drive to end
- Edison Street from West Reed Avenue to end
- North Clarens Street from Trinity Drive to end
- North Breckinridge Place from Lincolnia Road to end

- Murray Avenue from Swann Avenue to Calvert Avenue
- Oakville Street from Swann Ave to Fannon Street
- Fannon Street from Richmond Highway End
- Juliana Place from North Picket St to End
- North Breckinridge Place from Lincolnia Road to end

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

A Transparent Government

Last month, nearly [all elected officials in the state](#) were required to submit an annual [Statement of Economic Interests](#). While these documents are subject to public inspection in our Clerk's office, at my request, over five years ago, Alexandria [became the first local government in Virginia to post these disclosures online](#). We may still be the only jurisdiction that does so.

About 17 years ago, [Alexandria became one of the earliest jurisdictions in Virginia to post local campaign finance reports online](#). Anyone can easily review who finances the campaigns of Alexandria's elected officials.

In 2009, I along with then-Councilman Smedberg and then-Councilman Krupicka, [successfully sought approval from Richmond](#) to impose new restrictions on land-use applicants. Specifically, the new laws we adopted [require land-use applicants to reveal any financial interests that they might have with policymakers](#).

Eight years ago, we made improvements to the motions that the City Council makes and votes on to initiate executive sessions. These changes serve to provide our residents with more information about the closed sessions that Council conducts.

Eight years ago, we moved the Council's work sessions from the Council Work Room (off camera) into the Council chambers so that the public can more easily observe our discussions.

The City also began [posting online the reports of our Internal Auditor for public review](#).

In January of 2016, [the Council adopted a Transparency Resolution to consider ideas for improving transparency in City operations](#). The adopted resolution included language that I drafted requesting that our Clerk begin producing an annual report detailing the Council's use of executive session during the previous year. Executive session is a closed

meeting of Council, neither televised nor witnessed by any members of the general public, for specific purposes.

The **Code of Virginia strictly limits the circumstances where the City Council can meet in executive session.** As a practical matter, the sessions are used primarily to address personnel issues, litigation strategy, and the acquisition or disposition of public property. In the case of the latter two examples, the executive sessions are used to protect the City's negotiating posture and thus protect the taxpayer dollar.

Before going into executive session, the Council must vote on the reason for the executive session. After the executive session concludes, the Council must return into public view and each member must certify that we complied with the law during the private session.

The **latest of these executive session reports is now posted and available for public consumption.** It shows that the Council met in executive session 8 times during the last Council term and each vote to go into executive session was unanimous.

I have always believed that, as Justice Louis Brandeis wrote in 1913, "sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants." I do believe that government should continue to seek new ways to provide public accessibility to information about their government, to ensure ethical and accountable government.



Putting Federal Funds To Work

On Saturday, **the United States House of Representatives passed the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion piece of legislation that contains a \$350 billion local government assistance package.**

This legislation will now go to the Senate for consideration. In enacted, this will provide a significant infusion of cash, with little restriction on its use, for the City. **In anticipation of this funding, the City Council spent time at our last legislative meeting determining priorities for this next round.**

While the City Manager has recommended a framework similar to how the City utilized previous COVID relief funding, I have pushed for us to broaden our thinking. This will be a large infusion of one-time money. **I believe we should use this money to create sustainable structures that will not only help us recover, but benefit the City for decades to come.**

In May of last year, the City received our **first tranche of Federal CARES Act** money. **We have put**

that money to good use in benefiting the residents and businesses in need in our City.

In June, as we were on track to fully expend the \$13.9 million that the City received, **I wrote to urge the quick release of the second tranche of funding.** At the end of July, **the Governor announced the allocation of that money** to address the significant need that remained.

From the beginning of this crisis, it has been clear that the two levels of government, local and state, who are required to balance our budgets annually, could not address the immense financial need that has been created. Only the Federal Government could provide a sufficient amount of money to address some of these challenges.

While jurisdictions around the country have faced real criticism for frivolous expenditure of these scarce funds, the City committed early in this crisis to ensure that we effectively used these funds to assist our residents and businesses who have suffered during this crisis and that we leave no dollar on the table. I believe we did just that.

As we concluded the year and the original deadline for the expenditure of funds, the City used the entirety of the \$27.8 million we received:

- \$8.9 million was utilized for the City's COVID-19 response (City staffing, PPE, public health investments, etc)
- \$4.1 million was utilized to address food insecurity in our City
- \$6.5 million was utilized for emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention efforts
- \$5.5 million was utilized for grants to small businesses
- \$2 million was utilized to provide resources to non-profits addressing need in our City
- \$800,000 was utilized to provide childcare to families in need

While we have expended significant amounts of money to address this crisis, the largest financial impact on the City has been the loss of revenue. The CARES Act funds were not allowed to replace the revenue that the City lost, but it did help us support the residents and businesses who are suffering during this time.

While there is new hope that COVID-19 may soon be behind us, the hardship faced by our residents and businesses will continue for a while to come. The City will continue to find ways to provide the support required. I am hopeful we will take this opportunity to use these resources to wisely shape our future.

Taylor Run, Strawberry Run & Lucky Run

Just over a decade ago, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made a historic commitment to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. **With the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), the EPA committed six states and the District of Columbia to significant reductions in pollutants across a 64,000 square-mile watershed.**

The establishment of this TMDL imposed a "pollution diet" on the entire watershed, committing to reductions of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment from flowing into the Bay. To meet these ambitious goals, this TMDL was divided into smaller TMDLs for waterways and jurisdictions throughout the watershed.

Meeting this commitment to the future of the Bay requires extensive, collective action across the watershed. Alexandria is working to do its part.

The process has not always been smooth. Our neighbors in Fairfax County partnered with the Commonwealth to sue the EPA challenging the TMDL that was set for Accotink Creek. **The lawsuit was successful, disallowing an EPA attempt to regulate the volume of run-off, as opposed to specific pollutants.**

In order to meet the City's obligations under the Federal Clean Water Act and the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, the City holds an MS4 Permit (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System). **The permit, issued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, imposes a "pollution diet" on the City.** We are in the second 5-year permit cycle that will culminate in reaching our portion of the TMDL.

By 2023, we must meet 40% of the TMDL. By 2028, we must reach 100%.

The City is on track to meet our obligations to the Chesapeake Bay.

One of the most effective ways for the City to achieve these aggressive pollution reduction targets is to make improvements to City-owned properties. In urban areas like Alexandria, achieving these reductions can be challenging, given the limited amount of public land.

To ease the burden on Alexandria's taxpayers, the City has sought funding from the Commonwealth. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality administers the **Stormwater Local Assistance Fund** (SLAF), which provides matching grants to assist local governments in addressing these requirements.

The City recently completed two major stormwater projects, the **Lake Cook Stormwater Management Retrofit Project** and **the Ben Brenman Pond Stormwater Management Retrofit Project**.

The Lake Cook project, was the beneficiary of \$1.5 million of SLAF funding, and made significant improvements to better treat stormwater and enhance the natural resources at this location along Eisenhower Avenue.

The Ben Brenman Pond project, was the beneficiary of \$1.75 million of SLAF funding, and made improvements to better filter pollutants and upgrade landscaping at this location in Cameron Station.

The City has now received SLAF funding for three other projects. **The EPA has advanced stream restoration as a technique for the reduction of pollutants in the Bay**. This technique involves repairing the human impacts on streams, with the goal of restoring these streams back to their natural states.

After an assessment helped prioritize and assess the pollutant reduction opportunities, the City selected three projects to be submitted to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Each was awarded SLAF funding by the state.

The Lucky Run Stream Restoration project received \$668,000 of SLAF funding and proposes to enhance the stream, re-introduce native plants, and improve the aesthetics of this area located in the shadow of Interstate 395 on the West End. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2017. **More information was presented to the community at a meeting in 2019**.

The Strawberry Run Stream Restoration project received \$800,000 of SLAF funding and proposes making natural stream restoration improvements in an area bounded by Fort Williams Parkway, Taft Avenue and Duke Street. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2018. **A public meeting was held in the fall to collect input on this project**.

The Taylor Run Stream Restoration has received \$2.55 million of SLAF funding and proposes restoring the natural stream-bed and repairing a threatened sanitary sewer connection in an area near the Chinquapin Recreation Center. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2018. **At the end of January, a community meeting was held to review changes and solicit community feedback**.

Together, these are very important environmental projects for our City.

At Taylor Run, in addition to protecting a sanitary sewer line running through the area, this project will result in 9% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 30% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 4% of our required sediment reduction.

At Lucky Run, this project will result in 9% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 26% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 57% of our required sediment reduction.

At Strawberry Run, this project will result in 10% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 34% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 14% of our required sediment reduction.

The City has important obligations to improve the quality of the water in the waterways of our region. These investments maintain our commitment to the future of the Chesapeake Bay.

School Reopening

Tomorrow, **the first cohort of hybrid students will return to Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) buildings**. This is welcome progress in efforts to bring our students back to in-person education across the City.

On March 16th, all hybrid students will return to classrooms for two days a week. We still have considerable work ahead as we must create the public health conditions and meet the physical plant requirements to support a safe return to classrooms for students, educators and support staff alike.

The City's Health Department has worked closely for months with ACPS to support a safe return to classrooms. **Alexandria was the first jurisdiction in the Commonwealth to begin vaccinating our teachers. Governor Ralph Northam came to Alexandria to witness the first vaccination**. We will continue to push to explore existing facilities that may be repurposed to support the return to in-person learning, either in the spring or in the fall if necessary.

In a season of many tragedies and loss, the loss of a considerable amount of education for our children has been particularly frustrating. Children should be in school learning. Watching some students miss the traditional senior year of high school and others miss the beginning of Kindergarten is a loss that can never be replaced.

In the fall, [the Virginia Department of Health posted a new view of the Commonwealth's COVID data that reflects the new "Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making" that were issued by the Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\).](#)

The [CDC has now updated their guidance to reflect strategies to support a safe return to in-person learning.](#)

Educational policymakers around our nation are in an impossible situation as they attempt to provide a first-class education to our students against the backdrop of an extraordinary pandemic.

For our students and families, our schools serve many important functions beyond educational instruction. They provide child-care, food and nutrition services, health care services, transportation and more. The pandemic has forced a disaggregation of how we provide school. Filling the gaps has required difficult choices and partnerships with various public agencies, non-profits and private providers.

There is no question that policymakers influencing school decisions want to see our students back in school. As a parent of two ACPS students myself, I share that desire. [The health benefits of students being in school together are considerable.](#)

I recognize there are stark realities presented by virtual education. Many of our students cannot learn virtually. Students will fall behind academically, socially and emotionally. Some of our more vulnerable students (lower-income, special education, limited language proficiency, etc) are in an even more precarious situation. I don't believe you will find anyone involved in educational policy-making right now who believes this is optimal.

The work of supporting our families is not solely the work of ACPS. The City government, our non-profit partners and our community will need to collaborate to provide the critical services our students and their families require during this time. The City has committed additional resources to our schools, identified facilities and staffing support. Those efforts will continue as long as they are necessary.

While the conditions are clearly sub-optimal, we owe it to our students to support every student during this extraordinary time in their lives.

New Campaign

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.



Last month, I did announce that I will be running for re-election as Mayor this year.

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

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