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your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

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In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Investing in our Infrastructure](#)

[Budget Amendments](#)

[West End Transit](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues:](#)

[Helping Small Businesses, Water Rates, TSA & Old Town Trash Cans](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Call.Click.Connect](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Last month, ACT For Alexandria reprised their "Spring2ACTION" event.](#)

In one 24-hour period, Spring2ACTION raised \$1,337,493 for 153 non-profit organizations that serve Alexandria.

It didn't matter whether the organization was serving kids, seniors, the homeless, the ill, new Americans, animals, the arts, or anything else. Alexandrians opened up their wallets and used their generosity to make Alexandria a better place.

It's one of those things that makes this community great. Thanks to all of you who contributed.

Have a great month.

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

Council Initiatives

Investing in Our Infrastructure

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.), or renovate an existing asset.



[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Del Ray Home & Garden Tour

[On Saturday, May 7th, the Del Ray Home & Garden Tour returns!](#)

From 11 AM to 5 PM, the landmark homes and impressive gardens of Del Ray will open up.

Tickets are on sale on-line. Prices will increase tomorrow.

Strategic Plan Update

As we continue our efforts to craft a new Strategic Plan to guide the City's future, we need your help!

[Please login to AlexEngage prior to May 8th and provide your feedback on the draft theme statements.](#)

Cinema Del Ray Returns!

Thanks to the generosity of Realtor Jen Walker, Cinema Del Ray returns on Saturday May 21st.

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

This month's movie is "Inside Out" and it starts when it's dark enough!

First Thursday Returns!

This Thursday is the next "First Thursday" of the year!

[The Del Ray Business Association continues the tradition from 6 - 9 PM on Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray.](#)

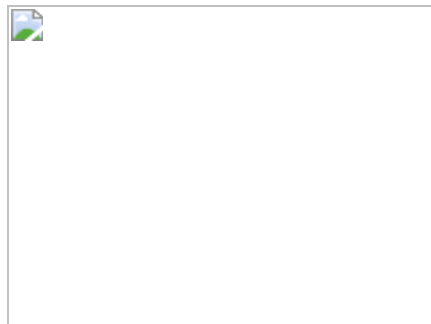
In late February, the City Manager [presented his proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budgets](#) to the City Council and our budget process has now begun.

The proposed general fund operating budget is \$671.6 million, an increase of 3.46% from Fiscal Year 2016. With revenue growth in the low single digits, the City Manager included a proposed increase of one cent in the real estate tax rate.

At the proposed rate of \$1.053 per \$100 of assessed property value, and including the impact of assessment increases, the average single family homeowner will pay an additional \$238 during 2016. The average condominium homeowner will pay an additional \$60.

[Alexandria currently has the second lowest real estate tax rate of major Northern Virginia jurisdictions](#) and given the [adopted budgets of our neighbors](#), that is unlikely to change.

The budget process is now nearing conclusion. The City's staff have been working to answer questions from individual members of the Council regarding the proposed budget. This year, the staff is responding in [the traditional budget memo format](#), as well as trying a new ["questions and answers" format for answering the same questions](#).



The Council held its first Public Hearing on March 14th. We took four hours of testimony from residents around our City. A day later, we made the first critical decision of the budget process.

State law requires that early in the budget process, we "advertise" the highest real estate tax rate that we might adopt. When we adopt the budget on Thursday, we can go lower than the "advertised" rate, but we cannot go above it.

On March 15th, [the Council unanimously voted to advertise a real estate tax rate of \\$1.073](#), a three cent increase. If Council were to adopt the full three cent increase, the average residential homeowner would pay \$275 more than they did in 2015 (\$119 due to increase in assessments and \$156 due to the increase in the rate).

In March, I wrote about [the significant deficiencies in a variety of municipal facilities](#). Just getting these facilities up to a passable condition could cost over \$100 million over the next decade.

[I also wrote about our road paving plan](#). Due to years of underinvestment, our roads are in dismal condition and we have tripled our road maintenance budget to play catch-up around the City.

In January, [I wrote about the daunting infrastructure needs that face the Alexandria City Public Schools](#). Years of underinvestment and robust student growth over the past decade have left us with little choice but a rapid investment in new capacity.

[A year ago, I wrote about the scarcity of funding for new transportation infrastructure](#) and how increased needs to sustain the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) were crowding out local investments for transportation.

Collectively, [we have a basic infrastructure crisis](#). Deferring this work increases costs on future taxpayers and chokes off investment.

This month's theme is "Dog Days of Del Ray," with the focus on our canine family members.

Ramsey Homes

The process to consider [new options for the redevelopment of Ramsey Homes continues.](#)

[On Thursday May 26th, a community meeting will be held at the Charles Houston Recreation Center to discuss alternative development scenarios.](#)

The meeting will be at 7 PM.

Bike To Work Day

Friday, May 20th is Bike to Work Day across the region.

[If it will be your first time biking to work or you're an old pro, sign up online today.](#)

There will be four Alexandria "Pit Stop" locations, including [Carlyle](#), [Del Ray](#), [Old Town](#) and [Mark Center](#).

I'll see you there!

Real Estate Assessment Appeals Due June 1

Any appeal of 2016 Real Estate Assessments must be filed by June 1 for hearing by the Board of Equalization.

The [form is available online](#) and can be submitted by mail.

See The Stars

One of the little known treasures of Alexandria is the Planetarium at T. C. Williams High School.

Even lesser known is that each month, Bob Nicholson, who has long managed the Planetarium, opens it up for the community for free.

In advertising the rate increase in March, the City Council requested that the City Manager prepare a package of recommended capital initiatives to direct the additional two cents. [A little over a week ago, the City Manager provided his suggested capital investments.](#)

After required contributions to our fund balance, the additional two cents will provide \$10.2 million of additional revenue in Fiscal Year 2017 for investment. The City Manager recommended:

- \$730,000 for additional ["Complete Streets" efforts](#) to improve safety of all users of our streets
- \$2.3 million for renovations and HVAC replacement at the Alexandria Courthouse
- \$1.4 million for additional DASH Bus purchases
- \$450,000 for energy retrofits of City facilities
- \$996,000 for facility repairs at Gadsby's and Apothecary Museums
- \$570,000 for additional road resurfacing and repair
- \$400,000 for additional resources to support the [Municipal Broadband Initiative](#)
- \$3.4 million for Alexandria City Public Schools capacity initiatives

This addition of two cents will also provide \$7.6 million annually of cash capital funding to our Capital Improvement Program. This reduces planned borrowing, advances capital investment, and ultimately reduces taxpayer obligations in the future.

I support the package the City Manager has proposed to continue our efforts in addressing our long-deferred infrastructure backlog.

Adding and Subtracting

The conclusion of each budget process is the "Add/Delete" process. The process, where each member of City Council makes suggestions of changes to the City Manager's proposed budget, finalizes the budget for adoption by the City Council.

Things can change between February when the proposed budget is finalized and May when it is adopted. To account for that, [the City Manager delivers "technical adjustments"](#) as the Council prepares to make its amendments. These are typically a collection of puts and takes associated with new revenue estimates and new estimates of expenditures.

For this year, the net result of these changes was to provide a relatively small amount of money (a little more than \$200,000) available that was not anticipated.

Over the past few years, the Council has made significant adjustments to our Add/Delete process to ensure the alignment of proposals to our strategic plan as well as require greater support of individual members of Council. The result has been to narrow our previously fractious add/delete discussions. [These are the proposals that were on the table for discussion this year.](#)

Last Tuesday evening was the Preliminary Add/Delete worksession. This is the first opportunity the Council has to come together as a body and begin discussing the various proposals from the Council.

My focus on this budget was the significant new investment in our capital infrastructure that I detailed earlier in this newsletter and the Council appears poised to adopt.

[Reservations](#) are required, but don't miss out on this great resource!

There are only two shows left for the school year, on Tuesday, May 31st and Tuesday, June 14th.

Memorial Day Jazz Festival

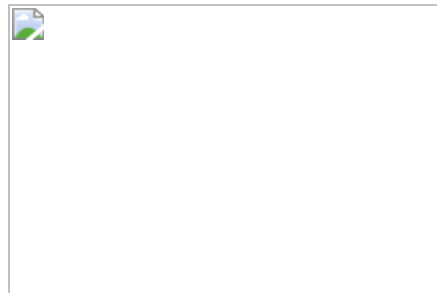
[The 39th Annual Alexandria Memorial Day Jazz Festival returns!](#)

Back on the waterfront at Waterfront Park (1 Prince Street), the festival starts at 1 PM on Monday, May 30th.

Don't miss this great, free event!

However, working with my colleagues on the Council, I also made the following budget amendment proposals for this year:

- **Expand early childhood services:** The proposal will reduce the waiting list of low-income children awaiting these services and ensure they are ready to learn in Kindergarten. This is funded through three strategic reductions I proposed.
- **New trash and recycling cans in City parks and public spaces:** The proposal would utilize an increase in the residential refuse fee to fund new trash and recycling cans in City parks as well as other public places.
- **Restore Sunday Hours At Libraries:** The proposal is to restore Sunday hours at the Barrett, Duncan and Burke libraries. This is funded using the new revenue re-estimates
- **Refresh Digital Advertising:** Funding to allow Visit Alexandria to refresh their digital advertising content to make their marketing efforts on behalf of tourism in Alexandria more effective. This is funded using the new revenue from revenue re-estimates.
- **Energy and Sustainability Project Manager:** This proposal creates a new position to manage the implementation of energy conservation efforts within City facilities and manage citywide sustainability efforts. This position is proposed to be funded by the existing capital project.



Tomorrow evening, the Council will have the Final Add/Delete worksession to finalize our budget decisions in advance of Thursday's adoption.

[The current consensus version of our budget amendments was just released and is available for review.](#)

West End Transitway

Over a decade ago, a group of Alexandria residents began its work to revolutionize the way we think about transportation in the City.

The [Ad Hoc Transportation Policy and Program Task Force](#) was tasked with overhauling the transportation components of Alexandria's Master Plan.

The fruit of their labor was ultimately approved in 2008, with the adoption of [our new Transportation Master Plan](#).

One of the core components of the plan was the creation of three high-capacity transit corridors through the City. The corridors were designed to bring new transit service, in partially dedicated right-of-way, to the three most congested corridors of our City.

[Transit Corridor A was largely designated as the north-south corridor on the east end of the City. Transit Corridor B was designated as the east-west corridor. Transit Corridor C was designated as the north-south corridor on the west end of the City.](#)

The City began work on Transit Corridor A. In August of 2014, the initial phase of Transit Corridor A was launched. [Metroway Bus Rapid Transit service began operating](#) connecting Crystal City Metro and Braddock Road Metro by way of Potomac Yard. It was the first dedicated transitway in the region at the time it launched.

Last month, the elected officials of Arlington and Alexandria again gathered as [Arlington completed its portion of dedicated transitway](#). The [ridership on the new service continues to grow](#) as significant development throughout both Arlington and Alexandria's section of the corridor continues to occur.



With Transit Corridor A operating, the City is hard at work at bringing Transit Corridor C to reality. Now called the West End Transitway, a [Policy Advisory Group was formed to help guide the alternatives analysis work](#).

After two years of work, the group [recommended a build alternative for City Council's endorsement](#). As on the east end of our City, the proposed West End Transitway, connecting the Pentagon to Van Dorn Metro, will [use a variety of dedicated lanes and mixed traffic to bring premium, high frequency transit service to this congested corridor](#).

At the end of March, the [City Council unanimously endorsed the build alternative](#) and new transit service is on its way to the West End. Service is expected to begin in 2021.

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

Helping Small Business Succeed

A new small business owner is taking an enormous risk. They are betting their resources on the future success of an idea. It's a risk that our system relies on. It results in businesses that provide products and services that enrich our lives. As taxpayers, it supports tax revenue that eases the burden on residential taxpayers.

In government, we have an obligation to provide a process that is efficient, predictable, and expedient. Sometimes our existing processes fall short of that mark.

Many new businesses seeking to operate in Alexandria require a Special Use Permit by virtue of the zoning of the property they have chosen. It is required when the use is permitted, but under special conditions. Those special conditions can vary.

A normal Special Use Permit first undergoes a thorough review by our City Staff. The City Staff then makes a recommendation to the City's Planning Commission. The Planning Commission ultimately makes a recommendation to the City Council.

At any step in that process, the application can become bogged down, can be substantially modified, or rejected. It is an unpredictable process that introduces both cost and uncertainty to a nascent small business who can rarely avoid either.



Over the years, City government has worked to make changes to our processes to support small business growth.

[In 2003, the City Council approved the Arlandria Plan](#), which pioneered the use of Administrative Special Use Permits. Under the administrative special use permits, the staff can apply defined criteria and provide a new business with permission to operate, avoiding the necessity for hearing before the Planning Commission and City Council.

A decade ago, the City [created the Small Business Task Force, which recommended expansion of the Administrative Special Use Permit process](#).

[In 2008, the City Council approved a package of reforms](#) to further ease the impacts on new small businesses. In 2010, the Council [approved a separate package of additional reforms](#).

At the direction of City Council, [we are now considering a new package of zoning reforms](#).

While the changes affect many areas, they will create additional areas eligible for administrative special use permits, reduce the number of applications that require any special use permit, and allow the Planning Commission to be the final arbiter for most special use permits.

The Planning Commission and City Council will be hearing this proposal in June. I'm hopeful that we will be able to move forward with these important initiatives to give our small businesses their best start.

Bringing TSA Home

In 2005, the Army Material Command moved out of what was later dubbed [The Victory Center on Eisenhower Avenue](#) in the City's West End.

Little did we know at the time, but the departure would doom the Victory Center to a decade of vacancy. **This one vacant building today constitutes 18% of the vacant commercial real estate in our City.**

In August, that vacancy potentially ended.

[The General Services Administration \(GSA\) announced that it had awarded a lease to the owners of the Victory Center for the new headquarters of the Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\).](#)

This move brings 3,800 new employees to the Victory Center, a stone's throw from the Van Dorn Metro and easily accessible to the Beltway.

With the Federal Government leasing (not owning) this property, it would remain taxable. This is a huge win for the taxpayers of the

City.

This is shot in the arm for our ongoing efforts to revise the [Eisenhower West Small Area Plan](#). Coupled with our [successful attraction of the National Science Foundation last year](#), this again demonstrates that the City is willing to aggressively compete in the regional battle for commercial office tenants.

Under normal circumstances, that would have been the end of the story. Unfortunately, it was not.

Boston Properties, the owner of a property in Springfield that had unsuccessfully competed for the award, appealed the lease award to the United States Court of Federal Claims. While such appeals are not unusual, rarely does anything occur as a result.

In this situation, that was not the case. On [November 11th, Judge Charles Lettow voided the lease issued by GSA for the TSA Headquarters at Victory Center](#).

This was certainly a stunning and unexpected result. To make the situation more mysterious, the Judge issued his ruling under seal, initially pending a series of redactions to protect the bid process.

Eventually, [the Judge did release the public version of the decision](#). Essentially, the crux of the ruling related to free space that was provided by the owners of Victory Center in excess of what was provided for in the Congressional authorization.

[While the decision was ultimately not appealed, the General Services Administration has now re-advertised the solicitation seeking applications only from the finalists in the previous round.](#)

I am hopeful that the result of any next step is to bring TSA home to Alexandria.

Water Rates

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

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

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

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

At my request, the City [filed with the Commission in opposition of VAWC's request](#). The City's concern was that the change proposed by VAWC removes a significant "check" (the review by the State Corporation Commission), that exists to ensure the proper process is followed before rates are raised.

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

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

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

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

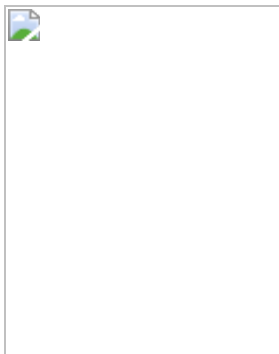
In April, the City Council voted unanimously to oppose the proposed increase. We will be joining with a few other jurisdictions in Virginia who are also opposing this increase.

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

Taking Out the Trash In Old Town

About 20,000 residences in the City receive trash and recycling services from City government. Most condominium developments and private neighborhoods contract with private collection companies. Those that do receive City trash removal pay a residential refuse fee on their real estate tax bill.

Yet for Old Town residents who received City trash services, they put that trash to the curb in their own trash can, not in a City provided can.



For the past two years, portions of the residential refuse fee revenue have been set aside to purchase new trash cans for Old Town residents.

[Beginning in September, City staff will begin distributing new cans to Old Town residents.](#) Residents can continue to use a private can if they wish, but they now have the opportunity to utilize the standard 65-gallon City trash can, which

is in use throughout the City.

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