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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

May 1, 2021

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On Christmas Eve, our Health Department vaccinated 251 healthcare workers. That small effort was the beginning of the largest vaccination effort in our City's history.

Thanks to an army of volunteers from the Alexandria Medical Reserve Corps, our Health Department staff, various other public employees, non-profit organizations and private community partners, as of yesterday, 68,484 Alexandrians have received at least one vaccine dose, which is over 51% of the eligible population of those 16 and older.

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Of those, 44,960 are now fully vaccinated. That is over double where we were a month ago.

The last month marked a critical transition in our vaccination effort as we have now exhausted our waiting list and moved to open scheduling of vaccines.

ANYONE who is aged 16 or older is eligible to be vaccinated and we have a dose waiting for you.

The City remains in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, but with real hope that we have reached the beginning of the end of this horrific experience:

- Inova has opened a new high capacity-vaccination center in Alexandria at Victory Center. This will be used to supplement our City's vaccination capacity as supply continues to increase.
- Two months ago, the City was receiving 3,000 doses (1st & 2nd doses) from the state. This week we are receiving over 11,600 doses.
- The City has received \$1.7 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support our vaccination efforts.
- Alexandria has continued a free COVID-19 testing initiative, with kiosks available daily at 3 locations.
- This week we surpassed 155,000 COVID tests performed in the City.
- Hospitalizations in Northern Virginia increased considerably after the holidays and matched all-time highs. They have dropped and are remaining low.
- Our hospital capacity has remained stable.
- Our 7-day testing positivity rate peaked four months ago, reaching our highest point (13.3%) in over 6 months at the beginning of January. As of yesterday we are now at 3.5%, which is nearly matching our all-time low.
- The Governor last week announced further COVID restrictions will be eased in two weeks on the 15th.

- [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 6th 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.

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

Initiatives and Updates

Budget Adoption Next Week



Next week, the City Council will adopt the City's Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget and the Fiscal Year 2022 - Fiscal Year 2031 Capital Improvement Program. We are now considering action on amendments **that have been proposed by individual Council members to this year's budget:**

- I proposed **an amendment that will eliminate fares on DASH bus routes in conjunction with the launch of our new route network in September.**
- I proposed an amendment that would use unrelated project savings to expand and accelerate improvements (new recreation facilities) **being planned at Hensley Park on Eisenhower Avenue.**
- Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker proposed an allocation of budget savings to provide additional money for affordable housing, provide a 1% bonus to all City employees, eliminate juvenile library fines and fund new investments in sustainable building.
- Councilman Aguirre has proposed an amendment that increases funding to the Office of Historic Alexandria's oral history program.
- Councilwoman Pepper has proposed an amendment to expand funding for a workforce development program for experienced workers.
- Councilman Seifeldin has proposed an amendment that would eliminate funding for the Alexandria Police School Resource Officers that work in our Middle Schools and High School.

You can watch City Council's Preliminary Add/Delete work session from earlier this week, as we discussed each of these proposals.

In order to be considered, a proposed budget amendment must have the support of at least 3 members of the City Council. In order to be included in the budget, it must have the support of 4 members.

The Council will return on Monday evening to finalize the Council's action on each amendment, with the final adoption scheduled for Wednesday.

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).

In February, 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.

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.**

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 some good budgetary news, 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, largely driven by the pandemic
- 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.

Shortly after the presentation of the budget, state law requires that the City Council adopt a ceiling for the real estate tax rate that might be considered during the budget process. Once that rate is "advertised," the Council cannot adopt a rate that is higher, but may go lower. **While I wished to advertise the City Manager's proposed rate of \$1.11, the majority of the City Council voted to advertise the current rate of \$1.13.** This means that while the real estate tax rate may decrease this year, as the City Manager has proposed, it cannot increase. This does mean that 2021 will be the fifth straight year without a real estate tax rate increase in Alexandria.

Given the results of the Add/Delete session earlier this week, it appears highly likely that the City Council will accept the City Manager's recommendation and barring any surprises, our adopted real estate will drop two cents to \$1.11, as proposed.

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). The City Council will consider an increase of \$24 annually, to help offset the costs of the DASH fare elimination. This fee is paid only by the 20,647 homeowners who receive City trash collection.

The stormwater utility fee will be doubling (**as addressed in last month's 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 to 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 am optimistic that we will

adopt a budget that is reflective of those collective values.

Let me know your thoughts!



Putting Federal Funds To Work

In March, President Biden **signed the American Rescue Plan into law**. This sprawling and comprehensive piece of legislation provides significant resources to Alexandria's residents, our businesses, our schools and our local government.

We need your ideas for the best way to spend these funds to benefit our City!

The survey will be available for the next two weeks, with two community meetings scheduled on May 8th and May 10th.

Alexandria's government will receive \$59.4 million from the legislation, divided into two allotments, one to be received next month and the other to be received in May of 2022. All funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

Beyond what the City will receive, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) will receive \$35.4 million from this legislation. This is in addition to the \$15 million ACPS received from the Federal legislation that was enacted before the end of last year.

The American Rescue Plan included three criteria for how the local government funds may be used:

- To respond to the public health emergency with respect to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue of such metropolitan city, nonentitlement unit of government or county due to such emergency
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

It is now up to the Department of Treasury to provide more specific guidelines for local governments. While we have already commenced planning, that rule-making activity will ultimately shape how we expend these funds.

This is a "once in a generation" infusion of money for Alexandria's City government and our school system. We must ensure that we not only spend every penny

that the Federal government has provided to our community, but we also must use these resources wisely and to the long-term benefit of our community.

Prior to the enactment of the legislation, the City Manager recommended a framework similar to how the City utilized previous COVID relief funding, I have pushed for us to broaden our thinking. **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.** Furthermore, given the substantial resources that ACPS will be receiving, I believe that Alexandria's expenditure of these combined resources should be closely coordinated to ensure the maximum benefit for our community.

In March, **the City Council reviewed a new framework for the expenditure of these funds.** There will be further community engagement over the next few months with Council adopting the final plan for Fiscal Year 2022 in July.

While we continue our focus on the resources that will be directly appropriated to our local government, we must also commit resources to ensuring that each of our residents and our businesses avail themselves of portions of the legislation that might benefit them. The Rescue Plan is a large piece of legislation and our government can assist our residents and businesses in navigating its complexity.

Additionally, **the House of Representatives is bringing back what used to be known as "earmarks" and will now be called "Community Funding Requests."** Earlier this week, **Council approved the input that we have provided to Congressman Beyer's office on the City's project priorities.**

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.

Municipal Fiber

Over 7 years ago, I proposed that the City develop a broadband plan to help bring true competition to Alexandria's broadband market.

It has taken far too long, but the City is finally moving ahead on an effort to bring new broadband capacity to our community.

In December, the City issued a revised solicitation to select a vendor to construct a municipal fiber network to serve City and School facilities around our community. Last month, **a contract was awarded**

to Jones Utilities Construction, Inc to perform this work.

With a vendor selected, the City will soon work to solicit proposals from the private sector to use this new resource.

Nearly 6 years ago, the City issued a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI solicited concepts from the private sector for partnership with the City in expanding broadband options, availability, and capabilities. We received 10 responses from potential private partners and those responses shaped the approach the City is now taking.

For years, Alexandria has sought new private investment in broadband infrastructure. For most of our residents, we have one company providing Internet connectivity and television. With new **Verizon FIOS deployment plans shelved** around the country and **Google Fiber largely dead**, the investment in broadband infrastructure must fall to local governments. Regardless of the performance of incumbent providers, technological innovation and reliability thrives on competition.

This is an issue that impacts not only residents but also our businesses and the ability of our community to attract new investment.

Concurrent with the FY 2017 budget process, the City completed the **initial financial estimates for the first phase of the infrastructure build-out**. The plan is designed to replace the City's existing connectivity agreement for City facilities with a City-owned fiber network.

By **leveraging E-Rate funding from the FCC**, achieving operating savings from the costs of the existing agreement, and the potential for private leases of our infrastructure, the effort may be able to pay for itself.

In the fall of 2016, **the Council unanimously took the next step** in this important process, as we requested that the City Manager formally solicit for new providers to partner with the City.

One of the core components of the original proposal I made was that the City **adopt a "Dig Once" policy**. Essentially that's a policy that makes the City more efficient by leveraging existing underground infrastructure work to add conduit and other infrastructure at the same time. With hundreds of millions of dollars of sewer and transportation work scheduled over the next decade, we should sequence and combine that work to be the most efficient.

This is an exciting project and one that gives the City the best chance to leverage its assets to bring new broadband services to our residents and businesses.

Landmark Mall Redevelopment

Days before Christmas, [the City joined with a few partners, some familiar and some new, to announce the future of the Landmark Mall site.](#) The new development plan will move [Inova Alexandria Hospital](#) from its home for [the past 58 years](#) on Seminary Road to a new modern facility on the site of Landmark Mall.

The site, one of the largest sites inside the Beltway awaiting redevelopment, will see a billion dollars of new investment, including a new Level II trauma center, medical office buildings, residential, retail, parks, a new fire station replacing [Fire Station 208](#), new committed affordable housing and a new transit hub anchoring the City's new bus rapid transit network, DASH and Metrobus.

[Long sought, this arrangement was recently named by the Washington Business Journal as the 2020 Real Estate Deal of the Year.](#)

This will not only revitalize a site that many had given up on, but will also provide a catalyst for redevelopment and enhancement throughout the West End of our City.

On Monday evening, [another community meeting relating to the redevelopment of the existing Inova Hospital site will be held.](#) On Thursday the 13th, [a community meeting on the development of the Landmark site will be held.](#)

The community engagement is providing input to Planning Commission and City Council applications that will be heard in June and July.

Despite over two decades of decline, it is not a mystery why we had been unable to spur redevelopment on this site in the past. It is a complicated site, with a complicated ownership structure requiring significant infrastructure investment.

Conquering those obstacles requires a unique partnership and financial arrangement. A local firm, [Foulger-Pratt](#) is leading a joint venture in partnership with [Howard Hughes Corporation](#), the current owner of the mall site, and [Seritage Growth Properties](#), the owner of the Sears site. They were able to bring [Inova Health System](#) into the arrangement to anchor this redevelopment.

The City will finance some of the infrastructure improvements required on the site and we will purchase the future hospital site to lease back to Inova. Inova's proceeds from selling their existing site on Seminary Road is financing their expenses related to the move.

Nearly 55 years ago, [then-Virginia Lieutenant Governor Mills Godwin Jr. \(later Virginia's 60th and 62nd Governor\) came to Alexandria to open Landmark Mall.](#) Today, the work to restore the Landmark Mall site to a productive use of real estate for our City is a top focus for our community.

In June 2013, after taking over ownership of the mall site, the Howard Hughes Corporation [received approval by the Planning Commission and City Council for a redevelopment of their portion of the site](#). A slower than expected leasing market slowed their intentions to redevelop.

In 2015, Howard Hughes Corporation was back at City Hall to apply for very minor amendments to the approval that was issued in 2013. [These changes were approved by City Council in April of 2015.](#)

[Sears spun-off a new Real Estate Investment Trust \(REIT\) in 2015 called Seritage Growth Properties to maximize value out of their remaining real estate. The Landmark Mall Sears store property is now owned by this REIT.](#)

[Early in 2017, Macy's announced the closure of their store at Landmark.](#)

[The Howard Hughes Corporation later announced that it had purchased the Macy's store site.](#)

[The Howard Hughes Corporation subsequently announced that the existing mall site is closing.](#)

[Almost two years ago, Council approved revisions to the Master Plan to advance a comprehensive redevelopment of the site.](#)

There is no clearer demonstration of the City's financial challenges than the predicament that has faced Landmark Mall.

Two decades ago, when the ownership of the properties at Landmark Mall received their tax assessments from the City, the [actual mall site was assessed at \\$76.4 million](#). The [Sears store was assessed at \\$19.7 million](#). The [Macy's store site was assessed at \\$17 million](#).

At the City's tax rate in 2000, these three sites alone generated \$1.25 million in real estate tax.

Today, the three properties are assessed at \$25.2 million, \$14 million, and \$12.6 million, respectively. They generate about \$500,000 in real estate tax today, less than half of what it used to be.

To make the situation even more severe, real estate tax is only a portion of the picture. The reduction in revenues from sales tax, dining tax, and other business taxes has also been dramatic at this site.

While no one should be convinced until they see bulldozers knocking down the existing mall site, we have finally assembled a partnership, financing and a plan to revitalize this site. Landmark Mall redevelopment has been complicated from the beginning, but I believe we can be cautiously optimistic that it is finally coming together with this exciting partnership.

Stream Restorations

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 Chinguapin 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.

Yet the projects are controversial, with opposition from residents concerned about construction impacts, potential ecological impacts, accuracy of pollution reduction estimates, tree impacts, among other objections. While these types of projects are under way in hundreds of other communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, similar controversy has erupted in other communities, including **Fairfax County** and **Arlington County**.

At our last City Council meeting, **our staff provided an update on the City's Stream Restoration strategy.** The was followed by a presentation by our Environmental Policy Commission, which has come out against stream restoration as a technique. **You can watch the full presentation and Council discussion beginning just after the 3:44:00 mark in the video.**

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Council gave our staff direction to pause on the projects, do further

measurements of all three, engage with the community and the Environmental Policy Commission on other alternatives and return to the City Council for further direction.

The City has important obligations to improve the quality of the water in the waterways of our region. These investments are intended to maintain our commitment to the future of the Chesapeake Bay and address human-caused damage in these natural areas.

We will continue to work to determine the best approach as we move forward.

Alexandria's Next Election

Early voting has now begun and [**Alexandria Democrats can vote to choose their nominees for statewide, state and local offices.**](#)

[**Alexandria Republicans have chosen a local canvass and a state convention to select their nominees.**](#)

This November, Alexandria voters will elect a Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, members of the Virginia House of Delegates, Alexandria Mayor, Alexandria Sheriff, Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney, all six members of the Alexandria City Council and all 9 members of the Alexandria City School Board.

On Tuesday June 8th, all City polling places will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM for the Democratic Primary.

The June 8th Primary will be used to select the Democratic nominees for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Alexandria Mayor, Alexandria City Council and the member of the Virginia House of Delegates representing the 45th District (the eastern end of Alexandria).

Last year, Virginia introduced "no-excuse" early voting, so voters have three choices to vote in the June primary:

1. [**You can request a ballot by mail online now.**](#) Ballots will be mailed upon request. The ballot can be mailed back or dropped 24/7 at the drop-box located in front of 132 N. Royal Street.
2. You can vote in person at the Alexandria Registrar's Office, Monday - Friday from 8 AM until 5 PM. Saturday voting will be available May 22nd, May 29th and June 5th.
3. You can vote in person [**at your precinct**](#) on the Primary Day of June 8th.

I'll see you at the polls!

Climate Action

Three years ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change again sounded the alarm. Their report gave the world about 12 years to take meaningful action to mitigate catastrophic impacts of rising temperatures.

While the Federal government was largely disengaged from international efforts to address climate change, that is now changing. With or without Federal leadership, Alexandria is continuing to take meaningful climate action.

It was almost two years ago that the City Council adopted the latest update of our Environmental Action Plan. This ambitious plan does not commit or appropriate money, but it does set the strategic direction to:

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

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

The City just released a comprehensive report of the accomplishments achieved during 2020, including reductions in GHG emissions, new programs to make commercial buildings more sustainable, transportation initiatives, new green building standards, expanded recycling, and more.

The City just appointed our new Energy and Climate Change Task Force. This group is designed to turn our Action Plan into concrete steps the City can take to make progress. They will hold their first meeting this week.

Earlier this week, the City Council approved our new Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Readiness Strategy. Earlier this year, the Council approved the City's first Alternative Fuel Fleet Policy to accelerate the City's deployment of these vehicles.

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

While the Green Building Policy will ensure that new development is built in a sustainable manner, to make progress, we must address existing structures.

Last year, the City Council voted 5-2 [to create a C-PAACE program in Alexandria](#). A C-PAACE program will allow commercial property owners to make improvements to reduce energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability, financed by repayments collected as part of the property's real estate tax payment.

The City has again partnered with the [Northern Virginia Regional Commission to bring back Solarize Alexandria](#). This program partners with residential property owners to conduct assessments on the feasibility of solar power installations.

[Buildings account for 39% of total energy use, 68% of electricity consumption and 38% of all carbon dioxide emissions](#). When buildings are built efficiently, redevelopment can be a powerful force to reduce our energy demands and improve our environment.

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

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

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

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

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

Since the adoption of the policy, 95% of the development constructed or under construction has met

this policy. This equates to about 10 million square feet of green building.

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

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

While the task force supported the notion that public construction activity to lead the way in sustainability, there was some disagreement as to whether LEED Gold was sufficient or whether the City should set **Net-Zero construction** as the goal. Ultimately Council chose to set Net Zero as the goal for public facility construction. MacArthur Elementary School, which is now beginning construction, will be our first Net Zero building.

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

Regulating Noise

Last year, our Police Department handled 2,451 noise complaint calls for service. Our Transportation and Environmental Services Department handled another 366 and our Planning and Zoning Department handled another 20-25 noise complaints. Excessive noise is one of the most prevalent causes of civic disputes.

Today the City **has a patch-work of regulation, administered and enforced by a variety of agencies.** Various court decisions **have invalidated portions of the ordinance and some codified enforcement techniques are obsolete.**

At the beginning of last month, our staff presented Council with an overview of the options for correcting the invalidated portions of the ordinance as well as modernizing our approach to noise.

Next month, our staff will bring the Council an updated ordinance which corrects legal deficiencies and can

expand enforceability.

Following that adoption there will be new community engagement to prepare additional adjustments to the ordinance, as we attempt to balance the vibrancy of our business districts with protecting quality of life for our residents.

I look forward to arriving at a modern set of rules for noise in our City, as well as an appropriate way to enforce those rules.



New Campaign

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.

In January, 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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