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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

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Alexandria, Virginia

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## In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Public Land for Public Good](#)

[More Kids In Our Schools](#)

[Moving Forward Together on the Waterfront](#)

[Help Design the Potomac Yard Metro Station](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Eisenhower West, Signs & Our Next Budget](#)

## Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Call.Click.Connect](#)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

In a few days, we'll be past Election Day and the holiday season will be upon us.

This has been a particularly difficult election season, regardless of which side or what role you have had. It will be a relief to turn the page from that rancor.

As always, we have successes to celebrate in our schools.

[Last week, Governor Terry McAuliffe came to Alexandria's Patrick Henry Elementary to celebrate the educators and students' significant improvements in academic achievement.](#)

[The week ended with the T. C. Williams Field Hockey team advancing to the regional semifinals for the first time in 20 years. Tuesday night, they return to action on the field at Minnie Howard facing off against Fairfax High School.](#)

Please let me know how I can be of assistance. [Contact me anytime.](#)

## Council Initiatives

### Public Land For Public Good

A few months ago, I wrote about the [City's efforts to dispose of surplus properties](#). Pursuant to the City's Real Estate Disposition Policy, most of these properties were sold using a sealed bid competition to achieve the highest return for the taxpayers.



[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

## Events/Updates

### Vote on Tuesday

On Tuesday, polls will be open across Alexandria to elect our Mayor, the City Council, the School Board, and our representatives in the Virginia House of Delegates and the State Senate.

[Sample ballots are available in advance for review online.](#)

[One of the City Council debates was posted online and can be viewed before you vote.](#)

The polls will be open from 6AM to 7PM. You can [view and confirm your polling place online.](#)

Please turn out to cast a vote in these important elections.

### Leaf Collection Begins

The annual City's leaf collection effort has begun.

[Residents may bag leaves using bags that can be picked up from a variety of City government sites.](#)

Additionally, the vacuuming of leaves placed on curbs has begun. [A full schedule is available online.](#)

### Be Prepared

The Alexandria Citizen Corps Council is a group that works to promote emergency preparedness and support community preparedness and response activities.

As part of these promotional activities, the Council is encouraging residents to visit [Readynova.org](#).

The site is the result of a regional partnership and will

One of the strategies in the recently approved [Housing Master Plan](#) was for the City to leverage our City-owned properties. This was done to improve the availability of affordable housing.

Last year, in the [City Council's approved budget guidance for the City Manager](#), I included language that called for the City Manager to assess whether some of our surplus properties could be utilized for unmet social service needs.

Last week, as the first example of such an arrangement, [the Council approved an agreement](#) with [New Hope Housing](#), a local non-profit for the operation of 211 Aspen Street.

In 1989, this property was [purchased by the City](#) and used as a group home for a few decades. In 2013, the program was shut down due to a budget reduction, and the property designated for surplus.

With the acceptance of the offer from New Hope Housing, this new arrangement now allows for the property to be re-purposed this as a facility for three homeless single men, with a focus on veterans.

Coincidentally enough, this property sits a few houses away from my residence and I'm excited that this arrangement will help us reduce homelessness and give its residents a chance to start anew.

### Student Enrollment

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

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

In September, [14,670 children started school in the Alexandria City Public Schools](#). That constitutes a 3.6% increase from last year, or about 500 additional students. This year is the ninth straight year of enrollment growth. During that period, ACPS has added over 4,000 students.

The last time [that many children attended our schools was over 40 years ago in the early 1970s.](#)

One of the earliest tasks completed by the group was to agree upon a methodology for how we can project future enrollment. Ending the days where the Schools had one projection for student enrollment and the City had another, was a key goal.

Every year since this effort was completed, we examine the actual student enrollment to refine our projections and to ensure that our methodology is sound.

Our projection for this year was 14,745, which means the projection was an accurate forecast. This is now the third straight year that our projections were accurate predictors of enrollment. Given the [sordid history of projections that didn't come to pass, this is an important accomplishment.](#)

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. For example, we learned that low-rise apartments generate nearly 3 times the students as high-rise or mid-rise apartments do. We learned that single family homes generate nearly double the students as townhouses. We now know that public housing and other income-restricted units far outpace any other property type for student generation.

help you develop emergency response plans for your family and business.

### Health Fair

On Saturday November 14th from 9AM to 4PM, the Free Health Fairfax will return to Hammond Middle School (4646 Seminary Road).

Free flu shots, glucose tests, blood pressure texts, BMI screens, anemia screens, mental health screens, hearing and vision screens, HIV tests, and more are all available!

### Run For Fun

On Sunday November 15th, the USATF National 12K returns to the streets of Alexandria.

This fast and flat course through Old Town allows runner to compete with some of the best runners in the world.

[Join me on the 15th to run the streets of Old Town!](#)

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### Run For Shelter

On Sunday November 22nd, Carpenter's Shelter hosts the 5th Annual Run For Shelter road race on Eisenhower Avenue.

With three distances (10K, 5K and 1 mile), this race is for everyone. It begins at the United States Patent and Trademark Office at 600 Dulany Street.

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

In the final analysis, these data points remind us of the need to address this enrollment growth head-on.

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

We are now defining the next phase of this effort, this being planning for additional capacity at the middle schools and our high school. With important decisions for the Council and School Board ahead over how to address capacity challenges for 9th Grade at Minnie Howard School, this process has urgency to it.



Even as we plan for new growth, ACPS is already working to accommodate the current growth in our schools. Recently the School Board launched the long-overdue process of drawing new attendance zones.

The School Board has appointed a [Redistricting Review Committee to facilitate communication](#). A little over a week ago, the first community meeting was held at T. C. Williams. The [video from that meeting is available to be viewed online](#).

As the process continues, the Review Committee holds its [next meeting on Wednesday evening](#).

We have more work to do as we welcome new kids to our schools, but it is certainly an exciting challenge for our community.

### Working Together For the Future of the Waterfront

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

Unfortunately, for the past few decades, the future of our waterfront has also been the source of discord and community division. Far too often it has led to litigation. This litigation has, in some cases, [persisted for decades](#).

When the current City Council was sworn in almost three years ago, it was an early goal to resolve all on-going litigation, craft settlements with disputed landowners, and move forward as a community together. I believe that has been a success.

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

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

[Join me as we run to help the fight against homelessness.](#)

### Run For Turkey

For the 40th Year, Del Ray will host the best Turkey Trot around!

The 40th Anniversary Alexandria Turkey Trot 5 Miler returns to the streets of Del Ray and Rosemont on Thanksgiving morning.

The race, brought to you by the Del Ray Business Association and DC Road Runners, is a regional tradition and last year attracted 4,000 finishers!

[Join me on Thanksgiving for a great run through Alexandria.](#)

### Comment on the Next School Calendar

The Alexandria City Public Schools Calendar Committee is working to develop the academic calendar for the 2016 - 2017 school year.

[They would like your input.](#)

The draft calendar for Tucker Elementary is [posted here for review](#).

The draft calendar for all other schools is [posted here for for review](#).

### Jones Point Park

The National Park Service is seeking your input on the activities you would like to see at [Jones Point Park](#) in Old Town.

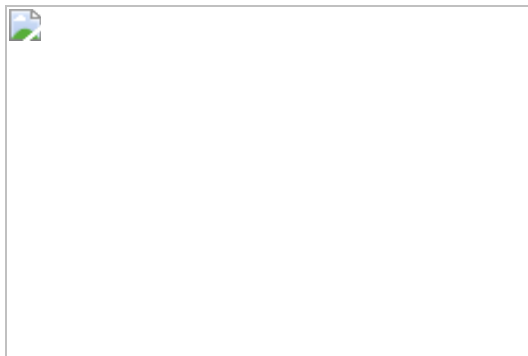
On Saturday, November 7th, there will be a community open house at Jones Point from 9AM until 1PM.

Take the time to participate to help shape the future of this significant park.

### See The Stars

One of the little known treasures of Alexandria is

In March, [the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in favor of the City](#) in the final litigation related to the Waterfront Plan. [In June, the Court denied a request for the case to be reheard](#), thus ending the litigation.



In late May, the property exchanges occurred between the City and the Old Dominion Boat Club. The [City now owns the existing Club property](#), and the Club [now owns properties farther south along the waterfront](#). In order to create a seamless, uninterrupted park along the waterfront, this exchange was required.

With City funds from our settlement, the Boat Club will [soon construct a new club for their members on their new site](#). Additionally, the City will create a landmark park with integrated flood mitigation at the base of King Street, thus addressing flood challenges that have long plagued the corridor.

A year and a half ago, the Council approved [Phase 1 of the Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design](#). This exciting design marries the vision of the Olin Group and the input of hundreds of residents who participated in the planning efforts. It also received input from the [Art and History Report](#) to ensure our history is a key component of the future of our waterfront.

In January, prioritizing the development of the public promenade and the flood mitigation, the [Council approved the implementation plan](#) for the public improvements.

Two years ago, [the Council unanimously approved the new Carr Hotel proposal](#). It allows a new waterfront hotel in exchange for expansion of a City park, new public waterfront access, and hundreds of thousands of dollars of public improvements. That project is under way today.

In April, Council [approved the Robinson Terminal South](#) development, next door to the Carr Hotel. [This new mixed-use development](#) will include large new public spaces on the waterfront, preservation and adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings, new civic spaces, and additional hundreds of thousands of dollars of new public improvements.

The Council's approval includes new parking restrictions to ease the impact on neighboring residents. It also requires the developer to barge a large portion of the debris from the construction, as opposed to trucking it through Old Town.

The final waterfront redevelopment [site was approved last month, when the Robinson Terminal North proposal](#) was unanimously approved by the Planning Commission and City Council.

This site was approved for mixed-use development including a hotel, residential space, and commercial space. The landowner will be required to dedicate an acre of public open space on the promenade, a new 18,000 square foot public pier, a new floating dock, and contributions to affordable housing, public art, and other community amenities.

With the significant work beginning throughout the waterfront, the City has [convened a stakeholder group to monitor the](#)

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.

[Reservations](#) are required, but don't miss out on this great resource! The next show is the evening of Tuesday, November 17th.

### **Women's Holiday Market**

On Sunday December 6th, the Friends of the Alexandria Commission for Women will sponsor its 18th annual Holiday Market.

The event, at the Charles Houston Recreation Center (901 Wythe Street) is from 1PM to 5PM.

Each year the event raises money to support programs critical to women in Alexandria, including domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

The event showcases the work of creative women artists and artisans.

### **City Tree Lighting**

[On Friday, November 27th, at 6PM Santa returns to Market Square in Old Town to light the City's tree.](#)

With a welcome from the Town Crier and performances of all kinds, this event cannot be missed!

### **Real Estate Tax Bills Due**

[The second half real estate tax bills are due on Monday, November 16th.](#)

Save a stamp and a trip to City Hall by [using the City's eChecks system.](#)

[construction](#) work and the debris hauling from the properties. The next meeting of the group is tomorrow at 5:30 PM in The Lyceum (201 S. Washington Street).

With the fighting behind us, we now have a unique opportunity to shape the waterfront of Alexandria's future in a way that benefits our residents, our visitors, and our taxpayers. I'm excited about the future.

### **Help Design a Metro Station**

For decades, the City has discussed, planned, and just plain hoped for a Metro Rail station at Potomac Yard.

In May, the City Council [unanimously adopted Alternative B](#) as the site of the future Potomac Yard Metro station. We have now moved from discussing Metro at Potomac Yard, to designing and building Metro at Potomac Yard.

We'd like your input on the design strategy for the new station. Use [AlexEngage to give us your take on the station, its impacts, and improvements on the existing parks.](#)

In 2008, along with then-Councilman Rob Krupicka, I proposed a new start to efforts to bring Metro to Potomac Yard. We included [language in the City's Transportation Master Plan](#) explicitly calling for a new station at Potomac Yard. We also tied the construction and funding of Metro to the development occurring in the Yard.

The result is [a funding plan for Potomac Yard Metro](#) that not only leverages the development activity in Potomac Yard, but also does so without requiring the contributions of General Fund taxpayers.

The largest environmental, [economic development](#), and transportation initiative in our City's history is being accomplished using [one of the most innovative funding mechanisms used anywhere in the country.](#)

The funding package consists of 2 [special tax districts](#), tax increment funding, [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority regional funding](#), [a Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Board loan](#), and a developer contribution.

It is designed to use the development in Potomac Yard to pay for Metro in Potomac Yard, not the City's General Fund taxpayers.

In the Spring, the project took a gigantic step forward with the release of the [Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public review and comment](#). The release of the draft statement, coordinated with the Federal Transit Administration, the National Park Service, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), kicked off a lively period of public input which lead up to the Council's adoption of our Locally Preferred Alternative.

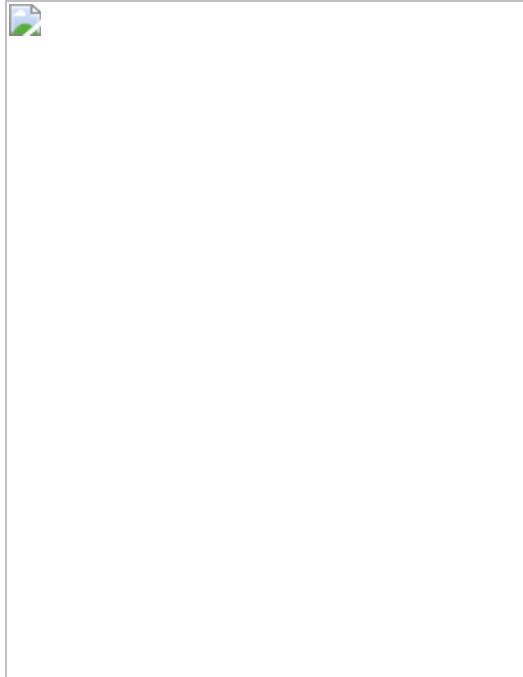
In May, another milestone was achieved as the City announced that it had received approval from the National Park Service on a "Net Benefits Agreement." Such an agreement is required for the National Park Service to transfer land to the City.

The agreement that was published provides for \$12 million of improvements to the adjacent National Park Service land. These improvements include expansion of the existing National Park Service land and improvements to both Dangerfield Island and the Mount Vernon Trail. The City has also made a series of policy changes to address any potential impact.

[This project will leverage the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs, and will bring up to \\$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City. It removes](#)



[thousands of vehicles from one of the most crowded corridors in our City. It promotes the creation of the kind of walkable community our City has long desired in Potomac Yard.](#)



Once the Environmental Impact Statement process concludes with a Record of Decision, the construction efforts can commence. The Record of

Decision is the formal federal document that outlines all of the agreed upon mitigation to any potential impacts that will result from the project.

I serve as a member of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group (PYMIG). [In September, the group received the latest schedule for the station construction, reflecting the beginning of the Design/Build procurement process next summer, with a station opening in early 2020.](#)

As the City focuses on efforts to erase the structural imbalance in our budget, the successful completion of this project is a key component in that effort.

### 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

### Eisenhower West

Nearly 3 years ago, the City Council placed [the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan](#) at the top of its list of priorities for small area planning.

Adoption of a new plan for Eisenhower West had long been a goal of West End residents. Together with the [Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan](#) and the [Beauregard Small Area Plan](#), it is the last piece in the puzzle to define the West End for the next generation.

Yet [with 620 acres](#), Eisenhower West was unique in the City's planning processes, in that there were very few notions as to how

that vision would develop. They were faced with an area of the City with many of the remaining heavy industrial uses that we have left, an incomplete transportation network, and a lot of potential.

After a year and a half of planning with a very focused community group, the process culminates with a desire to create an identity for Eisenhower West, and use this process to create new neighborhoods.

This week the Planning Commission will consider the [draft Eisenhower West Small Area Plan](#), and the City Council will hear the Plan later this month.

The proposed plan remakes the plan area into six distinct neighborhoods. It encourages a straightening of Eisenhower Avenue, while establishes a new grid of streets for pedestrians, vehicles and bikes.

It works to concentrate new development near the Van Dorn Metro and to establish the new multi-modal connectivity to the Metro from South Pickett Street. The proposed plan grows the City's open space network, works to expand affordable housing, and includes new areas for the construction of a new school.

When the City started this planning process, we had to imagine ways for the plan to be implemented. We did not envision [the Transportation Security Administration coming to Victory Center](#) and providing a catalyst for the efforts realizing the vision of a new identity for Eisenhower West. We now have an opportunity to translate the plan to reality.

Let [me know your thoughts](#) on this new plan.

### **The End of Campaign Median Signs?**

One of the fun things about service on the City Council is that it can be difficult to predict where the next issue will come from. In this case, a little anticipated United States Supreme Court decision may have a significant impact on Alexandria.

In June, the Supreme Court delivered a [unanimous opinion in Reed vs. Town of Gilbert, Arizona](#). Let me preface this by saying that I'm not an attorney, and most definitely not a Constitutional scholar.

Nevertheless, the case involved the town's signage ordinances and the impact those ordinances had on temporary signs that a church wished to place directing parishioners to their services.

Essentially, the court ruled that "Because content-based laws target speech based on its communicative content, they are presumptively unconstitutional..." Said another way, if you have to read what a sign says in order to enforce your signage laws, your laws are probably not okay.

This decision is likely going to force the [rewrite of signage regulations around the country](#), and certainly here in Alexandria.



We have ordinances that regulate "Going out of Business" signs, "Opening Soon" signs, and real estate signs.

We currently ban most signs from the public right-of-way, yet allow political signs under permit.

These distinctions are unlikely to pass muster given the Supreme Court's recent ruling.

Given the scope of changes required, our Staff is currently working to prepare revisions to the City Code and the City's zoning ordinance.

### **Our Next Budget**

It does seem as though we just completed the FY 2016 budget process. Yet it is almost time to begin the discussion on the FY 2017 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program.

The regional economic situation tells us that any hope for easy, lean budgets are likely unrealistic.

To use public comment to inform the budget development, the City Manager has proposed a series of meetings to solicit input.

The last of four community meetings on the budget will be Wednesday evening:

Wednesday, November 4th at 7:00 PM at Cora Kelly Recreation Center ( 25 W. Reed Avenue)

To encourage participation in the meeting by parents, the City is providing childcare upon request. [Please fill out this form to reserve your spot.](#)

The [three previous meetings were taped and can be viewed online.](#)

You can also [provide input directly online using AlexEngage.](#)

Public input is important as we work to distribute a very finite amount of resources.

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