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Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

November 1, 2017

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Early last month Alexandria's Commonwealth's Attorney Bryan Porter [released his report reviewing the use of force](#) by law enforcement officers during the June 14th incident at Simpson Park.

The review provides an extensive narrative of the incident and concludes that the Alexandria Police Department and United States Capitol Police acted appropriately in using force to resolve a dangerous situation.

The review is also a reminder of the valor exhibited that day by Special Agents Griner and Bailey of the United States Capitol Police and Officers Jensen, Jobe and Battaglia of the Alexandria Police Department.

As the report indicates, these officers ran towards danger and in doing so saved countless lives. They have our gratitude and appreciation.

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

Council Initiatives

Short Term Rentals

Whether it is Uber and Lyft or AirBNB, local government is ground zero in the battle to keep up with "disruptive technologies." For many of these businesses they begin operations in violation of existing state or local laws and await the laws to "catch up."



[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Vote Now!

It will be a crowded ballot in on Tuesday with elections for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, House of Delegates member, Sheriff and Commonwealth's Attorney before voters.

In person absentee voting is under way and concludes on Saturday.

At the General Registrar's office at 132 N. Royal Street, in person absentee voting is available from 8 AM until 8 PM today and tomorrow. On Friday and Saturday voting is available from 8 AM until 5 PM.

At Beatley Library at 5005 Duke Street, in person absentee voting is available from 1 PM until 8 PM today and tomorrow. On Friday voting is available from 1 PM until 5 PM. On Saturday voting is available 10 AM until 5 PM.

Sample ballots are now available online, with a ballot available for those in the [45th House of Delegates District](#) and one for those in the [46th House of Delegates District](#).

I'll see you at the polls!

ACPS Calendar Input

The Alexandria City Public Schools are working to develop the academic calendar for 2018 - 2019 and they would like your input.

[You can review the three draft calendars online.](#)

In the case of short-term rentals, popularized by AirBNB, the Commonwealth of Virginia has struggled to arrive at the correct way to level the playing field and provide Virginia's local governments with appropriate tools to address quality of life impacts.

During last year's General Assembly session, [legislation was finally adopted seeking to address these types of businesses](#). The

legislation adopted allowed local governments in Virginia to create a registry, require registration, charge a fee for registration, and impose fines on those who do not register.



With the legislation now in effect, [the City is responding to implement this new authority](#). Later this month, City staff will [bring a new ordinance to the City Council to create a registry of these short-term rentals](#). At the same time, our Finance Department is now working to negotiate a tax collection agreement with AirBNB to allow them to collect and remit the appropriate taxes from those short-term rentals operating within the City.

Between now and November 11th, the staff is accepting public comment to inform the staff recommendation on this ordinance. [Let us know your thoughts!](#)

Making 911 Better For Your Family

In an emergency, before a resident ever encounters a "First Responder," they encounter the women and men who answer the phone at the City's 911 center.

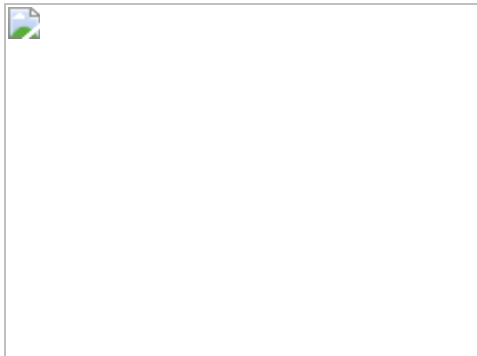
[In 2011, the City opened the new headquarters of the Alexandria Police Department on Wheeler Avenue](#). The new facility, which has saved the City taxpayers millions of dollars by vacating numerous leased spaces, consolidated the entire department under one roof.

In conjunction with the transition, the [City used the opportunity to consolidate the previous Police Department Communications and Fire Department Communications](#). In the past, 9-1-1 calls were transferred between the departments during emergencies.

[The new Department of Emergency Communications was created](#) and located at the Wheeler Avenue location.

With the department established, it now became time to provide the new department with the appropriate resources necessary to protect the safety of our community.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2011, the City began planning and



budgeting for an entire replacement of our Public Safety Communications system, the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, the Police Records Management system, Fire Station Alerting system, and more.

As we concluded the [implementation of this](#)

You can [vote for your preference](#) between now and November 17th.

Leaf Collection

The annual City's leaf collection effort began on Monday.

[The full schedule of leaf vacuuming efforts is available online and will continue for the next few weeks.](#)

Commonwealth's Attorney Community Academy

[Alexandria's Commonwealth's Attorney, Bryan Porter is introducing the first ever "Community Academy."](#)

Scheduled on Wednesday November 8th from 6 PM until 9 PM, this program will introduce residents to the office charged with prosecution of criminal offenses in Alexandria.

Space is limited. [RSVP by e-mail today!](#)

Run For Turkey

For the 42nd Year, Del Ray will host the best Turkey Trot around!

The 42nd Anniversary Alexandria Turkey Trot 5 Miler returns to the streets of Del Ray and Rosemont on Thanksgiving morning.

Brought to you by the Del Ray Business Association and DC Road Runners, the race is a regional tradition and last year attracted 4,300 finishers!

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

City Tree Lighting

[On Friday, November 24th, at 6PM Santa returns to Market Square in Old Town to light the City's tree.](#)

[system in 2015, the project had become a \\$15 million investment.](#) The CAD system and Fire Station Alerting System went live on January 21, 2015.

These new systems provide better data to our dispatchers, better pre-arrival data to our first responders, and more efficient and prompt dispatch of emergency response. It provides our dispatchers with better data on the location and status of resources.

The new system provides for greater interoperability with our neighboring jurisdictions, thus improving our mutual aid response.

Last year, the City was able to avail ourselves of another feature of this investment, the ability to receive text messages from those seeking emergency response. [Our friends in Arlington and Fairfax County have already deployed](#) this functionality.

[While the City still encourages residents to call 9-1-1 if emergency assistance is required, the ability to text 9-1-1 is now available for our residents in an emergency situation.](#)

To better prepare our first responders to serve our residents in an emergency, [we have joined a national "Smart911" service.](#) This service allows residents to populate important information that will become available prior to the arrival of first responders, thus ensuring the most personalized response in an emergency situation. [You can create your profile online today.](#)

In a region such as ours, borders between jurisdictions are divisions that the politicians get excited about, but are not overly relevant to most of our residents. Our public safety services are provided seamlessly across the region using a variety of mutual aid relationships. In recognition of that reality and a desire to be even more efficient about the tax dollars that we utilize for these services, the City recently took a significant steps towards closer partnership with Arlington County in providing 911 services.

The two jurisdictions have now jointly [executed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly procure a truly integrated Next Generation 911 \(NG 9-1-1\) call processing system.](#) Once implemented, this will allow either 911 center to provide geographic redundancy for the other, and create a platform for further integration and consolidation across the region. It is an important step towards efficiency and improved service for the residents of both jurisdictions.

Public safety communications are the first step for local government to provide the life and death services that our residents rely. Providing these services at the highest level, while leveraging new technology and maximizing our investment of your tax dollars will ensure the safety of each and every resident and visitor.

The Cost of Disagreement

A little over three years ago, in October of 2014, the Planning Commission and City Council heard a land-use proposal at 329 N. Washington Street in Old Town.

The property was historic having had its original section constructed around 1823. For its first 100 years of history, the property was largely utilized as a residential property. From the 1930s through the 1980s, the property functioned as a ground-floor doctor's office, with residential above.

In the citywide 1992 rezoning, the City removed the commercial zoning and the property remained residential.

The owners of La Bergerie, a French restaurant elsewhere in Old Town had conceived of a plan to move their existing restaurant to the site. [The application before the Planning Commission and City Council in October of 2014 was to amend the master plan, rezone](#)

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

Lyceum Exhibit

Next week the Lyceum will host a reception to showcase a new exhibit "Alexandrians Fight the Great War."

The reception will be held on Thursday the 9th beginning at 5:30 PM.

[Free tickets are available online.](#)

Run For Shelter

On Saturday November 18th, Carpenter's Shelter hosts the 7th Annual Run For Shelter road race on Eisenhower Avenue.

With two distances (10K and 5K), and a fun run this race is for everyone. It begins at the United States Patent and Trademark Office at 600 Dulany Street.

[Join the fight against homelessness.](#)

Halloween Parade

[The 21st Annual Del Ray Halloween parade returns to Mount Vernon Avenue.](#)

Due to the weather on Sunday, the parade was moved to this Sunday.

Free for all ages, the parade features prizes for the best decorated homes, strollers, businesses and pets.

It starts at 2 PM. I'll see you there!

Real Estate Tax Bills Due

[The second half real estate tax bills are due on Tuesday, November 15th.](#)

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

[the property to allow a return to commercial use, and approve a special use permit to allow the operation of a restaurant with 153 seats and a 5 room "hotel" above.](#)

The Planning Commission unanimously recommended the application to the City Council. On October 18th, 2014 the City Council held our public hearing on the application. The Council heard from 45 members of the community that day, about half in support and half opposed to the application. After the testimony, the Council deliberated for some time, and ultimately I made a motion to approve the application including some changes designed to address many of the concerns we heard from the opposed neighbors (restrictions on outdoor music, restrictions on how trash would be picked up, parking, odor control, etc). That motion was adopted unanimously by the City Council.

Ordinarily, this would be the end of the story. If it was, this wouldn't be very interesting.

A month later, a group of residents opposed to the application filed a lawsuit in Alexandria Circuit Court challenging the City Council's decision. That began an odyssey that did not conclude until last weekend, over 3 years later.

The lawsuit was filed by attorneys from Williams & Connolly, one of the most exclusive law firms in the nation. Given the risk, the applicant put their plans on hold awaiting the result of the litigation.

The litigation accused the Council of making an unreasonable and arbitrary decision, of exercising illegal "spot-zoning," of showing favoritism to the applicant due to the fact that our former State Senator, the now-late Patsy Ticer, was the applicant's mother/mother-in-law, and a denial of equal protection.

Given the nature of the case, all of the City's Circuit Court judges recused themselves. This required a retired judge from elsewhere in the state to be appointed to hear the case.

The appointed judge allowed the entire City Council to be deposed in the case, along with members of the City staff, Planning Commissioners and other related parties.

While [standards suggest that state-level civil litigation should be resolved within a year](#), the case did not come to trial until the spring of 2016, and an opinion was not rendered until a year ago yesterday.

The judge ultimately ruled for the City and dismissed all of the claims made in the lawsuit.

Unfortunately, that was *still* not the end.

The plaintiffs in the litigation then filed an appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court. Last month, a writ panel of the Virginia Supreme Court heard arguments to take to case. [We learned last weekend that they decided not to take the case, thus affirming the Judge's ruling for the City.](#)

[The City spent over \\$1 million defending this lawsuit over the past 3 years.](#) That is \$1 million that could have been spent supporting our schools, our human services, our parks, our infrastructure, or a myriad of other City services. In addition to the actual cost of outside legal counsel, there was much more value expended with staff time responding to the litigation. This is deeply frustrating for me.

I believe that everyone has a right to exercise their rights in court. It is natural that those who feel aggrieved by a decision of the City Council may want to take that grievance before a judge. I have voted on many land-use applications in my seven years on the City Council and reasonable people will not always agree on every application.

Yet there is something wrong when litigation that is ultimately found without merit, can be allowed to drag out for 3 years, leaving the City's taxpayers and a small business owner left paying the bills.

Let me know your thoughts on this situation and how we avoid them in the future.

Youth Risk Behavior

The City government and Alexandria City Public Schools partner with a variety of State and Federal agencies, as well as non-profits to help promote healthy activities among our youth.

Whether it is the [Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy](#), the [Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria](#), or the [numerous gang prevention efforts](#), the City commits significant resources to help our youth make healthy choices in their lives.

It is important to assess whether these efforts are successful, and understand where further resources should be devoted. To do so, the Alexandria City Public Schools and Alexandria Health Department conduct the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. This voluntary survey administered to youth in grades 8, 10 and 12, provides a window into the choices being made by children in our City.

[This year's survey was recently released and the data provides some bright spots.](#) We continue to see reductions among those taking the survey in substance abuse, including cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. Alexandria youth consuming these substances remain lower than applicable national averages.

The levels of sexual activity continue to drop, with high levels of sexually active students reporting the use of protection against disease and unwanted pregnancies.

This is not to say that there are not concerns. 20% of the youth completing the survey reported riding in a vehicle with a drunk driver. Almost 30% reported texting or e-mailing while driving.

Concerns remain about mental health challenges, levels of fitness, and remaining substance abuse issues.

It is important to continue to assess the prevalence of these risks to calibrate our public policy response. While every child will not make the right choices, our combined efforts can help support positive and healthy decisions.

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

Vision Zero

In 2012, [a drunk driver killed a child walking along the road near Landmark Mall](#). His mother was also seriously injured.

In 2013, [a pedestrian was struck and injured while crossing Mount Vernon Avenue at Four Mile Road in the crosswalk.](#)

In 2013, [another child, while trick-or-treating, was hit by a vehicle on Russell Road.](#) While seriously injured, he fortunately survived.

In 2014, [a mother pushing a stroller with an infant was hit while walking on the sidewalk near Cora Kelly Elementary School.](#)

In 2015, [a resident was hit and suffered serious injuries while crossing the street at Duke and Ingram.](#)

Over two years ago, [a long-time City resident was hit and killed at an intersection in Del Ray.](#)

In May of last year, [a biker was hit and seriously injured on Duke at West Taylor Run.](#)

In August of last year, [a parking attendant was hit by a vehicle and killed in Old Town.](#)

A year ago, [a resident was hit and killed while crossing Yoakum Parkway on the West End.](#)

A few days later, [a pedestrian was hit by a drunk driver in Old Town.](#) The pedestrian died a little over a month later.

Late last year, [another pedestrian was hit in the crosswalk and killed walking home from work on West Glebe Road.](#)

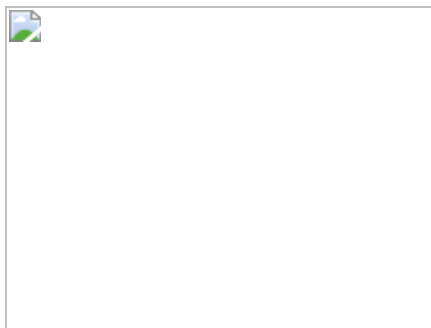
[The data shows that vehicle crashes have trended downward over the past five years, peaking at 1,713 in 2012 and dropping since. Overall crashes involving pedestrians have stayed steady at roughly five or six per month. Last year we had 22 crashes that resulted in death or serious injury. While that number is down from 55 in 2011, the four pedestrian deaths last year was the highest count in years.](#)

Each of these tragic incidents change the lives of the victims and their families in dramatic ways. But for each tragedy, there are also countless close calls and near misses that don't get reported.

In Alexandria, we are fortunate to have pedestrian scale, walkable neighborhoods with urban amenities throughout our City. Yet if residents do not feel they can safely traverse the streets of our City, then all the urban amenities are for naught.

The City [has invested millions of taxpayer dollars to improve pedestrian safety throughout our community.](#) Those resources have included improving pedestrian access to schools, building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming efforts, bike lanes, new signalization, and more.

With the recent large increases in road resurfacing budgets, [the Council has also steered new dollars into our "Complete Streets" efforts, the City's program for improving non-vehicular infrastructure.](#)



Yet there are still areas of our City where sidewalks are non-existent or unusable, intersections are unsafe and unsafe driving is rampant. We must improve the safety of our streets for all users. Doing so requires changing the behavior of all users of our roads.

[In last year's adopted budget, the Council expanded the Alexandria Police Department's traffic enforcement capacity by 30%](#). We also provided additional overtime funding to ensure expanded traffic enforcement until those resources come online.

Our new Police Chief has worked to increase the focus of existing resources on traffic enforcement efforts.

Last year, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#). Early this year, we kicked-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While this initiative will involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. Next month, our staff will release the draft plan for comment. In December, it will come to Council for approval.

My view is that in order to significantly improve pedestrian safety in our City, we will have to be willing to make trade-offs in the pursuit of safety. The data show that the changes that will most significantly improve safety are also the most controversial in our community. We have to follow the research.

For instance, [the first phase of the King Street Complete Streets](#) effort involved the removal of parking, narrowing of travel lanes, improved crosswalks, signage, new bike lanes, etc., to reduce speed and improve safety. [The initial analysis showed that the project has reduced speed, reduced crashes and improved safety.](#)

[The second phase of the work on King Street](#) was an even more dramatic overhaul of the corridor, including reductions of travel lanes, pedestrian islands, crosswalks, etc. [In September the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes.](#) As with the first phase, crashes have been reduced, average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. [The initial review of this action has indicated a reduction in speed and accidents.](#)

We have also looked at signalization efforts that can improve safety. At a few problem intersections, the City created a "[Leading Pedestrian Interval](#)" to allow residents to get a head-start crossing before traffic can move.

We have also explored the creation of additional "[pedestrian scrambles](#)" to create an "all pedestrian" phase at problematic intersections.

[We have HAWK \(High Intensity Activated crossWalk\) signals in place](#) to ensure high visibility of pedestrians in high traffic corridors.

In response to concerns among several neighborhoods in the center of the City, the City just conducted an extensive data collection effort to help guide future traffic mitigation response.

[The Central Alexandria Traffic Study](#) involved the collection of origin and destination data, traffic volume and speed data in numerous locations around the City.

[The data that was collected was recently presented to a community task force and it provides a clear depiction of the impact of cut-through traffic on our neighborhoods.](#)

Soon the task force will begin looking at the potential impact of mitigation efforts on these problems.

The City is now concluding implementation of intersection and pedestrian improvements as part of our "Safe Routes to School" effort. These improvements were conducted at [Maury](#), [Ramsay](#) and [Polk](#) Elementary Schools.

I do believe there is more we can do.

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash](#). Lowering speed limits where appropriate will likely be in our toolbox around the City.

[Reducing traffic lanes, or so-called "road diets," can improve safety](#). As we approach future road resurfacing, removing lanes will likely be an option we consider.

[Allowing right turns on red was pushed by the Federal Government during the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis](#). Some [communities in the country are banning right turns on red to improve pedestrian safety](#).

It has been the City's practice to [announce enforcement efforts for intoxicated driving in advance](#), as well as [announce the results afterwards](#). We should do the same with our traffic enforcement. I believe greater transparency will help get the message out and improve safety throughout our City.

We need your input!

Are there particular areas of our City that you feel are unsafe and need attention? Are there intersections that are unsafe? Are there incomplete sections of sidewalk? Are there places where signage can be improved? [Please use the Alexandria Vision Zero Safety Map to report these areas](#).

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Let me know your thoughts.

Asking Richmond

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

Contained in the package are specific pieces of legislation that we would like to see proposed as well as the City's position on legislation that may arise during the session.



This upcoming General Assembly session is the so-called "long session." The General Assembly alternates between a 45 day session in odd number years and a 60 day session in even number years.

This upcoming session will be marked by the new Governor elected in a few days, and by the new members of the House of Delegates elected at that same time.

In August of 2016, [the Governor brought together the Joint Money Committees from the General Assembly](#). He gave them the sobering news that the

Commonwealth had not met the forecasts in the approved biennial state budget. The change to the revenue estimates removes \$1.2 billion from the budget over the two years.

Faced with this reduction of revenue, the state was forced to dip into its revenue stabilization fund (the so-called "Rainy Day Fund") and defer planned salary increases.

[This year, when the Governor went before the Joint Money Committees, the story was a much more rosy one, with a \\$136 million budget surplus to celebrate.](#)

While budget matters always dominate in Richmond, there is likely going to be significant discussion of a variety of other priorities before the Commonwealth.

The Council will be holding a public hearing on the proposed legislative package on Saturday, November 18th beginning at 9:30 AM. Final adoption of the package is scheduled for Tuesday, November 28th.

[I included a number of proposals in this year's proposed package, including:](#)

- A request for a change to the state's Virginia Preschool Initiative to improve access to the City's low income children.
- A request for authority to expand our tree preservation ordinance
- A request for increase to an assessment charged for each civil case filed as a funding source for the City's law library.
- A request for legislation that provides our local school board with the authority to set the start date of school at their discretion.
- A request to expand the right of a renter to assign their purchase right during a condo conversion. Current law allows an elderly or disabled resident to assign their right to purchase to a housing non-profit or government agency. I have suggested that we expand this right to families. This is one way we can maintain affordable housing.
- A request for funding to support the purchase of body-worn cameras for our Police Department
- A request to clarify legislation that was passed last year by the General Assembly and now serves to limit transparency in land-use matters

While it is difficult to get legislation passed in Richmond, my hope is that we will be able to make progress on many of these important issues when the General Assembly gets to work in January.

The City is represented in the State Senate by [Senator Richard Saslaw](#), [Senator George Barker](#), and [Senator Adam Ebbin](#). In the House of Delegates, the City is represented by [Delegate Charniele Herring](#) and [Delegate Mark Levine](#).

[Click here to determine who represents you.](#)

Torpedo Factory

[The Torpedo Factory Arts Center](#) is an iconic presence on the City's waterfront. Bringing a half million visitors into working artists galleries, the Factory is a economic development engine and unique arts resource for our community.

The City of Alexandria purchased the Factory from the United States Government in 1969. The Arts Center was opened in 1974 and has been a model for similar centers around country.

Yet for the past several years, the challenges of the Factory and the possible solutions to those challenges have been divisive.



In 2009, the [City commissioned a study to review the Factory and the opportunities of the site](#). The result of the study was a series of organizational changes to the Factory. [Those led to the creation of a new non-profit Board](#) to run the operations and leverage private resources to support the Factory.

With the existing lease nearing conclusion on June 30th of last year, the Torpedo Factory Arts Center Board [commissioned another study to look at the strategic options available to the City and the Factory](#).

This report recommended more changes to the governance, the management, and vision of the Factory.

My focus is on deriving a structure for the operation of the Factory that:

- expands the vitality of the Factory
- improves its financial sustainability
- improves its diversity
- ensures the success of Alexandria's premier arts destination long into the future.

I am confident that working together we can achieve these goals.

[As the efforts to chart that course continue, the City has now taken steps to provide stability in the intervening time period. Effective October 1 of last year, the City assumed caretaker leadership for the Factory](#). Since that time, the City has provided 3 year leases to the existing artist tenants, and is providing day to day management.

[We now have a community engagement effort under way to determine the future of the Factory, and we want your input!](#)

It is my hope that this phase will be brief and we will be able to move forward with a new structure for the future of the Torpedo Factory.

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