

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

November 1, 2018

## In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Smarter Waste Disposal](#)

[Landmark Mall Redevelopment](#)

[Stormwater Fee Credits](#)

[Fixing Metro](#)

[More Efficient BAR](#)

[A Safer Seminary Road](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Legislative Package & Potomac Yard Metro](#)

## Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

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

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

In less than a week, we will know the seven individuals that will set policy for our City government for the next three years. The campaigns for City Council have dominated the last year. I'm excited for our attention to get back to governing.

The current City Council will get started shortly with our budget process.

Our annual budget retreat will be held on Saturday November 10th, with the Council considering the adoption of our guidance to the City Manager for the preparation of the FY 2020 budget later this month.

In September the City Council voted to make our Deputy City Attorney Joanna Anderson the Acting City Attorney. [Last month we voted unanimously to make the assignment permanent.](#) I look forward to continuing to work with Joanna and I know she will do great things for our City and its residents.

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

## Council Initiatives

### Getting Smart About Waste

Waste removal is one of the most visible and traditional of local government services. A service that at one point simply involved a trash truck on a route picking up a resident's waste has now evolved into a complex portfolio of services.



[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

## Events/Updates

### Voting Has Started

On November 6th, Alexandria voters will choose a United States Senator, our representative in Congress, our Mayor, our City Council and our School Board. They will also decide the fate of [two proposed amendments to the Virginia Constitution](#).

The polls will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM.

[You can find your polling place and verify registration online.](#)

Sample ballots are now available for the election:

[School Board District A](#)

[School Board District B](#)

[School Board District C](#)

Absentee voting is already at an all-time high for a non-Presidential year.

[Today, tomorrow and Saturday are the last three days of in-person absentee voting available.](#)

Voting is available at 132 N. Royal Street and 5005 Duke Street.

### The Campaign

[In November, of last year, I made a significant announcement about my political future: I announced that I am running to be Alexandria's next Mayor.](#)

While the City provides curbside trash and recycling collection for a tad over 20,000 households, we also provide:

- Yard Waste Collection
- Leaf/brush collection
- Metal and appliances collection
- Spring Clean-Up
- Bulk Trash Pick-Up
- Electronic waste collection
- Recycling Drop-Off Centers
- Public Space Trash and Recycling
- Farmers Market Composting

Each of these services has evolved to address defined needs in our City, but each has associated policy choices. Several of these significant policy questions are now before us.

[To determine a path forward on these issues the City is working to adopt a "WasteSmart Strategic Plan."](#) This plan will define a future for how Alexandria addresses our waste.

It is no accident that one of the chapters of the City's recently [adopted Environmental Action Plan Phase 1 update](#) is Solid Waste. Alexandria's handling of its solid waste is a core area of environmental stewardship.

Five years ago, [I wrote in this newsletter about our consideration of whether to extend the operating agreement with Covanta to operate the "Waste 2 Energy" facility which is jointly owned by Alexandria and Arlington](#). This [important facility](#) generates up to 23 megawatts of renewable energy.

That agreement will now expire in 2038 and the future of waste disposal will need to be carefully considered in the intervening time. In preparation for this study, [a white paper considering alternatives to address the future of this facility was prepared](#).

[Recycling markets are now in crisis](#). The glass we collect in our single stream recycling cannot effectively be recycled. Challenges also exist for some plastics and other material. We will need to determine new ways to effectively address these materials.

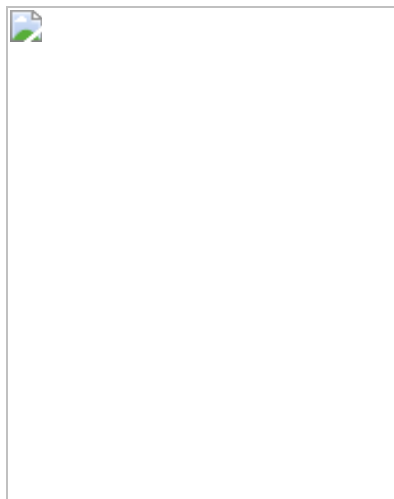
[The City's collection of yard waste is of dubious environmental value, and current trials of food waste collection have not been beneficial from an environmental perspective](#). It may make sense to reconsider the yard waste collection as a service.

[Should the City look to further outsource or possibly displace existing private providers operating in the City?](#) There may be benefits of both scenarios.

This month the draft strategic plan will come to Council. On Saturday November 17th the City Council will be accepting public testimony on the plan at our Public Hearing.

Please let me know your thoughts on these important issues!

### Landmark Mail



In June, [I was successful in winning the Democratic nomination](#), and I will be on the ballot this November.

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.

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

I would be honored to have your vote on Tuesday.

### **Black Friday**

Avoid the mall, head to Old Town for Black Friday!

[Throughout Alexandria, 50 independent boutiques will offer an alternative Black Friday experience!](#)

### **Small Business Saturday**

Saturday November 24th is Small Business Saturday!

This national event showcases the many small businesses that are backbones of our City's retail community.

[With deals and events throughout our City, this is the time to get your holiday shopping done while supporting Alexandria's diverse small retailers.](#)

### **Leaf Collection**

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

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

### **Medicaid Expansion**

Beginning today, residents may apply for health coverage effective January 1st under the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia.

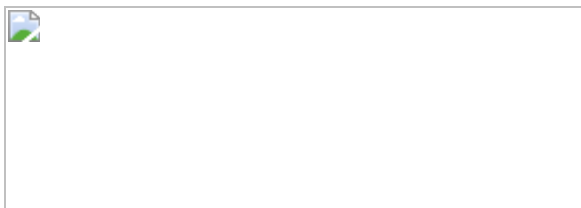
There is no clearer demonstration of the City's financial challenges than the predicament that currently faces Landmark Mall.

Eighteen years 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 \$24 million, \$13.4 million, and \$10.6 million, respectively. They generate about \$500,000 in real estate tax today, less than half of what it used to.

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.



The City has taken a number of steps over the years to revitalize the site.

In 2009, the City Council approved the [Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan](#). This plan laid out a comprehensive vision for the redevelopment of the entire corridor including the properties on the existing Mall site.

The bankruptcy of one of the owners, unfavorable market conditions, and the complexity of the relationship between the three owners on the site resulted in little action for several years.

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 has slowed that company's 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.](#)

While no one should be convinced until they see bulldozers knocking down the existing mall site, there is a lot going on, including some significant events earlier this year. Landmark Mall redevelopment has been complicated from the beginning, but I believe we can be cautiously optimistic that it is finally coming together.

- [Early last year, 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.](#)
- [Mill Creek is now engaged to handle the residential portion of the redevelopment.](#)
- There have been discussions between the City and Howard Hughes about potential public/private partnerships that will help spur the redevelopment.
- 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 the new REIT.](#)

[Residents may verify their eligibility online.](#)

The City will be hosting a trained "Navigator" every Monday morning from 8:30 AM until 12:30 PM until December 10th at 2525 Mount Vernon Avenue to assist residents in signing up.

Get covered today!

### Run For Turkey

For the 43rd Year, Del Ray will host the best Turkey Trot around!

The 43rd 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 4,600 finishers!

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

### City Tree Lighting

[On Friday, November 23rd, 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 Thursday, November 15th.](#)

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

### Backflow Preventers

In some areas of the City, homeowners have periodically experienced

One of the largest impediments to redevelopment has been the presence of three landowners on the site. We now have two landowners on the site and we are getting closer to having one landowner with full site control.

While that is good news, the shift from a modest redevelopment of only the mall site to a more comprehensive redevelopment means some more delays as new plans are submitted for a larger area.

[In the City's Indepartmental Work Program, we included a new process to re-plan the site with a more comprehensive vision.](#)

[That process will commence with a community meeting on Wednesday November 14th at 7 PM at 200 Cameron Station Blvd. There will be a Community Open House on Wednesday December 12th at 7 PM at 5550 Cardinal Place.](#)

During the interim period an agreement between the Howard Hughes Corporation and [Carpenter's Shelter](#) to [temporarily house the shelter at Landmark](#) was struck. [Carpenter's Shelter is redeveloping their existing shelter, expanding and creating new affordable housing on site in partnership with the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation.](#)

The shelter will be at Landmark for 18 - 24 months, at which time they will return to their new location on N. Henry Street.

The redevelopment of the Landmark Mall site has been a long time in coming to fruition. I am optimistic that we are finally making real progress in this effort.

### Getting Credit for Your Stormwater

This year the City put in place a new stormwater utility fee to address our significant obligations to protect waterways from polluted storm water. The [City's MS4 Permit Program](#) spells out specific pollutant reductions that the City must meet over a 15 year time period.

With the fee in place, the Council has now approved a [credit structure that will allow homeowners to request credit for improvements on your own property or on common properties](#). The application will become available to formally apply for credits on December 1st.

There are [a variety of ways the City can meet these obligations](#). Redevelopment can help, in that it can convert impervious surfaces into areas that can handle stormwater. For example, [a residential project in the Eisenhower Valley](#) that was approved by Council in 2013 has created a new pond. That pond **alone** will account for a substantial portion of our pollutant reduction obligations from its construction until this year.

The new credit structure provides incentive for small and large changes that property owners can make that will reduce the volume and pollution of stormwater runoff.

In the end, meeting these obligations will be expensive. Current estimates have the costs at \$65 - \$100 million dollars over the next 15 years, including \$33 million over the next five years.

The fee is now assessed on the impact the property has on stormwater runoff in the City as opposed to simply the valuation of the property.

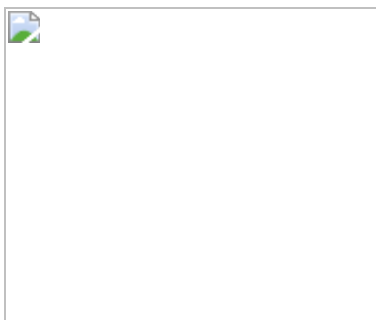
For residential properties, our staff devised a relatively simple tier structure with 4 tiers (Condo, Townhouse, Typical Single Family and Large Single Family) for different types of residential properties. For non-residential properties, a calculation based on impervious areas on a property was implemented.

sewer backflow into basements.

In addition to being quite unsanitary, this condition can cause significant damage to homes.

For property owners in designated areas, who have experienced these conditions in the past, the City has recently brought back a cost-sharing program to assist property owners in the purchase and installation of backflow preventers.

[Full details are available online.](#)



The City is now well on its way to meeting these important watershed obligations, and we now will partner with property owners to help advance these important improvements.

## Fixing Metro

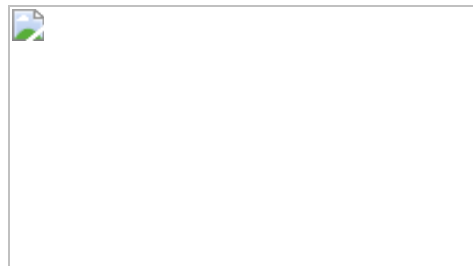
Last month, City staff brought [the initial framework to Council to respond to the planned Summer 2019 Metro Shutdown in Alexandria](#). Planning efforts to prepare for needed repairs on Metrorail have been very active at the staff level, and we will require ideas from our residents as we work to prevent this from being a disaster for our City.

Once the crown jewel of the Washington, DC region, Metrorail is experiencing a very difficult time. While the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has numerous challenges, the most serious and pressing are related to safety.

Metro is a basic building block of our region's economy. If there is a perception that the system is unsafe, then that awareness can be crippling to the region.

Paul Wiedefeld, the WMATA General Manager for the past 3 years, is aggressively working to tackle these challenges. [WMATA finalized the SafeTrack Plan, which concentrated three years of work into one year.](#)

Advancing this work required expanded time when the system is not operating. To make this happen, extended weekend hours were discontinued, new mid-day maintenance was scheduled, and most importantly, a series of "surges" occurred across the system.



[Working with WMATA, DASH, and other local partners, we came up with a series of alternatives to assist Alexandria riders in their commutes.](#)

[We will now have to put those lessons to the test as WMATA has announced a new set of closures for next summer.](#) This time, the closures will be to rebuild outdoor station platforms that are past the end of their usable lives. The first phase of this work will involve closing down the Braddock Road, King Street and Eisenhower Avenue stations. This will mean that there will be no blue or yellow line service south of the airport expected from Memorial Day to Labor Day in 2019.

This will require a dramatic regional response. Far beyond the impact of the SafeTrack, this closure holds the potential to cripple our region. While we do have the luxury of a year to get ready, this closure will require the City and its regional partners to identify transit alternatives, teleworking options, economic development planning, and more.

[Last week Paul Wiedefeld proposed his suggested budget to the](#)

[WMATA Board](#). The [proposed budget](#) is an attempt to recover ridership to the beleaguered system by expanding service, maintaining fare levels, and expanding service guarantees. Of course that leaves the local jurisdictions on the hook for expected increases in our subsidy requirements.

[Last month our City Manager proposed setting aside half of the City's surplus](#) from last fiscal year to address the City's portion of retroactive compensation due to some of the organized labor workforce of WMATA [as a result of a recent arbitration award](#).

The work to restore Metro back to the level required to support this region continues. In the short-term, additional sacrifice will be required. As a daily Metro rider myself, I know the service challenges first-hand. I'm hopeful that these efforts will bear fruit soon.

## BAR Consolidation

Our City government conducts many vital functions. It's important that they do so effectively and efficiently.

Alexandria has two historic preservation districts, the [Old & Historic District](#) and the [Parker-Gray District](#). Both of these districts have a Board of Architectural Review (BAR) charged with preserving the historic fabric of each area.

The Old & Historic District and the BAR were created originally in 1946.

In 1984, there was an effort to expand the existing Old and Historic District to include the areas that are today part of the Parker-Gray District. While that was ultimately rejected, a decision was made to create a separate district with its own board.

Once the General Assembly took action, City Council appointed the first Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review in 1986.

Today, both boards are responsible for hearing applications for permits to demolish or certificates of appropriateness.



In 2011, the Parker-Gray Ad Hoc Design Guidelines Work Group was formed to streamline the approval process, expand the use of more modern materials, and reduce the fees.

This group agreed upon a series of [recommendations](#) that were [adopted by the City Council in the Fall of 2013](#).

A consequence of those changes has been to shift many requests that required a full public hearing before the BAR, to be able to be approved administratively by City staff.

The meetings of the Parker-Gray BAR have reduced significantly in duration, and two meetings in the past year have been cancelled due to a lack of agenda items.

In an effort to reduce the impact on the City's staff, as well as improve the customer service for our property owners, my colleague [Councilman Paul Smedberg and I jointly proposed combining the Old & Historic District and Parker-Gray Boards of Architectural Review into a consolidated Board of Architectural Review for both districts](#).



The City Council voted 6-1 to initiate a Text Amendment to consider this change. Our City staff [worked with stakeholders over the past few months](#) to prepare a recommendation.

Tonight the staff [will bring a recommendation implementing this change to our Planning Commission](#). The Commission will hold a public hearing beginning at 7 PM and public testimony is welcome.

If approved by the Planning Commission, this proposed change will come to the City Council on Saturday November 17th, and the Council will also have a public hearing to consider this change.

### **Making Seminary Road Safe**

In 2012, the City Council worked to clarify the City's position regarding a then-proposed connection from the Interstate 395 HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) Lanes onto Seminary Road.

At the the time the Council held serious concerns about potential adverse impacts to cut-through traffic if all vehicles were allowed to use the exit onto Seminary during rush hour.

Ultimately, the City Council [adopted a resolution limiting the connectivity and certain turn movements](#).

The new ramp [opened nearly 3 years ago to operation](#).

Last month, the Virginia Department of Transportation notified the City that Transurban (the concessionaire for the Interstate 395 Express Lanes) wished to evaluate the existing HOV operations and consider whether a HOT (High Occupancy Tolling) ramp is more appropriate.

This would be a significant change and holds the potential to have negative impacts on Seminary Road and other City streets. This



proposal also comes at a sensitive time as the City was in the process of considering options for improving the safety of Seminary Road.

Last month, City staff [unveiled three different proposals](#)

for reconfiguration of Seminary Road to be considered by the community. With the Transurban proposal now being considered, our staff has delayed consideration of safety improvements for Seminary Road given the potential changes.

### **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**

## Asking Richmond For Help

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 "short



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 likely be marked by significant conversations around fiscal policy, with new proposals around the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and new revenue from online sales due to the [recent Supreme Court "Wayfair" decision](#).

In August, [the Governor brought together the Joint Money Committees from the General Assembly](#). He gave them the news that the previous fiscal year had closed with a surplus in excess of half of a billion dollars.

With this additional revenue, the state made contributions to its revenue stabilization fund (the so-called "Rainy Day Fund") and other reserves.

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

This year, the City has chosen a different approach to the package with particular focus in two large issues:

- The City will be again seeking funding from the Commonwealth to assist in funding the implementation of new state mandates for combined sewer remediation work in Old Town.
- This City is requesting that the Commonwealth make a significant investment in school facilities construction and maintenance. Jurisdictions around the state (including Alexandria) are struggling with the costs of growing student enrollment and aging school facilities.

The Council will be holding a public hearing on the proposed legislative package on Saturday, November 17th beginning at 9:30 AM. Final adoption of the package is scheduled for Tuesday, November 27th.

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.](#)



## Potomac Yard Metro

In September the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) announced the latest and most significant milestone in the the City's 4-decade long effort to bring a new metro station to Potomac Yard. WMATA [announced the selection of Potomac Yard Constructors as the prime construction contractor.](#)

Potomac Yard Constructors is a joint venture of [Halmar International](#) and [Schiavone Construction Company](#). The bid was ranked the highest technically during the procurement process and had the lowest price. WMATA later provided Potomac Yard Constructors with the formal "Notice to Proceed" and the formal design and construction of the new station has begun.

On the front page of the [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) for the Potomac Yard Metro Station are the seals of four entities: Federal Transit Administration, Department of the Interior, WMATA and the City of Alexandria. Later in the report there is additional input from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission.



The breadth of the entities involved clearly demonstrates the complexity of the project.

[The Potomac Yard Metro project will facilitate the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs and will bring up to \\$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City \(over 30 years\). 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.](#)

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

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 today consists of a [special tax district](#), tax increment funding, [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority regional funding](#), a [Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Board loan](#), and a developer contribution. Council did vote to remove one of the special tax districts if a portion of money from the proposed Dominion 230KV transmission line easement could be used to replace the resources. With the transmission line not currently proceeding, this funding area requires further discussion later this year.

While the funding is generated by the City of Alexandria, the procurement agency is WMATA. It is being handled as a reimbursable project.

At the end of 2016, [WMATA issued the pre-solicitation notice to hire the contractor to design, construct, test and commission the new Potomac Yard Metro station](#). The formal solicitation was released shortly thereafter.

As the sealed bids came back it became clear that the responses were significantly above the budget for the project.

At this point the City had a choice. The City could have cancelled the procurement, restarted the public process and modified the scope. We could have cancelled the project altogether. Ultimately, the City chose to explore ways to keep the project moving, and our staff worked with WMATA staff to make changes to the project scope within the existing procurement to bring the cost down.

Ultimately, [the budget was increased to \\$320 million](#) and the southern mezzanine was proposed to be removed from the current plan.

I remain deeply disappointed to see the scope of the project change. I do believe that the design was a good one. Yet, the last thing this project needed was any further delay.

The new design will allow for the construction of the additional southern entrance at a later date, if the need is demonstrated and the funding established.

Along with Councilman Paul Smedberg, I represent the Council on the Potomac Yard Metro Implementation Group (PYMIG). This advisory committee has now met weekly with the new construction team and offered feedback on the process and pending changes.

The PYMIG worked with the team to design improved connectivity between the northern entrance and where the southern entrance would have been. [The committee does appear to be coalescing around a ramp concept that will provide access while meeting budget constraints](#).

In December, the revised land-use approvals will come back to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval. In addition, there are a number of Federal and State approvals required, as well as modifications to our existing agreements with the National Park Service. Further public comment is invited through each of these processes.

The new schedule is for the station to open in late 2021/early 2022.

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson  
703.746.4500  
[justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov](mailto:justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov)  
[www.justin.net](http://www.justin.net)  
Alexandria City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Paid for by Wilson For Mayor