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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

October 1, 2015

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The Governor has declared [a State of Emergency throughout the Commonwealth](#) in preparation for the significant rainfall and hurricane impacts.

[Make plans now](#) for the effects of these storms and ensure you are signed up with the [City's eNews Alert system to receive any updates](#).

The Council has been back from recess for a month, and will now consider some thorny land-use matters.

The pace is even more hectic with the elections little more than a month away.

Last month, [the City mourned the loss of former City Council member T. Michael Jackson](#).

I had the opportunity to come to know Mike as a colleague at my day job. He had a wicked sense of humor and was a very conscientious public servant during his time serving our community. He will be missed.

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

Council Initiatives

Keeping Our Streets Safe



[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Voting Has Begun

[In person and mail absentee voting has begun for our upcoming election.](#)

On Tuesday November 3rd, 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 for review online in advance.](#)

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

There will be three additional City Council debates this month. For two of those, the details are available:

Tuesday October 6th at 6:30 PM at Cora Kelly Recreation Center (25 W. Reed Avenue)

Thursday October 8th at 7:00 PM at George Washington Middle School (1005 Mt. Vernon Avenue)

The City's PTA Council has scheduled a forum for all of the candidates for School Board. That forum will be held at Minnie Howard School (3801 W. Braddock Road) at 7:00 PM on Wednesday October 21st.

Alexandria Library Now Accepts Passport Applications

[The Beatley Central Library at 5005 Duke Street will now accept passport applications for residents.](#)

No appointments are necessary. Applications are accepted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 3 PM to 7

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

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.](#)

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

Just last month, [a long-time City resident was hit and killed at an intersection in Del Ray.](#)

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.

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 in attempts 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.

In the aftermath of last month's fatal accident, the Police Department and the Transportation and Environmental Services Department hosted a community meeting at Maury Elementary to solicit feedback from the community. The result was a lively meeting resulting in great feedback from City residents on ways we can make Alexandria's streets a safer place for all. [We continue to solicit input from residents.](#)

The most recent tragedy has made the [City's on-going updates to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#) all the more important. We have an opportunity, with the adoption of significant revisions to the plan, to change the mindset on our streets.

One of the concepts being discussed by the citizens involved in the process is the adoption of a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While such an initiative would involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries.

While eliminating fatalities and serious injuries is a bold and ambitious agenda, we must take steps now to make sure Alexandria streets are safer for all users.

Creating a New Broadband Future

In July, the City took a significant step forward in our efforts to bring new broadband options to Alexandria. As I wrote in May, the Council

PM, Saturdays from 11 AM to 3 PM, and Sundays from 1 PM to 3 PM.

Art on the Avenue Returns!

On Saturday, [Art on the Avenue returns to Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray!](#)

For the 20th consecutive year, the annual arts festival returns with hundreds of artists, food vendors, and activities for kids.

Don't miss it!

Blood Drive Saturday

This Saturday from 11 AM until 3 PM, the [Hope for Accreta](#) Foundation will be hosting a blood drive at Beatley Library.

The drive is in honor of mothers who have lost blood after childbirth.

[Sign up to online to give today!](#) Use sponsor code 8131. Thanks for being willing to offer this lifeline to so many!

See The Stars

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

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

[Reservations](#) are required, but don't miss out on this great resource! The next show is the evening of Tuesday October 27th.

Personal Property Tax Bills Due

[Vehicle Personal Property Tax bills are due on Monday, October 5th.](#)

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

Follow the Drain

had supported the idea of issuing an Request for Information (RFI). This RFI would solicit concepts from the private sector for partnership with the City in expanding broadband options, availability and capabilities.

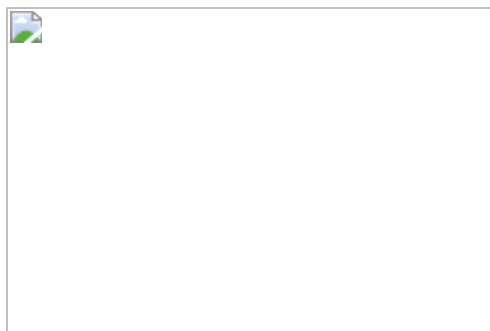
In July, [the RFI was issued and we actively solicited those partnerships.](#) The deadline for responses was September 3rd and I am excited that we received 10 responses from potential private partners.

Our City Staff is now evaluating those responses and will be making a recommendation shortly about how to move forward.

[A little over a year ago, I proposed that the City develop a broadband plan to bring true competition to Alexandria's broadband market.](#)

In [Chattanooga, Tennessee, a community of 170,000, a public electricity utility used hundreds of millions of dollars to build thousands of miles of underground fiber.](#) In doing so, the utility enabled the residents and businesses of Chattanooga to receive the fastest Internet connectivity in our nation.

For years, Alexandria has sought new private investment in broadband infrastructure. For most of our residents, we have one company providing Internet connectivity, television and telephone service. Regardless of the performance of that company, technological innovation and reliability thrives on competition.



This is an issue that affects not only residents, but also our businesses and the ability of our community to attract commerce.

In 2009, the City made great strides in bringing Verizon FIOS to our City. [Unfortunately, Verizon made the decision to cease any new deployments of FIOS nationally,](#) and Alexandria was left out.

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

Accountable and Transparent Government

Last month, I wrote about my efforts to publicly post the reports of the City's Office of Internal Audit.

[The office has the charge of detecting waste, fraud, and abuse, evaluating the adequacy of management and internal controls, and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of City programs.](#)

About 11 years ago, [Alexandria became one of the earliest jurisdictions in Virginia to post local campaign finance reports online.](#) Anyone can easily review who finances the campaigns of Alexandria's elected officials.

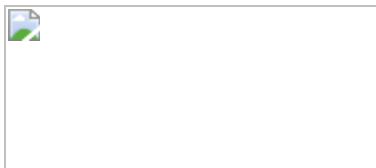
In 2009, I along with Councilman Smedberg and then-Councilman Krupicka, [successfully sought approval from Richmond](#) to impose new restrictions on land-use applicants. Specifically, the new laws we adopted [require land-use applicants to reveal any financial interests that they might have with policymakers.](#)

All elected officials in the Commonwealth are required to submit an annual [Statement of Economic Interests](#), which is available for

Ever wondered where the City's sewage goes to be processed?

Perhaps not, but if so, [request a tour of the Alexandria Renew Enterprises facility](#).

In addition to being a fascinating tour, it is an excellent way to learn about one of the most essential services in our community.



review at any time at our Clerk's office in City Hall. These reports are [frequently covered in the media](#).

Starting last week, at my urging, [Alexandria likely became the first jurisdiction in Virginia to begin posting those statements online for public review](#).

I'll admit to feeling a bit vulnerable with this much information about myself online. However, I'm hopeful that in a time where there is far too much cynicism in government, these measures go a long way to ensuring Alexandrians that they have a transparent, honest, and accountable government serving them.

A Victory for City Ratepayers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Last month, the [Commission concurred with their hearing examiner and the case is now closed](#). While I'm glad this proposal was defeated, this does not in any way diminish the importance of these badly needed infrastructure investments.

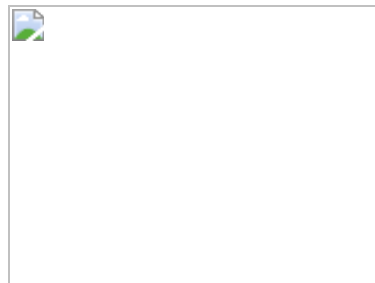
I'm hopeful we can continue our efforts working with VAWC to improve our aging water infrastructure.

Making Metro Work For Alexandria

A little over a year ago, [the region celebrated the opening of Phase 1 of Metro's Silver Line](#). With the completion of Phase 1, Metro Rail is now connected to Reston, with a [Phase 2](#) underway which would extend the connection to Loudoun County, including Dulles Airport.

This has been a major improvement for our region, unlocking economic growth and easing congestion. However, it has not come without trade-offs, and for Alexandria those trade-offs are significant.

From the early days of the Metro Rail system, the tunnel under the Potomac River, connecting the Rosslyn Metro Station in Arlington with the Foggy Bottom Metro Station in Washington, has been the most significant chokepoint in the system. Today, the tunnel can carry 26 trains per hour in each direction.



As the areas of Fairfax County at the end of the Orange Line have grown, so have the demands on this sole tunnel connection to our nation's capital. With the opening of the Silver Line, the situation reached a breaking point.

In preparation for the opening of the Silver Line, [Metro implemented a series of changes to the Blue Line to free up capacity in the Rosslyn tunnel to allow the Silver Line service to operate.](#)

As a result, the Blue Line which previously provided rush-hour service every 6 minutes to Alexandria residents boarding at Van Dorn, Braddock Road, and King Street Metro, now runs every 12 minutes. In the event of a service disruption, this frequency can be much less. Particularly for Alexandrians taking the Blue Line to Rosslyn, Foggy Bottom, Farragut West, or McPherson Square, this change has become unbearable.

To provide alternatives for these riders, Metro has expanded Yellow Line service. It utilizes the other, above ground, Potomac River crossing between the Pentagon and L'Enfant Plaza. As a Yellow Line commuter myself, this additional service has been a nice improvement. They have also deployed longer eight-car trains during rush hour on the Blue Line, as well as expanded some regional bus service to ease the crunch.

While these alternatives certainly help, they do not address the underlying issue, which is a lack of a capacity in the system, most acutely in the tunnel under the Potomac River.

Overall, Metro's answer to the long-term challenges that ail the system is the [Momentum Plan. This ten year Strategic Plan lays out a significant list of improvements to allow continued growth in the region's flagship transit system.](#)

Most significant for Alexandria is the Momentum Plan's vision for [new Blue Line connections](#). These additional connections, coupled with a future plan to add a new crossing, represent the only concrete ways to relieve the pressure on the Rosslyn tunnel.

However, as with anything of this magnitude, the cost for implementing most of the Momentum Plan is immense. Metro is unique among transit systems around the country in that there is no dedicated funding source. Metro must rely on contributions from the federal, state, and local governments that it serves.

In the current fiscal year, the City will provide \$34.5 million to Metro to fund our portion of its overall operations. Additionally, we provide another \$8.3 million in support of their capital budget.

Many jurisdictions, including the Alexandria City Council last year, have endorsed the Momentum Plan. However, obtaining funding to implement it will be challenging during this difficult financial time.

[In response to the many concerns that have been voiced, Metro has proposed increases in Silver, Orange, Green, and Yellow line headways in order to allow for reductions to the existing Blue Line headways.](#)

While this proposal is step in a positive direction, ultimately, it will require new investment to ensure that the Blue Line remains a viable part of the region's transit solutions.

Yet, this is not entirely a money issue for WMATA. [In April, I wrote in this space about the challenges WMATA's financial constraints had placed on the City's Transportation Improvement Program.](#) WMATA has significant management concerns as well.

With management instability, safety concerns, and a lack of adequate financial management, WMATA is in significant peril. Given the importance of WMATA to the region's success, this is a peril shared by every jurisdiction in this area.

It is my view that correcting this must be the highest priority for the region, and must involve systemic change including the potential of reopening the [WMATA Compact](#).

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

NVRPA Deal

The [Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority](#) (NVRPA) was created in the late 1950s as a public land conservation agency serving our region.

Today, the NVRPA is jointly funded and owned by Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun County, as well as the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church.

[The authority today owns over 10,000 acres of land and serves the dual purpose of land conservancy and recreation agency, with parks around the area.](#)

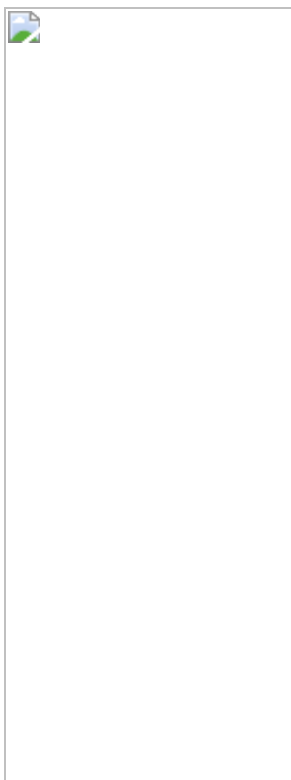
In Alexandria, NVRPA manages [Cameron Run Regional Park \(which is actually owned by the City of Alexandria\)](#), and owns and manages [Carlyle House in Old Town](#).

In full disclosure, during my 3.5 years off of City Council, I served as one of Alexandria's representatives on the NVRPA Board.

Cameron Run is a very active recreational park, with a wave pool, water slides, batting cages, etc. The property is very profitable for the authority and the [existing 40-year lease with the City expires in 2021](#).

Carlyle House is a historic site, with historical interpretation conducted by volunteers and NVRPA staff. NVRPA heavily subsidizes the operation of Carlyle House.

A few years ago, NVRPA came to Alexandria seeking to construct a new aquatics feature at Cameron Run. In order to finance the project, an extension to the lease was required. Prior to the issuance



of any new lease, the City's Park and Recreation Commission sought to explore alternative uses for the property, as well as address some issues with the existing use.

In the intervening time, the authority has recently come to the City with a new proposal. [NVRPA has obtained an option to purchase 517 Prince Street](#) in Old Town. [This historic property](#) operated a livery stable from 1772 - 1792 and has remained in the ownership of one family for 184 years. It is in remarkably good shape.

Dependent upon an extension of the lease at Cameron Run, NVRPA will purchase 517 Prince Street and operate it as a historic site similar to Carlyle House.

While there are certainly details to be considered, I am excited about the opportunity to expand the active recreational uses at Cameron Run, while adding a new historic property into the public inventory.

The City will undertake a public input process this fall to discuss the proposal. Let me know your thoughts!

Oakville Triangle

In past months, I have written about the [Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Planning process](#).

The Oakville Triangle largely consists of a light industrial area on the west side of Route 1 opposite to Potomac Yard. Last year, [the new owner of the 13 acre tract in the middle of the Triangle approached the City, about the possibility of redeveloping the property](#).

In response to the request, the City convened a community workgroup and commenced a planning process for much of the west side of Route 1.

We are now at the culmination of 17 public meetings by the nine member community working group. This week the City's Planning Commission will hear the [draft Oakville Triangle & Route 1 Corridor Vision Plan](#). If approved, this will come to the Council at our October 17th Public Hearing.

The potential for development in this area presents a variety of issues for consideration, including the future of light industrial space in our City, impacts on open space, connectivity, economic vitality, density, affordable housing, and many others.

The community group that was assembled to shepherd the planning process grappled with these issues among others.

In the end, the proposed plan works to expand the Mt. Jefferson Park, create other additional open space, concentrate new development closer to the transit (and away from existing lower-scale neighborhoods), improve the transportation systems and streetscape in the area, create significant new affordable housing, and create new "maker" spaces.

While there has been substantial community input during this process, I look forward to the recommendation of the Planning

Commission as well as the community input as this planning process comes to a conclusion.

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 meetings will be held on:

Thursday October 15th at 7:30 PM at Durant Arts Center (1605 Cameron Street)

Tuesday October 20th at 7:00 PM at Beatley Central Library (5005 Duke Street)

Saturday October 24th at 10:00 AM at Minnie Howard School (3801 W Braddock Road)

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

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

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