

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

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Alexandria, Virginia

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Events/Updates

The GW Parade!

On Monday, February 17th our [City's George Washington Birthday Parade](#) returns to the streets of Old Town.

Scheduled to step off at 1:00 PM, this event is designed to celebrate our first President and Alexandria's unique history.

I will see you there!

Citizens Police Academy

The [Citizens Police Academy](#) is back!

With the budget to be released in a few weeks, the busiest time of the City Council calendar is set to commence.

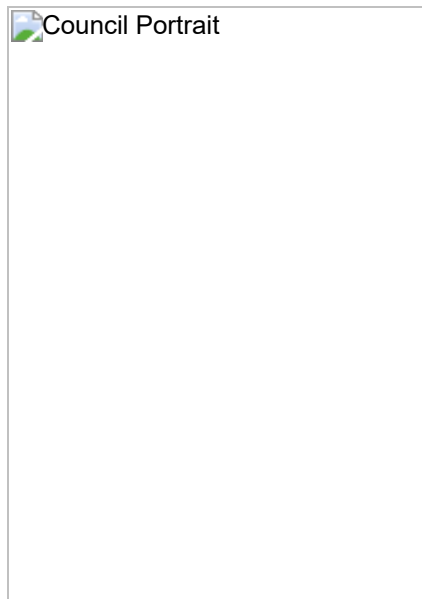
An advantage of local government is the ability to quickly see results of our collective efforts.

A key example of that was last month, as the [groundbreaking for the new headquarters of the National Science Foundation](#) occurred in the Eisenhower Valley, adjacent to the Eisenhower Avenue Metro.

With the National Science Foundation coming home to Alexandria, 2,400 new jobs and millions of dollars of economic activity become a permanent part of our City.

It is an exciting time to be an Alexandrian.

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



Council Initiatives

If I Had A Million Dollars

During last year's General Assembly session, former Governor McDonnell came together with the Senate and House of Delegates to [pass a historic transportation funding package](#). The adopted package increased a variety of state and regional taxes to provide billions of new dollars to fund transportation efforts.

This is a historic opportunity for our region.

The funds for Northern Virginia are allocated to the [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority](#) (NVTA), a regional body charged with distributing these new revenues. Of the funds collected, 30% will be sent directly to the member jurisdictions (like Alexandria) while 70%

This 10 week program allows residents to learn and interact with our Alexandria Police as they continue their mission to keep our community safe.

Having participated in the program myself, it's a wonderful way to learn about and meet the men and women in the Department.

Give Metro Your Opinion

As Metro prepares its upcoming budget, they are seeking [input](#) from the community.

In addition, Metro will be hosting a number of [public hearings](#) to collect input in person.

Take the time to weigh in!

The Future of the Waterfront

The community process to shape the future of our City's Potomac River waterfront continues.

[The next community meeting](#) to help design the public spaces on the waterfront will be held on Thursday Feb 6th at 6:30 PM at George Washington Middle School.

Royal Street Bus Barn Efforts Underway

As I have written in previous newsletters, [WMATA is closing their Royal Street Bus Barn](#) and they will be selling the valuable property.

The City has constituted an [advisory committee](#) to solicit community input on a future redevelopment.

The Committee will be having their first meeting on Saturday the 8th from 9AM until noon at City Hall

Senior Housing

Senior Services of Alexandria and At Home in Alexandria have joined

will be expended by the authority on projects of regional significance.

As the funds are now being collected, the NVTAs has requested each [jurisdiction submit requests](#) for expenditure of the 70% funds--the projects of regional significance. For Alexandria, our adopted [Transportation Master Plan](#) gives us a very clear roadmap for new transportation investments.

The [request](#) adopted by the City Council last week covers the next 10 years and includes \$69 million for the [Potomac Yard Metro](#), \$19.5 million for an [East-West Dedicated Transit System](#), \$62 million for a [North-South Dedicated Transit System on the West End](#), and other important mobility investments.

In addition to bringing the City's planned transitways to life, using these NVTAs dollars for the Potomac Yard Metro will significantly decrease the financial risk of this vitally important project.

Overall, this is a significant opportunity for our City and the region to demonstrate the substantial benefit to our residents derived from transportation investments.

An Early Spring Cleaning of Our Laws

One of the consequences of being an old and historic city is that we have laws in the City Code that have long outlived their usefulness.

Working with volunteers in the community, our City Attorney's office and applicable City staff, [we have worked to develop a list of old laws requiring repeal or update](#).

Last month, the Council completed the first phase of that effort, [repealing several laws that were purely obsolete and inappropriate](#). A second phase of this effort will follow this year, where obsolete laws requiring replacement will be handled by the Council.

A provision in our City Code requiring all new north-south streets to be named after "confederate military leaders" has generally gotten the [most attention from the media](#). However, the first phase of this effort also repealed a City ban on cohabitation, a ban on shoeshines or a "bootblack," as well as regulation on ["rebound tumbling"](#), and other codes that were past their expiration date.

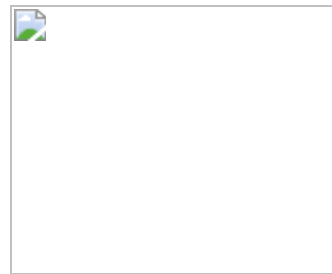
While this is certainly not the most important work done on City Council, expensive litigation has been waged by the City due to mistakes in the Code, and it is always important to ensure that the laws we enforce are frequently modernized.

Flood Insurance Gets a Little Cheaper

Alexandria would likely not exist if not for the Potomac River, but the waters from the Potomac threaten property around our City.

Roughly 20% of the land in Alexandria is mapped as [part of the floodplain](#), and many of our residents are required by their mortgage issuer to purchase [flood insurance](#). While most of the threatened property is along the banks of the Potomac River, some residents far from waterfront property find themselves at flood risk.

The National Flood Insurance Program has a [Community Rating System](#) (CRS) to assess voluntary actions by communities to manage their floodplains and reduce the risk of flood damage. The more efforts that are performed, the higher the discount for those residents purchasing flood insurance.



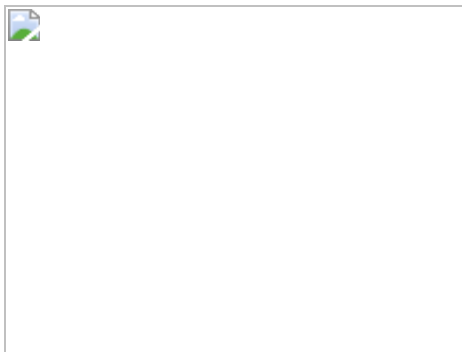
forces to host their [February Senior Speaker Series event](#).

The event will be held on Wednesday February 12th from 9:30 AM until noon at Beatley Library.

The session will cover new innovation in senior housing and should be an informative session.

Alexandria was recently reviewed and our [class was lowered from 7 to 6](#), which means Alexandria purchasers of flood insurance now receive a 20% discount on their policies.

Alexandria is now the first and only jurisdiction in Virginia to have obtained such a rating, which means we receive the highest discount.



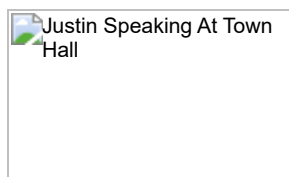
In the City's recently adopted legislative package, the Council included a request for partnership with the State to continue our efforts to lower our flood risk. In response, [Delegate Krupicka has proposed a budget amendment](#) that will partner with jurisdictions to assist in lowering CRS scores further.

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings are back!

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

Here Comes the Budget

The Numbers:

Estimated "New" Revenue Citywide: \$6.4 million

Increase in Debt Service: Approximately \$7 million

Increase in City Appropriation Requested in Superintendent's

Proposed Schools Budget: \$7.4 million

"Merit" Pay Increase (Step Increase) for City Employees:

Approximately \$4.1 million

For a little over 20 years, the City has held its coveted AAA/Aaa bond rating from Standard & Poor's and Moody's Investor Services. These ratings allow the City to borrow money for capital improvements at a rate lower than all but a handful of cities and counties in the country.

In 2011, while maintaining the City's perfect rating, Moody's Investor Services changed the outlook for the City's rating to Negative. This change was widely regarded as a prelude to a downgrade.

In their analysis Moody's did not cite any weakness in the City's fiscal management. They did not note any looming City investment. In fact, the explanation for their outlook was not even focused within our borders. They gave Alexandria a negative credit outlook due to concerns about the fiscal management of our federal government and the potential effect that might have on Alexandria.

Moody's did [remove the negative outlook](#) last year. While their caution was likely misplaced, it clearly demonstrates the degree to which Alexandria's financial fate is affected by the collective actions

(or inaction as the case may be) of the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives and the President.

With our City Manager set to present his budget on Tuesday February 25th, the impact of those actions weigh heavily.

While our real estate market is showing limited growth, our consumption-based taxes, our sales tax, our hotel tax, and our business license tax, are dropping or stagnant.

At the very same time, we are continuing to see blistering growth in student enrollment, escalating costs for benefits for our employees, and unmet needs across our community.

Our current revenue estimates suggest growth of about 1%, which provides the City with \$6 million of additional revenue for our next budget.

From public safety to human services and transportation, without significant reductions, our costs will grow far beyond 1%.

The interim Superintendent of Schools recently [presented his draft budget to the School Board](#). This budget requests an increase of the City's appropriation to the Alexandria City Public Schools by 4%, or about \$7.4 million dollars, as our schools continue to grapple with an enrollment that has grown by 18% over the past 5 years.

The very same pressures that are straining the City's resources are also straining the resources of our residents. The guidance resolution adopted by the City Council in the Fall is sensitive to that fact and mindful of last year's 4 cent real estate tax rate increase.

The [guidance resolution](#) requests that the City Manager present a budget that does not include an increase to the real estate tax rate or the vehicle personal property tax rate.

Additionally, it does not allow a roll-back of our commitment to our capital budget to resolve our funding constraints.

Taken together, this budget presented later this month will include significant further reductions. It will be essential to have the input of residents in our community to ensure that the budget adopted in May is reflective of our collective values.

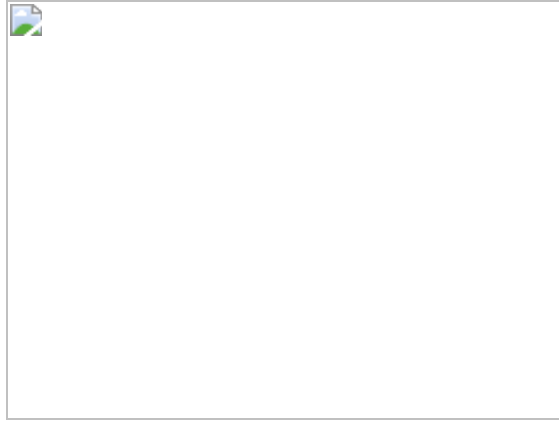
Good Parks to Great Parks

Since 2012, the City has been conducting analysis and outreach with the residents of Alexandria to develop a new Citywide Parks Improvement Plan.

The [draft plan that was released last month](#) provides a future vision for the large parks of our City. Many of these changes are significant investments that will not happen quickly, but the planning process will help the City define the future for these important parks.

A public hearing by the Parks & Recreation Commission will be held on Thursday February 20th at 7:00 PM.

If the plan is successful, it will be before the City Council in the spring. Please let me know your thoughts.



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