

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

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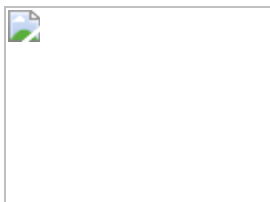
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Events/Updates

St. Patrick's Day Parade

The [Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Alexandria](#) returns today, beginning a little after noon.

Hosted by the Ballyshaners, the parade will begin at King and Alfred Street. I will see you there!



Dr. Crawley Takes Charge

The School Board has completed their search and

Early last month, our City was again shocked when a neighbor of ours and a daughter of Alexandria, Ruthanne Lodato, was murdered in her home.

I had the opportunity to know Ruthanne and her family and I'm saddened by her loss. She was an educator who taught the love of music to a generation of children. Her absence will be felt for long to come.

Like the murder of Ron Kirby late last year, this incident is both wildly abnormal and deeply disconcerting for our City.

Our Police Department has worked day and night to bring the person or persons responsible for these crimes to justice.

They have engaged outside assistance from both Federal and State law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, they have released a [composite drawing](#) based on a witness account.

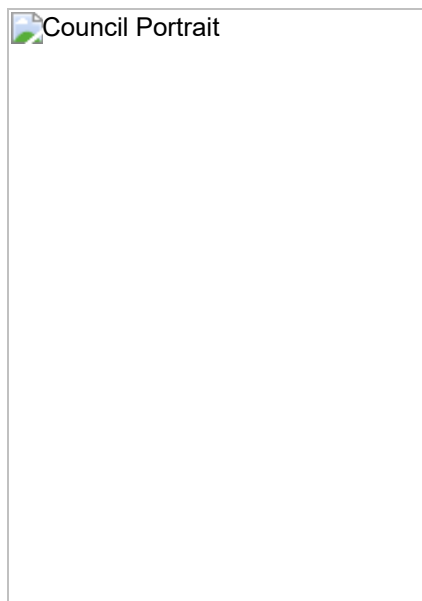
If you know any piece of information that may assist the Police Department in bringing the killer to justice, please contact 703-746-6864.

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

Council Initiatives

Going Up

More than half of the money that the City relies upon to fund our government comes from the Real Estate Tax which is assessed on both residential and commercial properties.



[selected interim Superintendent Dr. Alvin Crawley](#) as the new Superintendent of the Alexandria City Public Schools.

I have already had the opportunity to work with Dr. Crawley during his time in Alexandria, and I know that he will do great things for our children.

The Board will be hosting a welcome reception for Dr. Crawley on Wednesday March 26th from 7 - 9 PM at Mlnnie Howard School.

Kindergartners?

Will your child be starting Kindergarten in the Alexandria City Public Schools this fall?

If so, registration will begin on March 12th, with an evening registration period on March 19th.

Each elementary school will be holding a [Kindergarten Open House](#) to get more information. Congrats to your rising Kindergartners on this important step.



Plan the Waterfront

The community process to plan the public spaces of the Waterfront continues.

A [community meeting covering the waterfront landscape and flood mitigation design](#) will be held at 6:30 PM on Thursday March 6th in the United Way building (701 N. Fairfax Street).

Metrobus Changes

Previously I have written about the [studies underway on the Metrobus 10 routes \(10A, 10E & 10 B\)](#) which

The [property assessments](#) received by property owners last month sets the tone for the upcoming budget process.

Thanks to value increases for existing residential properties, and some of the most significant new residential development since 2008, the City's overall real estate tax base grew by 3.56%. This continues a trend of fairly modest assessment growth over the past 5 years.

The growth in the overall real estate tax base continues to mask considerable weakness in our commercial tax base. A stubbornly high vacancy rate continues to depress commercial valuations, which in turn is pulling down nearly all commercial property values.

On the residential side, the value of the average single family home increased by 3.67% from \$653,395 to \$677,375. The value of the average condo unit increased 4.48% from \$275,167 to \$287,375.

Assuming the Council makes no change to the real estate tax rate, the average single family homeowner will pay an additional \$249 (new total \$7,031) and the average condo owner will pay an additional \$127 (new total \$2,983).

Of those single family properties, 85% saw increases in their values, 4% decreased and 11% remained without change.

Of the condo units, 77% increased in value, 7% decreased and 11% remaining without change.

If you have concerns about the assessment that you received, the first step is to request a review by the Real Estate Assessments division. The requests [can be submitted online](#) until March 14th.

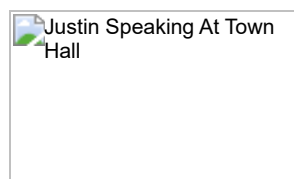
If that process does not yield a satisfactory result, landowners have the ability to file a [formal appeal](#) with the City's Board of Equalization. The deadline for that filing is June 2nd.

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

In the fall, the City Council adopted its budget guidance to the City Manager for the preparation of the FY 2015 Operating Budget and the FY 2015 - FY 2024 Capital Improvement Program.

The Council was very mindful of last year's 4-cent real estate tax rate increase and the effect that Federal budget actions have had on the household incomes of many of our residents. With that perspective we asked the City Manager to prepare a budget that does not increase the Real Estate or Personal Property Tax rates.

With revenue growth now projected below 2%, this request necessitated that the City Manager propose significant cuts to City spending to bring his budget into balance.

run from Arlandria to Hunting Towers within the City.

The studies are now complete and the following changes will be made on March 30th:

New Routes 10R and 10S: These routes will provide peak period service between Rosslyn and Alexandria.

The 10R will run northbound from Hunting Point to Rosslyn during the AM peak period and southbound from Rosslyn to Hunting Point during the PM peak period.

The 10S will run southbound from Rosslyn to Braddock Road during the AM peak period and northbound from Braddock Road to Rosslyn during the PM peak period.

The 10R and the 10S WILL NOT serve the Pentagon, saving riders approximately 10 minutes of travel time between Crystal City and Rosslyn.

10A Riders: During the AM peak period northbound (from Hunting Point) and the PM peak period southbound (to Hunting Point), Route 10R will replace 10A service.

10E Riders: Service will only run between Braddock Road and the Pentagon. Passengers wishing to travel between the Pentagon and Rosslyn may take Route 10R or transfer at the Pentagon to the Blue line. The peak period service will now run on an even 15 minute schedule.

Route 9E Riders: Route 9E will be discontinued.

Responsive to that request, the City Manager made his proposal of the [City's \\$634.8 million Operating Budget and the \\$1.46 billion 10-year Capital Improvement Program](#).



This is only the beginning of the budget process. The Council will now spend the next 2 months in deliberation with the community to adopt a budget reflective of our values as a City.

While there are many changes in the proposed budget, some of the more significant changes are:

Reduces the City workforce by 2.5% (67.62 FTE)

Modification of Elderly Tax and Rent Relief programs

Eliminates adult case management services at JobLink

Extending parking meter hours to Saturdays in Carlyle and until 9 PM city-wide

Adding two additional red-light cameras

New efforts by the Sheriff to rent unused jail beds to other jurisdictions

Eliminates Senior Taxi

Eliminates City Staff support of the Alexandria Walk to Fight Breast Cancer

Eliminates the Windsor transitional housing program (consolidates with Grayson)

Reduces the Alexandria Library materials budget

Reduces hours at the Durant Center

Reduces the Alexandria Fund for Human Services

Reduces the City's appropriation to Inova Alexandria Hospital

Reduces the City's appropriation to Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services (ANHSI)

Eliminates the City appropriation to the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria

Eliminates a City contribution to the Northern Virginia Family Services

Reduces a City contribution to the Northern Virginia Regional Dental Clinic

Reduces the Alexandria Marketing Fund

Relocates Fire Department Engine 204 to the newly opened Station 210 (Currently at Powhatan/Station 210 is being constructed on Eisenhower Avenue)

Eliminate 10 vacant firefighter positions

Eliminate one peak-time Emergency Medic unit

Eliminate one Community Oriented Policing (COPS) officer position

Eliminate one Homeland Security Detective position

Eliminate three Deputy Sheriff positions

Eliminate a vacant Domestic Violence Family Services Specialist

Close 12 satellite Police facilities

Eliminate City funding for the Alexandria Law Library

Reduce City funding of the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home

Close Warwick Pool (pending a decision by the Council on its future)

Consolidates the Real Estate Assessments Department into the Department of Finance

Makes reductions to the City Manager's office

Reduces funding to Action Alexandria

Renegotiated the City's contract with the Animal Welfare League to achieve savings

Even in difficult times, our budget must continue to move the City forward. With that objective in mind, the Manager's proposed budget:

Provides a 2.7% increase (\$5.0 million) in Operating funds to the



Alexandria City Public Schools (the [Superintendent's proposed budget](#) had requested \$7.4 million)

Increases road resurfacing from the 22 lane miles annually to 40 lane miles annually

Increase investment in stormwater management to meet new state and federal standards

Expand DASH Bus service and new Potomac Yard Bus Rapid Transit

Increase King Street Trolley service hours

Creation of a new Development position within the Office of Historic Alexandria to assist with leveraging private resources for our historic properties

Additional one-time resources to assist our Voter Registrar's office in implementing Virginia's new photo ID law

It is very early in this process. There are many good things in this budget, and things that I have concerns with.

There will be a series of [work sessions open to the public](#), as well as a public hearing on Monday March 10th at 4:00 PM in the City Council chambers.

In addition, the City will be hosting a public town hall meeting to present the budget on Monday March 17th at 7:00 PM at Beatley Library.

I need your thoughts, creative solutions and good ideas! [Let me know](#).

Taxis

This week, [the cover story in Bloomberg Businessweek Magazine](#) recounts the swift and dramatic marketplace disruption imposed by the introduction of [Uber](#), and similar services.

For generations, local governments have tightly regulated the taxi industry to ensure the availability, courtesy, honesty, affordability and quality of taxi cabs. Technology and the ubiquity of smart phones now threaten to turn that [regulatory structure on its head](#).

We have struggled in Alexandria to bring stability to our taxi industry. With 767 taxi cabs, we have a saturated marketplace. With that many cabs in operation, drivers frequently cite concerns about their ability to earn a living.

Alexandria issues operating certificates to taxi companies, who in turn hire drivers. The drivers pay stand dues to their companies who then provide a dispatch system, marketing, etc.

After an extensive process in 2005, former Councilmen Rob Krupicka and Ludwig Gaines [proposed a new system of regulation for the taxi industry](#) in our City. The new system allowed driver mobility between companies, but required that companies demonstrate a dispatch call volume equivalent to 2 dispatch calls per day per driver. Companies failing to meet that volume would lose their certificate. The objective was a self-regulating solution to the saturation of taxi cabs.

Faced with the possibility of a few companies losing their permits, Council later relaxed the dispatch volume requirement and made it harder for drivers to transfer to other companies.

Last year, a group of taxi drivers again expressed concerns about drivers' quality of life. Our staff supported the creation of a task force to look at a proposal the drivers had made for liberalizing the ability to transfer to other companies. Over my wishes, the [Council did create](#) such a task force.

My colleague, Councilman Paul Smedberg had the difficult job of chairing this new task force, which ultimately recommended that the City end the right to transfer altogether, as well as a few other relatively minor changes.

This recommendation will come before Council this month. Given the current restrictions on driver transfers, I'm relatively indifferent to this proposal. More significantly, I'm concerned that this proposal does not reduce the number of taxis in operation today. This is ultimately one of the biggest challenge to the industry in our City.

I am hopeful that in debating these recommendations, the City Council will give consideration to measures that will ultimately reduce the number of drivers and bring stability to the market.

Additionally, the City will have to confront the existence of services such as Uber and Lyft and determine how our existing regulations might need to change. .

Councilman Justin M. Wilson
703.746.4500
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov
www.justin.net
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314