

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

August 1, 2018

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Combined Sewer Plan Approved](#)

[Public Housing Redevelopment](#)

[Bond Rating Renewed](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Simpson Park After Action, Route 1 South & BAR Consolidation](#)

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](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

With a month left in the summer for most Alexandria students, the students at Samuel Tucker Elementary School head back to school tomorrow. Best wishes to the Tucker community for an incredible year.

Last week I had the opportunity to conduct a hard-hat tour at the new [Ferdinand Day Elementary School](#). Opening in one month, this school is an adaptive reuse of a vacant office building that was purchased by the Alexandria City Public Schools and is presently under construction to accommodate nearly 600 students.



Tuesday evening is National Night Out. This annual event will be celebrated [in parties all across our City](#), as our Public Safety agencies fan out to help celebrate the community collaboration that keeps our neighborhoods safe and vibrant. I'll be working to cover as many parties as possible, and I hope to see you in your neighborhood.

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

Council Initiatives

A New Plan for Combined Sewer System

[A year and a half ago, the General Assembly enacted legislation that required the City to address remediation of our Combined Sewer System by July 1, 2025. This is a timeline far more aggressive than what the Commonwealth's own environmental regulator had agreed was reasonable.](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

The Campaign

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

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.

Restaurant Week

Give your kitchen a break. It's time to dine out in Alexandria.

[Beginning August 17th through August 26th, Alexandria's Summer Restaurant Week is back!](#)

With 60+ Alexandria restaurants participating, you can obtain a three-course meal for one or dinner for two for \$35.

ParkMobile Comes to Alexandria!

[Later this month the ParkMobile parking payment system will be coming to Alexandria.](#)

Beginning September 1st, ParkMobile will be supporting approximately 1,200 parking spaces, replacing the existing Pango system.

At our June Public Hearing, [City Council approved transferring the ownership of the four Combined Sewer outfalls to Alexandria Renew Enterprises](#) to allow the City to leverage their capacity and capabilities to address these issues.

At the end of June, [the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality approved a plan jointly prepared by the City and Alexandria Renew to meet the more stringent timeline](#) imposed by the General Assembly.

The City is now well on our way to meeting this new timeline.

In 95% of our City, stormwater (run-off) is collected and returned to rivers and streams with very little treatment to remove pollutants accumulated from roads, parking lots, and other surfaces upon which it falls. Separately, sanitary sewage is sent to the [Alexandria Renew Enterprises wastewater treatment facility](#) where it is treated and later returned to waterways as clean water.

However, in a 540-acre section of Old Town, a Combined Sewer System still collects both sanitary sewage and stormwater together and sends it to the wastewater treatment facility for its final disposition.

[During most rain events, due to capacity and design issues, this system experiences a Combined Sewer Overflow condition. This is where a mixture of stormwater and sewage flows untreated into waterways via stormwater outflows.](#)

In addition to the impact that this has on the cleanliness of our rivers and streams, this type of overflow is strictly regulated by law primarily the Clean Water Act.

The City operates this Combined Sewer System [under a permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality \(VDEQ\)](#). In 2013, the City was issued a new five-year permit for the operation of the system.

The City has always been in compliance with all permits for the operation of the system, releasing amounts of sewage within the limits permitted and has conducted targeted sewer separation activities along with redevelopment and other planned activities.

The 2013 permit required the City to work with the community to adopt a new Long Term Control Plan. The plan that was prepared reduces the presence of dangerous bacteria in the flow that is returned to the water. The new plan was submitted to the state on schedule.

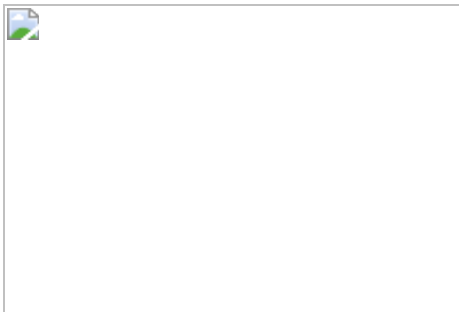
[Politico recently ran a very comprehensive look at St. Louis' efforts to address their combined sewer issues.](#)

[Marketplace had a review of the Baltimore Combined Sewer System.](#)

[National Geographic covered the Combined Sewer challenges in Washington, DC.](#)

These cities, and many others face similar challenges to the task we face in Alexandria. While there are some differences, we all share the immense complexity and costs.

[Washington's "Clean Rivers" Project is expected to take 20 years and cost \\$2.6 billion](#) to cover 53 outfalls. Washington's latest effort for



Stay tuned for further details!

Sales Tax Holiday

In the past, the Commonwealth of Virginia had three separate sales tax holidays: one for back to school time, one for hurricane preparedness, and one for Energy Star efficient appliances.

[A few years ago, the three sales tax holidays were combined and this year will be held concurrently from August 3 - 5.](#)

Use the opportunity to shop at some wonderful Alexandria businesses and enjoy the tax discount!

Friendship Fire Festival Saturday!

[On Saturday from 9 AM until 2 PM, the annual Friendship Fire Festival returns to the 100 block of South Alfred Street in Old Town.](#)

Celebrating the founding of the historic Friendship Firehouse in 1774, this festival is a great event for residents and visitors of all ages!

Irish Festival

[On Saturday August 25th from 11 AM until 7 PM, the Ballyshanners host the Alexandria Irish Festival.](#)

Held in Waterfront Park at 1A Prince Street, the festival includes entertainment, food and family fun!

First Thursday Returns!

Thursday is the "First Thursday."

[The Del Ray Business Association continues the tradition from 6 - 9 PM on Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray.](#)

the Anacostia began in 2013 and will conclude in 2023.

The challenge is significant. We certainly did not plan to rectify this outfall on the timetable that the Commonwealth has provided. Even with the unreasonable timetable, Alexandria remains ahead of many jurisdictions around the nation on this issue. Stormwater planning and work coordinated with redevelopment activity has left us better situated than most. This is not a new issue for Alexandria.

[The City Council's approved budget includes \\$385 million of new capital funding to address this Combined Sewer remediation.](#)

To fund these obligations, the City Council adopted a 30% increase in the Sanitary Sewer Maintenance fee that is paid on Alexandria Renew Enterprises bills across the City. The estimates were previously that ANNUAL 30% increases would be required going forward. With Alexandria Renew taking on responsibility for this project, the financing plan for this undertaking may change.

With remediation expected to require hundreds of millions of dollars, the City requested funding from state coffers to assist in this challenge. Other jurisdictions in Virginia with similar systems have benefited from such funding.

While the City moves forward on addressing the Commonwealth's new mandate, the state has been unable to deliver funds to support the City's efforts. Governor Terry McAuliffe proposed \$20 million in his final budget [to address the City's Combined Sewer System \(CSS\)](#).

Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House of Delegates removed this funding.

During this year's state Budget impasse, Governor Ralph Northam proposed a new budget for consideration in the Special Session of the General Assembly. [He has again proposed the \\$20 million to assist the City.](#) Unfortunately, the funding was again removed.

This is now the second and third times that Virginia's Governor has recognized the importance of state funding assistance for Alexandria to tackle this significant clean water initiative by providing funding. But now Governor McAuliffe, Governor Northam, and previously Governor Bob McDonnell have both had the General Assembly remove that funding.

I am hopeful that once the General Assembly adopts its budget next year, these important resources will be restored.

Preserving Public Housing

Over 35 years ago, the City Council adopted [Resolution 830](#), which committed the City to "one for one" replacement of any public housing unit that was destroyed by redevelopment.

Making the commitment stated in Resolution 830 is rather easy. Actually achieving that replacement, in an environment of dwindling Federal resources and rapidly-appreciating property values, is extraordinarily difficult.

That difficulty was again demonstrated by [the announcement last week that the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority \(ARHA\) and its private development partner could not come to terms to move forward with the redevelopment of the Andrew Adkins development](#). While not unexpected given the challenges of this project, this is a terribly disappointing turn of events that potentially delays redevelopment efforts by multiple years.

As we move forward, my focus is to salvage aspects of the work that

Cinema Del Ray Returns!

Thanks to the generosity of Realtor Jen Walker, Cinema Del Ray returns on Saturday August 18th.

The monthly free outdoor movie on the field next to Mount Vernon Recreation Center has become a summer tradition.

[This month's movie is "Cars 3" and it starts when it's dark enough!](#)

has been performed so far, to ensure the entire process is not a loss.

Councilman John Chapman and I initiated [a task force representing many impacted constituencies](#). The task force has been working to make recommendations for revision of Resolution 830. Last month [the findings of this group came to the ARHA Redevelopment Work Group](#).

Any potential changes to the resolution have broad impacts to residents, the City's finances, ARHA's finances, and in some cases the demographics and fabric of our community.

As these recommendations come to the City Council and the ARHA Board of Commissioners, it will be important for the entities to strike the right balance between what we aspire to and what is feasible.

The future state of Resolution 830 and the future of the Andrew



Adkins redevelopment effort are linked. The very same factors that prompted a review of Resolution 830 are challenging the feasibility of redeveloping the existing Andrew Adkins.

The [Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority \(ARHA\)](#) is an independent entity, with a City Council-appointed Board, but separate from the City, that utilizes Federal funding from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing to low-income residents of Alexandria.

ARHA directly manages and controls 1,079 units of affordable housing. In addition, ARHA manages the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, which utilizes Federal funding to provide assistance for another 1,906 low-income families to reside in privately-owned housing units. Together, this is approximately 4% of the City's overall housing stock.

At the federal level, we have seen dramatic changes in how public housing is managed and developed. In the past, the Federal Government had been a proactive participant in bringing about the redevelopment of public housing. This was demonstrated in Alexandria when the City used [HOPE VI funding](#) to redevelop 100 units of Public Housing into [Chatham Square](#). This mixed-income development incorporated both market-rate and public housing.

Now well into 2018, the Federal Government is forcing changes in public housing with its inaction. Today, HUD funds a shrinking portion of the dollars required to operate Alexandria Public Housing units. The balance of revenue that ARHA collects as rent is not sufficient for sustainable management of their properties, and this is likely to get worse. The impacts of the new Administration are largely unknown at this point.

With aging properties sitting on valuable land, ARHA must look at the highest and best use of its land to preserve housing for low-income residents in our City.

In 2008, the City Council adopted the [Braddock East Master Plan](#), which called for redevelopment of several aging public housing properties. By allowing additional density near existing transit, it was designed to encourage private partnership in the redevelopment of this housing.

Aligned with this Plan, James Bland Homes [have become Old Town](#)

[Commons](#). This redevelopment activity has proven successful in providing a sustainable model for mixed-income housing in our City.

In the fall of 2014, with these experiences and lessons behind us, [ARHA issued an RFP \(Request for Proposals\) to solicit proposals from private developers for the potential redevelopment of seven additional properties: Cameron Valley \(built in 1985\), Andrew Adkins \(built in 1969\), Samuel Madden \(built in 1945\), Ramsey Homes \(built in 1942\), Hopkins Tancil \(built in 1945\), Ladrey \(built in 1968\), and the ARHA Headquarters building on North Fairfax Street.](#)

As they continued through the process, ARHA narrowed the number of properties down to five: Andrew Adkins, Samuel Madden, Hopkins Tancil, the ARHA Headquarters building, and Cameron Valley.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group, which I serve on along with Councilman Chapman, the ARHA Chair, the ARHA Vice Chair, and the Planning Commission Chair, is tasked with coordinating the work between the City and ARHA.

ARHA had originally chose development partners for each of the five remaining properties:

Andrew Adkins: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty was the partner prior to the recent announcement.

Samuel Madden: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty remains the partner for this property.

Hopkins Tancil: EYA/Penrose/JBG

ARHA Headquarters: EYA/Penrose/JBG

Cameron Valley: Bozzuto/Wesley Housing

Each of these redevelopment efforts will rely on [Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#) (LIHTC) and will need to compete successfully for those funding sources.

This is a significant undertaking and we will have a historic opportunity to partner with the private sector and provide new housing for a variety of income levels near existing transit in our City. This effort will also provide financial stability for ARHA in the face of continued change at the Federal level.

Let me know your thoughts!

AAA/Aaa Affirmed

Each time the City goes to borrow money for its capital budget, it must go before the rating agencies to have its credit worthiness evaluated.

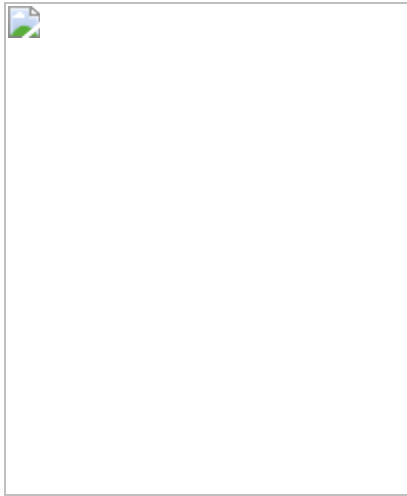
Much like individuals must have a credit check performed before acquiring a mortgage, a car loan, or a new credit card, the City must go before Standard & Poor's and Moody's to have the two organizations assess whether we are doing a good job managing the City's finances.

In May, the [City Council unanimously voted to authorize the issuance of up to \\$69 million of municipal borrowing.](#)

[Both Moody's and Standard & Poor's re-affirmed the City's AAA/Aaa bond ratings, citing our strong fiscal management and conservative debt posture.](#)

Those high ratings qualify the City for the cheapest borrowing rates available, which will save our taxpayers millions over the 20 year life

of these bonds.



In May, [the Council adopted our 10 year Capital Improvement Program, covering fiscal years 2019 - 2028.](#) Over the 10 year period, the program calls for \$2.192 billion in capital investment throughout the City. A quarter of this funding goes to sanitary and stormwater sewer efforts. A third of this funding goes to City and School municipal facilities. Another third goes to transportation initiatives.

Our capital budget is funded primarily through a mix of debt and current year

funding also known as "cash capital." Relating this to your home mortgage, the cash capital is the down payment. We also pay interest each year on the debt that was issued in previous years.

Alexandria is very conservative with our use of debt.

In issuing the City's rating, Moody's wrote: "The stable outlook reflects the likelihood that the city will maintain its satisfactory financial position due to proactive management, sound financial policies, and continued tax base growth and diversification."

Standard & Poor's similarly cited that the City's "...overall net debt is low" and noted that the City's "debt and contingent liability profile is very strong."

Arlington County limits its debt to 4% of its Fair Market Real Property Value. Both Fairfax and Prince William Counties limit their debt to 3%. [Alexandria's self-imposed limit is 2.5%, and this budget year we achieved 1.73%](#).

The median for other similarly rated and sized jurisdictions is 2.42%.

Debt is a tool that allows us to balance the costs of large capital investments across the generations of Alexandria taxpayers that will benefit from them and to pay for our investments from the returns we reap from them.

It is important for us to maintain the careful stewardship that will protect our taxpayers and our City's infrastructure long into the future.

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!

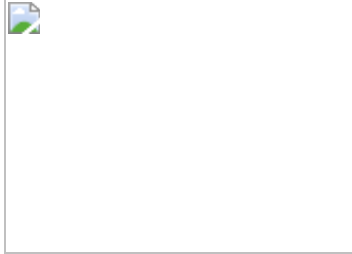


Upcoming Issues

Simpson Park Shooting After Action

[A little over a year ago, on the early morning of June 14th of 2017, Alexandria Police, Fire and Emergency Medical personnel responded to reports of an active shooter situation at Simpson Park in Del Ray.](#) A lone gunman was attempting to assassinate the members of the Republican Congressional baseball team.

Thanks to heroic efforts from personnel of the Alexandria Police Department, the Alexandria Fire Department, and the United States Capitol Police, those that were targeted and wounded that morning are alive today. We are all grateful for the efforts of those that ran into danger that morning, and relieved for the recovery of Congressman Scalise, Officer Griner and Zack Barth and Matt Mika.



The President's award of the Medal of Valor to Nicole Battaglia, Alexander Jensen and Kevin Jobe of the Alexandria Police Department, as well as David Bailey and Crystal Griner of the United States Capitol Police were important recognition of their heroic action that morning.

The City has also worked to recognize the incredible efforts of the partner agencies that supported the response, including the Department of Emergency Communication, the Alexandria Sheriff's Department, the Virginia State Police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

In October of last year, Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney Bryan Porter [released his analysis of the use of deadly force by the law enforcement personnel involved.](#)

In the aftermath of any significant incident, it is important to learn from our experiences. With that in mind, the City's Office of Emergency Management initiated an After-Action Report process to determine what the collective agencies could learn from an incident of this nature.

[The Virginia Department of Emergency Management funded an outside review by the non-profit research firm CNA, which recently concluded its report.](#)

The report findings praised the initial response and the incident command structure. Yet the report did identify opportunities to improve inter-agency communication, leadership structure and patient transport prioritization.

We hope that incidents like the Simpson Field attack are rare, but when they occur it is important to use them as learning experiences to prepare for the future. It is gratifying to see Alexandria's public safety agencies taking such a proactive approach.

Route 1 Affordable Housing

In local government the decisions that City Council makes can be very important with significant implications. Sometimes the decisions we do not make can be equally important. Inaction IS a decision.

While creating new affordable housing is especially challenging for our City, the preservation of affordable housing units that are ending their designated affordability periods, presents similar constraints.

In the southeast corner of our City, along Route 1, there are 319 affordable housing units that, for various reasons, are at risk. For 215

of the units, they are under [Project Based Voucher agreements](#) that are on the verge of expiring or have expired. For the remaining 104 units, they are market-rate affordable units that currently accept [Housing Choice Vouchers](#).

Inaction likely means the loss of these affordable units over time. In an attempt to devise proactive measures to maintain the affordability of the housing, the City applied for and received grant funding from the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to launch the new [Route 1 South Housing Affordability Strategy planning effort](#).

This planning began last year, and is now nearing completion, with a final plan going to the Planning Commission and City Council in the fall.

In July the City staff released [the latest draft of the plan documents for community review and comment](#). The basic premise of the proposed plan is to use additional density on the site, in partnership with private landowners, to replace the existing affordable housing.

Residents who have been participating in the process have [provided substantial comments and our staff have worked to address those comments](#) in future plan revisions.

Between now and August 17th, our staff [is accepting additional comments on the draft plan online using the AlexEngage system](#). This will inform the plan that is ultimately brought to Council shortly after we return from our recess. Let us know your thoughts!

Preserving Our History, Efficiency in Government

On Monday the City held [the first of two public meetings regarding the potential consolidation of the City's two Boards of Architectural Review](#). A second meeting will be held at the Charles Houston Recreation Center on September 17th at 6:30 PM.

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.

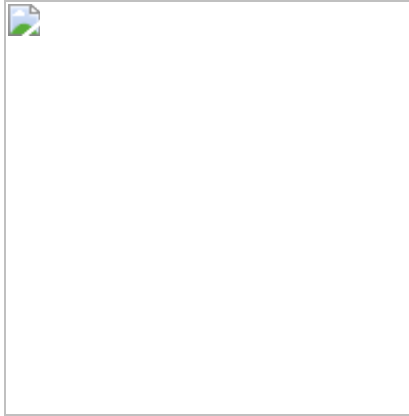
Today, both boards are responsible for hearing applications for permits to demolish or certificates of appropriateness.

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, [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 make this change. Our City staff will work with stakeholders, prepare a recommendation, and bring it to the Planning Commission and City Council this fall for consideration.

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 Mayor