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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

August 1, 2022

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Last month, [we lost our former Mayor, Kerry Donley](#). So much of today's Alexandria is the legacy of Kerry's tenure as Mayor, Vice Mayor and as a member of City Council.

He served as our Mayor during a pivotal time in our City's history, as we diversified our economy, addressed critical infrastructure needs, recovered from the attacks of 9/11 and charted a course for a sustainable financial future. He defined where our City needed to go, and built the coalitions necessary to get us there.

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He was a consummate public servant, dedicating his career to local government and believing in our ability to address challenges. Despite ending his tenure as Mayor nearly two decades ago, he remained an indispensable leader in our community, up until his last day.

I valued his advice, his humor and his example. As devoted as he was to Alexandria, his first devotion was to his wife, Eva, their five daughters and their grandchildren. We lost Kerry too soon and we will miss him.

Kerry was consistently supportive of the men and women who served Alexandria protecting the safety of our community. He was an active participant each year in the City's National Night Out celebrations.

[Tomorrow evening is National Night Out, with celebrations in neighborhoods throughout our City.](#)

I hope to see you at one of the parties, along with the dedicated public servants of the Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Fire Department and Alexandria Sheriff's Department.

[The City is now working to respond to the spread of the Monkeypox \(MPV\) virus.](#) While the virus remains quite rare in Virginia, anyone who has come into contact with an infected individual can contract it.

The Alexandria Health Department is now working to vaccinate those who meet the [current eligibility criteria](#) against the Monkeypox virus. [If you are interested in getting vaccinated, you can sign-up online.](#)

We continue to work to vaccinate every resident in our City to protect against COVID-19. [ANYONE who is aged 6 months or older is eligible to be vaccinated and we have a dose waiting for you.](#)

Starting in June, vaccinations are now available for the youngest children.

If you are 5 or older and received the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or the single dose of Johnson & Johnson you are eligible for a booster dose.

For those 50 or older, or immunocompromised, you are now eligible for a second booster if you are more than 4 months since your last one.

Additionally, if you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and booster over 4 months ago, you may now receive a booster of either Moderna or Pfizer.

For more information or to sign-up for a booster dose, please head to our vaccine website.

For those who have already been vaccinated, you may now download your vaccination record from the Virginia Department of Health.

COVID testing is widely available throughout our City. Additionally, if you have not requested your free at-home test kits from the Federal government, you can request it online today.

The latest updates will continue to be posted regularly on the City's Coronavirus website.

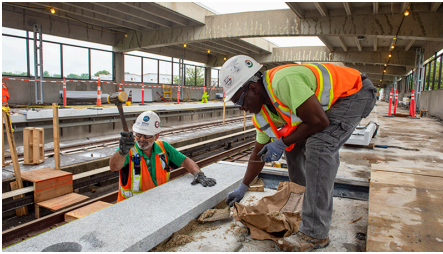
The Virginia Department of Health posts data daily online regarding positive tests, hospitalizations and deaths.

After two years of doing virtual town-hall meetings, including weekly sessions during most of 2020, I am moving back to in-person, "Living Room Town Hall" meetings. If you would like to host a town hall in your neighborhood, please drop me a line and we'll get it on the calendar!

Contact me anytime. Let me know how I can help.

Initiatives and Updates

Upcoming Metro Work



Last week, [Randy Clarke began work as the new CEO of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\)](#). He joins WMATA at a particularly low-point in an up and down history of the DC region's transit agency.

I had the opportunity to connect with Mr. Clarke last week, during his first week on the job, and we discussed the important work ahead in Alexandria, including the Potomac Yard Metro, further restoration of suspended bus service, restoration of the 7000-series Metro Rail cars, joint development projects in Alexandria, and upcoming infrastructure work.

In June, the [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) released their plan for travel alternatives during the extensive Yellow and Blue Line work that is planned to begin on September 10th](#). As anticipated, this plan includes new free shuttle routes and reduced Blue Line headways. [Last month, the Virginia Railway Express also announced that its service will be free in September and October for trips to and from Alexandria.](#)

The first project is one that we expected. In order to connect the newly-constructed Potomac Yard Metro Station, rail service south of the National Airport station will need to be shutdown for 6 weeks from September 10th until October 22nd.

The second impact was not anticipated. The rehabilitation of the Yellow Line bridge and the adjacent tunnels, will require a shutdown of the bridge for 8 months, also beginning on September 10th.

These closures will again cut Alexandria off from the rest of the system and significantly impact Alexandria transit riders at a time where the City and its regional partners will be working to bring our residents back to transit.

In May, representatives from WMATA attended our City Council meeting to discuss the ongoing planning for the upcoming shutdown. [You can watch the discussion online or view the slides from the presentation.](#)

After the May meeting, [I wrote to WMATA Interim General Manager Andrew Off](#) detailing the City's requests for mitigation, as well as reiterating the City's position that this major infrastructure work cannot occur unless WMATA has completed their [work to bring the 7000 series cars back into service](#). Recent [lapses by WMATA](#) have only affirmed this position.

Almost three years ago, Alexandria's Metro Rail stations reopened after a difficult summer of platform improvement work cut the City off from the rest of the system. [We spent part of a September 2019 City](#)

Council meeting looking back at the mitigations that we had put in place and how they had fared.

It was a challenging period for our City, its residents, our visitors, and our businesses and their employees.

With a year of planning and regional collaboration, we were able to throw nearly everything we had at the shutdown.

While riders settled into new, slower routines, there were still challenges that impacted our City. The shuttle buses had issues with capacity and traffic flow. Some Metro Bus and DASH routes had similar problems as well. Traffic impacts exacerbated existing congestion. Some businesses saw reductions in revenue.

Fortunately, we know what works. In 2019, the City worked closely with WMATA, DASH and other regional partners to ensure that the shutdown did not become a disaster for our residents and our businesses. We must again do the same.

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 regular Metro rider myself, I know the service challenges first-hand.

With new leadership and major infrastructure investment, I am optimistic that these efforts will result in a more reliable system for Alexandria and the entire region.



New Torpedo Factory Artists

This fall, 26 artists will begin new three-year leases as artists at the Torpedo Factory. Fifteen of these artists will join 11 current studio artists and become part of Alexandria's internationally-recognized arts community.

This concludes the first of 3 annual jury processes to evaluate those interested in joining the Torpedo Factory as a studio artist and those who currently operate their studio at the arts center. The current artists who participated in this year's process had most recently juried into the arts center between 1975 and 2003.

On Friday evening, from 6 until 8:30 PM, there will be a public reception at the **Principle Gallery (208 King Street)** to kick-off a 2-week exhibition featuring the work of the newly admitted artists.

The Torpedo Factory Arts Center is an iconic presence on the City's waterfront. Bringing a half million visitors into working artists galleries, the Factory is a

economic development engine and unique arts resource for our community.

The City of Alexandria purchased the Factory from the United States Government in 1969. The Arts Center was opened in 1974 and has been a model for similar centers around country.

Yet for the past several years, the challenges of the Factory and the possible solutions to those challenges have been divisive.

In February of last year, the City Council endorsed an action plan for the future of the Torpedo Factory. In June, the City Council received **an update on the status of the engagement on that action plan.**

Our staff brought a few proposals for the future of the Torpedo Factory to stakeholders for input, and last year brought those proposals to the City Council. **You can review those proposals online.**

At the end of last year, the City Council **unanimously endorsed a framework of principles for next steps for the Torpedo Factory that I proposed to my colleagues.**

These principles call for an entirely new structure to strategically manage the Torpedo Factory and the many new arts assets that the City is bringing to reality as part of the **Old Town North Arts District.**

You can watch Council's discussion **beginning at the 1:56:00 mark in the video from December's Legislative Meeting.**

Alexandria is an arts destination, but that destination is broader than one building. I am excited that Council has now endorsed this vision to expand our commitment to arts real estate in our City, with the Torpedo Factory as a focal point of that expansion.

This discussion has gone on for a while. In 2009, the **City commissioned a study to review the Factory and the opportunities of the site.** The result of the study was a series of organizational changes to the Factory. **Those led to the creation of a non-profit Board** to run the operations and leverage private resources to support the Factory.

With the lease nearing conclusion a several years ago, the Torpedo Factory Arts Center Board **commissioned another study to look at the strategic options available to the City and the Factory.**

This report recommended more changes to the governance, the management, and vision of the Factory.

Candidly, the future of the Torpedo Factory has been studied to death. We have used the divisiveness of this issue as an excuse to avoid making a decision on its future. Unfortunately, inaction is a decision in and of itself.

My focus is on deriving a structure for the operation of the Factory that:

- expands the vitality of the Factory
- improves its financial sustainability
- improves its diversity
- ensures the success of Alexandria's premier arts destination long into the future.

I am confident that working together we can achieve these goals.

It has now been five years since the City took steps to provide stability by assuming caretaker leadership for the Factory. Since that time, the City provided leases to the existing artist tenants, and has been providing day to day management. I am pleased we are now making decisions and creating a sustainable structure for the governance of the Factory so that it can flourish in the future.

Ensuring the presence of a diversity of arts and artists in the Torpedo Factory Arts Center on our Waterfront is a priority of mine. I look forward to working with our community and various partners to bring this vision to reality.



Flood Resiliency

In the past few weeks, we have seen the devastation that can be wrought by the impact of heavy rain events, with severe flooding in **Buchanan County, Virginia** and **Eastern Kentucky**. These examples add urgency to the necessity that communities like ours must plan and implement climate-resilient infrastructure to protect the lives and livelihood of our residents.

For us here in Alexandria, our residents have endured 5 storm events in the past 3 years (July 8, 2019, July 23, 2020, September 10, 2020, August 15, 2021 and September 16, 2021) where the intensity and duration of the rain has far-exceeded the design capacity of our storm sewers, resulting in devastating flooding.

Over the last few years particularly, the City Council has worked to accelerate efforts to address chronic flooding issues, this time due to more frequent and more intense rain events. These storms are causing our residents and businesses to suffer significant financial loss due to damage from flooding and sanitary sewer backflow.

Addressing this challenge requires immediate and sustained action in the following areas:

- Infrastructure Investment and Maintenance
- Financial and Technical Assistance to Residents
- Development Policy Reform

Earlier this year, the City Council unanimously adopted **an ordinance to again increase our Stormwater Utility Fee**, to further increase the resources available for investments in our storm sewer infrastructure. This increase will mean a condo owner will pay \$82.32 annually, a townhouse owner \$123.48 annually, a small single-family homeowner \$294 annually and a large single-family homeowner \$490.98 annually.

The Stormwater Utility Fee revenue, paid by all property owners in the City (including non-taxable properties), will allow for an acceleration of major capacity projects and "spot improvements," an increase in channel maintenance, new "state-of-good repair" investments, property owner grants and new staffing in support of these projects and the system.

Recently enacted state legislation, sponsored by Senator Adam Ebbin at the City's request, gives the City the flexibility to use these resources to address all of the challenges facing our residents.

This increase of the fee over the past two years has allowed the City to quadruple the planned investment in stormwater mitigation since 2020 and **support a newly accelerated 10-year program of investments**.

While these funds will **address many smaller "spot improvement" projects**, this funding will allow the City to undertake 11 of the top priority storm sewer capacity projects over the next decade:

- **Commonwealth & Glebe: \$34 million**
- **Ashby & Glebe: \$16 million**
- **Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: \$60 million**
- **Edison & Dale: \$13 million**
- **Dewitt Avenue: \$15 million**
- **East Mason Avenue: \$1 million**
- **Notabene & Old Dominion: \$4 million**
- **Mount Vernon, E. Glendale, E. Luray & E. Alexandria: \$10 million**
- **E. Monroe & Wayne: \$3 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont: \$6 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont (south): \$8 million**

In addition to these locally-funded infrastructure initiatives, **the City Council voted a year ago to allocate \$5.8 million of our American Rescue Plan funding to address maintenance and investment in our Storm Sewers**.

The City launched **our "Flood Mitigation Pilot Grant Program."** This new program has provided over \$558,000 in matching reimbursement grants to property owners making flood resiliency improvements. This is one of the components of our comprehensive approach to addressing the flooding that has impacted our community for decades.

We created the **Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group**, a citizen group to provide advice to Council and our staff as we execute this aggressive investment schedule.

Together, nearly a billion dollars is planned for water investments. This spending dwarfs planned investments in schools, transportation and other major priorities. Only a decade ago, **planned investments in water infrastructure were less than 10% of this total**, but addressing these challenges will require a sustained increase in that investment level of a long period of time.

The investments required in our Sanitary Sewer system are funded by maintenance fees paid by existing customers (on the Alexandria Renew Enterprises bills) and by connection fees paid by developers.

In 2016, the City conducted a comprehensive Storm Sewer Capacity Analysis. This exhaustive study looked at each of the City's eight watersheds (Backlick Run, Cameron Run, Four Mile Run, Holmes Run, Hooff's Run, Holmes Run, Potomac River, Strawberry Run and Taylor Run) and identified problem areas where current capacity does not meet our 10-year storm design standard.

The study identified 90 separate deficiencies in the system, and estimated \$61 million of construction costs required to address those deficiencies (construction costs are approximately half of expected budget costs). Over half of these deficiencies are concentrated in the Hooff's Run and Four Mile Run watersheds. The reports of flooding from our residents during these most recent events align closely to these deficiencies. It is that study that has informed the list of priority capacity projects listed earlier.

For development, whether large-scale, mixed-use development or a small residential addition, **Alexandria's stringent stormwater requirements** stipulate that conditions after development to be the same and oftentimes better than they were. As a consequence, the flooding we have experienced in the City is typically in established neighborhoods, areas of our City where we have not seen new development (aside from infill) in decades. Yet, there may be options to further strengthen these existing requirements. We have sought additional

authority from the General Assembly for these expanded requirements.

A climate-resilient City requires investments and potentially new policies to ensure that residents of our City do not suffer devastating damage with such frequency.

Putting in place the infrastructure that can support a changing climate will be a significant undertaking for our community. It will involve a large commitment of new resources and possibly private property impacts. I am pleased that the City has made these new investments. Now we must explore every option to accelerate this work.



Lighting Our Playing Fields

Our parks and open spaces are significant contributors to quality of life, particularly in an urban community like Alexandria. As the pandemic ravaged our City, our open spaces were a refuge, well-loved and utilized. As we eased back into "normal," our children returned to athletic fields around our City, even before most other venues.

Yet, the reality that exists in our City today is that we lack the athletic facilities to fully meet the needs of our youth, and hardly begin to address adult recreation needs. Our most [recent needs assessment](#) clearly identifies these gaps, and decades of underfunded plans have exacerbated these challenges.

In the face of significant capital needs for schools, sewers, public buildings and transportation, providing resources for significant investment in our parks and recreation infrastructure has not been able to rise to the top of our list of priorities. This must change.

The capital budget approved by the City Council in May contemplates over \$157 million of [new investment in our recreation and parks infrastructure](#). The approved budget includes large investments in athletic facilities, including:

- \$22M for field improvements (including synthetic turf replacement at Witter; turf renovations at Stevenson & Four Mile Run; as well as a large-scale renovation of the diamond fields at Simpson).
- \$17.3M for field improvements at Four Mile Run Park
- \$2.6M to build a new synthetic field at Patrick Henry, once the old school is demolished

To maximize the use of these facilities, [the budget including funding for new athletic lighting at](#)

Francis Hammond Middle School, George Washington Middle School, Jefferson Houston K-8 School, Patrick Henry K-8 School and Eugene Simpson Stadium Park.

Our staff is now working to collect public input on these proposals, with final approvals coming before the Planning Commission and City Council in October.

I look forward to advancing efforts to improve our recreation capacity, to promote our quality of life and the health of our community.



Community Police and Fire Academy

Alexandria is fortunate to have capable, well-equipped and dedicated public safety agencies to keep our community safe. Yet, our public safety agencies depend on the involvement of residents to be successful.

The **Alexandria Fire Department** and the **Alexandria Police Department** will soon be beginning the next classes of their community academies. These programs are unique opportunities to achieve in-depth learning on the work that each department does for our City.

Applications are due soon. Please sign-up today!



Cut-Through Traffic

Last fall, the City Council finalized the recent update of our **Alexandria Mobility Plan**. During the outreach phase of that update, one of the most consistent areas of input we received were concerns about the impacts of congestion on quality of life.

The data collection that was performed for the Central Alexandria Traffic Study revealed that a relatively small number of residential streets were carrying inordinate amounts of "cut-through" traffic, mostly using those streets to access the Telegraph interchange with the Beltway.

Specifically:

- Of the vehicles coming from Seminary Road and Quaker Lane, roughly half use Quaker Lane to access the Telegraph Road ramp and half use local streets, namely Cambridge Road, Yale Drive and West Taylor Run Parkway.
- Of the vehicles coming from Seminary Road, 16% use Jordan Street (5%) or Fort Williams Parkway (11%). Roughly 35% use Quaker Lane and about half use local streets that are east of Quaker Lane.
- Of the vehicles coming from King Street, about 85% use West Taylor Run Parkway with most of

the rest using Cambridge Road (13%).

In response to input from the Central Alexandria Traffic Study, the City implemented [a variety of mitigation efforts to reduce neighborhood cut-through and work to keep heavy volumes of traffic on the highways and arterial roads.](#)

As traffic volumes have returned in the wake of the pandemic, it is clear that more is necessary.

After work with civic associations, [our staff proposed new mitigation efforts to reduce some neighborhood cut-through traffic.](#)

At the beginning of the year, the first pilot was implemented and remained in place through April. This effort changed light timings on Quaker and Duke, as well as on side streets, to focus traffic volumes on the arterial roads.

The results of this first pilot were very positive:

- Overall volume on the Telegraph Road ramp was down by 14%
- Travel times for all routes were faster than before, but were about 35% faster using Quaker Lane and 20% faster on West Taylor Run
- Cut through traffic on Quaker Lane increased by 23%
- Cut through traffic on West Taylor Run and Cambridge Road decreased by 47% and 73%, respectively.
- Cut through traffic on Yale Drive, with the new “no left turn” restriction in place, decreased by 96%, from 706 vehicles in the peak to 31
- Cut through traffic on Fort Williams Parkway decreased substantially, by 81%, from 171 vehicles to 32

The second pilot is now being discussed and would bring back the light timings from Phase 1, but also limit access from West Taylor Run Parkway to Telegraph Road, along with unimpeded ramp traffic on the Telegraph ramp.

The plan is to assess the impact, collect data and engage with the community to ensure these changes achieve the results they are designed to create.

[Our City staff will be discussing the Phase 2 pilot at a Clover College Park Civic Association meeting on August 10th. This meeting is open to the public.](#)

Let me know your thoughts!

New Ways to Get Around



Nearly 15 years ago, the City adopted its latest **Transportation Master Plan**. At the time, the plan was a significant transition in that it shifted from a plan focused on roads and vehicle traffic, to a plan that prioritized transit.

One of the most significant changes that came from the 2008 Master Plan was the designation of three transit corridors for high-capacity transit. The three corridors are:

- Transit Corridor A, which was nominally north to south on Route 1 on the east end of the City
- Transit Corridor B, which was intended as east to west on Duke Street
- Transit Corridor C, which was north to south on the west end of the City using Van Dorn and Beaugard

After the adoption of the 2008 Master Plan, a community task force was assembled to provide some more details around the vision for each of the transit corridors.

Transit Corridor A began service as "Metroway" eight years ago, and was the region's first bus rapid transit service, providing service to Potomac Yard and Crystal City, with further enhancements planned.

Transit Corridor C, now called the "West End Transitway" will be the next to come to reality. The West End Transitway has now been awarded over \$101 million of State and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) funds. Just last month, the NVTA awarded an additional \$5 million to bring this project to fruition.

The slower pace of redevelopment in the Beaugard corridor will necessitate multiple phases to implement this project. With funding now in place (although not until 2024-2025), work begins to plan the implementation.

Transit Corridor B, the Duke Street Transitway, will be the final corridor implemented. Two years ago, the City received \$75 million in regional funds from the NVTA to bring this new transit to reality.

On August 18th, the Duke Street Transitway Advisory Group, a group of residents advising next steps in this project, will be holding their fourth meeting to provide input.

High capacity transit provides our residents with alternatives to congestion and delay. I am optimistic as we work to bring these projects to reality.



Food Waste

In January of 2019, the City Council unanimously adopted the [WasteSmart Strategic Plan](#). This plan sought to chart a new course for trash and recycling services.

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 designed to advance our environmental sustainability goals and preserve quality of life.

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
- 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.

With recycling markets in crisis, the City worked to change how we collect glass due to the inability of glass collected in our single stream to be recycled. Challenges also exist for some plastics and other material. We will need to determine new ways to effectively address these materials.

In 2019, the City announced the implementation of one of the short-term tasks in the WasteSmart Strategic Plan. In partnership with Fairfax County and Arlington County, the City unveiled four new glass recycling drop-off locations. Each of the now five locations is open 24 hours per day.

We later joined our neighbors and removed glass from the single-stream curbside recycling collection.

Estimates by the Environmental Protection Agency suggest that 30% of waste is food waste or organic yard waste. The cost and environmental impact of collecting that volume of waste presents a significant opportunity for the City.

Nearly a decade ago, I proposed funding during our budget process that created the [City's Farmers Market Compost program](#), which allows residents to drop organic food waste each week at farmers markets in their neighborhood. The program has been successful in diverting this organic waste from our trash collection, and instead creating compost for sustainable uses.

During the most recent budget process, I again proposed new funding to expand programs relating to food waste.

Last month, [the City launched a new farmers market compost site, in Old Town North](#). A second site will be identified soon, ideally on the West End.

Additionally, [the City will be launching a new pilot of curbside collection of food waste, for interested residents](#).

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

Please let me know your thoughts on these important issues!



Youth Leadership Conference

[Registration is open for the annual Alexandria Youth Leadership Conference \(YLC\)! This free hybrid conference is open to rising 9th through 12th graders residing in the City of Alexandria. This year's conference theme is "Lead with Courage.](#)

Youth who attend the conference **in its entirety** are eligible to receive a \$20 gift card. The YLC empowers emerging young leaders by providing training opportunities and connecting them to resources in their community. This event is hosted by the [Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy](#), the [Alexandria Sexual Assault Center](#), the [Alexandria Library](#), and the [Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria \(SAPCA\)](#).



Looking for Centenarians

We are celebrating those who have built our community!

If you know an Alexandria who is over the age of 100, or will be by the end of this calendar year, please let us know!

In partnership with our friends from Senior Services of Alexandria and the Successful Aging Committee, the City is looking to honor our Centenarians.

National Centenarians Day is September 22nd and we will host an event on September 13th to honor these individuals who have made such an impact on our City.

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