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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

February 1, 2020

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## Welcome to February!

February is when City Council enters the busiest period of our calendar.

For the past few weeks, the Alexandria Health Department has been working closely with the Virginia Department of Health on education, surveillance and planning relating to the **"novel" coronavirus outbreak.**

At this point the Virginia Department of Health has not confirmed a case of the virus in the Commonwealth, **but there are patients under investigation.**

On February 18th, the City Manager will present his proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget and a 10 year Capital Improvement Program.

Once the budget is presented the Council **begins a busy schedule of worksessions** designed to explore each portion of the proposed budget documents.

Your input is very valuable in this process.

Let me know how I can help. **Please contact me anytime**

## Council Initiatives

### Freedom House

**Between 1828 and 1861, over 100,000 enslaved African-Americans passed through 1315 Duke Street in the City of Alexandria. This building was the headquarters for one of the largest domestic slave trading operations in our nation.**



[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

## Events/Updates

### President's Day Parade

[The annual George Washington Birthday parade returns to the streets of Old Town!](#)

On Monday, February 17th from 1 PM - 3 PM, the parade is always an essential part of the season!

### Stormwater Fee Credit Application

Are you an Alexandria property owner who is implementing [stormwater best practices](#) on your property?

Between now and February 15th, you can apply for credits off your fee. [Full information including the online submission form is available.](#)

### Presidential Primary

On Tuesday March 3rd voters across Alexandria will go to the polls to participate in the [Democratic Primary to choose our next President.](#)

Voting locations will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM. [The sample ballot is available online for review.](#)

Absentee voting has already begun for this primary, both in person at 132 N. Royal Street or by mail. [You may apply to receive a ballot by mail online.](#)

[The City has now agreed to purchase the building from the Northern Virginia Urban League to ensure the preservation of this important historic resource.](#) While the purchase will be [locally funded](#), the Governor has [proposed \\$2.4 million of state funding in his budget](#) to support the rehabilitation and development of the historic resources on the site

Operating from a prominent location, this human trafficking operation brought enslaved African-Americans from the Chesapeake Bay area to a holding pen surrounding the building, where they were then forced by foot or by ship to Natchez, Mississippi or New Orleans.



Today, known as Freedom House, the building has been owned by the Northern Virginia Urban League since 1996 and is being operated as a museum in partnership with the City.

[Last year, the City extended financial support when the Urban League's finances prevented successful operation of the museum.](#)

[Facing the financial burden of supporting the maintenance of the old facility, the Urban League placed the property on the open market.](#)

This property is a significant piece of Alexandria and our nation's history. The history depicted in the museum today, and the history yet to be unlocked in the building is a story that must be told. I believe we must work to ensure this history remains accessible to the public.

Additionally, fundraising efforts have begun immediately to support private interest in this important resource. [Please join me in donating to support this effort.](#)

I am excited about the opportunity that this acquisition presents for the City to better discover, interpret and educate the public on a vital part of American history.

### Preservation of Affordable Housing

[Our City's Housing staff has now assembled the financing for the acquisition of a West End property that had been on the market.](#) With this purchase, which closed earlier this week, the building and its units will be preserved as committed affordable housing.

The [Avana Alexandria Apartments](#) is a building located at 3001 Park Center Drive. It consists of 326 apartments, with most currently affordable at market rates to residents making 70% - 80% of the Area Median Income.

The purchase was made by the [Alexandria Housing Development Corporation](#) (AHDC), a housing development non-profit created by the City, and it will represent two firsts:

- As part of the Commonwealth's Amazon incentive package, the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) was provided new resources to invest in areas potentially impacted by the new Amazon housing demand. This is the first proposed use of those funds.
- JBG Smith, one of the largest private developers in the region, recently [created the Washington Housing Initiative.](#)

The Republican Party will not be holding a primary in Virginia to nominate a candidate for President. A statewide convention will be held later this year.

With the related Impact Pool, JBG Smith has created an investment vehicle to provide financing to support affordable housing. This is the first ever use of this fund.

In addition to these more creative sources of funding, the City is also providing \$8 million of lending to support this acquisition.

### Free Tax Assistance

Starting today, eligible Alexandria residents can receive assistance in completing their Federal taxes.

[Sessions are held on Saturdays and Wednesdays between now and April 11th.](#)

### The City Academy

[The City is accepting applications for participating in our City Academy.](#)

The nine week program, beginning in March, will help you understand the way your government works!

[You may apply online today.](#) The deadline is this Friday.

### Community Police Academy

[Sign up now to participate in the Alexandria Community Police Academy.](#)

This acclaimed program is one of the Police Department's key public outreach efforts.

[Sign up today!](#) The deadline is Friday.

### Eco-City Academy

[The City's newest academy is the Eco-City Academy.](#)

This 6 week program begins April 1st and will equip residents to be Eco-City Ambassadors!

[Sign up today!](#) The deadline is Friday February 12th.

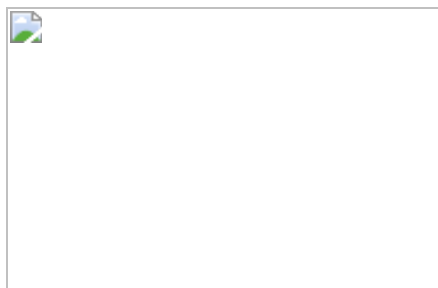
### Arlandria and Del Ray Planning

Last month the City hosted our [2020 Housing Summit](#). The event was designed to draw residents and policy experts from around the region and the nation. The attendees discussed the status of the City's implementation of our [2013 Housing Master Plan](#) along with discussion of our continued housing challenges and the options to address those challenges in the future. It was a thought-provoking session and you can [review the presentations and videos for all of the sessions online](#).

During [my presentation](#) at the beginning of the session, I discussed the City's achievement toward our goal of creating of preserving an additional 2,000 committed affordable units before 2025. Through a variety of efforts, the City has accounted for 1,404 of the 2,000 housing units we are working towards.

Of the 1,404 units 735 of them have been created through partnerships with non-profits and the City's housing authority, the Alexandria

Redevelopment and Housing Authority. These partnerships have typically utilized Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and braided several different funding approaches. Creating housing that remains affordable regardless of often unforgiving market conditions, requires creativity and a little luck.



[With this purchase](#), AHDC will be able to operate the building as committed workforce housing for decades to come. This is an exciting arrangement that highlights the partnerships required to make affordable housing happen in our city.

### Transparency in Our Government

Next week, nearly [all elected officials in the state](#) are required to submit an annual [Statement of Economic Interests](#). While these documents are subject to public inspection in our Clerk's office, at my request, over four years ago, Alexandria [became the first local government in Virginia to post these disclosures online](#).

About 16 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 then-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](#).

Seven years ago, we made improvements to the motions that the City Council makes and votes on to initiate executive sessions. These changes serve to provide our residents with more information about the closed sessions that Council conducts.

Seven years ago, we moved the Council's work sessions from the Council Work Room (off camera) into the Council chambers so that the public can more easily observe our discussions.

Our Planning Department continues outreach related to the update of the Arlandria and Del Ray Plans.

[Today, from 10 AM until noon at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, our staff will conduct an Open House.](#)

Please stop by and share your thoughts!

### Summer Camp Fair

Working to plan your child's summer and need help?

[The Alexandria PTA Council will be hosting their annual Summer Camp Fair on Tuesday February 20th from 5:30 PM until 8 PM at the T. C. Williams Cafeteria.](#)

This event brings together over 40 summer camps of all kinds!

### Mental Health First Aid

[To improve our community's response to those in mental health crisis, our City sponsors free Mental Health First Aid training.](#)

There is training for youth and adults. [Sign up online today.](#)

### Be A Snow Buddy!

[Volunteer Alexandria and the City work together to recruit "Snow Buddies."](#)

Snow Buddies work across our City to help residents who are unable to clear snow during inclement weather.

Sign up today!

### REVIVE Training

[Twice a month the City offers free training to residents seeking to learn how to spot and reverse an opioid overdose.](#)

No RSVP is required, and attendees receive a free medical kit upon completion.

The City also began [posting online the reports of our Internal Auditor for public review](#).

In January of 2016, [the Council adopted a Transparency Resolution to consider ideas for improving transparency in City operations](#). The adopted resolution included language that I drafted requesting that our Clerk begin producing an annual report detailing the Council's use of executive session during the previous year. Executive session is a closed meeting of Council, neither televised nor witnessed by any members of the general public, for specific purposes.

The [Code of Virginia strictly limits the circumstances where the City Council can meet in executive session](#). As a practical matter, the sessions are used primarily to address personnel issues, litigation strategy, and the acquisition or disposition of public property. In the case of the latter two examples, the executive sessions are used to protect the City's negotiating posture and thus protect the taxpayer dollar.

Before going into executive session, the Council must vote on the reason for the executive session. After the executive session concludes, the Council must return into public view and each member must certify that we complied with the law during the private session.

The [latest of these executive session reports is now posted and available for public consumption](#). It shows that the Council met in executive session 14 times during the last Council term and each vote to go into executive session was unanimous.

I have always believed that, as Justice Louis Brandeis wrote in 1913, "sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants." I do believe that government should continue to seek new ways to provide public accessibility to information about their government, to ensure ethical and accountable government.

### Municipal Facility Collocation

Under-investment in our basic infrastructure has challenged our ability to provide critical services.

Despite large efforts to address deferred capital investment in recent years, three years ago the City stood at a crossroads. With a perfect storm of infrastructure needs for school, sewer, city facilities, transportation and recreation, the practices of the past will not sustain us in the future.

The City Council's adoption of the City's Operating and Capital Improvement Budget in 2017 included making a new 10 year commitment to invest in our municipal facilities, including new schools and new fire stations.

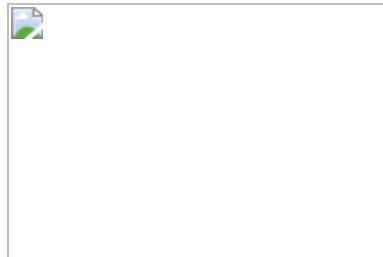
In adopting that budget, we knew that doing things the way we had always done them was not sufficient. To ask that much of our taxpayers we also had to take a dramatic step forward and bring together the disparate visions of the City and School municipal facilities plans.

To do so, we created the [new Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force](#). This blue-ribbon group brought together significant expertise to help the City prioritize and streamline a municipal facilities vision that ensures the success of City and School services for decades to come.

In 2017 the City Manager constituted the new Ad Hoc group, and in 2018 the group concluded their work. [You can watch the meetings and read the materials online](#).

Help become a lifesaver in our community!

In concluding their work, [the Task Force presented their second and final deliverable](#) to the City Council and School Board. These recommendations proposed a series of process reforms designed to improve the joint management of the City's infrastructure work.



The Task Force recommended a rethinking of the processes and collaboration associated with the development of both the City and Alexandria City Public Schools' (ACPS) Capital Improvement Programs.

One of the findings noted by the Task Force was:

"Creative and innovative solutions that have occurred are the result of ad hoc and reactive efforts rather than a cohesive replicable process."

They also recommended that "...leadership proactively challenge traditional practices and methods for capital project and service delivery by exploring new best practices to keep Alexandria competitive..."

They further encouraged "embracing opportunities such as public private partnerships, joint use, co-location, shared municipal services, adaptive reuse..."

Implementing these recommendations requires both the City and ACPS to step out of our comfort zones and modify processes that have been utilized for decades. Their recommendations have provided the Council and School Board with a charge to unify our capital budgeting processes.

Years later, things are much better. The collaboration between the City Council and School Board, between the City Manager and the Superintendent and between the City Staff and the ACPS Staff is far more collaborative and constructive. [Here's the latest staff report on the status of implementing these findings.](#)

Yet, we still have work to do. While we have had some success in facility collaboration, there is still considerable opportunity to work together at each municipal site and determine the right mix of uses, agnostic of whether these services are seen as traditionally "school" uses or traditionally "city" uses.

In October, at a joint worksession, the Council and School Board discussed these issues in depth. [You can watch the discussion online.](#)

As we move forward, the City and the Schools are working to create a "Joint Facilities Master Plan" to help guide future collaboration. We need your help! On Thursday February 13th, [there will be a meeting to engage members of the community in the development of this plan.](#)

In March, the City Council and School Board will gather for our budget joint worksession. At that session, the two bodies will discuss the adoption of facility collocation principles to guide future collaboration.

With your input, we can more efficiently utilize our resources and respect the sacrifice of the taxpayers who have provided them.

### **Virginia Tech Campus Takes Shape**

It has now been over a year since, in conjunction with the announcement of Amazon placing a portion of its new "HQ2" in the Crystal City section of Arlington County, Governor Northam announced that part of the Commonwealth's incentive package will include state funds to [support the creation of a new Virginia Tech "Innovation Campus" in Alexandria](#).

Late last year, the Virginia Tech Foundation [submitted its first concept plans to the City for the construction of the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus and related office, retail and residential development](#).

To obtain early community input, [a meeting was held with a presentation detailing the submission](#). You can [watch the video of the full public presentation online](#).

Later this month, the Virginia Tech Foundation and JBG Smith will be hosting two community meetings to educate our community on what is proposed and solicit feedback.

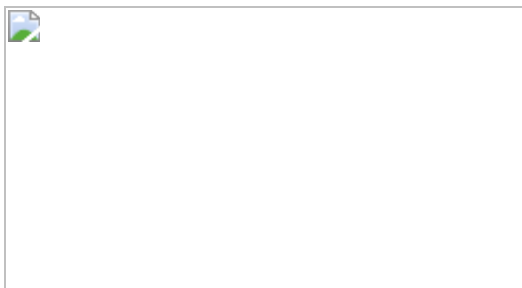
[The first meeting will be on Thursday February 13th at the National Industries for the Blind \(3000 Potomac Avenue\) at 7 PM.](#)

[The second meeting will be on Wednesday February 19th at Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School \(1701 N. Beauregard Street\) at 7 PM.](#)

While originally announced to be in Oakville Triangle, Virginia Tech decided that a property in North Potomac Yard (where the movie theater currently is) made more sense given their future growth plans. In June, [the leadership of Virginia Tech was back in Alexandria to announce the new location they had selected the property for their future "Innovation Campus."](#)

Integral to the Commonwealth's attraction of Amazon was access to the talent Amazon will require to grow. The creation of a [new \\$1 billion graduate campus will provide a pipeline of talent for our entire region](#).

In doing so, this new investment in our City will spur new job creation, catalyze redevelopment in Potomac Yard, Oakville Triangle and beyond, as well as open up new educational partnerships for our schools and non-profit organizations.



In November, [I wrote in this newsletter about our partnership with Arlington to ensure that the benefits of these new investments accrue to all in our communities](#). As this campus begins to take shape, our work continues.

The initial development approvals will come to the Planning Commission and City Council in March, with public hearings and input opportunities at both meetings.

### **Enhanced West End Bus Service**

As part of the Commonwealth's I-395/95 Express Lanes project, \$22 million annually will be provided to the jurisdictions along the corridor to support new transit initiatives.

[The City submitted two successful applications for a portion of this money](#). The second-highest rated submission was the City's

proposed expansion of the DASH AT1 route to provide more frequent service to West End locations.

[This funding allowed for the creation of the new AT1 Plus, which so far has increased monthly ridership on the route by 26%!](#)



In an environment where resources for transportation infrastructure have been shrinking, state policymakers have frequently been enamored

with public-private partnerships. The Commonwealth has been using public-private partnerships to advance transportation projects, including new High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. Through these arrangements, a private entity finances a portion of the transportation improvement in exchange for the ability to collect tolls from use.

I am skeptical of the overall merits of using these types of agreements to develop major transportation infrastructure. Yet, that is a decision for state policymakers not for local ones.

Under Governor McDonnell, there was an effort to create new HOT lanes on Interstate 395/95 to cover the 35 miles from the border with the District of Columbia south to Stafford County.

Both Alexandria and Arlington had concerns over the details of the proposal. Mainly, what impacts the operation of the new lanes would have on local streets and air quality, as well as potential impacts to private property in order to expand the existing highway right of way.

At the time, Arlington County [filed a Federal lawsuit](#) to oppose the proposal. While the City did not join the litigation, [the City did adopt a resolution expressing the concerns](#) on the details of the proposal.

In the end, state Government chose to remove the section of the lanes that went through Alexandria and Arlington .

Five years later, [Governor McAuliffe and his administration made a new proposal for extension of the HOT lanes into the District of Columbia](#). That proposal was implemented and launched recently.

The additional revenue provided to the City by this agreement has allowed for new transit expansion serving our City.

### Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

As Mayor, I am continuing my regular series of Town Hall Meetings.



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply the Mayor who will hopefully have 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

### Eisenhower East

First approved in 2003, [the Eisenhower East Plan](#) was one of the first small area plans adopted in the City's nearly two decade comprehensive update to our City's Master Plan. Since the plan adoption, this area has come to include the Carlyle neighborhood, and many large employers, including the Patent and Trademark Office, the National Science Foundation, and Motley Fool.



With requests pending for additional density in the plan area, the City undertook a new comprehensive update of the plan.

On Tuesday, [the Planning Commission will consider this update](#), which includes:

- New Affordable Housing obligations
- New School Site
- New Open Space network
- New Flexibility of land-uses within the plan area

Assuming the Planning Commission makes a recommendation on this plan update, this will come to the City Council at our Public Hearing on Saturday February 22nd.

[Please let me know your thoughts.](#)

### **Pocket Parks**

For the past 8 years the City has been planning the future of its parks, led by our Park and Recreation Commission. That has led to the adoption of new comprehensive plans for our [Citywide Parks](#) and our [Neighborhood Parks](#).



We are now working to plan future of our pocket parks. A pocket park is a park that is under a half acre. The City currently has 25 different pocket parks around our community and they support quality of life in the neighborhoods they exist.

[Our Park Planning staff have now released a draft plan](#) that was based on input received from residents who know and enjoy these parcels.

The draft plan will go to the Park and Recreation Commission at their hearing on February 20th. Public input is welcome prior to and during the hearing.

### **Paving Survey**

Later this month when the City Manager presents his proposed Capital Improvement Program, it will include a proposed paving schedule for streets around our City for the next three fiscal years.

In advance of repaving, the City looks to implement components of our [Complete Streets Policy](#) to address safety, mobility and access concerns. By utilizing planned repaving, the City can be more efficient with the investment of tax dollars.

As the City prepares to repave streets that currently are planned for in our Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021), we are now soliciting for community input as to what concerns exist on the streets currently.

The streets we are soliciting for input on include:



February 2020 Council Connection

- Alfred Street (First Street to Church Street)
- Cameron Mills Road (Virginia Avenue to Allison Street)
- Morgan Street (North Chambliss Street to cul-de-sac)
- Rayburn Avenue (North Beauregard Street to Reading Avenue)
- Reading Avenue (Rayburn Avenue to North Beauregard Street)
- West Street (Duke Street to Wythe Street)

[The survey is available online and the deadline is February 7th.](#)

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