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Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

July 1, 2015

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Events/Updates

July 4th in Rosemont

The City Council has now adjourned for the summer after a productive session.

Congrats to the over 750 members of the T. C. Williams Class of 2015 who received their diplomas and will now move to the next phase in their lives.

[Specific congratulations to Ben Thomas and Barbara Peisch for setting the pace academically through being selected as the valedictorian and salutatorian of the class.](#)

Best wishes for a relaxing and enjoyable summer!

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

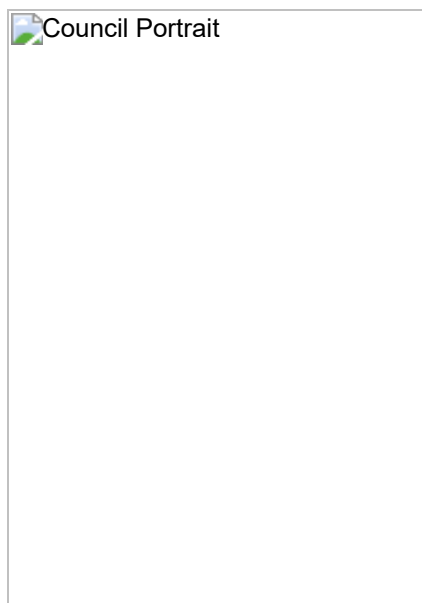
Council Initiatives

Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?

I have now been a part of adopting five City budgets as a member of the Council. Each year, I try to find new ways to engage residents in the process, and increase understanding of budget priorities and trade-offs.

This year, I worked with the staff in our City's Office of Management and Budget to create a new [Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#).

Modeled after the [Federal Taxpayer Receipt](#), this website will take the assessed value of your home and detail how much of your real



[This Saturday the Rosemont Citizens Association continues the annual Independence Day celebration.](#)

This year the event gets underway at 9AM at the Maury Elementary field.

Complete with a baby beauty contest, bike decorating contest, lots of food, and even Sugar Shack donuts, this event is not to be missed!

Alexandria Birthday Party Next Saturday

[The summer tradition continues as we celebrate Alexandria's 266th Birthday in style at Oronoco Bay Park on Alexandria's Waterfront.](#)

The festivities kick off at 6:30 PM, with 9:30 PM fireworks accompanied by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, and the men and women of the United States Marine Corps from Quantico.

I will see you there!

Marketing Fund Deadline Tomorrow!

Do you have an idea to help promote Alexandria as a destination for visiting, shopping, dining or other business?

[If so, submit your application for funding by the Alexandria Marketing Fund.](#)

The Fund is designed to provide seed money to create public/private partnerships to promote Alexandria.

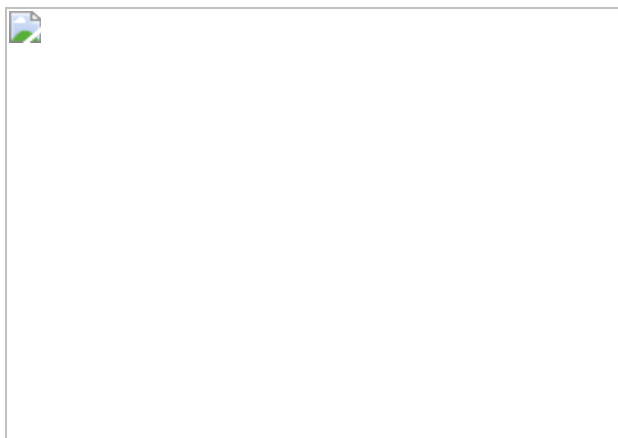
The deadline is tomorrow, so please submit your application today.

First Thursday Continues

[The 2015 season of First Thursday in Del Ray continues tomorrow on Mount Vernon Avenue.](#)

estate tax is going to the various programs and services of City government.

Give it a try and let me know how you like it!



Moving Forward Together on the Waterfront

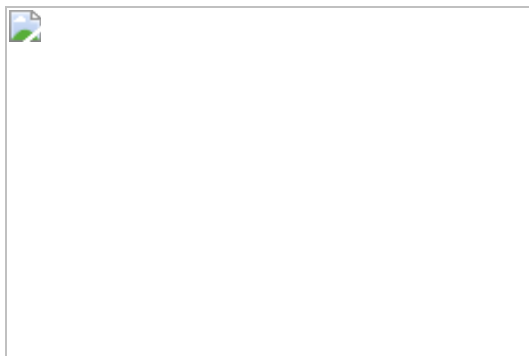
Our Potomac River waterfront is the reason Alexandria exists as a community. [The history of this waterfront](#) is the history of Alexandria. It is what has brought people and commerce to our community for generations.

Unfortunately, for the past few decades, the future of our waterfront has also been the source of discord and community division. Far too often it has lead to litigation. This litigation has, in some cases, dragged out for decades.

When the current City Council was sworn in about two and half years ago, it was an early goal to resolve all on-going litigation, craft settlements with disputed landowners, and move forward as a community together. I believe that has been a success.

The implicit compromise of the [Approved Waterfront Small Area Plan](#) was as simple as it was controversial. Can we allow some increased development on three derelict sites in exchange for the following:

- new waterfront parks, public accessibility throughout the shoreline, new flood mitigation, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality?



While achieving this vision has not always been easy, we now stand closer than ever.

In March, [the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in favor of the City](#) in the final litigation related to the Waterfront Plan. [Last month, the Court denied a request for the case to be reheard](#), thus ending the litigation.

In late May, the property exchanges occurred between the City and the Old Dominion Boat Club. The [City now owns the existing Club property](#), and the Club [now owns properties farther south along the waterfront](#).

The monthly street party is from 6:00 - 8:30 PM on Thursday evening.

The Boat Club will [soon construct a new club for their members on their new site](#) with City funds from our settlement, and the City will create a landmark park with integrated flood mitigation at the base of King Street, thus addressing flood challenges that have long plagued the corridor.

A year ago, the Council approved [Phase 1 of the Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design](#). This exciting design marries the vision of the Olin Group, and the input of hundreds of residents who participated in the planning efforts. It also received input from the [Art and History Report](#) to ensure our history is a key component of the future of our waterfront. .

In January, prioritizing the development of the public promenade and the flood mitigation, the [Council approved the implementation plan](#) for the public improvements.

Last month, [a new waterfront restaurant, Blackwall Hitch](#), opened in the old food court pavilion.

A year and a half ago, [the Council unanimously approved the new Carr Hotel proposal](#). It allows a new waterfront hotel in exchange for expansion of a City park, new public waterfront access and hundreds of thousands of dollars of public improvements. That project should be under way shortly.

In April, Council [approved the Robinson Terminal South](#) development, next door to the Carr Hotel. [This new mixed-use development](#) will include large new public spaces on the waterfront, preservation and adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings, new civic spaces, and additional hundreds of thousands of dollars of new public improvements.

The Council's approval includes new parking restrictions to ease the impact on neighboring residents. It also requires the developer to barge a large portion of the debris from the construction, as opposed to trucking it through Old Town.

The final waterfront redevelopment [site comes for approval in September, when the Robinson Terminal North proposal](#) comes before the Planning Commission and City Council.

With the fighting behind us, we now have a unique opportunity to shape the waterfront of Alexandria's future in a way that benefits our residents, our visitors and our taxpayers. I'm excited about the future.

Surplus Property

In 2007, a blue ribbon commission of residents and business leaders in Alexandria, formally known as the "Mayor's Economic Sustainability Work Group," [made their report to the City Council](#).

One component of their report related to City-owned properties. The report urged that the City create a good accounting of the property we did own, and dispose of properties that were no longer required to provide municipal services.

After adopting this recommendation, the City hired the national real estate firm Jones, Lang, Lasalle to perform such a review. The review looked at the full inventory of 300+ properties owned by the City. These properties ranged from tiny slivers of land that were completely inaccessible to large multi-block tracts.

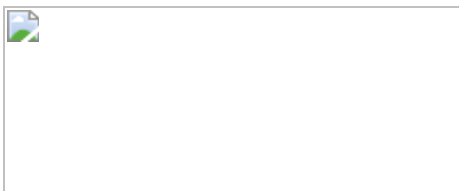
In the end, the Jones, Lang, Lasalle review [led to a series of recommendations for the Council to pursue](#). They made specific recommendations of properties to dispose of. They also made recommendations of properties that could be reused for other purposes.

In 2009, the Council adopted these recommendations and began to pursue disposition of the properties that were designated as surplus.

In late May the Council received an update on these activities at my request. Today, only one of the eight properties that were designated for surplus remain in City ownership. All of the properties are listed below with their disposition:

401 E. Braddock Road (corner of Braddock & Mount Vernon Avenue): This was sold in 2011 for \$280,500.

716 - 718 N. Columbus Street (former residential care home): This was sold in 2012 for \$662,000.



3600 Jefferson Davis Highway (corner of Jefferson Davis & Reed): This was transferred to AHC Inc. (an affordable housing non-profit) to support a new affordable housing development.

200 N. Royal Street (Elder Crafters): This was sold in 2013 for \$1,250,000.

509 N. St. Asaph Street (old Health Department building): This was sold in 2014 for \$5,230,000.

1505 Powhatan Street (corner of Powhatan & Slaters Lane): This was sold in 2014 for \$4,400,000.

0 Prince Street (Beachcomber Restaurant): This was exchanged in 2014 as part of the land swap with the Old Dominion Boat Club.

912, 916, 920 King Street (King at S. Patrick): The General Services department has funding in this year's budget to dispose of this property.

The net proceeds from these sales have generated \$11 million of one-time funds that we have used to fund our Capital Improvement Program. Beyond that, these sales have taken properties that were non-taxable and placed them on the tax roles, easing the tax burden on residents and business owners throughout our City.

Keeping Water Rates Low

Alexandria remains one in a relatively small list of Virginia jurisdictions who have a private water utility. [Virginia American Water Company](#) (VAWC), a subsidiary of a large national company, provides water supply to Alexandria's residents and businesses.

As a private utility, VAWC is subject to the authority of the [State Corporation Commission](#) in Richmond. Last summer, VAWC [applied to the commission in order to create a new "Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Service Charge."](#)

As proposed, the new charge is to assist VAWC in collecting the resources to perform system-wide maintenance.

While the City certainly supports the maintenance efforts that are badly needed to protect our City's water supply, we do have concern about the mechanism.

At my request, the City [filed with the Commission in opposition of VAWC's request](#). The City's concern was that the change proposed by VAWC removes a significant "check" (the review by the State Corporation Commission), that exists to ensure the proper process is followed before rates are raised.

The Commission appointed a hearing examiner to look at the facts in the case and make a recommendation. The [response of the hearing examiner](#) last month supports the City's perspective.

This City recently filed [a response urging the Commission's support of the findings of the hearing examiner](#).

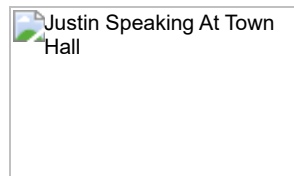
We are hopeful that the Commission will concur and that VAWC will continue to use the designated process for the review of any necessary rate increases.

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

Planning North Old Town

While much attention involving development in our City has focused on the development of three sites in Old Town (detailed earlier in this newsletter), a quiet revolution is occurring just a bit farther north, in North Old Town.

[While the future use of the now decommissioned Mirant/GenOn/NRG coal-fired power plant is a central question, there is a myriad of other redevelopment efforts. These are either under way, proposed, or contemplated throughout Old Town North.](#)

[I have previously written about the planned redevelopment of numerous Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority \(ARHA\) properties.](#)

A potential redevelopment of the power plant and the ARHA properties alone would significantly change Old Town North, but that is just the beginning.

Last month the Council formed [the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group](#), to create a community leadership group to shepherd a planning process for Old Town North, beginning this fall.

We are fortunate to have a basis of community work to begin from in Old Town North. The North Old Town Independent Citizens Association (NOTICe) has been [engaged in surveying community input and crafting vision statements for this planning effort](#).

I look forward to continued active community engagement as this planning process continues.

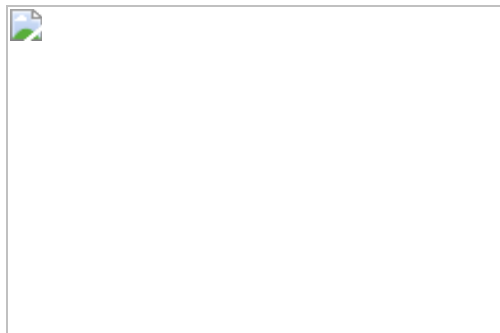
The New Patrick Henry

A little over five years ago, the School Board adopted proposed capital funding for a new elementary school on the City's West End. Specifically, they proposed the site of the existing Patrick Henry Elementary School and Recreation Center.

The school itself was originally built in 1953. Classroom additions were constructed in 1995 and 2011. The recreation center was added in 1973. Today 600 students attend the existing school.

With the enrollment challenges, particularly on the West End, coupled with the inadequate infrastructure, replacing Patrick Henry now is a priority.

In May, in adopting the Capital Improvement Program, the Council approved \$38.1 million for replacement of Patrick Henry Elementary School, and another \$6.7 million for replacement of Patrick Henry Recreation Center.



In the same month, the [School Board](#) [accepted the feasibility study on the new school](#), and chose their preferred configuration for the new building.

There still remains considerable uncertainty over the configuration and features of the replacement recreation center.

Our City staff [brought their recommendation for the uses at the new recreation center to the Council last month](#). Their recommendation was a Neighborhood Recreation Center, which constitutes a middle ground between a smaller school-focused center, and a larger community recreation center.

After a very spirited conversation, [which you can watch here](#), the Council ended up endorsing the Staff's recommendation. There will be some additional community engagement to help inform the ultimate design of the joint facility.

While the process of jointly planning this facility got bogged down a bit, it is my hope that the ultimate design will be a carefully integrated school and recreation center. This is the first time in a decade and a half that we have built a joint City/Schools facility, and it's important to define a future model process to work from.

Once the design is finalized, this project will proceed to the City's land-use approval process like other projects. Please let me know your thoughts.

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