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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Councilman Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

June 1, 2015

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## Events/Updates

**Choose our Next Mayor**

The City Council is now in the home stretch, as we race to the end of this Council term and prepare for our summer recess.

Last month, the City [said goodbye to A. Melvin Miller](#), an Alexandrian who gave a lifetime of service to our community.

His impact on our City, particularly in the area of housing, will be felt for a long time to come.

In a few weeks the T. C. Williams Class of 2015 will receive their diplomas and move to the next phase in their lives. Congrats to all of the students and best wishes for continued success!

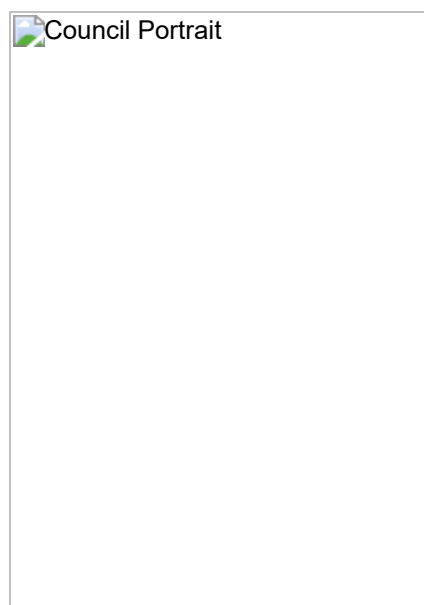
While the graduates will be leaving, T. C. Williams will be welcoming a new principal. As [Suzanne Maxey enjoys a well-deserved retirement](#), [Dr. Jesse Dingle will take on the mantle of running Alexandria's only high school](#).

I look forward to working with Dr. Dingle to ensure the success of our children.

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

## Council Initiatives

**Potomac Yard Metro Nearing Arrival**



I try to keep this newsletter free of politics, but I do strive to inform.

A week from tomorrow, the Democratic Party will choose its nominee to be the next Mayor of Alexandria. With no Republican or Independent candidates yet in the race, it does appear as if the primary will be tantamount to election.

With the Mayor, the former Mayor, and the Vice Mayor facing off, this is arguably the most interesting race for Alexandria's mayoral seat in 30 years.

[Absentee balloting is well under way. Tomorrow is the deadline to request a ballot by mail. Saturday is the last day a voter can absentee vote in person at the Registrar's office.](#)

The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a debate of the three candidates, and the [video from that debate is available to view online.](#)

Each candidate also had the opportunity to appear of WAMU's Kojo Nnamdi's show over the past few weeks.

You can listen to appearances by [Mayor Bill Euille](#), [former Mayor Kerry Donley](#), or [Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg](#).

The [final debate is tomorrow evening at George Washington Middle School from 7 - 9 PM.](#)

I will see you at the polls!

### **Choose a Delegate**

For those Alexandrians on the east end of our City, the June 9th Democratic Primary will also choose a replacement for Delegate Rob Krupicka.

The [sample ballot is available online.](#)

To learn more about each of the 5 candidates, visit their

For decades, the City has discussed, planned, and just plain hoped for a Metro Rail station at Potomac Yard.

Last month, the City Council [unanimously adopted Alternative B](#) as the site of the future Potomac Yard Metro station. We have now moved from discussing Metro at Potomac Yard, to designing and building Metro at Potomac Yard.

In 2008, along with then-Councilman Rob Krupicka, I proposed a new start to efforts to bring Metro to Potomac Yard. We included [language in the City's Transportation Master Plan](#) explicitly calling for a new station at Potomac Yard. We also tied the construction and funding of Metro to the development occurring in the Yard.

The result is [a funding plan for Potomac Yard Metro](#) that not only leverages the development activity in Potomac Yard, but also does so without requiring the contributions of General Fund taxpayers.

The largest environmental, [economic development](#) and transportation initiative in our City's history is being accomplished using [one of the most innovative funding mechanisms used anywhere in the country.](#)

The funding package consists of 2 [special tax districts](#), tax increment funding, [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority regional funding](#), [a Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Board loan](#), and a developer contribution.

It is designed to use the development in Potomac Yard to pay for Metro in Potomac Yard, not the City's General Fund taxpayers.

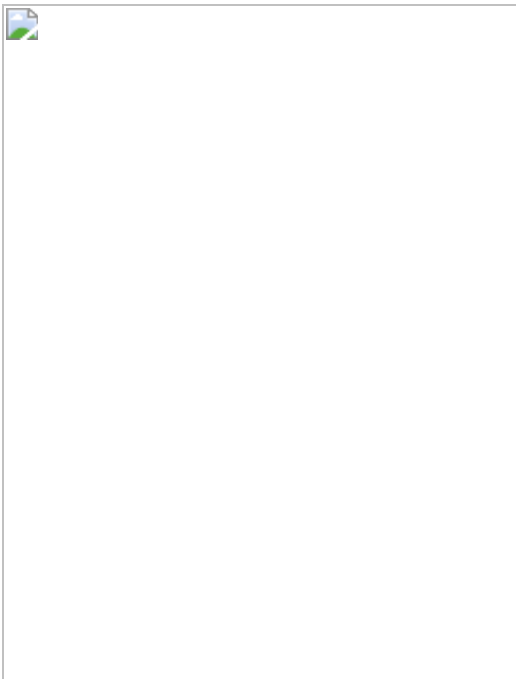
A little over a month ago, the project took a gigantic step forward with the release of the

[Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public review and comment.](#)

The release of the draft statement, coordinated with the Federal Transit Administration, the National Park Service, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), kicked off a lively period of public input which lead up to the Council's adoption of our Locally Preferred Alternative.

Last month, another milestone was achieved as the City announced that it had received approval from the National Park Service on a "Net Benefits Agreement." Such an agreement is required for the National Park Service to transfer land to the City.

The agreement that was published provides for \$12 million of improvements to the adjacent National Park Service land. These improvements include expansion of the existing National Park Service land and improvements to both Dangerfield Island and the



websites:

[Larry Altenburg](#)

[Craig Fifer](#)

[Julie Jakopic](#)

[Mark Levine](#)

[Clarence Tong](#)

The candidates for this seat will [also be participating in the debate tomorrow evening at George Washington Middle School](#).

### **Taste of Del Ray Returns!**

The 7th Annual Taste of Del Ray returns this Sunday from 1 - 3 PM in the lot behind United Bank on Mount Vernon Avenue.

[Tickets can be purchased this week at designated locations or on the day of the event.](#)

### **First Thursday Continues**

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

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

### **Planetarium**

The final TC Williams planetarium show for the 2014-2015 school year will be Tuesday, June 16th at 7PM

Registration opens today at noon, and is limited to 35 attendees. [Sign up online or by calling.](#)

Mount Vernon Trail. The City has also made a series of policy changes to address any potential impact.

[This project will leverage the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs, and will bring up to \\$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City. It removes thousands of vehicles from one of the most crowded corridors in our City. It promotes the creation of the kind of walkable community our City has long desired in Potomac Yard.](#)

Once the Environmental Impact Statement process concludes with a Record of Decision, the construction efforts can commence.

As the City focuses on efforts to erase the structural imbalance in our budget, the successful completion of this project is a key component in that effort.

### **Budget Adopted**

Early last month, the City Council unanimously adopted the Fiscal Year 2016 Operating and Capital budgets. The budget covers the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

[The budget that was presented by the City Manager in March](#) was a continuation of a pattern that has persisted for much of the last decade. Anemic revenue growth, coupled with significant pressure on the expenditure side, resulted in a budget that presented new cuts, but disappointingly left many unmet needs.

While the [residential real estate market experienced some growth](#), our commercial real estate tax base was battered again, and consumption-based tax revenue was lackluster at best.

The City Manager entered the process with little more than a half of a percent of new revenue. In the fall, when the City Council adopted guidance for the preparation of this budget, [we voted 4-3 to give the City Manager the authority to propose a tax rate increase](#). While the City Manager had that authority, [he chose not to exercise it](#).

Yet the City Manager worked to create additional revenues to help balance the budget. [New fee increases have been proposed](#). The proposed budget leverages new revenues from Potomac Yard development. The proposed budget also shifts the costs of some services from the General Fund to special funds generated by fees. In the end, the proposed budget relies on a paltry 1.7% increase in General Fund revenue.

As has been the case for much of the past decade, the budget also proposes significant reductions to ongoing City spending:

*A net reduction of 3.8 full time headcount equivalents. If approved, the City will have the smallest workforce in over a decade.*

*Elimination of a Deputy City Manager position*

*Elimination of a City Architect position*

*Renegotiation of the City's agreement with the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home*

*Reduction to Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA) advertising*

*Reduction of two part-time juvenile probation officer positions*

*Elimination of City funding of the Alexandria Law Library*

## Oakville Triangle

The next community meeting in the Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Planning effort is this evening at 7 PM at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

[This meeting will be focused on community benefits and retail market analysis.](#)

## Plan Your Neighborhood Parks

After receiving input around the City last year, our Park Planning staff have released [Draft Improvement Plans for our smaller Neighborhood Parks](#).

City Staff is now [collecting feedback on the draft plans using an online survey](#).

There is one remaining community meeting to collect additional input:

District 3: June 4th, 7pm at Patrick Henry Recreation Center

Includes: Luckett/Skate Park, Taney Ave Park, Ewald Park, Mulligan Park, Chambliss Park, Stevenson Park

## Take Me Out to the Ballgame

[The Alexandria Aces kick-off their 2015 season on Thursday evening at Frank Mann Field at Four Mile Run Park.](#)

Enjoy the 8th season of collegiate summer baseball right here in Alexandria!

## City Mulch

[City mulch is now available for pickup or delivery.](#)

On Monday through Friday from 7 AM until 3:30 PM, residents can pick up mulch at 4215 Eisenhower Avenue.

For \$50, the City will deliver. Call 703-746-HELP to schedule delivery.

*Close Cora Kelly Recreation Center on holidays*

*Close William Ramsay Recreation Center on holidays and Sundays*

*Close Warwick Pool for the summer (renovation is now planned and funded in FY 2017)*

*Reduction of Chinquapin Recreation Center summer operating hours*

*Eliminate one refuse truck and two vacant driver positions*

*Full automation of the Union Street Parking Garage*

While reductions were necessary, the proposed budget does suggest new investments to core areas of City operations:

*To address rising student enrollment, \$6 million of new operating dollars are proposed for the Alexandria City Public Schools. While this represents 55% of all new revenue available to the City, [it is still \\$3.2 million less than the request approved by the School Board](#).*

*Over \$4 million of new resources to fund the City's obligations to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)*

*Over \$2 million to address long-standing pay inequities within the Alexandria Police Department*

*Expansion of Alexandria Fire Department career ladders*

*Funds to begin implementation of the City's recently adopted [Youth Master Plan](#).*

Early in our annual budget process, state law requires the Council to adopt a cap in the real estate tax rate that we might consider. Once the cap is adopted, the Council can ultimately lower the rate, but not increase it that year.

On March 17th, the Council [voted unanimously to adopt a cap of \\$1.043, which is the current rate](#). [The real estate rate will not increase this year](#), and any increases to City spending must be funded by alternate means.

Over the course of the budget process, [the Council asked a series of questions](#) designed to dig through every corner of the \$800+ million budget.

The Council is trying a new system than had previously been used to manage the Add/Delete process. In the past, each individual member would submit a list of proposed "adds" with offset "deletes," and we would gather and attempt to reconcile each list.

The new process required that all additions or deletions to the proposed budget have at least 3 identified supporters, staff analysis, and alignment with the City's Strategic Plan.

In adopting the budget, the Council [chose to make a few modifications to the City Manager's proposed budget](#):

*An additional appropriation of \$1 million to the Alexandria City Public Schools (this narrows, but does not eliminate the gap between the School Board and City Manager's proposed budget).*

*Funding for the staffing necessary to provide fire suppression at the newly opened Fire Station 210 ([I detailed this situation in last month's newsletter](#))*

[Funding to integrate the Alexandria Law Library into the Alexandria Library](#)

## All Night Grad Party

The 26th Annual TC Williams All Night Graduation Party is scheduled for Monday June 15th.

Help the graduates of TC celebrate their accomplishment safely and enjoyably by [contributing](#) or [volunteering](#) at the party.

## Real Estate Assessment Appeals Due June 1

Any appeal of 2015 Real Estate Assessments must be filed today for hearing by the Board of Equalization.

The [form is available online](#) and can be submitted by mail.

## Food Truck Rodeo

[The 2nd Annual Food Truck Rodeo, sponsored by the West End Business Association, returns to Southern Towers on Friday June 5th.](#)

The event, which draws a variety of great food, beer from Port City Brewing, vendors and activities for the kids, will be held from 11 AM until 8 PM.

*Restoration of a portion of the City's Transportation Improvement Program (utilizing a lower than expected WMATA subsidy request)*

[Providing funding to support an existing community partnership to make improvements at Maury Elementary School](#)

[Funding for expansion of City space utilized by ALIVE for their food bank.](#)

This is now the fourth budget that I have had the opportunity to work on as a member of the City Council. In the conclusion of every process, there are things I would have done differently. Yet given the financial environment, I believe this was a good budget.

It respects our taxpayers. It invests in public safety, basic infrastructure and new economic development initiatives. It continues our investments in our children, both on the operating and capital sides of the budget.

We still have employee compensation issues that remain. We have significant unmet needs in early childhood preparation, infrastructure and the myriad of transportation challenges that await us.

The input from the community made this budget better. Thanks for all of the thoughts that you shared.

## Public Private Partnerships

A few years back, I was an age group coordinator for my son's division in the Alexandria Soccer Association. One of the coaches, for a team from MacArthur Elementary, was concerned that he was unable to reserve the practice field at MacArthur for his team's practices at the time he wanted.

I remember he complained that he had "paid for this field." I figured he was speaking generally as a taxpayer. I later found out that the field at MacArthur was the result of private partnership and fundraising.

The City's protracted revenue challenges have led many of our residents to take matters into their own hands to make things happen. Community volunteer efforts have long existed and contributed greatly to the fabric of Alexandria. However, the efforts of late have grown to a larger scale than what we've seen before.

Residents in Arlandria are continuing to work [to raise money to plant new trees in Four Mile Run Park](#) , and have used private donations to create the park plaza that hosts the [Four Mile Farmers and Artisan Market](#) on recently acquired public space.

Residents and business leaders worked together to [raise significant resources to build the newly dedicated Alexandria Police Memorial](#).

The Del Ray Citizens Association [came forward to sponsor some park improvements in the pocket park at the corner of Commonwealth and E. Del Ray Avenue](#) , which was recently renamed the Judy Lowe Memorial Park.

Residents and businesses have partnered to make improvements at [Ewald Park](#).

Residents from around the City are working to [raise money for new pools](#).

In adopting our budget last month, the City Council agreed to provide City funds to supplement the significant private fundraising that has occurred in support of the [Maury Schoolyard Initiative](#).

All of these efforts share a common element: committed residents dedicated to improving our City. Yet they also share a common

element in that each followed a different path to partnering with the City.

In approving the most recent Maury effort, I requested that our Staff work on developing a formal policy for consideration of these type of public private partnerships.

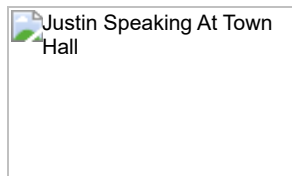
These arrangements hold great promise for the City in the future, but fairness demands that we develop clear policies and criteria for their consideration.

### 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

### More Kids To Educate

A little over two years ago, we convened the joint [Long Range Educational Facilities Work Group](#). The group was given the essential charge to understand our recent increase in student enrollment, better project enrollment growth in the future, and decide what to do about it.

In September, [14,167 children started school in the Alexandria City Public Schools](#). The last time [that many children attended our schools was over 40 years ago in the early 1970s](#).

The School Board Chair and Vice Chair, the Mayor and I have joined an experienced group of residents to work through this issue with the community.

One of the earliest tasks completed by the group was to agree upon a methodology for how we can project future enrollment. Ending the days where the Schools had one projection for student enrollment and the City had another, was paramount.

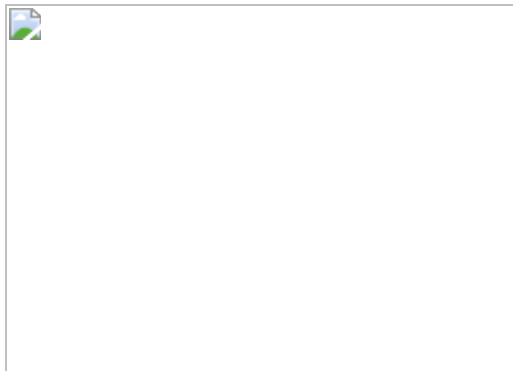
Every year, we examine the actual student enrollment to refine our projections and ensure that our methodology is sound.

The headline is that enrollment in the Alexandria City Public Schools grew by 4% over last year. We have 593 more kids

in the system than we had last year.

Between September 2006 and this school year, the system has averaged over 4% growth every year.

Our projection for this year was 14,111, which means the projection was on target.



We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. For example, we learned that low-rise apartments generate nearly 3 times the students as high-rise or mid-rise apartments do. We learned that single family homes generate nearly double the students as townhouses. We now know that public housing and other income-restricted units far outpace any other property type for student generation.

[We now know that housing units built over 30 years ago account for 4 times the student generation as those built in the past 30 years.](#)

In the final analysis, these data points remind us of the need to address this enrollment growth head on.

With that in mind, the group has just released the [Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan](#). The Plan is the culmination of the group's work in conjunction with the efforts of both ACPS and City staff. The plan looks at each school building in the City, assesses the educational adequacy and provides a roadmap for increasing capacity and addressing deficiencies.

What do you think? From now until June 8th, the City and ACPS are collecting input on the draft plan using the [City's AlexEngage system](#).

The draft plan will come to both the School Board and City Council for adoption this month. Upon conclusion we will move to the next phase of planning for additional capacity at the middle school and high school level.

I look forward to your input as we work to ensure the success of our children.

## **The Future of Alexandria Pools**

Several years ago, the City had seven municipal pools: the [indoor pool](#) at Chinguapin Recreation Center, two large outdoor pools ( [Old Town and Warwick](#)), and four small neighborhood pools (Ewald, [Charles Houston](#), Lee and Colasanto).

With little new financial resources devoted, and mounting capital needs, the City closed Ewald, Lee and Colasanto over the past five years, and last week Warwick did not open with the other outdoor pools.

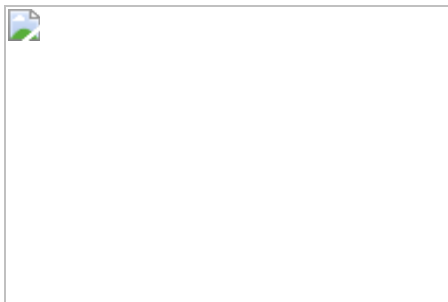
The FY 2014 budget was the first budget adopted by this Council. In adoption of that budget the Council made a [significant financial investment in the future of municipal aquatics](#).

In partnership with [Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics](#), the Council proposed a partial rebuild of Chinguapin Recreation Center to include a new 50 meter pool, as well as aquatics improvements throughout the City.

While Warwick is now closed, [in the Fall the Council gave the direction to the City Manager to begin engineering and building a new pool on the site](#). Unfortunately Warwick will be closed next season as well, but a new Warwick Pool will reopen in the summer of 2017. The recently approved Capital Improvement Program includes \$2.3 million for this project.

For Chinguapin Recreation Center, the Council budgeted \$20 million to match the commitment of \$2.5 million of private fundraising.

Last year, the City undertook a feasibility study for the creation of a 50 meter pool. While the feasibility study did determine that the pool



was possible, it showed the cost at greater than \$30 million, much more than the approved budget for the project.

Our staff is now working with the community to determine ways to reduce that cost, as well as exploring other options for improving

our City's aquatics facilities. The Council will revisit this issue next year.

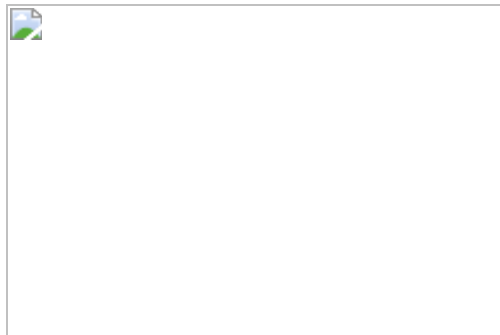
### **The New Patrick Henry**

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, and the inadequate infrastructure, replacing Patrick Henry now is a priority.

Last month 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.



Last week, 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.

On [Thursday evening and Saturday morning, City staff will hold community meetings to collect input on the future of the recreation center](#).

City staff will then be bringing forward recommendations for the Council to choose from at the end of this month.

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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