

# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

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Alexandria, Virginia

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## Events/Updates

### Endless Summer

The Old Town Pool, which typically would close for the year on Labor Day will be [remaining open through Saturday September 21st](#).

It will close for humans at noon on Saturday the 21st, and reopen for the [Annual Doggie Day Swim](#) from 3-7 PM.

Register a space for your dog online.

### Multicultural Fest Returns!

[The 2nd Annual Alexandria Multicultural Fest returns to](#)

When this month's edition arrives in your e-mail box, I should hopefully be nearing completion of a half-marathon in Virginia Beach.

I'm training to run another marathon (my 5th) this year. I'll be running the Marine Corps Marathon with the [Running Brooke Foundation](#) to help support the great work Brooke does for children across our City.

While Mount Vernon and Tucker Elementary schools got a head-start on the school year last month, the rest of our schools start on Tuesday. Best wishes to students and parents on a wonderful year!

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

 Council Portrait

## Council Initiatives

### Taxis Now Required to Accept Credit Cards

Starting today, taxis in the City will now be required to accept credit cards!

Working with my colleagues, I was pleased that we were able to advance this new requirement. Our Staff has worked with all six companies to ensure readiness to comply with this new requirement.

Credit cards are nearly ubiquitous in our society today, and having this available as a form of payment in our taxis will add convenience for our residents and visitors alike.

### Changes to Senior Taxi

For nearly 30 years, the City has operated the [Senior Taxi](#) program. The program, designed to assist our seniors in retaining their mobility, provided taxi rides to grocery stores and medical appointments for residents over 60.

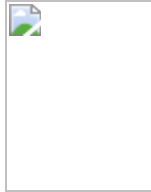
[the Four Mile Run Park and Community Building on Saturday September 14th, from noon until 4PM.](#)

There will be performances, games and activities for entire family. Admission is free!

### King Street Art Festival

[The 11th Annual King Street Art Festival returns on the 7th and 8th of September.](#)

From Washington Street to the water, King Street becomes an outdoor art gallery.



The festival runs from 10 AM - 7 PM on Saturday and 10 AM - 5 PM on Sunday.

### Guest Visitors In Parking Districts

In order to encourage the use of existing off-street parking, some newer housing developments have restrictions prohibiting residents from using on-street parking.

Those restrictions also prohibit those residents from receiving guest permits for any overnight visitors to park on street.

The City will soon be considering revisions to the existing ordinance to allow residents in those developments to receive short-term permits for their guests.

[There will be a public meeting on Tuesday September 17th at 7 PM in the City Council Work Room to discuss this proposal.](#)

### DASH Bus Public Meetings

As part of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis that DASH Bus is currently conducting to refine its route structure,

In the last fiscal year, this program provided 23,389 one-way trips for Alexandria seniors.

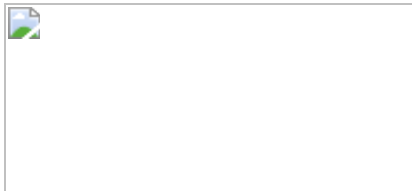
As one of the reductions included in the recently approved budget, Senior Tax is being replaced with the [Senior Taxi Yellow Card Program](#). This replacement program now imposes an income cap for eligibility and provides seniors with a pre-paid voucher card that they can use to access rides. Unlike the previous program, rides are no longer limited to specified destinations.

These changes will preserve the service for seniors in need, and save the taxpayers nearly \$100,000 per year.

### Can We Make Peace on the Waterfront?

With the successful re-vote of the [Waterfront Plan](#) earlier this year, the remaining litigation is now winding down.

The City is now moving forward to faithfully implement the approved vision for the future of our precious waterfront: a vibrant space publicly accessible to residents and visitors alike, sensitive to our history, showcasing our arts, and maintaining its historic role as integral to our economic growth.



The City recently selected [The Olin Studio](#) to perform the design of the public spaces and integrate with the flood mitigation efforts. Having a nationally recognized firm on board

gives us the best chance at achieving the vision for these important public spaces.

A variety of public and private [implementation efforts](#) continue:

At any moment we expect the winning bidders of the [two Robinson Terminal properties](#) to be announced by The Washington Post Company.

A revised proposal for a [new boutique hotel](#) on the site of the former Cummings Warehouse at 220 S. Union Street will also begin the public process this fall.

Unfortunately, the City's decades-long dispute with the [Old Dominion Boat Club](#) regarding the waterfront parking lot continues and now threatens the implementation of the flood mitigation efforts integral to the Waterfront Plan.

In an effort to bring these disputes to a close, the City has made a [new comprehensive proposal](#).

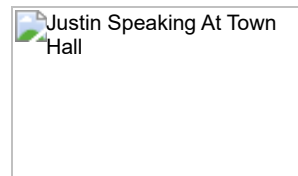
I am hopeful that this proposal will be favorably viewed by the Boat Club as a good faith effort, allowing a resolution of these long-disputed issues.

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

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings are back!

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!

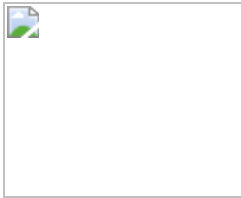


[DASH will be holding two public meetings.](#)

The first meeting will be on Wednesday the 11th at 7 PM in the Durant Arts Center (1605 Cameron Street).

The second meeting will be on Thursday the 12th at 7 PM at Landmark Mall on the 2nd Floor near Macy's (5801 Duke Street).

Please help us shape the future of transit in Alexandria!



## Upcoming Issues

### Keeping the Focus on Our Kids

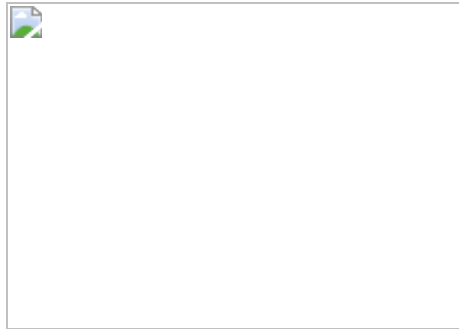
Alexandria's School Board made a [very significant decision](#) last week to change the leadership of our schools.

As with any transition, it presents opportunities and challenges moving forward. Ultimately, the nine people elected to provide policy direction for our schools have made their decisions, and as a community we need to use this moment to focus on the children in our schools, and how we can ensure their success.

Late last month, the Virginia Department of Education released the [preliminary Standards of Learning \(SOL\) assessment results](#) for the 2012-2013 school year for the Alexandria City Public Schools.

[Individual School Report Cards](#) can be downloaded directly from the Department of Education.

The test results portray a varied picture of our school system. They showed continued progress in mathematics learning around our City. They also showed signs of concern for reading and writing learning.



Overall, 13 of our schools are fully accredited for this upcoming school year, 5 will be accredited with warning, and Jefferson Houston Elementary School will remain without accreditation.

Alexandria continues to have good schools--filled with dedicated, creative and hard-working teachers that inspire our children every day. I see it in my own children when I drop them off excited to learn, and I see it in their faces when they recount their days when I pick them up.

However, we cannot be satisfied with the fact that we have children who are not achieving in our schools.

There are certainly plausible explanations. Alexandria maintains the [highest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches in Northern Virginia](#); with a rate double or triple that of our neighbors in Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties.

Of that peer group of jurisdictions, Alexandria has the [highest percentage of English Language Learners](#) with a quarter of our students arriving with limited English proficiency.

Yet there are school systems around the country that have excelled in educating children from poor backgrounds, or children with limited English proficiency.

The variation in test scores within our City show that there are even schools in Alexandria that have excelled in educating these children.

As a member of the City Council, it can be easy to make the case that this is an issue for our School Board. There is no question that the Board which was elected to lead our schools have an enormous responsibility for ensuring our students' success.

That being said, our children are in school for 32.5 hours a week. What they experience in the other 135.5 hours of each week (as well as the 5-6 years before they enter our schools) has a dramatic impact on their achievement.

We cannot ignore the significant role that the City government plays in the success of our children.

Many of our children receive pre-school, day care, after school and summer camp from City government. They may access programs from our Health Department, our Recreation Department, our Court Services Unit, or some of the many non-profit organizations that receive City funding.

The children may live in public housing units owned and operated by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, or in affordable housing units created or supported by the City.

This is part of the rationale behind our effort to develop a new [Youth Master Plan](#). We can no longer afford to throw as many programmatic "solutions" at our children as possible and assume success will result. A coordinated approach tailored to each child, utilizing all of the resources available within our City will best equip us to reach every child.

Later this year, as the [Child, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission](#) and the City Council work to adopt the Master Plan, we will need continued community input to ensure an actionable, realistic plan that helps ensure the success of every child.

## **Food Trucks**

Many residents have written urging that the City consider the possibility of allowing food trucks to operate in Alexandria.

I frequent food trucks in downtown Washington for lunch, and I do believe that properly regulated, they can offer a convenient option for both residents and visitors to our City alike.

There are certainly quality of life and competition concerns that need to be thoughtfully addressed prior to changing existing ordinances.

With that in mind, the City Manager has formed a working group of residents, restaurateurs, farmers market organizers, and food truck operators to make a series of policy recommendations.

The City Manager will make a recommendation for the City Council to consider later in the fall.

## **One Is the Loneliest Number**

As legislative paralysis causes the Federal Government to lurch from one short-term budget to another, we see a cautionary tale of the failure to budget strategically over time.

This fall, Alexandria has a chance to send the opposite message.

The Fiscal Year 2015 budget process will begin officially this fall, with the adoption of our guidance for the City Manager to use in the preparation of his budget.

As I've discussed in past newsletters, this is the place where the City Council provides the ground-rules for the Manager as he works to prepare the budget he will present in February.

I believe we should use the next budget guidance as the opportunity to direct the preparation of a multi-year operating budget.

Each spring, the Council adopts an annual operating budget, and a 10-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). That approved budget includes [three forecast scenarios](#), which provides an excellent starting point for a long-range operating plan.

Our current annual budget process hampers long-range planning, encourages short-term decision making by policy makers, creates unnecessary spending and taxation volatility, and obscures long-range operating impacts of capital spending.

We plan capital improvements over a 10-year cycle, allowing us to coordinate and sequence construction and maintenance efforts. That very same rigor can help us on the operating budget, whether we are implementing a new unit in our Police Department, or reducing staffing in a department due to reductions in the demand for services over time.

There is nothing that is revolutionary about this type of planning. It is recommended by the [Government Finance Officers Association](#) and is in use [throughout the country](#).

I look forward to discussing these changes in the fall.

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