

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

September 1, 2015

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[TSA Comes to Alexandria](#)

[Sharing a Pool with Arlington?](#)

[More Success in our Schools](#)

[Greater Transparency for Our Government](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Combined Sewer, Capital Bikeshare & Confederate History](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Call.Click.Connect](#)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

Council gets back to work this month, with our first legislative meeting of the new term next Tuesday evening.

The next two months promise to be intense as the Council takes up a series of important decisions, while elections play out for General Assembly, Mayor, City Council and School Board.

A week from today, school starts for most of the students in the Alexandria City Public Schools (Tucker Elementary got started last month).

Best wishes to the students and educators as they embark upon an exciting year of learning!

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

Council Initiatives

Welcome Home, TSA!

In 2005, the Army Material Command moved out of [The Victory Center on Eisenhower Avenue](#) in the City's West End.

Little did we know at the time, but the departure would doom the Victory Center to a decade of vacancy. This one vacant building today constitutes 18% of the vacant commercial real estate in our City.



[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Last month, that ended.

Events/Updates

Alexandria Library Now Accepts Passport Applications

[The Beatley Central Library at 5005 Duke Street will now accept passport applications for residents.](#)

No appointments are necessary. Applications are accepted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 3 PM to 7 PM, Saturdays from 11 AM to 3 PM, and Sundays from 1 PM to 3 PM.

Last First Thursday of 2015!

[The last First Thursday of 2015 returns to Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray this Thursday from 6 - 9 PM.](#)

This month's event focuses on party planning ideas. Celebrate the end of summer.

Athletic Hall of Fame

[Last year the City established the Alexandria City Public Schools Athletic Hall of Fame, to recognize the best of Alexandria's student-athletes.](#)

The selection committee is now accepting nominations for Hall of Fame members to be inducted into the second class of student-athletes.

[Make your nomination today!](#)

Sample Ballots Available

The November 3rd General Election for State Senate, State House of Delegates, Mayor, City Council and School Board is rapidly approaching.

[To help voters prepare in advance of Election Day, the Alexandria Registrar's](#)

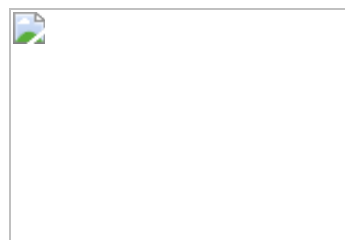
The [General Services Administration announced that it had awarded a lease to the owners of the Victory Center for the new headquarters of the Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\).](#)

[This move brings 3,800 new employees to the Victory Center](#), a stone's throw from the Van Dorn Metro and easily accessible to the Beltway.

With the Federal Government leasing (not owning) this property, it will remain taxable. This is a huge win for the taxpayers of the City.

This is shot in the arm for our on-going efforts to revise the [Eisenhower West Small Area Plan](#). Coupled with our [successful attraction of the National Science Foundation last year](#), this again demonstrates that the City is willing to aggressively compete in the regional battle for commercial office tenants.

As has become the norm in these types of regional economic development contests, the City provided a partial real estate tax abatement. Despite the abatement, TSA is expected to generate nearly \$16 million annually for Alexandria's economy and \$25 million of net new tax revenue over the initial 15 year lease.



The 3,800 jobs single-handily increases Alexandria's workforce by 4%. With the Victory Center no longer vacant, our commercial vacancy rate now drops to 13.5%, one of the lowest in the region.

The move is scheduled for 2017.

Sharing The Pool With Our Neighbor?

During the adoption of the FY 2014 budget, the Council set aside significant capital resources to maintain our aging aquatics infrastructure.

One of the central components of that new investment was the exploration of feasibility and construction of a 50-meter pool at Chinquapin Recreation Center. The financing plan approved by the Council included assumptions for \$2.5 million of private fundraising from [Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics](#).

With funding from the Council for a feasibility study, the City recently [completed a comprehensive study of the potential expansion](#).

While this is only an early step in the effort, this does validate some of the key assumptions and allows the City to move forward on the planning.

However, [the cost analysis resulted in an estimate of \\$30.5 million for the construction of the new pool](#). The City's current budget for the project (including the private fundraising) is \$22.9 million, leaving a considerable gap.

My preference, to meet the current budget for this project, is that the City work with our private partners to narrow the scope of this effort, so that we can build a 50 meter pool at Chinquapin.

Yet in the meantime, with the gap as large as it is, I believe it's important to explore alternatives.

For some time, our friends in Arlington have been planning to [build a very large aquatics center at Long Bridge Park near the Pentagon](#).

[Office has released the sample ballots to review.](#)

Apply for the Marketing Fund

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 a week from today, so please submit your application soon.

Back to School Nights

With Alexandria City Public Schools back in session next week, Back to School Nights for parents have been scheduled.

[The full schedule is available online.](#)

Soil to Soul

On Thursday September 17th from 6 - 9 PM, Jackson 20 Restaurant and Kimpton Hotels will be hosting the 2nd Annual Soil to Soul Fundraiser.

The event, to benefit the SNAP/EBT Double Dollar program at the Old Town Farmers' Market, will feature food from the market prepared by local chefs.

[Tickets at \\$35 and can be purchased online.](#)

Parker-Gray Restaurant Graze

On Saturday September 19th, the first ever Parker-Gray Restaurant Graze comes to Alexandria!

This tasty event is sponsored by the Parker-Gray Roundtable, the

While they have not finalized the scope of the project, they have approved borrowing to fund a \$64 million budget for the project.

With Arlington discussing how to move

forward with the Long Bridge project, and Alexandria has been discussing how to resolve the funding challenge at Chinguapin, it has been suggested that we work together.

[Both Alexandria and Arlington recently included questions in their resident surveys to gauge interest in such an arrangement.](#)

What do you think?

Should Alexandria consider entering into a financial partnership with Arlington build a joint aquatics facility in Long Bridge Park? This could free up most of the \$20 million we had budgeted to be used for other Alexandria aquatics needs?

[Let me know your thoughts.](#)

Students Making Progress

A week from today, I will drop off both of my kids off for the first day of school at Mount Vernon Community School. With their hard work, great educators in the classroom and our efforts at home, my kids will meet success. That's typically the measure most parents hope for.

Whether we like it or not, our schools, our kids, and our educators will ultimately have their success each year measured by standardized tests. In our case, [the battery of tests we call the Standards of Learning \(SOL\)](#), is how we measure that success.

[With the release of the SOL testing results for the Alexandria City Public Schools last month, we see significant increases in achievement across the system.](#) This is a great achievement for our students and educators, and should be celebrated.

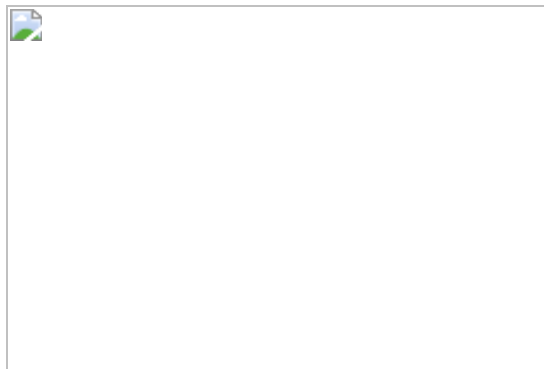
Scores increased across English, math, history and science. The largest increases were seen in English and Math, with 14 of 16 schools seeing increases.

Specifically at Jefferson-Houston School, a school which is currently on a three-year plan to become fully accredited, we saw dramatic increases. The pass rate for science nearly doubled, along with double digit increases in math and English.

Alexandria continues to have good schools, filled with dedicated, creative and hard-working educators 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 from school.

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](#)



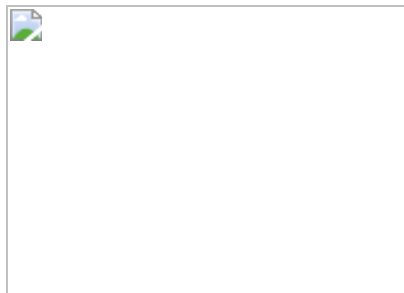
Braddock Metro Citizens Coalition, and the Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority.

It will bring together food from Lost Dog Cafe, Sugar Shack Donuts, Mason Social, Shanghai Peking and Bastille.

[Scheduled from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM, tickets are \\$20.](#)

[Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties.](#)

[Of that peer group of jurisdictions, Alexandria has the highest percentage of English Language Learners with over 27% of our students arriving with limited English proficiency.](#)



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

The variation in test scores within our City show that there are schools in Alexandria that have even 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 five to six 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 adopt our [new Youth Master Plan](#). We can no longer afford to throw as many programmatic "solutions" at our children 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.

While the scores of one year do not necessarily make a trend, I'm hopeful for continued progress ahead.

New Transparency in Government

This year, the City will collect and spend roughly \$642 million into our General Fund. The City's Office of Internal Audit has the responsibility of ensuring that it is spent appropriately.

[The office has the charge of detecting waste, fraud and abuse, evaluating the adequacy of management and internal controls, and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of City programs.](#)

At my urging, the office has recently begun posting its reviews of City operations on the City website for review.

[We have begun this new transparency initiative by posting a review of Special Pay Code use in City government.](#)

My hope is that this will serve as a new transparency measure to provide taxpayers with clear accountability for the expenditure of their tax dollars.

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

Combined Sewer Work

Protecting the historic nature of Old Town is one of the more important obligations of the City Council. However, there is one aspect of our historic infrastructure that must be modernized.

In 95% of our City, stormwater (rain) is collected and returned to rivers and streams with very little treatment. Separately, sanitary sewage is sent to the [Alexandria Renew Enterprises wastewater treatment facility](#), where it is treated and later returned to waterways.

However, in a 540 acre section of Old Town, a Combined Sewer System still collects both sanitary sewage and stormwater together and sends it to the wastewater treatment facility for treatment.



[During severe rain events, due to capacity and design issues, this system experiences a Combined Sewer Overflow condition, where a mixture of stormwater and sewage flows untreated into waterways.](#)

In addition to the impact that this has on the cleanliness of our rivers and streams, this type of overflow is strictly regulated by law.

The City operates this Combined Sewer System [under a permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality \(VDEQ\)](#). In 2013, the City was issued a new five year permit for the operation of the system.

Essentially, this new revised permit requires the City to work with the community to adopt a new Long Term Control Plan reducing the presence of dangerous bacteria in the flow that is returned to the water. The new plan must be submitted to the state by 2016.

The Plan, to be implemented over the next two to three decades, will obligate significant financial resources and likely prove disruptive to some portions of the affected area.

[In evaluating potential strategies for compliance with the permit, the City has narrowed the strategies to storage tunnels and tanks, as well as "green" infrastructure. The plan is to minimize the overall separation activities which would prove so disruptive and costly in Old Town.](#)

It will be important to receive broad community input as we work to comply with the new permit. [In June the Council created a new stakeholder committee](#) to monitor the creation of and offer feedback on the Long Term Control Plan.

The committee will begin meeting this month.

Capital Bikeshare Growing Again

A year ago, the City's Capital Bikeshare network doubled. The addition of eight new stations in Del Ray and Carlyle showcased the bike sharing public/private partnership that now counts the District of Columbia, Arlington, Montgomery County and Alexandria as members.

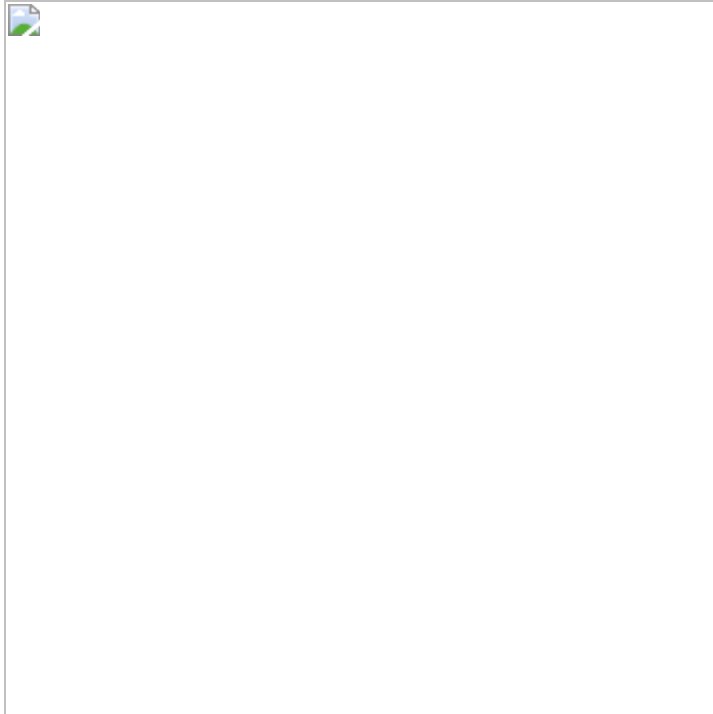
The expansion did not come without a [full performance review of the existing system](#) which was originally installed in the Fall of 2012.

[The network is now ready to grow again, with sixteen new stations planned to be installed this year.](#) Four stations funded as part of development applications should be installed in the fall, and the remaining twelve installed in the winter.

The City's Capital Bikeshare system was originally funded using Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. The CMAQ funds now purchase new stations, while the City's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) now funds operations for existing stations.

Public transportation systems of all kinds depend on heavy public subsidies. In Alexandria, the DASH Bus system recovers approximately 30% of its costs from fare box revenue. Original estimates of Capital Bikeshare's performance were expected to be similar. Surprisingly, Alexandria's cost recovery in the first year reached 72% from rentals.

The system has provided a critical, low-cost connectivity option for short trips, used frequently by our residents and visitors alike. Current plans will allow continued expansion over the next few years. [Please use this link to suggest station locations.](#)



Our Complicated History

In the aftermath of the tragic murders in a Charleston, South Carolina church, communities across the nation have reexamined their representations of Confederate history. None was more visible than the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the South Carolina state capitol.

Here in Alexandria, we have received similar requests from residents to reexamine examples of such representations in our community.

Our Staff recently performed some analysis of the examples that have been cited by residents, and the Council will be discussing this issue when we return from our recess.

[A few notable examples in Alexandria:](#)

Since 1970, the City has displayed the first flag of the Confederacy (not the battle flag) on Robert E. Lee's birthday and Confederate Memorial Day.

There are at least 30 streets named for prominent leaders of the Confederacy. The most significant one is Jefferson Davis Highway (Route 1).

[The Appomattox Statue, owned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, at South Washington and Prince Streets honors the dead soldiers of Alexandria who fought for the Confederacy.](#)

A plaque on the [Marshall House](#) (now the Hotel Monaco) tells the story of the shooting of a Union officer from a Confederate perspective.

My view is that there is little gained for Alexandria to re-litigate a war that concluded 150 years ago. However, our community has changed over 150 years.

Honors and commemorations that seemed appropriate a century, or even 40 years ago, may no longer be appropriate in a modern Alexandria. Furthermore, a modern Alexandria should focus not just on what should be removed or renamed, but how to portray a more accurate and fair telling of our history.

In my view, that would be a just reaction to the events in Charleston.
Let me know your thoughts as the Council discusses this later this month.

Councilman Justin M. Wilson
703.746.4500
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov
www.justin.net
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Paid for by Wilson For Council