

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

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Alexandria, Virginia

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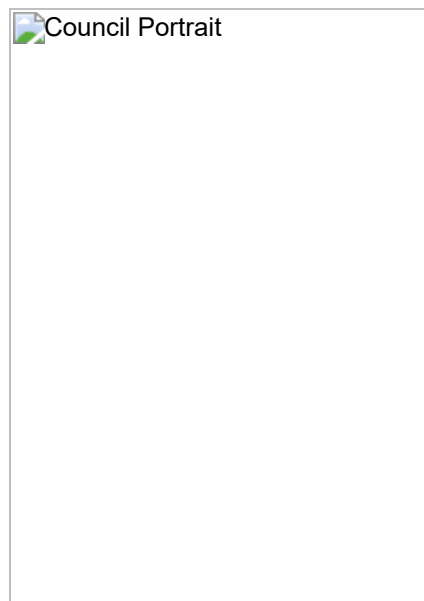
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Last month **Spring2Action**, an initiative of [ACT for Alexandria](#), raised **over a million dollars** in one day for non-profits serving Alexandria.

In a very difficult financial time for our community, our residents have ensured that the need in our City will be addressed by a collection of dynamic non-profit organizations.

I am so grateful for the generosity of our residents.

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



Events/Updates

Days of Remembrance

The City's 27th Annual [Days of Remembrance Ceremony](#) will be held today at noon in Market Square.

The ceremony is organized to recognize the victims of the Holocaust and ensure the learning of this time continues into future generations.

Events in Del Ray!

Three exciting events return to Del Ray:

1) Today is the last day to [purchase](#) discounted

Council Initiatives

Budget Vote Tonight

A month ago I wrote that the City Council was in the middle of the most difficult budget process the City had experienced since 2008.

Tonight that process concludes, as the City Council will adopt the FY 2015 Operating Budget and the FY 2015 - FY 2024 Capital Improvement Program.

The [budget proposed by the City Manager](#) presented the Council with very stark choices about the future of our City. In adopting last year's budget, the Council chose to bring additional revenue into the process to begin to address long-standing under-investment in the City's critical infrastructure.

While last year's focus was on the Capital Budget, this year all attention was on the Operating Budget. A pattern of lagging revenue growth coupled with higher expenditure growth has left us with a mismatch that must be reconciled.

You can [review the questions](#) (and the answers that our Staff has provided) that Council has been asking over the past few weeks.

tickets for the 2014 Del Ray Home & Garden Tour.

The event is scheduled from 11AM to 5PM on Saturday May 10th.

2) [First Thursday](#) returns to the Avenue this evening from 6PM to 9PM with the theme that Del Ray is going to the dogs!

3) Cinema Del Ray returns with a free outdoor showing of "Frozen," sponsored by realtor Jen Walker, on Saturday the 17th at Mount Vernon Recreation Center.

Choose a Congressman

The Republican Party recently nominated Micah Edmond as their choice to run for Congress from the 8th Congressional District

The Democrats will be selecting their nominee at a primary on Tuesday, June 10th.

The [absentee voting](#) for the primary has now begun both in person and by mail.

Waterfront Implementation

The [next meeting](#) to engage the public in the implementation of the new public spaces on the waterfront will be held a week from today (Thursday, May 8th) at The Lee Center.

Hug a Farmer

In addition to the year-round [farmers markets](#) in Old Town and Del Ray, the Four Mile Run and West End Farmers Markets are back open for the season!

Buy local!

Student Summer DASH Pass

Less than two weeks ago, each member of City Council [presented their suggested amendments](#) to the City Manager's proposed budget. Through two budget work sessions in the past week, the City Council has arrived at a [consensus document for adoption this evening](#).

As you can see, each member took different approaches to addressing the constraints of this budget. As in March when I [unsuccessfully attempted to maintain the real estate tax rate](#) at its current level, I continue to believe that the City must right-size our Operating budget to match our expected revenue growth. I believe that change can be done without asking for more of our real estate tax payers.

The budget to be adopted this evening:

Increases the real estate tax by a half of a cent: The average single family homeowner will pay an additional \$249 due to the increase in assessments, and an additional \$34 due to the rate increase.

The average condo homeowner will pay an additional \$128 due to the increase in assessments, and an additional \$14 due to the rate increase.

Provides \$1.2 million of additional operating funds (beyond the City Manager's proposal) to the Alexandria City Public Schools:

The School Board had requested \$7.4 million which would keep per student expenditures at the existing level in an environment of growing enrollment. The City Manager proposed an increase of \$5 million. Instead the Schools will receive a \$6.2 million increase.

Continues new investments to improve our Fire Department's capacity: The budget opens Fire Station 210 on the West End, and funds a new Medic Unit at the newly opened station.

Maintains our commitment to our basic infrastructure: The budget did not rollback the new investments we made in capital expenditures last year, and in some case expands those efforts, which is exemplified in the proposal to double the scheduled road-paving.

This is not a budget to get excited about. This is a budget that maintains the City's obligations during a very difficult time.

While tonight closes the door on the adoption of the FY 2015 budget, the FY 2016 process will start in earnest. As I have written over the past few months, we will begin that process with another double-digit gap due to the expected continuation of revenue challenges and the consequence of some Council actions this year.

We continue to rely upon your input to assist with this process.

Thriving Businesses

Faced with projections of continued anemic revenue growth the burden of ever greater taxation will continue to fall on our residential taxpayers.

Easing that burden means making our businesses more successful. When our businesses are more successful they're employing more of our residents and returning more in tax revenue to the City.

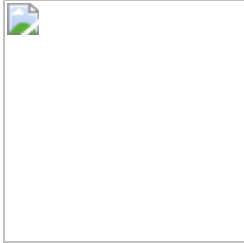
With that goal in mind, along with my colleagues Councilmen Tim Lovain and Paul Smedberg, we proposed the creation of a [Business Tax Reform Committee](#).

The Committee's charge was to explore changes in administration and assessment for our current business taxes. The goal of any changes would be to increase the success of our businesses.

We are fortunate that we had a highly qualified and representative

DASH is bringing back the [Student Summer Pass](#).

If the pass is purchased prior to the end of May, an Alexandria Middle or High School student will enjoy unlimited DASH rides all summer long!



The Future of Recreation

The City is conducting a [survey](#) to help shape the future of recreation services in our City.

With a deadline of tomorrow, the survey will help the City determine the future need.



group of Alexandria residents and business owners who worked for months to generate a [comprehensive set of recommendations](#) for the Council's consideration.

The Council held a work session with the Task Force to review the recommendations and we will be discussing the

next phase of implementation as we move forward into next year's budget process.

I believe the Committee has provided some very helpful food for thought for the Council's consideration. I would like the Council to explore whether a targeted approach of some of these recommendations may be helpful.

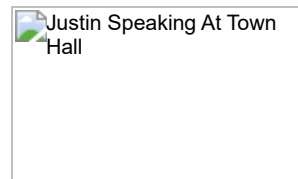
Let me [know your thoughts](#).

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!



Upcoming Issues

A Focus on Our Kids

In 2012 Alexandria was named for the fifth time by the America's Promise Alliance as one of the [100 Best Communities for Young People, America's Promise Alliance](#), founded by General Colin Powell is dedicated to ensuring good outcomes for our youth.

It would be easy for Alexandria to be content with these accolades and celebrate the successful youth in our community. Yet we know that there are children in our community who go hungry. There are children in our community living unhealthy lifestyles with little access to playgrounds and recreation. There are children in our community beginning Kindergarten without quality early childhood experiences. There are children who drop out of our schools and are left defenseless in an unforgiving knowledge economy.

We must do better by ALL of the children in our community.

With that goal in mind, the City launched a multi-year effort to develop a Youth Master Plan. Guided by a 35-member Design Team, the input of hundreds of Alexandrians was incorporated and ultimately developed into the [Youth Master Plan](#), approved by the City's [Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission](#).

The approved plan now moves to the City Council and the School Board for consideration and approval.

The City Council will be holding a Public Hearing on the plan in May, and we will be holding a joint meeting with the School Board to discuss next steps.

This plan presents an opportunity for the community to develop a plan for youth success.



My goal is to use the Plan as a vehicle to ensure the success of our children, through promoting difficult trade-off conversations that must happen withing City Hall.

Simply documenting the efforts the City already has underway would serve to waste the significant time invested to get to this point.

Let me know your [thoughts](#). The Council will be holding a public hearing on the proposed plan on Saturday May 17th at Cit y Hall.

What Do We Get From Development?

As the City went through this most recent budget process, one of the most common questions I received challenged the supposition that the City was facing difficult budget times. These challenges were largely based on the increasing development seen around the City.

From the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census Alexandria was actually [one of the SLOWEST growing jurisdictions in Northern Virginia](#). We added 9.1% growth to our population during that period. That compares to 9.6% in Arlington, 11.5% in Fairfax County, 84.1% in Loudoun and 43.2% in Prince William.

Yet since the 2010 census, it is clear that the pace has picked up. Current census estimates suggest that in the first 2 years of the decade, our population has grown 4.5 %, which is nearly double the rate of the Commonwealth of Virginia during this period.

As of February, there were [8,338 apartment units in some phase of construction](#) in Alexandria. While some of these new units are replacing existing housing, most were new units for our City.

A decade of planning for future development in our City, coupled with some signs of economic recovery, has meant that the pace of new development has definitely quickened.

In 2010, in the worst of the recession, the City added \$40 million to



our tax base from new residential development. This year, the City added nearly 3 times as much, with \$112 million of new residential development hitting the tax rolls.

While a significant rebound, \$112 million is only roughly a quarter of the \$424 million that was added to the tax rolls in 2007.

Each development effort brings an associated need for services (schools, public safety, transportation,etc), but also new revenues. For example, the \$112 million of new residential development last year provides the City with \$1.1 million of additional revenue. Stated another way, it provides revenue equivalent to a little less than half of a cent on the real estate rate.

Food Trucks

Since last year, a group appointed by the City Manager has been working to build consensus around proposals to allow food trucks to operate within Alexandria.

At this point, the Task Force will be bringing a variety of [recommendations](#) that the Council will consider later this month.

In summary, the Task Force recommends that food trucks be allowed to operate in the City, but with substantial regulation depending on the area and circumstance.

Let me know your thoughts on the recommendation.

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