

STATEMENT TO CITY COUNCIL

^{Here we}
Good ~~evening~~, Mayor Donley, members of council, my name is Dick Walker. I am a business owner and a resident of the city. I am also the current President of the Board of Directors of Senior Services of Alexandria, a non-profit corporation that has devoted itself to the welfare of Alexandria's aging for more than thirty years. It is in that role that I appear before you today.

I would like to begin with a quote: " The test of a people is how it behaves toward the old." That was said by a gentleman named Abraham Joshua Herschel - I don't know much more about him, but he sounds like a Rabbi.

Mr Mayor, I am concerned about the way that WE treat OUR elderly., We are a Righteous community and would never allow abuse of the elderly, but I think we are Sometimes too busy to notice NEGLECT of our elderly. I feel many of our programs are failing to address the needs of our senior citizens.

^{the city &}
I can call ~~Planning and Zoning~~ they can tell me how many children under the age of 18 are in poverty. They can't tell me how many people over the age of 65 are in poverty.

We know there are serious problems with the elderly residents of our independent living facilities. A great many of our EMS calls are made to the senior housing locations. But ^{don't know} we can't find out how many..

Does anyone know how many seniors will be moved from Hunting Towers when the Building is demolished for the construction of the new Wilson bridge? And where will They go?

We know there is a waiting list for home-delivered meals. We know there is an inadequate supply of nursing home beds for low & moderate income elderly.

We know there is a waiting List for home care providers. Someone spoke earlier about The living wage. Are you aware that the city pays homecare workers less than \$6.00 per Hour? Somehow the living wage didn't apply to them. I know there is an increase in the proposed budget, but I don't know how that translates to an hourly wage.

In recent years, I've seen needs assessments for persons with disabilities, the working Poor, teen pregnancy, the hispanic community, and, most recently, an assessment of The need for a community center at Ben Brenman Park.

What I have not seen is an assessment of the needs of the elderly in Alexandria, despite the mandate of the Older Americans Act that area agencies on aging perform such assessments regularly. Despite the fact that the population as a whole is aging, and that the 85-plus age group is the fastest growing segment. And despite the fact that the Council and the city manager have stated that planning is their priority. There has not been an elderly needs assessment in Alexandria in recent memory.

We know that more money is needed to supplement public funding, and we are working to raise it, but we are handicapped because we can't get the hard statistical information

needed to support our grant applications. That information is not available.

I submit this is not the way to operate where resources are scarce.

This is budget time. We are faced with seemingly infinite needs and finite resources. We recognize the need for balance in the allocation and effective use of our resources, but while we are funding the sewers, the roads, the schools, the parks and the recreation centers, also consider the needs of the people who helped make this the wonderful city we live in today. Fund the plans that will allow our seniors to age with dignity in their own community. Fund them on the basis of good information, That is what we ask.

"The test of a people is how it behaves toward the old"

Thank you