

CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Special Public Hearing Meeting
Monday, April 8, 2002 - - 4:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Kerry J. Donley, Vice Mayor William C. Cleveland, Members of Council Claire M. Eberwein, William D. Euille, Redella S. Pepper, David G. Speck, and Joyce Woodson.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Mr. Sunderland, City Manager; Mr. Pessoa, City Attorney; Ms. Evans, Assistant City Manager; Mr. Jinks, Assistant City Manager; Mr. Swearingen, Director of Management and Budget and Members of his Staff; Mr. Sanderson, Director of Real Estate Assessments; Ms. O'Regan, Director of Human Services; Public Information Officer Gordon; Ms. Federico, Director of Historic Alexandria; Legislative Director Caton; Mr. Ransom, Special Assistant to the City Manager; Mr. Neckel, Director of Finance; Health Director Konigsberg; Mr. Skrabak, Division Chief, Environmental Quality; Mr. Howard, Director of Personnel Services; Ms. Davis, Director of Housing; Mr. Baier, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services; City Engineer Baker; Fire Chief Hawkins; Mr. McCobb, Deputy Director of Transportation and Environmental Services; Code Enforcement Director Dahlberg; Ms. Whitmore, Director of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; Ms. Fogarty, Director of Planning and Zoning; Ms. Ross, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning; Mr. Cole, Director of Information and Technology Services; Dr. Claiborn, Director of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse; Library Director O'Brien; Mr. Mandley, Director of General Services; Commonwealth's Attorney Sengel; Ms. Boyd, Director of Citizen Assistance; Police Chief Samarra; and Lieutenant Uzzell, Police Department.

Recorded by: Mrs. Beverly I. Jett, CMC, City Clerk and Clerk of Council.

OPENING

The Meeting was called to Order by Mayor Donley, and the City Clerk called the Roll; all Members of City Council were present with Councilwoman Eberwein arriving at 4:47 p.m.

(It was noted that a Notice of this Special Meeting had been previously served upon each Member of Council pursuant to a provision of the City Charter, a copy of the Notice certified by each Member of Council present being on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council.)

2. Public Hearing on The Proposed Annual Operating Budget for FY 2003 (including Schools) and The Proposed Capital Improvements Program for FY 2003-2008 (including the School CIP). (#12 3/12/02)

(Communications received on this item are on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked collectively as Exhibit No. 1 of Item No. 2; 4/8/02, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.)

The following persons participated in the public hearing:

Laura Lantzy, 433 Old Town Court, spoke to lowering the tax rate;

Valerie Rife, 4600 Duke Street, #305, representing the employees of the Alexandria City Public School System, thanked the City Manager for including the entire School Board's proposed budget in the City's budget. In addition, Ms. Rife requested that a STEP 15 be created for the teachers who have served this system for many years; a copy of Ms. Rife's statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 2 of this item;

Mayor Donley reported that he has discussed with the City Manager the specific matter regarding the added step increase for teachers and with the Superintendent of Schools and the chairman of the School Board. They have made a formal request, and the Council will be considering it as it works through the budget.

John Smucker, 108 North Quaker Lane, spoke in support of quality wages for quality City employees;

Pam Cornelio, 4004 Featherstone Place, PTA officer, Francis Hammond Middle School, thanked Council for fully funding the building project at Hammond and the School Board's proposed budget;

Sherry Brown, 1600 Prince Street, spoke in support of continued funding for the arts;

Councilman Speck noted that there is a budget memo pending with respect to the Arts Commission funding. Apparently, there is some confusion about what was intended last year when the Arts Commission's budget was increased by approximately \$35,000 against its approximately \$100,000 budget. His recollection is that was to be year one of a three-year plan to get the budget doubled over the three years. He thought it was the Council's intent to do that and somehow or another, we just did not get it pinned down that precisely. Depending upon what comes back from the budget memo, if it has to be an add/delete, we're just going to have to find the money for that, and he is confident that Council will. But, Councilman Speck would like to know as a matter of record if we, in fact, do that and he thinks that there is a consensus on the Council's part to do so, that this would then be year two of a three-year plan to get the budget up to approximately a double against what it was from \$100,000 to approximately \$200,000 for the Arts Commission to fund all of these different arts organizations.

Carol Freeman, 619 Upland Place, expressed her support for a skateboard park;

Councilman Speck noted that Council has just received a budget memo on this matter providing Council with some additional information to allow us to consider it. He noted that this is not that large of a capital expense nor an operating expense and after Council has had a chance to review the budget memo, he is hoping that Council can look at that with some level of enthusiasm for doing it sooner rather than later.

Bill Hendrickson, 304 East Spring Street, president, Del Ray Citizens Association, spoke in support of funds to move forward with the design and expansion of the Duncan Library. He also addressed the association's support for additional City investment on Braddock Road between Mount Vernon Avenue and West Street aimed at significantly enhancing streetscape aesthetics and improving pedestrian safety and accessibility while maintaining adequate flow of vehicles; copies of the letters from Mr. Hendrickson are on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked collectively as Exhibit No. 3 of this item;

Mayor Donley requested staff to provide Council with a summary of the items discussed with the citizens regarding proposed improvements on Braddock Road from the railroad bridge west to Mount Vernon Avenue. This will give Council a basis for determining what the potential costs are and whether we can do something this year or whether we would have to potentially add it into the CIP for future years.

Councilman Euille stated that the issue of improvements being made to the Duncan Library has been around long enough. This Council will be working with staff and with the community to try to address those needs and others to try to tighten up the time tables and the funding years within the CIP budget. It is important that we bring closure to projects that have been around for at least three, four or five years.

Councilwoman Woodson recommended that Council take five minutes to go to look at how crowded the Duncan Library is at this point and note how much they get done in such a small space which is really telling.

Carol Holmes, 3121 Ravensworth Place, speaking on behalf of the Alexandria Community Services Board and as a consumer of mental health services, spoke in support of the Board's base budget amount and its supplemental amount to allow the department to continue operations at the same level in order to stay nearly whole;

David O'Brien, 910 Peele Place, Alexandria Community Services Board member, also spoke in support of the Board's base budget and its supplemental amount;

Maggie Williams, 203 Yoakum Parkway, #1011, PTA president, Samuel Tucker Elementary School, supported the public schools' budget request, the added STEP increase and to fund fully the capital improvements;

With respect to the approximate \$670,000 needed for an additional step increase for teachers, Vice Mayor Cleveland noted that he has sent an e-mail and will do a formal budget memo asking for that. He will also submit another budget memo requesting some extra money for extra books for the Burke Library.

Martha Blakslee, 810 Clovercrest Drive, Douglas MacArthur School PTA president, supported the School Board's budget as proposed;

Matthew Natale, 3401 Martha Custis Drive, supported a decrease in the tax rate; a copy of Mr. Natale's statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 4 of this item;

Alice Haitzuka, 5321 Fair Avenue, Alexandria PTA Council president, supported the Alexandria School Board's budget submission;

Nabia Strom, 202 Tennessee Avenue, representing the Tenants and Workers' Support Committee, spoke in support of creating a parents' liaison position at George Washington Middle School which would result in the involvement of Spanish-speaking parents in school activities assisting students to achieve a higher academic standard. Ms. Strom also requested additional resources for the dual language program at Mount Vernon Elementary School. Ms. Strom stated further that economic incentives should be provided in order to both find and reward bilingual personnel which reflect the change in demographics in the City. Lastly, she requested sufficient funds to all teachers within the City, and as part of these funds, cultural diversity workshops should be required for all teachers so that they gain a better knowledge of their students' general background;

Lisa Chimento, 1809 Kenwood Avenue, #304, chairperson, Budget Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, presented the Committee's initial comments on the Manager's Proposed Budget for FY 2003; a copy of Ms. Chimento's statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 5 of this item;

Philip G. Matyas, 219 North Pitt Street, suggested as a small revenue item that the City consider painting the curbs blue as an additional identifier for a handicapped parking space, that the City provide additional parking in Old Town, and place a cap on the amount of increase or decrease in taxes;

Kathleen Henry, 3805 Mount Vernon Avenue, #5, representing UNITY - TWSC, requested that health insurance be provided to child care providers, as did Eunice Harris and an unidentified speaker;

Barry Schifftic, 1301 Hancock Avenue, representing the Alexandria Police Association, supported the City Manager's budget, indicated that it would be nice to have more than a 2.5% COLA, possibly a 3%, suggested an increase in the amount that the City pays towards health insurance for retirees, and an increase in the buy-out for sick leave from 25% to 50%;

Kathy Wilson, 1402 Orchard Street, board member, Alexandria Child Care Director's Association, requested raising the City's reimbursement rate and eligibility scale for subsidized child care to the level of Fairfax County's; a copy of Ms. Wilson's statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 6 of this item;

Regarding the Alexandria Child Care Director's Association's request that the Council raise the City's reimbursement rate and eligibility scale for subsidized child care to the level of Fairfax County's, Mayor Donley requested staff to provide Council with a dollar figure on what the increase would be if we raised the reimbursement rate to the level of Fairfax County, and then if we raised the eligibility scale to 250 percent of poverty. Mayor Donley also requested staff to give the Council some historical perspective when was the last time we made any adjustments to both the eligibility and the rate itself.

Sheryl Gorsuch, 408-A East Raymond Avenue, PTA president, Mount Vernon Community School, fully supported the school budget as prepared by Ms. Perry and the School Board, competitive pay for teachers with additional bonuses and differentials for teachers with special qualifications, and hopes to see enhancements in the science curriculum by providing specialized science staff at each school; a copy of the statement of Ms. Gorsuch is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 7 of this item;

Jay and Susan Lucas, 3409 Saylor Place, spoke in support of funds for special education/vocational services;

Jeannie Cummins, 4 East Oxford Avenue, supported full funding for the SABRE program, funding to support the vocational and day support services for special education graduates, increasing the on-call pay for counselors who perform overnight shift work at residential facilities, and funding a HIPAA/Corporate Compliance Officer; a copy of the statement of Ms. Cummins is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 8 of this item;

There was an extensive discussion regarding funding to support the vocational and day support services of our special education graduates and the need to ensure a smooth transition from school to work and independent living. Councilman Speck requested a budget memo with a little bit more detail on what's involved and what it will cost.

Mayor Donley spoke to the SABRE funding which was effectively zeroed out at the state level and asked Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Director Claiborn what the impact would be at this point. Director Claiborn will provide Council with that figure.

Jack Taylor, 3750 Jefferson Davis Highway, spoke in support of a skateboard park;

Councilwoman Woodson questioned whether Mr. Taylor had any land behind his building that could be used for a skateboard park.

Mr. Taylor indicated that he would be happy to discuss with the City the possibility of using some of his property for a skateboard park provided it does not take away from his open space requirement; and

Cindy Anderson, 2709 Valley Drive, representing the George Mason Elementary School PTA, spoke in support of the School Board's budget.

WHEREUPON, upon motion by Vice Mayor Cleveland, seconded by Councilwoman Pepper and carried on a vote of 6-to-0, City Council closed the public hearing. City Council will adopt the budget on Monday, May 6, 2002. The voting was as follows:

Cleveland	"aye"	Eberwein	out of room
Pepper	"aye"	Euille	"aye"
Donley	"aye"	Speck	"aye"
		Woodson	"aye"

3. Public Hearing on AN ORDINANCE to establish real estate and personal property tax rates for calendar year 2002. (#17 3/26/02)

(A copy of the City Manager's memorandum dated March 19, 2002, is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 1 of Item No. 3; 4/9/02, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.

A copy of an Informal Memorandum explaining ordinance is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 2 of Item No. 3; 4/9/02, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.

A copy of the ordinance referred to in the above item, of which each Member of Council present received a copy not less than 24 hours before said introduction, is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 3 of Item No. 3; 4/9/02, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.)

The City Clerk read the docket item.

It was noted that there were no speakers on this item as the speakers who spoke to the tax rate spoke under docket item no. 2.

WHEREUPON, upon motion by Councilman Speck, seconded by Councilwoman Woodson and carried on a vote of 6-to-0, City Council closed the public hearing. Second Reading and Final Passage of the Ordinance will be held on Monday, May 6, 2002. The voting was as follows:

Speck	"aye"	Cleveland	"aye"
Woodson	"aye"	Eberwein	out of room
Donley	"aye"	Euille	"aye"
		Pepper	"aye"

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED, upon motion by Vice Mayor Cleveland, seconded by Councilwoman Pepper and carried on a vote of 6-to-0, at 6:30 p.m., the Special Public Hearing Meeting of Monday, April 8, 2002, was adjourned. The voting was as follows:

Cleveland	"aye"	Eberwein	out of room
Pepper	"aye"	Euille	"aye"
Donley	"aye"	Speck	"aye"
		Woodson	"aye"

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APPROVED BY:

KERRY J. DONLEY

MAYOR

ATTEST:

Beverly I. Jett, CMC

City Clerk