

3A
4-22-03

CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

**Special Public Hearing Meeting
Wednesday, April 2, 2003 - - 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; Public Information Officer Gordon; Mr. Baier, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services; Mr. Neckel, Director of Finance; Human Rights Administrator Niebauer; Ms. Boyd, Director of Citizen Assistance; Ms. Moore, Acting Deputy Director of Management and Budget and Staff Members; Ms. Fogarty, Director of Planning and Zoning; Mr. Howard, Director of Personnel Services; Ms. Whitmore, Director of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; Mr. Cole, Director of Information Technology Services; Ms. Smith-Page, Director of Real Estate Assessments; Mr. Gee, Deputy Director of Real Estate Assessments; Ms. Steele, Interim Director of Human Services; City Engineer Baker; Mr. Culpepper, Deputy Director of Transportation and Environmental Services; Library Director O'Brien; Health Director Konigsberg; Ms. Davis, Director of Housing; Superintendent of Schools Perry; School Board Chair Eaton and Members of the School Board; Legislative Services Director Caton; Acting Fire Chief Gower; Ms. Federico, Director of Historic Alexandria; Code Enforcement Director Dahlberg; Police Chief Samarra; and Police Lieutenant Uzzell.

Recorded by: Mrs. Beverly I. Jett, 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 Pepper arriving at 4:45 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 2004 (including Schools) and The Proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for FY 2004-2009 (including the School CIP). (#8 3/11/03) This Public Hearing also includes hearing testimony on Councilman Speck's proposal for long-term funding of Open Space in the City of Alexandria. (#9 3/11/03)

While comments on tax rates can be made as part of the public hearing on the Budget and the CIP, the Public Hearing on An Ordinance to establish real estate and personal property tax rates for calendar year 2003, and the effective tax rate increase for 2003, will be held on Tuesday, April 22, 2003.

(A copy of Councilman Speck's open space proposal is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 1 of Item No. 2; 4/2/03, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.

Copies of communications received on this item are on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked collectively as Exhibit No. 2 of Item No. 2; 4/2/03, and is incorporated herewith as part of this record by reference.)

The following persons participated in the public hearing on the proposed budget:

Greg Principato, 4717 Newcomb Place, president, T.C. Williams PTSA, spoke in support of the school budget and the proposed new T.C. Williams High School; a copy of his statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 3 of this item;

Gary Fenton, 5400 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA, representing the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, spoke in support of funding for the NVRPA;

Priscilla Goodwin, 306 Mansion Drive, president, George Mason Elementary PTA, asked that City Council fully fund the budget passed by the School Board, and supported the revamped salary scale for teachers and the proposed new T.C. Williams High School; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 4 of this item;

Judy Guse-Noritake, 605 Prince Street, chair, Park and Recreation Commission, spoke to the Capital Budget and requested that \$100,000 be allocated in FY 04 to hire the design consultants for the proposed renovation of the Charles Houston and Patrick Henry Recreation Centers; endorsed the allocation of \$20 million in FY 07 to begin the construction of an expanded Chinquapin Recreation Center in cooperation and coordination with the construction of the new T.C. Williams High School and encouraged Council to allocate funds in FY 04 to move forward with schematic design and to begin the design development phase in concert with the design of T.C. Williams; fully supported the open space funding proposal; and supported adequate funding for trails; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 5 of this item;

Victor Glasberg, 6 East Alexandria Avenue, urged Council to support the School Budget; and asked Council to take a long hard look at the defaults, the consequences of which are descending upon us and will continue to descend upon us due to the shrinkage of federal and state funds, but the basic program must be to step to the plate and permit programs which are specifically funded in largest measure by this City to be funded;

David Mercer, Marshall Lane, representing the Campagna Center, supported funding for the Campagna Kids program and made the following three recommendations: (a) that the City and the Campagna Center commit to seeking a long-term vision for this program and provide the same services, the same programming, the same fee structure, and the same high-quality standards at all sites within the City; (b) that as the City and the Campagna Center work toward this vision that we together maintain the existing level of care that our efforts have built and that

we protect our investment in Campagna Kids; (c) that the City not give up on the children served by this program and act quickly to insure that the FY 04 budget provides the funding needed to maintain existing care levels. This requires an increase of \$441,000 to operate the program at all of the current sites and meeting the existing standards. This \$441,000 would merely place the salaries of the staff of Campagna Kids at the bottom level of what we determined existed in 2001 of care providers at this level in the City of Alexandria;

Mayor Donley noted that the Manager has recommended \$1.2 million for Campagna Kids. He asked if the Campagna Center's request is to increase that by \$441,000, and Mr. Mercer responded in the affirmative.

Arlene Krohmal, 705 Beverley Drive, executive director, CrisisLink, urged the City to increase the funds available through the Community Partnership Fund to allow for fair share funding of critical services; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 6 of this item;

Sherry Brown, 1600 Prince Street, representing the Alexandria Arts Forum, thanked the Council for providing funds for the arts and for its continued support, and introduced the following representatives for the arts who also thanked the Council for its continued support: Carolyn Griffin representing MetroStage; Susan Landrus representing the Kathy Hardy Gray Dance Theatre; Katherine Brown representing the Del Ray Artisans; Kathy North Rodine representing the Alexandria Arts Consortium; Elisa Carroll, president, Alexandria Arts Forum; Ulysses James representing the Mount Vernon Orchestra Association; and Fran Redmon, commissioner, Virginia Commission for the Arts;

John Redmon, 801 North Fairfax Street, Suite 402, representing the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the significant contribution that Alexandria business makes to the overall health and welfare of the City; supported efforts that encourage additional commercial activity within the City; supported the proposed increase in sewer fees; encouraged the development of a comprehensive plan for user fees; supported the proposed capital improvements; encouraged the City to exercise caution in incurring further debt in future budgets; supported the City's operating budget; encouraged an overall review of staffing levels and compensation within the City; encouraged continued improvements in efficiency in planning and zoning and code enforcement and encouraged an evaluation process to measure improvement; a copy of his statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 7 of this item;

Lisa Chimento, 1809 Kenwood Avenue, #304, representing the Budget Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, recommended that (1) the City should continue to adhere to its debt-related policy guidelines; (2) the City should keep one eye on the future as it works to meet next year's revenue and expenditure challenges; (3) the City should pay close attention to employee compensation issues, which are key drivers of the City's budget; and (4) urged the City to continue exploration of a means by which revenue sources can be diversified in an equitable fashion; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 8 of this item;

Councilman Speck noted that this community and this Council deeply appreciate all of the effort that all of the members of BFAAC make during the budget process. It is enormously helpful to Council to have this apolitical, thoughtful process of looking at the budget and the budget process, and thanked them for it.

Paula Whitacre, 600 Fort Williams Parkway, president, Douglas McArthur PTA, supported the School Board's budget, stressed adequately compensating teachers and supported construction of the proposed new T.C. Williams High School;

Michele Brandon, 727 Upland Place, president, Alexandria PTA Council, asked Council to fully fund the Superintendent's budget for fiscal year 2003-2004; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 9 of this item;

Sheryl Gorsuch, 408-A East Raymond Avenue, president, Mount Vernon Community School PTA, supported the school budget and increased funding for the Mount Vernon Recreation Center; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 10 of this item;

Allen Lomax, 5021 Seminary Road, #730, chair, Human Services Committee of the Alexandria United Way, provided highlights of the Committee's recent survey of nonprofits which may prove useful as Council considers the funding level for the Community Partnership Fund; a copy of his statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 11 of this item;

Bill Hendrickson, 304 East Spring Street, supported Councilman Speck's open space proposal, additional funding for Arlandria, continued support for the Plan for Planning and funding for the proposed consultants, and expressed support for continuing the level of funding for the arts community;

With respect to funding for Arlandria, Councilman Speck noted that there is \$100,000 in the CIP specifically earmarked for the Landover path. City Manager Sunderland indicated that there also are some continued dollars that are in general categories that are designed to do a number of the infrastructure items along Mount Vernon Avenue and Glebe Road.

Ronnie Campbell, 5731 Leverett Court, #72, PTA Council president-elect, supported the Superintendent's proposed budget and adequate compensation for teachers;

Mayor Donley reported that we have seen the unfortunate dwindling of Intergovernmental revenue that comes to support Alexandria public school children at the same time we're faced with a number of unfunded mandates. He noted that we're funding eighty-five percent of the school budget here locally with local dollars. We're going to do our best to try to fund the School Board's budget this year.

Matthew Natale, 3401 Martha Custis Drive, president, Parkfairfax Condominium Association, urged Council to do more to decrease the tax rate; a copy of his statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 12 of this item;

Councilman Euille noted that most of Council is on record to try to reduce the tax rate further from the three-cent reduction recommended in the City Manager's proposed budget.

Vice Mayor Cleveland requested a report back on what can be done to cap the real estate tax bills.

Mayor Donley requested a budget memo regarding a cap on the real estate tax bills. If it's seven percent, that's going to indicate what the revenue generation would be, which would mean, again, assuming a seven-percent increase, it would determine how much Council would have to cut out of the proposed budget to reach Vice Mayor Cleveland's or the Council's goal as suggested by Mr. Cleveland. Mayor Donley requested staff to give Council an idea of what that tax rate would be to get a seven-percent aggregate increase that will also determine how much Council would have to reduce on the expenditure side for it to achieve that goal. That gives Council some information, some implications of the policy determinations that Mr. Cleveland is requesting for Council to have that discussion.

(A copy of the verbatim transcript of the above discussion is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 13 of this item.)

Ruth Reeder read an e-mail from Bruce Dwyer, chair, Alexandria Bicycle Committee, strongly supporting Councilman Speck's proposal for a one cent "set-aside" in the real property tax rate to be used for long-term funding of open space in Alexandria; a copy of his e-mail is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 14 of this item;

John Tyler Osborn, 1637 Fitzgerald Lane, asked Council not to increase the tax burden to fund its wants, strongly supported a reduction in the tax rate, and strongly opposed the proposed open space proposal;

Eric Wagner, chair, Planning Commission, reported that the Planning Commission voted unanimously and enthusiastically to endorse Councilman Speck's proposal for long-term funding of open space; a copy of his statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 15 of this item;

Councilman Speck appreciated chairman Wagner's comments. Mr. Speck noted that he got this idea down on paper, but he thinks, in all due respect, that this is really something that has evolved, that has been part of discussion that many of the people on Council have had, which is, if Council is going to do this, there are a limited number of possibilities, and this is one of them. If Council doesn't do it, it's a decision that it has made and Council knows what the consequences of that are, which is that we are going to have to struggle to find revenue. If we decide to do it, it's not going to solve our problems. As much as he appreciates the comments that Mr. Wagner made, he wants to try to redirect this more to being something that he thinks that Council as a whole really needs to look at as a broad public policy discussion that is available to us, as opposed to something that he simply was the one who got the ideas down on paper that we've all been talking about. He thanked Mr. Wagner for his comments.

Katy Cannady, 20 East Oak Street, supported Councilman Speck's open space initiative; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 16 of this item;

Brooksie Koopman, 116 West Maple Street, urged support for Councilman Speck's proposal to establish a systematic method of accumulating the financial resources to acquire additional open space for public use in future years and urged the Council to support our library system; a copy of her statement is on file in the office of the City Clerk and Clerk of Council, marked Exhibit No. 17 of this item;

Aaron Spevacek, 2210 Mount Vernon Avenue, executive director, Alexandria Volunteer Bureau, supported the Early Childhood Fund, the Youth Fund, and the Community Partnership Fund and urged Council to increase the funding for all three of these funds, but certainly the Youth Fund;

Ellen Pickering, 103 Roberts Lane, representing Taylor Run Civic Association, spoke in support of Councilman Speck's proposal for open space. Speaking for herself, Ms. Pickering supported funding for a stream valley study that would go to the Park and Recreation Department so that they can begin to study the linking of our stream valleys. She supported continued funding for the consultants for the Planning Department. In addition, Ms. Pickering requested that the video tapes of City Council and Planning Commission meetings be made available to the public without charge and be placed in the libraries. She also suggested that the podiums in Council Chamber have the ability to be raised;

Poul Hertel, 1217 Michigan Court, supported funding for consultants for the Planning Department and more funding for the DASH bus system in the City;

Julie Crenshaw, 816 Queen Street, aligned herself with the comments of Eric Wagner and Ellen Pickering; questioned whether taxes are being applied in the places where people are spending the money and do they see a result of having to pay taxes; and thanked Mr. Speck for his proposal for open space, and thinks that open space needs to be looked at in a different context than it has been looked at in the past;

Linda Couture, 422 North Union Street, representing Senior Services of Alexandria, requested \$20,000 for a coordinator for the volunteers for Meals on Wheels, and supported funding for the guardianship program;

Mary Catherine Gibbs, 3818 Keller Avenue, supported fully funding the schools, the proposal for open space, and total funding for the Police Department, the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Office;

Cindy DeGrood, 2411 Leslie Avenue, speaking on behalf of herself, strongly supports the open space proposal; and

Frank Putzu, 1423 Juliana Place, president, Seminary Hills Association, reported on thoughts of the membership regarding the open space proposal. They by and large thought it was a good thought, but there are other alternatives that should be explored in addition to the open space fund. For example, one of the ideas was the affordable housing fund. Another idea was tax incentives for developers to maintain that open space. Open space bonds were suggested. There was concern expressed about creating a special pot of money for open space even though it's very valuable, but having created a precedent, it might create problems for the future. There was a suggestion to budgeting \$2 million over the next five years for an open space fund, and is \$10 million enough? There was concern about what happens to the land when the City buys it. It was suggested that there possibly could be public/private partnerships with environmental groups or other groups that might be interested in preserving park space and open space. He noted that he wanted to share some of the responses he had received and was quite surprised by the number of e-mails and responses he received. He thanked Mr. Speck for introducing this. It is a critical issue, and it needs to be fleshed out and the association is very much looking forward to working with Council.

The public hearing was concluded.

With respect to open space, Councilman Euille asked the status of his request to staff to take a look at other types of funding options and/or mechanisms. He asked the possibility of using bonds for financing.

Councilman Speck requested budget memos on the following: (1) the issue that Judy Noritake raised regarding funds designated for design purposes for the Charles Houston Recreation Center and the Patrick Henry Recreation Center; (2) the recommendations that were made by Dave Mercer on behalf of Campagna Center regarding Campagna Kids; (3) the issue of the Community Partnership Fund and trying to have some rationale for why that should be where it is or why it should be increased. He stated that he doesn't know if Council wants to look at this in the same way that it looked at the Arts Commission budget which was to have a longer term plan or whether there is some basis or framework for how much is there now, whether it should be increased, and, if so, on what schedule or by how much. The fact that it's the amount that it is now is because that's essentially the amount that was there when we started. We don't really have any basis for determining the right amount, is it too much or is it too little; (4) Ellen Pickering's recommendations about a stream valley study. In addition, Mr. Speck felt that Ms. Pickering's suggestions about video tapes being available for citizens to review without having to purchase copies, and the issue of a rising podium are two very good suggestions for things that we do to accommodate our community. These are good services, and we should just go ahead and do them; and (5) the issue raised by Senior Services Board Member Couture regarding funding for a coordinator for Meals on Wheels in whatever budget Council sees fit to place the funds.

With respect to the \$409,931 in health contingency that is separate and apart from Contingent Reserves, Mayor Donley requested a budget memo providing Council with an explanation of what that is. Mayor Donley also requested some recommendation on the request received from Senior Services regarding Meals on Wheels.

Councilwoman Eberwein requested a memo from Director of Transportation and Environmental Services Baier with regard to the consulting fees of \$100,000 and bringing the work in-house. Ms. Eberwein would like to have his comments on turning that back into consulting fees. She has concerns about whether that might be questioned in terms of the objectivity of those numbers given some of our recent experiences.

In response to Councilwoman Eberwein's query, Assistant City Manager Jinks indicated that staff does periodic reviews of the City's fee revenue sources.

Councilwoman Woodson spoke to affordable housing. She noted that our contribution to the Housing Trust Fund is going to get smaller as the years go out and that concerns her. The Interfaith Alliance has expressed an interest in the City making a commitment in some way to increasing the amount of affordable housing in the City by threefold. She would like to see in what way the City could project that happening. We have talked a little bit about supporting the creation of a Community Development Corporation which, of course, we don't have here and that certainly would be one avenue towards developing best practices in affordable housing, and perhaps, the development of affordable housing. Ms. Woodson would like to see anything that the City sees as a potential given the fact that we are going to have limited contributions. Ms. Woodson stated that we need to embrace this as an issue that is not going to go away. It is getting worse, and it's getting worse on two sides, both the cost of housing and the cost of taxes. She would like for the City to at least look at that and come back to Council with some projection of what we're going to have and what we're not going to have in the out years.

Mayor Donley stated that certainly included in that budget memo should be an explanation. The Manager had indicated the other night that he was going to bring forward within the next couple of weeks a proposal for us to consider, but he has included an additional million dollars in the Housing Opportunities Fund this year, bringing it to a total of 2.6 million dollars that is available. And, that goes to some of the discussion Ms. Woodson has requested because there is a significant allocation in general fund dollars in the proposed budget, at least, for the Housing Opportunities Fund, and the potential creation of a CDC.

Councilman Euille piggybacked on both the expressions of Councilman Speck relative to the Campagna Kids and the Community Partnership Fund. He agreed that there should be some type of formula or program to continue to fund an increase for this fund annually; however, he requested staff to focus on increasing the Community Partnership Fund by \$125,000 to see what the impacts are. He noted that we are in the last year of the three-year plan of the Arts group funding. Mr. Euille indicated that Council needs to refocus whether or not it wants to recommit itself to some type of continued funding plan formula for the arts programs. Councilman Euille supports Councilwoman Woodson's request regarding affordable housing, and we need to always be thinking about what we can do, and how we can identify some resources. Not as part of this proposed FY 04 budget, but Mr. Euille requested us to focus on whether or not and what the timetable would be to become a wireless community.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED, upon motion by Vice Mayor Cleveland, seconded by Councilwoman Pepper and carried unanimously, at 7:10 p.m., City Council closed the public hearing, and the Special Public Hearing Meeting of Wednesday, April 2, 2003, was adjourned. The voting was as follows:

Cleveland	"aye"	Eberwein	"aye"
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