

June 15, 2004

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Good Evening Mayor Euile, Vice Mayor Pepper and City Council members. My name is Ronnie Campbell and I am the PTA Council President (outgoing).

I am here to speak concerning the Strategic Plan for the city. Before I get started I need to show our appreciation for fully funding the Alexandria City Schools' budget. With such a small minority of city residents having children in the public school it sends a strong message that the city and its communities care about its children and their future.

I will begin by mentioning

Goal 4 "A Strong Local Economy That Is Growing in Varied Small Businesses and Job Opportunities"

Objective 3 states Increase job opportunities in Alexandria for Persons at Various Income Levels. This objective should include opportunities in Alex. For Persons with various disabilities, job training and additional work study programs for students. Of the four Policy Actions for 2004/2005 and the two Management Actions none mention job opportunities which is part of the Goal. This needs to be a "Top Priority".

Goal 5 "A Caring Community That Is Diverse and Affordable"

Of the six objectives #5 stood out. It states "Increase the Employability of Residents through Skill + Workforce Development + Support Services. This seems to cover areas I looked for in Goal 4 however, once again it was not considered a top priority. The second Action under Goal 5 states most significant needs of Elderly Strategy. Perhaps disabled could be added to read Most Significant Needs of the Elderly and Disabled Persons leaving school and entering the workforce for the first time. This needs to be a Top Priority. The School Boards policies only cover the education of these students until they are 21 years of age. Then it is our city that needs to ensure they are given the support and training necessary to become active and contributing members of our society. Most do not want a hand out just a chance to learn and be successful in whatever field they may choose.

Goal 6 "A City Government That Is Financially Sustainable, Efficient and Community Oriented"

Under Objective 6" Improve Community Understanding of all aspects of the city Government. The best way to accomplish this goal is to communicate. The city has made many steps in the right direction to reach out to our communities for input. I feel the PTA

Council, Boards and members can be of great assistance to the city as we try to be to the School Board when it concerns public input. We can reach many families that normally are not contacted or informed on a consistent basis by the city concerning city issues. I was fortunate a school board member contacted me and told me about the last public work session for the City's Strategic Plan.

Of the Policy Actions under Goal 6 #2 "New Sports Facility Expansion" I must agree personally I think it is a wonderful idea to build school spirit. Also a top priority should be to maintain and repair the parks and fields we currently have that so desperately need our attention.

Goal 7" Public Schools That Are Among the Best in Northern Virginia"

I'd like to think you saved the best for last.

The first policy action the Before/After School Program is a committee I was invited to be a member of. I want to thank who ever is responsible for inviting my involvement. I feel this is an area that needs improvement and although it is new it seems the committee is moving in the right direction.

The goal of making our Public Schools Among the Best in Northern Virginia can be reached with the joint efforts of our city, schools and community. The best action for working toward this goal is communication. If the city seriously intends to find ways to encourage small businesses to move here and grow within our city it needs to actively recruit and request their involvement and inclusion in the planning process. The same holds true for any area of interest. If the city wants to create a school system that welcomes families and encourages them to make Alexandria their home they need to invite families in their planning process. Please feel free to contact the School Board or the PTA Council for input and insight. If we want Alexandria to grow and continue to be a great city for all its citizens we need great school as well as great communities. This involves a lot more than beautiful buildings. It is the programs, the teachers and staff, our children and our community. If everyone is working together it will be a great city with Great schools.

Thank you for your time and patience.  
Sincerely,

Ronnie Campbell  
PTA Council President (2003/2004)

**Testimony Before the Alexandria City Council  
Public Hearing on the 2004-2015 Strategic Plan  
on behalf of the George Mason Elementary School PTA**

**June 15, 2004**

Mr. Mayor and Members of the City Council, thank you for holding this public hearing. I am here representing the George Mason Elementary School Parent Teacher Association and its newly-formed Legislative Liaison Committee.

A couple months ago, Councilwoman Joyce Woodson suggested that our school community work to ensure that the needs of children and views of parents with children are brought before the City Council in a regular and sustained manner.

As I'm sure many of you know, the free time of parents is often exclusively dedicated to family and school activities. As a PTA, we are more likely to be focused on specific issues facing our city schools than on the broader community. Unfortunately, this means that parents with children are often under-represented before the City Council.

Thus, we have formed a Legislative Liaison Committee to express our views with respect to the needs of our community's youth and families, and to work closely with the City Council as you map our city's direction and future. The consideration of the City Strategic Plan raises an especially appropriate occasion to begin this effort.

We should begin by recognizing that Alexandria is a community that treasures its children as essential to the city's vitality and supports their educational advancement, physical development, cultural enrichment, and civic involvement. We commend the Council to the extent that this principle is reflected in the Strategic Plan.

As a starting point, we believe that strong schools will bring more lasting prosperity to this city and its residents than any other investment. Excellent schools attract families and businesses to our community and ensure that they stay as long-term residents. They are also essential to providing an effective "safety net" for our residents in need.

The Strategic Plan recognizes this fact and specifies that Alexandria's public schools should be among the best in Northern Virginia by 2009. We believe that we are already a long way toward achieving this objective and would like to see "nationally recognized excellence" as the stated goal. We would also like to see a greater emphasis on attracting and retaining quality teachers and school administrators, as they are the foundation of our current success and future progress.

We commend the City Council for its strong support for the T.C. Williams High School Replacement Project, which demonstrates your commitment to our public school system and reflects your acknowledgement that a first-rate education is a critical component of a first-rate city.

Of course, ensuring that our youth fulfill their potential involves more than academic excellence. It also involves exposure to cultural, artistic, recreational and sporting activities. While the School Board has the primary responsibility for the schools themselves, we believe that the Council should take special interest in those aspects outside the purview of the schools that aid in the broader development of our children and their families.

Specifically, some areas that need to be examined closely include:

- Increasing access and options for quality day care and pre-school;
- Expanding after school programs for middle school-age children, including both sports and non-sports related options;
- Ensuring the availability of recreational fields and open space throughout the city for our children; and
- Providing a teen center that offers a safe and comfortable location for our teens to socialize, relax, and organize and lead their own activities.

Finally, in addition to traditional school-related priorities and objectives, Goal 7 of the Alexandria Plan for 2004-2009 calls for Early Childhood Intervention; Before/After School Program Expansion and Enhancement; and a Teen Pregnancy Reduction Program. These actions are especially important for the City Council to address in the near-term in order realize their benefits as soon as possible.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. This Strategic Plan is a good start and we look forward to working with Council as you effect its implementation.