

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 6, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: FEDERAL ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION WITH CONGRESSMAN JAMES P. MORAN

ISSUE: Federal issues for discussion with Congressman James P. Moran.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the items below for which the City will request funding or other federal action in the FY 2008 federal budget or other legislation.

DISCUSSION: Each year, Council presents Congressman James P. Moran with a list of federal issues of concern to the City. Most of these are specific items for which the City would appreciate federal funding. The following is a description of those items. Most of these were requested a year ago, but are being resubmitted since the development of the FY 2007 federal budget, several months into the fiscal year, did not allow for the specification of projects for federal funds. Staff recognizes that this list of items is larger than that which will ultimately be funded, but hopes that the Congressman and his staff will be able to select from among these projects those that are most likely to be approved.

1. Funding for Law Enforcement

A. Public Safety Radios

Alexandria's public safety radios will eventually become outdated due to continued technology advancements in the radio system industry. Recent radio system purchases Arlington County and Prince George's County will eventually reduce the ability to have direct interoperability with the City of Alexandria, and most of the 900 radios now used by Alexandria police and fire officers will eventually not be interoperable with these jurisdictions. The City's radio system is used by many jurisdictions within the National Capital Region, as well as by federal and state agencies. In addition, the City's subscriber radios also have the capability to interoperate with other state/local/federal agencies and have the national interoperability channels.

The lessons learned from 9/11 and other incidents such as Hurricane Katrina have also demonstrated the need for public safety officials from neighboring jurisdictions to be able to communicate quickly. In order to do so, Alexandria needs to eventually purchase new public safety radios. The total cost of replacing 900 mobile radios with units that are totally

interoperable with police and fire departments throughout the region will be \$3.6 million, and we would appreciate federal funding to help with this cost. This is our highest priority for public safety funding.

B. Computerized Crime Fighting Technology

The City would like to acquire two new computerized tools that will help the Police Department in fighting crime. *IxReveal Software* is an information data-mining tool that allows crime analysts to quickly review large police records systems using a variety of “search” mechanisms. For example, if a burglary occurs when a home’s residents are at a funeral, the system can search records for synonyms and other key words relating to “funeral” to see if a link to previous cases can be found. These “searches” can also be shared with other IxReveal clients to help them identify similar crimes. This software has been proven to be reliable by law enforcement agencies in other states, who are currently using it to mine data from millions of police records dating back several years, revealing trends that would have gone unnoticed by analysts who merely read cases or write simple queries. The estimated cost for the software is \$102,000.

The City would also like to purchase additional computer hardware and software to assist it in its efforts to use technology to solve crimes. Information from desktop computers, laptops, PDAs, Blackberries, and similar devices are used increasingly to help track criminals involved in murders, identity fraud, narcotics offenses, thefts and other crimes. Technology used to break encryption codes and track criminals is changing constantly. The Alexandria Police Department needs to purchase new hardware and software to upgrade its crime-solving technology so that it can conduct a forensic analysis of any type of electronic equipment that is seized during an investigation. In order for our Computer Crimes Unit to remain proficient in this area of expertise it is imperative that it has the necessary computers/technology/software. The estimated cost of equipment, software and training is \$80,000.

C. Emergency Generator at the Public Safety Center

The electrical generator at the Public Safety Center (PSC) provides emergency power during electrical outages for: the detention facility (which houses over 150 federal prisoners, some of whom are alleged terrorists); the Office of Sheriff Administrative and Program offices; portions of the Police Department (including the 911 Communications Center, Property and Evidence and Identification sections); emergency fuel storage for first responders; and perimeter security (including cameras, barriers, gates and lighting) for the PSC. In an emergency, this facility may also serve as the command center for law enforcement activities, since it is the most secure facility in the City. The PSC is also under consideration as a possible site for a new Emergency Operations Center following completion of the PSC slab replacement project in 2008. The current 800 kw generator was installed twenty years ago when the building opened in 1986 and is nearing the end of its useful, reliable life. The estimated cost for the design, procurement and installation of a replacement generator is at least \$800,000.

2. Helping Alexandria Residents with Special Needs

A. Developing Job Skills for the Community--Automobile Training Institute of Alexandria

The Automobile Training Institute of Alexandria (ATIA) is a new program being developed to help meet the need for an increasing number of reliable and skilled workers in the automobile industry. Prior to initiating this program, the City surveyed managers at local auto dealerships, who cited the need for additional trained workers available to fill vacancies. This initiative complements the federal/state/local welfare-to-work programs, by providing unskilled workers with the training needed to enter and stay in the work force earning more than subsistence wages.

Operating as a business, ATIA is designed to replicate an automobile dealership with a curriculum that includes many of the job skills and functions found in a typical dealership or repair shop. Student workers will learn not only how to fix cars, but other necessary skills such as how to write service orders; and order and stock parts. The curriculum will also teach communication skills, team building, and other human relations skills required to provide excellent customer service. The ATIA is a collaborative effort of the City, local automobile dealerships and repair shops (including Land Rover of Alexandria, Koon's Collision Repair Center, Lindsay Cadillac, Brown's Mazda, Passport Nissan, and Jack Taylor's Alexandria Toyota), the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, the Alexandria City Public Schools, and Northern Virginia Community College.

Startup costs for the program, to rent space and purchase the necessary equipment and furnishings, are estimated to be \$3 million. We would appreciate federal assistance to pay for a major portion of these costs.

B. Child Day Care Funding

The welfare reform reauthorization passed by Congress last year increased TANF work requirements, but underfunded the cost of this and other changes. TANF now requires mothers to seek work after their children are 12 months instead of 18 months. Due to this change in TANF work requirements, money was taken from federal dollars that Alexandria and other localities had used for the local child care fee system for working parents who are not receiving TANF benefits. For the first time in many years, a waiting list now exists in Alexandria and many other jurisdictions for children in need of day care. The City asks that Congress fully fund the increase in child care costs that Alexandria and other localities are experiencing as a result of the changes in TANF work requirements.

C. Child Welfare Services

Federal funding for basic child welfare services (child protection and foster care) has not kept up with the need and in some instances has been reduced. The federal Child and Family Service Reviews, which are program audits, have shown that more needs to be done in Virginia and

across the nation to adequately fund the child welfare system. Federal funding, however, has not increased to help implement the Review recommendations. The federal government, which is setting the standards for the quality of service we provide to our families, needs to become a full partner in funding. The City asks that Congress provide increased federal funding to support the changes recommended by the Child and Family Services Review.

D. Safety Improvements and Repairs to the Women's Shelter

Alexandria's Battered Women's Shelter, opened in 1981, provides emergency housing and food at a confidential location for Alexandria women and their children who have been abused or who are threatened with abuse. The Shelter is located in a remodeled private residence built many years ago. In addition to providing temporary living quarters, the building also includes office space for several staff members from the Office on Women.

Recently, an addition was built for the Shelter, to provide a bedroom that is accessible to those who are unable to climb the stairs to the second floor, where all the existing bedrooms were. At the time this addition was being planned and built, the City also hired an architectural firm to assess the condition of the existing building. The architectural firm has made a number of recommendations for high and medium priority safety and other repairs to the building, including the installation of new smoke detectors and sprinkler and fire alarm systems; electrical repairs; installation of a sump pump and water pressure relief systems; repair of the basement slab, stairs, and basement ventilation; repairs to the HVAC and exhaust systems; and upgrades to the plumbing and electrical systems. The projected cost for these repairs is \$161,500. Although the City funded the addition to the Shelter, currently there are no City funds for these repairs and upgrades.

E. Alexandria Seaport Foundation

The Alexandria Seaport Foundation has entered into a partnership with the Carpenter's Union to design a pre-apprenticeship program which teaches beginning carpentry skills, work ethics and GED classes. The Court Service Unit intends to use this program for older probationers and parolees (ages 16 and up) who can learn the carpentry trade and prepare for the GED test at the same time. The Seaport Foundation also provides mentors and job placement opportunities for these individuals. Participants are paid while they learn the trade and prepare for a career in carpentry.

The program has been most effective with those who are vulnerable to joining gangs. The Court Service Unit considers this program one of the "best practice" gang prevention programs available in the community. The Foundation would appreciate up to \$200,000 in federal funding to help pay for a portion of its current costs, and to expand the program if sufficient funds are made available.

3. Projects to Make the City More Transit and Pedestrian-Friendly

During 2005, Congressman Moran arranged for significant federal funding to come to the City (as part of the federal SAFETEA-LU legislation) for several important transportation projects: pedestrian and transit improvements in the Eisenhower Valley; transit improvements in Potomac Yard; funding to help in the relocation of WMATA's Royal Street bus garage; design money for a Mill Road slip ramp; and money for improvements to the DASH bus system and other Citywide transit improvements. Unfortunately, most of the money authorized in SAFETEA-LU was a multi-year appropriation, with only the first year's funding appropriated in 2005. The City's top priority for transportation funding in the FY 2008 federal budget is the SAFETEA-LU authorizations for FY 2008.

In addition, if additional funds are available, the City would like increased funding for two of the SAFETEA-LU transit projects: Potomac Yard and Eisenhower Valley.

Arlington and Alexandria are working together to plan Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for the Potomac Yard corridor. While SAFETEA-LU includes \$1 million to assist with this project, additional funds are needed so that the City can make the needed improvements to Route 1 (design and construct a dedicated transit way) for its portion of the new BRT.

Additional funding is also needed to develop a new north entrance to the Eisenhower Avenue Metro Station, and make other improvements to encourage greater transit use in this developing area of the City.

4. Funding for Bicycle and Multi-Use Trails, and Environmental Restoration

The City is requesting additional federal funding to develop the following bicycle and multi-use trails.

A. Improvements to Potomac Riverfront Access and Stabilization of the Shoreline

An estimated \$3.0 million is needed to create wetlands, replace failing riverfront bulkhead and provide pedestrian and bicycle access along the Potomac River. This funding will provide resources to design and build the planned elements. These will include: a trail connection along the river, north of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and a segment of trail and boardwalk along the river and shoreline behind Hunting Towers, as well as bulkhead improvements further upstream. The Hunting Towers connection will provide linkage to the National Park Service's Mount Vernon Trail.

B. City Bike Trail System (West End)

Improvements are needed for portions of the bike trail system in the City's west end, including the Chambliss Connector, the Tarleton Trail, and the Holmes Run Trail. More specifically, the

City needs to construct an in-stream crossing for the Chambliss Connector; and restore the trail and make drainage improvements in and around the Holmes Run trail at the Van Dorn crossing and the Tarleton trail intersection. The estimated cost of this project is \$538,000.

C. Dora Kelley Trail (extension of Holmes Run Trail)

Drainage and edging improvements are needed for the Dora Kelley Trail, as well as the realignment of portions of this trail. This work is expected to cost \$75,000.

D. Four Mile Run Master Plan

For several years, Alexandria and Arlington have worked jointly to develop an environmental restoration plan for Four Mile Run. A next step is to begin the design and implementation of a Master Plan for the project, and we request that \$1.5 million be provided to Alexandria and Arlington for this purpose.

5. Maintaining and Restoring Our Cultural Resources

A. Restoration of the Lloyd House Garden

Lloyd House, an historic structure built in 1795, now houses the Office of Historic Alexandria and also hosts a number of public and private functions. Since it ceased being used to house special collections of the Alexandria Library in the late 90's, it has undergone significant renovation to return it to its historic origins. A remaining area in need of renovation is the garden, which sits primarily in the rear of the house. Needed are new or repaired fences and gates along Washington, Queen, and Columbus Streets. A garden plan has been prepared but not yet implemented. The projected cost of the project is \$100,000.

Private contributions will pay for a portion of this work; \$35,000 is on hand or committed. Federal Save Our Treasures funding (\$50,000) would allow this project to proceed more quickly.

B. The Lyceum

In 1839, a group of citizens calling themselves The Alexandria Lyceum joined with the Alexandria Library Company to build a grand hall to provide a place for lectures, scientific experiments and quiet reading. Eventually, the building became known as the Lyceum. In 1985, it became Alexandria's History Museum, providing exhibitions, school programs, lectures and concerts. Like any old building, the Lyceum is in need of constant upkeep. At this time, the City would like to make the building more accessible to those with disabilities. In order to make it accessible, it needs a new entrance, a new elevator, and upgrades to its bathrooms. If Save Our Treasures money were available for this purpose (\$50,000), the City would provide the necessary match for this project.

C. Friendship Firehouse

The Friendship Fire Company was formed in 1774. It is the oldest volunteer fire company in Alexandria, and one of the oldest in the country. George Washington is associated with the early history of the company, which originally was housed on Market Square. Just before the Civil War, the Company moved to a new location on South Alfred Street and constructed a new firehouse, which remains there as a museum. Renovated in the 1870's, and restored by the City in the early 1990's, the building is crowned with a distinctive cupola which carries Friendship's classic weathervane, depicting a fireman running to the rescue. Unfortunately, this original building feature is exposed to the most severe weather all year round, and the cupola is now leaking and requires a thorough restoration. Federal Save America's Treasures funding (\$75,000), matched by the City, would help preserve this important landmark.

D. Jones Point Light House

The Jones Point Lighthouse, built in the 1850's adjacent to the south cornerstone of the original boundary of the District of Columbia, aided Potomac River shipping for 70 years and is significant in illustrating Federal concern for the improvement of inland navigation in the 19th century. The Jones Point light was tended by a keeper living in the lighthouse building until 1919, when an automatic beacon was installed in the lantern. The beacon was relocated to a tower on the extended east corner of Jones Point in 1926, and the replacement light was removed in the 1940s.

The Lighthouse needs a handicapped-accessible entrance and renovations to restore the building's interior. It would also be appropriate to develop an interpretive exhibit relating to the Light House. The estimated cost of the improvements and interpretive exhibit is \$165,000. The City is requesting at least a portion of this funding now to begin this work.

6. Funding for Programs Dealing with Gangs

A regional gang prevention task force has been working throughout Northern Virginia for several years with federal funding. Since there were no federal earmarks for FY 2007, the initiative is currently operating with unused federal funds from FY 2006. This unused federal money is expected to last only until September 2007. Among the projects that are being funded through this initiative are several Gang Prevention/Intervention Coordinators, street outreach workers, a regional assessment being done by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and a Public Service Announcement on gang prevention. Funding is also being used by area police departments for gang suppression programs.

It is critical that new federal money be made available no later than the beginning of the next federal fiscal year for this work to continue without interruption.

STAFF: Bernard Caton, Legislative Director