

CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

**Special Public Hearing Meeting
Tuesday, June 15, 2004 - - 7:00 p.m.**

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Present: Mayor William D. Euille, Vice Mayor Redella S. Pepper, Members of Council Ludwig P. Gaines, K. Rob Krupicka, Paul C. Smedberg and Joyce Woodson.

Absent: Councilman Andrew H. Macdonald.

Also Present: Mr. Sunderland, City Manager; Ms. Evans, Assistant City Manager; Police Lt. Uzzell and other members of City staff.

Recorded by: Jackie M. Henderson, City Clerk and Clerk of Council

OPENING

1. Calling the Roll.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Euille and the City Clerk called the roll; Councilman Macdonald was absent.

2. Public Hearing on the Draft City of Alexandria 2004-2015 Strategic Plan.

The following persons participated in the public hearing on this item:

(a) Franklin Malone, 2300 Monroe Street, NE, Washington, D.C., Chair of the Alexandria Commission on Employment, offered language on goal 4, objective 3, to train and educate Alexandria citizens through alternative style experimental, multi-modol, educational institutions, which should include those who are disabled and with wheelchairs, and to utilize institutions that utilize teaching styles that use industry specific language assessments, as opposed to those who use general academic testing and training. Under goal 5, objective 2, they would like language to guarantee a specific number of summer youth employment experiences at all City funded agencies, through paid internships to help develop the youth for the workforce. Under goal 5, objective 5, they want to increase the employability of citizens by the establishment of multi-modol educational institutions that offer hands on employment training that meet the demands of the 21st Century workforce. Under goal 7, school priorities, he said they need to offer vocational learning.

(b) Joan Renner, chair of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber has a strong interest in the document, and they applaud the opportunities for citizen participation. She said business plays an indispensable role in carrying out the

vision, mission, goals and objectives in the document. The revenue to make the future financially sustainable depends on Alexandria business. She said high priority should be given to objectives that foster a healthy business community to make the vision a reality. For continuity, the plan should contain a provision that it will be reviewed and adopted by future Council's at the beginning of their term. For effectiveness, the plan should provide a means of evaluating periodically whether and to what extent the goals and objectives are being achieved. For perspective, the document should address the level of internal and external resources that will be required to make the vision a reality.

(c) Rick Dorman, executive committee member with the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber has concerns that lead them to recommend structural enhancements to improve the document. He said the plan should be shorter, easier to understand and easier to use for the future decision making, while laying out the City's guiding principles. The Chamber suggests that the document be separated into two documents. The first would be a strategic planning document, and the second would be the operational plan. The strategic plan documents would contain visions, missions, strategic goals and guiding principles that were brought out during the strategic planning process. That part of the plan should function as a strategic tool for the future and if well crafted, the strategic document can stand for many years without any changes. Presenting it in combination with current action items or operational plans makes the document more complicated than it needs to be. It is the operations plan that will change and shift as different environments change within the City. Separating out the true strategic elements from the more operational elements of the document would make it a more usable tool for decision-making.

(d) Ken Moore, president and CEO of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, said they would like to see a document that is more focused and prioritized to better assist them in choosing actions in the future. It is not clear what goals and objectives are important for prioritizing actions in the future. The final document should more clearly express those priorities. The document would be a better decision-making tool if it is revised to express priorities among the objectives for each goal, and the priorities should be expressed on one page in an executive summary. The most important to the Chamber are: 1. Development--prepare and approve a comprehensive land use master plan that will enable Alexandria to achieve quality new and infill development in areas where there is a need and to protect established neighborhoods; 2. Natural Environment--maximize usefulness of existing parks, open space and recreation areas and acquire those areas that would make a significant contribution to the welfare of the City; 3. Transportation--prepare a comprehensive transportation master plan that addresses all modes of transportation and is coordinated with a comprehensive land use plan; 4. Local Economy--become known as a business friendly city so that businesses of all types can become established and thrive within the City; 5. Caring Community--create a caring community through the human and social services to the elderly disabled and disadvantaged; 6. Sound Government--maintain Alexandria's AAA bond rating; and 7. Public Schools--improve both the image and performance of public schools to the point where the schools attract residents to the community.

(e) Susan Johnson, 2318 N. Rosser Street, Chair of the Early Childhood Commission, said the executive board wishes to note that they are pleased that children are mentioned but dismayed that they first appear on page 29, in the last objective of the last goal of the action plan and not in the vision mission of the City or related goal statements directly. She said they are pleased that the before and after school program expansion is part of the policy actions, and that an early childhood intervention strategy is also part of the plan. Ms. Johnson said they are not clear how the items fit with goal 7, or the objective under that goal under #5 to prepare children to enter school with basic knowledge and skills, and neither of those two items had priority for the coming year. Ms. Johnson noted that it was difficult to see a clear relationship between goals and objectives and the objectives that follow them, and in fact the whole document is difficult to understand and follow, and it is difficult to get a clear picture on how to flow through this one. Ms. Johnson said the Board felt the focus of the document was off-center a bit, and children, in particular, are not as prominent in this vision as history, beauty, buildings and fiscal issues, and while all involve and benefit people, they are not in themselves as important as the people and the children.

(f) James Pickup, 2916 Richmond Lane, representing the George Mason School PTA, and its newly formed legislative liaison committee, said that a few months ago, Councilwoman Woodson suggested that the school community work to ensure the needs of children and the views of parents are brought before Council in a regular manner. They should recognize that Alexandria is a community that treasures its children as essential to its vitality, and supports their educational advancement, physical development, cultural enrichment and civic involvement. He said they believe that strong schools will bring more lasting prosperity to the City and its residents than any other investment. Excellent schools attract families and businesses to the community, and they are essential to providing an effective safety net for the residents in need. Mr. Pickup said the strategic plan recognizes this fact and specifies that Alexandria's public schools should be among the best in Northern Virginia by 2009, and he believed they are already a long way toward achieving this objective and would like to see nationally recognized excellence as the stated goal. He said they would also like to see a greater emphasis on attracting and retaining quality teachers and school administrators, as they are the foundation of their current success and future progress. They commend the Council for its support of the T.C. Williams replacement project. The Council should take special interest in cultural, artistic and recreational and sporting activities outside of the purview of the schools, and those areas include increasing access and options for quality day care and preschool, expanding after school programs for middle school age children, ensuring the availability of recreational fields and open space for children, and providing a teen center. Goal 7 of the plan calls for early childhood intervention, before/after school program expansion, and a teen pregnancy reduction program.

(g) Annabelle Fisher, 6161 Edsall Road, said the vision plan process is important for the future of Alexandria and its residents, but unfortunately, the choice of Mr. Sumek was flawed and the selection process should have been open with 2-3 choices from Council and citizens to select. She said she may be one of the 20 percent

citizens that would never be satisfied with any plan and the group of citizens who should not be included in this process. Ms. Fisher said Mr. Sumek's reports were poorly written and the hand-written follow-up notes would never have been acceptable to groups she has worked with. She said that at the second and final work session, the Mayor stated that the process would continue with citizens input, but the two sessions involving new citizens had only about 80 residents of 75,000 voters in Alexandria. She said the process remained exclusive and out of reach for many citizens and youth who rely on public transportation for a meeting that was held in a non-locally location. Ms. Fisher suggested that Council continue the strategic process plan, to have monthly meetings for the next six months, dedicated to one particular issue specific to the strategic plan--transportation, traffic, land use, and housing and to rotate the meetings around Alexandria with appropriate publication and outreach for citizens.

(h) Philip G. Matyas, 219 N. Pitt Street, said change is vital to have a vibrant community, and he commended everyone for having the insight to look into the future and see where Alexandria is going. A vision requires good management. He said Old Town Historic Alexandria is the heart of Alexandria, and to that end, there was a vision of traffic management over the last year and a half that resulted in much better traffic management. One of the objectives in the vision is to maintain the historic balance and interest in Old Town, and it has the City putting up large silver boxes on light poles for traffic management, telephone or cable. He said if that is a vision for better traffic management, he applauded the vision, but he didn't applaud the implementation when it takes away from the lifeblood of historic Old Town Alexandria. He said everything boils down to political or financial, and he saw that there were programs designed to increase revenue, but he didn't see programs that deal with accountability, looking at expanding existing programs to implement the changes.

(i) Nancy Carson, 301 W. Masonic View, speaking on behalf of Housing Action, a citizens coalition of advocates and others who make it possible for people of all incomes to work and live and be educated in Alexandria, said that while participating in the visioning process, she was struck by the widespread understanding that affordable housing is a serious and growing problem in the City. She said many of the goals, from diversity and preserving the neighborhoods, improving the schools, growing small business, reducing traffic and making Alexandria a wonderful place to live, depend on a healthy balance of housing options. She said the plan doesn't have a road map, and they will need a realistic set of steps to reach their goal. She said she is pleased that policy and strategy for the topic is a high priority for this year, and they look forward to working with the Council to help develop that path. She suggested that Council, when it hires a new City Manager, hire one from an urban environment where they have an aggressive and effective affordable housing effort.

(j) Donald H. Misner, 920 Woburn Court, McLean, said he attended the open sessions and represented himself and the Chamber of Commerce as a member of the Commission on Persons with Disabilities. He said the one thing missing from the two sessions was that there was not a commitment to make Alexandria the predominant City in America that is a level environment for all people, whether blind, autistic or in a

wheelchair. He said he could not find anything in the goals that he could disagree with, but he challenged Council to make the City the best in the country as far as accessibility is concerned for each and every citizen.

(k) Elizabeth Wright, 113 S. Ingram Street, said she participated in one of the sessions and found it extraordinarily exciting and dynamic. She noted that in goal 4, objective 1, increase the percentage of residents who live and work in Alexandria, she thought that transportation is one of the problems, and if they could increase people to do the smart growth thing to live closer to where they work, that would be wonderful. She said she was stunned to find out that the Community Services Board had not partnered with the School system to find how many disabled students were going to be out at age 22. She spoke about having job slots for those students graduating. She asked for more communication through departments to be a safety net for the disabled citizens.

(l) Julie Crenshaw, 816 Queen Street, said she would provide her written comments to Council, especially on the content, for which she won't have time to speak to this evening. Ms. Crenshaw spoke to the process. She said she agreed with Ken Moore about the reorganization and the poor writing, and with Annabelle Fisher about a more inclusive public process. She said there were significant populations who were not at the meeting, many of them do not necessarily speak English, and other populations need to be included in the process. She said it is a lot of information to absorb and try to visualize the impacts that would take place. She said they need more time for people to grasp it and think about it. She asked to lengthen the time, include more of the populations, so that no one can say they weren't included.

(m) Harry Harrington, 1 King Street, with the Old Dominion Boat Club, said he would waive his right to speak.

(n) Larry K. Grossman, 1123 Powhatan Street, said he attended both sessions and wanted to echo comments made by Julie Crenshaw. He said he looked around at the sessions and thought that in 2015, are they going to have the same group of people or will it have a very different group of people, much more mixed and more representative of the City, and that may be something to strive for. Mr. Grossman said they need to fix the zoning, that to go forward with a flawed Zoning Ordinance, they will be handcuffed, and that can't be done in five years. He said he was concerned about Potomac Yard, in that there was a tendency to do a plan and then walk away from it. It may get away from them, with the change in ownership, it still has a land use plan that is out of sync with the transportation plan, and he didn't know what the decision was on the Metrorail station or lightrail, but Arlington is going forward. Mr. Grossman said one of the challenges for transportation is it will be hard to have a walkable community for the residents to ensure their safety and convenience if the road system is designed for autos, so those two have to be reconciled.

(o) Sarita Schotta, 104 Prince Street, said there is no detailed table of contents, and it is absolutely necessary. She said the more difficult thing is a detailed

annotated index at the back. She said a template doesn't appear as it is making decisions, it needs a filter to look at different aspects of it - what is the impact on the neighborhood, what is the impact on parking, and what is the impact on nearby businesses. She said traffic is directing people north and south instead of east and west. She spoke about the businesses in the waterfront area. She said they need that template so they can look at the implications and issues for the 100 block of Prince Street.

(p) Constantine H. Wilson, 0 Prince Street, said he is all for anything that involves improving the waterfront. He asked to be involved in anything that involves the area he is in, as that is his livelihood.

(q) Paol Hertel, 1217 Michigan Court, said one of the things he tends to focus on is development and planning, and one of the things that concerns him on page 22, goal 3, regarding transportation, is one of the tension points the City is facing, which can be described as more suburban settings, and part is more urban settings. He said there are some areas of the City where you cannot go without using a car, so when it speaks to mass transit ridership and a walkable City, it is something different from people who live in the more urban areas. He said objective 6 raises some serious issues, in that it is actually a radical shift in the policy the City has, until now, adhered to, which is that they will not accommodate through traffic just to expedite them. They will make sure that people that live in the communities can live there and have walkable, safe, pedestrian oriented areas. He suggested that they remove objective 6 from page 22.

(r) Lois Walker, 417 S. Royal Street, applauded Council for its work on the vision plan. She said she would like to see a much shorter document, with a very strong vision statement and the flexibility to make changes as the world changes, so that it has an overall underlying goals and vision for the City that allows them to look at a situation and say does it fit in with where they want to be. She noted that they need a comprehensive transportation plan that works with the land use plan. The transportation plan needs to start with the most vulnerable of the citizens - those who are pedestrians, on-foot, children, elderly and disabled. Council needs to recognize the need for a comprehensive educational plan that includes educational programs from birth to death, programs like healthy families, to help educate parents to help their children, that emphasizes the 20,000 students in the college level, and programs that allow all adults to expand and grow.

(s) David Froman, 2307 E. Randolph Avenue, said he participated in both of the sessions and his reaction to the original vision statement was that he found it generic, and he got challenged on that, but the realization was that it wasn't generic but was what he wanted to see. On the goals and objectives, his table focused on what tended to do the greatest good - they avoided specific projects and looked for things that were made most inclusive and focused on the future. He said that all five of his group's votes were in the document, so that means that most of the people were focusing on things that were for the greatest good, looking for the future and avoiding

personal projects. He suggested that the format be rewritten and not try to come to a conclusion in a week or so, and he said he found the process easy to track. He suggested that they rewrite it into a good document that they disseminate in various languages and get final opinions before Council approves it.

(t) Ronnie Campbell, 5731 Leverett Court, #72, the outgoing PTA Council President, said that with such a small minority of City residents having children in the public schools, it sends a strong message that the City and its communities care about its children and their futures. She said goal 4, a strong local economy that is growing in various businesses and job opportunities, objective 3 states that increased job opportunities in Alexandria for persons at various income levels, this objective should include opportunities for persons with disabilities. She said that of the four policy actions for 2004/2005, and the two management actions, none mention job opportunities, which is part of the goal, and this needs to be a top priority. On goal 5, a caring community, of the six objectives, #5, increase employability of residents through skill and workforce development and support services, this seems to cover areas in goal 4, however, it was not considered a top priority. The second action under goal #5 speaks to those leaving school and entering the workforce for the first time, and perhaps "disabled" could be added. The City needs to ensure that after age 21, they are given support and training necessary to become active and contributing members of our society. Under goal 6, a City government that is financially sustainable, efficient and community oriented, objective 6, improve community understanding of all aspects of the City government, the best way to accomplish the goal is to communicate. The PTA Council, Board and members can be of great assistance to the City as they try to be to the School Board when it concerns public input. She said the last goal about the schools becoming the best among Northern Virginia is their goal as well.

WHEREUPON, upon motion by Vice Mayor Pepper, seconded by Councilman Krupicka and carried unanimously, Council moved to close the public hearing and refer it for Council consideration at the legislative meeting of June 22, 2004. The voting was as follows:

Pepper	"aye"	Gaines	"aye"
Krupicka	"aye"	Macdonald	absent
Euille	"aye"	Smedberg	"aye"
	Woodson	"aye"	

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, upon motion by Vice Mayor Pepper, seconded by Councilman Krupicka and carried unanimously, the special public hearing meeting of June 15, 2004, adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Pepper	"aye"	Gaines	"aye"
Krupicka	"aye"	Macdonald	absent
Euille	"aye"	Smedberg	"aye"

Woodson "aye"

APPROVED BY:

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

Jackie M. Henderson, City Clerk