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11/10/2005 11:59 AM

To Gloria Sitton/Alex@Alex
cc
bcc
Subject Fw: News Release -- National, Leading, Grassroots
Conservation Organization Names Alexandria A Cool City

they will be making this presentation under "public discussion" at Saturday's meeting.

Jackie M. Henderson
City Clerk and Clerk of Council

----- Forwarded by Jackie Henderson/Alex on 11/10/2005 11:59 AM -----

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11/10/2005 11:58 AM

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Subject News Release -- National, Leading, Grassroots Conservation
Organization Names Alexandria A Cool City

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**National, Leading, Grassroots Conservation Organization
Names Alexandria A Cool City**
Sierra Club Recognizes Alexandria in Council Chambers on Saturday, Nov. 12

The Sierra Club has named the City of Alexandria a Cool City for moving forward with solutions to reduce heat-trapping global warming pollution. Alexandria joins the list of 187 cities across the nation that are taking action to re-energize their communities with innovative local

energy solutions, such as cleaner car fleets, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. The Sierra Club will recognize the City of Alexandria at 9:30 am on Saturday, Nov. 12, in the City Council Chambers, 301 King St., second floor.

“The City is honored that the Sierra Club is recognizing Alexandria as a Cool City for its efforts to reduce pollution and save the environment,” said Mayor William D. Euille. “One of the many activities the City has implemented include operating a fleet of hybrid cars to enhance fuel consumption and reduce harmful emissions. The City Council is committed to initiatives that will provide a cleaner environment for future generations to enjoy.”

The process of becoming a Cool City consists of four steps: step one involves taking a “Cities for Climate Protection” pledge with a city’s mayor signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement; step two entails conducting a global warming emissions inventory; step three involves creating a solutions plan to reduce emissions while lowering energy costs for the city; and step four consists of implementing and monitoring the plan’s progress.

Other initiatives the City has taken to help the environment include the purchasing of 10 Honda Civic Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) cars in addition to two Toyota Prius Hybrid cars; and the retrofit construction of a green roof on the Health Department’s new office building at 4480 King St.

The hybrid cars use advanced engineering to combine a gas engine with an electric motor to create an environmentally advanced, fuel-efficient, hybrid. The hybrid cars run on regular gasoline and never need to be plugged in for recharging. Once the electricity in the batteries gets low, the gasoline engine takes over and begins to recharge the batteries.

The City will display two vehicles from its fleet of hybrid cars on Saturday, Nov. 12, at 9:30 am beside City Hall in the 100 block of N. Royal St.

Green roof technology is an innovative low impact design that replaces a traditional rooftop with a special mix of soils and vegetation. By reducing total impervious surface cover, this technology has been recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and others as having many environmental benefits including the ability to reduce the urban heat island affect, improve water quality, and significantly reduce the volume and velocity of storm-water runoff.

The Sierra Club is a national, leading, grassroots conservation organization that was founded in 1892 by John Muir.

For more information on the Sierra Club recognizing Alexandria as a Cool City, call Laura Durham of the City’s Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities at 703.838.5041, extension 350; or visit the Sierra Club’s web site at sierraclub.org.

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Statement by Bert Ely to the Alexandria City Council in opposition to the proposed Old Town B.I.D

November 12, 2005

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, my name is Bert Ely and I am here today to express my opposition to the proposed Old Town Business Improvement District, or BID. I express my opposition as both a 24-year Old Town resident and as the owner of a small consulting business which rents space in an office building that will be subject to whatever taxes the BID levies.

Initially, I thought the BID might be a good idea, but as I researched the proposal and spoke with others in the growing army of BID opponents, I, too, have come to oppose the BID, at least in its presently proposed form.

Time this morning does not permit an exhaustive discussion of my concerns about the BID bylaws and BID finances, such as the fact that the proposed BID assessment rate equates to an 11% real-estate tax hike on Old Town commercial properties. Attached is list of some of my concerns.

I am far more troubled, though, about the highly undemocratic manner in which the BID bylaws and proposed agreement with the City have been developed and are now being presented as a *fait accompli*. I am further concerned that commercial property tenants, such as myself, will not be able to nominate or vote for their representatives on the BID board of directors. As now written, the tenant representatives on the BID board will be pawns of Old Town property owners.

It is my understanding that Council must act by the end of this year to create the Old Town BID in order for a special real-estate tax assessment to be levied to finance the start-up of BID activities next year. The remaining 50 days in this year do not allow sufficient time for the many businesses and persons who will be impacted by the BID to fully understand the real cost and possibly ephemeral benefits of the BID or to rectify problems in how the BID is structured.

Therefore, I recommend to Council that it not authorize the BID this year and instead appoint a committee of supporters, opponents, and those who are unsure to study the BID concept and to report back to Council next year with a recommendation as to whether an Old Town BID should be created and if so, in what form. It is vital that this study committee not be stacked with either supporters or opponents of the BID proposal.

If there is a sufficient consensus that a BID should be formed, public hearings should be held at which specific provisions of the proposed BID bylaws can be debated and amended – in effect, a mini-constitutional convention should be held to ensure that the BID will operate in a truly democratic manner.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you this morning.

Specific problems with the BID by-laws

- Commercial tenants will not be properly represented on BID board of directors because the tenant directors will be elected by property owners, not the tenants themselves. The property owners will be certain to elect only those tenants who will rubber-stamp the owners' interests.
- A single property-owner could cast as much as 30% of the votes cast by property owners eligible to vote on BID matters. That is hardly one person, one vote! Conceivably two property owners, each casting 30% of the total vote, could control the BID.
- There is no reason why Virginia Tech should be given a seat on the BID board. Why shouldn't UVa or George Mason get that seat?
- The authorization of proxy voting at membership meetings would further undermine democracy within the BID.
- BID board of directors meetings would be closed to commercial tenants as the meetings would only be open to property owners.
- The BID is not authorized to purchase directors' and officers' liability insurance.
- The BID would not be required to have its financial statements audited annually.

Specific problems with the BID finances

- The proposed 10 cents per \$100 BID assessment represents a 10.9% property tax hike on the affected properties and pushes the tax rate two cents above the fiscal year 2005 tax rate, which is eight cents higher than the 2006 tax rate.
- The BID will have high overhead costs – 30% of total spending. The Executive Director's \$78,000 salary, plus 25% for benefits, will chew up over 10% of the BID budget.
- The proposed BID budget has no provision for the cost of liability and directors' and officers' insurance.
- The BID would get no contribution from the City for services the City now provides, such as snow removal and horticultural services, which the BID will take over.

Other problems with the BID proposal

- The number of supporters claimed by BID advocates vastly overstates support for the BID because of substantial double-counting. Some who are listed on the pro-BID website as supporters in fact are not.



SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER

STATEMENT TO THE ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING ON BEHALF OF SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER (SALT) AND THE VIRGINIA COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS NOVEMBER 12, 2005

Mr. Mayor, Ms. Vice Mayor and members of the Alexandria City Council, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning on behalf of Social Action Linking Together, better known as SALT, and the Virginia Coalition for the Homeless. These two organizations are working together to establish a fair wage in Virginia by raising the minimum wage \$1 each year for the next three years and indexing the wage to inflation in subsequent years. The Virginia Fair Wage Act will be brought before the General Assembly in 2006 by Senator Charles Colgan and Delegates Vince Callahan and Al Eisenberg. I am here today to ask for your support for the Virginia Fair Wage Act.

As most of you likely know, the minimum wage has not increased since 1997 in Virginia and is now worth only one-third of the average hourly wage, its lowest relative value since 1949. A full-time minimum wage worker earns only \$10,712, well below the federal poverty rate for a family of three. It logically follows that minimum wage workers in Virginia cannot afford the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter, and medical care. My colleague Sue Capers, policy director for the Virginia Coalition for the Homeless, often testifies that homeless shelters are filled with working parents who cannot afford housing. This is why the coalition is focusing its advocacy efforts in the General Assembly this year solely on the Virginia Fair Wage Act.

The majority of minimum wage workers are parents whose children suffer from the insecurity of low family income and the absence of parents working multiple jobs. While there are teenagers working minimum wage jobs, many contribute their wages to a low-income family. Minimum wage workers work hard but can only survive with the help of a second job and aid such as food stamps. We claim that we value an "honest days' work" and that no one who works full-time should live in deep poverty. We must acknowledge that this is not the case in our state.

Since the last increase in the federal minimum wage in 1997, 17 states and the District of Columbia have increased their minimum wage. Other states have pending legislation for an increase. It is time for Virginia to do the same. It is important to note that these increases have occurred not only in blue states, but in red states as well.

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Significantly, numerous studies have concluded that those states that have increased their minimum wage have little to no job loss. Because raising the minimum wage normally increases the wage for those workers just above the minimum, it is estimated that as many as 445,000 Virginia workers and their families stand to benefit from passage of the Virginia Fair Wage Act.

While SALT will focus primarily on this important piece of legislation during the General Assembly session, we have a legislative package that includes investing in human services and assistance for former drug offenders. More detailed information on these initiatives can be found in the packets you have received.

We thank you for your past support and request your full support of the Virginia Fair Wage Act. Minimum wage workers and their families deserve a long overdue raise.



SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER

SALT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS 2006 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

- ✓ **Investments in Human Services.** SALT supports a number of initiatives in human services program spending. First, programs for the poor were cut repeatedly during lean fiscal times. Now that more state revenue is available, State General Fund support must be restored to human service programs. Second, TANF Payments should be adjusted for inflation, and future payments should be indexed so that purchasing power does not continue to erode. Third, child support payments on behalf of children in TANF should be paid 100% to the intended recipient. And fourth, State funds should be appropriated to draw down all available Federal child care funds.

- ✓ **Virginia Fair Wage Act for Low Income Workers.** The Virginia Coalition for the Homeless and Social Action Linking Together (SALT) propose to the 2006 General Assembly passage of the Virginia Fair Wage Act to increase the Virginia minimum wage \$1.00 in each of the next three years (2006, 2007, and 2008) and index the minimum wage to inflation thereafter. The cost of living has increased significantly, while entry-level wages of low income workers have not kept pace. Currently, too many families working full-time for the minimum wage remain impoverished. A Fair Wage is needed to make work pay.

- ✓ **Transitional Assistance for Former Drug Offenders.** SALT and Virginia CURE urge members of the General assembly to support legislation that would lift the lifetime ban on TANF benefits for the individuals convicted of drug-related felonies. The denial of assistance to such families perpetuates the cycle of crime and poverty. SALT supports an amendment to lift the lifetime ban on benefits for those whose sentences have otherwise been served. SALT applauds the 2005 Virginia General Assembly for eliminating the lifetime ban on food stamps for people with drug felony convictions. With Virginia CURE and Delegate Jim Dillard, the bill's patron, SALT members worked to eliminate the ban on food stamps and benefits through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The elimination of the ban on food stamps is commendable, but the unjust ban on TANF benefits remains and must be removed to ensure those with drug felony convictions, a vulnerable population, receive the assistance to which they are entitled.

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- ✓ **Virginia Income Tax Credit Coalition Mini-Grants (Bill and Budget Amendment)**. One of the most effective programs for reducing poverty and encouraging work is the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Available only to people who work, the EITC is a refundable tax credit that increases the net income of low-wage families. The EITC helps to lift Virginians out of poverty including thousands of poor children. Participation for former TANF clients is an important element for building financial self-sufficiency. Research reveals that current and former TANF clients are less likely to participate in these programs and that minorities are less likely to receive these program benefits. The Virginia Earned Income Tax Coalition worked with 18 volunteer coalitions and returned over \$3 million EITC dollars to communities throughout Virginia. The power of volunteer coalitions is the driving force in all communities. Despite these efforts it is estimated by IRS that 22% of those eligible in Virginia do not claim the credit. Virginia leaves \$186,895,000 unclaimed. This proposal is to request funds to support the development of community based EITC outreach and free tax preparation services for TANF families, Head Start and low-income working-poor families and to reduce the incidence of poverty in the State.



SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER

Investing in Human Services

2006 General Assembly Session

1. Restore State General Fund Support for “Expanded TANF Programming”.

- During the state fiscal crisis of the past several years, the federal TANF block grant was used as an informal “rainy day fund” to support programs that had previously been funded with state general fund dollars. Such programs include many important services such as the Healthy Families program, Community Action Agencies, CHIP, homeless shelters, domestic violence programs, and local DSS foster care and adoption staff.
- As Virginia’s fiscal crisis eases, in addition to replenishing the formal “Rainy Day Fund,” a portion of increased state revenue should also be dedicated to restoring state general fund support for these programs so that federal TANF funds can be used for their intended purpose to provide a safety net for poor children and to move families from welfare to work.

2. Invest in the TANF program.

- TANF payments should be adjusted for inflation. TANF payments now have less than 40% of the purchasing power that they had in 1974 when Virginia’s locality groupings and payment levels were established. Today, the average monthly TANF payment in Virginia is only about \$279. If TANF payments had kept pace with inflation, the average monthly payment would be more than \$700.
- Children on TANF should receive the benefit of all **child support** collected for them by the state. In FY 2004, the TANF child support supplement gave TANF children the benefit of all current child support collected for them by the Department of Child Support Enforcement. However, the current Appropriations Act funds the child support supplement at only about 70% of expected child support collections as of October in the second year of the biennium in FY 2006.



SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER

Transitional Assistance for Former Drug Offenders

2006 General Assembly Session

SALT applauds the 2005 Virginia General Assembly for eliminating the lifetime ban on food stamps for people with drug felony convictions. With Virginia CURE and Delegate Jim Dillard, the bill's patron, SALT members worked to eliminate the ban on food stamps and benefits through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The elimination of the ban on food stamps is commendable, but the unjust ban on TANF benefits remains and must be removed to ensure those with drug felony convictions, a vulnerable population, receive the assistance to which they are entitled.

Each year, Virginia releases roughly 10,000 men and women from its prisons. Seventy-five percent of them are parents of two or more children. All Virginians have a stake in the success of these families, since failure is likely to mean renewed cycles of poverty, substance abuse, physical abuse, and crime. Effective transitional assistance, on the other hand, leads to job training, treatment, and limited financial support for members of this population while they work to become self-sufficient.

SALT urges members of the General Assembly to support legislation that would lift the lifetime ban on TANF benefits for individuals convicted of a drug-related felony. This legislation is essential for the following reasons:

- The ban, while providing no meaningful deterrent to drug-related crime, unfairly punishes one group of former inmates who have paid their debt to society, and punishes their families as well.
- Parents who are reentering their communities after incarceration often need public benefits to reunite their families, pay rent, and buy food, clothing, and other necessities. The denial of assistance to such parents as they attempt to rebuild their lives is counterproductive.
- The ban makes it extremely difficult for individuals to enter or complete substance abuse treatment programs, or maintain recovery from addiction. It limits the effectiveness of community-based treatment programs, which rely on their clients to use TANF benefits to help cover room and board expenses.
- The ban interferes with the ability of ex-offenders to find work, return to school, or enter job training programs to gain essential skills to become competitive in the labor market.

- TANF benefits provide a lifeline for women trying to escape domestic violence. Many women with drug-related convictions began using drugs as children when they were being physically or sexually abused. Providing them and their children with essential assistance enables them to avoid returning to an abusive environment.

BACKGROUND:

Section 115 (a) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, P.L. 104-193, permanently bans individuals convicted of drug felonies from receiving TANF cash assistance or food stamps. However, section 115(d) of the Act allows states to opt out of this ban or modify it, and 34 states have done so. Virginia modified the ban in the most recent session of the General Assembly, removing the ban on food stamps.

SALT has worked repeatedly with Virginia C.U.R.E. to promote meaningful reentry programs for inmate parents and their children. We know from experience that incarcerated individuals who do not receive help with their transition back into society are more likely to return to a life of crime and, ultimately, prison.