

budget hearing statement
Michelle L'Heureux
to:
jackie.henderson
03/10/2010 05:21 PM
Cc:
"Michelle L'Heureux"
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Hello Ms. Henderson,
Please forward my statement to council as was requested by
Councilwoman Hughes. I was speaker #12 in today's hearing. Thank
you.

Hello City Council,

My name is Michelle L'Heureux and I serve on the Affordable Housing
Advisory Committee, am a board member of RPJ Housing, a non-profit
affordable housing provider, and a member of Housing Action. I
am representing myself in my statement today.

First let me state the obvious: Alexandria is a desirable place to live and
with that popularity there is a significant subsection of the community
who is priced out of living in this city. It is those that are priced out that
give Alexandria its diversity, not only in terms of race, but also in terms
of age, gender, and chosen professional occupation.

One of the reasons I'm in this community is because after graduate
school, I got a job in this area where I grew up, and I was able to
find affordable rental housing at privately owned Hunting Terrace. I paid
somewhere just over \$1,000/mth, which is affordable housing in this
area, especially for a young professional making \$45K a year. I
guarantee you without that affordable rental housing, I would not,
several years later, be putting down roots in this fine city and be in the
process of buying my first home.

Myself and many other residents have benefited directly or indirectly
from policies that the city has put in place to preserve affordable
housing. This is why I am upset to see that the proposed budget
mandates a 30% cut in the Office of Housing budget for FY2011. I

ask council to reduce this cut, which happens to be the largest percentage cut among all city departments.

This cut is even more surprising given the time and energy provided by various city workgroups to ensure affordable housing and given city's own strategic goals to convey that, "Alexandria is a caring and inclusive community that values its rich diversity, history, and culture, and promotes affordability" (Goal 7). This cut will directly undermine these goals and harm the very people that make this city a diverse and fun place to live.

I know this is not an enjoyable part of your job, to listen people complain about what you should be funding and what you're proposing to cut... I empathize, but I do think what is being proposed here is unreasonable especially given the tremendous loss of affordable housing in the last decade and tough economic times that make affordable housing an even more urgent need. So please consider reinstating the money from the real estate tax that is dedicated to creating affordable housing. Thank you.