

Fw: COA Contact Us: March 10 Comments at Budget Hearing

Derek Schultz to: Jackie Henderson

03/11/2010 01:46 PM

Cc: Gloria Sitton

Jackie,

This got sent to use. Attached is a copy of comments made at the public hearing. I thought you may want to include this.

Thanks,

Derek Schultz
City of Alexandria
Office of Management and Budget
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----- Forwarded by Derek Schultz/Alex on 03/11/2010 01:48 PM -----

From: Donald Buch <dnbuch@hotmail.com>
To: bruce.johnson@alexandriava.gov, dawn.webster@alexandriava.gov, derek.schultz@alexandriava.gov
Date: 03/11/2010 01:26 PM
Subject: COA Contact Us: March 10 Comments at Budget Hearing



Time: [Thu Mar 11, 2010 13:26:48] Message ID: [19983]

Issue Type: Budget
First Name: Donald
Last Name: Buch
Street Address: 389 Livermore Lane
City: Alexandria
State: VA
Zip: 22304
Phone: 7036479132
Email Address: dnbuch@hotmail.com
Subject: March 10 Comments at Budget Hearing
I was requested to submit a written copy of the comments I made at yesterday's budget hearing. I trust the attached will serve your needs.
If not, kindly let me know.
Comments: Thank you for your time and trouble.

Donald N. B uch

Attachment: a878e58538ce6dde678dcaaf5b409c45.docx



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City of Alexandria - Budget Public Hearing
4:00 pm, Wednesday, March 10, 2010, Council Chambers

Comments of Donald N. Buch
389 Livermore Lane, Alexandria, VA

Thank you Mr. Mayor. I have three issues with respect to the proposed storm water fees.

(#1): I understand that the City was contemplating assessing storm water fees on common areas of communities such as Cameron Station but that is now off the table. If my understanding is correct I'll gladly move on. However, if the concept returns to the table I would hope the public would have an opportunity to comment on it at that time.

Comment Withheld Assuming Confirmation that the Common Area Charge is "Off the Table": As I understand it, most City residents will pay one storm water fee covering both their residence and their share of the costs of providing storm water services for common areas such as streets and parks. I will pay the same fee, - however I am already, through my homeowner fees, paying for the on-site storm water systems serving the streets and parks of Cameron Station. So, I'll be paying double with the second portion effectively being a contribution to the City for a service which, in large measure, they are not providing. Moreover, if you now levy another storm water fee on the common areas of my community I will (through additional homeowners' fees) be paying a third time. I do not perceive that as fair and I would ask that you consider that perspective.

(#2): My second request is that Council explain to the community what this new arrangement has, and will, cost us to develop and administer. I understand the average homeowner is projected to pay roughly \$20 a year. If I'm already paying \$4,000 in property taxes why not simply increase my tax rate by 1/2% and bill me \$4,020 in property taxes? (I gather the storm water fee is intended to simply be a separate line on my tax bill. I'm going to write the same \$4,020 check to the City whether you list my charges on one line or two.)

However, it appears to many of us that you have chosen to pursue a course which will appreciably expand the government bureaucracy in this City. What has already been spent to develop this concept? I note the City Manger's February 26th memo which concludes "Most of calendar year 2010 will be needed to develop the database, software and procedures for implementation." Then we'll have a whole administrative process and apparently some complex process of credits and partial credits to address all manner of eventualities. Not to mention an appeal process.

We deserve to clearly understand what the development of this new bureaucracy will ultimately cost us. I would like to see that compared to the cost of changing the tax rate from say \$0.97 to \$0.975 which I would suggest would take nothing more than a minute or two of a computer programmer's time to implement, putting you roughly a year ahead of the City Manager's schedule with a savings of many tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars in development and implementation costs. Please - just add the charge to our property tax bill.

(#3): Finally, in terms of the IRS, I understand property taxes are deductible expenses whereas a storm water fee is not and I would ask that you confirm if my understanding is correct. If it is

and the average marginal tax rate in Alexandria is say 20%, then the residents of this City will be paying an extra \$500,000 in taxes if you choose to impose this as a fee rather than include it in our property taxes. We ought to avoid that additional burden.

Thank you.