



**Bud Miller**  
<Bud@efficientresearch.com>

11/17/2009 10:27 AM

Please respond to  
Bud Miller  
<Bud@efficientresearch.com>

To william.euille@alexandriava.gov, frank.fannon@alexandriava.gov,  
kerry.donley@alexandriava.gov, alicia.hughes@alexandriava.gov,  
council@krupicka.com, delpepper@aol.com,  
cc  
bcc  
Subject COA Contact Us: Budget Matters

**Time: [Tue Nov 17, 2009 10:27:28] Message ID: [16879]**

**Issue Type:** Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members  
**First Name:** Bud  
**Last Name:** Miller  
**Street Address:** 115-D South Saint Asaph Street  
**City:** Alexandria  
**State:** VA  
**Zip:** 22314  
**Phone:** 703 684-5312  
**Email Address:** Bud@efficientresearch.com  
**Subject:** Budget Matters  
I've attached an editorial listing six general budget reforms and seven  
**Comments:** specific proposed budget cuts for your review.  
Bud Miller  
**Attachment:** e61381159a8942a9bdf4a7c831191cba.docx



e61381159a8942a9bdf4a7c831191cba.docx

It is good to see that City Manager Jim Hartman is instituting a program of “collaborative realignment “. In private business, we would likely skip the fancy words and simply call such a program “common sense”. Given the stresses on the City Budget over the last few years, one can reasonably question why such operational inefficiencies weren’t addressed long ago. Regardless, it is an encouraging sign.

It would be cruel, damaging, and counterproductive to impose yet more tax increases on Alexandria homeowners and businesses as we struggle to climb out of the worst recession in recent memory. Obviously, making cuts in order to close gaps in the budget will cause a level of discomfort for the professional politicians that occupy our City government, but the Mayor and Alexandria City Council must learn to live within their means like any other American institution or individual.

Given the lack of imagination in the area of budget reductions expressed by our Mayor, I thought it would be appropriate to make a few suggestions as follows:

### **General Reform**

1. **Close City coffers to new programs.** For example, the City shouldn’t even consider jumping into the financial morass (easily worth tens of millions of taxpayer dollars) associated with proposed street cars.
2. **Transparency.** Post all financial information, contracts, invoices, etc. on the City’s web site so we can see where our money is being spent. Of course, there should be some exceptions to this, such as payments associated with police investigations.
3. **Zero Based Budgeting.** Programs shouldn’t be funded just because they exist. Start from the ground up and justify costs on an annual basis. Weed out the bad and fertilize the good.
4. **Litigation Board.** Create a nonpartisan board of retired judges and lawyers to review all pending and future litigation involving the City. This volunteer board should be able to veto new and settle pending litigation. Each member should voluntarily agree to abstain from running for public office for five years beginning with the end of their service to the City.
5. **Auditing Board.** Create a nonpartisan board of auditors, business executives and individuals who have served in local governments outside of Alexandria to review operations and budgeting. These volunteers should also foreswear running for public office in Alexandria for five years at the end of their service.
6. **Cease using the powers of the City as political weapons.** It appears that the elected leadership doesn’t like business, especially if it deals with goods or services that some may consider “politically incorrect” such as fuel oil or high quality sporting weapons. After all, the elimination of one discreet, high end sporting goods store resulted in the unexpected opening of the first “adult” shop on King Street, with more to come.

### **Specific Programs**

Here are a few items for immediate savings.

1. **Terminate the "Safe Haven" Program.** Though created with the best of intentions, this controversial, misguided, multi-million dollar program designed to provide luxury apartments in the heart of Old Town to a dozen homeless people is a gold plated monument to waste. As of this date, the poorly managed, over budget program has yet to service a single person.
2. **Terminate the Sister City Program.** Surely, Alexandria's tourism industry benefits much more from its location at the step of our nation's capital than association with a city an ocean away.
3. **Terminate the iPod/key chain giveaway.** Sure, it's only \$30,000, but how many meals could that buy for the truly needy had the city left those dollars in the hands of charitable private citizens?
4. **Verify that all public school students are legal residents of Alexandria.** Transfer non-residents to the appropriate school district, and fine the parents for the cost of the services provided by the City. Why should Alexandria taxpayers pay the tab for students sneaking in from other jurisdictions?
5. **Terminate City participation in the NVT A.** By any reasonable expectation, The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVT A) has been an abject failure. Its finances were gutted as unconstitutional; its original "priority" projects met with ridicule from its closest allies as being politically motivated and ineffective; and even one of its staff members was arrested for allegedly defrauding the organization. There are better solutions for our transportation problems, beginning with cutting all support for this failure.
6. **Planning and Zoning.** Readers may recall that it was only a few months ago that Planning Director Faroll Hamer's arbitrary, capricious, or simply unreasonable actions in a recent land use case were overturned by the BZA. Now taxpayers deserve an answer to this question: why have staffing and other costs increased when economic activity, such as building, has declined? Replace Faroll Hamer with a professional urban planner, down size the staff and keep personal political agendas out of this office.
7. **Divest of land holdings and leave the Old Dominion Boat Club alone.** Instead of attacking an Alexandria institution with an unwarranted land grab, the city should focus on reducing its property holdings and improving management at existing locations.

Obviously, with a bloated budget that has grown so quickly over the past few years, there is plenty of room for additional reductions and no need to raise taxes yet again. Hopefully, the Mayor and City Council will be up to the task to make these decisions and do their jobs. Goodness knows, the taxpayers have done more than their fair share.

Sincerely,

Bud Miller  
Alexandria Taxpayers United  
115-D South Saint Asaph Street  
(703) 684-5312



**COA Contact Us: Inquiry of Feb 18**

william.euille, frank.fannon, kerry.donley, alicia.hughes,

**Bud Miller** to: council, delpepper, paulcsmberg, rose.boyd,  
jackie.henderson, elaine.scott

02/26/2010 11:01 AM

Please respond to Bud Miller

**Time: [Fri Feb 26, 2010 11:01:47] Message ID: [19504]**

**Issue Type:** Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members  
**First Name:** Bud  
**Last Name:** Miller  
**Street Address:** 115-d South Saint Asaph Street  
**City:** Alexandria  
**State:** VA  
**Zip:** 22314  
**Phone:** 703 684-5312  
**Email Address:** ersalexandria@msn.com  
**Subject:** Inquiry of Feb 18

Dear Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor and Council Members.

I greatly appreciate the fact that the Mayor and two City Council Members responded to my inquiry of February 18, 2010 to state that they or City Staff would research the answers to my questions.

Unfortunately, as of this time, I have yet to receive an answer. I understand the many demands on your schedule, however I believe the questions (reproduced below) are straightforward and that a minimum of research is involved.

Three Questions regarding Staff Reductions

According to the City's web site: the budget eliminates 67 positions. Staff reductions would result in reduced service hours at some City facilities, and cuts to programs and services.

**Comments:** How many of these 67 positions have been vacant for three months or more?

If a substantial number of these 67 positions have been unstaffed for three months or more, why would this result in reduced service hours at some City Facilities, and cuts to programs and services?

How many of these 67 positions pay \$100,000 or more?

Thank you for your assistance. I hope the City Council will give serious consideration to a zero growth budget given the substantial economic challenges being faced by its citizens.

Sincerely,

Bud Miller



**COA Contact Us: Three Questions regarding Staff Reductions**

william.euille, frank.fannon, kerry.donley, alicia.hughes,

**Bud Miller** to: council, delppeper, paulcsmedberg, rose.boyd,  
jackie.henderson, elaine.scott

02/18/2010 01:22 PM

**Please respond to Bud Miller**

**Time: [Thu Feb 18, 2010 13:22:33] Message ID: [19210]**

**Issue Type:** Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members

**First Name:** Bud

**Last Name:** Miller

**Street Address:** 115-D South Saint Asaph Street

**City:** Alexandria

**State:** VA

**Zip:** 22314

**Phone:** 703 684-5307

**Email Address:** ersalexandria@msn.com

**Subject:** Three Questions regarding Staff Reductions  
According to the City's web site: the budget eliminates 67 positions.  
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facilities, and cuts to programs and services.  
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If a substantial  
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why would this result in reduced service hours at some City Facilities, and  
cuts to programs and services?  
How many of these 67 positions pay  
\$100,000 or more?



**COA Contact Us: Budget Cuts/Reform**

william.euille, frank.fannon, kerry.donley, alicia.hughes,

**Bud Miller** to: council, delppeper, paulcsmedberg, rose.boyd,  
jackie.henderson, elaine.scott

03/11/2010 10:02 AM

**Please respond to Bud Miller**

1 attachment



56912c783bba4a3afdc9aef624ed96c1.pdf



**Time: [Thu Mar 11, 2010 10:02:00] Message ID: [19973]**

**Issue Type:** Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members  
**First Name:** Bud  
**Last Name:** Miller  
**Street Address:** 115-D South Saint Asaph Street  
**City:** Alexandria  
**State:** VA  
**Zip:** 22314  
**Phone:** 703 684-5312  
**Email Address:** ersalexandria@msn.com  
**Subject:** Budget Cuts/Reform  
 Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, and City Council Members,

I have attached my  
 comments from the March 10, 2010 hearing on the proposed budget in an  
 electronic format for your records.  
 Please recall the last time City  
 Council considered the issue, more than 200 local business owners and  
 residents signed a petition opposing a piggyback raise in Commercial  
 Property taxes. I trust the City Council will reach out to the local  
 business community in the event such a proposal resurfaces.  
 Finally, I  
 would like to provide you with one, brief, personal example of why there is  
 a public impression that the City bureaucracy's structure is inefficient.  
 We had to apply for a hearing to remove a nonhistoric wall in my backyard

which was severely damaged in the recent snows. Two City employees inspected the site and verified that the wall was nonhistoric. A relative of the former property owner also verified that the wall was built in the mid 1970's.

**Comments:**

We were then informed that we needed to apply for a permit to remove what remained of the wall. (Which I don't have a problem with, given the location of the house.) During the process, we were instructed to file 12 copies of our application. I can understand triplicate, but a dozen copies? This flies in the face of both basic efficiency and the stated desire of our City to go "Green". Please consider updating this process to allow people to file these materials electronically, saving time, money and preserving resources for all.

You have our best wishes for the difficult choices ahead. I urge immediate action in the area of budget cutting and reform to prevent the necessity of making draconian decisions in the future. (i.e., Kansas City, Mo which just announced the closure of almost 50% of its schools.)

Better some pain now, than terrible pain in the future. Time is running out to change course.

**Attachment:** 56912e783bba4a3afdc9aef624ed96c1.pdf



Alexandrian Taxpayers are now being asked to accept a substantial tax increase on devalued properties for reduced services in the midst of the worst recession in 80 years. This is what our City Manager calls a "status Quo" budget.

Regardless of one's Party or personal ideology, we simply can't continue down this path. It simply won't hold up much longer.

Our schools recently ranked LAST in the country in terms of bang for the buck. Taxpayers are now paying more than \$18,000 a year for students to attend a \$100 million+ high school.

The City's debt service to pay for the past projects cost taxpayers \$37.1 million this year alone. This debt service has grown by an astounding 322% over the last ten years. The City projects our debt service to rise to more than \$68 million within nine years-- creating additional stresses on future budgets, regardless of the state of the economy.

While private industry has taken advantage of cheaper and more efficient technologies to streamline their bureaucracies, the number of full-time employees working for the city has grown by 9.8%. This must stop. There must be real reductions in City staff, and not the Smoke & Mirror games of simply eliminating empty positions.

Spending on the Planning and Zoning Department has grown by over 203% over the last ten years. With new development at a virtual standstill in these challenging times, the time to prune this overgrown weed is now well overdue. Replacing the top leadership of this bloated department allow the City to control costs and revitalize King Street which is now increasingly populated with empty store fronts and adult specialty stores.

The City has allocated approximately \$3 million in assets towards a well meant, but poorly designed, program to assist as many as 12 "urban nomads" a year. Someday, ten City employees will be overseeing 12 troubled people. Think about that number. 10 highly paid City employees to oversee, at most, 12 people. Not exactly a model of efficiency.

To make matters worse, as of this date, this gold plated monument to waste has failed to provide our most needy citizens with a single meal, a single night's shelter or even a blanket. Indeed, if you walk by the location today, just a few blocks up King Street, you will see an empty building plastered with expired permits and few signs of progress. This program should be eliminated and the building sold to private interests so it can generate additional tax revenue. The Community Services Board, which is in charge of this project, should also be audited, have all of its programs re-evaluated and its leadership replaced.

We must also avoid the professional politicians' jaded trick of budget cutting where it will do the most visible damage in order to intimidate our citizens to support yet more tax increases.

Budget cuts should focus on waste, inefficiency, and nonproductive bureaucratic exercises--not the street cop, EMTs or fire fighters who put themselves at risk to protect us.

In addition to the above, we have a few proposals for you to consider. These proposals will save substantial funds while having a minimal impact on City Services.:

**1. Immediate Savings: \$300,000 to \$1.45 million per year.**

- a. Modest pay reductions for all City Employees earning more than \$100,000 per year.
  - i. 1 percent = \$290,000
  - ii. 3 percent = \$870,000
  - iii. 5 percent = \$1,451,000

Note: This would impact a total of 246 of the City's highest paid employees, but the average City Employee, including the cops & firefighters on the street would not be touched.

**2. \$2 million**

- a. Reduce the Planning & Zoning Department staffing to 2000 levels.

City Council should also immediately let the well meaning volunteers of the Alexandria Street Car Coalition know it's not going to happen. The City doesn't have hundreds of millions of dollars for their projects.

We have already sent you several other reasonable budget cuts proposals for your condition. More are on the way. We're also developing proposals for an overall reform effort to reduce the City's inefficiencies and to fundamentally change how our budgets are written.

Folks, if you think the current budget is a challenge, just wait until our debt service doubles, change course now, institute real budget cuts and right sizing of City staff while you can.

Bud Miller  
Alexandria Taxpayers United  
703.684-5312

#39  
2  
3-10-10

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