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3-18-23

**CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov**

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**From:** briandsands@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2023 11:16 AM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Public comment - Support for FY2024 budget and CIP

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Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson and members of the City Council,

First, many thanks for your hard work, and that of the entire City staff, to make Alexandria such a wonderful place to live and work.

Second, I would like to express my support for the proposed FY2024 budget and capital improvement plan, including the scheduled increase in the stormwater utility fee and the proposed \$282.1 million for investments in the City's stormwater management systems. The City has been fortunate for the last couple of years to have been spared significant surface flooding events like those that occurred in 2006, 2019 and 2020, but such situations are sure to occur again in the future. As such, it is critical that the City continues to make investments, and in fact increases these over time due to climate change, in order to mitigate the impact of such events, thereby maintaining the safety of the city's residents and businesses and reducing the associated property damage.

As an aside, I am also very glad to serve as a member on the City's Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group, which is currently led by the remarkable Mr. John Hill and supported by a smart and highly motivated group of community representatives, and is doing excellent work in conjunction with the City's staff to help address this issue.

Many thanks for your attention to and support for this important topic.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Sands  
510 E Alexandria Ave.

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3-18-23

Re: Letter of Support for Proposed Stormwater Budget for FY 2024 and CIP for FY 2024-2033

Hello,

I am Katie Waynick – a resident of Del Ray, the Vice Chair of the Ad Hoc Stormwater Group, and founder of DrainALX.

I am writing to voice my strong support for the proposed FY 2024 annual budget as it pertains to stormwater infrastructure, as well as the 10-year Capital Improvement Program for stormwater.

At Council’s direction, City staff has worked hard in recent years to build the Flood Action Alexandria program and that time and investment has already begun showing promise in terms of correcting the decades of under investment into City infrastructure and flood mitigation. However, as timelines and models show us, despite the massive increase in funding and staffing we still have a long way to go in making the kinds of long-term, sustainable upgrades that will provide long-lasting relief to the greatest number of residents.

A drop in funding to the program would result in fewer projects at precisely the time we need to be increasing project numbers to address not only the capacity deficiencies highlighted in the 2016 CASSCA study, but new projects that have come to light through resident reports and 311 logs as a result of the climate-driven stronger storms impacting our area.

In recent years residents have made clear their desire to see this issue become a priority and I believe that for the first time in decades, it has finally been elevated there but with an understanding that to make the changes needed for long-term success, this program needs to remain a sustained priority for years to come. Analysis shows that the increase in maintenance and spot improvement projects has had a profoundly positive impact but models also show that for many areas, funding to the large capacity projects will be vital in helping mitigate risks that come with storms that exceed the 10-year storm design of our current system.

We can’t take our foot off the gas now.

Thank you for your time and continued consideration and support of this issue.

Katherine Waynick

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3-18-23

Dear City of Alexandria, City Council,

In consideration for the City Council Public Hearing March 18, 2023 regarding CSS flood mitigation project funding.

The City of Alexandria is frequently noted in rankings as one of the best cities in the country to live. The historic charm of Old Town and the residents that make up this community would generally agree to most of the evaluation criteria such as quality of life, economic opportunities, diversity, raising a family and the list goes on. Some people would agree so much that they've been here their whole lives; and one would argue that part of what adds to the charm and value of this community is the diversity of families that have been here for generations as well as families that are just settling in.

However, within certain areas of Old Town that are on the combined stormwater and sewer system, those charming communities are being torn apart due to flooding. Flooding is caused by the overflow of the city's outdated stormwater and sewer utilities which backs up into our streets, destroyed our cars, floods our homes, and is a danger to the residents. The flood waters on the combined system are not just a danger because of the rising water in our homes but also because it's combined with sewage which poses a health risk.

The roadway that floods, including Gibbon St, floods where rush hour traffic backs up to standstill traffic from the Pkwy to S Royal St. The heavy traffic flow during a flood event has caused safety risks where cars are adamant about driving through the flood waters to get to 495 but they not only risk their cars flooding, but they risk the safety of residents on these blocks who are out in the flood waters trying to redirect traffic to prevent further damage to our homes by cars causing wakes in the flood waters which have risen up to 6 feet on our front doors to enter our homes.

The community that is reaching out to you, City Council, lives at S Pitt St and Gibbon St. The community that is reaching out to you, is being torn apart by this issue. When a new neighbor moves in, along with a welcome greeting also comes a warning of the flood issue with the city utilities. It would be devastating to this community to lose residents, whether new who moved here to be a part of this community or residents that have lived here for decades that have built this community. It's the people of Old Town that define it and in this area with the flooding from the city utilities on the combined stormwater and sewer system it's the people that aren't being protected.

Here are just a few of the dozens of stories from the residents that have invested in this neighborhood and care about their future in this neighborhood; and are asking for City Council's help to fund the projects to mitigate the flooding on the combined stormwater and sewer system due to outdated City utilities.

Robert Vitale, 508 Gibbon St

In July 2020, I came out to the block between Pitt and Royal to find my car had been flooded to above the seats and was completely totaled. This was a major cost, even with insurance, and a lot of time lost handling that and replacing it.

Ann Liddle, 526 S Pitt St

My home (main floor) flooded from overflowing sewers during a very heavy rain for the first time in 1977 and again a few years later. After those floods, it was extremely unnerving whenever we had a sudden heavy rainstorm. We developed a flood plan to raise the furniture up and roll up rugs, etc. Then the Tanyard Ditch project enlarged the sewers and the overflowing problem seemed to go away. Until July 2019. The rain came so fast that the sewers were quickly overwhelmed and water flowed into our house. We ended up with about 6-8 inches on the main floor. We have flood insurance which allows us to fairly quickly recover. Then it happened again in summer 2020 with less damage but with help from flood insurance again. We've been holding our breath ever since. The thing is, even with all these floods, the reality of what it means to be in the CSS was slowly dawning on me. Looking back on my experience and city records, most of the more recent flood prevention planning has been outside the CSS. In the CSS area, most of the planning has been centered on river flooding. The CSS has truly been overlooked. And when our sewers overflow, it includes sewage! Finally, with the \$11.5 million project now underway in the Pitt-Gibbon area (where I live), I think we will get some relief. But it won't be finished until 2029. Although promising, the city needs to plan a long term project to separate the sewers from the flood drains to minimize overflow of the flood drains and ensure it won't contain sewage. (Note - I've tried to find ways to mitigate the chance of flood water entering my home but have not yet found a way to do that.)

Tom O'Neill, 419 Gibbon St

I live at 419 Gibbon St. Each time I see "Flood Warning" in the weather forecast, I wince. My block for years (I've lived here since 2006) has been extremely vulnerable to heavy rainfall. The 400 block is low-lying, with storm water pouring in from all directions. The inadequate sewer drainages are quickly overwhelmed. Three times in 2021 and 2022 rainfall flooded the block. The high water swamped my front yard, swept into my crawl space and, save for sandbags at my doors, would have leaked onto my first floor. All along the block, vehicles and home interiors were seriously and expensively damaged.

Finally the city has established an overlook committee to study the infrastructure weak points. I am relieved that maintenance crews worked to clear out the area's drainage pipes last summer; I hope that this is a regular occurrence. Because when I see that construction on an upgrade to the Gibbon St. sewer system won't be completed until 2029! I can only wince and pray that extreme storms won't again traumatize the block in the meantime.

Michelle Gleeson, 423 Gibbon St

In 2008, the flooding occurred right before Lyles-Crouch ended for the school day. Parents walking from the East on Gibbon had to wade through very deep water to get to the school. I was carrying a very terrified toddler and it was extremely precarious. Miraculously, the water drained about 5 minutes before the bell rang. It is also fortunate that (at least in the 16 years we have lived on the 400 block of Gibbon), they have not occurred in the worst of rush hour when

cars are bumper to bumper on the three blocks leading to Route 1. People would be stranded. The flooding issue is very real and I hope it does not take an incident such as 200 elementary students facing a raging flow of water as they try to make their way home or 20 motorists who find their cars inoperable after water rises to their car windows for the city to take quicker action.

Christine Thuot, 421 Gibbon St

We have lived in the City of Alexandria since 2009 and 2013 respectively. We bought our home on Gibbon St in May 2019 with the intent to raise a family. Within a couple of months, on July 8, 2019, we unfortunately experienced our first flood event. The flood waters filled our crawl space and entered our first floor but the worst part was that it is combined stormwater and sewer. Since this flood event, we have stood in the flood waters during each event along with our neighbors to tape off streets to prevent cars from either flooding and/or driving through and causing wakes of flood waters to enter people's homes. As a community we have gone door to door to help people move cars and warn them when there's the potential of a flood event to occur.

I have volunteered on the BAR for a couple of years and due to this flood event I pursued to dedicate my time to the Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group. We had to modify our property to protect it from flooding including closing in our crawl space, building a raised brick garden bed in the front yard with structural reinforcement for a floodgate, and working with the City to build in a curb to direct water to the inlet at the back alley off of S Pitt St. We are passionate about our community, home and future in Old Town. We don't want our daughter to grow up scared of the rain because of where we live in Old Town, or to not be able to play outside after a flood event due to the sewer water contamination, or have her Elementary School, Lyle's Crouch, flooded with sewer water as it often does during flood events. We are asking the City to invest in resolving this issue as we have invested in this community.

Johanna Fitzpatrick, 600 S Pitt St

We bought our house at 600 South Pitt Street in July 2000. The seller did not tell us about any flooding and there was no flood notice we could find. Within a short period of time, the streets flooded and occasionally came into our home. Our worst experience occurred in 2003 or 2004 when we were out of town and flooding caused damage to a large portion of the first floor of our home and the loss of an automobile. We learned that the city had for many years a plan to deal with flooding in our area, but it had not been implemented for budgetary reasons. Finally, in about 2006 or 2007, the city began a massive project. Our block on Gibbon was torn up for a year. No car traffic or parking on our block. Large equipment and mounds of dirt in front of our houses. But we all felt the inconvenience was worth it, and it was. The huge system installed from the intersection of Pitt and Gibbon to the river completely stopped the flooding. We believed the flooding problem was behind us. Then, after a decade or so, the flooding began again. Why? We would like to have an explanation of why we have the same flooding problems now that we had before a very expensive- and seemingly successful- project was completed in the mid 2000s. Perhaps an answer to that question would help to resolve the current problem. Meanwhile, like our neighbors, we replace floors, furniture, rugs, and outdoor plantings destroyed by the flooding. And we purchase floodgates that we rush to put up every time rain is in the forecast.

Fred and Lorraine Griesbach, 425 Gibbon Street

Over the last several years we have lost one car to flooding and almost lost another. We have had to redo our landscaping several times because the floodwaters constantly destroy plants and grass. Several times we have had the water come up to our door. So far we have not had flooding inside the house but it feels like it is just a matter of time. Flood insurance has become prohibitively expensive. It now costs around \$3000 a year if you insure both house and contents and that is for the minimum coverage. But perhaps the greatest problem caused by the flooding is the fact that every time there is any suggestion of rain storms we are moving cars, putting out sandbags, and generally put in panic mode because the floods happen so quickly and we are powerless to stop them once they start. If we hear thunder in the middle of the night we are up because we have to make sure we are ready just in case.

Jan Rivenburg, 606 S Pitt St.

I have been through multiple floods, back to 2003. From June through September, I live just hoping another will not happen. My house and car have been flooded. Some floods are daytime, some are nighttime. I ask that the City takes specific steps to ensure that the CSS project is executed as planned. My concern is it will be pushed out. I remind the city that the previous Tanyard Ditch project completed in 2007 has ultimately failed for this area. To have sewage concerns while living in OldTown is disturbing and a health issue. I believe the Lyles Crouch School was potentially going to review some onsite options in 2021. I do not think that happened. I recommend that responsibility to track this project through 2029 should be written into the appropriate city department. Please do not let project oversight slip through multiple persons or offices. I also do not believe the City has addressed the ongoing Heritage Project and its potential flooding impact. As a reminder, CASSCA initially missed this intersection in their study. This suggests not enough supervision by the City. Stay engaged for the good of all.

Sincerely,  
Oldtown Residents  
S Pitt St & Gibbon St