

TO: Mayor Wilson
Members of the City Council
Mr. Parajon

FROM: Katie Cissel Greenway, CYFCC

DATE: Friday March 15, 2024

SUBJECT: ACPS Budget Support & Recommendations

As a member of the City of Alexandria's Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission, I'd like to express my support (and the CYFCC's support) for:

- **The School-Board approved ACPS budget**, which includes additional funding for step increases and a 2% market rate adjustment for ACPS staff, additional support for students mental health and wellbeing through the addition of a high school psychologist, a career/college counselor, two middle school deans and an athletic trainer, and a bilingual family liaison
- **The tax rate increase needed to fund the provisions listed above.**
- **The creation of a dedicated Outreach Service full-time Library Assistant II position**, who will support equitable access to library services by bringing them to the communities, including immigrant communities, throughout our city.
- **Funding to provide compensation to youth members who serve on the City of Alexandria's boards and commissions.**

I would also like to thank City Manager James Parajon for including the following in the proposed FY25 budget:

- Funding to support and improve the provision of mental health services to our residents, such as the addition of a Residential Services Program Manager
- Funding for a Youth Safety and Resilience Coordinator and seasonal funding for ten Youth Ambassadors
- Creative use of multiple revenue streams to ensure continuation of the current level of service provided by programs that benefit children, youth and families, such as 1) clinical and emergency services, 2) residential and community support services and 3) the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Very much appreciate your time and consideration on these matters, and extremely grateful for your service to the community.

CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Nathan <nfortner@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 12:01 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Cc: Kirk McPike
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Written Comment for 16 March City Council Public Hearing in Support of ATC/DASH Service

Some people who received this message don't often get email from nfortner@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good morning,

As a regular rider of the city's DASH bus, I am writing to encourage the Council to continue to fully fund this service that improves the lives of thousands of Alexandrians and visitors to the city every day. Additional funding would allow the Alexandria Transit Company to further improve services. I routinely take the Route 103 bus as part of my commute. It is normal for the 7:00 departure from Braddock Road to be standing-room-only by the time it reaches the Park Fairfax neighborhood. Because of this frequent overcrowding, this route especially would be well served by increased frequency during rush hours.

Efficiency measures such as bus stop consolidation and straightening of circuitous routes (such as the 36's serpentine routing and closely placed stops in places like Southern Towers and Potomac Yard Center) should be implemented at the first opportunity. However, while these measures would provide some scheduling flexibility, they would not create the surfeit necessary for truly increased service that can only be provided by funding increase.

Thank you for your consideration!

Very respectfully,
Nathan Fortner

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**City Council Public Hearing on FY25 Budget — Support for Alexandria Library
March 16, 2024 — Libby Bawcombe**

Good morning. My name is Libby Bawcombe, and I am here representing the Friends of Duncan Library and the Friends of Alexandria's Libraries.

Library Friends groups across the City fundraise for our branches in order to help pay for books, materials, programs, improvements in the facilities, equipment and supplies. Overall, Duncan Friends, Beatley Friends, Burke Friends and Barrett Friends help support services and materials that are not covered by the City budget. But, we have much to be thankful for this morning.

First, we would like to say "Thank you" to the Mayor, to City Council and to the City Manager for supporting the compensation study, which led to more accurate position descriptions and salary increases for librarians and staff across the system. These changes were sorely needed, and the Friends are excited to see that the FY25 budget is looking at another round of increases for librarians and staff, according to more research.

Next, the Friends want to thank you for funding the Hotspot and Chromebook lending, which are so important for equitable access to the internet. We hope that funding for that will continue into FY25.

The Friends also want to thank you for funding security guards at library branches, which are public spaces where patrons need to feel safe. And we appreciate your support for digital infrastructure and cybersecurity enhancements that are so vital to keeping library services up and running and secure.

As you know, library services and materials are vital to our communities. That's why the Friends support Alexandria Library's commitment to equitable access to information, knowledge and services across the City.

The Library has acquired an electric outreach vehicle for this very purpose in order to reach communities that can't come to the library or don't know about the library's offerings. The initial request for the outreach vehicle was supported by Brent Place, Ruby Tucker, Casa Chirilagua, and Southern Towers to allow the library to expand its partnerships within these neighborhoods and communities.

The outreach vehicle can promote awareness of library services, better serve the immigrant community, and participate in more school events and community gatherings.

Today, the Friends are asking you to create a dedicated full-time Outreach Service Librarian position, which would be funded by state aid. Alexandria Library is the only system in the area that does not currently have an outreach department. Prince George's, Montgomery, DC, Arlington, Loudon, Fairfax and Prince William all have outreach departments.

Library Friends support the library's effort to bring equitable access to materials and services, and we have pledged to help pay for outreach vehicle materials. We hope that through the creation of a dedicated outreach librarian position, the City will show your support for equitable access to library services. Thank you.

March 16, 2004

Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson and City Council members - good morning.

My name is Missy Estabrook. I'm Past President of the Alexandria PTA Council and a proud mother of two boys at ACPS. My apologies that I'll be calling in this testimony from a soccer tournament in Manassas.

I join with the many parents and teachers who have shared their concerns about the City Manager not including the School Board's additions in the City's proposed FY25 budget. I'd like to address the items specific to ACHS and GWMS where both of my boys have incredibly dedicated administrators and teachers but for whom the challenges of working in public education are becoming increasingly untenable.

If you do not fund the School Board approved budget, our nearly 5000 high school students will not receive:

- > A full-time College & Career Counselor;
- > A full-time Psychologist; or,
- > A full-time Athletic Trainer.

Meanwhile, our middle schoolers will not receive the additional Dean so desperately needed to help manage that already overcrowded school.

In addition, none of our teachers will receive the 2% Cost of Living increase OR the restoration of a missing salary step for our most experienced and valued teachers.

However, those teachers would receive those benefits if they left ACPS to go to neighboring districts and that is exactly what they'll do, leaving more students in the position of my 11th grader who did not have a math teacher for the first THREE MONTHS of school. Not surprisingly, his grade floundered but since a teacher was hired in November, he's had all As. That's great news for him - and a quick shout out to Mr. John Maes for making that possible - but this isn't about the grades of one student at one school. This is about a City Budget that should mirror the priorities and needs of our City - and no priority is more significant than educating our children.

I understand that Council is facing a difficult budget year with decreased revenue projections and numerous funding demands all designed to help Alexandria thrive, but strong public schools are an essential component of a community's economic vitality. If offsets cannot be found in a \$2.3 billion city budget to cover the \$11 million needed to fully fund ACPS, then taxes should be raised and I fully support that. Whichever path you choose to get us there, I'm confident you share PTAC's goal of helping ACPS students realize their full potential and bringing families and educators together to make our community stronger.

Please show your full support for Alexandria City Public Schools by FULLY FUNDING the ACPS FY 2025 Approved Combined Funds Budget.

Thank you.



Park & Recreation Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

November 3, 2023

Mr. James Parajon
City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Park & Recreation Commission Priorities for FY 2025 Budget

Dear Jim,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on budget priorities for FY 2025. Based on our meetings and discussions during the past year, the Commission has identified six priorities:

1. Ensuring the availability of sports fields & open space
2. Investing in new facilities
3. Increasing RPCA maintenance budget
4. Supporting the RPCA administrative needs
5. Exploring creative, new non-traditional revenue generation opportunities to supplement budget
6. Addressing waterfront flooding

Ensuring the availability of recreational fields & open space.

A combination of events has led to a significant increase in demand for recreational field space -- including COVID recovery, population increases, and new school construction. The Commission believes that the most efficient way to ensure availability of recreational spaces is with more synthetic turf and lighted fields. This enables the same number of fields to service many more hours of use throughout the year for a comparatively nominal cost. This important work should continue and expand to more sites to allow for increased capacity.

We also encourage the City to continue its recent practice of pursuing public access easements for open space in new developments which efficiently allow public access to these spaces while minimizing maintenance and operating expenses. We are particularly excited about – and have had an opportunity to review – the new open spaces being developed in the old Oakville Triangle, Potomac Yard, Virginia Tech and (longer term) at the HRP PRGS and Landmark Mall sites.

Investing in New Facilities and Parks to Better Serve our Growing Community

The City adopted an overall parks plan 10 years ago. Significantly, we have only completed 23% of all the planned upgrades & improvements since that time. We understand that the City's Capital Improvement Program is actively discussed and a top priority for Staff and Council alike. We believe

Signature: 
Email: danacolors@gmail.com

Signature: 
Stuart Fox (Nov 3, 2023 16:49 EDT)
Email: sfox@route66ventures.com

that funding more of the programs that were identified in the last 10-year plan, including Hensley Park, makes our community greener, more livable and attractive for those currently living in -- and this considering to move to – the City of Alexandria.

Increasing RPCA maintenance budget.

Even though the number of parks and facilities that RPCA manages continues to increase, the maintenance budgets have barely increased in the past decade. The Department has done a stellar job managing our facilities more efficiently, but without proper maintenance our long-term expenses will increase substantially, and we risk requiring more capital improvement more regularly. Increasing the operating budget to maintain our facilities at a high level is critical.

Supporting the RPCA administrative needs.

The City must support its staff to attract and retain top-tier talent. We must provide competitive salaries as well as pathways for growth within the City, so that we are attracting and maintaining top performing staff. This is particularly the case within our Recreations Centers for staff playing critical roles providing after-school care and engagement programs as well as an increasingly diverse set of programs for all residents. These investments make the Department more efficient and better able to achieve its mission.

Exploring creative, new non-traditional revenue generation opportunities.

Today, an increasing share of the RPCA operating budget is funded via cost recovery, rentals, and classes. We encourage this trend to continue for several reasons:

1. to limit the impact to the City's operating budgets;
2. to ensure that we are providing the greatest value to our stakeholders: our City residents; and
3. to better align the programs and services we provide with the wants and needs of our community – including considering new projects and new uses of city spaces.

We encourage RPCA to update its Resource Allocation Model with these priorities in mind and the goals of generating revenue, providing valuable services, and living up to our City's values and responsibilities.

Addressing waterfront flooding.

Waterfront flooding continues to severely impact multiple parks on a regular basis throughout the year. The engagement of Skanska/JMT as the phase 1A contractor the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project is a big step in the right direction, however, there remains a tremendous volume of critical work to be done to ensure that we maximize the dollars being invested into the Waterfront and its parks that we know and are so loved by our community and visitors alike.

Please reach out to us if you'd like to further discuss or would like us to advise on other related issues.

Sincerely,

Dana R. Colarulli
Dana Robert Colarulli, Acting Chair
Park & Recreation Commission

Stuart A. Fox
Stuart Fox, Member
Park & Recreation Commission

cc: Honorable Mayor & Members of the Alexandria City Council
Park & Recreation Commission members
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Staff Liaison to the Parks & Recreation Commission

Good Morning, Mr. Mayor, Members of the City Council, and Mr. Parajon. I greatly appreciate having the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the City's Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission. In 2011, Alexandria's City Council established our Commission in part to advocate for policies and decisions that result in better outcomes for children, youth, and families in Alexandria. We are here today to urge you to adopt the School Board-approved ACPS budget. We understand that a tax rate increase might be needed to fund this ACPS budget, and our Commission supports that tax increase.

The School Board budget's inclusion of a market rate adjustment and step increases reflects our Commission's concern that we attract and retain the highest quality teachers and staff for our schools. This funding is critically important to our city's children and youth.

The addition of new staff positions related to mental health and social-emotional well-being, such as a psychologist, a college/career counselor, two middle school deans and an athletic trainer, corresponds to our Commission's expressed desire for access to timely, high quality mental health services. In-school personnel are the front-line in identifying and addressing students' mental health needs in a timely manner.

Finally, a bilingual family liaison will help to ensure that our non-English-speaking families will be aware of what ACPS offers and be able to take advantage of all of our school district's programs and services. As you are aware, the Commission oversees the implementation of the Children and Youth Community Plan, and the first sentence of the plan's overview states that "The City of Alexandria, Alexandria City Public Schools, and youth-serving organizations will work together to promote equitable access to the resources needed for all children to be healthy, safe, and academically successful." Certainly a bilingual family liaison is critical to ensuring equitable access to resources.

We'd also like to voice our support for the creation of a dedicated Outreach Service full-time Library Assistant position. This library assistant position will promote equitable access to resources as well by bringing the library to underserved communities throughout our city, thereby promoting the academic success of all of Alexandria's children.

The Commission would also like to remind the City Council of its support for funding to compensate youth for serving on our City's boards and commissions. This, too, reflects our interest in equity, as students from financially-strapped families may choose to forgo the opportunity to serve on a board or commission if that service is not compensated.

Finally, the Commission would like to thank Mr. Parajon for including funding to support and improve city-provided mental health services and for funding a Youth and Safety Resilience Coordinator and ten Youth Ambassadors. We'd also like to thank Mr. Parajon and city staff for their creative use of multiple revenue streams to ensure continuation of services for children, youth and families despite a very challenging fiscal environment. We greatly appreciate your efforts to support vulnerable families and remain fiscally responsible.

Thank you very much for listening to our Commission's views.

Sincerely,

Catherine Clinger
Chair
Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission

Written Public Comments of Alexander Crider Scioscia
Before the Alexandria City Council
on the FY25 Proposed Budget
3.16.24

My name is Alexander Crider Scioscia and I am here today both as a member of the BAC and a former student of ACPS to speak in support of fully funding the School Board's proposed budget.

This is two fold, as a former student, I can personally attest to what great teachers give us. Students know when teachers are fully invested and love what they do and they respond in kind. I had an amazing education here at George Mason, George Washington and ACHS and it set me up for the rest of my life. We owe it to students to make sure we keep and hire the best teachers and staff, it truly makes a difference and the School Board's budget moves in the right direction. We also need to make sure that the previously proposed CIP plan is preserved so that George Mason and Cora Kelly are both expanded to be ready for increases in the population and meet the City's Green Building Policy.

Look, this is my first time ever speaking directly to the Council and historically it is rare that the BAC publicly advocates for something. This cause is worth it. I want to see our schools thrive, so that we can continue to create and give the same great opportunities I had, to all students and make sure that we staunch the loss of our best and brightest staff to other school systems. I understand this proposed budget will lead to some hard choices for you all and the Community - a possible tax increase or cuts somewhere else in City services, but we need to figure this out. I stand with PTAC, EAA and the community in asking you, the Council, to approve the School Board's budget request.

Thank you.

Testimony in support of FY2025 Stormwater Budget

Good afternoon Mr. Mayor, Madame Vice Mayor and members of City Council

I am John Hill. A resident of Rosemont and a member of the now-permanent (thank you very much) Stormwater Advisory Committee.

I am here to voice my strong support for the continued investment in stormwater infrastructure that is contained in the proposed budget for FY2025.

Back in 2021, City Council launched the Flood Action Alexandria Program. Yes, it did impose a special stormwater fee that is paid by all Alexandria residents. And yes, that fee will increase again by 5% in 2025.

But that money is going to the right place. It is being spent on several major capacity-building projects and dozens of small repairs that protect Alexandria from the severe rainstorms that flood our homes and businesses every year.

The proposed budget continues the commitment for a \$260million 10-year investment in stormwater infrastructure that Council made back in 2021. In fact, the proposed budget actually increases that commitment by \$28 million to address flooding in the combined sewer area of Old Town.

The rainstorms of the past summer have confirmed why that investment is so important – and so necessary.

This past summer we had two extreme rainstorms. The most severe dropped an inch-and-a-half of rain in just 20 minutes. That's 400 million gallons of water dropped on the 15 square miles of Alexandria in just 20 minutes. To put that in perspective -- that is enough water to bury a football field under 900 feet of water. That's the volume of water that our storm drains and culverts and little streams have to move through Alexandria so it doesn't flood our streets and basements.

The Flood Action Program has two projects well-underway to directly address the two areas that saw the most flooding last summer. The project at Commonwealth, Ashby and Glebe addresses the flooding in the Del Ray and Lynnhaven neighborhoods. The Hooff's Run project addresses the problem in the Rosemont neighborhood. The completion of these projects is still years away – but the residents see that the work has started and designs are being drawn up.

In closing, let me thank City Council for its continued support for stormwater infrastructure. The pipes, drains, and culverts of stormwater are underground and – in the past -- never received the funded they needed.

In 2021, Council fixed that. Alexandria now has a 10-year Flood Action Plan that includes a comprehensive set of projects for the City's most flood-prone neighborhoods. By the way, that list contains many more projects than the two I just mentioned. And many of these projects won't be complete until the next decade.

In the meantime, the Stormwater Committee will continue to oversee the Flood Action Program. We will ensure that the Stormwater Fee is spent on the most urgent projects and Alexandria makes progress every year toward a more flood resilient future.

Thank you.

March 14, 2024

To: City Council

From: YIMBYs of Northern Virginia, Alexandria Chapter¹

Re: Increased Funding for Housing



Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson, and Members of Council:

Our region faces a housing crisis rooted in a simple fact: as the DC region grew in population and added thousands of high-paying jobs over the past several decades, we failed to build enough housing to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for homes near these jobs. The impacts of our housing crisis are devastating, and land hardest on the most vulnerable Alexandrians. The solution to this crisis is simple: we must build more homes for the people who live here today and who will want to live here tomorrow.

But we must also mitigate harm today while we pursue this long-term solution. The budget plays a critical role in this by funding both dedicated affordable homes and assistance for families who want to remain a part of our community.

- **Council should approve \$10 million in additional affordable housing funds for 2025 so work can begin on these projects.** In addition to the \$10 million in this year's budget, Council should commit to identifying a sustainable source of at least \$20 million in additional ongoing revenue for committed affordable housing in future years.

There are hundreds of already-approved affordable homes that could be under construction today if not for lack of funding, including the projects at Elbert Avenue (approved 2023) and the Parc View Apartments (approved 2022). The approval of an additional \$10 million in 2025 and \$20 million in future years will ensure that approved affordable housing projects can be built quickly rather than languishing in purgatory while more and more of our neighbors get priced out of Alexandria.

During last year's consideration of Zoning for Housing, you heard from both supporters and opponents of that reform about the importance of affordable housing. The need to fund dedicated affordable homes may be the closest thing Alexandria has to a political consensus.

¹ This written comment is the only official position of YIMBYs of Northern Virginia's Alexandria chapter. Leads and members may give individual comments on the budget that include, but are not limited to, the organization's housing priorities. YIMBYs of NoVA does not take any official position beyond what is written here.

- **In addition to increased affordable housing funds, Council should invest in a local voucher program to support families earning 40% area median income (AMI) and below.** Voucher programs provide critical resources to the most vulnerable families, but those funded by the federal government are subject to the whims of a national executive that has in the past excluded families with mixed immigration status. As a city that welcomes and cherishes our immigrant communities, Alexandria should ensure all families facing displacement are able to receive assistance.

YIMBYs of NoVA has no position on whether the individual property tax rate should be raised. We are cognizant that these requests come during a difficult budget year, when funds are scarce and Council is being asked to consider many other requests. We hope you will consider the fundamental role that housing plays in the lives of all Alexandrians, from teachers and students to first responders and the employees and customers in our many small businesses. Investments in keeping Alexandria affordable are investments in all of our community.

With these fiscal constraints we would also remind Council of the **important and free regulatory** reforms the City could make to both improve housing affordability and generate additional tax revenue that can be spent on dedicated affordable homes, schools, staff salaries, transportation, or any of the City's many other priorities.

Housing could be made much more affordable if the city simply stopped mandating luxury accouterments like off-street parking for private vehicles. Mandated parking drives up construction costs, which gets passed on to us as higher rents and mortgage payments. If Alexandrians choose to live in homes with off street parking, as many do today and will continue to do in the future, they should of course be free to do so. But a government mandate that all homes include a minimum number of parking spaces is unnecessary and forces all households, even those who can't afford a car, to pay for private vehicle storage.

Removing costly parking mandates from the zoning code would make housing more affordable, and would cost \$0 in future city budgets. In fact, it will reduce the subsidy needed for future affordable housing projects.

The City could also improve the state of future budgets by getting more serious about transit-oriented development. Alexandria still places strict limits on how many people the City will allow to live near transit. Walksheds around many of our Metro stations and current & future transitways are still zoned for low density or industrial uses instead of the dense, vibrant, transit-supporting and revenue-producing neighborhoods they could be if we simply allowed them to grow.

The impacts of these restrictions are visibly obvious: anyone standing at Braddock Road Station, for example, can face east and see a City growing up around the station, resembling much of the region's best transit-oriented communities. Turn around and face west, however,

and you see what looks like a sleepy suburb. In too many places we've approached transit with a split mentality, imposing strict caps on the growth of some neighborhoods while allowing abundant housing on "the other side of the tracks."

By limiting the growth on our most in-demand land, the City provides what is in effect a regulatory subsidy to low-density residential uses while actively preventing the types of high-density residential and commercial development that delivers huge tax windfalls for cities who allow growth to happen. Arlington County is a prime example of this - by allowing growth all around their metro lines they have over the years developed a strong baseline of commercial tax revenue that funds the County's priorities. Alexandria could have this too, if we'd only allow it.

Allowing growth around high-capacity transit stations would make housing more affordable, and would provide additional money for future city budgets.

We hope Council will take seriously its commitment to improving housing affordability across the board, both by funding today's needs for affordable homes and vouchers and by permitting the growth that will allow us to fund future needs as well.

About Organization: *YIMBYs (yes in my backyard) of Northern Virginia is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization working to make housing affordable to all by enabling the construction of more homes for more people. Attainable homes close to the amenities of daily life hold the promise of communities that are more affordable, socially connected, economically productive, and sustainable.*

www.yimbysofnova.org

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL ON MARCH 16, 2024, IN
SUPPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER'S PROPOSED FY 2024 BUDGET**

Good Evening Mayor Wilson and City Councilmembers.

My name is Michael Schuster. I am the Chair of the Alexandria City Commission on Aging. I am testifying on behalf of the Commission on Aging

First, we thank the city government for its generous support of older Alexandrians over the years. In particular, we appreciate the contributions of the City Manager and the Office of Management of the Budget, and in meeting with Commission members.

We wish to address four items: the real property tax relief program; the cuts in DASH funding and funding for the GrandPad program; and outreach to underserved older communities

An item not in the budget is a provision for updating the Household asset and income limits in the real property tax relief program. The most a taxpayer can have in assets, excluding their home, is \$430,000, far lower than Arlington County's current limit of \$656,232. It is important to note that Alexandria lowered its asset limit in 2013 to bring it line with the lower limits in both Arlington and Fairfax Counties in 2013. While Arlington County has progressively increased its asset limit since 2013, Alexandria has never increased its limit. This change will not require an appropriation of money, and in cases of tax deferral, the City would eventually receive the tax dollars with interest when the owner either sells the home or dies. At a time when "real" property taxes are rising, and when there has been talk about raising the tax rate, this is the time when the Council should follow Arlington County and increase the asset limit to ensure that long-term, moderate-income home owners are able to continue living in Alexandria.

The Commission appreciates the City Manager's increase in general fund support for DASH in the proposed budget which will enable DASH to remain fare free for FY 2025 and to meet compensation increases required under DASH's collective bargaining agreement.

The proposed budget does however include a \$180,000 cut to the DASH budget, cutting in half the service on Route 104 that connects Del Ray, Northridge, and the Parkfairfax neighborhoods to the Braddock Road Metro and the Pentagon during peak periods. This represents the first reduction in DASH service since the free fare program began, and sets a concerning precedent where the City could gradually pare back DASH service to offset the increasing costs of keeping the system free.

I want to mention the GrandPad program through the Division of Aging and Adult Services and Senior Services of Alexandria. The use of these specially programmed iPads ensure that older Alexandrians both remain socially engaged in their communities and have easy access to their health care providers. The United States Surgeon General last year sounded alarm about social isolation, which has been found to be as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. The funding for the GrandPad programs will end this year. We hope the City Council will provide funding to continue this important public health program.

Finally, the Division of Aging and Adult Services has funded a community outreach program managed by Senior Services of Alexandria since April 2022. The goal of the program is to establish on-going programs for limited English-speaking older adults and persons with disabilities to ensure they have access to important City programs, including COVID and Flu vaccinations through the Health Department. This outreach effort has resulted in the establishment of regular programming in their native languages for older adults in the Hispanic and Amharic [AAM HAA RUHK] Communities, building on the work that contributed to

Alexandria's high vaccination rates - 80% of Alexandrians were vaccinated, comprising over 126,000 Alexandrians— saving countless lives. DCHS received ARPA funding for the program from the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services which ends on September 30,2024. The Commission urges the City Council to continue funding the program, at an annual cost of only \$42,000.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Mayor and Members of the City Council:

As a Commissioner of the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission, I want to share my support for fully funding the ACPS School Board-approved budget. This will be another arrow in our quiver to support teacher retention in ACPS. The quality of the teacher in the classroom is the number one in-school factor impacting student outcomes. To support public education, this is the most important investment the City of Alexandria can make.

I want to call particular attention to the need for step increases for teachers whose steps were frozen in the past. In previous years, neighboring districts would only place new employees on their salary scale up to a certain step (often Step 10-12). Now, some of our neighboring districts are offering full step placement. So, for example, an employee currently on Step 8 here could be placed at Step 14 in Fairfax, which gives that teacher a \$10,000+ salary increase compared to the individual's current ACPS salary. We all want to retain these experienced teachers for the betterment of the kids in our community.

I would like to thank you for your continued support for increasing teacher compensation and our public school students in the City. I support ways we would need to increase revenue for the City of Alexandria to offset ACPS funding increases.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the City.

Respectfully,

Carrie Heath Phillips

Alexandria resident

Alexandria City Council – ACPS Budget Discussion

March 16, 2024

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

Thank you all for your many years of dedicated service to our community.

I request that you support our schools by funding the full operating budget put forth by the ACPS School Board. As you are aware, the gap between the proposals of the Superintendent and the School Board is focused on adequate compensation for our teachers. This compensation is critical to attracting and retaining the best teachers for our community.

I have been an active supporter of our community for many years, including through roles leading multiple school and city PTAs and school redistricting and capital projects, and I am currently Vice Chair of the ACPS School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC). While these roles have informed my viewpoints on many aspects, the comments I make here are my own.

I have children at both George Washington Middle School and Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, although I still would be making this same request even if my children were not in ACPS. High quality schools are the cornerstone of strong communities and teachers are the foundation of any school system, so it is essential that we have the best teachers. While it is somewhat inherent that teachers don't choose their profession based on the salary potential, it is necessary that we provide compensation that makes teachers feel valued. That compensation is even more crucial in our highly competitive region.

Looking back through my documents, I am reminded of several occasions during the last decade where I, along with other community members, have asked for City Council's support with ACPS' needs. I am very thankful that in recent years there have been fewer occasions where the community has had to strongly advocate to bridge gaps, largely because School Board and City Council (and both staffs) have made significant progress, working together on a shared vision for our city and schools. However, this current situation highlights there are still opportunities to improve this collaboration so that the Superintendent, School Board, City Council, and staffs are better aligned, so I also respectfully request that everyone try to avoid the politics and continue working on being better together.

I appreciate that the City of Alexandria has finite funding, and it is a complex process of matching community desires with available resources. While I generally don't like more taxes, I would support an increase in residential property taxes if it were necessary to fully fund the School Board's recommended budget that includes both a market rate adjustment (MRA) and reconciles the deferred historical step increases. However, I also want to be considerate of other concerns throughout our community and urge you to consider funding at least one of either the MRA or step increase if you feel that both would be too significant.

In closing, I reiterate my request that you support our schools by funding the full operating budget put forth by the ACPS School Board.

Thank you,

William C. Pfister Jr.
3718 Templeton Place
wcpfister@gmail.com
703-879-2327

Dear City Council Members –

I am Nichole Westin, a resident of the City since 1998, a home owner since 2007, and a proud parent of a thriving first grader at William Ramsay ES. I urge the Council to support the Schools Board budget and yes, I support a tax increase. My husband and I purchased our home in the West End in 2016 and the day we closed is the day we discovered I was pregnant. And one of our initial reactions was to wonder if we had made the right choice to buy a home in the City instead of one with a better school district. But we have “lucked” out with the gem of a school that is William Ramsay.

Since I have moved here in 1998, Alexandria schools have never been considered the best. It's always been “it's fine if you get lucky”. When I owned my Old Town Condo, young couples would always move out to Fairfax or Loudon or even – god forbid- Maryland to enroll their future children in strong school systems. Even now, with my personal experience of a dynamic school that provides a strong education grounded in support and affection for all, I find myself convincing, begging, bragging to my neighborhoods as they contemplate putting their homes for sale and moving to the next street over in Fairfax County. In fact, most of the kids in our neighborhood are homeschooled or in private. It is not possible to improve our city, to diverse zoning, to attract more businesses if people do not want to live here because of the reputation of “if you get lucky” schools – even if that reputation is not deserved.

So where to start? Pay our teachers to keep them here and to attract more. Teachers deserve pay that supports them just as much as they support their students. As fewer people enter the teaching profession, as legacy teachers leave for non teaching jobs that pay more with less pressure, and as our own teachers leave for better paying jobs in neighboring communities, it is shocking that this is even up for debate. I also support the budget as it includes the assurance that all elementary schools will have two AAS support teachers as the original budget allotted just one for the West End schools. We are lucky to have a population of students who need advanced academic support spread throughout the city and not just concentrated in a few.

As for the threat of raising taxes – so be it. I see families and community members pull out wallets and drop off supplies to support the schools now. Boxes of Band-Aids stuffed into backpacks. Grandparents buying extra school supplies “just in case” a friend needs them. Those who send their kids to private schools still showing up for PTA fundraisers at a local taco shop or dropping off candy for a Trunk or Treat. Parents who work multiple jobs handing over extra cash at a bake sale to make sure a beloved teacher gets a treat. A mother who barely speaks English showing up to volunteer and communicating through hand gestures and smiles. This city prides itself on a progressive, rising tide approach but it is empty words if our teachers that shore up communities and guide our children forward are left behind or just leave.