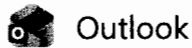


13
4-18-26

Outlook

[EXTERNAL]Agenda Item 26-0790 — Concerns Regarding Proposed Meter Changes in Old Town

From Joy Quinn-Whalen <j.quinn@spiceandtea.com>

Date Fri 4/17/2026 12:31 PM

To CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov <CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov>

You don't often get email from j.quinn@spiceandtea.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, Members of Council, and Mr. Parajon,

I am writing as a local business owner in Old Town, directly across from City Hall, to express my concern regarding the proposed expansion of metered parking hours and the significant rate increase.

From where I sit, this proposal does not reflect the realities of operating a small business in a historic retail district. Our customers already perceive Old Town parking as difficult, confusing, and expensive. Increasing meter rates so sharply, while also expanding enforcement to Sundays, risks reinforcing that perception and making it even harder for local businesses to attract shoppers, diners, and casual visitors.

This is especially concerning because Alexandria does not appear to be pairing higher prices with the other elements that good parking policy typically requires. Best practice is not simply to raise rates to generate revenue. Good parking management is supposed to be data-driven, zone-specific, and tied to turnover, clear wayfinding, and viable off-street alternatives. In historic retail districts, pricing changes work only when visitors can easily understand where to go, where garages are, how long they can stay, and what the reasonable alternatives are. That does not describe the current customer experience in Old Town.

For businesses near City Hall and west of Washington, the situation is even more difficult. We are not operating in a modern commercial district built around abundant structured parking. We are operating in a historic district with constrained street patterns, reduced on-street supply, limited long-term options, and a customer base that often arrives by car. When pricing is raised without adequate alternatives, the result is not necessarily better turnover. It can just as easily mean fewer visits, shorter visits, more spillover into nearby residential areas, and more frustration for both customers and employees.

I also want to emphasize the employee side of this issue. Small retailers and restaurants depend on staff being able to access work reliably and affordably. When long-term parking options are limited, and on-street parking becomes more expensive and more restrictive, the burden falls on employees as well as customers. For a district that depends on service workers, retail teams, and hospitality staff, parking policy should not unintentionally make staffing harder.

If the City believes parking demand truly justifies these changes, then the public should be shown the zone-by-zone data supporting that conclusion. If the goal is sound parking management rather than budget balancing, then Alexandria should first implement the complementary tools used in successful downtown parking systems: clearer vehicular wayfinding, better communication about garage options, more intuitive customer guidance, and policies tailored to the actual conditions of each subdistrict rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Old Town is a historic, small-business-driven district. Parking policy here should support access, turnover, and economic vitality — not further damage the city's reputation for being difficult to visit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joy Quinn

Capricorn Collaboration, LLC - DBA The Spice & Tea Exchange
320 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 21401

"Creating & sharing the experience of a more flavorful life"

Joy Quinn-Whalen

Store Owner

Mobile: (703) 624-3591

The Spice & Tea Exchange of Alexandria, VA

320 King St, Alexandria, VA 22314

 (571) 312-8505

The Spice & Tea Exchange of Annapolis

155 Main St, Annapolis, MD 21401

 (410) 280-2088

**THE SPICE & TEA
EXCHANGE**

The Spice & Tea Exchange of Rehoboth

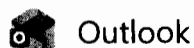
10 Rehoboth Ave, Rehoboth Beach,
DE 19971

 (302) 227-3327

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13
4-18-26

[EXTERNAL]Support for metered parking on Sundays

From Tom VanAntwerp <tom@tomvanantwerp.com>

Date Wed 4/15/2026 9:07 AM

To CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov <CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov>

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Members of Council,

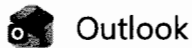
I'm writing to express my unreserved support for metering public parking on Sundays in Alexandria.

Public parking is a taxpayer-funded subsidy to drivers. In this dense city full of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit-users, it amounts to a regressive tax on a large portion of the population that goes toward funding services for those with more wealth. All public parking should be metered all the time—let's stop subsidizing car storage for the well-off.

Thank you,
Tom VanAntwerp
Resident, Del Ray, Alexandria

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18
4-18-26



[EXTERNAL]Agenda item 26-0790 Parking Meters

From JP <jenniferpark131@gmail.com>

Date Tue 4/14/2026 10:48 AM

To CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov <CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov>

Cc Jim Parajon <jim.parajon@alexandriava.gov>

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Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing to share my experiences operating two businesses, Wear Ever Jewelry and 1112 King Enterprises, at 1112 King Street over the past nine years. We care deeply about the success and vibrancy of Old Town. To help our commercial district continue to thrive, we want to bring several pressing parking challenges to your attention.

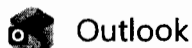
The current parking situation creates significant hurdles for our customers, tenants, and employees. We hope to work together to find supportive solutions for the following issues:

- **Long-term residential parking limitations:** Our second-floor property operates as a short-term residential rental. To meet city requirements, we must provide a parking spot within 500 feet of the building. After extensive searching, the only available spot costs \$6,000 per year, an expense the rental market cannot absorb. Because our tenants change frequently, we do not qualify for a standard residential permit.
- **Customer parking constraints:** Wear Ever Jewelry hosts three-hour classes on weekends. Street meters and lots regularly fill before 11:00 a.m., and public parking garages are difficult for visitors to locate. As a result, many students arrive late or must interrupt their classes to move their vehicles to different parking zones.
- **Employee parking costs:** We currently pay \$4,000 per year to lease parking spaces for our staff. It is simply not feasible for employees to leave the premises every two to three hours to move their cars.
- **Impact of Sunday metering:** Implementing metered parking charges on Sundays will further complicate an already difficult situation for our weekend customers and staff.
- **Reduction of available street parking:** Over the last nine years, available street parking has noticeably decreased. Spaces have been absorbed by pedestrian-only blocks, restaurant pickup zones, and outdoor seating *parklets*.
- **Safety and practical concerns regarding parklets:** While outdoor seating benefits some restaurants, placing diners in parking spaces inches from vehicle traffic poses a clear safety risk. Furthermore, these parklets do not serve retail businesses like ours. Placing high-value merchandise outside is unsafe and increases the risk of theft. We suggest encouraging restaurants to utilize permanent outdoor spaces, like patios or rooftops, rather than makeshift parking spot conversions.

We share your commitment to making Old Town a safe, welcoming, and accessible place for everyone. Thank you for your time, your public service, and your attention to these concerns. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further and explore practical solutions together.

Sincerely,
Jennifer J Park
Owner
Wear Ever Jewelry & 1112 King Enterprises
1112 King St, Alexandria, VA 22314
201-841-2674

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B
4-14-26

[EXTERNAL]Parking Meter policy proposed changes and impact on Old Town boutiques

From Danielle Romanetti <danielle@fibrespace.com>

Date Mon 4/13/2026 5:48 PM

To CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov <CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov>

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Dear Council Members,

I am writing to provide information about the impact of changing parking meter policy in Old Town and my opposition to these changes as a business owner, commercial property owner in the metered district and member of the most recent Old Town Area Parking Study Workgroup. The proposed changes to meter policy in this year's budget appear to have been made without past data collected and examined by previous parking studies and knowledge of our own experience in changing parking policy here in Alexandria. **It appears that meter revenue is being used to balance the budget, which is in direct conflict with our charter that mandates that parking revenue must be used to maintain the parking resources or add additional resources.** Since meters are supposed to manage high demand, what data does the City manager have that shows we require meters to create turnover on Sundays? What data shows that we should RAISE the rate for meters and how do we compare with other similar sized historic jurisdictions, not major business districts with developer-built garages at their disposal?

Our retail community knows these changes will negatively impact shopping and dining by chasing off visitors to the City of Alexandria entirely, where we already have a parking perception problem. We are built inside of a historic district without the benefit of large scale development that often creates much needed off-street long-term parking resources. Those of us who were in business for the last four city managers are aware of the impact of these changes on our business community, as each one tried to balance the budget by reaching for parking meter revenue. While TES and the City Manager state that these changes intend to push drivers to other resources, that is not at all what we know will happen.

We would be the only jurisdiction charging for parking on Sundays, which would further solidify our reputation as being outrageous with our parking policy. Raising meter rates and fines for not paying the meter is a policy strategy to push people to more affordable and longer-term parking. **BUT** the city has not fully implemented the other tools that would assist in moving customers to our lots and garages. At present, visitors to our city are not directed to our off-street parking by any wayfinding, and the only parking wayfinding that exists on the main entrances to our city are a simple blue "P" sign that doesn't indicate what that parking resource is or how far away, as is the standard with other jurisdictions. Even approaching from north or south on Washington St, there is nothing telling drivers to turn before King to find our ample parking garages. We have made little effort to make our own city owned off street resources more available or advertised. In fact, the city SOLD three of the only parking resources West of Washington Street, which will all soon be redeveloped and gone entirely. As you haven't made other changes to balance any raise in meter rates and fines, simply changing prices will not move people to garages and lots. And again, we don't even have garages and lots West of Washington. Instead, the negative press (which has already happened) will prevent people from considering coming entirely. Those who come and overstay on a meter (since 2 hours is not enough to shop and dine), will receive an even larger fine resulting in them never returning. The City communications department and Visit Alexandria have yet to create any impactful campaign around parking to attempt to educate the public about our resources and combat our reputation in the DMV as a nightmare to get to.

And one size doesn't fit all

On the area of Old Town WEST of Washington St, it is important to understand why that meter zone is different than the rest of town. Our hours are different for a reason. We do not have off street parking options west of Washington for parking over 2 hours. And again, the City sold the off street lots that are hourly, and those will disappear when those redevelopments start (900 and 1000 blocks of King). As such, changing parking policy on this end of town does not

result in anything other than a devastating blow to our retailers and restaurants as people simply have nowhere else to go except to residential spaces where they are less likely to be ticketed for staying past the time period. You can see in the past when these changes have gone into place, there was an enormous negative impact on the business community. The City manager at the time eventually turned back the meter price and also the meter hours AFTER they were already posted on signs. Old Town Area Parking Study Workgroup (OTAPS) was reconvened in 2015 to respond to push back from the businesses and residents after those changes. OTAPS met in spring of 2015 and developed a series of policy recommendations that, if implemented comprehensively, would improve the goals of moving vehicles out of residential spaces to meters and push long term parkers from meters to garages and lots. We never recommended extending meters to Sundays, as the data didn't support it and the result would have a huge negative impact on residents and churches.

The idea that meters are for short term visitors and garages are where longer-term visitors should park is a great idea in theory. But it doesn't work so well when there is no long-term parking option. Since the City is not also planning to make sig moves to direct cars to our garages AND our main city garage resource is closed for the next two or more years, this change in policy makes absolutely no sense from a parking management perspective.

Most importantly, what does the data show?

What the data that the last Old Town Area Parking Study workgroup shows is that overall since increasing the price on the meters and extending the hours across town, we have seen a DECREASE in garage usage and in INCREASE in parking at residential areas next to business zones. At the time of the study, the data ALSO showed that zone 2 is nowhere near capacity (in fact almost every block of King in our zone was reported at between 25 and 49% usage at the time) yet meter policy changes continue to be proposed across ALL meter zones. Again, one size does not fit all.

Since OTAPS

In the 11 years since the city last conducted a parking study in Old Town, we have shut down parking spaces and car traffic to two entire blocks of King and also sig portions of Union / the Strand with more to be removed soon. We have created a traffic back up situation on Union that has made those parking garages very inaccessible. During COVID we removed a large number of parking spaces to convert them to loading zones, to serve restaurants needs. City Hall garage is now closed entirely for several years and all parking around City Hall has also been removed, pushing motor coach parking further into our retail district and blocking view and access to boutiques nearby. Several entire blocks or nearly entire blocks of King are now taken with outdoor parklets put in place during COVID that have been made permanent. The wayfinding program was only fully implemented for pedestrians and not car traffic. We still have no real time parking data app, but we have added an aggressive private ticketing company who has chased off a ton of customers and employees with their practice of writing tickets even when people have paid the meter (forcing them to go through our parking adjudication process). And lastly, the City sold the only off-street parking resources on the west end of Old Town. City policy since the last OTAPS has not improved conditions for retail or put tools in place that would ease a transition to higher meter prices and extended hours / days.

We are in a crisis where our off-street parking resources have diminished or are harder to get into, and our on street spaces have been reduced. Now is not the time to extend meters to Sunday and raise rates and fines. This is just an additional tax on our customers, which is ultimately a tax on businesses. It pushes cars further into the residential districts when the meter price is high. City policy also continues to only impact the businesses and residents of Old Town/Carlyle, as we bear the burden of generating parking revenue for the entirety of Alexandria. This budget proposal is a PR nightmare for our boutique community. Driving and parking in Old Town should not be seen as impossible, expensive and not worth it. For many of our businesses, our entire customer base arrives in a car and always will. Making meters pricier just chases them out of town or into residential parking areas.

If the city is concerned with managing high demand on parking, why have you not installed meters on Mount Vernon Avenue, for example? Does demand for metered spaces on Sunday in Old Town somehow exceed the demand for spaces any day of the week on Mount Vernon? Are we managing parking resources or balancing the budget by placing undue burden on one business district?

Danielle Romanetti
Owner
fibre space | fibrespace.com
1319 Prince Street

Alexandria, VA 22314
phone 703-664-0344 | Instagram [fibrespace](#)
Find us on Ravelry: Fans of fibre space

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