

## **CITY OF ALEXANDRIA – PROPOSED 2022 General Assembly Legislative Package**

### **City of Alexandria 2022 General Assembly Legislative Priorities – PROPOSED**

The City of Alexandria considers the following proposals to be key initiatives for the City during the 2022 General Assembly legislative session:

#### **Investing in Infrastructure**

Roads, sewers and schools are all, clearly, core infrastructure that need ongoing and increased investment from the Commonwealth. In addition, the City believes that transit, affordable housing and childcare are long-term assets that help our community, and our residents, grow and thrive, and considers them “infrastructure needs” which require partnership from the Commonwealth and additional investment.

The City supports legislation and budget items that support the ongoing and increased investment in infrastructure throughout our community. In addition, the City supports additional authority and flexibility in implementing solutions to address investment in core infrastructure needs in Alexandria.

- 1. The City supports a technical amendment to the budget to ensure funds already appropriated for the CSO project from the State’s American Rescue Plan Act funds are directed to AlexRenew/The Alexandria Sanitation Authority. In addition, the City supports the General Assembly’s commitment to appropriating an additional \$40 million in bonds in the next biennial budget to support Alexandria’s legislatively mandated combined sewer overflow project.**
- 2. The City supports legislation to require electric utilities in Virginia, including Dominion Power, to report and publish, on an annual basis, industry-standard electric reliability metrics to the State Corporation Commission for its system and for individual localities, including Alexandria.**
- 3. The City supports efforts to protect existing multimodal transportation funding and fully restore funding to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) in an amount equal to what was diverted, to ensure that transportation projects continue to advance in Northern Virginia after decades of state underfunding.**
- 4. The City supports statewide programs and funding, as well as additional local tools and authority, to address the need for additional affordable housing in our community, to preserve currently affordable housing stock, and to protect those vulnerable residents living in affordable housing in our community, including:**
  - Legislation to allow localities with affordable dwelling unit ordinances to require mandatory contributions from developers for affordable housing, rather than those contributions being voluntary and variable; and
  - Legislation to allow a locality, by ordinance, to require a property owner or developer to reimburse tenants whose lease is terminated due to the work on the property for expenses directly related to the tenant’s need to relocate from the property and return to the property, if

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there is a right to return. This provision would apply to the owner or developer of a multi-family property with more than four units that is undergoing rehabilitation, demolition, redevelopment, or a change in use.

- 5. The City supports legislation to provide authority and funding to support localities across the Commonwealth dealing with the impacts of inland flooding.**
  - Legislation to authorize a comprehensive, statewide workgroup and/or master planning process to consider issues related to inland flooding and recommend actionable short-term and long-term strategies and funding opportunities to prepare for and adapt to inland flooding, including policy changes, priority resiliency projects, funding and financing strategies, and a plan for coordination among state, federal, and local governments.
  - Budget language to direct DEQ to convene a work group to review and recommend modifications to current law regarding the limitations on local authority to regulate additions/modifications to single family detached residential structures where land disturbance is less than 2,500 square feet in order to review the land disturbing activity for potential stormwater impacts.
  - Increasing Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) appropriations to support projects that reduce pollution in our local waterways by providing Chesapeake Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nutrient and sediment reductions required under MS4 permits. The City supports the evaluation and possible updating of SLAF funding proposal scoring criteria in order to assign points to projects that also support local stormwater resiliency priorities and capacity needs.
- 6. The City supports efforts to increase funding for the state’s Child Care Subsidy Program, expand local flexibility to administer or expand support services for childcare, and enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers (e.g., reduce the administrative burden on participating providers, increase reimbursement rates providers including a Northern Virginia differential).**
- 7. The City requests the appropriation of State funds to support the City’s efforts to preserve and restore Douglas Memorial Cemetery, including the investigation and resolution of significant drainage issues and the restoration of this historic African American cemetery.**
- 8. The City supports the full funding of existing school construction funding options, including the Virginia Public School Construction Grant Program, as well as new, innovative funding and financing opportunities for new school construction and the renovation of older school facilities, including, but not limited to, flexibility in bonding capacity, additional local revenue authority, and public-private partnership authority for localities.**
- 9. The City supports legislation that assists in the deployment of universal, affordable access to broadband technology in both unserved and underserved areas, including:**
  - Legislation to extend the pilot program allowing for public broadband authorities to apply for VATI funds without having to utilize a private sector ISP provider;

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- The allocation of grant monies in a CDBG-type program for underserved, urban areas in order to provide free or affordable digital device and digital skills training to residents, with an emphasis on low-income residents and senior citizens;
- Legislation to establish a new organization responsible for digital equity in urban, underserved areas separate from the current VATI effort. Short of establishing a new organization to address these issues, revise VATI to broaden the definition of “unserved” to more appropriately reflect current standards.

### **Protecting Local Authority and Funding for Localities**

As a Dillon Rule state, local governments in Virginia are significantly restricted in their authority, as localities may only engage in an activity if it is explicitly sanctioned by the General Assembly. In addition to this limited authority, an overemphasis on statewide uniformity often hampers the ability for localities like Alexandria to respond nimbly to emerging issues or problems unique to our community.

Existing local government authority must be preserved. In addition, local authority should be expanded to provide localities more flexibility in the administration of local government and the provision of core government services, as appropriate solutions differ significantly from one community to the next.

The City supports legislation and budget items that preserve existing local authority and funding for localities as well as the expansion of local authority and local revenue options.

- 1. The City supports regionally scaled, adequate funding for positions in our community authorized by the State and funded through a combination of State and local funds, including increased funding or reimbursement for all positions currently authorized by the State and funded through a combination of State and local funds.**
- 2. The City supports additional State funding for K-12 education costs, including the Cost of Competing, At-Risk Add On funding, and other outlays, to better reflect the true cost of education and the cost borne by localities, including:**
  - Addressing revenue and education funding shortfalls resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including those due to reduced student population counts (or Average Daily Membership);
  - Realistic and fully-funded Standards of Quality;
  - Recognition of cost of living variations in state funding formulas, to more accurately determine a locality’s true ability to pay, particularly for high cost of living areas;
  - Restoration of full funding for the Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) for support positions. Full funding of COCA would ensure that our schools’ salaries remain competitive and help us secure vital support positions such as nurses, school counselors and psychologists, technology support, and other positions critical to strong public schools; and,
  - Appropriate recognition in state funding formulas of the increased costs required to serve children with higher level, more specialized needs, including special education students, English language learners, and students living in economically disadvantaged households, to include At Risk Add-On Funding.

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3. **The City supports efforts to modernize the local tax structure.** Short of comprehensive tax reform, the City is supportive of opportunities for additional local revenue authority to increase funding for critical local needs, including transit, transportation, school construction and renovation, and other significant capital needs.
4. **The City supports legislation to expand local authority to preserve and expand the tree canopy,** including legislation expanding local authority to preserve trees during new development and restore trees removed during development at a faster rate.
5. **The City supports legislation to enhance building safety in the Commonwealth, particularly in high-rise buildings, including:**
  - Legislation to establish new reporting requirements and transparency regarding current structural findings by homeowners and condominium associations;
  - Legislation granting local building code officials additional authority to proactively inspect buildings and structures in their communities for structural deficiencies;
  - Legislation establishing a building inspection/recertification process;
  - Legislation to require homeowners performing work on a condominium unit that requires a local permit to list a licensed contractor on the permit application.
- ~~6. **The City supports legislation to provide localities with the authority to regulate the use of commercial gas-powered leaf blowers, including their sale, time of use and/or prohibition of such use. (Mayor Wilson/Quiet Clean NOVA)**~~
7. **The City supports legislation to expand local authority to utilize automated traffic enforcement solutions, specifically red light cameras.**
8. **The City supports legislation to reinstate the authority for local law enforcement to regulate noise from vehicle exhaust systems.**
9. **The City supports the full restoration of the Circuit Court Clerk Technology Trust Fund (TTF).** The Virginia General Assembly partially restored the TTF during the 2021 session, which allowed the Alexandria Court Clerk's office to budget for critically needed technology improvements. Restoration of the balance of the TTF would enable the Clerk's office to expand online availability of records, enhancing the reliability and sustainability of operations by making records available to the public without a need to visit the courthouse, in addition to other long overdue technology improvements.
10. **The City supports legislation to require homeowners to get a survey plat when purchasing a home in a historic district.**

### **Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable and Underserved Populations**

The City is committed to providing services to protect our most vulnerable residents, including children, youth, older adults, survivors of sexual and domestic violence, individuals in behavioral health crisis, as

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well as those of differing abilities. In addition, the City supports efforts to address policies and practices that create an unequal distribution of services and resources based on race, gender, class, place, and other factors.

The City supports legislation and budget items that provide support, authority, investment and flexibility in our efforts to implement creative, innovative programs and services to serve these vulnerable and underserved members of our community.

- 1. The City supports legislation to re-allocate existing Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) funding in support of low- and no-fare public transit programs.**
- 2. The City supports legislative proposals endorsed by the Commission on Youth to allow for limited, narrowly-tailored data and information sharing between and among local agencies serving vulnerable youth who are, or are at risk of being, involved with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.**
- 3. The City supports legislation to expand the pool of participants who can serve on local teams that manage and assess local programs to support vulnerable children and families that are funded by the Children’s Services Act.**
- 4. The City supports increased, continuing funding for the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Fund and its continued focus on supporting domestic violence and sexual assault programs here in Alexandria and across the Commonwealth.**
- 5. The City supports legislation and efforts to protect residents experiencing housing insecurity and evictions including:**
  - Legislation requiring evictions be for cause;
  - Legislation allowing localities to establish a landlord registry;
  - Legislation limiting the percentage of annual rent increases for existing tenants;
  - Legislation requiring landlord notices and communications in languages other than English;
  - Legislation allowing a ten-day appeal period for all evictions even if the tenant is not present;
  - Legislation to allow tenants to file a tenant’s assertion to schedule a hearing on landlord violations of the lease without having to pay rent into court escrow;
  - Legislation eliminating the appeal bond or allowing indigent waivers for low income tenants;
  - Legislation establishing a tenant right to counsel.
- 6. The City supports legislation to include the provision of marijuana to minors in Virginia’s existing “social host” law (§4.1-306). This update to the current “social host” law – which currently applies to alcohol – would promote the reduction of underage consumption of marijuana by imposing a civil fine on persons responsible for a party, gathering or event where marijuana is consumed by, served to or in the possession of underage persons.**

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- 7. The City supports efforts to streamline the SNAP application for seniors on fixed incomes and increase their SNAP benefit amounts.**
- 8. The City supports efforts to reduce disparities in all areas of public health and achieve health equity in our communities related to tobacco use, including:**
  - legislation to expand the state Medicaid smoking cessation benefit;
  - legislation banning the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes;
  - legislation providing additional flexibility to localities to raise their local cigarette tax, and;
  - legislation increasing the state tobacco tax with a portion of increased revenue earmarked for locally administered tobacco control, prevention and cessation programs.
- ~~**9. The City supports legislation to mandate healthier comprehensive options for both food and drinks on children's menu items in Virginia restaurants and ensure the food options in kids' meals promote health by designating limits on calories, sugar, salt and fat for items on kids' menus in the Commonwealth. (Councilmember Jackson)**~~

### **Enhancing Access, Equity and Equality**

The City of Alexandria is committed to the work necessary to acknowledge and address the core issues of inequity and inequality in our community and our Commonwealth. The City supports legislation and budget items which echo this work, including ensuring all members of our community have access to justice and democracy and are afforded equal protection under the law.

- 1. The City supports legislation ensuring access to voting for all Virginia citizens.**
- 2. The City supports legislation to increase opportunities for electronic participation by members of public bodies and members of the public accessing meetings of public bodies.**
- 3. The City supports efforts to ensure parents have access to adequate, effective legal representation and support in child welfare proceedings as we work to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families in our community, including impacting reunification rates, speeding up permanency, reducing disproportionality and reducing entries.**
- 4. The City supports the work of the General Assembly's Joint Subcommittee to Study Comprehensive Campaign Finance Reform and the proposals endorsed by the Subcommittee to improve disclosure, limit personal use of campaign funds, enhance the institutional capacity of the State Board of elections to monitor and enforce campaign finance laws and regulations, and extend the timeline for the work of the Subcommittee beyond the current deadline.**
- 5. The City supports legislation to amend the Condominium Act to allow official candidates for local political offices to deliver campaign materials to secure condominium buildings.**
- 6. The City supports legislation limiting qualified immunity protections for law enforcement officers who commit intentional or reckless acts of excessive use of force.**

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7. The City supports legislation to replace the words “handicap” and “handicapped” in Virginia Code with language that better reflects the individuality, equality, and dignity of people living with disabilities.
8. The City supports legislation to require publishers to license eBooks to public libraries under equitable, reasonable pricing, circulation and other licensing terms.

### Promoting Energy Efficiency and Encouraging Clean Energy Investment

The impacts of climate change are impacting families, businesses and communities across the Commonwealth. Fortunately, the Commonwealth has the opportunity to address the causes of climate change while advancing pragmatic, common-sense programs to offset the impacts of climate change across the Commonwealth. The City of Alexandria supports legislation and budget items that address the symptoms of climate change, as well as its root causes.

1. The City supports efforts to protect the Virginia Clean Economy Act and other legislation which has made advances in the areas of combatting climate change, promoting energy efficiency and encouraging clean energy investment.
2. The City supports legislation in increase energy efficiency in existing buildings including:
  - Legislation to allow localities to require private building owners to benchmark energy and water usage using the EPA’s Energy Star Portfolio Manager, or similar benchmarking system, and report this information to their local jurisdiction annually for public disclosure; (EPC)
  - Legislation to expand current authority for localities to establish “green banks” to allow for regional clean energy financing authorities that promote or incentivize investment in clean energy technologies;
  - Legislation to support innovative energy efficiency incentive and finance programs for residential dwellings, including condominiums.
3. The City supports legislation to strengthen Energy Conservation Building Codes for new buildings, including:
  - Legislation to reform the process of updating the Virginia Energy Conservation Code, including requiring the State to adopt the International Energy Conservation Code promptly when a new iteration is adopted by the International Code Council without weakening amendments;
  - Legislation to afford localities the authority to adopt energy efficiency codes that are more stringent than the statewide building codes.
4. The City supports legislation to encourage and achieve zero carbon energy in the Commonwealth, including:
  - Legislation to increase the Virginia Clean Energy Act's Renewable Portfolio Standard targets to 60% by 2030, and 100% carbon-free electricity (renewables and nuclear) by 2035;
  - Legislation placing a moratorium on the building of any new fossil fuel infrastructure in the Commonwealth;

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- Legislation making community solar or community choice aggregation more accessible to all homeowners, including placing limits on “administrative” fees charged by utilities;
  - Legislation authorizing a larger scale “microgrid” pilot program, to allow for “behind the meter” sharing of electricity between lower usage buildings and buildings with higher needs within a local development district or Small Area Plan.
- 5. The City supports legislation to mitigate greenhouse gas emission impacts of the transportation sector and reduce inequalities in transportation and its air pollution, including:**
- Appropriation of funds to the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program;
  - Legislation and appropriations to provide direct incentives for zero carbon transportation methods, including ebikes and scooters, for residents who don’t have easy access to a public transit stop;
  - Developing state-wide policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled, reducing emissions for ports, freight and local delivery trucks especially near vulnerable, overburdened populations;
  - Support the electrification of school busses, while maintaining control over bus battery usage rather than granting control to a utility;
  - Legislation to join the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program (TCI-P).