

Cassandra Ford

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4-18-15



ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INC.

NU XI ZETA CHAPTER

SERVING ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

P.O. Box 25961, Alexandria, VA 22313

"Celebrating 28 years of building stronger families and stronger communities"

April 18, 2015

Dear Honorable Mayor Euille and Alexandria City Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Alexandria Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. As you continue to prepare to vote on the Fiscal Year 2016 budget ***we request that you continue to focus on, and provide funding for, programs benefiting the children, youth and families of the city, as well as programs that protect public safety.***

We put forth these specific recommendations for the Council:

1. Continue to engage more diverse segments of the city in budget and public safety decision making.
2. Exploration of body cameras through an inclusive process
3. Involve our youth in civic engagement opportunities to prepare an educated electorate

First of all, we congratulate the newly appointed city manager on his recent promotion, and for the work that he (and his staff) put in to developing a budget that has been widely accepted and praised by many throughout the city. We look forward to more opportunities to work with Mr. Mark Jinks in the future, via our members serving on boards and commissions and during community forums.

Diversity in Decision Making Process

Our organization is highly focused on providing opportunities for underrepresented and previously oppressed groups to become heavily involved in their decision making processes of their local government. We are currently implementing #ZetasGetEngaged, which is focused on educating our members and community about issues related to knowing our rights, media diversity, public policy, and the importance of voting in EVERY election. This fall, we appreciated the inclusive process utilized in developing this budget proposal that started with a focus on civic engagement via community conversations. We look forward to this process continuing in all facets of city government in order to develop a diverse and engaged electorate who are educated about the way government impacts their daily lives.

Public Safety and Body Cameras

During the first quarter of the year we focused on knowing your rights and partnering with our local NAACP branch and our local police department to educate and engage our members,

youth, and neighbors. This has led to heightened awareness of the need for increasing funding of the Alexandria Police Department so that they can expand community policing efforts. We also look forward to City Council thoroughly reviewing and considering the use of body cameras. When the police department releases their report later this spring, we hope that there will be transparency and opportunities for community engagement in the decision making process. Also, in lieu of the recent news story about Ms. Natasha McKenna, we look forward to a thorough review of the mental health training for all who work in public safety, as well as more opportunities for collaboration with Alexandria's mental health agencies.

Youth Civic Engagement

Our organization is focused on scholarship and service, and we are constantly looking for new ways to engage our youth to prepare them to be successful citizens in our democracy. Recently we held a youth forum at city hall, and will provide scholarships through our H.A.V.E. (Helping Alexandria Virginia Excel) Foundation, including one through a partnership with the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria. Investing in our youth is an essential aspect of our success, and we encourage City Council to continue to find ways to fund opportunities to enhance youth involvement in the decision making process. Mayor Euille's efforts through the "End Bullying" campaign, and Police Chief Cook's recent "Coffee with the Chief" at TC Williams, are two examples of what we hope to see more of throughout the city.



As the country continues to recover from the recession, Alexandrians are not immune to the impact on our day to day lives. The government has been forced to operate in a new normal, as cuts to programs and services become a way of life. With the current fiscal climate, we recognize that the City Council is forced to make tough decisions to effectively balance the budget. We want to join those singing the praises of the City Manager and his staff who created a budget that addresses a lot of the concerns that our members commissions/boards had issue with in the past.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. is a community-conscious, action-oriented organization committed to effectively and compassionately meeting the needs of the communities it serves. The Nu Xi Zeta Chapter of Alexandria focuses on empowering leaders to make an impact on vulnerable communities in Alexandria and Arlington through the March of Dimes, Read Across America, civic empowerment activities and by providing direct community support to various organizations including ALIVE! Inc. and Campagna Center. The members of the Alexandria, Virginia Chapter are committed to improving the quality of life in our local communities, while embracing the transitions needed to meet the challenges of the new millennium. For more information, please visit www.nuxizeta.org.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing collaborating with members of council and city officials to enhance the lives of all Alexandrians.

Sincerely,

Christmas Hutchinson, President
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Nu Xi Zeta Chapter

Cc: Cassandra Ford, Social Action Chair



Julia Addison

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Dear Mayor Euille and Honorable City Council members,

My name is Julia Addison, and I am in 11th grade at TC Williams High School. I currently take a criminal justice course, and we often talk about how citizens should have a chance to work in places to make sure that they like what they do. A few people have thought about how great it would be to create a youth police academy for this reason. While many people would suggest that people should shadow a person as they work, or even intern at different jobs, people don't get a true feeling of how everyday life is like being in any particular job. This is the reason why I believe the city of Alexandria should create a youth police academy. Just like soccer, a "club" signs up multiple "players" at a very young age and teaches them skills required to "play" at the "club's" standards, I believe a youth police academy could prepare future Alexandria Police Officers.

Alexandria Police should have a program for the youth because it might just solve the recent issues going on in the United States. With the problems that are occurring today, many people do not believe that police are "good people". Some parents are even trying to get their children away from the idea of being a "cop." If people have the ability to test the waters before choosing a career, there would be a decrease of "bad apples," and the police would then get the respect they have earned. I have heard that in the past there had been a Law Enforcement Youth Academy that ran for a week during the summer time. Only given one week at the end of the summer does not allow people to attain a lot of the information of that career field. Even at TC we do "Senior Experience" for three weeks at the end of the school year to explore a career of interest.

The program should be structured in the following ways:

- The age groups should range from 10-18 rather than 10-15. This is because most kids don't know what they are really interested in or want to be until they are in their late teenage years
- The length of the program should be the entire summer, rather than just a week. My suggestion would be from June to August. Every week from 9 AM to 5 PM. Children should have the ability to leave if they need to during the day.
- The academy should cover such topics such as: fitness training; defense tactics; patrolling; firearm safety; CPR training; the law; driving training (if student is old enough); and entry requirements

The benefits of this program are the following:

- It will help young people understand police officer's jobs
- It will help strengthen trust in police, which is a big issue in today's society
- It will allow people to find the job (like police officer) that they really would like to have

Thank you for your time and have a great day!

Sincerely,

Julia Addison

Future TC Williams Alumni and Lawyer