

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2018

TO: MEMBERS & MEMBERS-ELECT OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: VICE MAYOR JUSTIN WILSON

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL WORK PROGRAM PROPOSAL

In May of 2011, the City Council adopted a “Long-Range Multi-Department Planning Work Program” for Fiscal Year 2012¹. This document was the first attempt to evolve the work program that Council has previously adopted for the Planning & Zoning Department into a document that now incorporated multiple departments engaged in long-range planning and policy efforts.

Today, the “Long Range Interdepartmental Planning Work Program” is adopted each year and serves as a schedule and framework for planning and policy initiatives. As a focal point for prioritizing initiatives and ensuring adequate resources for those initiatives, this document has been quite successful. This Multi-Departmental Work Program is typically discussed by Council in January of each year and then adopted post-budget adoption in June. The current Council adopted Multi-Departmental Work Program was approved on June 13, 2018².

As a contrast, the Council itself has no such document to guide its annual work. While Council has adopted a Strategic Plan for FY2017 to FY 2022, it is a high-level plan and does not set out an annual work program. While a portion of the Council’s workload is dictated by recurrent obligations (adoption of the budget, appropriation ordinances, periodic reports, etc), and by those seeking approval for various efforts (primarily land-use applications), the Council has no plan or document that allows it to schedule and sequence policy initiatives initiated by the Council itself.

I believe that Council should begin each year (a 2019 retreat date has already scheduled for January 26, 2019) with a retreat that allows it to define and refine a work program for the upcoming year.

During the January retreat, for the 2019 year ahead, I think that Council should identify and prioritize what policy areas that it wants to review; identify what departments and agencies it wishes to review work plans and strategies with (in recent months the City Manager has brought forward the Police Department and the Information Technology Services Department for Council review); understand what land use master plan amendments and revisions are planned during the year; and selectively select which of the City’s boards and commissions that it would be important for the Council to meet with during the year (past suggestions have included the School Board, Planning Commission and Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board of Commissioners).

¹ <http://dockets.alexandriava.gov/fy11/052411rm/di13.pdf>

² <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/FY2019LRPWPBarChart061418.pdf>

Included in an adopted work program could be:

- 1) Identification and schedule for policy work sessions,
- 2) Identification and schedule for department strategic reviews,
- 3) Schedule for receipt and consideration of master plan updates,
- 4) Identification and schedule for Board or Commission joint meetings for those Boards and Commissions that Council thinks important to meet with, and
- 5) Schedule for recurrent obligations (budget, appropriation ordinances, financial reports, etc)

Once approved, the work program can become a “living document” subject to periodic amendment along with the calendar on Legislative Meeting dockets.

Given the planned Council retreat, staff will present the draft proposed FY2020 Multi-Departmental Work Program at Council’s retreat on January 26, as that will tie directly into Council retreat discussions of policy, strategic reviews, master plan updates, and work with certain Boards and Commissions. A draft of this Multi-Departmental Planning Work Program will be provided to the Planning Commission in January and can be provided to the Council ahead of our planned retreat.

Cc: Mark Jinks, City Manager
Gloria Sitton, City Clerk,
Joanna Anderson, City Attorney
Richard Lawrence, Special Assistant to the City Manager