

BACKGROUND: Each year, the City of Alexandria produces its General Assembly Legislative Package. The goal of the package is to organize, prioritize, and communicate the City's legislative and budget priorities to the community, stakeholders, and legislators. In addition, because Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, localities only have the authority expressly granted to them by the legislature by state statute or in their charter. Localities in Virginia, including Alexandria, therefore often request legislation to grant them enabling authority for specific powers they do not already have, which are included in the Legislative Package.

The requests in the draft Legislative Package generally originate from City Council members, City staff, and boards and commissions, with additional input coming from the public through the public hearing process. For the past several months, staff has been working with Council members, City departments, and boards and commissions to develop legislative and funding proposals for the City's 2021 Legislative Package. On October 22, 2020, City Council's Legislative Subcommittee met with subject matter experts on City staff to discuss the proposals submitted for consideration for inclusion 2021 legislative package. The proposals described in Attachment 1 have been recommended by Council's Legislative Subcommittee for your consideration.

DISCUSSION: The draft 2021 Legislative Package as presented today has the proposals recommended by the Legislative Subcommittee organized into two sections - Legislative Principles and Legislative Priorities. The section of Legislative Principles is structured around the City's Strategic Plan and creates a clear nexus between the City's goals and the legislative and funding measures necessary for us to achieve these goals. The Legislative Principles are, generally, broadly crafted and focus on comprehensive legislative strategies rather than specific legislative tactics. The Legislative Priorities are, generally, specific revenue and legislative proposals that the City has identified as the issues of greatest impact to the City. These are the issues the City intends to continue expending significant political capital on and the issues that we intend to ask our General Assembly delegation to engage in on behalf of the City.

In addition to tonight's input from Council, the Package will receive input from the community and other outside stakeholders at the Public Hearing proposed for November 14. In addition, we will hold a Work Session with the City's Legislative Delegation that same day to get input on their priorities for the 2021 session, the practicalities of how the 2021 Session will function in the COVID-19 environment, and their feedback on the draft Legislative Package.

The City looks toward the 2021 General Assembly session, pre-filing of bills began in July but, with the Special Session of the General Assembly occurring until mid-October, very few bills have been filed to date. Pre-filing will close on November 30, 2020. On December 16, 2020, Governor Northam will present his budget recommendations for any changes necessary to the FY2020-2022 biennium budget, most likely related to revenue reforecasts as a result of COVID-19. Staff will report to Council on the Governor's recommendations shortly after they are released.

The 2021 General Assembly Session will be a "short" 45-day Session, beginning January 13, 2021 and ending February 27, 2021.

The City Council Legislative Subcommittee will begin reviewing pre-filed bills in early December; these meetings will become weekly meetings starting on January 5, 2021 and will continue until the Friday after the final day for bill introduction. These meetings allow the Legislative Subcommittee to review legislation that may have an impact on the City with the input of City staff subject matter experts and recommend positions on this legislation. These positions are subsequently reviewed by the full Council and communicated to the Alexandria delegation in the General Assembly for their consideration.

The City's Legislative Director, Sarah Taylor, continues to represent the City "with" the General Assembly, if not "at" the General Assembly this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and likely changes with the way the General Assembly Session is held. She will report to you regularly on the status of the City's legislative priorities as well as other legislative and budget issues that are sure to arise during the 2021 General Assembly Session.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed City Legislative Package for the 2021 Virginia General Assembly Session
2. Presentation on 2021 Proposed Legislative Package

STAFF:

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Sarah Taylor, Legislative Director