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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 18, 2017

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:
Discussion of the Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program.

ISSUE: What planning work priorities should be established for FY 2018?

RECOMMENDATION: Provide preliminary feedback on the proposed planning priorities for FY 2018.

BACKGROUND: The Planning Commission and City Council are asked to provide preliminary input on a Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program. The City Council’s discussion is scheduled for January 24, 2017. The input from the Planning Commission and City Council will help inform development of the FY 2018 City Manager’s Proposed Operating Budget, scheduled to be released in late February. A final Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program will be docketed for City Council approval in May 2017.

As in previous years, the City departments and agencies that are engaged in long range planning and plan

implementation have collaboratively prepared a draft work program for the upcoming fiscal year (see Attachment 1). The draft work program includes new plans scheduled to begin in FY 2018, the completion of plans and studies now underway, and implementation of previously approved plans.

DISCUSSION:

Preparing the FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program

The work program coordinates the planning work programs of the Department of Planning and Zoning; the Department of Project Implementation; the Office of Housing; the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services; the Office of Historic Alexandria; and the Department of General Services, as well as the ongoing redevelopment activities of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). Potential work program elements are evaluated by the above departments with the City Manager's Office, the Department of Code Administration, Alexandria City Public Schools, the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and Visit Alexandria.

The proposed work program is intended to be complementary of the City Council's Strategic Plan, the interdepartmental nature of the planning program, and the resources needed to complete each project at the recommended level of effort on each project. As is usually the case, there is greater demand for work to be undertaken and completed than there are staff and available technical resources. The work program endeavors to balance demand for interdepartmental planning and development review with staff, community and City Council decision making capacity to do so, while also taking advantage of market opportunity and enabling future real estate tax base growth and developer contributions toward public benefits.

The Planning Commission held a work session on January 5, 2017 to discuss the draft work program. Planning commissioners expressed general agreement with the proposal as presented, understanding the resource constraints and balancing of priorities represented by the draft work program. One commissioner expressed strong concurrence with prioritizing the Mt. Vernon Avenue Pedestrian Safety and Plan Update. Overall, the Planning Commission suggested refining the process of the work program to allow for more public engagement next year.

Evaluating Potential Planning Projects for FY 2018

The basic approach to developing the proposed work program involves some constants from year to year: projects that have been started should be completed, adopted small area plans may be followed by plan implementation, and there will be projects led by one department that will require contributions by other departments.

Long range planning capacity (and the ability to engage in multiple large planning efforts at a time) is constrained by a variety of factors, chief among them staff capacity across multiple departments and budget resources for technical analysis. However, bandwidth for planning projects is also limited by decision-making capacity (senior City staff, various Commissions, and City Council), as well as the community's capacity to simultaneously engage in multiple planning processes.

For FY 2018 and beyond, staff evaluated the priority of potential projects based on community interests and objectives, timing opportunities and constraints, whether the project/area has already been postponed in the past, and the extent to which the project supports the City's strategic goals and objectives. What staff heard from the community over the course of the City Strategic Plan update process (now nearing completion with public hearing anticipated in January) also helped inform planning priorities for FY 2018 and beyond.

Ultimately, developing the FY 2018 work plan requires some of the following tradeoffs for addressing the imbalance between demand for planning and capacity to do so, including:

- Prioritizing certain types of projects over others;
- Delaying some projects until others can be completed;
- Reducing the scope of work of a project;
- Ensuring that appropriate funding will be in place; and/or
- Authorizing additional staff resources.

The volume and complexity of regulatory work - from building permits for single-family homes up to complex DSUPs - has increased over the past two years such that some staff resources previously devoted to long range planning have been reassigned to handle the regulatory applications in a timely manner. In some cases, regulatory applications have review timelines defined by law. In other cases, staff endeavors to ensure continued and highly desired investment in the City by maintaining established time frames for development review.

Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Work Program Items

In May, the Long Range Planning Work Program will be docketed for City Council final review and approval. The Council's action will be for the FY 2018 work program only; however, the accompanying bar chart/timeline in Attachment 1 covers the period from mid-FY 2017 to mid-FY 2020 to give a broader picture of the proposed schedule of major planning projects (i.e., what's in the queue and the priority in the queue), and the potential projects that will be considered in future years. In addition, the chart shows work associated with plan implementation, which continues to occur after each plan is adopted.

The draft work program for FY 2018 represents a continuation and completion of projects begun in FY 2017 plus the addition of new projects. Major planning projects include completion of the Old Town North SAP Update (Line #5), North Potomac Yard SAP Update (Line #6), initiation of the Eisenhower East Phase 1 SAP update (Line #9), the Route 1 South Affordable Housing Strategy (Line #13) pending funding through a VHDA grant application, and Mount Vernon Avenue Pedestrian Safety Improvements and update to the Mt. Vernon Avenue Business Plan and Arlandria Action Plan (Line #15).

The attached bar chart and the attached list of project descriptions make clear that there is a very high volume of planning work that has been proposed - more than can be accommodated in the next two fiscal years. In order to tackle as much as possible, staff has identified opportunities to focus our efforts on each project to the core issues; for example, the Route 1 South study (Line #13) will focus on affordable housing, the very limited number of potential redevelopment sites, and streetscape and other pedestrian/bike safety improvements. The Mount Vernon Avenue study (Line #15) originally envisioned as an update to the Del Ray and Arlandria Plans will now encompass and build upon the pedestrian safety improvements now under way. We think grouping and sequencing the Mount Vernon Avenue work is an efficient approach, particularly because it involves the same stakeholders, staff and decision makers. It will also be important for the community to understand the scope of the proposed improvements before the next phase of the planning effort moves forward, so they may be taken into account when we engage the community early in a discussion of core issues that the plan should address.

Some long range planning projects, such as the Green Building Policy update (Line #69), are proposed for delay because existing resources (staff and funds for outside technical assistance) are insufficient for its inclusion in the FY 2018 work program and competing projects have a higher priority. In this case, Staff recommends focusing available resources on the update of the Environmental Action Plan (Line #14), which is

the City's overarching environmental policy guidance, and using the results of that effort to guide the Green Building Policy Update when it can be scheduled. Currently, Alexandria's Green Building Policy is among the most environmentally advanced for a local government in the region and Alexandria regularly achieves near-total compliance with this Green Building Policy for new buildings.

New this year to the interdepartmental work program bar chart is a reorganization of information into specific categories. The projects and proposed timing for the major work program items are shown below and are described in more detail in Attachment 2. Line numbers correspond to both attachments.

Plans/Projects Concluding in FY 2017

- City Strategic Plan (Line #1)
- Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Planning (Line #3)
- Old Town North SAP Update (Line #5)
- North Potomac Yard SAP Update (Line #6)
- Long Range Educational Facilities Plan Phase II (Line #7)

Plans/Projects Starting or Concluding in FY 2018

- Eisenhower East Phase I Plan Update (Phase II beginning January 2020) (Line #9)
- Strategic Facilities Plan (Line #11)
- Route 1 South Affordable Housing Strategy (funding application pending) (Line #13)
- Environmental Action Plan Update (Line #14)
- Mt. Vernon Ave Pedestrian Safety and Strategic Plan Update (funding dependent) (Line #15)

Plans/Projects Starting Beyond FY 2018

- Census 2020 Community Outreach (funding dependent) (Line #16)
- Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update (Line #17)
- Parker Gray Zoning (Line #18)
- Landscape Guidelines Update (Line #19)
- Dangerfield Island Master Plan (Line #20) (National Park Service lead)
- Transportation Master Plan- Streets/ITS Chapters (Line #21)
- Citywide Design Guidelines/Architecture Forum Phase II (Line #22)

Plans/Projects in Implementation in FY 2018

- Old Town North SAP (Line #31)
- Eisenhower West/Landmark Van Dorn SAP (Line #32)
- Housing Master Plan (Line #33)
- Public Art Implementation Plan (Line #37)
- Sanitary Sewer/CSO Plan (Line #38)
- Stormwater Mandates/MS4 Compliance Plan & Proposed Stormwater Utility (Line #39)

FISCAL IMPACT: The proposed work program has implications for the very constrained FY 2018 General Fund Operating Budget and the project funding challenges of the FY 2018 to FY 2028 Capital Improvement Program. Some projects are noted on the bar chart as "funding dependent" in order to proceed.

This proposed work program can only be accomplished with adequate resources provided by the City funding for FY 2018, approximately equal to FY 2017 funding and staffing levels. Additional outside funding is being sought through a grant opportunity with VHDA for the Route 1 South Affordable Housing Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Bar Chart: Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program
2. DRAFT FY 2018 Project Descriptions
3. PowerPoint Presentation

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