



## Legislation Text

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### City of Alexandria, Virginia

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#### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MAY 5, 2021

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the City of Alexandria related to \$2.443 million in Grant Funds to Preserve and Rehabilitate the Freedom House Museum (1315 Duke Street).

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**ISSUE:** Execution of a grant agreement.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding related to a \$2.443 million grant to preserve and rehabilitate the Freedom House Museum (Attachment 1) between the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) and the City of Alexandria.

**BACKGROUND:** On March 25, 2020, the City of Alexandria purchased the National Historic Landmark known as the Franklin and Armfield Office. Residents and visitors to Alexandria pass by this site at 1315 Duke Street, unaware of its chilling past. It was once the Alexandria Slave Pen where thousands of enslaved men, women, and children were purchased locally, held, and sold for a large profit to plantations in the Deep South. This four-story brick building, while heavily modified, is the only portion of this slave pen complex that remains. It is one of the few remaining buildings used for slave trading in the United States. The City of Alexandria, through the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), plans to restore the building and create an expanded museum dedicated to the interpretation of the domestic slave trade - the second phase in the evolution of slavery in America.

Acquisition of the property by the City ensured the long-term ownership of the building as a public museum, held for the public trust, accessible to the public, and preserved to recall a painful but important era of national, Virginia, and City history. This is an important opportunity to tell a more complete story of the site and the individuals who were trafficked behind its walls. Funding requested by the City, recommended by Governor Northam, and then authorized through the Virginia General Assembly is planned to support the restoration of

the building as well as research and initial museum exhibits in the publicly accessible spaces of the building.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The Commonwealth of Virginia through the Department of Historic Resources will provide \$2.443M to the City of Alexandria for the exclusive support of the rehabilitation and interpretation of the Franklin and Armfield Office, aka Freedom House. Information (Attachment 2) which was produced by the City to inform the Governor's Office and the General Assembly of the City's funding request contains the details of how the \$2.443M would be allocated. This amount will be available upon full execution of the Memorandum of Agreement by DHR and the City of Alexandria. The funds will be passed from DHR to the City no later than June 30, 2021.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Memorandum of Understanding between DHR and the City of Alexandria
2. Information on City's Freedom House budget request (January 2020)

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager  
Gretchen Bulova, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria  
Sarah Graham Taylor, Legislative Director