



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 1, 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Calendar Year 2022 City Council Priorities.

ISSUE: Planning for next steps on addressing 2022 City Council Priorities.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Discuss and consider the proposed 2022 City Council Priorities, as developed during the January 29, City Council Retreat; and
- (2) Direct the City Manager to develop business plans for each priority and provide regularly scheduled progress reports on the priorities during the upcoming year.

BACKGROUND: On January 29, 2022, the Alexandria City Council held a retreat with the goal of discussing City Council expectations and developing the priorities for an annual City Council Work Program for 2022. In advance of the retreat, Council Members provided their individual list of priorities and staff prepared a consolidated list in order of the number of Council Members interested in the topic. During the meeting, Staff presented the consolidated list and Council Members held a discussion on their top priorities. For each priority topic, Council members came to a consensus on the desired result they hope to achieve and the policy question to be explored in the upcoming year.

The priorities, as written during the retreat, include:

1. Covid-19 Recovery

Desired Result: Fill gaps in our existing response, build our resiliency, and deepen our understanding of what other jurisdictions are doing - define our approach to navigating the future.

Policy Question: What are the policies, practices, and resources needed to address our existing gaps and sustain a resilient recovery (small businesses, other jurisdictions, etc.)?

2. Infrastructure Resiliency

Desired Result: Improve and efficiently invest in public infrastructure developed and maintained at a state of good repair, and build trust and communication

Policy Question: What are the options and financial implications for improving resiliency in infrastructure?

3. Housing

Desired Result: An Alexandria housing economy that provides the necessary range of price points and styles of housing to meet the needs of a thriving city.

Policy Question: How to reconsider our zoning model and other tools to better facilitate the growth and sustainable development needed to be a livable city for all?

4. Community Engagement

Desired Result: Ensure that engagement is accessible and happening efficiently and effectively and all stakeholders understand how their input impacted policy decision

Policy Question: How best to incorporate new methods into traditional forms of outreach so as to create new conversations while incorporating existing ones?

5. Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Desired Result: Engage community, private entities and government in achieving the required GHG reductions contained in Environmental Action Plan

Policy Question: How do we bridge to gap between existing plans and policies and where we need to be to achieve the stated goals?

6. Out Of School Time

Desired Result: Universal, high-quality out of school services for youth

Policy Question: What would it take to expand academic, social, emotional, and physical supports and services to youth during the out-of-school time hours?

7. Economic Development

Desired Result: Diversify medium- and long-term revenues to support the services expected and required by all stakeholders.

Policy Question: What are the budgetary, land-use and regulatory decisions required to foster equitable development and to ensure that we eliminate our long-term structural deficit?

8. Compensation Philosophy

Desired Result: A new compensation philosophy for our workforce to be preferred and for employees to feel valued

Policy Question: In a hyper-competitive marketplace for talent and with the advent of collective bargaining, what is the correct philosophy for making us the preferred work place of choice?

City Council expressed that the priorities will be consistently viewed through the lens of equity, civility, transparency, respect, and service. While equity was initially discussed as a priority unto itself, it could not be separated from any other priority, and therefore is applicable to all policies set forth throughout them all. It should also be noted that while these are the current priorities for the upcoming year, in no way do these priorities diminish or change the City's on-going commitment to its on-going services and accountability to ensure that it continues to support a safe, vibrant, and livable community.

DISCUSSION: In order to look more holistically and practically at these priorities, staff recommend consolidating the topics from eight areas to six (or less). Staff recommend removing community engagement as a stand-alone priority. Instead, this is an initiative that must be incorporated in each priority with a commitment from the City to ensure that engagement is accessible to all stakeholders and that the community understands how their input impacts a policy decision. Staff also recommend combining the infrastructure and economic development priorities as both ultimately pertain to fiscal responsibility and diversification of revenue streams. For ease of communication, staff also recommend summarizing the priorities into clear actionable statements. The proposed staff recommendations include:

- 1. Recover from COVID-19:** We will identify the policies, practices, and resources needed to ensure a resilient and equitable recovery for all residents and businesses.
- 2. Reduce the Long-Term Structural Deficit:** We will fully explore and clearly communicate to the community the options and financial implications to invest and improve in our public infrastructure and maintain it at a state of good repair. We will seek out and consider budgetary, land-use, and regulatory tools to foster equitable development and diversify revenue.
- 3. Provide Diverse Housing Opportunities:** We will reconsider our zoning model and explore other tools to better facilitate an Alexandria housing economy that provides the necessary range of price points and styles of housing to meet the needs of a thriving city.

4. **Reduce the impacts of Climate Change:** We will further engage with the community, private entities and government to have a meaningful and equitable impact on achieving the required greenhouse gas reductions contained in the Environmental Action Plan.
5. **Support Youth and Families:** We will explore how to expand academic, social, emotional, and physical supports and services to all youth during the out-of-school time hours.
6. **Develop a Compensation Philosophy:** We will establish a new compensation philosophy to ensure we are the preferred workplace of choice and that our employees feel valued.

NEXT STEPS: Upon approval, the proposed priorities will serve as a roadmap to guide Council and staff work and be a “living document” subject to periodic amendment. To ensure that each priority is acted upon and measured, staff recommend developing a business plan for each priority. The business plan will identify the existing city efforts underway to address the topic, including budget, policy, and metrics. The plans will be updated throughout the year as a tool to communicate progress and highlight the impact the City is having on the community in these priority areas.

Calendar year 2022 is the first-time staff will be taking this approach of developing annual business plans focused on City Council’s top priorities. The timeline below shows milestones for City Council to receive updates on the priorities:

- January 29, 2022: Winter City Council retreat held
- March 8, 2022: Docket with draft priorities received
- May 2022: City Council to receive update on priorities
- July 2022: Summer City Council retreat and review of priorities
- October 2022: City Council to receive update on priorities
- December 2022: City Council to receive annual report on priorities

Since the timing of the Council docket may often be driven by outside forces, or issues unforeseen at the time of the retreat, there may be at times a need to shift the timing for milestones. Also, it may be unreasonable to expect that any of these priorities will be completed in a one-year time frame. It is expected that at the next City Council Retreat many, but not all, topics will be re-evaluated and updated for consideration in the subsequent year.

STAFF:

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