

FY 2024 Budget Comments Received



New comments on top.

Date Received	Comment
Friday, March 24, 2023	Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council, On behalf of the Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC), we are submitting this letter to recommend that you adopt the provisions included in the Fiscal Year 2024 alternative budget option #1 as proposed by City Manager James Parajon, either by approving the alternative budget or by including these provisions through the add/delete process. The CYFCC outlined its priorities for the FY2024 city budget in an October 13, 2022 letter to the Mayor and City Council. We are extremely pleased to see that the existing proposed budget recognizes our ongoing concern regarding the mental health crisis among our children and youth by including additional funding for mental health-related services and positions. We were also grateful that the proposed budget adopts the ACPS budget in full, as it also places a high priority on increasing access to mental health services. Given the magnitude of the crisis in mental health, we strongly support the provisions in the alternative budget that would allow the city to fund an emergency services bed finder position, a bilingual clinical psychologist, and Out of School Time staff stabilization measures. A recent report from the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia entitled "The Shape of Youth Mental Health" confirmed what families in our community know all too well: our children and teens are struggling emotionally and the resources currently dedicated to their needs are inadequate. The alternative budget addresses this disparity by maintaining all of the mental health-related funding enumerated in the primary budget proposal while adding the following critical services: *an emergency services bed finder position (to find in-patient mental health care) – this position will aid in locating in-patient mental health services, which is crucial for families when their children are in crisis. *a bilingual clinical psychologist – this position is vital to address mental health needs among non-English speaking youth in Alexandria. *Out of School Time staff stabilization measures – this measure would address the high turnover rate among after-school staff, which compromises the planning and managing of critical recreation activities for our youth during non-school hours. These positions and other important priorities in the alternative budget are funded through a one-cent increase in the real estate tax rate, which we believe is a small price to pay for improving access to inpatient mental health care, ensuring sufficient staff to meet with youth needing outpatient care, and providing additional trusted adults and role models for youth in out-of-school settings. Indeed, these provisions are three immediate ways the Council can tangibly respond to families in our community facing an array of emotional health concerns among their children. The Commission, again, thanks the City Council for adopting the Children and Youth Community Plan and for all your efforts to make implementation of this plan financially possible since its adoption. We look forward to working with the City Council, the citizens of Alexandria, and ACPS to ensure this year's budget addresses the evolving needs of Alexandria's children, youth, and families. Thank you again for the great work that you do for our city and residents. Sincerely, Jessy Cuddy, MSW she/her Catherine Clinger she/her Chair Chair Elect
Monday, March 20, 2023	The following comment was received via Alex311: Please consider increasing salaries and resources for Duncan library, one of our city's most important treasures. It has been a resource when my son was in school and we continue to check books out virtually and in person regularly, and occasionally drop in to just read in quiet. Thank you.
Saturday, March 18, 2023	Hello, my name is Michelle Chan. I live in Alexandria, Virginia. I've been a resident for over four years in the Del Ray Area and I often go to the James M. Duncan Branch library. I have concerns about library safety in Alexandria. I know that folks are saying "security guard services need to be retained at their current level to ensure that patrons and staff remain safe." I'm not sure how I feel about that. Especially since security guards are often figures of intimidation and violence towards patrons, especially patrons of a lower income class or non-white racial backgrounds. However, safety is a very real concern, and I do strongly think that the city of Alexandria should ensure that there is funding allocated towards deescalation trainings either for staff or any security guards that have been hired. Please see this article for more information: https://lithub.com/librarians-in-the-21st-century-we-need-to-talk-about-library-security/. I would also like to support the ask that "the library staff deserve compensation comparable/competitive to other libraries in the region." Current staff salaries are 16-20% behind peer libraries. If we want to keep our best librarians, we must compensate them accordingly so that they have a living wage, especially since the standard of living in Alexandria Virginia is so high.
Tuesday, March 14, 2023	Alexandria has taken many steps to address climate change. The draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan includes a recommendation to, among other items, better communicate about federal and state incentives for electric vehicles. While there are limited opportunities to provide local incentives, one potentially revenue neutral approach, would be to modify the valuation used for vehicle personal property taxes based on either federal greenhouse gas emission rates (see https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-rating) or the federal fuel economy ratings for the vehicles (https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.shtml). The City could establish separate classes of vehicles, as provided for in section 58.1-2503(B) of the Code of Virginia, as the basis of the differing valuations. To remain revenue neutral, this could include increasing, on a sliding scale, the valuation rate for high emission/low mpg vehicles while decreasing the rate for no/low emission/high mpg vehicles. This would not be a completely new action as the City already has exercised its authority to modify its car tax rates to account for higher vehicle values in the 2023 budget year. Issues of equity have already been addressed through use of the State Car Tax Subsidy. As this may be a first of its kind step in Virginia, and as the City Manager has already completed his proposed FY 2024 budget, the City Council could request that the City Attorney investigate the legal basis for such an action, and if found to be legally allowable, then direct the City Manager to develop options for use in the FY 2025 budget.

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Monday, March 13, 2023	Dear Mayor, City Council Members & City Manager, My name is Mac Slover and as you know, I was a 30 year employee of the City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and now continue to volunteer with the City by heading up the Miracle League of Alexandria program. As you know, I began this program with the help and support of my board members in 2011. In 2012, with the assistance and support of City Council (who allocated \$285,000), we privately raised over \$300,000 of monetary and in-kind donations to build the rubberized surface Kelley Cares Miracle Field. In November 2012 we opened the new field complex to our youth and adult special needs participants. City Council and community members were there for the field dedication. The Miracle League of Alexandria has partnered with the City to run the highly successful program and has now for over 12 years and is still going strong and even partnering with helping its neighboring jurisdiction in Prince William County to help begin their program. I am writing to ask for your support for a FY 2025 Capital Budget item (as part of the FY2024-33 ten year plan). That item is for \$171,300 to replace the current playing surface of the Kelley Cares Miracle Field. Alexandria continues to be a part of the national Miracle League which has member communities throughout the United States and Canada. We coordinate games on Wednesdays for the youth and on Saturdays for the adults n the Spring and Fall. The Field has been played a vital part in helping meet the needs of our special needs community over the past 12 years. The field is used for the special needs games, by the Therapeutic Recreation after school program run by the City at the Lee Center, the Recreation Department's and Alexandria Soccer Association for their adaptive sports programs; the Recreation Department's T-ball and Coach Pitch programs; various programs for Senior Citizens. In the fall of 2012, the Miracle League and ACPS Office of Special Instruction began hosting special needs ACPS students during the school day for exhibition games. It was a new partnership the Miracle League and ACPS continues to grow and became a On average, the Miracle Fields lasts up to 10 years. The Kelley Cares Miracle Field is now beginning to show the wear on it and has had to be repaired several times over the last couple of seasons. The playing surface needs to be replaced now with the many years of use by the entire community. Thankfully, in the FY 2025 budget, City Manager has included funds to replace the surface. I am in support of the City's efforts to continue to provide our special needs community with a safe playing area as well as other citizens who use the field too. I am asking for you continued support for the budget item and I personally invite you to attend any of our Miracle League games to this upcoming spring season. Our opening day is scheduled for April 15 at 1 pm and would love to have you all attend. You can find the schedule of the youth and adult games and volunteer opportunities on our website: www.miracleleagueofalexandria.com. Come out and experience the excitement and joy of our players, parents, staff and volunteers have each game. Again, I may be retired, but as you know, my heart is with the City of Alexandria and expecially the Miracle League of Alexandria that I love to work with. Thanks, Mac
Saturday, March 4, 2023	I listened to the City Manager's presentation to the City Council on February 28th. Although it was informative, it lacked balance. For example, I do not recall the city manager mentioning programs for older adults (60+) even though they comprise over 17% of all Alexandrians. Alexandria is scheduled to lose \$19,000 in federal and state Older American Act funds in 2024. This could result in 12 clients not receiving congregate meals (i.e., 2750 meals), 591 fewer hours of homemaker services, and a 4% reduction in personal care services, increasing the current 40+ waiting list. These cuts, in addition to the termination of the special SNAP benefits last month, place older Alexandrians in dire straits. I encourage the City Manager to focus on the impact his proposed budget will have on older residents in the upcoming public meetings. Older persons deserve better from the Alexandria city government.
Tuesday, February 7, 2023	Hi there, I live in Alexandria and have for the past three years (and hopefully for many years to come!). I am writing in the hopes that the Manager will prioritize funding to fight climate change in next year's budget. Specifically, I hope that the Office of Climate Action programs will be fully funded, and that any leftover funds from the 2023 budget will be applied to the 2024 budget for climate programs. I would love it if low- or moderate-income residents benefit FIRST from the city's energy efficiency and clean energy programs — they are the ones who need help the most! I know that budgets like this one are always tight and include lots of tough decisions, but this is my number one issue, and I am confident that addressing the climate crisis will have major benefits beyond just climate in terms of making life easier for all of us living here in Alexandria. Thank you for your action already on the climate crisis, and please do as much as you can moving forward! Jamie Biondi
Thursday, January 26, 2023	I am a City of Alexandria resident and I ask the Manager to prioritize climate change in the City's budget for next year. Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission. Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time. Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action over the past year on the climate crisis. Steve Castle

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Tuesday, January 24, 2023	Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission. Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time. Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action on the climate crisis. Kaitlyn Golden, MSW
Sunday, January 22, 2023	Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the 2024 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from 2023 climate programs to similar programs in 2024. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission. Please also make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time. Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action over the past year on the climate crisis. The Rev. Richmond Jones
Sunday, January 22, 2023	Hi. I'm an ALX citizen and I'm writing to request the manage consider climate change when making the budget for FY2024. Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24. I also hope you make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. Thank you. Emily Straight
Saturday, January 21, 2023	Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. They are in greatest need. To do that you will need to fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24. We need to support our Environmental Action Plan and the City's Enironmental Policy Commission. These are not just nice policies which can wait till tomorrow. You only need to watch the PBS Newshour to realize how catastrophe waits if we don't take action now. Susan C Tate
Friday, January 20, 2023	Thank you for your thoughtfulness in this process. Your leadership in taking action on climate policy for our citizens and for this city are deeply appreciated and don't go unnoticed. I humbly and urgently request that you please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission. As you draft the budget, please also make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time. So much money has been allocated for building electrification and efficiency from the Inflation Reduction Act. It's like the city has its own bank account full of funds to make sure we realize the emissions reductions estimated to come from the IRA – we just need to take advantage of it and make sure residents know about this "wallet" they have at their disposal. And, any and all building codes and zoning laws that can incorporate climate-smart and clean energy provisions (like mandating electric heat pumps, water heaters, EV chargers, etc. in ALL new builds across the city) will save the city massive amounts of money in the long run. Thank you for prioritizing these measures and thank you to the Manager, Mayor, and Council for your action on the climate crisis.