



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

November 3, 2023

James F. Parajon, City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria VA 22314

Re: FY 2025-FY 2034 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget Planning

Mr. City Manager:

This letter summarizes the Waterfront Commission's fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget priorities, in response to your recent request for recommendations from commissions to help inform City of Alexandria budget priorities and decision making.

The Waterfront Commission, charged with overseeing implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, continues to focus on analysis, planning and implementation of the capital improvements necessary to implement park improvements and flood mitigation projects, as well as ongoing maintenance and operation of high-quality parks and public spaces along the waterfront. The citizens of Alexandria made clear during the Waterfront planning process and ongoing implementation period that they supported private development efforts but valued most highly the improvement and maintenance of waterfront public areas controlled by the City. In addition, an attractive Waterfront—from Jones Point Park, through the core area of the Waterfront, northward to Old Town North and Daingerfield Island supports the City's aims to be a tourist destination, which sustains the economic health of the City.

This letter summarizes the Waterfront Commission's recommendations for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) followed by the Operating Budget.

Capital Improvement Program

Waterfront Flood Mitigation and Park Improvements

With climate change moving at a visibly rapid pace, including the amount of flooding observed along our waterfront, we recommend that decisions for implementing flood mitigation and park improvements be based on current and realistic estimates of the needs and perils of the waterfront. In addition, improvements should be engineered to be reasonably afforded by the City, including both up-front capital and ongoing maintenance and operations costs.

In May 2022, the Waterfront Commission offered recommendations on the progressive design -

build procurement for the implementation of flood mitigation and park features of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. With the award of a progressive design-build contract to Skanska/JMT, the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project is now moving forward. We continue to encourage the City to consider additional designs and technologies that will further the City's climate change goals, maximize recreational opportunities, and optimize our capital investment, and will provide further input as designs for improvements evolve. We also look forward to planning and implementation of park uses on lands affected by the flood mitigation project following completion of the capital project.

Operating and Maintenance Budget

Priority Waterfront Operations

The City's FY 2025 Operating Budget should sustain funding for priority waterfront operations and maintenance functions, including the marina, parks, policing, security, public restrooms, and debris removal. We encourage investment in the Torpedo Factor, to ensure it remains a welcoming place. The budget should also support endeavors such as the Tall Ship Providence and special events—including landmark celebrations for the City in 2024 (275th anniversary of Alexandria's founding) and the nation in 2026 (250th year of American independence).

The City should commit necessary funding for operations and maintenance as public spaces along the waterfront continue to be activated and improved. Increased activity in waterfront areas requires higher standards of attention to effectively manage those spaces.

Staffing and Employee Compensation

We note that improving the City's competitive position in attracting and retaining employees will be an ongoing focus of the City budget in FY25. In September, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities was able to successfully hire five (5) full time staff members. The hiring of these new staff members will help to improve maintenance and operations in the Waterfront area.

Continuing to improve compensation of hourly and salaried employees across City government will help to improve the competitiveness of the City in attracting and retaining employees key to supporting Waterfront maintenance and operations, inclusive of public safety (police and fire), marina, and Waterfront parks and recreation positions.

Waterfront Transportation Access

We continue to encourage investment in transit, bicycling, pedestrian and disabled access along the Waterfront. including continued support of the King Street Trolley to Old Town and **fare-free** DASH Bus service throughout Alexandria. And we look forward to the continued support of the water taxi. This mitigates the impact of changes in parking supply and helps to provide green and healthy means of transportation to enjoy the Waterfront.

Waterfront Funding Streams

The Commission continues to encourage the City to find long-term and sustainable ways to fund investment in waterfront infrastructure, maintenance, and management through mechanisms such as a business improvement service district, public/private partnerships, bonding, or

application of incremental revenue from the waterfront's completed new private development. Programs that address equitability like the Seaport Foundation's program for at risk and disadvantaged youth should continue to be supported.

Conclusions

In summary, the Waterfront Commission recommends that the City Manager's proposed FY 2025 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan reaffirm the City's commitment to funding planned capital expenditures, operations, and maintenance of the Waterfront, and consider creative funding to ensure the future and continued success of the implementation of the Waterfront Plan.

We look forward to providing constructive feedback on the City's budget proposals over the coming months.

Sincerely,



Lebaron K. Reid, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Commission

cc: Alexandria Waterfront Commission members
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Recreation Parks & Cultural Activities
Terry Suehr, Director, Project Implementation
Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Commission Staff Liaison