

MESSAGE FROM THE BFAAC COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council,

Thank you once again for the opportunity to review and reflect upon the City Manager's Operating and Capital Budgets.

The comments offered by the members of your Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (BFAAC) are offered in the context of the uncertainty in the macroeconomic environment, both regionally and nationally. As conveyed in previous memoranda, BFAAC believes the City Manager and City budget staff continue to effectively navigate the economic challenges the City has faced. This includes a once-in-a-generation global pandemic and the unpredictable effects it has had on our main sources of revenue, real estate and personal/business property, our pandemic recovery, the uncertainty of the interest rate environment, and the future of commercial real estate.

In our report, we provide our thoughts and feedback on the following topics:

- I. Alexandria's Fiscal Challenges
- II. Longer-Term Revenue Opportunities
- III. City Council and ACPS Coordination
- IV. Budget-Related Communications

In the remaining two months of our FY2024 term, BFAAC will continue its "Budget Education" program. We will be receiving a few more presentations from City staff and discussing options for how best to summarize and disseminate this large amount of complex information. We will likely use the summer pause to prepare the deliverables we identify in our remaining spring sessions for review & discussion in the fall.

To date, we have received presentations from staff on the following budget topics:

- Budget Process & Calendar
- Revenues and Real Estate Assessment
- Finance
- CIP

We will round out the year with additional presentations on:

- ACPS Budget Process & Calendar
- Special Revenue Funds & Grants

Additionally, I'm pleased to share that we have already identified several interesting topics for next year's "Budget 201" series, including:

- Understanding the investment-related authority, role, responsibilities and powers of the Industrial Development Authority of Alexandria (IDA) and the Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority (ARHA), exploring potential for collaboration for City projects and goals around economic development and capital improvements.
- Learning about how the budget is analyzed by some of the City's newer departments, including the Offices of Race and Social Equity and Climate Action.
- Dashboarding and performance metrics tracking update from the Department of Project Implementation (DPI) and the City Manager's Office
- Exploring economic development strategy for the City, and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership's (AEDP) role in supporting revenue.

We welcome any additional suggested topics for exploration from the City Council.

I would like to personally thank the members of BFAAC for their work on this report and this year's efforts. We hope City Council will carefully consider our recommendations. We look forward to discussing these and other issues at our upcoming budget work session with City Council members.

Sincerely,



Amy Friedlander, Chair
Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee

MEMORANDUM

Date: MARCH 28, 2024
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: BUDGET AND FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BFAAC)
SUBJECT: REFLECTIONS ON THE CITY MANAGER’S PROPOSED FY 2025 OPERATING BUDGET AND FY 2025-2034 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

BFAAC shares the following reflections on the FY 2025 Budget with focus in these areas:

- Alexandria’s Fiscal Challenges
- Longer-Term Revenue Opportunities
- City Council and ACPS Coordination
- Budget-Related Communications

I. Alexandria’s Fiscal Challenges

The City continues to face macroeconomic trends of increasing costs that are exceeding the increases in revenue, in particular, debt service related to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This reality is reflected in BFAAC’s observations and recommendations about the FY 2025 budget. We encourage City Council to carefully consider the impacts of its FY 2025 decisions on the long-term affordability of its financial obligations.

In the face of declining commercial property tax revenue and growing demands on the City’s operating and capital budgets, City Council has advertised a maximum \$0.04 per \$100 in assessed value residential property tax increase for the FY 2025 fiscal year. This proposed action reflects Alexandria’s continued reliance on residential property taxes as the primary source of revenue to address the City’s needs, and this reliance will need to continue given the limited additional options available.

Strains on the City’s finances will continue for the foreseeable future. General fund-supported debt service is projected to increase from now through 2033, at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.9% between FY 2025 - FY 2029 and a rate of 2.6% between FY 2029 - FY 2034.

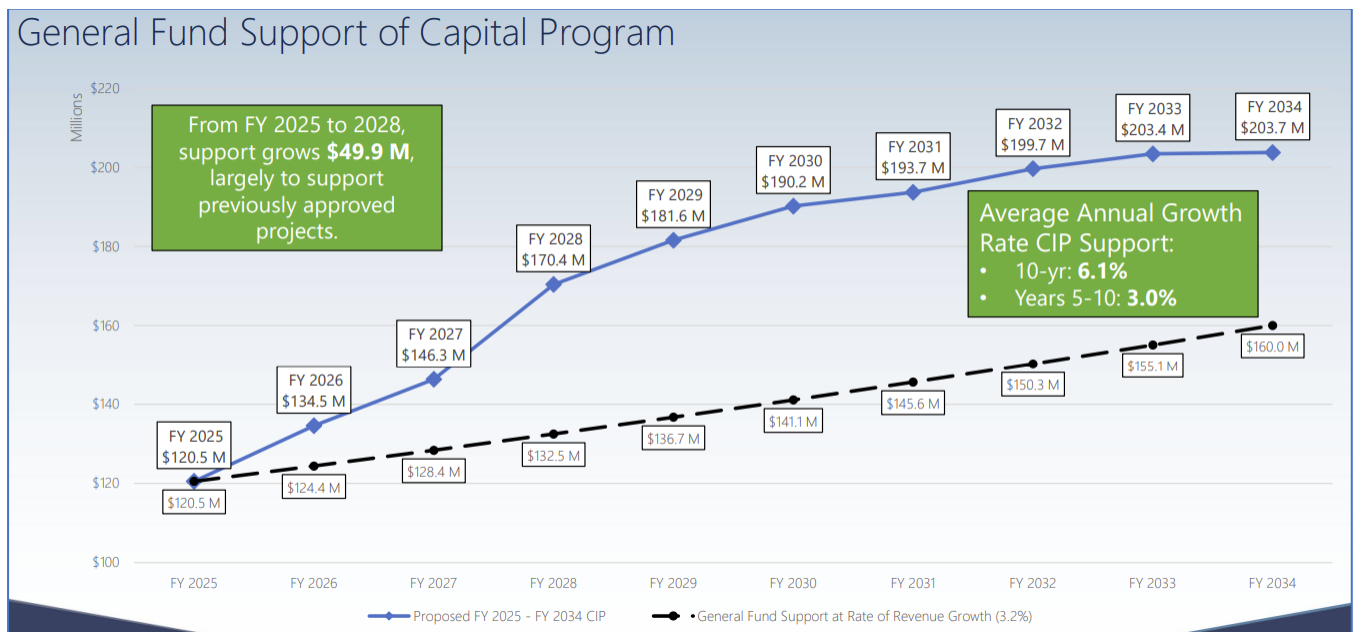
Alexandria has a robust policy and practice for contributing cash from the general fund toward offsetting capital borrowing costs, with a 10-year plan of 3.35% annual contribution. With the budget pressures this year, the FY 2025 cash capital contribution is planned at 2.45%.

The City has made good use of end-of-year fund balance to support capital costs, an appropriate use of fund balance that BFAAC supports. We encourage the continued replenishment of fund balance as a primary use for any anticipated allocation of realized year-end surplus, but caution that this is a limited

tool to offset capital costs on average given the likelihood of little-to-no year-end surplus in the near term.

Alexandria will require additional borrowing for several of the eleven current capital projects that represent the majority of the CIP over the next ten years. Waterfront Flood Mitigation, George Mason Elementary School renovation, and the long-delayed City Hall renovation will together require approximately \$185MM in borrowing proceeds between FY 2025 and FY 2028. As a result, City Staff estimate debt service increases of approximately \$8MM in FY 2026 and approximately \$14MM in FY 2027.

According to the City, “The general fund support of the CIP [a combination of debt service and cash capital] is forecasted to grow at an average annual rate of 6.1%, significantly higher than the experienced rate of general fund revenue growth.”¹ We believe this directly contributes to its unsustainability.



Proposed FY 2025 – FY 2034 CIP and General Fund Support at Rate of Revenue Growth²

Given this context, BFAAC wishes to emphasize that the decisions City Council makes today in FY 2025 will have significant impact on the affordability of future budgets.

As an illustrative analysis, BFAAC asked staff to estimate the amount of additional revenue that would be available to the City Council if the advertised tax increases had been approved since FY 2020. Of course, we understand that there were extenuating circumstances, including the pandemic and the substantial increase in residential property assessments, that influenced the City Council’s decision not to increase the tax rate. However, in the interest of furthering this thought experiment, we chose to use historical data to demonstrate how today’s decisions could impact tomorrow’s budget.

¹ https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/02.00_cip_overview2.pdf, quote, page 24

² https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024.02.28_proposed_fy_2025_-_fy_2034_cip_worksession_city.pdf, graph, pg 14

The chart below shows that if each advertised tax increase since FY 2020 had been adopted, the cumulative increase in revenue would have been approximately \$86MM by FY 2025, and City Council would have approximately \$21MM more this year to spend. By FY 2034, if the value of a penny of tax rate revenue remains unchanged, the cumulative additional revenue would be approximately \$276MM.

	(Value of Penny in \$MM)			FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
	Advertised Max Rate	Adopted Rate	Unused Increase						
				\$4.00	\$4.20	\$4.30	\$4.60	\$4.70	\$4.70
FY 2020	1.135	1.130	0.005	\$2.00	\$2.10	\$2.20	\$2.30	\$2.40	\$2.40
FY 2021	1.155	1.130	0.025		\$10.50	\$10.80	\$11.50	\$11.80	\$11.80
FY 2022	1.110	1.110	0.000			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
FY 2023	1.115	1.110	0.005				\$2.30	\$2.30	\$2.30
FY 2024	1.120	1.110	0.010					\$4.70	\$4.70
			Annual Total	\$2.00	\$12.60	\$13.00	\$16.10	\$21.20	\$21.20
			<i>Cumulative Total</i>	<i>\$2.00</i>	<i>\$14.60</i>	<i>\$27.60</i>	<i>\$43.70</i>	<i>\$64.90</i>	<i>\$86.10</i>

Similarly, if the City Council had adopted the staggered rate increase over the past four budget cycles of \$0.02 every other year as proposed in the original FY 2021 budget, before the COVID-related budget revision, and considered at least that amount of increase this year to help with the long-term affordability of the budget, in particular debt service of the CIP, the cumulative increase in revenue would be \$82MM. As a result, the City Council would have approximately \$28MM more to spend this year and the cumulative impact by FY 2034 would be \$336MM.

		FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
	Value of Penny (in \$MM)	\$4.20	\$4.30	\$4.60	\$4.70	\$4.70
FY 2021 Increase	2	\$8.40	\$8.60	\$9.20	\$9.40	\$9.40
FY 2023 Increase	2			\$9.20	\$9.40	\$9.40
FY 2025 Increase	2					\$9.40
	Annual Total	\$8.40	\$8.60	\$18.40	\$18.80	\$28.20
	<i>Cumulative Total</i>	<i>\$8.40</i>	<i>\$17.00</i>	<i>\$35.40</i>	<i>\$54.20</i>	<i>\$82.40</i>

BFAAC recognizes the challenges the City faces in terms of both affordability for its residents and affordability for itself and the important goals and projects it wants to advance. However, we also recognized that there will be a point where decisions need to be made on how to ensure the financial sustainability of the City's goals and we encourage City Council to consider all the options, including incrementalism, which, as shown above, could provide the support the City needs to manage its affordability issues over the long term.

Infrastructure Investment & Project Management

BFAAC is impressed by the efforts City staff have made to manage capital projects more efficiently and effectively through standardizing and centralizing project management practices, training, and data collection. This includes the implementation of the AlexPM project management information system. Staff have also implemented a higher level of scrutiny of project readiness and ongoing funding levels that may result in the delay or deferment of certain projects.

BFAAC is in support of the proposed 5% increase to the stormwater fee as proposed in the City Manager's budget. As noted in the Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee memo to the City Manager, dated October 30, 2023, "creating a more flood-resilient Alexandria will require at least a decade of sustained investment and effort."³ BFAAC recognizes the forward thinking of the City Council in dealing with the City's stormwater mitigation effort by planning the yearly growth rates to the stormwater fee to fund the future project needs for the next decade. BFAAC also recognizes the relationship between infrastructure investment projects and economic growth and development initiatives. We advise that City Council continue to emphasize this linkage explicitly to the public, especially as it relates to the implementation of the scheduled increases to stormwater fees that help pay for these projects.

In addition to the continued pressures on capital spending, Alexandria is expected to face other demands on the general fund to address collective bargaining requirements, non-collective bargaining staff needs and other programmatic requirements stemming from policy priorities. BFAAC acknowledges the difficult road ahead and will continue to provide guidance and feedback to City Council as it navigates the budget process.

Recommendations

Given these fiscal challenges, BFAAC recommends that the City Council:

In the near term:

- Remain open to using all of the tools at the City's disposal to address known and expected budget needs, including openness to property tax rate increases over time, perhaps similar to the way the stormwater fee increases were planned.
- Consider the delay and/or deferment of proposed or early stage capital projects.
- Recognize good capital project budgeting and management helping to alleviate the pressures of the CIP.

In the longer term:

- Support diversification and growth of Alexandria's revenue base by creating and implementing a new City-wide economic development strategy and plan that recognizes the challenges and opportunities in our post-pandemic economic climate.
- Explicitly link infrastructure investment to economic development in communications to residents.

³ Memorandum to James Parajon, Alexandria City Manager, from the Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group, October 30, 2023, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/Memo%20to%20City%20Manager%20re%20FY2025%20SW%20Fee%20%28final%29.pdf>

II. Longer-Term Revenue Opportunities

As we do every year, we also reflected on opportunities for revenue growth and diversification. We recognize that both staff and City Council are hyper-aware that the long-term potential impact from the reduction of Alexandria's commercial tax base presents a significant risk to the budget and threatens to increase the tax burden of Alexandria's residents. We have been experiencing this trend for a long time and there are no "silver bullets" to alleviating the revenue pressures on the City's residential tax base.

While there are high-profile initiatives being explored that potentially offer a partial solution to rectify the imbalance, BFAAC wants to highlight that alternative opportunities do exist and should be explored further. Alexandria has used similar economic development tools at projects like Landmark Mall,⁴ and we encourage the City to continue that thread of creativity while exploring these other examples, which and is by no means an exhaustive list of opportunities. Regardless of the specific opportunities pursued, a strategic, well-resourced, sustainable, and effective effort by the City is required to make any significant changes to the tax base balance.

Potential revenue opportunities to explore could include, but are not limited to:

- **Commercial-to-“Other Uses” Conversion:** Consider implementing a clear strategy to help accelerate the transition of current commercial spaces to new productive uses to incentivize the private sector to invest in Alexandria. Other jurisdictions in the region have explored and implemented initiatives such as reduced permit fees, accelerated rezoning, density and height increases, tax abatements, etc. The City should explore these avenues, quickly devise and implement a strategy that makes conversion as easy as possible, and ensure that it is clearly communicated to the real estate industry. Time is of the essence as the office market will likely take a considerable amount of time to recover, and not to the same productivity levels as previously expected, if left to its own devices.⁵
- **Incentive Programs:** The General Assembly can provide the City with unique incentives that have significant impact on capital financing of real estate development projects. A local example is Fairfax County's "Economic Incentive Program"⁶ or "EIP."
 - The purpose of the program is to incentivize development in specific locations the County identified as places they want development to occur. Qualifying projects must meet criteria identified by the County, such as that they have be commercial, industrial, or multifamily residential, be a newly proposed project, consolidate parcels that may not have otherwise been consolidated, and be consistent with other County policies.
 - "Financial incentives include a ten percent reduction of site plan fees and a partial abatement of the real estate taxes on the difference between the base value of a property and its post-development value, including any increase or decrease in the annual assessed value of the tax-exempt portion of the property. In addition to the financial incentives, there are regulatory incentives such as expedited scheduling of zoning applications, concurrent processing of a Comprehensive Plan amendment and zoning application, and concurrent processing of a site plan with a zoning application."

The City has several areas that have been previously identified that could benefit from a similar incentive, such as through Small Area Plans or the selection of Qualified Opportunity Zone

⁴ Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, "Unique Solution Allows Landmark Redevelopment to Move Forward," <https://alexandriaecon.org/unique-solution-allows-landmark-redevelopment-to-move-forward>.

⁵ <https://www.costar.com/article/338468743/some-real-estate-professionals-say-us-office-market-may-still-have-room-to-fall>

⁶ <https://www.fcinvite.org/economic-incentive-program>

tracts. The abatement structure, while freezing taxes during a fixed period, accelerates development that may not otherwise occur for years and pulls property tax dollars forward. The City can then benefit from increased taxes after the abatement period ends.

- **Parking Development & Authority:** Publicly owned and financed parking garages can incentivize development by reducing the overall costs of a project and making it more financeable. A successful local example of this technique is the parking garage in the first phase of development of the Mosaic District. To support the 31-acre mixed-use development, Fairfax County created a Community Development Authority⁷ (“CDA”) that financed public infrastructure, including the garage, and then collects revenue to pay the debt. Without the publicly financed garage, the 500,000 square feet of retail the developer planned and wanted to deliver in the short-term may not have been financeable (given how much parking was required to serve that retail) and the project may never have happened. City Council should consider using this tool to accelerate redevelopment of designated high-density areas, for example Potomac Yard or parcels in Carlyle/Eisenhower East, if desired.
- **Transit-Oriented Public-Private Development:** WMATA has been dedicating significant resources over the past decade to develop transit-oriented development on its underutilized assets throughout the region to increase ridership. Braddock Road, Eisenhower East, and Van Dorn Metro stations have been on the list but not prioritized as WMATA worked through its larger opportunities first. The City should engage with WMATA to understand what might help accelerate the public-private development of the facility, which would increase the City’s tax base while also helping WMATA’s ridership needs.
- **Economic Development Authorities in the City:** The City could explore opportunities for the two development agencies in the City – the Industrial Development Agency of Alexandria (IDA)⁸ and the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA)⁹ — to creatively collaborate with the City to solve issues across the City’s portfolio in terms of economic development and affordability of capital improvements. These authorities are political subdivisions of the Commonwealth, and are afforded specific powers, roles, responsibilities, and financial capabilities by the Code of Virginia¹⁰ that vary to those given to municipalities. IDA and ARHA could potentially open avenues that are not accessible to the City on its own. BFAAC has discussed exploring this topic further with the goal of potentially providing new guidance to City Council. We are not making any formal recommendations at this time; however, we do encourage the City Council to consider dedicating resources to reviewing potential opportunities, which BFAAC’s research could support, if appropriate.
- **Identify & Request Additional Authority or Funding:** BFAAC has observed that the Governor and General Assembly have been increasingly involved in creating new opportunities for economic development throughout the Commonwealth. The City should be proactively and consistently looking for ways to propose new ideas or ask for additional authority from the General Assembly to achieve its goals.

⁷ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/assets/documents/fy2022/adopted/volume2/70040.pdf>

⁸ Chapter 49, Title 15.2, Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended. *See also* § 15.2-4905, et seq.

⁹ Chapter 1, Title 36, Code of Virginia, as amended. *See also* § 36.4, et seq.

¹⁰ <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/>

- **Allocating City Resources to Finding Other Opportunities:** Finally, identifying and executing any of these opportunities (or the myriad other opportunities of which we are not aware) requires appropriate allocation of resources — staff, time, funding, and political support. BFAAC strongly encourages City Council to continue to ask staff what it needs to accomplish these goals and prioritize providing it.

III. City Council and ACPS Coordination

Investment in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is an important and shared community value, as reflected by its significant portion of the City’s capital and operating budgets. As BFAAC and its School Board-appointed counterpart, the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) have shared previously, it is critical that our City and Schools leaders maintain and strengthen positive and productive communication throughout the calendar year around financial issues.

BFAAC has previously commented on the positive developments City and Schools staff and elected leaders have fostered in establishing regular fora for communication. This is a great start. We encourage both organizations to recognize that these conversations will be most effective if staff and our elected leaders proactively organize the content of each meeting in advance so that all participants are best prepared for strategic, productive discussions.

Based on our observations of recent budget cycles, we advise City Council (and will advise the School Board) that budget-related conversations, including each stakeholder’s anticipated needs, should be occurring earlier — before proposals are submitted. Joint meetings are opportunities to discuss the financial realities the City is facing, establish and explore relevant budget guidance, identify shared or unique priorities, and be transparent about anticipated budget needs and pressures that may materialize.

Additionally, the stakeholders should consider creating a dedicated venue for discussing larger scale, strategic issues such as capital planning, shared services, and alternative financial models — outside of the budget cycle — so that the conversation can be more objective and separated from immediate budgetary needs.

Recommendations

BFAAC shares the following recommendations with City Council, which will also be shared with BAC and the School Board:

- **City-Schools Subcommittee Planning & Meeting Preparation:** The joint City-Schools Subcommittee should use their standing agenda item devoted to budget and financial planning during each monthly meeting with the goal to use the time as a work session to plan for upcoming joint City-Schools budget meetings. The Subcommittee should:
 - Develop each budget meeting’s specific agenda.
 - Ensure expectations for each meeting are clear.
 - Determine information or analysis staff would need to complete in advance to prepare stakeholders.
 - Identify and troubleshoot potential challenges.

Regular participants in the joint City-Schools Subcommittee meetings should prepare in advance to ensure that specific budget-related sub-topics are identified for discussion during joint City-Schools Subcommittee meetings (e.g., budget calendar review, budget impact of collective bargaining, status of capital planning) in order to capitalize on this important planning time together.

- **Rules of Engagement & Setting Expectations:** A joint City-Schools meeting should be calendared in the August-September 2024 timeframe for the purpose of:
 - Jointly drafting and committing to “rules of engagement” to inform forthcoming budget coordination.
 - Providing an opportunity for City and Schools leaders to share respective expectations for the forthcoming budget process.

The May 9, 2023, joint memo¹¹ from BFAAC and BAC provided some useful guidance for the substance of this meeting. Topics could include:

- Respective roles and responsibilities related to areas of joint work, planning, and decision-making;
- Differences in approaches and calendars and their impact on joint efforts and discussions;
- Delineating expectations for desired information that each body needs from the other to engage in the budget process (and when needed);
- Budget guidance on operating and capital budgets;
- Plans for better utilizing ongoing joint discussions between staff and bodies to address budget development, including ACPS’ role in the City’s annual budget retreat; and
- A review of the full budget calendar (City and Schools) to identify and troubleshoot any pain points or challenges to better prepare for and anticipate needs.¹²

Finally, as an update, City and Schools elected leaders have recently expressed continued interest in learning more about budget development approaches in our neighboring jurisdictions, including and especially with respect to revenue sharing models. BFAAC and BAC intend to explore this topic further and report back to both bodies later in 2024 to share learnings, including identified advantages and challenges to the approaches examined. We recommend that at least one joint City and Schools meeting in 2024-2025 should include a discussion and report-out from BFAAC and BAC leadership on this topic.

¹¹ Memorandum to Alexandria City Council and Alexandria School Board from BFAAC and BAC, May 9, 2023, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/BFAAC%20FY%202024%20Memo%2003%20-%20Joint%20BFAAC%20BAC%20Memo.pdf>.

¹² For example, the City Council and School Board held a joint work session on the FY25-FY34 CIP on November 1, 2023, one day before the Superintendent was scheduled to present her proposed FY25-FY34 CIP budget, November 2, 2023. A sequencing concern like this should be identified earlier for a potential remedy to promote transparent and well-informed discussion at the joint meeting.

IV. Budget-Related Communications

As we have been educating ourselves on the complex world of the City's budget this year, we took this as an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the City communicates budget information, how its priorities are reflected in its investment decisions to its various audiences and stakeholders, and the effectiveness of that communication. We believe that providing feedback on budget communication is a logical extension of our education project and have heard from a few City Council members that this is a priority for them as well. It may make sense to formalize this work for next year, the scope of which we can discuss with City Council. BAC has previously done a similar analysis that we could use as a model.¹³

BFAAC recommends that the City Council dedicate more resources toward budget communication efforts. We recognize that budget season is incredibly busy for staff and without sufficient resources, spending time on effective communication can be difficult when the goal is to be responsive and transparent. In BFAAC's review of the materials for the FY2025 budget, we identified areas for improvement so that our committee, the intended audience, and the public are able entertain the budget's complexities with digestible content.

Recommendations

We recommend City Council make sufficient, dedicated resources available to staff to address:

- **Materials Consistency & “Hygiene”:** We understand that the budget process is fast and busy, but with some internal templates and consistency, we found the public-facing documents could be both easier to develop and easier to interpret.
 - Find the resources to dedicate to making budget presentation materials visually effective and consistent, including a professional graphic designer.
 - To that end, *outside of the budget process*, create templates for budget information to be consistently conveyed each year. At the end of the day, the budget inputs do not change that much year-over-year. Having a consistent visual language that stakeholders can understand and use to make accurate “apples-to-apples” comparisons will go a long way towards increasing the effectiveness of communications.
 - Additionally, if the presentations are templated, it should help staff be more efficient with their own time and resources too — alleviating the need to “reinvent the wheel” on matters that remain consistent over time.
 - Make sure presentation slides either convey the appropriate message without the presentation audio or publish a slide deck that has annotations/citations that explain what the audio message conveyed. We recognize that is standard with work session presentations, but it should be consistent.
 - Ensure graphs and charts are always appropriately labeled (e.g., units, axes, etc.)

¹³ BAC's original memo on budget-related communications generally (dated June 2022) is available at <https://alexandriapublic.ic-board.com/attachments/3367025c-4bf6-485c-9e3d-10e94620132c.pdf>. A subsequent memo focused on ACPS' Community Budget Forum (dated February 2023) is available at <https://alexandriapublic.ic-board.com/attachments/9f1b1c25-2ebf-42df-aa44-2fa7de59b287.pdf>.

- **Stakeholders and Audience:**
 - One of the low-hanging fruits we think will help with communications is to have the specific audience in mind when developing any public-facing budget materials. If the audience is City Council, make sure the materials make that clear and acknowledge that there may be other sources of information that are more approachable and geared toward the public. If the audience is the community at-large, that should be reflected in the way the materials are developed.
 - Think strategically about how all the budget presentations work together to clearly communicate complicated content relevant to the audience when developing templates and the materials themselves.
 - Consider creating a budget education video that could be posted online that explains budget basics for a general audience. Fairfax County has a good example of potential content.¹⁴
 - Consider creating a standardized budget outreach strategy that alerts the public to what the process is and how to participate. This strategy should be reusable each year and cross multiple forms of content (e.g., social media, print, advertisement, etc.).
 - BFAAC would be happy to provide our feedback and guidance about how to make the budget-related communications effective and useful for community stakeholders.
- **Priorities & Metrics:** Consider ways to explicitly highlight the City Council’s priorities and metrics that track the progress toward those priorities throughout all budget presentations — perhaps a compelling key in presentation documents that establishes accountability and credibility with the community. We acknowledge that the City is doing a lot of great work and collecting a lot of data, which is in the dashboard¹⁵ already. Making sure that information is repeated frequently and is as accessible as possible to stakeholders is important.
- **Data Accessibility:** Arlington’s “Arlington Wallet¹⁶” is a great model of creating tools for data accessibility and transparency. BFAAC recognizes that Arlington dedicated resources and investment to develop this tool, which we would encourage the City to do as well.

As always, BFAAC thanks City Council for its consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to discussing them with you at our meeting on April 3, 2024.

¹⁴ “How Our Budget is Built in Fairfax County,” Fairfax County Government, January 5, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSD6W0P7a44>

¹⁵ City Council Priorities, City of Alexandria, last updated December 11, 2023, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/city-council/city-council-priorities>

¹⁶ Arlington Wallet, <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Budget/Arlington-Wallet>