

City of Alexandria, Virginia
BUDGET AND FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BFAAC)

Monthly Meeting

January 20, 2026

Nannie J. Lee Memorial Recreation Center, Room #4
1108 Jefferson Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Committee Members Present: John Ruthinoski, Mayor Gaskins Designee (Chair); Randall Williams, Vice Mayor Bagley Designee (Vice Chair); Nancy Drane, School Board Designee (Secretary); Sonya Day, Citizen-at-Large; Erica Kaster, Citizen-at-Large; Lauren O'Brien, Councilmember McPike Designee; Lester Simpson, Councilmember Greene Designee; Mark Tonsetic, Citizen-at-Large; Jake Truex, Chamber of Commerce Designee

Absent: Mindy Lyle, Councilmember Elnoubi Designee

Staff Present: Morgan Routt, Director of the City of Alexandria Office of Management and Budget; Meghan McGrane, Budget Management Analyst

Guest: None

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Ruthinoski called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the December 16, 2025 Meeting:** Kaster made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2025 meeting, seconded by O'Brien. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote of those present.
3. **December Meeting Follow-Ups**
 - a. **Budget Education Series Materials for Director Fleming**

Ruthinoski began by discussing any possible follow up with Director Fleming. City staff only have two summaries in hand – general budget 101 and ACPS which leaves the following summaries and presentations missing: revenue/real estate, finance, capital improvement plan (CIP). Williams will do some follow up with former BFAAC members who had responsibility for the additional summaries that are missing to see if they could share those materials. Next steps are to see what we have available and decide what follow up with Director Fleming's office would be valuable. Drane expressed some hesitation about sharing the ACPS summary without some engagement with ACPS budget staff, especially since the presentations are somewhat dated and there may be more up to date materials that would be more relevant or helpful.

b. Feedback from City Council Members on Budget

Ruthinoski turned to whether BFAAC Council representatives had received additional feedback from Councilmembers about BFAAC's proposed memo. BFAAC members were asked to pose the following questions to Councilmembers before today's BFAAC meeting:

Question 1: What we heard you say during the Council Budget Retreat is that you are asking us for recommendations on identifying the elements of a framework that will first, help you navigate the budget decisions you need to make, and second, will help you communicate to the public how you ultimately came to those final budget decisions. Do you agree?

Question 2: Do you have something specific in mind as to what that framework might include or look like, or how it would be helpful when facing hard budget choices? For example, would it be a checklist with factors to consider; core questions to discuss; a scoring tool, something else?

Simpson spoke with Councilmember Greene, who said that she is interested in some visual tools that demonstrate the impact (past and/or future) of tax increases. (She also voiced a general interest in increasing funding for human services activities and no decrease in education activities, likely more generally related to the budget rather than a framework.) She was also interested in seeing meals and hotel tax and whether we are at the maximum allowed (per state cap). Per **Routt**, that will be included in the City staff's budget presentation.

Williams spoke with Vice Mayor Bagley who agreed that we don't need to create an actual tool, but rather a set of principles to communicate how the decision was made to use for communications. Some principal questions Council should ask during budget process: does an investment create jobs or a local use tax; does it offer economic incentives to attract businesses to invest; what are the infrastructure investments needed to support budget decisions. She is thinking more of a checklist than a tool. She thinks that research that would demonstrate similarities or differences in how other legislative bodies assess these budget decisions would be most helpful.

Ruthinoski shared that Mayor Gaskins thought what would be most helpful would be a combination of a checklist of factors with follow up questions that would facilitate a deeper examination of each factor and whether/how it has been met. Mayor Gaskins would also appreciate guidance about when the tool should show up in the budget process. There are also different types of decisions – basic services, discretionary services, potential cuts, revenue

opportunities – that might dictate different questions. That is something that we should keep an eye on.

BFAAC members discussed the feedback and next steps. With respect to timing, one approach could be to include our checklist and/or questions in the add/delete process. OMB showed a standard add/delete form that could be amended to incorporate this, https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/fy26budgetmemo099_attachment_1.pdf. The advantage of this approach is that it would apply to a more limited set of decisions as opposed to every line item.

Ruthinoski is meeting with the Mayor again next week and can raise some additional questions to flesh this out further, perhaps building on the feedback Vice Mayor Bagley shared with **Williams**.

Williams suggested that objective, pre-determined questions that Councilmembers can utilize no matter what the decision is would be most valuable (based on his discussion with Vice Mayor Bagley) understanding that there are different types of decisions. BFAAC could potentially present different questions for different decisions (i.e., questions for cuts vs. questions for adds). Part of this effort is about discovery – what is out there? What guidance do they need beyond OMB?

BFAAC members suggested a few additional ideas to keep in mind as our work continues:

- Possibility of a workshop to help them come to this list of questions, tools, etc. after we provide them with some examples or some suggestions.
- Importance of connecting the “how do we make the decision” with “how do we communicate how we made the decision” – using the same set of criteria.
- Point that having a common set of questions (as opposed to an individual assessment) can help them come to consensus.

4. Development of Work Plan for FY 2026 Work Products

Ruthinsoki suggested the following general outline for the memo:

Part One: Overview of current tools they have available now. (Note to review past OMB presentations.)

Part Two: Summarize research over four areas:

1. Models from other jurisdictions (i.e., Fairfax, Arlington, Falls Church, Annapolis, Richmond, other jurisdictions with strong City Manager structures). BFAAC members Jake, Nancy, and Lester will focus on this piece.
2. Best practices from trusted sources (i.e., government budget association or comparable). Morgan and Meghan circulated some suggestions here that they can recirculate. BFAAC members John, Randall, and Mark will focus on this piece.
3. Emerging technology solutions (including but not limited to AI). BFAAC members Erica, Sonya, and Lauren will focus on this piece.

BFAAC members determined that a May 2026 timeline for this deliverable sounds reasonable.

5. Updates and Reports

- a. **Williams** reported out on his work on the IT Commission. The committee is exploring the development of an open data portal, including creating a rubric for the committee to test out to potentially submit to the city as a tool to consider.
 - b. **Tonsetic** is waiting to be appointed to the Stormwater Commission.
 - c. **McGrane** reported that OMB is meeting with City departments to focus on budget development in advance of the City Manager's February 24 budget presentation. OMB also continues to track developments at the General Assembly.
 - d. **Routt** shared that BFAAC will tentatively be presenting during the City Council's March 25, 2026 Work Session to provide input on the proposed budget. **Ruthinoski** suggested adding a meeting on March 10 to the BFAAC schedule to prepare for this meeting. **Routt** suggested that we also use the March 25 presentation as an opportunity to check in on what we have been looking at for the larger memo.
 - e. **McGrane** reminded BFAAC members that meetings of 2+ BFAAC members must be noticed through OMB with 2-4 days advance notice. For virtual meetings, OMB needs to be present to facilitate recording, etc.
 - f. **Drane** provided a short update on ACPS budget developments and previewed a more detailed summary that she will share with BFAAC members via e-mail after the meeting.
6. **Adjournment:** A motion was made by **Ruthinoski** and seconded by **Drane** to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:22 P.M.

Upcoming Meeting(s) / Important Dates:

| <i>Event</i> | <i>Date/Time</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| BFAAC Regular Meeting | Tuesday, Feb 17, 2026 – 6:30pm | Lee Center, Conference Rm #4 | <i>Noticed</i> |
| BFAAC Regular Meeting | Tuesday, Mar 17, 2026 – 6:30pm | Lee Center, Conference Rm #4 | <i>Noticed</i> |
| BFAAC Regular Meeting | Tuesday, Apr 14, 2026 – 6:30pm | Lee Center, Conference Rm #4 | <i>Noticed</i> |
| BFAAC Regular Meeting | Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – 6:30pm | Lee Center, Conference Rm #4 | <i>Noticed</i> |