

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

Monthly Meeting

May 19, 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) (Virtual); Nancy Drane, School Board Designee (Secretary); Sonya Day, Citizen-at-Large; Erica Kaster, Citizen-at-Large; Mindy Lyle, Councilmember Elnoubi Designee (Virtual); Mark Tonsetic, Citizen-at-Large; Jake Truex, Chamber of Commerce Designee

Absent: Lester Simpson, Councilmember Greene Designee

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

Guest: None

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Ruthinoski called the meeting to order at 6:41 P.M.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the April 14, 2026 Meeting

Kaster made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2026 meeting, seconded by **Truex**. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote of those present.

3. BFAAC Memo on Budget Decision Making Process

Ruthinoski began the meeting with a discussion of the budget decision making process memo. He ran through a draft of the memo, section-by-section. The memo begins with a summary of the City's current decision-making process and our work product objectives. What follows is a brief review of budgeting best practices captured by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) coupled with an observation that the City's practices are generally in line with these recommendations. BFAAC then identifies three primary alignment issues: strategic, decision, and communication, followed by GFOA recommendations around navigating alignment issues.

Truex then prepared an executive summary (combined with a longer appendix) that details one potential alignment tool, Strategic Tactical Allocation of Resources Tool (START). The appendix

walks the reader through the mechanics of how START plays out in practice. The discussion reviews not only the process but shows how Tempe, Arizona elected officials utilized the tool to develop performance measures. The appendix also includes an analysis of how START could fit into Alexandria's budget process and would address identified gaps. Finally, the appendix lays out a process for developing a version of START for Alexandria, including addressing equity ideals and ensuring transparency and opportunities for public engagement.

McGrane suggested that the [Council's current priorities](#) be integrated into the analysis. They include: (1) Advance Housing Opportunities; (2) Reduce Community Disparities; (3) Strengthen our Economy; and (4) Recruit and Retain a Thriving Workforce. Each priority has underlying goals and objectives.

Ruthinoski suggested that we might consider adding a piece on how members of the public might engage in the same or a similar START exercise.

Truex shared that the appendix concludes with a side-by-side comparison between Tempe's approach to the START exercise and Alexandria's proposed adaptation, including potential improvements, an implementation timeline and roadmap, and necessary staffing and capacity requirements, including technology. The conclusion also flags potential risks or challenges in pursuing this approach. It ends with a set of eight BFAAC recommendations to Council.

Ruthinoski then opened up the discussion more broadly to solicit feedback from BFAAC members. **Ruthinoski** suggested that using the established priorities and performance measures might make it easier for Council to incorporate this approach into its current process.

Rouff shared that he likes the Tempe approach because it encourages cross-program investments to advance particular goals (i.e., it isn't about just increasing funding to one program, but rather a few programs that together advance a goal – perhaps in slightly different ways). He also thinks that this could also help them to prioritize within their existing priorities and promote understanding and alignment – and perhaps justify and clarify the basis for its ultimate decisions to the public.

Kaster suggested re: staffing that Council ensure that someone with a data science background is involved to bring that expertise into the use of the tool to ensure fidelity with best data practices.

Tonsetic wondered if we have any information on Tempe, Arizona's experience with using this – what was gained, how did this help them do their work more efficiently or effectively. **Truex** said that he might follow up with staff in Tempe to get some of this qualitative feedback.

Ruthinoski then turned to **Kaster** to review the section focused on leveraging AI to inform decision-making and public engagement. Themes in this section of the memo include: enhanced data analysis, pattern detection, and prediction; risk detection and early warning; and enhancing spending prioritization and resource allocation processes. The memo then reviews the type of data that can be fed into AI to facilitate analysis and ways that the analysis can be automated to support continuous improvement, flag aberrations in real time, etc. Foundational components for pursuing this would include setting up governance structures, privacy policies, etc. and potentially launching them on a pilot basis. The City could potentially build its own AI tool through contracted support. There are also public facing uses, like transcription in multiple languages, chat bots to help residents navigate the City website, etc.

Tonsetic reminded BFAAC members that there is already a \$300,000 allocation in the FY27 budget to support developing AI use cases. **Day** also suggested that we could explore models established elsewhere where City governments are using AI. **Kaster** also suggested that AI can be used to help the City amplify and increase engagement with its existing communications tools or generate additional tools like videos, podcasts, etc. **Tonsetic** suggested that another use case might be how to bring cost of building, executing certain processes down.

Ruthinoski tied up the conversation by summarizing next steps for finalizing the memo, including circulation of memo to BFAAC members for final comments and approvals.

4. BFAAC Memo on ACPS Appropriation Process

Drane provided an update on the BFAAC-BAC joint memo work. A subcommittee has been established with two BFAAC members (**Drane, Williams**) and three BAC members (including its chair). The joint subcommittee will review the draft outline shared during our last BFAAC meeting and build out the substance. At minimum, we expect to meet with ACPS budget staff and City budget staff and may do some additional research on jurisdictions that have adopted the funding by classification approach.

As Council suggested, yesterday **Drane** and **Williams** met with David Lanier from the City Attorney's office to learn more about what analysis was provided to Councilmembers in advance of its resolution adoption. Thanks to **McGrane** and **Routt** for setting it up. Generally, it appears that the City Attorney's focus was on the statutory and legal guidance surrounding the Council's shift to a classification-based appropriation and not really on the process of implementing that change. They did not conduct any analysis into how pervasive this funding approach is throughout the Commonwealth, although did speak with at least one jurisdiction that did switch to this approach.

5. Updates and Reports

a. Office of Management and Budget

McGrane reported that Council adopted the FY27 budget, which is followed by a formal appropriation. OMB is now working to refresh the entire budget document to reflect Council's changes, adjustments, etc. The final budget memo includes a summary of what they did in their last add/delete session.

b. Stormwater Utility & Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

Tonsetic reported on the group's latest activities. Even though there is currently a fund balance for stormwater projects, there is still a plan to continue to increase the stormwater fee because once shovels hit the ground, it will get very expensive, very fast. There is a desire to increase the fee more gradually – something the group has discussed how to message to the public.

c. Commission on Technology

Williams shared an update on the Commission's latest activities. There is an upcoming discussion planned for June 11 about the Flock Safety License Plate reader program. **Williams** will share the information with **McGrane** to share with the rest of BFAAC. He also wanted us to know that the Commission does not allow for stand-ins, so if there is some reason **Williams** cannot attend, they'd only be attending as a member of the public, couldn't offer BFAAC updates, etc. **Williams** inquired about whether there is an official Alexandria AI policy and staff is not aware that one exists. **Williams** suggests that we might add to our memo that there is no current City AI use policy and suggest one be created.

6. Adjourn

A motion was made by **Drane** and seconded by **Kaster** to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was then adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting(s) / Important Dates:

**BFAAC Regular Meeting – change to June 23, 2026 – 6:30pm Virtual [*To be noticed*]