

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 20, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 72 : RESOURCES FOR THE LONG RANGE PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

BACKGROUND: Since the Proposed FY 2012 Operating Budget was released, two possible long range planning work program elements have been the subject of recent discussion -- School facilities planning and Waterfront Plan.

Prior to these recent discussions, the Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, Department of Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities, and the Office of Housing presented a proposed work program to the Planning Commission on November 4, 2010, and to the City Council on November 23, 2010. At that work session, staff reviewed potential projects for the work program and noted as is the case in most fiscal years that it would not be possible to address all of them in FY 2012 with existing resources.

During the work session, Councilmembers indicated that they place a high priority on completing the Beauregard Corridor small area plan before starting another small area plan and wish to limit the use of consultant support to subjects that require specialized expertise for a short duration.

Based primarily on the feedback received, a FY 2012 work program based on existing budget resources was assumed for the preparation of the proposed FY 2012 Operating Budget:

- Start Eisenhower West Small Area Plan in the beginning of FY 2013;
- Start the feasibility study for Transit Corridor B in late FY 2012 and work on the feasibility study for Transit Corridor A in FY 2013; and
- Initiate implementation of the Waterfront Plan implementation in FY 2013.

The budget for consultant support was set at a \$220,000 level representing a \$120,000 increase to the City dollar level contained in the FY 2012 budget, which had been cut back substantially from prior years. While substantial federal funds were available for Beauregard Corridor work in FY 2011, those funds have largely been expended.

DISCUSSION: At a recent work session on the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) CIP, both City and ACPS staff proposed a joint long range planning project for school facilities. A joint planning process would recognize

- The enormity of the potential cost to meet demand for school capacity.
- Determining the exact nature of the demographic trends underlying recent enrollment increase – and whether they will continue.
- The very limited number of options for new school sites, which can inspire new thinking about how school buildings relate to the community that surrounds them.
- The many interwoven issues – from land use to transportation to human services to parks and recreations – for which both ACPS and the City have a mutual interest.

Long Range Planning for Schools is relatively easy to accommodate in the FY 2012 work program because existing City staff have experience in this field. Staff time necessary for this project could be “found” by slightly delaying work on the Transit Corridor Feasibility Study for Duke Street (and the land use study that would accompany it) by about four months until FY 2013. In addition, staff would not begin the Eisenhower West small area plan until FY 2013 even if the Beauregard Corridor Plan is completed before the end of FY 2012, so that the staff resources available between the end of Beauregard and the beginning of Eisenhower West could be used for school planning.

In recent weeks (given discussions with the Old Dominion Boat Club and the recent Waterfront flooding) it has become clear that with the adoption of the Waterfront Small Area and Flood Control Plan, many stakeholders in the community would expect the City to commit resources for Waterfront Plan Implementation in FY 2012 rather than waiting until FY 2013. Developers have indicated that they are interested – although not necessarily committed yet – to redevelopment projects in the 200 block of South Union Street, with potential projects including a small hotel and restoration of historic warehouses. There is community interest in moving forward soon with flood mitigation initiatives. If the current discussions with the Old Dominion Boat Club are successfully concluded, an agreement with ODBC may involve actions that the City would wish to pursue as soon as possible.

The early Waterfront implementation tasks could include:

- Review development proposals, including site design and coordination of public and private investments in amenities.
- Pursue a detailed planned agreement with the Old Dominion Boat Club, which could include elements requiring engineering, permitting, planning and legal work.
- Conduct engineering work for flood mitigation implementation and neighborhood outreach related to engineered designs.

- In the 200 block of the Strand, initiate park planning, design and engineering in coordination with the public and adjacent private development.
- Pursue a private sector partner in the Beachcomber project; if successful, manage that project as it moves forward; if unsuccessful, move forward with demolition.
- Pursue the Waterfront/Old Town parking implementation plan, including working with the community to set triggers for each stage of the parking management program.

The elements of Waterfront Plan implementation that are more technical and involve staff with engineering and landscape architecture training cannot be accommodated in FY 2012 with existing resources. *Since it is late in the budget process to add specific resources, if Council is interested in Waterfront Plan Implementation starting in FY 2012, then it may want to make sure that its contingent reserve is set at a healthy level so Council has the flexibility to add in this area if it so chooses after the Waterfront Plan is adopted.* Alternatively, as stated in Attachment “A” of Budget Memo #56, Council may wish to leave all or a portion of the unused Windmill Park bulkhead monies to fund Waterfront Plan implementation activities.