

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 23, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER *RM* / *FOR*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #51: BANNERS AND LIGHTS IN OLD TOWN AND DEL RAY

This memorandum is provided in response to Councilman Krupicka's request for information on the cost to upgrade the banners on King Street and the cost to install banners and lights similar to Old Town in Del Ray.

During the FY 2013 budget development process, staff members of the Land Use and Economic Development strategic plan goal group advanced a series of proposals for improving King Street, including banners, tree lights, plantings, sidewalk maintenance and cleaning. If additional resources are made available for King Street, staff recommends funding the sidewalk maintenance and cleaning initiatives before banners and lights. The cost to fully fund the staff proposal is \$164,300 and includes increasing street cleaning staff from one to two positions (\$60,000), sidewalk maintenance labor and materials (\$50,000), power washing public trash cans monthly in April through October and bi-monthly in November through March (\$24,300), and increased sidewalk sweeping (\$30,000).

Lights – Old Town

In FY 2011, City Council added \$9,000 from Contingent Reserves and funds were added to the base budget in FY 2012 to provide holiday tree lights from approximately one week before Thanksgiving until the end of March. In total, there is \$71,900 budgeted for the cost to install and remove the lights, fund the electricity and replace a small number of strings each year. Staff estimates that the monthly cost of electricity is approximately \$4,500. Year round electricity costs are estimated to be \$54,000.

During the budget process this year, the staff-comprised Goal Group 1 – Land Use and Economic Development requested supplemental funding to extend the number of months that the lights are on and extend the location of the lights beyond King Street to include some of Washington Street, also. Expanding the lights to 12 months would cost approximately \$165,600, or \$95,700 above the current budgeted amount. Due to the wear and tear on the strings from

year-round exposure, staff estimates that the lights would need to be replaced approximately every six months during the course of the year.

Currently, there are lights on approximately 200 trees in the King Street corridor including those around City Hall, along Union Street and Washington Street. There are approximately 120,000 lights or about 600 lights per tree. Each string of lights (with 100 lights per string) costs \$9 and it takes six strings of lights for each tree. The total cost for light strings for 200 trees is \$10,800. It takes staff (or contract workers) 5 weeks to install the approximately 120,000 lights on the streets in Old Town. The labor cost associated with each installation is \$45,000. If City Council wishes to expand the lights beyond the current number of trees, it would cost more.

Lights – Del Ray

To determine the cost for tree lights in Del Ray, staff made several assumptions. First, the area in which the lights might be placed is defined to be between Nelson Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue. Although the trees in Del Ray are not exactly the same as the trees in Old Town, staff believes similar assumptions can be made about the number of lights per tree (600). In the 14 blocks between East Nelson Avenue (1500 Mount Vernon Avenue) and Commonwealth Avenue (2800 Mt. Vernon Avenue) there are approximately 145 trees. Assuming \$9 per string and six strings per tree for 145 trees, the cost for materials is \$7,830 each time all of the lights need to be replaced. Due to the reduced number of trees, the cost for installation would be less. Staff estimates approximately \$33,000 for installation. The lights in Del Ray would likely only need to be replaced two times each year. In total, the cost for the materials, total replacement twice each year, removal and installation and electricity for year round lights on 145 trees in Del Ray is approximately \$115,000.

The biggest obstacle to lights in Del Ray is the type of street light that exists. In Old Town, there are two different styles of street lights, both of which have electrical outlets at the top of the street lights to power extension cords. Lights are strung on the trees, connected with extension cords and powered from the street lamps. In Del Ray the street lights do not have electrical outlets. Short of installing extensive conduit to provide electrical outlets, there is no easy solution to providing tree lights in Del Ray. In addition, the City would need approval from Dominion Power to rewire and then run lights from the street lights in Del Ray.

Banners – Old Town

Currently, the hardware exists on the street lights in Old Town to display banners. The King Street Implementation Staff Work Group has been looking at the costs associated with designing, replacing and maintaining banners on King Street. Banner hardware is currently in place on 18 blocks of King Street from the unit block to Daingerfield Road. There are approximately 26 banner assemblies on each side of the street (one or two per block depending on obstructions) for a total of 52 different locations where hardware is in place for two banners. The total cost is estimated to be \$30,000 for 170 custom banners (which would allow for some initial replacement due to wear and tear), including \$3,000 for new design or \$1,000 to update an existing design. The production cost to fabricate the banners is approximately \$22,000. Annual maintenance of the banners is \$6,200, including labor and equipment. It should be noted that a number of the banner assemblies on King Street are broken or damaged. Based on a recent quote for the Del Ray banner assemblies, the unit cost is \$210. The cost to replace the entire inventory of existing

banner assemblies would be approximately \$22,000. It should be noted that the most recent Old Town banners were funded by a combination of City and Old Town Business and Professional Association funds.

Banners – Del Ray

There are currently banners in Del Ray (“Where Main Street Still Exists”). These banners are placed between Nelson Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue and attached to the cobra-style light poles. There are 30 cobra-style light poles in the 14 block stretch of Mt. Vernon Avenue. The Del Ray Business Association purchased 16 vinyl banners for a total cost of \$8,000, including double-sided vinyl banners, banner mounting hardware for a single banner, and installation for 16 banners. The cost to install one banner on each of the 30 light poles in the 14 block stretch of Mt. Vernon Avenue would be \$15,000. It is important to note that the attachment of banners to the light poles would require an agreement with Dominion Power and insurance to cover any liability associated with the banners. Dominion Power routinely approved banners on their light poles subject to meeting Dominion’s standards.

Staff:

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