

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** APRIL 4, 2014  
**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL  
**THROUGH:** RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER   
**FROM:** NELSIE L. SMITH, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET   
**SUBJECT:** BUDGET MEMO #17: RESPONSE TO COUNCIL QUESTIONS

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Every Friday, the Office of Management & Budget issues Budget Memos to answer questions posed by members of City Council. We prepare the memos in a question and answer format. Below are answers to some of the questions posed thus far.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (A. Silberberg)**

**Question:** “What is the cost of the City Hall third floor renovation?”

**Response:** The estimated cost of the City Hall 3rd Floor renovation currently under construction, involving renovation of space currently or formerly occupied by the City Manager’s Office, Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Communications and Public Information, is \$697,500. The project is funded through the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

**JOBLINK (J. Chapman)**

**Question:** “Regarding the reduction to JobLink, could we switch to a non-profit model or elicit the services of faith-based communities to provide these services? Are there other delivery models that could be considered, i.e. transitioning these services to another department?”

**Response:** JobLink staff continuously explores opportunities for collaboration with various state, local, non-profit, and faith-based organizations. For example, JobLink partners with Catholic Charities for refugee resettlement employment services and provides space at JobLink for the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services. JobLink could be considered for transition to a non-profit or third party organization, however the fiscal impact is unknown at this time. DCHS would need to solicit proposals, determine their eligibility for receiving the grants used to fund the program (\$1.7 million from federal and state sources along with \$1.8 million from the General Fund), and evaluate their qualifications for delivering the services. The cost savings (if any) of doing so would be identified as part of the qualification and evaluation process. JobLink has not explored the

transition to another City department because of the strong interaction with other DCHS public benefit programs.

**SENIOR RENT RELIEF PROGRAM (P. Smedberg)**

**Question:** “Please provide some options for adding time restrictions on when a lease must be acquired in order to qualify for the Senior Rent Relief program. What are the legal ramifications, if any, for making this adjustment?”

**Response:** As a program that is operated entirely with City funds, the establishment of time restrictions, or prior residency requirements, is at the discretion of City Council. DCHS staff contacted current Senior and Disabled Rent Relief program recipients and found that 90% reported having lived in Alexandria for more than one year, while the average length of Alexandria residency was 31 years. DCHS staff contacted Arlington County and Fairfax County and confirmed neither county has residency minimums for rental assistance programs.

If City Council changes the time restrictions of prior residency, staff recommends a one-year residency requirement, with two exceptions to ensure equitable distribution of benefits. First, the residency requirement would be waived for applicants exiting the homeless shelter system and residents who received homeless prevention/intervention assistance within the 12 months prior to application. If these individuals do not receive a waiver, the residency requirement could create a bottleneck for shelter services because households may not be able to find housing without the subsidy and would therefore remain in the more costly shelter system longer than appropriate. The second exception would be made for current recipients with less than one-year residency. Those individuals would be allowed to continue in the program to prevent unnecessary and costlier homeless prevention services in the event they cannot afford the rent without the subsidy.

**BENEFITS PROGRAM (J. Wilson)**

**Question:** “(Page 10.56) The proposed budget includes \$50,000 to explore/study a new Benefits Platform. Can this cost be capitalized as part of a new CIP Project for the new Benefits Platform?”

**Response:** Yes, the benefits platform could be included as a new project in the CIP, however since it is a relatively small dollar amount for a software application with little or no physical infrastructure and an as-yet undetermined useful life, staff would use cash sources, not debt, to fund the project. The cash source for this project is currently in the General Fund operating budget. If the project moved to the capital budget, those funds would be transferred over as well, resulting in no savings to the General Fund. The alternative would be to identify funds from another project in the CIP to contribute to this project.