



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

October 4, 2019

Mark Jinks, City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Jinks:

RE: Waterfront Commission Priorities for FY 2021 Budget

Recently your office requested input from City boards, committees, and commissions regarding fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget priorities. This letter presents the position of the Waterfront Commission, in support of the City Council's priorities for a smart, equitable, and green City.

The Waterfront Commission's top priorities this budget cycle include investment in flood mitigation, sustaining investment in the King Street Enhanced Maintenance Initiative and Waterfront operations, and adopting a permanent funding mechanism for investment in Waterfront capital and operating needs.

We begin by addressing capital improvements, followed by the operating budget and additional resources for the Waterfront. We close by reflecting on the tremendous accomplishments achieved along our Waterfront this past year.

Capital Improvements

The Waterfront Commission finds that implementation of the public portions of the approved Waterfront Plan remains a **high priority**. Along with implementation of the flood mitigation plan, completion of continuous Waterfront access and improvements to the public parks along the core Waterfront were among the priorities expressed by the public for plan implementation.

The Waterfront Commission continues to support consolidated funding for flood mitigation and other Waterfront capital improvements in FY 2021. Consolidating the funding upfront will enable greater speed, and perhaps savings, as dollars, materials, and labor are presumably cheaper now than they will be in the future. By performing multiple elements of the project at once, the City may realize savings of substantial millions of dollars. Accelerating completion of Waterfront flood mitigation will advance completion of other capital improvements eagerly anticipated by the public.

Operating Budget

In FY 2019, City Council established the King Street Enhanced Maintenance Initiative, to improve the day-to-day appearance of King Street, support special events, and create a destination. The effort has sought to provide additional trash and recycling can service and daily sidewalk mechanical sweeping. This effort is a **high priority** and should be sustained to support the competitiveness of King Street as a clean and safe destination befitting its designation as a “Great Street.”

The City’s FY 2021 budget should sustain funding for other **high priority** Waterfront operations and maintenance functions, including the marina, parks, policing, security, public restrooms, debris removal, and special events and to commit to provide additional funding as the Waterfront Plan is fully implemented. This recommendation extends to related services such as consistent and reliable transit access to the Waterfront via the King Street Trolley, and high quality historic and artistic interpretation and programming from the Office of Historic Alexandria and the Office of the Arts, operations of the newly expanded Waterfront Park, support for the tall ship *Providence*, and any operating costs associated with pedestrianizing a portion of King Street.

Funding Mechanisms

In the long-run, the need for funds to realize the vision of the Waterfront Plan remain. Therefore, the Waterfront Commission continues to recommend that the City place a **high priority** on examining alternative means to directly sustain public improvements, including a business improvement district, public/private partnerships, bonding, or application of incremental revenue from the Waterfront’s new private development.

Reflection on Recent Accomplishments

This has been a momentous year of advancing the City’s long-range plans for the Waterfront. Completion of the Waterfront Park expansion and installation of the “Mirror, Mirror” public art has been a smashing success, attracting City residents and visitors to our Waterfront. The City, along with its partner Alexandria Renew Enterprises, has advanced environmental planning and permitting of the RiverRenew program to mitigate outfalls from combined sewers. We also welcomed a tall ship to Alexandria, the *Providence*, and construction continues on two Waterfront private developments on South Union Street.

Next year promises to be another year of progress for Alexandria’s Waterfront. Planning and engineering continue on Waterfront flood mitigation improvements, which will not only address periodic tidal flooding near the Waterfront but also construct permanent improvements at Waterfront Park. RiverRenew construction will commence, aiming to achieve a state-mandated 2025 deadline to address pollution from the City’s sewer outfalls. Private development will near completion, concluding with the opening of signature restaurants approved by the City in 2019. And the City will consider a pilot for pedestrianizing a portion of lower King Street.

Conclusion

In light of these advancements and forthcoming activities, we ask that the City Manager's proposed FY 2021 budget and capital improvement program reaffirm our commitment to maintain funding for planned capital expenditures, operations, and maintenance, and continue to institute a permanent funding mechanism to sustain our successful implementation of the Waterfront Plan.

Sincerely,



Stephen Thayer, Chair
Waterfront Commission

cc: Honorable Mayor & members of City Council
Alexandria Waterfront Commission members
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Terry Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation
Yon Lambert, Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Staff Liaison to the Waterfront Commission