Tom Hickok, 9/10/13

This document represents a tremendous amount of work. In a first read I didn't see any reference to establishing an amount of time for each agenda item at a meeting. I think that respecting people's time by starting and finishing on time, and sticking to the agenda items within (as best you can) is a key pre-condition of getting good participation. The norm should be that meetings start and end on time.

Sarah S. Pearson, 10/10/13

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the What's Next Handbook for Civic Engagement. Civic engagement has been part of my career and a passion of mine (examples below). I'm fairly active in the Alexandria community and I wish I had known this work was in progress as I would have happily volunteered my time to help.

I've reviewed the handbook draft and I have some suggestions and concerns.

- Reduce size by at least 40%! There is considerable repetition that can be edited out. The doc is far too long for the casual reader to review.
- Page 1 -- Cut 4th paragraph and last paragraph.
- Page 2 -- Great page! This could be the basis for a Prezi (***prezi***.*com/*) on the handbook.
- Page 3 -- Cut first sentence of first para.
- Page 5 -- Repetitive. Cut first sentence of first para. From 4th para, please provide examples of "representative groups of residents."
- Page 7 -- Seems that the following principles of engagement were left behind: voting, knowledge of your elected official, knowledge of how city government works and Alexandria's public policy process. I'm concerned that these important elements are left out of the conversation and while they may not form the basis for your handbook, whenever civic engagement is mentioned, these are paramount.
- The center of the handbook looks nice, but, again, there is a good deal of repetition---words/sentences could/should be cut.
- Appendix A-3 -- This reveals another concern for me. I see that in-person meetings were all held in the same church. This compromises a sense of diversity and accessibility. Yikes. Also, I only see that the poll was featured on one website. Yikes, again.

I realize my comments are critical and I apologize. I only mean to offer suggestions to streamline the handbook and facilitate accessibility. Please let me know if I can be of assistance in helping your team move the report forward.

Alexandria's Draft Handbook for Civic Engagement
Public Comment Form
September 6-October 11, 2013

The City of Alexandria invites you to review and provide your comments on Alexandria's Draft Handbook for Civic Engagement through October 11, 2013. The Draft Handbook is now available in City libraries and other community locations. Please provide your comments below and leave your form in the comment folder. You may also mail or deliver the form to Carrie Beach, Planning & Zoning, Room 2200, City Hall, 301 King Street, Alexandria VA, 22314. Alternatively, you may email your comments to: whatsnext@alexandriava.gov.

In addition to the printed copies in community locations, the Draft Handbook is also posted online at www.alexandriava.gov/whatsnext, where members of the community may post comments on the online public comment board.

Regardless of how you submit your comments, they will become part of the public record. All comments received during this period will inform the final Draft Handbook for public hearing and City Council consideration, tentatively scheduled for November 2013. A document demonstrating how the comments were addressed will be provided with the public hearing docket item.

Questions? Contact Carrie Beach at 703.746.3853 or email whatsnext@alexandriava.gov.

Looks like it could be a useful resource for folks interested in getting involved in their community. I'm glad it's also available online. Are there plans for tranlations (e.g., Spanish, Amharic)? -Marc Dyer

10.5.13

October 11, 2013

Letter Delivered To: Rashad D. Young, City Manager, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Carrie Beach, Division Chief, Neighborhood Planning and Community Development, City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning

From: Janet E. King

Subject: Civic Engagement Draft Handbook Comment

I have concluded my review of the draft civic engagement handbook. Regrettably, I find that the document falls short, from my perspective, at the same time not fulfilling its worthy purpose as described in its Table of Contents. I have included a summary of the issues supporting my assessment as well as my annotated copy of the draft upon which it is based.

The impact of this document as a guide in the city's civic engagement with the community is more far reaching than it would appear if viewed as just one more administrative issue to be brought before Council. Rather, it will be central to every interaction with the community from addressing the largest issues of its strategic plan and budget to more incremental issues affect smaller segments of our population. My involvement through every community meeting on this subject, in the many interactions with Ms. Beach throughout the process, in my previous comments on the draft handbook outline, and now in with the draft handbook have been informed by my heartfelt wish to see the discordance, or, said more strongly, the apparent dysfunction, reduced within our community and a healthier Alexandria emerge. Respect for city staff including those I have met in the Manager's office, Ms. Beach, those encountered as I participated last spring as a student in the Alexandria City Academy – and certainly my respect for many citizen activists engaged in many issues – is at work as well. I would wish to see a strong bridge in place to bring these committed individuals together – with consensus building tools, ones that redeem the word "compromise" – that word defined in terms of reason-based resolutions.

Finding that this draft does not serve these objectives well, I strongly recommend:

1. That the Principles of Civic Engagement alone be submitted for City Council approval on November 14 and thereafter posted in Council Chambers, at all public meetings, broadly distributed among city staff plus widely publicized via other media

2. That the next projects before our city (those 4 stated at the June 24 meeting if they are still viable as candidates) be established as test projects or laboratories for the essential refinement of the handbook.

3. That this interval be used by staff alone, and in conjunction with community activists/experts, those most often active in civic engagement to date (* specifically those described in greater detail at the end of this letter), to address deficiencies in this draft.

4. That an evaluation tool be adopted which will provide quantitative assessments of citizen ratings of performance against the Nine Civic Engagement Principles. That this involve a numeric rating (e.g. using a scale of 1-10) of experience for each relevant Principle at every civic engagement setting – and with each rating, this assessment tool would elicit from the citizen one or more suggestions for improving her/his rating.

5. That the actions stated in 2-4 above be woven into a process for producing a final draft and thereafter a final comprehensive Handbook for Civic Engagement for the City of Alexandria.

A Short Synopsis of What I Consider Confidence-Undermining Deficiencies: Graphics and color presentations can distract and beguile. Stripped of the graphics, photos, and color text entries, the Text Only version of the civic engagement handbook draft demonstrated to me what Jeff Bezos has proven at Amazon. No PowerPoint, no bullets, but well thought out narrative shows whether reason and logic are evident – or to frame this in an idiom: If there is a there, there.

The handbook's intended "there"? "The goal of this handbook is to be a tool for pursuing, achieving and measuring positive outcomes for civic engagement" (found on page 5 of the draft's Table of Contents). It is my conclusion that this destination has not been reach. I have included the support for this conclusion in my narrative comments (attachment 1) as well as the annotated text (attachment 2). These illustrate that, from my perspective, the draft handbook is insufficient as that "tool", for I found it providing little structured and integrated guidance but mostly lists or tables. Further, I did not find evidence of focus on producing conditions and setting forth techniques to facilitate cooperation and compromise--- which would be the centerpiece of this process. And very critically, I found **no measures**.

One of my most disturbing observations was that the "Outcomes" listed after each Principle are scant. They show no evidence of the honoring of my recommendation, among those offered in the earlier letter specific to the handbook's draft outline, that the City Manager's Performance Management Staff be invested in framing valid outcome statements and pairing them with equally valid outcome measures.

Equally distressing, the Principle "Evaluation" is so weakly underpinned that it is, I believe, an embarrassment. I applaud the City Manager's convictions about performance measurement for, like Bill Gates, I believe:"We test our assumptions and track achievements by measuring outcomes and impacts and by understanding how and why we have succeeded or failed" (Source: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation web page). Gates clearly ties these to the very word "Accountability" – one of the other citizens proclaimed Nine Civic Engagement Principles. I find the commitment to Evaluation is so fragile as to be almost nonexistent - the only tools being two forms (Appendixes F and G)– one for citizen use after meetings – and one to be used by staff for a project; both are subjective and without quantifiable measures. My suggestion in number 4 above is intended to answer the need for quantitative and actionable citizen feedback.

Undermining confidence in the entire process is the narrative on Annual Evaluations, page 32, which lays the groundwork for the potential dismantling of Evaluation – suggesting it might be too costly. This is defiant of the well established management principles and practices of performance management. It not only undermines confidence in both Accountability and, I

suggest, Respect, the first Civic Engagement Principle, it rings hollow for the promise of the entire enterprise.

"I think a lot of efforts fail because they don't focus on the right measure or they don't invest enough in doing it accurately"

Bill Gates
2013 Annual Letter
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Personal Reaction to this Year-Long Undertaking: Ms. Beach, always pleasant and professional throughout, at one point well into this process, in an e-mail, commended my fairness throughout. It was not always easy to maintain this demeanor – as one, for me, disjoined community experience (meeting) lead to another – with post-it notes and flip charts – and my dazed sense at the end of each of: "What just happened; what did I or any of us accomplish?" To fill out one of the evaluation forms at the end of each community session was torturous – for it seemed pointless; there was no context – that is, until the draft outline was offered for comment. This first blush view of what seemed to have been cobbled together from those meeting proving what I feared – that there was no integrating structure to build upon. And so it has been reinforced with me after reviewing the draft handbook.

This has been a learning experience. Yes, I did find out later that two of my more minor, in the scheme of things, suggestions within that earlier comment letter on the draft outline were adopted: 1. Producing a Text Only version to spare paper and ink for this type of commenter – one who does so on a page- by-page basis before drawing conclusions – this allowing for the "Bezos principle" to be observed, and 2. The Civic Engagement Principles be re-sequenced with Respect as the first - for it permeates all other Principles – and Evaluation as last - for it is intended to demonstrate a commitment to each Principle. Yet the most important suggestions, those about the quality of the draft outline and the need for a new course of action (part resurrected in the 5-point recommendation above) were ignored.

Despite my earnest pursuit of a response to my letter concerning the draft outline (comments due date 7/30/13), a response never came. In the aftermath of this, I could more directly relate to those citizens who have invested so long and deeply in a myriad of issues throughout our city and who felt they had not received the response that honored that investment. Like them, I might suspect, though with not in any way the degree of prolonged, persistent commitment, I put aside the sense of disillusionment, the sense that Respect had not been at work. This might have kept me from investing the time it has taken to document my comments at this juncture. But Respect I have – for my city and its future. This and Self- Respect has, after all my time and thought and caring, moved me forward.

And so, I have submitted my best effort, with good faith still alive. Yet, I must be healthfully realistic and, to respect myself fully, I have reached a conclusion that other methods of civic engagement will be my venues. While I will await the November 1 reconciliation of comments which will appear on the What's Next web page, I will, at least for the foreseeable future, invest my energies in what I perceive as potentially more productive ways. They are many – well beyond the context of this handbook. I have addressed this in my annotated comments – that the

preamble be added to the draft handbook drawing a distinction between what is intended to be expressed here as but one, be it major, form of civic engagement. Contributing via one of our many non-profit organizations is, for me, a much more desirable option in the wake of this year-long experience.

I do sincerely acknowledge that by embarking on this endeavor the City has shown an honorable and earnest commitment. This deserves commendation – as do all who have devoted their time and talent to this endeavor. There has been much that is good in all of this, most importantly the promulgation of the Nine Civic Engagement Principles. While I remain hopeful that a great deal more will be invested by the City to produce a document in which confidence can be found, I now move on.

Respectfully,

Janet E. King
422 Underhill Place
Alexandria, Virginia 22305

* Citizen Experts – Quoting from my earlier letter commenting on the draft civic engagement outline:

"Citizen expanded participation: As the number of citizens attending the civic engagement meetings decreased (the proportion of city staff, facilitators – constant or growing), there remained those who consistently showed up -many steeped in civic engagement. These are also the faces which are also familiar at city hall and whose voices ripple through the city's press. From these, the candidates must be drawn - starting with one of our city's Living Legends who also serves as a co-chair of the Federation of Civic Associations. The list's composition (and size – recognizing the limits of productive discussion), would be defined by these citizens themselves. While we look to the principles of civic engagement as our "thou shall's", we owe it to ourselves to draw upon the absolutely essential perspective and insights into the "thou shall not's"

Attachment 1 Narrative Comments on Draft Civic Engagement Handbook
Attachment 2 Annotated Copy of Draft Civic Engagement Handbook

Attachment 1
Janet E. King

Narrative Comments
on the
Draft Civic Engagement Handbook

For Whom is the Handbook Written?

At 99 pages, the handbook is clearly useful for one audience, that being the city staff, whose responsibility it is to initially set forth the projects and to set the stage in such a way as to fulfill the objective of improved and expanded effective citizen engagement. Tailored products, not the handbook, would be used for other audiences: City Council, Commissions (e.g. permanent posting of the principles in a prominent location within Chambers and working rooms with briefings on the details) and citizens. The visibility of the principles – via selected means/media (e.g. foldout card, pamphlets) – will introduce these to the latter audience, but the real means of doing so will be via the actions of staff as they demonstrate improved civic engagement practices.
Note: A preamble should be added to make clear that there are other avenues for civic engagement e.g. serving on Commissions, volunteering for city activities and functions -- as well as civic engagement embraces any contribution to the city and its people e.g. volunteering with non-profits such as meals on wheels or the friendly visitor program of Senior Services of Alexandria (SSA). ALexandrians InVolved Ecumenically (ALIVE!), or any of those publicized via. Volunteer Alexandria

Is the Stated Purpose of the Handbook Achieved?

"The goal of this handbook is to be a tool for pursuing, achieving, and measuring positive outcomes for civic engagement"- Source: page 5 of the Text Only Version of the draft handbook's table of content after the entry:" Focused on Outcomes".

Outcomes and Measures. The "outcomes" found at the end of each principal (pages 7-12 of the Text Only Version) are not adequate – and measures not found at all. A measure might be expressed in terms of increased participation. What a flawed and unscientific "measure" this would be. It was to prevent such an occurrence that in my earlier letter I proposed that the City Manager's performance management staff be added to the City's civic engagement team to address the need for both true outcome statements and valid measures which would convincingly address them.

The draft handbooks cited purpose to be a tool for "pursuing, achieving positive outcomes" also is served poorly. One prime example being the "Actions" that are listed (only 3) following the principle Respect. These are weak at best. Again, informed by my experience, I can say that an action of paramount importance is to: "Welcome citizen input and respond to it – for adopted ideas, commend; for those not adopted, explain fully the rationale for their not being adopted". Perhaps this sounds like "a lot of work". It is. It is the work of civic engagement. Demonstrating in public interactions, interest and courtesy, - we would think that stating these is unnecessary – but perhaps it is. If it is not understood that courtesy extends to the respectful response to citizen input for improving their community – their city, then respect is not in evidence and the foundation for future collaboration and compromise is not laid. Beneath the Principle "Respect: another Action would be: Demonstrate Active Listening. One procedural change that would demonstrate this would be found in Council Chamber and Committee hearings (sessions) where citizens have defined time limitations (2 or 3 minutes to state their position). If undivided attention is not afforded the speaker (side bar conversations taking place on the dais – among staff, etc.) then the clock should be stopped and re-set for the speaker.

And the weaknesses – lack of detail – continue in the "actions" and "outcomes" beneath each Principle (within the pages 7-12).

Section 4 – The Framework for Civic Engagement suffers from the same lack of detail. The Framework grid – found in Appendix D – is too rigid and incomplete. It was distributed and fleshed out at one of the community meetings – and I know from my table's experience it was done with a rush to action – little thought was invested as the press of time moved the 1.5 hour session along – a portion spent on this amid the distracting noise of voices within the room. Further, how "Respect" was not cited as a Principle to be served at each of the four frames of the example framework form – I cannot explain – for it must be a Principle served in every aspect of the process.

In the handbook narrative, rather than this rigid framework, the emphasis should instead be on the design of a tailored strategy to address the nature of any given, specific project, the population most impacted by it – the techniques to reach them for their early engagement to have the design the projects scope and timetable. Beyond the words expressed on page 13 of the draft which begin with "Goal(s)". (Frankly, I do not know what that word envisions. An example might have helped me.), it is clear that this early involvement group of the most impacted citizens would provide the initial list of: Planning Assumptions and Central Issues – and work to refine the priorities placed on each as criteria for fairly evaluating the input of the broader citizen populations. While reasonable flexibility and elasticity would b crucial – for expansion and revision -- such documented, objective criteria for assessment of ideas will demonstrate committed objectivity and add legitimacy to evaluation. These are very key words – often viewed by many engaged as missing when they have felt their input has been ignored or dismissed – this laying the groundwork for the suspicion of motives which undermines the potential for reaching common ground

Engagement Strategies and **Communication and Outreach: Getting the Word Out!**

These appear to be little more than the repetition of content from flip charts and post-it notes. There is no real guidance as to how to best tailor a project, or a phase of a project, drawing upon the inventory of techniques or avenues that are listed. One example: Online polls (page23). When are polls best used – appropriate? Are they used as a principle means or as an adjunct to one or more avenues for input? This listing of meeting types – and description of how to conduct them, seems too ill defined to be called guidance. When, for example, is an Advisory Committee or Board's formation warranted? I did not find reference to this – as a part of a strategy or framework. Wading through these pages, I stopped annotating for I felt I had lost the trail of anything worthy of my time – and I suspect other department staffs or others exposed to these pages might share my reaction.

Absent here but something that is essentially critical is a comprehensive discussion of techniques to be employed to reach common ground. The sessions and techniques would illustrate how staff is to create an atmosphere in which conciliation and reason-based compromise can be achieved.

Shared Responsibility

The division of responsibility and the nature of reasoned collaboration should be made clearer in this section. And most importantly the point of this collaboration must be corrected. It is **not:** " working toward broad and inclusive participation in decision-making that impacts how the city grows and develops". Growth and development have indeed occupied an overwhelmingly significant proportion of citizen and press attention. The entire civic engagement enterprise is not about "growth and development".

It is about: **Sustaining and improving the quality of life for Alexandria citizens – from housing, transportation, education, citizen support services, land use and financial planning for our future"** (my words with quotation marks added for emphasis). The "grow or die" philosophy is obvious as an underpinning in the original language within the handbook. It is critical that we understand that growth is not always framed as healthy. As a cancer survivor, I know this – and as a country facing the obesity crisis, we know this. These metaphors are illustrative of the damages associated with unchecked "growth". Wisdom and maturity – evidence of Growth – is what must be evidenced in this handbook. Reason – fact based analysis. Adherence to these is the mutual responsibility of city staff in whatever capacity and of the citizens who are engaged – their shared responsibility. This emphasis must be evidenced throughout.

Here I will move to a quote found on page 60 of the full color, full graphic version of the draft handbook; this quote of an anonymous "civic engagement participant" dominated one **full** page!!!:

"Engaged citizens are honest, ready to compromise, and are part of the solution. Leave your ego at the door. Open your mind and listen".

offensive in tone	I find it offensive in tone and I am certain it would be viewed as inflammatory by many citizens.

Even replacing the work "citizens" with participants – to include city council, staff – the insult stands.

"Ego"? "Open your mind" – and "Listen"

I have. And I am distressed that I am expected to conform to anyone's dictate to "compromise" – without a firm and respectful process – not grids – and litanies of meeting types and technologies - but something substantive. The handbook must expose the expectation that talent will be engaged to find that firm basis for "compromise" that has as its foundation a commitment to reason and response – the response to each citizen on every point of substance put forward. Let there be no mistake: Compromise is not a repugnant concept – but a necessary one. But it must be justifiable –and fact/reason-based. This is a critical component which must be addressed specifically. Where are the techniques/tools that staff and citizen leaders will use to reach this elusive and desirable and meaningful and collaborative compromise - in support of a sustained and improved quality of life for Alexandria's citizens?

The quote serves only to remind us – not only that this is the kind of misstep that must be avoided in word and tone in this handbook – but that the very important missing ingredient – of guidance to lead a collaborative process moving toward consensus and compromise must be a keystone within this handbook.

Let us hope that this one distressing provocative page, and any counter-productive language, is not perpetuated, for these send signals to its audience, city staff, that reinforce the Them (Why can't they be good?) and Us (We are good) undercurrent that allows for barriers to be preserved or erect --- rather than to serve the purpose of this civic engagement handbook – that of dismantling them.

Evaluation – Proving a Commitment to Accountability and Respect of Civic Engagement

Lastly – and of paramount importance to me and I believe essential to the City's and citizens' civic engagement success, we come to Evaluation: This section as presented in unacceptable. On page 12, the commitment is made which suggests that citizens will address adherence to the Civic Engagement Principles.

"The City will work in partnerships with the community to periodically assess the application of civic engagement principles. The evaluation will quantify participant feedback, document lessons learned, and identify strategies for refinement"

The only methods specified are totally insufficient: 1. A post-meeting evaluation form (Appendix F). It does not allude to the principles at all. Meetings evaluations are not sufficient in any way but might be made more useful as a snapshot if the form elicits numeric ratings of adherence to each principle on a scale of 1-10 (or 1-5). What is the obvious remedy is the citizens' rating for each principle – rating the citizen experience on a scale of 1-10 and leaving space beneath each rating for a "suggestion for improving the rating". This technique then would be used for each meeting (encounter), project phase, and the entire project – and potentially for any process-wide review conducted. 2. The only other evaluation tool is the "Staff Project Evaluation" (Appendix G) – a seemingly totally subjective form with 7 entries. The staff evaluation must focus on citizen ratings and suggestions for improving stemming from the quantitative rating technique.

In this section, as written, the handbook, not the Principles, is the frame of reference. Adherence to handbook? Adherence to the framework? I have already suggested why these are inadequate from my perspective – as I have that one would not expect a citizen to be conversant with its 99 pages for it is a staff tool.

We want OUTCOMES – that measure quantitatively (so that qualitative improvements can be achieved over time) if and to what degree the Civic Engagement Principles are being served. The rating scheme I have suggested point the direction. Where there are deficiencies, these numeric indicators identify the most critical areas for process (or other) changes and to remedial areas where solutions must be found **with** citizens who have experienced lower performance against each principle. Solutions, of course, will be sought collaboratively – and adjustment to documented procedures, i.e., the handbook, --- OR to the performance/practices of individuals whose actions do not comport with the Principles.

The Early Obituary for Meaningful Evaluation ? (or: Adding insult to injury)

On page 32, it is state that the "Interdepartmental Working Group" will develop a proposed plan for future annual review of civic engagement performance, taking into account the costs and benefits of an annual effort. While the benefits of an annual review are clear – ongoing assessment and refinement of the City's Civic Engagement performance – the staff resources to conduct such an effort could be significant. The City should not devote resources to assessments at the expense of doing the actual civic engagement work well".

It is an affront to read that the weakest form of assessment tools set forth in this draft might be viewed as Too Costly?

With so weak an attempt at Evaluation already set forth, by these words Accountability, and the underpinning of the entire civic engagement commitment, is positioned on the chopping block.

Final Words:

"We test our assumption and track achievement by measuring outcomes and impacts and by understanding how and why we have succeeded or failed".

Bill Gates
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Web Page

"I think a lot of efforts fail because they don't focus on the right measure or they don't invest enough in doing it accurately"

Bill Gates
2013 Annual Letter
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

See Specific Edits to PDF of Draft Handbook

Don Buch, 10/11/13

1. I don't believe many/any of the questions I raised earlier have really been addressed.

   1.1. I asked about cost and have had no answer. I've heard wildly varying amounts suggested by community members. Residents are paying for this and I believe are entitled to know what it cost. I'd like to see some breakdown – e.g. consultants, printing, staff time, etc. With respect to staff, was this all volunteer or were some/many/all compensated with extra wages, comp time or whatever?

   1.2. I asked about attendance and have had no answer. Some people have implied that there was a groundswell of community interest and participation (attendance). Having attended all four sessions, my visual observations would not support that contention. In fact, I know many people who went once or twice and told me they weren't bothering to go again. I also believe there should be accountability (individually) by senior staff and elected officials – who specifically is and is not walking the talk and contributing to this effort that so many say they are great supporters of? And I would not count being recognized and leaving shortly thereafter, nor turning up at 8:30, as "attendance".

   1.3. I asked what City processes and procedures have changed and got an explanation of the current SUP process with the clear implication that is the appropriate way. I'm told we "need to be responsive to the timeframes of persons wishing to operate businesses in the City". What about the residents? Springing totally new issues on us a week before they go to Planning Commission for the inevitable approval is not, to me, being responsive to the citizens (see below for an illustration). Certainly there is more than a 7 day lead time to developments and establishing new businesses. I'm told recommendations are welcome but past experience indicates most fall on deaf ears or are only paid lip service.

   1.4. I got a similar response to my question about the What's Next project team being comprised of 10 City staff but only 1 resident. The City responded "…(it) was a collaborative (effort) between the community and City…" Some would not view a 10:1 ratio as terribly "collaborative".

2. In my view this remains very much a manual about style as opposed to substance. Where's the beef? This whole process appears to have been stimulated largely by concerns about development proposals. Yet I've not seen much, if any, change in how SUPs and DSUPs are handled. I referenced the City's apparent "response" above. Allow me an example:

   2.1. I attempted to closely monitor the progress of the Landmark Mall rehabilitation; met with John Simon frequently; attended both public meetings. Yet the DSUP arrived on the Planning Commission docket with a number of very substantial revelations that I don't recall ever having been as much as mentioned in any community discussions that I am aware of.

2.1.1. For the first time - with no community discussion - there was mention of a $2 million proffer to be dedicated to affordable housing. Wasn't this supposed to be a catalyst project with no proffers? Some of us have been pleading for school and infrastructure proffers rather than, at this time, spending scarce funds to attract more people to Alexandria, putting ever more pressure on the need for the likes of schools and infrastructure.

2.1.2. We are told that midrise apartment buildings average 0.128 school children per unit yet someone apparently decided – with no community discussion – that these 400 units will only generate 0.015 school children per unit (6 students vs. 51). Where are the classrooms and teachers for these kids? Yet we dedicate the proffer to attract yet more kids to affordable housing which ACPS says has 4.71 times more kids per housing unit than all other housing. Not to mention all the commensurate social services, meal programs, infrastructure needs, etc. that are already stretched very thin. Does the City have a plan of how to pay for these? Are those costs considered in the DSUP? Apparently the City feels that the community deserves no voice in this discussion. That hardly seems to meet what most in the community would define as "civic engagement".

2.1.3. Whereas there was some discussion about how far the BRT would veer off Van Dorn (at least being confined to the eastern boundary of the property) we suddenly find - with no community discussion - that someone has decided it needs to go fully into the property, extend beyond and around Sears and then exit across Duke over to Stevenson to return to Van Dorn at some still-to-be-decided location. As some have suggested – there goes the "R" in BRT. Was this part of the BRT path proposed/supported by the Corridor Work Group?

2.2. Can you appreciate that this sort of "process" appears totally counter to many of the "Principles" that the City would have us believe they respect and agree with?

3. I concur with Janet King's comment that the pictures are extraneous. This should be a task-focused document, as brief and clear as possible - not some glossy, 99 page "manual" with extensive pictures, charts, lists and tables tempting one to stack it on the shelf with all manner of other "how to" guides. How many people truly anticipate dusting it off and reading it each time they start a new project (or new civic engagement)? To many people it comes across more as an academic research paper than a succinct document to facilitate active, tangible, focused civic engagement; hardly user-friendly, at least if it is the general public who are to be users. I fear many will view it as an overly complicated process that inevitably needs "the City" to be in charge of, interpret and implement as and when the City sees fit.

4. I found Connie Graham's reference to The Spectrum of Public Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower) very thought-provoking and would tend to agree with her that "…current engagement practices in Alexandria…operate at 'inform' while they (*presumably our elected officials and administration*) say they will 'consult' ". I sense the

City perceives it very differently and believes we are far closer to the end of the I-C-I-C-E spectrum than the beginning.

When will we see an appreciable change in how the City "works"? How do we get beyond style and actually make changes that lead to consulting, involving, collaborating, empowering? Regrettably, I don't see this handbook getting us there, yet I fear the City feels we are on the ideal track…