

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 10, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #95: PROPOSED FY 2007 CITY-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLICATIONS BUDGET

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This memorandum is in response to Councilman Krupicka's request for information regarding a \$62,865, or 33.2 percent, increase in costs for the FY 2007 City-wide communications/publications budget.

The City-wide communications/publications account includes a total budget of \$251,950 for production and distribution costs (i.e. printing and overtime) of four City-wide publications including the Proposed and Approved Budget documents, the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), the FYI Alexandria community newsletter, and the Know Your City booklet. The account also includes funding for the Citizens Academy and a City resident survey.

The increase is largely attributable to the City resident survey (+\$50,000), the Know Your City booklet (+\$7,000), and costs for colored copies and binding of the Proposed and Approved Budget documents (+\$5,000).

### **City Resident Survey**

The City resident survey, which was last performed in FY 2005, is proposed to be conducted in FY 2007. This timing enables Council to receive results at the early stages of its three-year term, and to help mold the Council plans and initiatives during the remainder of this new term. It is budgeted in the amount of \$50,000. This cost includes anticipated additional site visits by the contractor and a change in some of the questions to focus more on the City's strategic plan.

Justification for the proposed City resident survey:

- It is an important tool to find out systematically what all members of the community are thinking about the need for and quality of City services, not just those who regularly appear before or contact Council.

## **City Resident Survey, continued**

- It is the only way to track residents' opinions on City services, and changes in these opinions over time.
- It helps Council and staff to identify and address problems before or as they occur. Based on professional advice, such a survey should be done on a regular basis (e.g., every two years) to be an effective tool in responding to changing resident needs and opinions. Resident opinions often vary from year to year. Such a survey can be the first indicator of emerging issues that City residents are concerned about.
- It should be done every two years to determine whether efforts to address problem areas in earlier surveys have succeeded.
- It can be used to address issues that were not covered in the last survey, and help to measure indicators of success on the elements of Council's Strategic Plan, as well as assist in updating the Strategic Plan.

## **Know Your City Booklet**

The Know Your City booklet, included in the communications/publications budget, is produced with the assistance of the Alexandria League of Women Voters on a three-year cycle to coincide with City Council elections and the start of a new Council term. This booklet is used in the City's schools for civic classes. It is also available on the City's website for use by residents and others seeking information on the City government.

In 2003, the cost of printing this booklet and the map insert through outside sources was approximately \$12,000 for 8,000 copies of the booklet and 10,000 maps (the maps are also sold separately to residents and taxi drivers/companies). In FY 2007, the City is proposing to print the booklet internally for the cost of \$3,000 (3,000 copies). It should be noted that by printing in-house, and if changes occur, the booklet can be updated on a yearly basis. However, the maps of the City are copyrighted and must be printed in bulk externally by the Alexandria Drafting Company for a cost of \$4,000 for 8,000 copies (per map cost is cheaper the more you order). This brings the total cost of producing the booklet with these maps to \$7,000.

## **Budget Document Production**

The increase in the communication/publications budget is also attributable to an increase in budget document production costs in the amount of \$5,000. This increase is due to the increased costs of printing, the production of colored copies of the budget "overview", and planned professional binding (in lieu of the flimsy plastic binders now used) of the Proposed and Approved Budget documents in FY 2007. Opportunities will be sought to reduce the number of copies printed and rely more extensively on internet distribution. But some hard copies still need to be produced and distributed internally to City staff and Council, as well as to residents and others.