

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 7, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMAN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO# 19. FREQUENTLY USED SERVICE HOURS FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY AND THE TREASURY DIVISION

This budget memo responds to Councilman Wilson's request for information regarding the most frequently used days and times that residents come to City Hall to pay taxes and fines.

Most residents who come to City Hall to conduct City business visit during the hours of 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. (lunch time). However, we have a steady stream of taxpayers throughout the day on Monday through Friday. We have not found a significant difference in the number of visitors during any particular day of the week.

Personal Property tax staff (the windows closest to North Fairfax Street) handle 300 transactions per day on average, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This includes customers served at the counter and by telephone. This figure increases significantly to an average of 471 transactions per day during the City's decal/tax payment season and following delinquent tax and other mailings. Since 2005, taxpayers have been able to conduct vehicle registrations and report moves and other changes online through the City's website. Personal property tax staff handle 7,520 online transactions per year, an average of 627 per month.

The Treasury Division staff (the window closest to North Royal Street) handle 479 transactions per day on average during off peak periods. During peak periods, they handle an average of 1,390 transactions per day. These transactions include processing all City tax payments, City permits, tickets and fines, City agency daily deposits and parking permits.

As of June 2007 per Council ratified budget recommendation, the Personal Property Tax Branch and Treasury Division no longer had regular Saturday hours and was open only on September 29 and November 10, 2007, the Saturdays preceding the personal property and real estate tax due dates. Treasury staff processed 470 and 262 respectively transactions on those dates, including both in person and mail transactions. A portion of the Personal Property staff came in on those dates and handled 161 transactions on September 29 and 50 on November 10, 2007.

When not providing service to taxpayers in person or by phone, employees in both the Personal Property Tax Branch and the Treasury Division complete a variety of tasks vital to the functioning of the Finance Department. When not serving customers at the counter or on the phone, Personal Property Tax staff responds to taxpayer correspondence sent by mail, e-mail or fax; processes returned mail; processes online registrations; conducts daily maintenance of the online system; processes checks received from taxpayers; processes the monthly file from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV); processes DMV and Leasing Company renditions; conducts the required annual tax certification process; manually assesses the approximately 200 vehicles per month that cannot be assessed automatically; and conducts the annual assessment cycle. When Treasury cashiers are not assisting walk-in customers, they process mail payments and perform many support functions, such as updating financial spreadsheets for the many automated payment systems, reconciling parking ticket payments and processing refunds. Treasury staff also responds to an increasing volume of e-mail requests from taxpayers for information on their accounts.

Opportunities for efficiencies in the future exist as the City upgrades its tax software so that there can be automated interfaces between on line applications and the tax databases. In FY 2011 (or earlier if resources can be identified), the Finance Department plans to replace its personal property tax system. When that is completed, it will include automated interfaces with the City's website. Such interfaces will result in to be determined staff efficiencies.