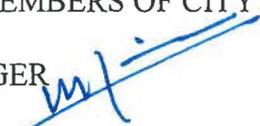


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 26, 2013

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: NELSIE L. SMITH, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #27: RESPONSE TO COUNCIL QUESTIONS

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

HEAD START PROGRAM (J. Wilson)

Question: “Is the Head Start program, in fact, slated to receive the \$203,448 increase proposed in the FY14 budget? In speaking with The Campagna Center, they believe this may be an error.”

Response: The \$203,448 indicated for The Campagna Center was not included in the FY 2013 Approved Budget but instead provided via the Fall Reappropriation Ordinance authorized by Council in December 2012. Therefore the amount proposed in FY 2014, when compared with the FY2013 Approved Budget, accurately reflects an increase. However, The Campagna Center is not proposed to receive any more funding in FY 2014 than was received in the current fiscal year appropriation.

Program expansion funding was first provided for The Campagna Center in FY 2010 as part of the federal American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). The City received three years of ARRA funded support. ARRA funding support was received post City adoption of its annual budget and with no assurance of continued funding. In FY 2013, ARRA funding for Head Start were converted to the Head Start funding stream. We now expect these monies will be received annually and funding support is being assumed as part of the City’s annual budgeted revenues.

ALEXANDRIA FUND FOR HUMAN SERVICES (A. Silberberg)

Question: “As in BM #3, I will be focused on reinstating the proposed 6% cut to the Human Services Fund. I cannot recall what that would cost, but given the ongoing economic downturn on Main Street in America, the work of our local nonprofits is as important as ever. I am very interested in the grant making process and that it needs to be a competitive system, what are the thoughts and plans?”

Response: Alexandria Fund for Human Services (AFHS) grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Review committees, appointed by the City Manager, evaluate applications and make funding recommendations based on the selection criteria. The criteria is based on a quantified rating system with specific categories and assigned points set forth in the Request for Grant Proposal guidelines. The reviewers meet with their respective committee members to discuss individual proposals and develop a consensus score for each proposal. Once each proposal has a consensus score, the reviewers determine the amounts of each award, starting with the proposals that receive the highest scores. They allocate funds until all of the funds designated in the City Manager’s proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year have been allocated or until they reach their pre-determined cut-off score.

Staff from the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) receive, process, and distribute grant applications to other City agency program managers based on their respective areas of expertise. Staff do not score or rate the proposals, they forward any relevant comments based on their review of existing programs to the respective review committees. The DCHS Grants and Contracts Coordinator provides a report to the review committees on the outcomes of the current applicants.

After funding decisions are made, and upon the approval of the City Budget, the City Council is notified in a docket memorandum of the selections. Subsequent to Council notification, applicants are notified of the award decisions.

During the upcoming fiscal year, the evaluation methodology described here will likely be modified to ensure services provided by our community partners also align with the City’s Strategic Plan. This will occur as part of the ongoing efforts to better align City services and activities with the City Strategic Plan.

TRANSIT STORE (A. Silberberg)

Question: “As we discussed last night, what is the cost of the Transit Store, and could it be merged with an existing entity at our Union Station or at Metro or at City Hall? What does that store cost us now, and what would it save to merge it with something else? Does it require its own storefront?”

Response: The Alexandria Transit Store is located across from the King Street Metrorail station and opened its doors for business in 2002. The Transit Store sells transit

passes, tokens, and SmarTrip Cards; provides bus and commuter rail schedules for all of the transit providers that serve Alexandria and neighboring areas; and is a resource for bikesharing, carpooling, biking and alternative transportation in the City. Thus far in FY 2013, the Transit Store has averaged \$56,250 in fare media sales and averages 1,800 visitors per month.

The current location of the Transit Store is close, but not immediately proximate, to the King Street Metro Station and is leased space. Moving the physical location of the Transit Store is technically feasible, but the intent of the service is that it be close to transit riders and near a transit hub, so a location such as City Hall would not be the most efficient space for that function. Funding is identified in the City Manager’s Proposed FY 2014-2023 CIP for a transit store on the King Street Metro site in FY 2020. At that time, Staff proposes closing the existing store and relocating the functions to the new location. Future funding through the TIP allows for siting the Transit Store within a City-owned facility proximate to the Metro Station, which will be more efficient and convenient to transit users.

The Transit Store operating cost for FY 2012 was \$214,324; for the first 9 months of FY 2013, operating costs have totaled \$140,204. However, these operations are solely funded by federal RSTP grants awarded by and distributed through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), no direct general fund cost is associated with the Transit Store. FY 2008-2013 costs are included for reference.

Operating Expenses by Fiscal Year

	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012*	FY 2013**
TOTAL	\$171,021	\$133,658	\$141,169	\$163,098	\$214,324	\$140,204

* FY 2012 increased costs are due to more accurate accounting of DASH personnel benefit expenses and due to one-time equipment costs of \$28,640 for security improvements and upgrades in the store.

** FY 2013 costs reflect only Months 01 - 09 for the fiscal year.

The Transit Store is managed by a contract with the Alexandria Transit Company (ATC), which operates the City’s DASH bus system, and is open Monday-Friday from 7 am – 7 pm. The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services and its Local Motion program provide oversight and coordination activities over the Alexandria Transit Store.

RSTP grant funding includes a portion of grants specifically earmarked for operating the transit store, and some general transportation demand management grants. The City could reprogram that funding if directed; however, it could only be used for CMAQ/RSTP eligible projects. CMAQ funds may be used to

establish new or expanded transportation projects or programs that reduce emissions, including capital investments in transportation infrastructure, congestion relief efforts, diesel engine retrofits, or other capital projects. RSTP funding is more flexible and can be used for a variety of regional transportation projects. Current and planned CMAQ/RSTP eligible projects are detailed fully in the City Manager's Proposed FY 2014 – FY 2023 CIP "All Funding Sources" Table (p. 5-12), and include buses and bus infrastructure, non-motorized transportation and trails, transit and parking technology integration, among others. Reprogrammed funding could be allocated to current projects based on prioritization and alignment with individual funding needs.

CITY-OWNED VEHICLES (A. Silberberg/J. Chapman)

Question: "What is the cost of city-owned vehicles that are driven by staff? What would that save to reduce that expenditure?"

Response: For FY 2014, the Proposed Budget funds the General Services Fleet Management Program at \$4.9 million and the Fire Department's Vehicle Operations and Maintenance Program at \$0.8M. These programs include fleet maintenance operations, equipment parts, and vehicle fuel for the City's fleet. Additionally, the FY 2014 City-wide budget for vehicle fleet depreciation is \$4.8 million, including \$4.6 million in the General Fund. These are the funds used to support the ongoing replacement of equipment at the end of its useful life. The amount budgeted in FY 2014 for the planned replacement of existing vehicles and vehicle acquisition for new or expanding programs is \$6.7 million.

As a matter of course, the City regularly assesses the size and use of the vehicle fleet in order to minimize operating costs and the environmental impact. Strategies such as an expanded shared pool car fleet and the purchase of gas-electric hybrid automobiles helps control the size and operating costs of the fleet. There are currently two separate AlexStat processes underway which are taking an in-depth look at the fleet. The first is analyzing vehicle fuel consumption with the goal of minimizing our consumption levels and maximizing our fuel procurement function. The second AlexStat is focused on the City's take home fleet and whether that program is appropriately sized and implemented. The results of these AlexStat meetings will ultimately be shared with City Council.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SOCIAL WORKER (T. Lovain)

Question: "To what extent does the domestic violence social worker at the Police Department duplicate the work performed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Specialist in the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney? Or duplicate work done by the Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Services Division of DCHS? To what extent is each of them able to access police records?"

Response: The Domestic Violence Social Worker position within the Alexandria Police Department (APD) does not duplicate the work performed by either the Domestic Violence Intervention Specialist at the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney (OCA) nor the Domestic Violence Services Division within the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS). As part of the City's domestic violence services network, they all work with victims of domestic violence; however, they provide different services and attempt to achieve different outcomes.

The Domestic Violence Social Worker at APD works with only non-arrest domestic violence cases and is the only person in the network that has access to these cases. The social worker reviews each police report and engages the victim to determine if further police involvement is warranted. Additionally, this position focuses on prevention of further violence by encouraging the victim to engage in services and informing them of their options and resources. The position also provides counseling and court accompaniment for all intimate partner violence stalking cases, lethality assessments, patrol officer training, public awareness activities, and referral of non-arrest cases to DCHS and OCA domestic violence service providers for further treatment/services.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Specialist at OCA works with only arrest cases who are labeled "reluctant" (hesitant, afraid or unwilling to be a witness and/or participate in the prosecution of the accused abuser) and going to court. The main function of this position is to work with victims in order to aid prosecutors in obtaining a conviction of the perpetrator. DCHS services work with arrest and non-arrest cases, only when referred by APD or OCA, as well as cases that are not part of the criminal justice system. DCHS services focus on treatment and support, not criminal prosecution.

The Domestic Violence Social Worker at APD and the Domestic Violence Intervention Specialist at OCA do have access to police records, while the Domestic Violence Services Division at DCHS cannot because they are not a law enforcement agency.

BRICK SIDEWALKS IN OLD TOWN (D. Pepper)

Question: "What would be the cost to repair the brick sidewalks in Old Town?"

Response: The City maintains approximately 319 miles of sidewalks across Alexandria, which includes a variety of surface types including concrete, brick and pavers. In Old Town, the City maintains the brick sidewalks on more than 200 tree-lined, residential and commercial city blocks that are typically 320 to 400 feet long and anywhere from six- to 16-feet wide.

With an additional \$300,000 in operating funds for spot maintenance of brick sidewalks in Old Town, staff estimates that it could make localized repairs and

replacements that would significantly improve sidewalk condition and accessibility. This level of effort, although spread out through smaller localized repairs and replacements, would equate to approximately seven full City blocks worth of sidewalk replacement. This maintenance would include removal and replacement of bricks buckled due to tree roots, sidewalk base failures and replacement of aging brick across Old Town.

DASH BUS FARES (A. Silberberg)

Question: “I realize that this would be up to the DASH board, but now that we have a few more funds, what would it cost to keep the bus fares at \$1.50, rather than increase the fares to \$1.60?”

Response: It would cost \$148,748 to keep the bus fares at \$1.50, rather than increase the fares to \$1.60.

VPI FUNDING USAGE (J. Wilson/J. Chapman)

Question: “In the current fiscal year, did the City of Alexandria pull down all of the VPI funding it was allotted by the Commonwealth? If not, what was the amount allotted for FY13; how much was pulled down by Alexandria; and, how much was left on the table and why?”

“Also, I recall that a key reason the City transferred management of VPI to ACPS last year was so that we could maximize the City's ability to pull down all of the state funding allotted for VPI? If this recollection is correct, has this strategy been successful? If not, why?”

Response: In the fall FY 2013 ACPS report to the Virginia Department of Education for VPI we reported that the VPI partners in Alexandria were serving a total of 336 students. The state estimated that we should be serving approximately 374 students. We were provided with \$3,000 per student for a total of \$1,008,000. Although \$114,000 additional dollars remain available for the current year, the addition of three new classrooms in FY 2014 will clear the remaining VPI wait list.

Since ACPS began managing VPI funds in school year 2011-12, we have added 8 additional VPI PreK classes. The budget recently approved by our board for FY 2014 includes the addition of three more VPI classes so we should be able to eliminate our current waiting list and serve all of the estimated number of eligible four-year-olds in Alexandria for the 2013-14 school year.