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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 11, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #36 : UPDATE ON PROPOSED ADD-DELETE PROCESS FOR FY 2006

At the end of the budget work session tonight, April 11th, we propose to discuss with Council a procedure and schedule for handling the add-delete process in light of Council's decision to advertise the proposed real estate tax rate at $0.915 cents, which is 4 cents lower than the City Manager's budgeted rate of $0.955. Unless City Council were to decide to readvertise this rate again at a higher level, it is the maximum rate that may be used for purposes of adopting the FY 2006 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for FY 2006 to FY 2011. A rate of $0.915 cents reduces revenues by $16.4 million compared to the City Manager's proposed budget.

To assist the City Council in identifying such adjustments necessary to identify $16.4 million in budget changes and fund a real estate tax rate reduction of 4 cents below the City Manager's proposed tax rate, staff recommends that ***Council request the City Manager to provide a list of possible amendments to the City Manager's proposed budget that would close the $16.4 million gap including:***

(1) revenue re-estimates for FY 2005 and FY 2006;
(2) new or increased tax and fee options;
(3) specific City operating and CIP budget reductions, including changes in fund balance designations; and
(4) reductions in funding from the School's requested operating and CIP budget General Fund transfer requests.

The possible amendment list would then be prepared and submitted to City Council by Friday, April 15th as a budget memorandum. This list would be used as the starting point for constructing a preliminary add-delete list for consideration at Council's work session on Wednesday, April 27th. City Council members would use this list as the starting point and then have one week to consider additional possible amendments (to that list and to the base budget) before submitting any other specific, preliminary add-delete list amendments to the Office of Management and Budget by the April 22nd deadline previously established in Budget Memorandum #1.

As has been previously planned, Staff then will provide a consolidated list of all add-delete items to City Council on Monday, April 25th by budget memorandum, for its consideration at the Wednesday, April 27th work session on the preliminary add-delete list.

This process is different than past practices, but it remains consistent with Council approved policy of how Add-Deletes are to occur under Resolution No. 2088 "Budget Resolution Regarding the Treatment of Final Revenue Adjustments During the Budget Process" (adopted November 25, 2003). (See attachment.) Under this resolution, Council may not "consider any motion or amendment to the proposed budget of the City of Alexandria if such motion or amendment would have the effect of reducing any specific revenues below the level contained in the proposed budget . . . unless such motion or amendment makes at least an equivalent reduction in other specified budget outlays, identifies an equivalent increase in other specific revenues, or an equivalent combination thereof."

Attachment: Resolution No 2088

Resolution No. 2088 **Attachment 1**

Budget Resolution Regarding the Treatment of Final Revenue Adjustments During the Budget Process

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria and the Greater Washington region face continued economic challenges; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria City Council has previously exhibited restraint when considering its annual budget and financial policies; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria City Council wishes to establish structure surrounding upcoming budget deliberations to ensure responsible actions with current economic resources;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, that the Council shall, for the purposes of consideration of the Budget for the City of Alexandria, adhere to the following rules of procedure:

Section (a) Proposed Budget for the City of Alexandria -

(1) For purposes of this resolution, the budget baseline of revenue rates and expenditure levels for the fiscal year shall be that proposed by the City Manager of the City of Alexandria.

(2) For purposes of this resolution, the Office of Management and Budget shall provide revenue and/or expenditure projections for any motion or amendment which could affect the proposed budget specified in paragraph (1).

Section (b) Maximum Expenditure Levels May Not Exceed Sum of Projected Revenue and Appropriation from Undesignated Fund Balance in Proposed Budget -

(1) It shall not be in order in the Alexandria City Council to consider any motion or amendment to the proposed budget of the City of Alexandria if such motion or amendment would have the effect of increasing any specific budget outlays above the level of such outlays contained in the proposed budget specified in section (a) of this resolution, or would have the effect of reducing any specific revenues below the level contained in the proposed budget specified in section (a) of this resolution, unless such motion or amendment makes at least an equivalent reduction in other specific budget outlays, identifies an equivalent increase in other specific revenues, or an equivalent combination thereof.

(2) In the Alexandria City Council, any appropriation from the Undesignated Fund Balance or any like account beyond that proposed in the Manager's proposed budget shall require an affirmative vote of five Council Members.

(3) In the event that the City Manager recommends final revenue adjustments that result in a net increase or net decrease from the revenue estimates specified in section (a) of this resolution, the net change in the revenue estimate shall be

reflected as a change in the proposed appropriation from the Undesignated Fund Balance. As specified in Section 2 (b), any appropriation from the Undesignated Fund Balance beyond that proposed in the Manager's proposed budget, including the net effect of final revenue adjustments, shall require an affirmative vote of five Council Members.

Section (c) Expiration -- The provisions of this resolution shall expire on June 30, 2006.

Debt Ratio Policies

Debt Related Financial Policies

City Council passed a set of debt-related financial policies on June 9, 1987. During FY 1998, the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (BFAAC), a City Council appointed citizen committee, analyzed these debt-related financial policies, examined the City's financial condition in comparison to other jurisdictions with superior credit ratings (other double-triple A rated jurisdictions). The BFAAC and the City Manager recommended that City Council reaffirm the updated debt-related financial policies, incorporating BFAAC's recommended updates to the policies to establish a consistent set of appropriate relationships between debt targets and limits. Because three of the six debt indicators measure the debt capacity of the City in relation to the size of the City and its economy, BFAAC recommended that these indicators should not produce debt capacity limits that vary greatly from each other.

City Council reaffirmed its commitment to sound financial management and adopted the updated debt-related financial policies on December 9, 1997. City Council amended the policies on October 26, 1999, to allow priority consideration for an increase in the designation of fund balance for capital project funding. These updated polices are as follows:

Debt as a Percentage of Fair Market Real Property Value
Target = 1.1 percent; Limit = 1.6 percent

This ratio indicates the relationship between the City's debt and the full value of real property in the City as assessed annually at fair market value. It is an important indicator of the City's ability to repay debt because real property taxes are the primary source of the City's revenues used to repay debt. A small ratio is an indication that the City will be better able to withstand possible future economic downturns and continue to meet its debt obligations.

Debt Per Capita as a Percentage of Per Capita Income
Target = 2.25 percent; Limit = 3.25 percent

This percentage is a measure of the capacity of citizens to finance tax-supported debt. A lower percentage means that taxes required to repay debt represent a smaller portion of the average citizen's income.

Debt Per Capita
Target = An amount equal to 2.25 percent of per capita income
Limit = An amount equal to 3.25 percent of per capita income

This ratio indicates the per capita debt burden and is a general indicator of the City's debt burden. A smaller ratio indicates a lighter burden. The debt per capita target is set on sliding scale so that growth in per capita income allows a gradual and equivalent increase in debt per capita.

Debt Service as a Percentage of General Government Expenditures
Target = 8.0 percent; Limit = 10 percent

This ratio is a measure of the City's ability to repay debt without hampering other City services. A small ratio indicates a lesser burden on the City's operating budget.

Unreserved General Fund Balance as a Percentage of General Fund Revenue
Target = Not applicable; Limit = 10 percent

Undesignated General Fund Balance as a Percentage of General Fund Revenue
Target = 5.5 percent; Limit = 4.0 percent

Unrestricted Net Assets as a Percentage of General Revenues
Target = 5.5 percent; Limit = 4.0 percent

These ratios indicate the ability of the City to cope with unexpected financial problems or emergencies. The Unreserved General Fund Balance represents the funds legally available to the City. It is desirable that the City maintain Unreserved General Fund Balance that is comparable to the ratio maintained by other double-triple A rated jurisdictions, but not to fall below the limit of 10 percent. The Undesignated General Fund Balance corresponds to the checkbook balance of the City. Both balances are important to consider. The unreserved balance includes designations that the City Council has made but presumably could change. Net assets corresponds to stockholders' equity for publicly traded companies. The larger the undesignated General Fund Balance or unrestricted net assets, the greater the City's ability to cope with financial emergencies and fluctuations in revenue cycles.

The ratios for undesignated general fund balance and unrestricted net assets are calculated after adjusting for the effect of subsequent year's expenditures, and funding for future equipment replacement and capital projects, grants and contributions restricted to specific programs, and extraordinary and special items.

The City will not issue tax or revenue anticipation notes to fund ongoing governmental operations. The City of Alexandria will manage its cash in a fashion that will prevent any borrowing to meet working capital needs.

The City will not issue bond anticipation notes (BAN's) for a period of longer than two years. If the City issues a BAN for a capital project, the BAN will be converted to a long-term bond or redeemed at its expiration, but will not be rolled over.

The City will continue to rely on current revenue, including its fund balance, to finance its short-lived and maintenance-oriented capital improvements. The City believes in funding a significant portion of capital improvements on a pay as you go basis; therefore, the City will continue to finance short-lived and maintenance-oriented capital improvements with current revenues, and its fund balance. The priority to consider when additional General Fund revenues become available at the end of the fiscal year would be a designation within the General Fund fund balance for pay as you go capital.

The City will not establish a trend of using General Fund equity to finance current recurring operations. The City's General Fund equity has been built over the years to provide the City with sufficient working capital and to enable it to finance equipment replacement, capital projects, and unforeseen emergencies without borrowing. To conserve the General Fund equity balance and to avoid reliance on this balance, the City will not finance recurring operations from the General Fund equity balance for periods longer than two years as confirmed by the audited financial statements. If the audited financial statements confirm that recurring operations have been funded from the General Fund equity balance for a period
longer than two consecutive fiscal years, then the City will adopt in its next ensuing budget a balanced budget in which the operating revenues meet the operating expenditures without any consideration of the General Fund equity balance.

The City will annually prepare a six-year capital improvement program. In accordance with the City Charter and in order to meet the debt ratio targets, to schedule debt issuance, and to systematically improve the capital structure, each year the City will prepare and adopt a six-year capital improvement program. This capital improvement program will identify the source of funding for all capital projects. The debt issuances that are a part of the capital improvement program will be structured to meet the City's debt policies and debt ratio targets.

The City Manager will prepare each year and submit a set of six-year scenarios of possible future revenues and expenditures that match the six year Capital Improvement Program time horizon with the proposed budget to be considered by the City Council. Those scenarios will be updated to reflect the decisions of the City Council and issued with the approved budget. In order to improve financial planning and decisions, the City Manager also will annually prepare with the approved budget a set of six-year scenarios of possible future General Fund revenues and expenditures and their effects on the debt-related financial policy ratios outlined above, including the effect of planned borrowing under the approved CIP.

In accordance with the Government Finance Officers Association budget review requirements, this table, taken from the City's FY 2004 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, is repeated here:

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Computation of Legal Debt Margin
as of June 30, 2004

Assessed Value of Real property, January 1, 2004		$22,757,185,300
Debt Limit: 10 Percent of Assessed Value		2,275,718,530
Amount of Debt Applicable to Debt Limit:		
General Obligation Bonds	$197,520,000	
Total General Obligation Debt		197,520,000
LEGAL DEBT MARGIN		$2,078,198,530

Limitations on the Incurrence of General Obligation Debt:

There is no requirement in the Virginia Constitution, the Virginia Statutes or in the Charter of the City of Alexandria that the issuance of general obligation bonds of the City be subject to approval of the electors of the City at referendum.

Under the City Charter, the City Council has full authority to authorize and issue general obligation bonds. The authorizing procedure consists of the passage on first reading of an ordinance authorizing the issuance of the bonds followed by a notice of public hearing at a subsequent meeting and the final passage on second reading following the public hearing.

The only constitutional limitation on the issuance of general obligation bonds is contained in Article VII, Section 10 of the Virginia Constitution, which states that:

No city or town shall issue any bonds or other interest-bearing obligations which, including existing indebtedness, shall at any time exceed ten percent of the assessed valuation of real estate in the city or town subject to taxation, as shown by the last preceding assessment for taxes.