

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 26, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO#39: WHAT IS THE CITY DOING AND WHAT RESOURCES ARE NEEDED TO EXPAND VOLUNTEER HELP FOR CITY PROGRAMS?

This memo is in response to Councilmember Krupricka's request for information regarding the City's current use of volunteers and the needed resources to expand volunteer help with City programs.

The City of Alexandria uses volunteers in many City agencies. As a result of reductions in staff and operating budgets, several departments are exploring options to increase the use of volunteers. The City is actively involved in community-wide efforts to increase the number of volunteers to meet the increasing demands of acute care services.

- In the development of "Connect Alexandria," staff are at the table with businesses, technology experts, schools, foundations, Volunteer Alexandria and others to develop a web-based mechanism for matching volunteer needs, goods and/or dollars with those who wish to donate time, money or goods to organizations providing safety net services.
- In the short term, the "Give Alexandria" link on the City web-site is an attempt to match the community with organizations that need goods, money or volunteers.
- *Spring for Alexandria* is an annual event that is becoming the most successful use of volunteers to support City departments, schools and non-profits. Each year, projects such as painting, landscaping, small capital improvements and clean-ups allow items in the queue to be taken care of in one day instead of waitlisted until staff can get to them. This year with reduced capacity, *Spring for Alexandria* projects will be very critical. So far, the City has 25 projects proposed. Other current and planned efforts are outlined in this memorandum.

For the purpose of this memorandum, volunteers are characterized as private citizens, unpaid interns, mentors and individuals performing community service. Nearly every department that

uses volunteers has an individual who is tasked within their job description and/or titled as a Volunteer Coordinator to conduct recruitment, training and matching of individuals to program needs. The broadest and most visible use of volunteers is in the form of the more than 79 Boards, Commissions, task forces and work groups that operate throughout the year. Excluding Boards and Commissions, volunteerism falls into two major categories — special events and programmatic support.

Special Events

Many City agencies use volunteers for highly publicized special events that benefit the larger community. Most notably, in the Department of Human Services' (DHS) is the Holiday/Immanuel Sharing Program that provides holiday presents to poor families with children and seniors. Each year, 81 volunteers work to take applications, separate donations and deliver gifts. Additionally, DHS sponsors the free Tax Assistance Program using 25 volunteers from February until April 15th each year. The Office on Women, which sponsors the Walk to Fight Breast Cancer every October, uses approximately 100 volunteers on the day of the walk and 10-20 leading up to the event.

Programmatic Support

The highest use of volunteers across City agencies is in the area of programmatic or operational support. Every agency articulated a reliance on volunteers to operate various functions.

- The Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) provides services to the Fire Department at no cost, documented by the total of 2,801 hours provided as of December 31, 2008. The Fire Department's corps of volunteers changes from year to year. Their service is in the form of firefighters, emergency medical services and general support.
- The Citizens Emergency Response Teams (CERT) are volunteers who provide support at special events with crowd management, general outreach and by being actors for training events. The Fire Department just started capturing CERT hours in December of 2008. From that point until present, CERT members have contributed 401 volunteer hours to the City.
- The Alexandria Library uses volunteers to conduct inventory projects, shelf reading and mend books. This includes community service volunteers, both court-appointed and students with school-related community service requirements. The Library also uses unpaid interns and wants to participate in the 2009 TeensWork! Summer Youth Employment Program through JobLink.
- The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities uses unpaid interns with the Commission for the Arts; unpaid mentors in the recreation centers; and community service workers (court and Sheriff-appointed) for park clean-up activities. The Department also utilizes volunteers for youth coaches, adult sport managers, special

events, adopt a park/garden programs, boy scouts for eagle projects, neighborhood/community groups for park clean-up.

- The Office on Women (OOW) uses approximately 75 active volunteers primarily for crisis intervention programs. The domestic violence and sexual violence programs typically each have two unpaid interns at the Undergraduate and Master's level for 9 months of the year. Additionally there is a speaker's bureau of approximately 10 volunteers. The Office on Women regularly uses 100 active volunteers. It should be noted that the majority of the active volunteers have received extensive training both in the classroom and on-the-job. Also, to sustain accreditation, they must have ongoing training. Many of OOW volunteers do similar work as paid staff, but on weekends and overnight, where it would cost much more to pay staff.
- The Alexandria Police Department (APD) uses volunteers to perform a variety of administrative and clerical tasks.
- In the Department of Human Services, currently ten social work interns and externs are used in child welfare and carry caseloads up to half the size of a normal caseload. Approximately 17 volunteers are used annually to help at the Adult Day Care Center to stimulate the seniors with art, music and physical activities. The Hispanic Orientation and Education Program (HOEP) uses 15-20 volunteers to teach an average of 400 students acculturation for eight months each year.
- The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) uses volunteers at all sites. The volunteers range in age from elementary school to adults. They perform a variety of functions ranging from field work, research and routine office duties. Volunteer docents answer history and exhibit questions and work on special projects.
- The Alexandria Health Department uses volunteers primarily for education and outreach. In calendar year 2008, volunteers staffed tables at special events, passed out literature, participated in immunization drills and administered surveys for an average of 31 hours per month.
- Court Services Unit uses unpaid interns, mentors and community service participants. There are 48 active mentors with the SOHO—Space of Her Own and iMovie Mentors programs. Each mentor volunteers for at least 150 hours during the first year and approximately 50 hours per year in subsequent years, although several volunteers contribute many more hours. The 48 active mentors represent approximately 5,000 hours of annual community service.
- Sheltercare offers community service hours every Saturday, except Christmas, Thanksgiving and sometimes New Year's Day for 45 youth. The Community Service activities they participate in include: Park/Tidal Basin Clean up; Nursing home/Assisted Living visits (Woodbine, Sunrise); assembling care packages; making cards/ornaments for soldiers at Walter Reed; food bank stacking work; Vola Lawson Animal Shelter; and street clean up.

- The Community Services Board (CSB) uses school community service volunteers, JobLink placements, unpaid interns seeking Ph.D and other graduate degrees, mentors and volunteers who serve as representative payees, legal guardians, friendly visitors and Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center.

Recruitment

Although there are some variations, most City agencies recruit volunteers through word of mouth, e-news, newsletters, distribution of volunteer cards at community events, Volunteer Alexandria, JobLink, City website and Public Service Announcements. City agencies are also working more closely with area colleges and universities to get interns. TC Williams has also opened their Career Tech program to allow TC students the opportunity to work in a variety of fields to gain vocational expertise. The City hopes to utilize students in that program. OHA is also working on a special recruitment with the Living History Foundation to provide volunteer re-enactors to develop a training program for their Cub Scout programs. Court Services continually recruits mentors through the Gang Prevention Initiative, but still needs males for the Mentor program to be sustainable.

The Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department is always looking for qualified individuals to serve within the AVFD. AVFD leadership continues to reach out to the community for volunteers and recruit new members each year. However, because of City-wide budget constraints, and the obligation of the Fire Department to provide training and gear to volunteers, annual recruiting is limited. CERT holds a minimum of four classes each year to train volunteers. Recruitment is increasing as the use of CERT expands. The CERT program actively recruits through a coalition of volunteer programs in the City such as the Neighborhood Watch Program, the Medical Reserve Corp and Volunteer Alexandria.

Expanded Use

A few agencies are at capacity with the number of volunteers they can manage. A few more indicate that due to liability, legal and confidentiality regulations, they have limited expanded volunteer opportunities.¹

However, several indicated a desire to become more creative and expand volunteer opportunities to offset current and projected budget reductions.

¹ In the Department of General Services, the use of unpaid volunteers in most cases is not preferable. Construction, facilities renovation, maintenance, repair and vehicle repair and maintenance are jobs that have a high level of risk for accident and injury and the utilization of unpaid volunteers in these circumstances would place the City at a high level of risk in the case of accident and/or injury, as well as compliance with OSHA and VOSH regulations. However, General Services does participate in the TeensWork! Summer employment program and are an apprentice site for JobLink trainees.

- The Office of Human Rights has had success in the past with paid interns. However, with the loss of ability to pay interns, it has been challenging to find the right balance between training an unpaid intern and commitment from the student to do the work. The appropriate intern is either a law or MPA student.
- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will be looking at additional neighborhood/community groups to assist with the maintenance/landscaping of neighborhood parks, medians and other right-of-way.
- Alexandria Police currently plans to start utilizing volunteers to fingerprint and photograph children and seniors for the SafeAssure ID Program, and to assist officers in VIN etching of vehicles. APD could possibly use volunteers to assist with crowd control at various events as long as they are properly trained and fully understand their limitations.
- The Alexandria Library is in the process of re-organizing its present volunteer program and putting together a volunteer handbook to see where they can be more effective.
- The Department of Human Services is currently looking at having a full unit of interns as well as interns placed in all the Child Welfare units and are talking with the local universities about having Child Welfare Stipend students placed at Alexandria DHS. Child Welfare is also developing a training curriculum based on core competencies to insure that each student is ready to practice social work. This will help create a hiring pool for social work professionals seeking employment with the City.
- The City Special Events Committee has recommended the increased use of volunteers to help support special events in the future to minimize paid staff hours.

The City has had initial discussions with Volunteer Alexandria about broadening their ability to assist in recruiting volunteers to help City agencies. However, the cost of using an external entity would have to be balanced against budget reductions and the return on investment additional volunteers would bring.

Estimated Avoided Cost Value

The City realizes an estimated \$ 1,711,729 in volunteer avoided cost value and the table below details this by department. It should be noted that cost values vary slightly among departments and adult values differ from youth values.

2008 Volunteer Data

Name of Department	Departments Total Volunteer Hours	Yearly Estimated Cost
Library	6,605	85,000
Office on Women	10,294	202,998
Police Department	7,619	144,761
Office of Historic Alexandria	20,996	282,607
Department of Human Services	12,295	143,985
The Courts	4,730	39,696
Mental Health	5,775	135,783
Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities	31,493	614,428
Fire Department	3,202	62,471
TOTAL	103,009	1,711,729