



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

October 26, 2021

To: Mark Jinks, City Manager

Re: FY 2023-FY 2032 Budget and Capital Improvement Planning

Mr. City Manager:

This letter summarizes the Waterfront Commission's fiscal year (FY) 2023 budget priorities.

The Waterfront Commission recognizes the extraordinary fiscal challenges the City faces in light of the continuing impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and all its ramifications. Yet in our efforts on the path to becoming a smarter, more equitable, and greener city, we must recognize the duty to allocate funds to work toward the implementation of those goals. For the Waterfront Commission, charged with overseeing implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, the primary emphasis continues to be analysis, planning and implementation of the capital improvements necessary to implement park improvements and flood mitigation projects, as well as ongoing maintenance and operation of high-quality parks and public spaces along the waterfront. We are mindful that the citizens of Alexandria made clear during the planning process and ongoing implementation period that they supported private development efforts but valued most highly the improvement and maintenance of waterfront public areas controlled by the City.

Capital Improvements: Waterfront Flood Mitigation and Park Improvements

Many of the original decisions regarding public sphere improvements to the waterfront were based on plans and analyses made years ago. With climate change moving at a visibly rapid pace and the amount of flooding observed in recent years along our waterfront, we are concerned that decisions for implementing flood mitigation and park improvements be based on current and realistic estimates of the needs and perils of the waterfront. In addition, improvements should be engineered to be reasonably afforded by the City, including both up-front capital and on-going maintenance and operations costs.

The Waterfront Commission has established a Flood Mitigation Committee to review and advise initial design proposals and will be developing recommendations for consideration by the full Commission. The Commission will provide specific recommendations to City Council in the coming months on this matter and encourages those recommendations to be considered as the City develops its FY 2023 Capital Improvement Program.

While we understand that funding is always a concern, we encourage the City to use federal recovery or infrastructure funds, as available, to invest in a world class waterfront, as stated in the Waterfront Small Area Plan, and further to pursue state and federal discretionary grant funds.

Operating and Maintenance Costs

The City's FY 2023 Operating Budget should sustain funding for priority waterfront operations and maintenance functions, including the marina, parks, policing, security, public restrooms, and debris removal. The budget should also support endeavors such as the Tall Ship Providence and special events – and to commit additional funding for operations and maintenance as public spaces along the waterfront continue to be activated and improved. Increased activity in waterfront areas requires higher standards of attention to effectively manage those spaces.

The Commission continues to encourage the City to find long-term and sustainable ways to fund investment in waterfront infrastructure, maintenance, and management through mechanisms such as a business improvement district, public/private partnerships, bonding, or application of incremental revenue from the waterfront's completed new private development.

Conclusions

In summary, the Waterfront Commission recommends that the City Manager's proposed FY 2023 Capital Improvement Program and Operating Budget reaffirm the City's commitment to funding planned capital expenditures, operations, and maintenance of the waterfront, and consider creative funding to ensure the future and continued success of the implementation of the Waterfront Plan.

We look forward to providing constructive feedback on the City's budget proposals over the coming months.

Sincerely,



Stephen Thayer, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Commission

cc Alexandria Waterfront Commission members
 Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager
 Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
 James Spengler, Director, Recreation Parks & Cultural Activities
 Terry Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation
 Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Commission Staff Liaison