

# FY 2024 Budget Comments Received



New comments on top.

Date Received	Comment
Friday, April 7, 2023	<p>Dear City Manager Parajon, City Council, and OMB, I am writing in strong support of the proposed budget provision to increase funding for RPCA Out of School Time staff stabilization efforts. As a working parent whose children have participated in the program for five years, I can tell you that the OSTP is widely regarded as one of the city's greatest assets for parents - and is arguably the linchpin that allows city residents with children to engage in full-time work and invest back into our local economy.</p> <p>The OSTP provides high-quality programming, a safe environment, and affordable child care for Alexandria children and families. Speaking from my experience, the rec centers themselves become second homes for our children, and the rec staff second families. There is no OSTP without its dedicated staff. These staff have cared for our children when schools have been closed. They have cared for our children during a pandemic - putting themselves at risk to ensure essential workers had a stable child care solution (keep in mind that ACPS staff were able to stay home during the pandemic). Rec staff provide consistently high-quality care to large groups of children with varying developmental, social, and emotional needs - but often without the same resources afforded to ACPS staff. And the staff at my local rec center (Chick Armstrong) always do so with a smile on their face, often telling me that it's the best job in the world, despite the challenges.</p> <p>Yet I have seen the toll of staffing shortages within the OSTP. Current staff are asked to take on more with less, and rarely do they have the time off they deserve. I'm well aware of the number of open positions that have gone unfilled. This is likely partly due to market competition, and that in the midst of the pandemic, well paying hourly jobs are easy to come by - and most are much easier than caring for large groups of elementary schoolers. To recruit and retain high quality OSTP staff, we must ensure that they will enjoy high job quality, fair and competitive wages, and fair working conditions including paid time off and sick leave. Without these investments (and funding our child care infrastructure IS an investment which pays off in spades) we're at risk of burning out our current dedicated staff and repelling potential future staff members. This will result in a range of negative consequences, from staffing shortages to decreased program quality, reduced capacity, and closures.</p> <p>Look no further than the faces of Alexandria parents to understand the value of the OSTP in our families' lives: when our children get a slot in the coveted program - you'll see joy and immense relief; conversely, at times that rec has had to close or when children do not receive a spot due to demand, you'll observe anxiety, disappointment, and uncertainty as parents grapple with last-minute child care solutions. The rec program staff have always been there for the working families and children of Alexandria - from days when schools are closed and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, let's show our gratitude by being there for them. I urge the city council to adopt proposed funding increases for OSTP staff stabilization in FY '24 and to continue to increase funding for the OSTP program staff and capacity expansion in the future.</p> <p>Sincerely, Margaret Ziemann</p>
Saturday, April 1, 2023	<p>When residential home assessments used to go up, council used to lower the property tax rate. When assessments would go down, council would raise the rate. This resulted in a flat tax for homeowners.</p> <p>By not reducing the property tax rate of \$1.11 per \$100 of assessed value this year, while assessments continue to skyrocket, council is raising taxes on every homeowner in the city. This will also mean higher rents for renters, as landlords don't pay higher taxes without passing on the costs to tenants.</p> <p>This budget pays little concern to the taxpayer — continuing to increase spending across the board, while increasing real property taxes (not to mention utility fee increases).</p> <p>Council should consider a serious decrease in the property tax rate — something resembling the \$0.815 rate of 2007. (Yes, the property tax rate was 36 percent lower just 16 years ago.)</p> <p>It will mean scaling back rubber-stamped school wish lists, but certainly there is room for some scrutiny and accountability with the school budget instead of approving every dollar requested without question. That budget is currently \$359,900,00.00, which means the 15,775 students each have an average \$22,814.58 spent per year. And that does not even include the \$497,800,000 approved for the ten year school Capital Improvement Program.</p> <p>It is time to start thinking about the taxpayer in Alexandria — not just the developers and those making money off of the many city projects underway. It is time to enact a serious reduction in the property tax rate — like just a few years ago, at \$0.815.</p>
Friday, March 31, 2023	<p>My family supports the budget for the APD</p>

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Friday, March 24, 2023	<p>Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council,</p> <p>On behalf of the Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC), we are submitting this letter to recommend that you adopt the provisions included in the Fiscal Year 2024 alternative budget option #1 as proposed by City Manager James Parajon, either by approving the alternative budget or by including these provisions through the add/delete process.</p> <p>The CYFCC outlined its priorities for the FY2024 city budget in an October 13, 2022 letter to the Mayor and City Council. We are extremely pleased to see that the existing proposed budget recognizes our ongoing concern regarding the mental health crisis among our children and youth by including additional funding for mental health-related services and positions. We were also grateful that the proposed budget adopts the ACPS budget in full, as it also places a high priority on increasing access to mental health services.</p> <p>Given the magnitude of the crisis in mental health, we strongly support the provisions in the alternative budget that would allow the city to fund an emergency services bed finder position, a bilingual clinical psychologist, and Out of School Time staff stabilization measures.</p> <p>A recent report from the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia entitled "The Shape of Youth Mental Health" confirmed what families in our community know all too well: our children and teens are struggling emotionally and the resources currently dedicated to their needs are inadequate. The alternative budget addresses this disparity by maintaining all of the mental health-related funding enumerated in the primary budget proposal while adding the following critical services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*an emergency services bed finder position (to find in-patient mental health care) – this position will aid in locating in-patient mental health services, which is crucial for families when their children are in crisis.</li> <li>*a bilingual clinical psychologist – this position is vital to address mental health needs among non-English speaking youth in Alexandria.</li> <li>*Out of School Time staff stabilization measures – this measure would address the high turnover rate among after-school staff, which compromises the planning and managing of critical recreation activities for our youth during non-school hours.</li> </ul> <p>These positions and other important priorities in the alternative budget are funded through a one-cent increase in the real estate tax rate, which we believe is a small price to pay for improving access to inpatient mental health care, ensuring sufficient staff to meet with youth needing outpatient care, and providing additional trusted adults and role models for youth in out-of-school settings. Indeed, these provisions are three immediate ways the Council can tangibly respond to families in our community facing an array of emotional health concerns among their children.</p> <p>The Commission, again, thanks the City Council for adopting the Children and Youth Community Plan and for all your efforts to make implementation of this plan financially possible since its adoption.</p> <p>We look forward to working with the City Council, the citizens of Alexandria, and ACPS to ensure this year's budget addresses the evolving needs of Alexandria's children, youth, and families. Thank you again for the great work that you do for our city and residents.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Jessy Cuddy, MSW   she/her Catherine Clinger   she/her Chair                      Chair Elect</p>
Monday, March 20, 2023	<p>The following comment was received via Alex311:</p> <p>Please consider increasing salaries and resources for Duncan library, one of our city's most important treasures. It has been a resource when my son was in school and we continue to check books out virtually and in person regularly, and occasionally drop in to just read in quiet. Thank you.</p>
Saturday, March 18, 2023	<p>Hello, my name is Michelle Chan. I live in Alexandria, Virginia. I've been a resident for over four years in the Del Ray Area and I often go to the James M. Duncan Branch library. I have concerns about library safety in Alexandria. I know that folks are saying "security guard services need to be retained at their current level to ensure that patrons and staff remain safe." I'm not sure how I feel about that. Especially since security guards are often figures of intimidation and violence towards patrons, especially patrons of a lower income class or non-white racial backgrounds. However, safety is a very real concern, and I do strongly think that the city of Alexandria should ensure that there is funding allocated towards deescalation trainings either for staff or any security guards that have been hired.</p> <p>Please see this article for more information: <a href="https://lithub.com/librarians-in-the-21st-century-we-need-to-talk-about-library-security/">https://lithub.com/librarians-in-the-21st-century-we-need-to-talk-about-library-security/</a>.</p> <p>I would also like to support the ask that "the library staff deserve compensation comparable/competitive to other libraries in the region." Current staff salaries are 16-20% behind peer libraries. If we want to keep our best librarians, we must compensate them accordingly so that they have a living wage, especially since the standard of living in Alexandria Virginia is so high.</p>
Tuesday, March 14, 2023	<p>Alexandria has taken many steps to address climate change. The draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan includes a recommendation to, among other items, better communicate about federal and state incentives for electric vehicles. While there are limited opportunities to provide local incentives, one potentially revenue neutral approach, would be to modify the valuation used for vehicle personal property taxes based on either federal greenhouse gas emission rates (see <a href="https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-rating">https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-rating</a>) or the federal fuel economy ratings for the vehicles (<a href="https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.shtml">https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.shtml</a>). The City could establish separate classes of vehicles, as provided for in section 58.1-2503(B) of the Code of Virginia, as the basis of the differing valuations. To remain revenue neutral, this could include increasing, on a sliding scale, the valuation rate for high emission/low mpg vehicles while decreasing the rate for no/low emission/high mpg vehicles. This would not be a completely new action as the City already has exercised its authority to modify its car tax rates to account for higher vehicle values in the 2023 budget year. Issues of equity have already been addressed through use of the State Car Tax Subsidy.</p> <p>As this may be a first of its kind step in Virginia, and as the City Manager has already completed his proposed FY 2024 budget, the City Council could request that the City Attorney investigate the legal basis for such an action, and if found to be legally allowable, then direct the City Manager to develop options for use in the FY 2025 budget.</p>

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Monday, March 13, 2023	<p>Dear Mayor, City Council Members &amp; City Manager,</p> <p>My name is Mac Slover and as you know, I was a 30 year employee of the City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and now continue to volunteer with the City by heading up the Miracle League of Alexandria program.</p> <p>As you know, I began this program with the help and support of my board members in 2011. In 2012, with the assistance and support of City Council (who allocated \$285,000), we privately raised over \$300,000 of monetary and in-kind donations to build the rubberized surface Kelley Cares Miracle Field. In November 2012 we opened the new field complex to our youth and adult special needs participants. City Council and community members were there for the field dedication. The Miracle League of Alexandria has partnered with the City to run the highly successful program and has now for over 12 years and is still going strong and even partnering with helping its neighboring jurisdiction in Prince William County to help begin their program.</p> <p>I am writing to ask for your support for a FY 2025 Capital Budget item (as part of the FY2024-33 ten year plan). That item is for \$171,300 to replace the current playing surface of the Kelley Cares Miracle Field.</p> <p>Alexandria continues to be a part of the national Miracle League which has member communities throughout the United States and Canada. We coordinate games on Wednesdays for the youth and on Saturdays for the adults n the Spring and Fall.</p> <p>The Field has been played a vital part in helping meet the needs of our special needs community over the past 12 years. The field is used for the special needs games, by the Therapeutic Recreation after school program run by the City at the Lee Center, the Recreation Department's and Alexandria Soccer Association for their adaptive sports programs; the Recreation Department's T-ball and Coach Pitch programs; various programs for Senior Citizens. In the fall of 2012, the Miracle League and ACPS Office of Special Instruction began hosting special needs ACPS students during the school day for exhibition games. It was a new partnership the Miracle League and ACPS continues to grow and became a</p> <p>On average, the Miracle Fields lasts up to 10 years. The Kelley Cares Miracle Field is now beginning to show the wear on it and has had to be repaired several times over the last couple of seasons. The playing surface needs to be replaced now with the many years of use by the entire community.</p> <p>Thankfully, in the FY 2025 budget, City Manager has included funds to replace the surface. I am in support of the City's efforts to continue to provide our special needs community with a safe playing area as well as other citizens who use the field too.</p> <p>I am asking for you continued support for the budget item and I personally invite you to attend any of our Miracle League games to this upcoming spring season. Our opening day is scheduled for April 15 at 1 pm and would love to have you all attend. You can find the schedule of the youth and adult games and volunteer oportunities on our website: <a href="http://www.miracleleagueofalexandria.com">www.miracleleagueofalexandria.com</a>.</p> <p>Come out and experience the excitement and joy of our players, parents, staff and volunteers have each game.</p> <p>Again, I may be retired, but as you know, my heart is with the City of Alexandria and expecially the Miracle League of Alexandria that I love to work with.</p> <p>Thanks,</p> <p>Mac</p>
Saturday, March 4, 2023	<p>I listened to the City Manager's presentation to the City Council on February 28th. Although it was informative, it lacked balance. For example, I do not recall the city manager mentioning programs for older adults (60+) even though they comprise over 17% of all Alexandrians. Alexandria is scheduled to lose \$19,000 in federal and state Older American Act funds in 2024. This could result in 12 clients not receiving congregate meals (i.e., 2750 meals), 591 fewer hours of homemaker services, and a 4% reduction in personal care services, increasing the current 40+ waiting list.</p> <p>These cuts, in addition to the termination of the special SNAP benefits last month, place older Alexandrians in dire straits. I encourage the City Manager to focus on the impact his proposed budget will have on older residents in the upcoming public meetings. Older persons deserve better from the Alexandria city government.</p>
Tuesday, February 7, 2023	<p>Hi there,</p> <p>I live in Alexandria and have for the past three years (and hopefully for many years to come!). I am writing in the hopes that the Manager will prioritize funding to fight climate change in next year's budget. Specifically, I hope that the Office of Climate Action programs will be fully funded, and that any leftover funds from the 2023 budget will be applied to the 2024 budget for climate programs. I would love it if low- or moderate-income residents benefit FIRST from the city's energy efficiency and clean energy programs — they are the ones who need help the most! I know that budgets like this one are always tight and include lots of tough decisions, but this is my number one issue, and I am confident that addressing the climate crisis will have major benefits beyond just climate in terms of making life easier for all of us living here in Alexandria.</p> <p>Thank you for your action already on the climate crisis, and please do as much as you can moving forward!</p> <p>Jamie Biondi</p>
Thursday, January 26, 2023	<p>I am a City of Alexandria resident and I ask the Manager to prioritize climate change in the City's budget for next year.</p> <p>Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24.</p> <p>This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission.</p> <p>Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs.</p> <p>I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time.</p> <p>Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action over the past year on the climate crisis.</p> <p>Steve Castle</p>

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Tuesday, January 24, 2023	<p>Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24.</p> <p>This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission.</p> <p>Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs.</p> <p>I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time.</p> <p>Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action on the climate crisis. Kaitlyn Golden, MSW</p>
Sunday, January 22, 2023	<p>Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the 2024 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from 2023 climate programs to similar programs in 2024. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission.</p> <p>Please also make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs.</p> <p>I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time.</p> <p>Thank you to the Manager, Mayor and Council for your action over the past year on the climate crisis.</p> <p>The Rev. Richmond Jones</p>
Sunday, January 22, 2023	<p>Hi. I'm an ALX citizen and I'm writing to request the manage consider climate change when making the budget for FY2024. Please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24.</p> <p>I also hope you make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs.</p> <p>Thank you. Emily Straight</p>
Saturday, January 21, 2023	<p>Please make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. They are in greatest need.</p> <p>To do that you will need to fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24.</p> <p>We need to support our Environmental Action Plan and the City's Enironmental Policy Commission.</p> <p>These are not just nice policies which can wait till tomorrow. You only need to watch the PBS Newshour to realize how catastrophe waits if we don't take action now.</p> <p>Susan C Tate</p>
Friday, January 20, 2023	<p>Thank you for your thoughtfulness in this process. Your leadership in taking action on climate policy for our citizens and for this city are deeply appreciated and don't go unnoticed.</p> <p>I humbly and urgently request that you please fully fund the Office of Climate Action programs in the FY24 budget, and on top of that funding, please dedicate leftover funds from FY23 climate programs to similar programs in FY24. This funding is critical to support City policies in its Environmental Action Plan, Climate Crisis Declaration, and draft Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, as well as to support the budget recommendations of the City's Environmental Policy Commission.</p> <p>As you draft the budget, please also make sure that low and moderate-income residents benefit first from the city's residential energy efficiency and clean energy programs. I recognize that this is a tight budget year, but the city and world can't postpone rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the effects of climate change. And these climate programs will save the city money over time.</p> <p>So much money has been allocated for building electrification and efficiency from the Inflation Reduction Act. It's like the city has its own bank account full of funds to make sure we realize the emissions reductions estimated to come from the IRA – we just need to take advantage of it and make sure residents know about this "wallet" they have at their disposal. And, any and all building codes and zoning laws that can incorporate climate-smart and clean energy provisions (like mandating electric heat pumps, water heaters, EV chargers, etc. in ALL new builds across the city) will save the city massive amounts of money in the long run.</p> <p>Thank you for prioritizing these measures and thank you to the Manager, Mayor, and Council for your action on the climate crisis.</p>