

Resolution No. _____

Budget Resolution Establishing the Process to be Used to Adopt the FY 2026 Operating Budget and the FY 2026 to FY 2035 Capital Improvement Program

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

WHEREAS, resolution No. 3198 previously adopted by City Council has now expired, or will soon expire; and

WHEREAS, City Council believes that flexibility is needed for both the preparation and evaluation of expense items as well as with regard to diversifying the sources of revenue available to fund the General Fund Operating Budget; and

WHEREAS, City Council's deliberations on the budget each year reflect a balancing of the needs of the community with the community's ability to afford services to meet those needs; and

WHEREAS, City Council desires to provide the core services expected of a municipal government and to continue to provide quality services and facilities for the residents and businesses of Alexandria, but understands that economic reality will require significant trade-offs between services and revenues; and

WHEREAS, City Council is committed to managing the cost of City General Fund operating and capital expenditures in order to properly balance the tax burden placed on the community; and

WHEREAS, City Council is committed to achieving the vision and strategic goals, long term outcomes, objectives, and initiatives as outlined in the City Council's Adopted Strategic Priorities; and

WHEREAS, City Council desires to allow for a thoughtful and deliberate budget process given the budget's complexity and importance;

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, adopt this resolution and adhere to the following rules of procedure:

Section (a) The City Manager's Budget Submission to City Council and the Setting of Budget Guidance by City Council

(1) That the City Manager shall plan and prepare the proposed Operating Budget and proposed ten-year Capital Improvement Program and that such preparations shall include those programs and resources necessary to achieve the City Council's Adopted Strategic Priorities.

(2) That the City Manager shall present to City Council a preliminary forecast and outlook for (a) revenues and (b) expenditures necessary to maintain existing services and policies (including the City Manager's forecast of cash capital and debt service costs related to the most recently approved Capital Improvement Program).

(3) That City Council shall direct that the City Manager prepare a budget resolution to be adopted by City Council to guide the preparation of the upcoming Operating Budget and next Capital Improvement Program.

(4) That the City Manager shall submit a proposed Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program to the City Council. Such budget shall meet any guidance for General Fund revenues and expenditures established by City Council.

Section (b) The Budget Submission to City Council by the Alexandria Public Schools (ACPS)

(5) That the Alexandria City School System (ACPS) shall separately present to City Council, but in a format coordinated with the City Manager, its preliminary forecast and outlook for (a) expenditures necessary to maintain appropriate services and policies, (b) the outlook for additional requests for Schools operating in the upcoming fiscal year and capital needs through the upcoming fiscal year and the succeeding 9 years, (c) projected ACPS capital related debt service for the upcoming fiscal year, (d) the outlook for possible budget reductions and increases in fees, fines and charges for services, (e) the outlook for Federal and State grants, and the costs of meeting unfunded Federal and State mandates, both current mandates and projected new mandates.

(6) That the Board of the Alexandria City Public Schools is requested to adopt a Capital Improvement Program no later than December 19, 2024 and an Operating Budget no later than February 20, 2025 so that any request may be considered by City Council in parallel with the City Manager's proposed operating budget and Capital Improvement Program. If the ACPS budget request exceeds or otherwise does not comply with any guidance regarding fiscal limitation provided by City Council to ACPS, then ACPS shall clearly identify what operating programs and activities would be funded if additional funding were provided.

Section (c) Actions of City Council Concerning the Budget Submissions of the City Manager and the Alexandria Public Schools (ACPS)

(7) That as part of a preliminary forecast of assessments and expenditures provided by the City Manager, City Council will consider this information and any other relevant information available to it at that time including the comments of residents provided via a public hearing or other public input opportunities.

(8) That the Council shall hold two budget public hearings on the City Manager's proposed budget in the month following the budget submission by the City Manager and should reserve time for public comment at a public hearing once the Preliminary Add/Delete list of City Council Budget Proposals and technical adjustments by the Office of Management and Budget has become available and distributed to the community. Any additional public hearing shall not conflict with or serve in place of a public hearing regarding the establishment of an effective tax rate as required by the Code of Virginia. Council shall also hold a series of budget work sessions in which the public may attend in-person or virtually to listen as the body discusses topics and questions related to the budget. These work sessions will take place after the City Manager's proposed budget and prior to the adoption of the Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program. Finally, all budget questions from members of Council shall be submitted to staff for response as soon as feasible. These questions and answers shall be posted on the City of Alexandria's Management and Budget website along with existing budget resources.

(9) That Council directs City staff to organize at least one public meeting to present the budget to interested residents and solicit input. Additionally, City staff shall provide an opportunity for residents and organizations to submit written budget comments to the Council in lieu of or in addition to participation in public meetings. The written budget comments should be submitted via the City of Alexandria's Management and Budget website.

(10) That Council directs City staff to prepare motions for adoption of the Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program and a summary of decisions made in the Preliminary or Final Add/Delete work session following the work session. Those motions and the summary of final decisions shall be released for public review no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled adoption.

(11) That City Council shall consider these proposals and endeavor to enact an Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program that balance the needs of the community with the community's desire and ability to pay for services to meet those needs.

(12) That City Council plans to adopt such a budget resolution.

Section (d) Proposed Budget for the City of Alexandria

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

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

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

(15) 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:

(i) there has not been a Budget Memo or formal information request submitted that relates to the specific item proposed for consideration or a Council discussion of the proposal during a budget work-session or public hearing has not occurred; and

(ii) any such motion or amendment that has the effect of increasing any specific budget expenditures proposed by the City Manager or would have the effect of reducing any specific revenue proposed by the City Manager unless such motion or amendment provides for a specific offset of either expenditure or revenue and ensures the maintenance of the fiscal balance of the proposed budget; and

(iii) such motion or amendment is not provided in the form of a City Council budget proposal submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) or an OMB technical adjustment at least 20 days prior to the adoption of the budget in accordance with the FY 2026 Rules of Engagement for the Add/Delete Process.

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

Section (f) Actions of City Council Concerning the Add/Delete Process

(17) The City Council shall adhere to the following Add/Delete Rules of Engagement for amending and adopting the final budget. These Rules of Engagement were first adopted for use during the FY 2016 budget process and continued in each of the subsequent budget processes:

(i) Continue use of the add/delete spreadsheet that was produced by OMB prior to the FY 2016 budget process and reintroduced in the FY 2017 budget process.

(ii) A City Council Budget Proposal form will be required in order to add or delete anything from the City Manager's Proposed Budget. The form will require the following prior to Council consideration:

1. Additional information related to how the change advances the Council's goals/priorities.
2. Additional information related to how the change impacts the performance of that program, service or goal.
3. The support of at least 3 of 7 Council members (the original sponsor and two co-sponsors).
4. Must be accompanied by an add/delete spreadsheet prepared by the Council member or OMB in which the sum of the individual Council members adds and deletes, including the items originally sponsored by that member and those co-sponsored by that member, are in balance or produce a revenue surplus.
5. Any add/delete proposal requiring a change to a City Ordinance or requiring a new ordinance must be submitted to staff eight days prior to the first legislative meeting in April in order for the item to be introduced and docketed for the April public hearing [For FY 2026, March 31]

(iii) The completed City Council Budget Proposal form must be returned to the Office of Management & Budget (OMB), with each of the steps from #2 above completed, at least 20 days prior to the adoption of the budget [for FY 2026, April 3].

(iv) City Council will hold a third budget public hearing to receive feedback on the preliminary add/delete items submitted by City Council Members [for FY 2026, April 8].

(v) A combined list of all City Council Budget Proposals that meet the criteria in #2, any technical adjustments from OMB, and any City Manager recommended changes, will be provided and discussed at the 2nd Legislative Meeting in April [for FY 2026, April 22].

(vi) Council will work with OMB to refine/develop funding figures based on the proposals submitted, to be completed no later than the Preliminary Add/Delete work session [for FY 2026, April 22].

(vii) If Council reaches a consensus during the preliminary add/delete work session, the final add/delete work session will become optional.

(viii) Completed Council Budget Proposals, with funding, will be circulated to Council and the public the Friday prior to budget adoption [for FY 2026, April 25]

(ix) City Council will be required to keep the budget in balance once all decisions are made.

(x) Budget Adoption will occur on April 30, 2025 with all City Council Budget Proposals, those approved and those not approved, made public upon adoption of the budget.

Section (g) Expiration – The provisions of this resolution shall expire on June 30, 2025.

ADOPTED:

Justin M. Wilson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk