

City of Alexandria, Virginia
BUDGET AND FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BFAAC)

Monthly Meeting

September 16, 2025

Alexandria City Hall, 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Sister Cities Conference Room #1101

Summary Minutes

Committee Members Present: Nancy Drane, Erica Kaster, Mindy Lyle, Michelle Millben (Vice Chair) (virtual), Lauren O'Brien, John Ruthinoski (Secretary)

Excused/Absent: Randall Williams, Mark Tonsetic

Staff Present: Morgan Routt, Meghan McGrane

1. **Call to Order: Vice Chair Millben** called the meeting to order at 7:21 PM.
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the August 19, 2025 Meeting:** A motion was made by **Drane** and seconded by **Ruthinoski** to approve the minutes of the August 19th meeting with no corrections. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.
3. **BFAAC Charter: Millben** led a discussion to review the BFAAC charter that establishes its membership and core functions, and observe how it aligns with current BFAAC practices. Members observed that BFAAC's advisory role is prominently featured throughout. **Millben** suggested that the charter can be a helpful tool to reference when BFAAC is developing its annual work plan and responding to Council requests and suggested that BFAAC members (re)familiarize their Councilmember or representative body of the BFAAC charter, ideally before the Council's upcoming budget retreat.
4. **BFAAC Work Plan Items**
 - a. **Memo #1 – FY26 Workplan**

Millben began a discussion to develop a general outline of BFAAC's FY26 Workplan. BFAAC members identified the following potential work plan areas:

Framework for budget assessment, decision-making – This work plan item responds to a Council suggestion that BFAAC advise Council on a framework or factors that it could utilize when making budget decisions and/or setting budget priorities, particularly in anticipation of difficult future budget tradeoffs. BFAAC's work here might start with a literature review on the decision-making process of other legislative bodies and/or elected

leaders during times of significant financial constraints, with the goal of identifying communities that have similar attributes to Alexandria. Based on the results of that literature review, BFAAC could potentially develop a tool for Council to utilize during future budget discussions. (Several BFAAC members felt strongly that BFAAC should not limit its work to a literature review but aim to go beyond that to develop this tool because Council seems most interested in something practical – a framework, set of questions, factors to consider, a rubric.) This effort could also include a review of previous BFAAC memos to see how BFAAC advised Council during difficult economic times. Finally, members suggested that depending on what BFAAC uncovers and develops, this has the potential to evolve into a broader set of recommendations around the budget development process, including the guidance that the Council gives to the City Manager.

Update on BFAAC education series – **Millben** shared that past BFAAC work plans had an emphasis on its ‘education series,’ noting that there are several substantive areas that BFAAC has not yet had a chance to focus on (i.e., special/dedicated revenue funds and grants; personnel & compensation). **Millben** suggested that we consult with **Williams** to get a better sense of any current plans to convey the content of past ‘education series’ sessions to the public. Otherwise, **Drane** suggested that BFAAC focus future educational sessions on issues directly related to its work plan and in executing its advisory role (e.g., inviting city staff to present on an issue that BFAAC plans to advise Council on through its work plan). The consensus was not to continue using an ‘education series’ as a future guiding principle, but to ensure that we close out past work and ensure that work is collected and available to BFAAC and/or others.

Best practices around collective bargaining – **Drane** shared that she received feedback that the Council is interested learning more about best practices around the sequencing of collective bargaining agreements and the overlay with budget years. If bargaining agreement (re)negotiations are concentrated in a given budget year, it may present significant budget pressures in that year (e.g., currently, the City is managing four agreements, with ACPS managing a fifth). Are there other recommended approaches that suggest spreading out these collective bargaining-related agreements across multiple budget years?

Split revenue – **Millben** suggested that might also offer to look to neighboring jurisdictions to perform a comparative analysis on the commercial to residential split for real estate (e.g., how does our split compare to other jurisdictions with similar sizes and local economies).

Role of AI to Promote Cost Efficiency – **Kaster** suggested BFAAC might consider how AI can be used to generate cost savings, efficiency, either in this work plan or in a future work plan.

a. Memo #2 – Recommendations for the FY27 Budget Guidance

Drane suggested that the budget guidance memo begin with an emphasis on Council using its pre-established priorities, goals, and actions to inform and guide the development of its guidance to the City Manager and its own future deliberations on the budget. **Millben** suggested that the budget guidance encourage Council to focus on outcomes it aims to achieve through its budget investments, drawing a direct line to its own pre-established priorities, goals, and actions. City staff shared that there is typically a provision in the budget guidance resolution that asks the City Manager to describe how the proposed budget aligns with the Council's strategic priorities.

Millben suggested that BFAAC's budget guidance should likely reference the CIP, but that the details of what BFAAC ultimately includes may be informed by discussion at the Council's upcoming October 7 meeting that will focus on the affordability of the CIP and the city's capital needs.

Drane suggested that the schools portion of the budget guidance mirror past BFAAC memos, and that the Council and School Board have several upcoming joint meetings and work sessions that might inform more specifics here.

5. **BFAAC Elections:** Nominations for the following officer positions were made during the August 19 BFAAC meeting:
 - a. Chair – **Ruthinoski** made and **Lyle** seconded the nomination for **Millben** to serve as BFAAC Chair. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - b. Vice Chair – **Lyle** made and **Drane** seconded the nomination for **Ruthinoski** to serve as BFAAC Vice Chair. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.
 - c. Secretary – **Ruthinoski** made and **Lyle** seconded the nomination for **Williams** to serve as BFAAC Secretary. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.
6. **2026 City of Alexandria Legislative Package:** City staff have asked boards and commissions to consider submitting input for its annual legislative package. **Millben** noted that BFAAC's most recent memo made some relevant recommendations, and asked City staff to forward this in response to the above inquiry. City staff also shared that BFAAC may have a chance to comment on the proposed city legislative package once drafted.

7. **Updates and Reports:**

- a. City staff is doing scenario planning related to potential risk with federal funding typically received by City and partner agencies, looking at areas of vulnerability and crosswalk with areas of critical need
- b. Note that the FY27 Budget Calendar is being finalized
- c. BFAAC meetings will move to Lee Center, Conference Room #4 during the City Hall relocation

8. **Adjournment:** A motion was made by **Ruthinoski** and seconded by **Drane** to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Future 2025 Events:

October 7 at 5:30-7:30 p.m. at City Hall – CIP & Economic Strategy Update Work Session. BFAAC members are requested to attend, preferably in person (but virtual should be available). Agenda is pending.

November 1 at 9:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. at Del Pepper Community Resource Center, 4850 Mark Center Drive Community Conference Room First Floor– City Council Budget Retreat. BFAAC will present during this meeting. Note: This date is not yet confirmed.

November 18 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall, Sister Cities – BFAAC Meeting

December 16 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall, Sister Cities – BFAAC Meeting. Note: This will be the last meeting at City Hall. Future BFAAC meetings will be held at the Lee Center, Conference Room #4 during City Hall renovation. Meetings at the Lee Center will end no later than 8:30 p.m.