

December 30, 2021

Mayor Wilson and Members of Council
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: FY 2023 Operating Budget and FY2023-2032 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Early this year, Council wisely approved hundreds of millions of dollars in new operating budget and capital improvement program spending for aggressively addressing increased flooding in Alexandria as a result of climate change. The flood mitigation response approved by Council was based on recommendations from an Interdepartmental Strike Team Flooding Management Task Force established by the City Manager, with responsibility for its implementation being designated to new Flood Action Program Manager Daniel Medina, Ph.D., P.E.

While we applaud this step toward helping our community deal with the consequences of climate change, it will do nothing to address the cause of the problem, which is that we are continuing to pump greenhouse gases into the air. These emissions are steadily increasing the severity and frequency of extreme precipitation events and flooding, sea level rise and tidal flooding, and heat waves and other extreme weather events.

More than two years ago, Alexandria City Council unanimously approved a resolution to declare that we face a climate emergency. Council must adopt a budget for FY 2023 that reflects the urgency of this crisis by making the investments necessary to meet the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals for 2030 contained in the city's Environmental Action Plan-2040. Given the effectively permanent and increasingly severe effects of climate change on public health and well-being, these investments should be on a similar scale to those Council has made to address the flooding resulting from climate change.

Because we are in an emergency, Council should strongly consider tax rate increases to fund the programs and personnel needed for an effective response. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to maintain a livable planet because we preferred paying less in taxes. Future city leaders will bemoan the drastic increases in public expenses if we fail during this crucial decade to adequately reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

More than half of our community's emissions are associated with energy use in the built environment, making it essential that we prioritize reductions in this area. The Virginia Clean Economy Act will be helpful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with Alexandrians' electricity use, but substantial energy efficiency improvements—and major reductions in our use of natural gas—will be necessary to achieve our 2030 emissions target.

We urge you to adopt a budget for FY 2023 that includes funding for:

- Supporting the electrification and retrofitting of existing buildings to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy use, including through establishing and expanding public-private financing initiatives;

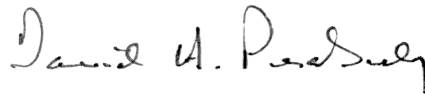
- Extending Alexandria's commitment to achieving net zero energy performance in new civic facilities to apply to all projects supported by public funds, including affordable housing;
- Establishing a policy that all new private development shall be net zero energy upon completion;
- Incentivizing on-site solar, battery storage, and microgrids to strengthen the resilience of our neighborhoods and advance decarbonization of the grid;
- Directing the new City Manager to organize and administer this work as a critical priority;
- Assembling Federal, State, and Municipal funding and authority at a scale equal to the task.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your public service on behalf of our city at this critical time in history.

Sincerely,



Scott Barstow



David Peabody



Stephen Koenig

CC: Mark Jinks
James Parajon