



Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's Statement on the Proposed Old Town Business Improvement District (BID)

Upon the recommendation of its Board of Directors, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce today sent a letter to the Alexandria City Council supporting the passage of an ordinance creating a proposed Business Improvement District (BID) in Old Town. In its 2017 Legislative Agenda, the Chamber noted its support for efforts to explore BID concepts in order to increase Alexandria's competitiveness as a destination for business and tourism. The Chamber Board's endorsement of the ordinance supports those efforts.

A majority of Chamber Board members felt the passage of the ordinance was the next step in the process of exploring the BID concept. However, the Chamber cautions that the endorsement of the passage of a BID ordinance should be viewed within the context of its ongoing evaluation of the BID. Many questions remain on BID specifics and the Chamber outlined some of those questions and concerns in its letter to Council.

"I am proud of the evaluation process the Chamber initiated to arrive at this decision about the BID concept," said 2017 Chamber Chairman of the Board Dak Hardwick. "Over the last year, the Chamber has gone through an extensive process to learn more about the BID, how it would affect Chamber members, the positive and negative attributes of such a concept, and how it would be implemented. Our Board took this discussion very seriously and, even though this decision was not unanimous and reflects continued questions about the BID within the broader business community, most of our Board felt we needed to endorse the passage of an ordinance to keep evaluating the concept."

Hardwick continued. "Our Board felt it was important to endorse the passage of the ordinance without endorsing a tax rate increase this year to support BID activities. Before any potential tax rate is set to support the BID, questions concerning governance, services to be rendered, and relationship with the City need to be resolved. Those questions can only be resolved if the BID is legally created by the City Council."

The endorsement of the passage of a BID ordinance comes after a yearlong discussion by the Chamber in which both the Chamber's Government Relations Committee and Board of Directors heard presentations, attended numerous meetings and listened to members, both in and out of the proposed service district.

"We've heard from and met with many members on the BID. For the most part, they are supportive of the concept because they have seen what it has done in some of our neighboring communities. However, they are still hesitant because there aren't more specifics now. We're hopeful the establishment of the ordinance will help answer some of these questions." said Chamber President & CEO Joe Haggerty.

Both Hardwick and Haggerty emphasized the Chamber is only supportive of the establishment of the ordinance now and plans to actively monitor developments as BID specifics, including funding mechanisms, become available.