

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce 2018 Alexandria City Council Candidate Survey –Del Pepper

Introduction- Please introduce yourself and describe why you are seeking a seat on the Alexandria City Council.

I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. I received my Bachelor's degree from Grinnell College and did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin. I worked five years as a case worker in Chicago, Illinois, Cook County Public Aid, Children's Division. I am married to Dr. F. J. Pepper, who recently retired from his psychiatric practice. We moved to Alexandria in 1968 and have been active in numerous organizations ever since. We have a married son, Murphy Pepper. He and his wife, Soo, have five children. Murphy is a product of the Alexandria Public Schools. He is a practicing lawyer in the Richmond, Virginia area. I was former Mayor Charles E. Beatley's administrative aide. I was elected to the City Council in 1985 and am presently running for re-election.

During this term, I have served as the City Council's representative on nine Council-related boards and commissions. In addition I continue to be involved in a number of organizations, such as the West End Business Association and the Del Ray Business Association.

I am running for re-election so I can continue to work toward the successful completion of several projects that are underway and in varying stages of being realized. Their successful completion would truly move the City forward. Among these are the construction of the Potomac Metro Station and the redevelopment of the whole North Potomac Yard area; the redevelopment of Landmark Mall and Eisenhower Avenue—East and West; and the completion of the remaining two transit corridors, B and C.

2. Attract-How do you think the City should approach attracting new businesses to locate in Alexandria?

Without a doubt the best way to attract new businesses, (and keep the ones we have), is to create a culture and image of being a business friendly City, community, and government.

Please refer below to my answers to the question on City Government Processes.

We need to make it easy for new businesses to locate here and for businesses already here to expand. Where appropriate the City needs to offer tax incentives to attract a special business to come to Alexandria as we did with the National Science Foundation.

We need to ensure our land use and zoning plans provide for innovative types of businesses like maker spaces, pop ups, and shared office spaces.

We need to keep the construction of Potomac Yard Metro Station moving along and to make plans for the completion of the southern entrance. We continue to work with Fairfax County for funding for the Corridor C Transitway and recently received \$2.5 million for early planning needs. Congestion continues to be an issue which the City is working to minimize. This summer a number of streets were repaved.

The City continues to build its own broadband service. It is important that it be made available as soon as possible to our residents and businesses and at competitive prices.

The City may need to appropriate more monies for recruiting new businesses.

We need strong, well-financed marketing of the City by our Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and by Visit Alexandria. We welcome assistance from the Alexandria Chamber. The City is an award winning, progressive, visionary jurisdiction with a long list of achievements.

3. Sustain How do we maintain and enhance Alexandria's position as a complete community with thriving commercial and retail businesses, highly ranked schools, workforce and affordable housing, vibrant and walkable neighborhoods and open spaces for recreation?

Alexandria needs to include in its Small Area Plan Updates the locations we feel would be the best place for new schools and any City public facilities. That's good planning. Alexandria continues to promote mixed use developments and to encourage commercial businesses to come to the City. The majority of the City's real estate revenue comes from residential properties. Efforts continue to attract more businesses so as to bring that imbalance into line.

One of the things that businesses look for when they think about relocating to another city is the quality of the schools. Alexandria continues to work to ensure that our public schools are exceptional. Working as a team with the schools we are addressing the infrastructure and expanding school population needs. Two new schools will be opening within this year, Patrick Henry Elementary School and the Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School..

During last year's budget, Council set aside funds for addressing the School's and City's infrastructures. A Blue Ribbon committee was set up to advise Council as to the most effective way to spend the new funds. We continue to implement their recommendations

Earlier this month Gov. Ralph Northam visited T.C. Williams High School to officially open the School's new Governor's Health Science Academy. There are 100 plus students. The participants will attend both T.C. and the George Washington School of

Medicine and Health Sciences and can earn up to 18 credits at the university before graduating from T. C.

The Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, AEDP, can be helpful in matching prospective business owners with the workforce they need. The City can help by ensuring that all levels of affordable and workforce housing are available.

The City Manager, Mark Jinks, has created the King Street Corridor Initiative to ensure that our main business corridor is always attractive. This unit consists of several men who not only keep the streets and sidewalks free of litter, loose bricks etc., but some times serve to answer visitors' questions.

The City continues to make plans for alternative modes of transportation during the months next year that Metro will need to close down the Alexandria stations for repairs. We assume that Metro will supply metro buses. Shuttles, cabs, uber, and private cars will be available.

4. City Processes-What's your plan to simplify City Government processes that affect the ability of businesses to invest, open, operate, and be successful in Alexandria?

We have been improving our budget process for several years now. For example, we have moved to a 10 year Capital Improvement Program. I support the formulation of a multi-year Operating Budget as well. It is critical that we know what our future financial needs will be so we can plan in advance to have sufficient revenues from all sources to support our Strategic Plan goals.

I also support getting more input from the business community, particularly as it related to marketing our City and making the process of applying for business permits easier.

Small businesses have told us that they struggle with some facets of the SUP process for business move-ins and expansion. Small businesses are the life-blood of our community, and we must try harder to meet their needs so they can be successful in our City. I would support examining our zoning requirements so that more SUPs could be administrative SUPs. In addition, if a business needs an SUP but their application is delayed by City Council's summer recess, I would support calling a special meeting of City Council, a public hearing, if needed, in July, to consider small business SUPs. It is my hope that as we continue to automate more City Application processes, we will be able to include applications for Business Licenses, and allow people to pay more of their taxes online. I would like to minimize the number of trips people have to make to City Hall to conduct their mandatory business permit and tax interactions.

In addition, I support City staff initiatives to review policy recommendations for their potential impact on the business community, and I support reducing barriers to implementation of small area plans. We have already been inserting more flexibility in small area plans so that new and previously unimagined types of businesses, spawned

by new technologies and ways of doing business, can be accommodated in our zoning and planning reviews.

5. State and Regional Issues- What do you feel are the most pressing state and regional issues effecting Alexandria?

It appears that at long last WMATA has found the dedicated funding that it so desperately has needed to ensure a steady source of income in order to make adequate plans to meet its infrastructure and service delivery needs. Even so, funding WMATA may continue to be a source of concern with rising labor costs. Also, part of the funding that WMATA received was taken from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVRTA) funds. These funds were taken partly from Alexandria's share of NVRTA funds. We continue to request that these funds be restored.

Recently, NVRTA has awarded Alexandria \$2.5 million dollars to use for the planning study of Corridor C Transitway. Alexandria has welcomed the partnership with Fairfax County as we plan to develop the Corridor C Transitway. We have worked well with Arlington County as we worked to develop the Route 1 Corridor.

In addition to funding for WMATA, I am concerned about the cost of the remediation of our four sanitary sewer outflows. We are fortunate to have Alexandria Renew Enterprises as a partner in the remediation effort, but it remains an extraordinary expense. Although we have made numerous requests, we have received insufficient financial assistance from the General Assembly. Also, the General Assembly required Alexandria to complete the remediation by 2025, a date which is considered to be unrealistic. We need to work with the State for assistance in both areas.

Heavy traffic and the lack of sufficient affordable housing throughout the region are pressing concerns for Alexandria.