



Alexandria Police: Staffing and Morale Plummeting

The taxpayers of Alexandria City deserve to know that after four years of mismanagement and ineptitude at the executive level of the police department, decades of false promises from Alexandria City Hall, the pressure of maintaining premium policing services through a global pandemic, and skyrocketing crime rates, both staffing and morale within the Police Department are plummeting.

Alongside our partners within the Alexandria Fire Department, the Police Department is experiencing an exodus of staff and an inability to add new officers at the same pace. And just like our fire department allies, it takes almost a full year to replace those who leave. Combine this with City Council's defunding of the police department of almost \$1,000,000, the elimination of half a dozen sworn positions, and the removal of several "over-hire" positions, the department struggles daily to meet the law enforcement demands of this densely populated suburb of Washington, D.C.

The citizens need to know that police services are being negatively affected due to the above issues. The department has had to transfer officers from our Detective, Community Oriented Policing, and Motors Sections just so that we can properly address routine calls for service. Because of the changes, these officers are unable to focus their attention on solving open crimes, engaging the community in neighborhood events, or addressing traffic complaints as we have in the past. The department was forced to make these adjustments so that we could provide adequate service to the community. However, these changes are not sustainable, and the community should soon expect to see drastic changes to our ability to provide the same level of service.

We have fought for fair pay for decades and yet our starting salary ranks 13th out of the 14 Northern Virginia law enforcement agencies. The City of Alexandria's pay philosophy is to "*maintain a competitive compensation program to attract, retain, and motivate qualified employees.*" It is simply not reasonable to believe we can hire and retain public safety staff when our compensation is second to the last.

We are told the only way to increase pay is to increase taxes; local politicians use this tactic because they know taxpayers will feel hesitant. Yet somehow, \$5,000,000 in brand new programs have been funded by the City just this calendar year without a tax increase. We are also told that our compensation issues will be rectified in collective bargaining. City Council and the City Manager neglect to mention that at best, we are 24 months removed from any contracts. The department and community cannot wait that long as staffing and morale continues to tumble.

The facts listed above are contributing factors to officer burnout which will ultimately have a negative impact on police officers' mental and physical health, performance, and interactions with the community. We recognize that the solution to this problem is complex. The answer begins with the City of Alexandria properly investing in public safety through increasing authorized staffing levels and fairly compensating those who protect this great city.

We stand united with our fire department partners and ask that City Council fully fund Alexandria's public safety departments, increase staffing, and pay us fairly!