



City of Arlington, Texas

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Arlington City Council Takes First Look at Proposed \$518 Million FY21 Operating Budget**

The Arlington City Council took its first look Tuesday at the proposed \$518 million Fiscal Year 2021 operating budget, which includes a recommendation for a property tax rate reduction for the fifth year in a row, and no increases for residents' water rates, and slight increases in the garbage collection rate and storm water fee.

Proposals for next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, include investments in public safety, public health and information technology, expansion of the successful Via rideshare transportation service citywide thanks largely to a federal grant, and support for Arlington's award-winning parks and recreation amenities. This includes the openings of The Beacon, which is the new recreation center at Webb Community Park in southeast Arlington, as well as the East Library and Recreation Center.

The budget, which the Council will vote on in September after a series of public meetings, also includes funding for a \$450,000 generator to ensure the health and comfort of animals being cared for at Arlington Animal Services Center, a \$200,000 land planning study along south State Highway 360, \$2.2 million in new software to update and secure the backbone of the City's finance and personnel systems, and \$211,392 to fulfill a federal COPS grant that has added 15 police officers.

Even with these additions and the projected economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic to the City's revenue sources, Arlington is proposing to lower its property tax rate for a fifth consecutive year. The City Council will consider whether to reduce the City's property tax rate, which is currently \$0.6240 per \$100 of assessed value, to .06225 per \$100 of assessed value. This change will result in tax savings for some residents. If approved, Arlington's

property tax rate, which remained flat for 14 years prior to the series of reductions, will have dropped by about 2.5 cents since 2016.

The Arlington City Council is expected to reauthorize a variety of residential property tax exemptions, including the largest homestead exemption by state law of 20% of the property value. The City also offers a senior tax freeze as well as \$60,000 exemptions for those who are over 65, disabled veterans and disabled persons. Exemptions are also available to surviving spouses of U.S. Armed Forces members and first responders who are killed in action. Seniors over the age of 65 in Arlington may also be eligible to defer payments.

The City is also implementing a variety of cost-saving measures to maintain a balanced budget and ensure that it can continue to provide services and programs that residents expect. This includes refinancing some bonds to lower interest rates, incorporating a hiring freeze, reducing department expenditures citywide up to 10%, an employee travel freeze, and deferred employee pay raises.

Arlington's proposed budget and business plan is built around supporting the City Council's five priorities: Champion Great Neighborhoods, Support Youth and Families, Invest in Our Economy, Enhance Regional Mobility and Put Technology to Work. Proposals include investing \$27 million in road maintenance, nearly \$159 million in public safety, \$16.5 million for parks and \$8 million for libraries.

Arlington strives to provide quality services and amenities to its residents, visitors and business community at the lowest possible cost. In addition to keeping the City's water rate the same for the coming fiscal year, Arlington also proposed a modest increase to the garbage collection rate and an increase to the stormwater rate by a quarter. This would be a 50% decrease over recent annual rate increases.

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