

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

March 29, 2022

Question: P 12.8: Are there ARPA funds that can be used towards the \$306,000 proposed budget for the Rent Relief Program that serves the elderly and disabled currently on the waiting list? How do the individuals served by this program fit within the existing housing services that the City provides for elderly and/or disabled renters with low incomes?

Response:

The City Manager's FY 2023 proposed budget adds \$306,000 to DCHS' Rental Relief Program (RRP) to address current program waitlists. RRP provides low-income elderly and/or renters diagnosed with a disability payment of up to \$500 per month (on a sliding scale) to assist eligible tenants with their rent. Even with the addition of \$306,000 in funding, there will be eight (8) individuals remaining on the waitlist. An additional \$48,000 would be required to clear the waitlist, which staff will recommend funding in the upcoming revenue re-estimates and technical adjustments budget memorandum. If City Council intends for RRP to provide an ongoing source of rental relief in the City, then staff would not recommend the use of ARPA funding for this program. ARPA funds are best aligned with projects that are one-time in nature.

The average time that individuals have received RRP benefits is six (6) years, with 38 percent receiving it for more than seven (7) years. The demand for the program may result in a waitlist building rapidly again even after it is cleared. Individuals are moved off the list when there are openings and are prioritized based on their assessed need. Individuals may stay on the waitlist as long as one year when there is no movement of individuals out of the program.

Many of the individuals served in the RRP are currently living in affordable housing units and are connected to the supportive services available for seniors and/or those living with disabilities in the City. In some cases, they are also on the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority (ARHA) waitlist. The program also offers case management services to support households in increasing income, decreasing expenses, identifying more affordable housing, and exploring other measures to stabilize housing.

During the pandemic the partnerships, dialogue and coordination has increased with churches and community organizations to respond to multiple areas of need. The City is looking to build upon the strength of these relationships as we move forward and continuing the Eviction Prevention Task Force and expand its purpose to include helping households find housing that may better meet their financial needs both within the open market and with affordable housing projects.