



Park & Recreation Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

November 3, 2023

Mr. James Parajon
City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Park & Recreation Commission Priorities for FY 2025 Budget

Dear Jim,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on budget priorities for FY 2025. Based on our meetings and discussions during the past year, the Commission has identified six priorities:

1. Ensuring the availability of sports fields & open space
2. Investing in new facilities
3. Increasing RPCA maintenance budget
4. Supporting the RPCA administrative needs
5. Exploring creative, new non-traditional revenue generation opportunities to supplement budget
6. Addressing waterfront flooding

Ensuring the availability of recreational fields & open space.

A combination of events has led to a significant increase in demand for recreational field space -- including COVID recovery, population increases, and new school construction. The Commission believes that the most efficient way to ensure availability of recreational spaces is with more synthetic turf and lighted fields. This enables the same number of fields to service many more hours of use throughout the year for a comparatively nominal cost. This important work should continue and expand to more sites to allow for increased capacity.

We also encourage the City to continue its recent practice of pursuing public access easements for open space in new developments which efficiently allow public access to these spaces while minimizing maintenance and operating expenses. We are particularly excited about – and have had an opportunity to review – the new open spaces being developed in the old Oakville Triangle, Potomac Yard, Virginia Tech and (longer term) at the HRP PRGS and Landmark Mall sites.

Investing in New Facilities and Parks to Better Serve our Growing Community

The City adopted an overall parks plan 10 years ago. Significantly, we have only completed 23% of all the planned upgrades & improvements since that time. We understand that the City's Capital Improvement Program is actively discussed and a top priority for Staff and Council alike. We believe

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that funding more of the programs that were identified in the last 10-year plan, including Hensley Park, makes our community greener, more livable and attractive for those currently living in -- and this considering to move to -- the City of Alexandria.

Increasing RPCA maintenance budget.

Even though the number of parks and facilities that RPCA manages continues to increase, the maintenance budgets have barely increased in the past decade. The Department has done a stellar job managing our facilities more efficiently, but without proper maintenance our long-term expenses will increase substantially, and we risk requiring more capital improvement more regularly. Increasing the operating budget to maintain our facilities at a high level is critical.

Supporting the RPCA administrative needs.

The City must support its staff to attract and retain top-tier talent. We must provide competitive salaries as well as pathways for growth within the City, so that we are attracting and maintaining top performing staff. This is particularly the case within our Recreations Centers for staff playing critical roles providing after-school care and engagement programs as well as an increasingly diverse set of programs for all residents. These investments make the Department more efficient and better able to achieve its mission.

Exploring creative, new non-traditional revenue generation opportunities.

Today, an increasing share of the RPCA operating budget is funded via cost recovery, rentals, and classes. We encourage this trend to continue for several reasons:

1. to limit the impact to the City's operating budgets;
2. to ensure that we are providing the greatest value to our stakeholders: our City residents; and
3. to better align the programs and services we provide with the wants and needs of our community -- including considering new projects and new uses of city spaces.

We encourage RPCA to update its Resource Allocation Model with these priorities in mind and the goals of generating revenue, providing valuable services, and living up to our City's values and responsibilities.

Addressing waterfront flooding.

Waterfront flooding continues to severely impact multiple parks on a regular basis throughout the year. The engagement of Skanska/JMT as the phase 1A contractor the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project is a big step in the right direction, however, there remains a tremendous volume of critical work to be done to ensure that we maximize the dollars being invested into the Waterfront and its parks that we know and are so loved by our community and visitors alike.

Please reach out to us if you'd like to further discuss or would like us to advise on other related issues.

Sincerely,

Dana R. Colarulli

Dana Robert Colarulli, Acting Chair
Park & Recreation Commission

Stuart A. Fox

Stuart Fox, Member
Park & Recreation Commission

cc: Honorable Mayor & Members of the Alexandria City Council
Park & Recreation Commission members
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Staff Liaison to the Parks & Recreation Commission










PRC FY2025 Budget Letter_3Nov2023

Final Audit Report

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