

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting**

Leonard “Chick” Armstrong Recreation Center

**Thursday, March 20, 2025
7 p.m.**

Commission Members

Present: Dana Colarulli, Chair (District II); Katy Matthews, Vice Chair (District III); Joseph Fray (District II); David Brennan, (District III); Asa Orrin-Brown (District III); Jeffrey Miller (District I); Paul Komelasky (District I). Stuart Fox, Secretary (District I).

Absent: Jacques Lecoq (student member), Tookie Organek (student member); Geoffrey Goode (District II)

RPCA Staff: Jack Browand, Interim Director RPCA; Beth Znidersic, Division Chief, Park Services; Tiffany Marbury, Administrative Assistant; Lucresha Murphy-Tate, PARKnership Manager; Jose Ayala, Principal Planner; Linda Odell, Division Chief, Community Outreach & Engagement.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dana Colarulli, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

He continued with the following 3 announcements:

1. The Commission Chair recently addressed City Council with a letter drafted on behalf of the Commission. The letter reaffirmed the budget priorities previously shared with Council in November and emphasized key additions and reallocations. These included funding for the new recreation center in Alexandria West, advancing the timeline for discussions about Cameron Run, support for pool funding, and supplemental funding for the purchase of electric leaf blowers. The letter also reiterates the Commission’s purpose and its commitment to providing meaningful feedback to City Council. He concluded by inviting Council members to engage with the Commission by attending its monthly meetings.
2. RPCA has hired a new Director, Hashim Taylor, who joins us from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he served as Director of the Recreation Department. A native of Alexandria and a CAPRA Chairman, Mr. Taylor will begin his role on April 14. The Commission Chair also expressed gratitude to Jack Browand for his leadership and service as Interim Director over the past four months.
3. There was a ribbon cutting ceremony at Patrick Henry Recreation Center to celebrate the opening of the fields and lights.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

City resident, Dan Munz, addressed the Commission to express his appreciation for the Neighborhood Fitness Pass program. As a regular user of the fitness center at Charles Houston Recreation Center, he shared a request to open the facility an hour earlier, at 8 a.m., noting that this change may benefit many gym users. Mr. Munz asked RPCA staff to consider this adjustment.

III. COMMISSIONER REPORTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. Commissioner Assignments

DISTRICT I

Stuart Fox shared the following update. The Waterfront Commission met this week and discussed two main topics:

1. Robinson Terminal North Draft Letter – The letter is still in a draft form, but there is progress in finalizing it. Commissioner Fox shared that he felt the Commission should sign or endorse the letter once finalized. The letter covers the following key concerns:
 - Ensuring the open space (eastern waterfront park) remains under HOA ownership with a public access easement instead of being donated to the city.
 - Addressing concerns about the development timeline. The western parcel (non-waterfront side) is set to be developed first, raising concerns that the eastern side (which includes the public amenities) may be delayed indefinitely. The commission plans to strengthen the letter’s language to insist that the eastern side is developed simultaneously with the western side.
2. Waterfront Flood Mitigation Update – The Waterfront Commission will write a letter to City Council strongly advocating for the \$40 mil of incremental CIP funding and pushing for non-flood mitigation improvements (park, docks, promenade).

ACTION: FY25.3.20.25A

Motion: Stuart Fox moved, and Joseph Fray seconded the motion to authorize Commission Chair Dana Colarulli to sign, on behalf of the Park and Recreation Commission, the letter drafted by the Waterfront Commission regarding Robinson Terminal North. The motion passed unanimously.

Jeffrey Miller reported increased activity at Potomac Greens Park in recent weeks. He noted that a new retaining wall is being constructed, along with an extension to the bridge. He also observed that the area resembles a wetlands sanctuary, with the presence of very large turtles.

Paul Komelasky reported that since the installation of lights at Jefferson Houston, the fields have seen constant use. He also expressed appreciation for the section of the Commission report highlighting Read Across America and the Kids Book Swap held at the Leonard “Chick” Armstrong Recreation Center.

DISTRICT II

Dana Colarulli did not have additional updates but noted that he was impressed by the current OSTP Summer Camp Enrollment (858 youth). He was also happy to see the programming of the Minnie Howard Pool.

Geoffrey Goode was not in attendance, but Jack Browand shared that there will be dedicated office space at George Mason Middle School. There will also be an expanded gym, bleachers, an outdoor restroom, and renovation of the multi-use tennis court.

Joe Fray did not have an update, but wanted to voice his excitement for the new Kayak Launch that will open at Four Mile Run Park.

DISTRICT III

Katy Matthews did not have an update on the Minnie Howard project.

Asa Orrin-Brown echoed Commissioner Fray's comments regarding the new kayak launch at Four Mile Run Park. He noted that having a local launch site will be a welcome addition, especially following the closure of the ramp at Jones Point Park.

David Brennan shared that youth sports did not meet this month. He mentioned that his favorite part of the Commission Report was the numerous learn-to-swim classes.

STUDENT MEMBER: Tookie Organeck and Jacques Lecoq were not in attendance.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 20, 2025

ACTION: FY25.3.20.25B

Motion: Katy Matthews moved, and Asa Orrin-Brown seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes—the motion passed unanimously.

V. ITEMS OF INFORMATION

a. RPCA Staff Highlights

Jack Brawand shared the following updates:

- Break Water is the new public art installation at Waterfront Park. There is a formal reception this Saturday where you can meet the artist.
- There have been enhancements to Potomac Greens Park to make it ADA accessible.
- On March 4th, the new bridge was dropped into the Holmes Run Trail. This is a big milestone for the project. Sites 2 & 3 will be opening this fall. Portions of the trail will be closed for spot improvements.

Beth Znidersic shared the following updates:

- Hensley Park – Both fields are complete, and programming will begin in May.

- Colasanto Park – There have been multiple community meetings. Construction fencing will be installed by the beginning of April. Project completion is scheduled for September.
- Skate Park pop-up event scheduled for March 29th.

b. FY2026 Proposed Operating and CIP Budget Brief

Jack Browand gave the following update related to the FY2026 proposed budget.

- The budget proposed includes a 1% increase for all staff.
- There will be a phased approach to converting gas powered leaf blowers to electric. RPCA will receive \$25,000 to begin that process.
- \$61,000 increase in service enhancements (tree service and landscape contracts).
- \$16,000 in seasonal staff reduction (less money needed to run Minnie Howard)
- Fee increases will cover program and rental enhancements.
- RPCA proposed budget \$34.9 million
- RPCA CIP budget \$119 million.

Please see the following CIP budget brief for more information:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/media/27148>

c. 2025 Needs Assessment

Jose Ayala provided an update on the 2025 Needs Assessment. He noted that RPCA recently met with the survey consultant, who presented a draft of the findings; however, the final report is still pending. He shared the following key highlights from the preliminary results:

- Promotion of the survey included 12,000 invitations, 1,900 phone calls, 13,000 emails, and 19,000 text messages.
- There were 955 participants (an increase from approx. 600 in 2019)
- Higher unmet needs are trending towards adult programming which is different from previous years.
- Services that fell into the categories of higher need and lower unmet need include:

- Walking paths	- Indoor pools
- Farmer's markets	- Community gardens
- Biking trails	- Outdoor walking tracks
- Indoor exercise and fitness facilities	

- Top priority of the services in the higher unmet need include:
 - Nature Centers
 - River/stream activities
 - Indoor gym space
 - Outdoor leisure recreational space
 - Swimming pools
 - Indoor walking trails
 - Family recreational swimming

A final draft should be available in the next 2 wks.

d. PARKnership Annual Report FY2024

Lucresha Murphy-Tate presented the PARKnership Annual Report. The presentation can be found here: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/parknerships.pdf>

e. 2025 Community Matching Fund Program

Beth Znidersic gave an update on the 2025 Community Matching Fund program. A list of Community Matching Fund projects can be found here: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/media/27151>

VI. NEXT MEETING

May 15, 2025 (No April meeting)

VII. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: FY25.3.20.25C

Motion: David Brennan moved, and Paul Komelasky seconded the motion to adjourn at 9:03 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.