

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 14, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO 61 : OPTIONS FOR ELIMINATING WAITING LISTS FOR THE RPCA AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

This is in response to a request from Vice Mayor Donley for a description of options for eliminating the waiting lists for the 5/6 year old age groups at RPCA After-School Program sites.

In FY 2010, elementary school enrollment in Alexandria's after-school programs equals 23% of the student population, which is greater than the national average of 15% for similar programs (Afterschool Alliance 2009). This high enrollment level exists in spite of a new activity fee of \$25 per trimester instituted by the City. The new fee has depressed overall enrollment levels compared to the prior year. However, only 9% of participant families take advantage of the reduced fee option even though 57% are eligible. Conversely, average daily attendance percentages (daily participants/overall enrollment) have increased from previous years. These trends suggest that the casual or periodic user of these programs have been deterred by the activity fee, leaving participants who use the programs on a more regular and predictable basis. See Attachment 1 to this memo for more details on enrollment and attendance trends.

A current challenge, which reflects the trending enrollment growth experienced by ACPS, is the need for waiting lists for RPCA After-School programs for the 5 and 6 year old age group. For example, at William Ramsay 40 students are on the waiting list for enrollment. Most other sites have lists of between 5 and 10 students. The structure of the staff to participant ratios as well as available budget resources limits RPCA's current ability to serve more students. The 5/6 age group has a ratio of 1/20 and older age groups are 1/25. Three options for eliminating the waiting lists are described below.

Alternative	Budget impact
1. Move the resources from the proposed Jefferson-Houston closing (described on page 17-28 of the Proposed Budget) to other sites to eliminate waiting lists.	FY 2011 proposed budget reduction option of \$45,516 would need to be restored during Council Add-Delete process.
2. Wait until September 2010 enrollment to determine waiting list and additional staff resources needed after internal program adjustments.	By forcing staffing adjustments at the beginning of the year, including some programs with slightly higher instructor/participant ratios, it may be possible to eliminate waiting lists with less than \$45,516. Depending on the demand for service next year and the ability to adjust staffing and ratios, it is possible that no additional resources would be needed. If additional resources were required, a supplemental budget appropriation would be necessary. Council could put funds in contingent reserves for this purpose.
3. Joint advertising and enrollment coordination between RPCA, Campagna, and ACPS. Through improving parental awareness of other after-school program offerings at various sites, combined with better enrollment data at schools, RPCA, Campagna, and ACPS can more effectively deploy resources to serve more children. Also, this option might involve closing RPCA programs for some age groups (low demand) at certain sites and shifting the displaced kids to other available sites. Overall, this option would attempt to maximize the available resources through coordinated deployment.	Improving communication and coordination will help ensure all resources are used effectively with potentially no budget impact. If additional resources were required, a supplemental budget appropriation would be necessary. Council could put funds in contingent reserves for this purpose

Attachment 1 – After School Program Review Memo

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 2010

TO: CITY COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE

FROM: JAMES SPENGLER, DIRECTOR, RECREATION PARKS & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: **AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM REVIEW**

The After School Program refers to the hours from the time school is dismissed until 6:00 p.m. daily during the regular school year. Programs operate at Neighborhood Recreation Centers and school sites. Each Center follows a set of structured activities to include: homework time, USDA snacks, physical activity, and other enrichment opportunities. Participants are placed into groups based on age ranges with a specified staff ratio. The curriculum is divided into four core areas – 1) creative and performing arts, 2) fine arts, 3) sports, fitness and health, and 4) education and leisure. RPCA follows program guides from the After School Alliance and the National After School Association. The Commission on Accreditation for Parks and Recreation Agencies has awarded accreditation to RPCA initially in 2004 and again in 2009. Accredited agencies must follow specific guidelines for all programs.

Table #1 shows the enrollment trends over the past three school years. A difference between enrollment and average daily attendance should be noted. Many parents enroll a child so they will have access to after school care as needed. However, the number of students actually attending each day has averaged about 65% over the prior three years. In the current school year a fee was instituted for the first time. The fee is \$25 and covers half of the school year. There is fee assistance available for children in the free or reduced lunch programs. No additional paperwork is required other than to show the letter received from ACPS. The fee appears to have reduced overall enrollment but increased the average daily attendance to 77% of those enrolled. RPCA budgets and staffs at the average daily attendance level.

Current Challenges

- Waiting lists at the 5 and 6 year old age group. The staff to participant ratio is higher at this age group and budget resources don't exist to increase staffing.
- With the fee many middle school students participate without "officially enrolling" and have shifted usage to free recreation programs after 6:00 p.m.
- At the elementary school level enrollment in after school programs is 23% of the student population versus a national average of 15% (Afterschool Alliance 2009).

Table 1 After School Enrollment and Attendance Trends 2007 - 2010

Location		2007	2008	2009	Current
Charles Barrett	Enrollment	82	82	97	107
	Avg daily attendance	58	68	78	90
Charles Houston	Enrollment	105	143	222	116
	Avg daily attendance	73	79	103	75
Cora Kelly	Enrollment	225	278	182	112
	Avg daily attendance	196	186	158	94
Mt Vernon	Enrollment	120	242	140	96
	Avg daily attendance	106	102	74	80
Nannie J. Lee	Enrollment	52	67	92	43
	Avg daily attendance	52	55	47	18
Patrick Henry	Enrollment	118	133	143	121
	Avg daily attendance	101	96	114	110
William Ramsay	Enrollment	124	98	125	128
	Avg daily attendance	113	90	100	85
John Adams	Enrollment	258	234	210	174
	Avg daily attendance	124	189	186	150
Durant Center	Enrollment	50	0	6	13
	Avg daily attendance	34	0	4	9
Douglas MacArthur	Enrollment	144	165	141	109
	Avg daily attendance	104	118	113	85
George Mason	Enrollment	20	24	45	0
	Avg daily attendance	20	20	24	0
Maury	Enrollment	1	37	52	0
	Avg daily attendance	1	16	21	0
Totals	Enrollment	1299	1503	1455	1019
	Avg daily attendance	982	1019	1022	796
George Washington	Enrollment	119	140	123	33
	Avg daily attendance	56	51	55	20
Francis C. Hammond	Enrollment	243	282	201	72
	Avg daily attendance	89	95	92	50
Totals	Enrollment	362	422	324	105
	Avg daily attendance	145	146	147	70
Totals	Enrollment	1661	1925	1779	1124
	Avg daily attendance	1127	1165	1169	866

Charles Houston

This Center saw a large increase in enrollment in the spring of 2009 when the new facility opened. For the two previous years the program was held at the Durant Center. Current average daily attendance is similar to that seen in 2007 and 2008. Steps staff have taken since September to increase attendance are:

- The Recreation Division outreach worker visited all the homes of youth who had enrolled in previous years but were not attending.
- Collaborated with ARHA to mail letters to all residents in public housing.
- Staff at Charles Houston canvassed the neighborhood on foot to pass out flyers and distribute enrollment packets to interested families.
- Changed the enrollment format to an ongoing process rather than specific starting dates.

All of these efforts have not significantly increased enrollment in the program. In cross checking youth enrolled at Charles Houston with school records through ACPS, currently 81% of those enrolled qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. The non after school time program opportunities for the game room and gymnasium are well attended. Charles Houston staff work in partnership with ARHA to collaboratively provide program opportunities at the Ruby Tucker Center and Family Learning Center. In addition, several program opportunities are provided specifically to low income youth at Charles Houston. They include:

- Six week introductory course to basic fencing provided by the VA Academy of Fencers.
- Ballroom Dancing program provided by Kathy Harty-Gary Dance Theatre.
- M&T Bank's Financial Literacy for Children.
- An equestrian program offered through the Hide Away Horse Farm in Brandywine, MD.
- Pandora's Box Art Program sponsored by the Commission of the Arts.
- The self-esteem youth program.
- Boxing classes offered through the Alexandria Boxing Club.
- Musical Flute Classes sponsored by the donors of the Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Other Trends

RPCA continues to see enrollment in after school sport programs increase at a very fast rate. From 2007 to 2009 registered youth increased 41% with most of the growth occurring in the younger age groups. Registration numbers were 3,590 in 2007, 4,126 in 2008, and reached 5,045 in 2009.

Table #2 After School Data

School Enrollment vs. After School Program Participation as of February 2010				
Site	School Enrollment	Campagna Enrollment*	RPCA Enrollment*	% youth Enrolled
John Adams	705	36	174	30%
Charles Barrett	289	12	107	41%
Patrick Henry	421	39	121	38%
Jefferson-Houston	296	23	13	12%
Cora Kelly	389	0	112	28%
Lyles-Crouch	366	70	0	19%
Douglas MacArthur	610	78	109	31%
George Mason	409	49	0	12%
Maury	316	39	0	12%
Mount Vernon	644	29	96	19%
James K. Polk	536	71	0	13%
William Ramsay	684	42	128	25%
Samuel Tucker	700	119	0	17%
Charles Houston	0	0	116	
Nannie J. Lee	0	0	43	
% Average Enrollment				23%
Francis C. Hammond #1 #2 #3	1253	0	72	6%
George Washington #1 #2	965	0	33	3%
TOTAL (overall ACPS)	8583	607	1124	20%

Other After School Programs offered in City				
Organization	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8		
ARHA- Ruby Tucker	14	6		
ARHA- Family Learning Center	20	9		
Boys & Girls Club	25	15		
Community Lodgings/ Chilrilagua	30	30		
YMCA	37			
TOTAL	126	60		

- * Campagna Center after school program sliding fee scale based on annual income (lowest level below \$12,000 is \$20 a month for 1 child)
- * RPCA after school program on discount basis based on free or reduced lunch, food stamps or TANF (lowest level is \$1.50 a month for 1 child)

cc. Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
 Judy Guse Noritake, Chair, Park & Recreation Commission