City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 24, 2016

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR ALLISON SILBERBERG

THROUGH: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER

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

SUBJECT: STRUCTURES AND PROGRAMS FOR RAISING FUNDS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION PURPOSES.

This memorandum follows up to your expressed interest in creating an Alexandria Parks Foundation. The purpose of this Foundation as staff understands the concept would be to raise funds for tree planting, capital projects and other activities to benefit local parks. The establishment of a foundation or non-profit organizations to support City activities and capital projects is one way for the government to encourage private investment as a means to provide a public good.

In the last 15 years, Council has created the Alexandria Capital Development Foundation aimed at raising capital funds for City projects (this Foundation did not raise significant funds and was disbanded), the non-profit Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC) which has become a successful non-profit housing developer and owner of affordable and workforce housing, as well as the Torpedo Factory Arts Board (TFAB) which currently is undergoing a discussion as to its future role. In addition, the Governance Committee of the Waterfront Commission has been talking about future governance models for the waterfront and including the possible establishment of a Parks Conservancy.

All of these entities were established as separate organizations and either employed staff or consultants to operate these entities. If a Foundation was created it would bring with it a certain level of overhead costs and additional management time.

The question is what is the best way to promote giving to benefit the parks. Encouraging private giving is a priority and Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (RPCA) has been working on a new consolidated giving program as the answer to that question. It is staff's view

that current programs including the newly organized program described below should work very well in increasing the level of private giving towards City parks.

PARKnership: In FY 2016, RPCA reorganized certain functions and established an internal program called PARKnership. This program centralized all the previously decentralized activities of the department concerning volunteers, internships, community partnerships, sponsorships, collaborations, grants, gifts and donations, including three main special revenue accounts of Living Landscape, Cultural Arts, and Open Space. Examples of successful partnerships include, but are not limited to:

- Building of the Miracle Field - contributions and in-kind construction provided from community and business groups.
- Simpson Dog Park Improvements - contributions from the community.
- Del Ray Plaza – Del Ray Business Association provided new tables, chairs, and landscape.
- Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veteran's Memorial – contributions from many individuals provided substantial funding.
- Four Mile Run Trees - contributions from the community.
- Hume Springs Park – contributions from RunningBrooke Foundation.
- Farmers Markets' Management Memorandums of Understanding
- Youth Art Festival
- Santa's Winter Wonderland (ARHA project)
- Kids Cut Community Day Event
- Ruthanne Lodato Playground - contributions from the community and business groups.
- Itty Bitty Doggie Dive and Big Dog Day Swim
- Judy Lowe Park Improvements - contributions from the community.
- Polk Avenue Park Volunteer Day
- Braddock Park Programming - Memorandum of Understanding with Civic Association
- Fort Williams Park Upper Trail Renovation - contributions from the community.
- 10-12 Interns annually
- More than 100 natural resource management projects annually
    - Invasive plant control projects (primarily hand work pulling English ivy, garlic mustard, etc.)
    - Ecological restoration plantings (such as at Tarleton Park)
    - Establishing pollinator gardens
    - Litter and debris removal from natural areas
    - Scout projects (site improvements, trail work, habitat plantings)
    - Trail maintenance (putting down wood chips, erosion repair, removing encroaching vegetation)
    - Potomac River, Holmes Run, and Four Mile Run stream valley clean-ups
    - Adopt-A-Garden agreements
    - Adopt-A-Park agreements
- 55,360 volunteers hours totaling $1,378,464 in-kind staff support (Independent Sector's volunteer monetary value of $24.90/hour)

Current partnerships under development:

- Potomac Yard Basketball Court Lights - $75,000 from the partner to cover 50% of implementation costs.
- Simpson Concessions - $15,000 donation and annual contribution to relocate maintenance storage and little league concessions.
- West End Project with RunningBrooke.
- Community Gardens at Four Mile Run Park.

The PARKnership program was created in response to an influx of requests from the public to form partnerships that would expedite existing CIP projects and/or maintain their desired level of service regarding maintenance and programming opportunities. To help shape the program, multiple focus groups have been conducted with stakeholders consisting of affiliates, sponsors, volunteers and donors. Over the past year, seven engagement meetings have been held with a total of 72 participants. Most recently, the Park & Recreation Commission showed strong support of the program. The results of the 2015 Alexandria Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment conducted by Leisure Vision/ETC Institute confirmed the need for this program by revealing that 50% of Alexandria households have a need for partnership and volunteer opportunities, ranking 4th highest among all unmet needs. Donations to the PARKnership program by individuals (since they are donations in effect to the City) are tax deductible from one's state and federal tax returns.

Community Matching Fund (for Parks capital needs): To better leverage partnership opportunities with the City that expand and improve the quality of recreation, park and cultural experiences, RPCA submitted a request for the establishment of a Community Matching Fund (the "Fund") in the City Manager's FY 2017-FY2026 Capital Improvement Budget. That RCPA request is recommended for funding in the proposed Capital Improvement Program (see Budget Memo #5). This program is aimed at neighborhood or group gifts of amounts of least $25,000.

The Fund promotes collaborative partnerships among Alexandria community organizations by providing matching dollars for groups that propose fundraising for park improvement projects. The Fund is designed to foster public/private partnerships and cultivate innovative ways for residents to have a greater stake in improving the park and recreation facilities that they use. These partnerships will also provide opportunities for developing positive relationships between the City and the community. Starting in FY 2017, community groups interested in receiving matching funds will annually compete for grant aid amounts up to $25,000. RPCA is seeking in FY 2017 $100,000 total ($50,000 City Funding and $50,000 Community Match) and beginning in FY 2018 through FY 2026 $200,000 annually ($100,000 City Funding and $100,000 Community Match). Community groups must show that they can raise their matching funds and have the project started within 18 months.

Interested partners may submit a partnership request at any time. Information on how to partner and to volunteer for the City is available online by visiting RPCA's ***Get Involved*** website at http://www.alexandriava.gov/45752.

Donated Trees Program: Memo is forthcoming.

Conclusion: It is a high priority to encourage and solicit an increasing level of donations for City parks from private, individual and corporate donors. While RPCA has had a number of programs in the past, RCPA's staff view is that consolidating them under the PARKnership umbrella with centralized focus new management will result in an increased amount of giving towards City parks. The PARKnership program will be monitored on a periodic basis to determine if its goal of increasing individual and corporate donations for parks increases.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. RPCA PARKnership Program Brochure

STAFF:

Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
Karen Snow, Assistant City Attorney
Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA Park Planning
Dana Wedeles, Urban Planner III, RPCA Park Planning
Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Manager, RPCA Recreation Services

cc: The Honorable Members of City Council