



Alexandria Archaeological Commission
America's First Archaeological Commission



22 April 2010

Mr. Tom Fulton, Chair
Alexandria Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park & Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group
c/o Ms. Laura Durham, Advisory Group Staff Coordinator
Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Fulton:

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC) appreciates being asked to comment on the City of Alexandria's future management of Fort Ward Park, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and encompasses not only the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site, but also most of the surrounding property within the Park. Fort Ward Park has a rich past spanning from Native Americans to the Civil War fort and defenses, to the post-war African-American community and gravesites. This cultural diversity is represented by archaeological sites, the historic record, and oral histories. The AAC believes that archaeological, historic, and cultural resources are important and must not only be preserved; but protected, interpreted, and the principal focus of any planning for the future of the Park.

The AAC recognizes that the Office of Historic Alexandria is responsible for the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site portion of the site while the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities is responsible for the remaining portion of the Fort Ward Park. However, these differing responsibilities should not represent a divided vision for the Park, but rather a shared understanding of the need for both the preservation of the Park's archaeological, historic, and cultural resources and the provision of recreational space and facilities appropriate to this National Register site and its unique history. The AAC believes that future plans for the Park must include the preservation and protection of the Park's historic and cultural resources, as well as known and potential archaeological sites and, as needed, excavation of such sites by professional archaeologists. The archaeological, historic, and cultural richness of the Park must be interpreted so that it remains an important and educational component of the Park's activities for the enjoyment of Park visitors and Alexandria residents.

History and communities can be forgotten, to the detriment of the site and the City, as evidenced by the history of Freedmen's Cemetery. The planning for the future of Fort Ward Park represents an opportunity to explore and celebrate an archaeological and historically significant site, which also provides for appropriate recreational activities. The AAC looks forward to the results of such planning and thanks you for the opportunity to provide our views.

Sincerely,

S. Kathleen Pepper, Chair
Alexandria Archaeological Commission

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