City of Alexandria

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2017, 7 p.m.
Charles Houston Community Center
901 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members:
Jennifer Atkins, Chair; (District II); Judith Coleman, Vice Chair; (District III); Gina Baum, (District I); Stephen Beggs (District II); Rich Brune, (District III); Brian McPherson, (District III); Jesse O’Connell, (District I); Matthew Walsh. (District II).

Absent:
Detriona Johnson (Student); Catherine Poulin, (District I); Conner Rex (Student).

RPCA Staff:
William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development and Marina; Faye Maslaki, Division Chief, Administrative Services; Iris Portny, Recording Secretary, RPCA; Diane Ruggiero - Deputy Director, RPCA and Director, Office of the Arts; Dana Wedeles, Acting Principal Planner; Beth Znidersic, Principal Planner, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development.

Absent:
James Spengler, Director; Laura Durham, Division Chief, Recreation Services, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Other City Staff: None.

Guests:
Dave Levy, Holmes Run Park Committee and Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

I. Call to Order: Chair Jennifer Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., a quorum being present.

II. Presentations:
Note: Actual order was updated from the pre-meeting agenda.
a. **Four Mile Run Restoration Alexandria/Arlington – South Park Update** -
presented by Dana Wedeles
Briefing posted to:

Wedeles reviewed activities related to South Park at Potomac Yards, the open space adjacent to Four Mile Run between Route 1 and Potomac Avenue.

- Arlington and Alexandria are coordinating their planning because the Arlington-Alexandria border winds through it. The park will benefit both Arlington and Alexandria residents.
- Arlington has begun its civic engagement process. Its second South Park public meeting is on March 29 at the Gunston Community Center. Wedeles encouraged Commissioners to attend. She noted only four people from Alexandria attended Arlington's first public meeting since the Alexandria residents who will be living in this area will not be moving in for several years.
- Park elements will be implemented in phases. The Arlington-Alexandria bike trail in this area is one of the busiest along the East Coast. The first phase will be constructing a trail connecting Route 1 and the Four Mile Run trail.
- City funds for the project will not be available until redevelopment of North and South Potomac Yards is further along, probably several years.
- The City has advised Arlington that if any actions on the Arlington side of the border require grading on the Alexandria side the City will not have the funds until developer contributions are made several years from now.

**Commission Discussion**

**Habitat Creation Award** -
Commissioners commended staff for the Four Mile Run Wetland Restoration project having won first place in the Chesapeake Stormwater Network's Best Habitat Creation award. The award was part of the 2017 Best Urban BMP in the Bay Awards. (BUBBAs)

b. **Office of the Arts and Events**
Presented by Deputy Director Diane Ruggiero
Briefing posted to:

Ruggiero reviewed activity areas overseen by RPCA’s Office of the Arts and Events, including public art, cultural programs and planning, and a variety of arts and cultural services that include awarding grants to local artists and arts organizations.

- **Cultural Programs** include the Mobile Art Lab, Durant Center, Community Supported Arts (CSA), and the Poet Laureate.
- **Events** - The Office of the Arts and Events is now responsible for special events and permitting but oversight of RPCA’s special events policy stays with the Park and Recreation Commission.
- **Torpedo Factory** - The City began directly managing the Torpedo Factory Art Center (TFAC) as of October 1, 2016, issued new three-year leases to artists currently renting TFAC galleries, and is moving forward with planning for how to make TFAC an integral part of the Alexandria community that engages residents as well as visitors. Four reports offering different recommendations were done prior to when the City assumed management but none included community outreach so civic outreach will be the City's next step as it develops its goals and strategy for moving forward.

Ruggiero reported the City Manager’s proposed FY18 budget did not include RPCA’s recommendation that FY18 spending on public art be capped at $50,000 and the Commission for the Arts is asking Council to restore the funds.

**Commission Discussion (highlights)**

Q: What is the rent for an artist's studio?
A: Rent averages about $300/month. About half the studios are shared. Revenue generated by TFAC goes into a special fund that supports TFAC operations.

Q: Are artists required to be in their studios during certain hours?
A: Current leases do not require specific times during which artists need to be in their galleries. When TFAC is open Thursday evenings until 9 p.m. many artists are not there. The City will be experimenting this summer with ways to activate the TFAC during evening hours, such as staying open until 11pm or midnight on Fridays and Saturdays and perhaps bringing in additional activities. The Interim Fitzgerald Square will be next to the Marina and when it opens in 2018 the City would like TFAC to host evening activities at times when visitors will be at Fitzgerald Square.

Q: Would proposed cuts to federal funding for the arts impact City programs?
A: Federal cuts would affect future growth in activities since the City has been planning to apply for federal grants as it expands its arts activities. Organizations such as the Art League and the Alexandria Symphony receive significant federal funding grants.

Q: How are Mobile Arts Lab visits arranged?
A: Arrangements are made through the Office of the Arts and Events. The Lab is at almost every City festival and staff partners with libraries, ARHA and other community organizations.

Q: The City should find ways to generate revenue from the Mobile Art Lab since revenue generation is a City priority.
A: The Mobile Art Lab's goal is to offer art to everybody so fee programs would need to address how to make it available for families who can't afford a fee. Staff is talking to local businesses about sponsorship opportunities.

Q: Is the City thinking about spaces for performing arts?
A: RPCA is working with Planning and Zoning on ideas for possible performance locations.
III. Public Comments – non-agenda items
Dave Levy said that since TFAC artists pay business taxes and a business license fee in addition to TFAC rent it might be useful to know how much they contribute that way.

IV. Items for Action:

a. Approval of Minutes: February 16, 2017

Coleman asked that the phrase "such as Backlick Run" be inserted on page 6 under "Commission discussion" of "Natural Resource Management Plan" so the amended sentence reads "How will the problem of maintenance in jurisdictional dead zones such as Backlick Run" be addressed.

Brune moved and Beggs seconded that the February 16, 2017 minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

V. Project Updates

a. Cameron Run Regional Park Planning Process
Monthly update is included in Division reports posted to:
RPCA's webpage for the project is at:

Browand reviewed the planning timeline for the project:
- **Public outreach** - First public meeting held March 2, 2017. Smaller stakeholder meetings have been held and are planned. A second public meeting is planned.
- **Council update** - Planned for April 2017.
- **P&RC Commission** - Additional details to be provided in April.
- **P&RC public hearing** - To be held in May 2017.
- **Process finish** - Expected by the end of FY17.
- **Online public survey** - Browand urged Commissioners to publicize the public opinion survey, available until March 24 at:

Browand said the goal of the public outreach process is to identify community interests for the site and add those to other factors that determine what is feasible.

Commission Discussion and Questions

Q: What has been the tenor of public comments to date?
A: There is no major push for the City to take back Cameron Run Park for its own use and not continue renting it to NOVA Parks. There is interest in how the City benefits from having NOVA Parks here. There is interest in having the property open year-round and in using revenues generated by the park to beautify it and improve its maintenance.

Q: The City should encourage as diverse participation as possible in the public outreach process even though attendance at public meetings has been limited.
A: Browand said the City does not only rely on public meetings since it knows that turnout for community meetings is unpredictable. He invited Commissioners' to recommend additional stakeholders to involve in the Cameron Run Planning process.

Q: Are natural spaces and trails a planning priority?
A: Browand said this ranks high in the City’s needs assessments.

Community meeting 2 - Browand asked Commissioners to send him any suggestions they might have that would be useful when planning the second public meeting.

b. **Warwick Pool**
Browand reported demolition is scheduled for March 27, 2017.

c. **Windmill Hill Park Shoreline**
Browand reported the contract for construction has been awarded and a groundbreaking has been tentatively scheduled for April 22, 2017. Construction is expected to take about 12 months.

d. **Interim Fitzgerald Square – ODBC Demolition Permit**
Browand reported the City's request for a demolition permit for the ODBC building on what will be the site of the Interim Fitzgerald Square was unanimously approved by the BAR. The next step is to submit the DSUP to Council for action. He said ODBC might be able to vacate the property as early as November 2017. Construction of the park could be finished by late spring/early summer 2018.

e. **210 Strand**
Carr has finished using the City's 210 Strand site for temporary storage during the Hotel Indigo construction and is preparing it for use by the City as green space. Browand said the park is expected to be in use for about three years, until construction on the flood mitigation project begins.

VI. **Director’s Report: FY18 Budget and FY18-27 CIP**

Full details of FY18 operations budget and FY18-27 CIP are posted to:

a. **FY18 Budget:**
Presented by Faye Maslaki, Division Chief, Administrative Services (pp 1-12 of presentation PPTs)

- **Overview** - Maslaki reviewed highlights of RPCA's proposed FY18 budget of almost $22 million, including a breakout of the FY18 budget by focus area, budget adjustments and reductions, and the Supplemental Funding Request Recreation Services
- **Power Up program** - Maslaki said funding for the Hammond Middle School Power Up after school program was eliminated due to low demand. Other programs are available.
- **Earned revenue** - Maslaki said RPCA's annual earned revenue has steadily increased from $2 million in FY09 to almost $5 million projected for FY18.

b. **FY18-27 CIP**
Presented by Beth Znidersic, Principal Planner, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development, (pp 13-22 of presentation PPTs)

Znidersic reviewed highlights of RPCA’s proposed FY18-27 CIP for arts, recreation and parks, about $94.4 million in the proposed City CIP budget of about $2 billion.

- **No net CIP increase** - The City Manager’s guidance was that the proposed CIP funding could not increase the approved FY17-26 CIP level. Browand said there could be no net increase in any department’s CIP budget. Any proposed add-on to RPCA’s approved FY17-26 CIP had to be matched by deleting an RPCA spending item approved last year.
- **RPCA’s CIP budget** includes park maintenance and improvements, open space acquisition and development, aquatic facilities, public art, renovated and new recreation facilities; and recreation facility maintenance.
- **Proposed reductions** from FY17-26 CIP include cutting public art acquisition ($1.5 million), cutting open space acquisition ($7.4 million), moving the new Chinquapin Aquatics Center from the proposed CIP budget to the unfunded supplemental CIP, and reducing Marina maintenance during construction of Waterfront Plan elements.
- **Proposed additions** to the FY17-26 CIP include Patrick Henry Recreation Center construction ($1 million), Chinquapin capital facilities maintenance program (CFMP) ($7.5 million over 10 years) to address significant maintenance needs identified by the City’s 2016 building assessment, public pools CFMP funds ($240,000); and pro-active maintenance for the Urban Forestry ($200,000 annually starting in FY22).
- **Unfunded supplemental CIP** - Znidersic reviewed the unfunded RPCA projects: about $15 million for the Chinquapin Aquatic Center, $2 million for Public Art Acquisition, almost $15 million for Waterfront Small Area Plan elements, $500,000 for Nannie J. Lee Therapeutic Pool Design, $8.1 million for Open Space Acquisition, $900,000 for Proactive Maintenance of the Urban Forestry and $600,000 for Citywide Parks Improvement Plan implementation.
Commission Questions and Discussion (highlights)

Q: What does the additional $7.5 million proposed over 10 years for Chinquapin maintenance cover? This is almost half the cost of building a new pool.
A: Browand said this covers needed safety-related building maintenance work on the elevator, windows, and mechanical systems.

Q: What is the funding amount in FY18 for Chinquapin?
A: $1.5 million for work during the CIP's first 3 years. Znidersic said GSA recommended which systems should be worked on together during the 10-year period to maximize cost efficiency.

Commissioners' concerns about the proposed budget included, but were not limited to:
- Time spent on the Chinquapin Aquatics Center project by staff, the Commission, Council and Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics has not produced the intended result. Atkins said Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics, the City's partner in planning the Chinquapin project, has written to Council strongly opposing the City Manager's decision not to move forward with a new Chinquapin pool at this time
- Reducing the open space acquisition budget.
- **Follow up:** Beggs and Baum volunteered to draft a Commission letter based on the Commission's discussion.

Motion - Baum proposed and O'Connell seconded that the Commission send a letter to Council regarding the renovation of Chinquapin and the unfunded CIP item of $15.3 million asking to return its funding to the 10-year CIP in coordination with the Cameron Run planning process.

The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

In response to staff's information that RPCA needs to match any new CIP spending with a cut in CIP spending approved last year (no net CIP increase), Commissioners said possible sources for the additional Chinquapin funds being proposed could include the CIP’s $7.5 million proposed for Chinquapin building maintenance and repair and from additional funds that might become available if an increased tax rate were approved.

VII. Division Updates:
Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina FY18-27

Division reports are posted to: https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCMeetingReportsMarch162017Combined.pdf

**Park Operations**
- **Community Garden Plot Rental Program - Fee Increase** - Deputy Director Tiwari reported that all current Chinquapin and Holmes Run gardeners were advised by letter the FY18 budget proposes doubling the fee. In response to
some Holmes Run gardeners, staff has offered gardeners a shared responsibility agreement to reduce costs and rental fees. The issue was discussed during the Council's recent budget work session.

VIII. **Commission Reports** (verbal reports by District)

- **Park District I** (Baum & O'Connell) - O'Connell reported that the North Old Town SAP Advisory Group February 22, 2017 meeting discussed the difference between SAP guidelines and requirements. He said a resident reported she was uneasy walking through Montgomery Park in the evening and it was agreed this was an enforcement issue but it will also be addressed as part of the park's redesign.

- **Park District II** (Atkins, Beggs, Walsh) - Atkins said the North Potomac Yard meeting discussed sustainability and other issues. Beggs said the next Ad Hoc Fort Ward Management Plan Implementation Monitoring Group is March 22, 2017.

- **Park District III** (Coleman, Brune, McPherson) - Brune said a PK Move fundraiser will be held during the week of April 5, 2017. He advised Commissioners his term on the Commission ends with the evening's meeting. McPherson said the Youth Sport Advisory Board meeting was cancelled.

- Atkins reported two new student members have been appointed to the Commission.


Commissioners thanked Brune for his years of service on the Commission.

IX. **Adjournment**

Brune moved and O'Connell seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

X. **Next Meeting**: April 20, 2017