City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Special Meeting
Thursday, December 15, 2016, 7 p.m.
Charles Houston Community Center
901 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members: Jennifer Atkins, Chair; Judith Coleman, Vice Chair; Gina Baum, Rich Brune; Jesse O’Connell, Catherine Poulin, Brian McPherson. Absent: Stephen Beggs.

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, Director; Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development, William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services, Robert Navarez, Park Planner. Absent: Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations.

Guests: Engin and Agnes Artemel, Artemel International; John Fennell, Project Manager, and Diana Hartman, Senior Planner, Michael Baker International; Paul Gilbert, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks); Todd Hafner, Stephen Koenig, Alexandria Planning Commission, Sean Kumar, NOVA Parks, Brian Nolan, NOVA Parks; Tommy Park, Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA).

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

II. Public Comments – non-agenda items: None

III. Cameron Run Planning Process: John Fennell, Project Manager and Diana Hartman, Senior Planner, Michael Baker International gave presentation:

See Cameron Run Planning Process Draft posted at:

See Presentation is posted at:

- Atkins noted that the meeting was not a public hearing, but an opportunity for Commission discussion and recommendations prior to the proposed concept plan moving forward to City Council. Browand said discussions have been ongoing and intensified when NOVA Park’s request to extend its lease for Cameron Run Regional Park site was considered by City Council in June 18, 2016. Their current lease expires in 2021. Council directed Staff to develop a planning process for considering long-term uses for the Cameron Run Park site. In July 2016, the Department of Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) proposed a three-step process: 1. Identify a public process framework 2. Implement the process. 3. Design a Concept Plan to bring forward to City Council. Browand said Council will consider the planning process for community engagement on January 10, 2017.

- Fennell said the City’s goals include: Long-term protection and provision of public open
space for residents and visitors; determining the highest and best use for the Cameron Run-Joseph “Hensley” Park - Lake Cook sites; and Educating Stakeholders and the public about possible future uses for the sites, while recognizing the environmental, political and social constraints (See Presentation). Fennell noted Cameron Run Park is a major ecological system and NOVA Parks is a major stakeholder in this process. He said both Cameron Run and “Hensley” Parks have had many planning processes done over the years that can be useful in this study as well as City small area plans. He noted the Eisenhower West Plan shows that largely commercial and industrial uses on Eisenhower Avenue will become mixed-use residential areas and these parks will become local parks. Approach: Fennell said Michael Baker will conduct the City's Public Engagement and Park Planning Process to identify the needs of local and regional stakeholders, and there will be multiple opportunities for inputs (See slide).

- **Three Main Tasks (See Presentation for details):** Fennell's briefing reviewed details of three-part planning process (Tasks 1-3) planned between December 2016 and June 2017, including the variety of outreach tools to be used, and a list of City Agencies and public stakeholders to be involved in the process, two public meetings are planned, as well as other broad outreach efforts including participation in non-City Sponsored meetings. He said social media has been very successful in soliciting public inputs. Fennell said Task 1, identifying the Public Process Framework, should be completed by late winter 2016/early spring 2017. Task 2 will be Public Process Implementation, and Task 3, will be Concept Plan Development. Fennell said this will be a living document and updated as needed over time. For more information see Presentation.

- **Commission Comments and responses by Fennell:**

  - **Brune** said it is a thorough and inclusive plan.

  - **Baum** said it is a good planning process for finding out what the community wants and needs and P&RC needs to figure out how best to fit into the process.

  - **Fennell** said the City has completed several Needs Assessments. He said the way questions are formatted determine how people respond. He said Michael Baker has experience translating Needs Assessment so that the data is more meaningful and useful.

  - **Baum** said the P&RC focus is on recreational needs and she hopes the Plan will keep its focus when it is presented to City Council. **Fennell** asked if it in the purview of the P&RC to address needs outside of the Department RPCA’s needs. He noted that including "what if" scenarios might change the scope of the Plan.

  - **Coleman** said Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) should be included as a stakeholder since they work with RPCA on shared uses of schools and recreation centers and use of fields.

  - **Brune** asked if the Needs Assessment analysis will include, “do you want a school here?”

  - **Coleman** said the Consultants (M. Baker) are using the existing Recreational Needs Assessment. She said the survey is not done by polling that responds to constituencies, and survey design is an issue. She hopes all City agencies will work cooperatively.

  - **Baum** asked if City Council’s directive to look at alternative uses for the Cameron Run Park site includes uses beyond RPCA’s park and recreational needs. She said as school enrollment expands there will be interest in building another school on Eisenhower
Avenue.

- **Spengler** said his understanding is that the Cameron Run Planning Process is for Parks and Recreation, long-term uses.

- **Fennell** said P&Z is not involved because the focus is on parks. He said if the scope changes this may involve P&Z.

- **Coleman** said working with the Eisenhower West Advisory Group would help identify some of the open space needs of developers.

- **McPherson** said funding should be discussed up front so that time and resources are not invested to develop a plan for Cameron Run Parks that the City rejects due to budget constraints.

- **Fennell** agreed funding should be discussed in the Cameron Run Planning process to produce a proposed plan that is realistic. He said this is why Michael Baker’s main focus is public engagement and educating people. He said there is an environmental Resource Protection Area (RPA) that is a major factor that limits available land and open space to less than 24 acres, and this should be taken into consideration.

- **Coleman** said an implementation forecast should be included in the Concept Plan.

- **Fennell** said there is a time element here. For example, recommendations may be phased in (0-5 years, 0-10 years), and if we expand the timeframe to 20 to 40 years we can focus on the best long-term uses and funding sources.

- **O’Connell** said where to hold future meetings is important because the immediate area is not very densely populated.

- **Fennell** suggested hosting a meeting at Michael Baker’s office since it is near Eisenhower Avenue, and noted having multiple meeting locations is preferable.

- **McPherson** cautioned that expectations should be managed about the project. He said a placeholder date for a possible third public meeting should be added in case of inclement weather in January/February 2017.

- **Atkins** recapped the P&RC concerns: 1. Whether or not to include Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) in the list of stakeholders in addition to RPCA, T&ES, the City’s Animal Shelter, and Police, noting that ACPS can participate in the public process as well. 2. Budget considerations, as a constraint or opportunity. 3. Location and time of meetings, and the best ways to engage the public, and 4. Implementation Phase - how will the spectrum of options be handled practically in conjunction within City budget parameters.

- Atkins said she welcomes the opportunity for collaboration on this project and thinks the process agrees with what the P&RC requested in July/August 2016. She believes that the timeline fits with trying to come reach some expeditious answers for NOVA Parks’ concerning their request for lease renewal. She said the goal is to look at the Cameron Park Planning project holistically. She said it would be difficult to meet all the City’s needs on this parcel of land, but full community engagement is important.

**MOTION:** Brune moved that the P&RC send a letter to City Council stating they have reviewed and endorse the Planning Process for Cameron Run Parks, with inclusion of the
following caveats: including ACPS as a stakeholder, consideration of budget constraints, location, time and place of meetings, and managing expectations. O’Connell seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

IV. **2016 Civic Awards**: Browand solicited participation of a sub-committee for the 2016 civic awards to be presented in 2017. He said this is the 31st year of the annual Civic Awards program, which recognizes individuals who make significant contributions to parks and recreation areas. The request for solicitation of nominations will be made in January, and come back to the P&RC in February for their review and recommendation. The awards will be presented to recipients in March 2017 before City Council. He asked that the P&RC encourage the community to nominate individuals or groups for awards. Brune volunteered to Chair the sub-committee, and Poulin and Vice Chair Coleman will also serve. **MOTION**: McPherson moved that Brune serve as Chair of the sub-committee. O’Connell seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Nominations are due by Tuesday, January 31, 2017. The nomination information can be downloaded online at: https://survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/CIVICAwards

V. **Commission Business (verbal report)**:

Atkins noted that a New Commissioner was recently sworn in, and that the P&RC is recruiting for new student members. Chinquapin 50 Meter Pool project hold – Bill Rivers, President, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics wrote a letter that was published in the Alexandria Times today expressing his disappointment. The Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center goes before City Council on Saturday, December 17, 2016. Atkins said the Planning Commission unanimously approved the plan at their previous meeting, and the P&RC will draft a letter to City Council saying they support the plans, but reiterate the need for a comprehensive recreation center in the City’s West End. There were no other reports.

VI. **Adjourned**: 7:58 p.m.

VII. **Next Meeting**: January 19, 2017 (later cancelled)