

City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 10, 2016, 7:00 p.m.
RPCA- Park Operations Division
2900A- Business Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members: Jennifer Atkins, Chair; Judith Coleman, Vice Chair, Gina Baum, Stephen Beggs, Rich Brune, Secretary, Jesse O'Connell, Catherine Poulin, Brian McPherson, Michael Peter, Angela Lalwani. **Absent:** Danielle Baker.

RPCA Staff: James B. Spengler, Director, Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, Acting Director Chinquapin Recreation Center & Aquatics Facility, Lyndon Murray, Regional Program Director, William Ramsay Recreation Center, Lucresha Murphy, PARKnership Manager, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant. **Absent:** Jack Browand, Division Chief, Planning, CIP, and Marina; Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Bethany Znidersic, Park Planner.

Other City Staff: Nathan Imm, Urban Planner, Planning and Zoning.

Guests: Emily McCoy, ASLA, Principal, Director Integrative Research, Andropogon & Associates, Bill Rivers, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), Carolyn Grigilone, AAA.

I. **Call to Order:** Judith Coleman, Co-Chair called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m., and noted that Chair Atkins would be arriving late. The Commission welcomed new District II member Michael Peter.

II. **Presentations:**

A. **Update on Potomac Yards Metrorail Station: Concept Plans for Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard Park:**

Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations gave a brief update on the project. Note: Coleman was recused from discussion.

See Staff Report posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

The Presentation is posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

Tiwari said the Park and Recreation Commissioners highlighted two concerns at the February 18, meeting: 1. ensuring bike paths are continuous and connected to the trail, and 2. having significant bike parking at the station, since there will be no parking lot. He said the plan shows bicycle parking on both sides of the Metrorail station (east and west sides), and a Bikeshare facility is planned for the north end. Staff is working with WMATA to finalize the exact number of bikes to be accommodated in these locations.

Station Concepts: Tiwari reviewed the two draft Metrorail Station Concepts (See Option 1 and Option 2) and noted they are very similar, but Option 2 has glass louvers. He the two Options will be presented to the Potomac Yards Metro Implementation Advisory Group (PYMIG) on May 17.

Pedestrian Bridges: Tiwari reviewed the two Pedestrian Bridge Concepts. He said one is a steel bridge, with interior trusses. This is lighter in appearance. Option 2, bridge has a steel beam at the bottom that reduces the amount of visibility from inside the bridge. In addition Planting/Screening concept plan has been developed for screening the Metrorail station from the Parkway, as required by the National Park Service (NPS). See Presentation.

Context Plan: There are two concept plans for the pedestrian and bike overpass bridges (discussed above). Two metro terminal buildings on the east side - first terminal building is located in Potomac Yard Park, the second one is further North, and is attached to a private development in the shopping center parking lot.

Potomac Yard Park: There are 2 Concept Plans for this park (Option A and B) were presented at the last PYMIG meeting. In addition, feedback on these concept plans was received on AlexEngage. Tiwari said the majority of people want to maintain the existing character of the park and its key features - the promenade and the trails. The concepts plans are being further refined and will be presented to PYMIG on May 17.

Development Special Use Permits (DSUP): Preliminary Plan Submission due on March 31, 2016. The P&RC will receive another update in April, and a tentative public hearing is scheduled for the May meeting to receive comments. City Council will hold a public hearing in June. The P&RC should prepare to submit comments to the Planning Commission and City Council. The goal is to send out the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the construction of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Project in July 2016.

Next Steps: See presentation.

Tiwari said the Draft Final EIS is being revised and will be finalized in May or June.

- B. Braddock Neighborhood Park Update:** Emily McCoy, ASLA, Principal, Director Integrative Research, Andropogon; Nathan Imm, Urban Planner, Alexandria Department of Planning & Zoning.

See Staff Report posted at for background:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

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Imm said the Braddock Implementation Advisory Group (BIAG) discussed the density, typology, and configuration of the building. The first step was to design the .50 acre Interim Park which has been completed. Andropogon Associates was hired to design the permanent one-acre park. There is currently no timeframe for redevelopment of the Wythe Street Post Office site, as City Staff continue to try to engage the USPS in discussions regarding redevelopment of the site. Staff is seeking approval of the Concept Plan for the one-acre permanent park from the P&RC. The park plan would not go to the Planning Commission or City Council at this time – the concept plan is intended to inform the future development of the site by establishing a park program, design parameters, and conceptual arrangement of areas and features. He said positive feedback has been received from the BIAG.

McCoy said Andropogon has been working on the Concept Design for the permanent one-acre park for the past year, and the park plan will serve as a framework that will help drive the development. The goal is to create a flexible plan that can be adapted to the future design (**See Presentation.**)

In September 2015, a community workshop was held to obtain public feedback on the three (3) design alternatives, and feedback was collected through AlexEngage. In January 2016, staff gave the final presentation on the Refined Design Alternatives (**See Presentation**).

Workshop Process – Three Design Alternatives had been presented: See Options 1, Option 2, and Option 3 (See Presentation)

McCoy said feedback from the community and AlexEngage favored Option 2, which has enclosed activities zones. She said there are some elements from each concept plan that will be incorporated into the final design.

Summary of AlexEngage of the Preferred Option and Summary from the workshop. She said the refined version is a hybrid of Option 1 and Option 2, that is moving forward. There is a strong desire for a canopy structure, that could serve as a market space for the larger neighborhood, and flexible water features. She said from the Interim Braddock Park design, people wanted more shade, space for markets, fewer but flexible activity spaces, and lots of green space. An Interdepartmental Meeting was held with City entities and feedback was obtained on the refined scheme (**See Presentation**), and inspiration was taken from the Neighborhood History.

McCoy reviewed the final **Site Plan-Refined Scheme** - See Presentation. She said this encompasses feedback received over the year, and they are refining the concept plan, and reviewing the cost estimates. She said storm water management will be part of the plan, and also lighting will be an important element to help

activate the space at night and for safety. McCoy reviewed perspectives from the North End, Midway Section and the South End.

Next Steps: Durham said the plan will go back to the BIAG, and the P&RC will hold a public hearing on the park plan. She said it should be ready in May for a public hearing. Imm said the BIAG meeting is scheduled for April 2016.

Regarding the issue and timing of the Post Office's possible move, Imm said the retail part of the Post Office may remain, but there is discussion about relocating the Distribution Center. He said the Post Office site is a valuable property for redevelopment. Durham said the Department of General Services, and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) will be involved.

III. Items for Information:

A. **Public Comments – non agenda item:**

1. Bill Rivers, Chair, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), thanked the City Staff and City Council for their support in funding renovation of Warwick Pool, Chinquapin 50 meter pool, and for including funding in the budget for Old Town Pool. He said AAA will send a letter to City Council thanking them for their support of aquatics.

B. **Updates:**

1. **Update on Publicly Released FY17 Proposed Operating Budget and the FY17 to FY26 Capital Improvement Program (CIP):** James Spengler, Director RPCA gave brief on the budget. **See presentation is posted at:** <https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

The Director briefed the P&RC on the budget and solicited feedback prior to public hearings, and City Council adoption in May. He shared recent RPCA organizational changes (See Attachment). **Highlights - major changes:** 1. Park Operations will assume responsibility for maintenance of all waterfront parks. The number of park managers will be reduced from five to three, 2. Jack Browand, will assume responsibility for Park Planning, Design, & Capital Development, due to position being vacated, and will maintain responsibility for the marina; 3. The Deputy Director, Office of the Arts will now manage Special Events, and 4. New PARKnership Manager was hired: Spengler introduced Lucresha Murphy, a native Alexandrian, and graduate of T.C. Williams H.S., where she served as head cheerleading coach for the past 12 years. Murphy holds a Bachelor's Degree, in Physical Education, and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. Her professional experience includes overseeing branch operations and facilities management for 13 years at the Metropolitan Washington, YMCA. She currently works as a Recreation Coordinator with RPCA's Classes and Camps section. This position will report to the Division Chief, Park Planning, Design, CIP and Marina. The P&RC members welcomed Ms. Murphy.

Budget History: City Manager Mark Jinks, released his proposed operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 2017 (starting July 1, 2016), and his proposed FY 2017 to FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program in February. City Council is holding work sessions and will hold an add/delete session in April and the final budget will be approved May 5, 2016. Spengler said RPCA presented a budget with 5% reduction, about \$1 million. He said in mid-January a re-estimate of revenues was completed, and the City's outlook had improved, RPCA was asked to add back 2.5%. The City has Four Focus Groups, RPCA falls into two groups: Healthy and Thriving Alexandria, and Livable, Green & Prospering City. Spengler reviewed the budget report which was sent out in advance to the P&RC and answered questions from Commissioners (See Presentation for details)

FY2017 Immediate Concerns (See Presentation) include:

1. Status of the Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery Policy.
2. Tier 1 Services. What the community wants to see at this level and its impact.
3. State of Good Repair and Daily Maintenance.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) FY 2017- FY 2026 - See Attachments. Spengler reviewed the CIP Summary of Projects Lists for Community Development and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. He said many of RPCA's requests made it into the CIP budget.

Commissioner Comments:

Following the discussion, Atkins asked what the P&RC members see as important to communicate with City Council concerning the budget. The P&RC was pleased that the CIP budget included many of RPCA's desired projects (See Attachment); however, there are several areas of concern that the Commission feel should be addressed with City Council:

1. The impacts of continually cutting RPCA's budget, in light of the added responsibility for park maintenance, the 46% increase in participation rates, the increase in fee assistance.
2. RPCA's effectiveness in using its Cost Recovery and Resource Policy in support of City's goals and how RPCA has its reduced expenses.
3. The impact of reductions in Tier 1 programs and services, that serve the broader community and children are important.
4. While RPCA should be congratulated for constantly doing more with fewer resources; there will come a breaking point. Also the impact of reduction in Tier 1 services.
5. The current budget reduction path is unsustainable over the long-term.

6. Concern regarding the waterfront losing a dedicated full-time staff person, and possible maintenance impacts.

Atkins said the P&RC should focus on a few broad forward looking policy issues, i.e. Tier 1 cut impacts, Cost Recovery Policy and how revenues are used.

MOTION: Baum moved that the P&RC write a letter to City Council on the budget impacts, Brune seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The Vice Chair will draft the letter on behalf of the P&RC.

Atkins had to leave to attend the Ethics Advisory Committee Meeting which began earlier. Atkins recently attended the unveiling of the three options for the new Patrick Henry Recreation Center. She said a March 16, public meeting is planned, and encouraged members to attend.

IV. **Items for Action:**

A. **Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2015, January 21, 2016:**

MOTION: 1. Brune moved to approve the November 19, 2015 minutes, O’Connell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 2. Brune moved to approve the January 21, 2016 minutes, Beggs seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

V. **Division Updates:** Recreation Services, Park Operations, Park Planning and Waterfront. To view full staff reports go to:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

VI. **Commission Business:** Verbal Reports from Commissioners by District:

Ben Brenman - Dog Park Lights: Spengler said a community meeting was held at the Cameron Station Clubhouse. Mindy Lyle, of the City’s Planning Commission attended the meeting. Most attendees spoke in favor of adding lights to the dog park. This item will go to the Planning Commission, April 5, 2016 and to City Council April 16, 2016.

Patrick Henry Pre-K-8 School and Recreation Center: McPherson said a community meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, to review initial site plan options. The issue of lights on the field is undetermined at this time. McPherson asked about the status of the lights and about the loss of the field. The Architects presented three Options for the new Recreation Center (Options A, B & C). McPherson said Option A seemed the most desired. He said some community members are still unclear about the programming options for the new recreation center. The Neighborhood Recreation Center programming scenario was recommended by RPCA and approved by City Council; however some residents still want the Community Center model. The Patrick Henry Advisory Group attended the last meeting, and the next meeting will be community focused. He thinks the Architects have done a good job. The new Patrick Henry School will be Pre-K-8, and will three stories terraced down, and there will be a loss of one athletic playing field. The

new school will be able to hold 800 people. McPherson tried to explain that the addition of lights to the field will help allow children whose parents work late to participate in sports during the evening hours. McPherson said the plans for the new Patrick Henry Recreation Center were released about a week ago, and he shared some photos with the P&RC. The plans are available online. For more information go to:

<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/facilities/ph/>

Baum said that the investment in synthetic turf fields is devalued if the fields cannot be used from October to February during evening hours. She said the fields are well used, and up to three teams play on the field. **Beggs** said the message should be that it is important to have lights on fields, due to the increasing population density and the need for more recreation playing spaces for children.

Commission Reports by District:

District I: Baum, O’Connell, Poulin:

Waterfront Commission – Baum said a meeting is scheduled for next week.

Dominion Virginia Power Group – Poulin said the group will resume meeting again next month.

Old Town North - O’Connell, said no meeting held since last time.

District II: Atkins, Beggs, Peter:

Potomac Yards Metrorail Project: Beggs said the last meeting was focused on discussion about the Potomac Yard Park, and the pocket park between the proposed Metrorail site and the water retention pond. They are coming up with a good plan, based on some preliminary plans and community feedback. The park which is on the trail will stretch from Arlington to the King Street Metro, and will be a hybrid of the originally proposed designs. The next meeting will discuss the design of the actual Potomac Yards Metro platform and the Pedestrian Access Bridge to the East of the tracks.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan: Beggs said the final meeting for the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan was held and recommendations were submitted to City Council. For more information: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/PedBikePlan>

District III: Brune, Coleman, McPherson:

McPherson gave an update on the Patrick Henry Project (See information above).

VII. **Next Meeting:** April 21, 2016, tentative location Charles Houston Center.

VIII: **Adjourned:** 9:22 p.m.