

City of Alexandria, Virginia

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 19, 2015, 7:00 p.m.
Charles Houston Community Center
901 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22312

Summary Minutes

Commissioners Present: Jennifer Atkins and Judith Coleman, Co-Chairs; Gina Baum, Rich Brune, William Cromley, Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson, Catherine Poulin, Alexis Browand.

Absent: Stephen Beggs, Emma Schutzius.

City Staff Present: James Spengler, Director; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Public Information, Special Events, and Waterfront Operations; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects; Bethany Znidersic, Landscape Architect/Park Planner; Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Emily Baker, Acting Deputy City Manager, Nathan Imm, Urban Planner III, Planning and Zoning, Lee Farmer, Principal Planner, T&ES-Transit Services, Karen Snow, Assistant City Attorney.

Absent: William Chesley, Deputy Director, RPCA, Recreation Services, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator.

Guests: Jeanne Gardner, Bill Goff, Caroline Grigilone, David Levy, Elizabeth Wright.

I. Call to Order: Jennifer Akins and Judith Coleman, Co-Chairs. The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Coleman; she noted that the tentative Executive Session had been cancelled.

II. Items for Information:

A. Chinquapin Feasibility Study Update: See Memorandum at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/ChinquapinAquaticsCenterFeasibilityStudy.pdf>

Coleman referenced the memorandum sent from Mark B. Jinks, Acting City Manager to City Council today, updating them on the Chinquapin Aquatics Center Feasibility Study (See Attachment). The memorandum was distributed to the P&RC earlier today via email by Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator. Kagawa said that the memorandum outlines the status of the project, and a community meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, February 25, 2015 with the consultant, Hughes Group Architects (HGA's) to solicit feedback from the community.

Commission discussion:

Coleman noted that only \$20 million has been allocated in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Chinquapin expansion, but cost estimates are higher.

- Kagawa confirmed that the updated cost estimates for a 50 meter x 25 yards pool expansion totals \$30.7 million, and exceeds the CIP budgeted amount.

Baum asked if the cost increase is for two pools. She also asked if staff has explored the possibility of building one 50 meter x 25 yard pool, and if a concept plan has been completed.

- Kagawa said a 50 meter x 25 yards pool costs \$30.7; the estimate for both the 50 meter pool plus renovations to the existing Chinquapin recreation pool totals \$41.7 million; and the cost for an alternative 25 yard x 25 meter (regulation size) pool totals \$20.5 million. He said building a new 50 meter pool is considered in addition to the existing indoor pool at Chinquapin (as an addition to the current facility). One of the criteria given to staff was that the existing pool would remain in place and open during construction of the new pool. Baum said if a 50 meter pool is not going to be built at Chinquapin, then the City should find another location for one, to meet community needs.

Coleman asked where the 25 yard x 25 meter pool idea came from.

- Spengler said the 25 yard x 25 meter pool idea was the original recommendation of the citywide aquatics study done by Kimley Horn, Inc. in 2012, and was the document staff spoke to City Council about. Out of that CIP meeting City Council and community dialogue decided on a 50 meter pool.

Baum asked who the Counsilman-Hunsaker group is and why they disappeared. She also asked why a third party is now involved.

- Spengler said Counsilman-Hunsaker is one of the leading aquatics planning and design firm in the world, and were a part of the citywide aquatics study team. He said based on City procurement requirements for the current feasibility study that another request for proposals was solicited. The team led by Hughes Group Architects (HGA) was deemed the most qualified. Kagawa said there is some overlap with the citywide aquatics study including Kimley Horn engineering and Brailsford-Dunleavy program managers consulting.

Poulin asked are the quotes gold, silver, or bronze standard.

- Kagawa said these are concept level costs, and could increase based on design details. There are other variables such as geotechnical details, etc. He said a firm like Hughes Group Architects (HGA), has a history-based on other projects of similar scope for cost analysis that they can draw upon.

Coleman asked when does this go to City Council.

- Spengler said not until the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget discussion, March 19, 2015. He said City Council will need to determine how to allocate funds to this project based on recommendations and comments received from the P&RC and the community.

Coleman said the P&RC should not wait for the public meeting, and solicited further comments.

Comments:

Forbes said we all support a 50 meter pool but the cost of the project matters. Are we willing to defer other important CIP recreation and parks projects to pay for a 50 meter pool? He said even this estimate could be low and once the project moves forward in a few years, actual costs are likely to be even higher and place more pressure on other CIP priorities.

Baum said the P&RC should recommend what is best for the community and not focus on costs. There are a lot of CIP projects.

Cromley said that by building a 50 meter pool the City can get two pools for the price of one. According to the RPCA Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery model, pools are a “mostly community benefit” that relate not only to recreation, but to health and safety as well. City provided swimming facilities fall at the base of the Resource Allocation “Pyramid” as a primary public service. He believes that City Council would agree that this is a good investment.

Atkins said based on the memorandum, and the fact that cost estimates exceed the CIP amount, the P&RC decision point is not at the end of the day do we want to spend \$40 million on this project, we should not let the rough estimate impact the project. City Council should understand that the CIP will need to change, due to the community needs for this project.

Cromley said that if the City would not fund the 50 meter pool at Chinquapin, then an alternative might be a 25 x 25 meter pool at Chinquapin, and a firm commitment to build a 50 meter pool in the future elsewhere in City. He also said he presumed that the consultants built in future cost increases into their construction pricing estimates.

Kagawa said the idea of doing the Feasibility Study was to ask the hard question of what potential costs entail. The consultant also used a third party contractor experienced in this work. He said as the project develops, it is unlikely that we will significantly deescalate the cost without substantially changing the project.

McPherson said we need to be realistic in our expectations. He’s not sure if it is feasible. He’s not comfortable with the idea of the P&RC pushing the project forward and letting someone else decide the cost. He asked should we have cost recovery information before we proceed.

Kagawa clarified and said to draw a distinction, the cost before them are the allocated Capital costs, the cost recovery impact are Operating costs.

Spengler said the Feasibility Study was completed in order to answer certain questions as the project moved along, and that City Council, and the community would have an opportunity to weigh in on the direction of the project. The question of whether or not a 50 meter pool facility would fit on the site, is yes, now there is a concept design. Refine the probably cost of delivering the concept design, staff now has this information and

cost is close to \$30 million. The decision is do we continue with the other phases of the Feasibility Study.

Coleman asked what are the other phases, and if the consultant is compensated at each phase. **Kagawa** said should we move forward with the next phases, the next step would be to refine cost estimates and further develop the existing concept, including geotechnical investigation. He confirmed that the consultant is compensated per phase.

Action: Atkins will draft a letter on behalf of the P&RC for review.

B. Update on Cameron Run Regional Park (see minutes of November 2014 and January 2015 P&RC meetings):

Director of RPCA **Spengler** said that the project is still being negotiated, and that the applicant, NOVA Parks, has delayed their Developmental Special Use Permit (DSUP) for improvements to the wave pool and parking area, until April 2015.

McPherson asked if the DSUP and lease will be done at the same time. **Spengler** said he is unsure. **Baum** said that the DSUP, and request for early lease renewal should not be tied together, and that a public hearing should be held regarding any lease extension. **Coleman** noted her understanding from the previous meetings is that the lease by itself it does not technically require a public hearing.

C. Public Comments – Non agenda items:

Elizabeth Wright, S. Ingram St., Alexandria, Virginia, said she appreciates the completion of the Ben Brenman Pedestrian Bridge repairs connecting the bridge to Tarleton Park, and that the new split-rail fence at Beatley Library Meadow is aesthetically pleasing. She would appreciate it if in the future; advance notice was given to civic associations and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), when repairs and maintenance are going to be done to pedestrian bridges or trails that are used for bicycle connections. She said these groups can help inform citizens of trail closings due to maintenance or repairs, as communication is important.

The original Holmes Run Stream Channel had a lot of work done (vegetative clearing of the site beginning late November to early December 2014). A lot of invasive plants and litter was removed. When Park staff was asked the nature of the work, they were unsure. It was later determined, that the work was being done by the Infrastructure and Environmental Quality Division of T&ES. It would be helpful if other departmental staff communicate with RPCA Park staff when work is done on parkland.

Regarding Cameron Run Regional Park wave pool; she said it would nice if the Development Special Use Permit (SUP), included a requirement to provide swimming lessons, and this could be included as part of NOVA Parks lease request. She spoke with Executive Director, Paul Gilbert, who said he would not consider this. However, when she spoke with a former Park Manager, he said he didn't believe that this would be a problem, and said that possibly the wave pool could be opened early in the a.m. to provide for swim lessons, and the wave machine would simply be turned off for swim instruction. **Wright** said this should be included as part of the Cameron Run lease renewal.

On Wednesday, February 4th an Alexandria Police Department (APD) motorcycle Officer was spotted on the Holmes Run Trail at Tarleton Park around 11:18 a.m. Chief Cook said officers should not use the trail as cut through, unless it is an emergency and they should have their lights on. There is additional concern about the Holmes Run Trail (between Tarleton Park and the Animal Shelter), water can pool and freeze on the trail in the winter under the CSX railroad bridge. This is a safety issue, as the area is shaded and the frozen puddle doesn't thaw. The concern was submitted by a BPAC member to Call.Click.Connect on Monday February 9th and the person is still waiting to hear back, no resolution received to date.

David Levy, E. Nelson Ave., Alexandria Virginia, said there has been a lot of discussion by the Arlington Bike Committee about snow removal and trails. He asked if T&ES or RPCA is responsible, and said that it is important to keep the trails clear for safety reasons. Holmes Run gets a lot of use; he reminded staff to put something in the budget for additional trail markers, working with T&ES for the Eisenhower trails.

Bill Goff, Bishop Lane, Alexandria, Virginia, asked about the status of the field with Alexandria Renew Enterprises. He said he heard about this at a City Council meeting, and it was discussed as being a City field/stadium.

Spengler said he is unaware of this field being considered as a stadium for T.C. Williams H.S. He said the field is elevated, on top of a roof; there is 20 feet of space between the sidelines and roof edge. The field was not designed for a stadium use to support bleachers, lockers, and parking lot. There are other limitations, due to it being on a roof, and loading issues due to maximum weights. The field will be synthetic turf and lighted, and run year round. At the end of 15 years Alexandria Renew Enterprises could consider if they want to allow field use anymore. The project is under construction, and the field will be delivered October 2015.

III. Presentations:

- A. **City/ACPS Long Range Educational Facilities Plan Project - Katherine Carraway, Planning and Zoning:** This item was deferred due to no staff being present. Spengler said his understanding is that the timetable is being deferred from March/April before the School Board, it will not be later. The item will be taken off the agenda for now.
- B. **Potomac Yard Metrorail project update:** (See copy of presentation <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRC19Feb2015METRO.pdf>)

Note: Co-Chair Coleman recused herself from discussion on this item.

Lee Farmer, Project Manager, Potomac Yard Metrorail Project, and Emily Baker, Acting City Manager gave an update on the status of the project. The project is currently at the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) stage. Farmer said outreach will be done during the next few months on the DEIS with the community. The project has four design Alternatives: Alternative A; Alternative B, Alternative B-CSX Design Option, and Alternative D, and there is also a No Build Option. They are focusing on Alternatives A and B at this time (see presentation). Staff is working on finalizing the Draft EIS, and hopes to release the document to the public in March for comments

before a recommendation is made to City Council. Key Impact Areas for consideration include: Parklands; Neighborhoods; Local Plans; Construction Access; Secondary and Cumulative Impacts; and Wetlands. In addition, Baker said that a Scenic Easement is being studied along the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP), with the National Park Service (NPS).

They will come back to the Commissions and ask them to comments. Outreach will include community open houses and other events. Staff is also soliciting comments on the DEIS in various ways and public hearings will be held.

Once City Council selects an Alternative, the final DEIS will be refined. All comments will be addressed in the final EIS. The goal is to complete the final EIS, in late 2015, with a Record of Decision in early 2016.

Farmer said the project will not be paid for out of City general fund dollars, and that funding will come from federal and state grants, and from taxes from new developments in Potomac Yards, and incremental taxes. Information on funding will be included future presentations.

IV. **Items for Action:**

A. **Approval of Summary Minutes: January 15, 2015** – Deferred.

B. **Follow-up on Update to Special Events Policy: Jack Browand, Division Chief:**
Browand said he is still receiving information and feedback from community stakeholders, and that the Special Events Policy language will be revised and brought back to the P&RC in April, with the goal of moving it forward to City Council in May. In the interim, he is meeting with community groups such as Founders Park Association, Old Town Professional Business Association, and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce.

V. **RPCA Staff Updates:**

A. **Director's Report – James Spengler.**

Fort Ward Management Plan: The Fort Ward Management Plan was unanimously approved by City Council as recommended by the P&RC and other groups on January 24, 2015. City Council would like to hold a worksession on Ft. Ward with the public. Some issues to be determined are: what the City will do to find all remaining graves on the site, how to approach the oral history, creating an interpretive plan for the park, and storm water drainage plans for the site. City Council also indicated they want a recommendation on forming another Stakeholder Group.

B. **Division Updates: To view full staff reports go to:**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCMergedStaffReportsFebruary192015.pdf>

1. **Recreation Services:** William Chesley, Deputy Director (absent),
See Staff Report.

2. **Park Operations:** Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, See Staff Report.

Atkins asked who is responsible for cleaning snow off the areas in front of schools. She said she received calls from Lyles Crouch, the parents went and shoveled and at Mt. Vernon School.

Spengler said that during a snow event, the Department of T&ES becomes the lead in responding to and directing all public works activities. All Park Operations staff are tasked by T&ES with a hierarchy for snow removal; beginning with primary transportation routes, metro stations, secondary routes, schools are cleared based on a decision to open or not open. Each school has a snow map which shows who is responsible for each item.

3. **Public Information, Special Events, Waterfront Operations:** Jack Browand, Division Chief, See Staff Report, and Item IV-B follow-up on Special Events Policy from January 2015.
4. **Park Planning, Design and Capital Development:** Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, See Staff Reports.

VI. Commission Business: Jennifer Atkins and Judith Coleman, Co-Chairs.

- A. Update from December 20, 2014 Retreat – minutes are pending.
- B. Establish timetables and assignments for Open Space Planning Policy and Public-Private Partnerships Policy workgroups: Coleman said the goal is to draft two memorandums by June: 1. to address planning for open space and development requirements, and 2. a letter regarding public/private partnerships. Coleman requested members email her or Atkins, to let them know which group they want to work on. Coleman will be the lead on Open Space, and Atkins will be the lead on Public/Private Partnerships.
- C. Cultural Activities Update: The Commission requested an update on cultural arts by the Department of Recreation. Director Spengler, will invite Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, Office of the Arts to attend the next meeting.
- D. Dog Park Master Plan: Coleman and Forbes will take the lead on this item, and invited others to participate.

VII. Reports from Commissioners by District (verbal updates):

A. Planning District I (Baum, Cromley, Poulin):

Dominion Power Sub-station update: Poulin said the Dominion Power group will not file with the State Corporation Commission. Projections show a decrease in energy usage, they will study the issue further. No further information has been provided by Dominion. Atkins said that projections on energy use were based on an outdated model. This item will be removed from the agenda for now.

Waterfront Commission: Baum said the Waterfront Commission met today at 7:30 a.m. Robinson Terminal North, had a Board of Architectural Review (BAR) meeting, the

plan was approved 4-2 (1 person was absent), item goes to City Council in March. The Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) is moving ahead, construction will be complete in eighteen months, item goes to City Council in March.

B. Planning District II (Atkins, Beggs, Forbes): no updates.

C. Planning District III (Brune, Coleman, Forbes, McPherson):

Youth Sports Advisory Board Meeting (YSAB): McPherson said the meeting was cancelled. Patrick Henry meeting was also cancelled. Brune said the decision on design of Patrick Henry is pending for the school and recreation center, the Recreation Center is unavailable to the public. McPherson said it all depends on what is decided with the school. Have the rec center near it and also look at field space. Brune said there will be a meeting on Patrick Henry School, next Wednesday, February 25 at 6 p.m. at Patrick Henry School in the cafeteria. He encouraged Commissioners to attend.

Eisenhower West Update: Coleman sent out an email to Commissioners on February 13, asking them to provide feedback on Eisenhower West concept plan, in particular their view on the parks and open space and space for a possible recreational facility.

VIII. Next Meeting: March 19, 2015, tentative location in the City's West End.

IX. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.