City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING

Charles Houston Recreation Center – 901 Wythe St.
Thursday, January 17, 2019
7 p.m.

P&RC Members:
 Presented: Jennifer Sands Atkins, Chair (District 2); Brian McPherson (District 3); Liz Birnbaum (District 1); Stephen Beggs (District 2); Gina Baum (District 1); Connor Rex (HS Youth rep); Barbara Marvin (District 1); Judy Coleman, Vice Chair; Matthew Walsh, Secretary (District 2); Abby Froemming (District 3)

Absent: None

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, Director; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Ops.; Laura Durham, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Lindsay Burneson, Recreation Manager; Tiffany Marbury, Executive Assistant; Bob Williams, Division Chief, Park Ops.; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning; Rod Simmons, Park Ops.; Skylar Borman.

Other City Staff:

I. CALL TO ORDER
Jennifer Sands Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS
None.

III. COMMISSION REPORTS (verbal reports by District)
DISTRICT 1: Barbara Marvin and Gina Baum had nothing to report. Liz Birnbaum inquired about her appointment to the RiverRenew Stakeholder Advisory Group. Jack Browand stated that the City Manager has recommended group members to Alex Renew, and someone should reach out to her shortly. Jennifer Atkins reported that there are upcoming meetings for the ACPS High School plan. The plan will include important information on land use. Atkins advised the Commission should stay current on plan updates.

DISTRICT 2: Matthew Walsh had nothing to report. Stephen Beggs stated that the Potomac Yard Metro Implementation Group (PYMIG) recently met to discuss the project. He reported that the State of Virginia has decided to give the City of Alexandria 50 million dollars to increase access to the metro rail. A determining factor was the anticipated increase in volume of metro users due to the upcoming Amazon campus. Though plans for a southern
entrance were canceled earlier in the planning process, there are alternatives that will increase access which include ramps and walkways.

**DISTRICT 3: Abby Froemming, Brian McPherson and Connor Rex** had nothing to report. **Judy Coleman** reported that the next community workshop for Landmark Mall is January 26.

**Commission Discussion**: Atkins stated that she received inquiries from the community on the impact of Virginia Tech on the planning of Mount Jefferson Park. Browand stated that there have been no changes to the plan due to Virginia Tech.

**IV. RPCA PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS**


Lindsay Burneson (Recreation Manager) reported that RPCA recently held its second Annual Photo Contest. Local amateur and professional photographers submitted photos that represent scenes from City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities parks, centers, programs, or events. Ms. Burneson displayed the winning photos and presented winners with an award and an RPCA gift certificate.

**V. PUBLIC HEARING – Natural Resource Management Plan**


Bob Williams, Division Chief, Natural Resources, gave a presentation on the Natural Resource Management Plan. During the presentation, Williams discussed why the plan was developed, and the goals for its implementation. He also discussed the plan elements, its four focus areas, and the next steps (all noted in the link above).

**Public Comments**

Atkins opened the floor to public comments. Bonnie Petry, Vice President to the Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association, asked the Commission to endorse and support the Natural Resource Management Plan. She also asked the commission to review actions 20 and 21 that involve protecting stream valleys. Those actions are removed in the current plan.

Dave Levy, resident, discussed the construction regulations. He stated that actions 20 and 21 cross over between management actions and natural resources. Stream restoration can damage the natural stream or wetlands. He stated that actions 20 and 21 should be a recognition of the combined authority of the plans. If the stream is on private property, it should be subject to regulations and the Natural Resource Management Plan should speak to that.

Atkins read a letter from resident Elizabeth Wright. In the letter, Wright echoed the concern of omitting actions 20 and 21.
Commission Discussion:
Atkins asked that Williams address the concern over actions 20 and 21. Williams stated that though RPCA supports actions 20 and 21, it is out of their jurisdiction to include them in the Natural Resource Management Plan. The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) presides over certain aspects of actions 20 and 21, including stormwater and other water resources. Though RPCA and T&ES work closely on certain projects, the Natural Resource Management Plan only applies to public land. Coleman asked for clarification on what’s stated in actions 20 and 21. Williams read, “Adopt the recommendation that storm water retention ponds and mitigation projects not be allowed in City natural areas except for sites where such features already exist or need to be maintained. Adopt the recommendation of stream water projects including wetlands, stream mitigation, banking projects not be allowed in City natural areas except for sites where such features already exist or need to be maintained.” Williams stated that these two actions conflict with the storm water program T&ES currently runs.

James Spengler, Director, RPCA, clarified the relationship with T&ES and their jurisdiction over certain areas. He stated that as a department of the City, RPCA falls under chapter six of the City Code, which covers park and recreation regulations. As a department, RPCA only has jurisdiction under that Code. Understand that the Natural Resource Management Plan applies solely to those properties that RPCA actively manage as a department. Beggs asked if the City can allow a developer to utilize current wetlands and streams to create a water retention pond if needed. Spengler gave an example that if T&ES wanted to put a storm water retention pond in front of a recreation center and received approval from the Planning Commission and City Counsel, there is nothing that would legally stop that from happening.

Birnbaum stated that she loved the work that went into the plan, however she feels it’s mistitled. She went on to say that it’s more of a plant plan and falls short of a Natural Resources Management Plan for the City of Alexandria. She stated that it does not mention stream habitats, eco-systems, or wildlife management. Beggs stated the importance of working across jurisdictions to ensure all interests are protected, and that T&ES should be required to talk to RPCA prior to beginning certain projects. Williams said that RPCA is involved with T&ES more now than ever before, and he’s very intentional about building those relationships. Simmons stated that the plan covers 80% of the City’s natural resources. Coleman and Atkins suggested that the plan is clearly titled as the departments plan, and that jurisdictional limitations are noted. In addition, Atkins asked that the Commission pen a letter to council indicating areas of concern with the relationship between RPCA and T&ES. Birnbaum volunteered to draft a letter to City Council that the Commission will review and finalize. Baum asked Williams if he could request specific feedback from City Council on actions 20 and 21. Williams agreed. Spengler asked the Council to adopt the plan as a recommendation to RPCA to be implemented.
Motion:
Walsh moved and Beggs seconded a recommendation to RPCA to implement the plan with the changes listed below. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.
   1. A change in title, clearly indicating that the Natural Resource Management Plan only applies to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA).
   2. Jurisdictional limitations are addressed within the plan.

VI. ITEMS FOR ACTION:
   a. Approval of Minutes: November 15, 2018
      Beggs moved and McPherson seconded the approval of the November minutes. The Commission approved the motion by unanimous voice vote.

VII. DIRECTOR’S REPORT
   a. Budget & CIP
      Spengler reported that RPCA has finished the internal process of budget and CIP with the City Manager’s Office. The CIP Policy Committee made a recommendation for a balanced CIP to the City Manager. They presented reduction and supplemental requests. Reductions totaled 2.5%. He went on to say that the budget gap went from 27 million dollars to 7 million dollars, which is a good budget year. By the next Commission meeting, the City Manager’s recommendation for the RPCA operating and CIP budget will be available for discussion.

VIII. DIVISION/PROJECT UPDATES: Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina
      Division updates (staff reports) posted at: https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCStaffReport17Jan2019.pdf

      Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, stated that Waterfront Park is almost complete. In February, fencing will be removed, and Dominion will set up power to the park. The grand opening is likely to happen in late March and will include the art installation.

      Browand reported that Patrick Henry Elementary School and recreation center open Tuesday morning. A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for January 31, an open house on February 2, and an expo lead by the recreation department on February 23. Be aware that access is limited to the recreation center and the school during the last phase of construction.

      Browand stated that Windmill Hill Park is open. The next phase is to requests bids on the northern pier. Coleman asked if RPCA had a naming policy. Browand said there was a loose plan, but they are working on a formal naming policy. Many parks are named for their location or a distinguishing characteristic for the area.

      Levy asked about trail clearing and if there is a policy in place. Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operation, stated that trails are cleared by level of priority. Commuter trails are higher in priority than others, but most trails are cleared concurrently. Browand stated that
there will be a trail and stream valley plan, addressing the standards of commuter trails specifically.

IX. NEXT MONTH MEETING ITEMS – Working Draft Attached

X. NEXT MEETING
February 21 – Patrick Henry Recreation Center, 4653 Taney Ave.

XI. ADJOURNMENT
At 8:28 p.m., Baum moved and Froemming seconded meeting adjournment. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.