City of Alexandria

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Public Hearing & Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2017
Charles Houston Community Center
901 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members:
Jennifer Atkins, Chair; Judith Coleman, Vice Chair; Gina Baum; Abby Froemming, Brian McPherson; Conner Rex; Matthew Walsh.
Absent: Stephen Beggs; Jesse O’Connell, Detronia Johnson (student), Catherine Poulin.

RPCA Staff:
James Spengler, Director; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Margaret Orlando, Division Chief, Recreation Services, Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development and Marina; Beth Znidersic, Principal Planner, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development, Dana Wedeles, Acting Principal Planner, Dan Roush, Park Operations.

Absent: William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services

Other City Staff: Jeff Farner, Deputy Director, Long Range & Strategic Planning, Planning and Zoning, Jose C. Ayala, Urban Planner III.

Guests:
Hudson Chiow and mom Summer Noel, residents; John Fennell (Michael Baker, International); Amy Friedlander (Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C.); Carolyn Griglione, resident and Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA); Dave Levy; Brian Noland (NOVA Parks);

1. Call to Order: Jennifer Atkins, Chair: At 7:05 p.m., the Chair called the meeting to order and announced a quorum was present. She welcomed new members Abby Froemming and Conner Rex.

Public Comments- non agenda items (Item IV):

- Carolyn Griglione, City resident and member of Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA) presented two reports:
  (1) Chinquapin Family Splash Night - Members of the Howard University Swimming and Diving Team will be special guests at the April 28, 2017 Chinquapin Family Splash Night, interacting with the students and parents, would be demonstrating swim strokes and working with students.
  (2) The ACPS P.E. curriculum Pilot Project for ACPS swim instruction will occur June 12-15 for one Fourth Grade class at Polk Elementary School.
    - She thanked those supporting the Pilot Project: Ralph Baird, RPCA's City
Aquatics Director, ACPS Superintendent Alvin Crawley, Mike Humphreys, ACPS Administrator, Preanne Johnson, Polk Elementary School Principal, and Polk P. E. Teachers Emily Stewart, Kathleen Chmurra, and Nicholas McDonald. She also thanked Helena Machado, the Arlington Public Schools Aquatics Manager and Director, for her guidance and teaching materials for the Pilot Project. Arlington has had a similar program for its Third and Fourth Grade students since 1973.

- ACPS will provide transportation and the program will run 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
- City Aquatics Director Ralph Baird, RPCA staff, and Polk teacher Emily Stewart will provide swim instruction.
- Polk Principal Johnson hopes the program can include all Polk Fourth Grade students next year and can eventually include all City elementary schools. Superintendent Crawley, who participated in the Arlington program as a young student, hopes to expand the program incrementally to include all City elementary schools. Due to limited pool space and scheduling, the City program will only be able to serve Fourth Grade students.

Atkins thanked Grigilone for her continuing advocacy on behalf of the City’s aquatics programs.

- **Hudson Chiow**, 10 years old
  (Does not reflect actual order during the meeting.)

Mr. Chiow asked if the City could change the policy requiring children under 13 years old to be accompanied by an adult or parent when using a City Recreation Center.

- He said Recreation Centers are a safe, supervised environment, promote diversity, are a great place for sports, and encourage exercise the way former First Lady Michele Obama’s Let's Move! Campaign did. Chiow said changing this rule for children 10-13 who follow a Recreation Center's rules also fits with the RPCA mission statement: “We support the well-being of Alexandria’s residents by ensuring access to a variety of quality recreation, park and cultural experiences."
- Chiow asked why, since Virginia law does not prohibit leaving children home alone at any age, do children have to be at least 13 years old to be left at a City-sponsored safe environment like a Recreation Center.
- Chiow suggested there could perhaps be a time limit for unaccompanied children to stay at a Recreation Center, perhaps 2.5 hours. If liability is a concern perhaps a parent could sign a waiver for children 10-13 years old and children could be asked to sign a code of conduct agreement. Chiow suggested the City try some of these ideas as a pilot program, perhaps at Cora Kelly Recreation Center, the center closest to his home.

**Commission comments**

Atkins thanked Chiow for presenting his concerns. She said she invited him to present them to the Commission after receiving his letter since the City and P&RC
consider children to be very important consumers of recreation services. Atkins asked RPCA to provide information at the May meeting about relevant City policies such as RPCA’s Recreation Center policy for children 10-13 and the ACPS policy that lets children from fourth grade onward walk home alone so Commissioners can consider whether they are consistent with each other.

**Follow-up:** The issue will be put on P&RC’s May meeting agenda for a RPCA staff update.

II. **Public Hearing:**

a. **North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (SAP):**

Briefing presented by Jeffrey Farner, (P&Z) and Bethany Znidersic, (RPCA)

Briefing posted to:

Farner (P&Z) and Znidersic (RPCA) reviewed highlights of the planning process for the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (SAP) that was begun a year earlier.

* * * SEE BRIEFING FOR DETAILS

- **Input** is being requested from a variety of groups such as P&RC, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and others.
- **Timing** - The goal is to bring the Small Area Plan (SAP) to the Planning Commission and City Council in June 2017
- **Plan Area Context** - Farner noted developer JBG has requested an amendment to the design approved in 2010 because new information is available for the area, such as the Metrorail station details, the plan’s phasing, design changes that include the retail area, and additional open space planned for Potomac Yard Park. Block 4 is being kept for use as a future school or other community/civic use.
- **Activated Open Space and Retail** - The updated design reflects significant attention to creating activated junctures between the retail area and open spaces so that Open Space supports, not undermines, the retail area.
- **Networked Open Space** - Znidersic said the SAP open space area will, as the North Potomac Yard Advisory Group requested, create Open Spaces that link internally within North Potomac Yard and externally to the broader regional open space network.
- **Open Space Types** - The design integrates Sustainable Design Features and a variety of Open Space types and uses (e.g. Active/Passive and Social/Civic Spaces, Pocket Parks, Rooftop Open Space, programmed and un-programmed, etc.).
- **Open Space Locations** - Specific Open Space locations will be determined later and submitted to the P&RC.
- **Regional Open Space Network** - The SAP will connect to a regional...
Open Space Network and to large open space areas such as the existing Four Mile Run and Mount Vernon Trail Systems.

- **Potomac Yard Metro area** - Potomac Yard Open Space will link the new Reed Avenue and Metro Square to the internal plan area and be integrated with the Metrorail station.

- **Updated 2010 Design Adds SAP Open Space**. The updated 2010 plan's 9.0 acres of public open space include 1.5 new acres added near the Metrorail Station and bounded by Potomac Avenue and New Streets A and B - Potomac Yard Park Extension (1 acre), Market Lawn (.2 acres) and Metro Plaza (.3 acres).

- **Parks Will Be Accessible to the Neighborhood** - Plan identifies what is within 1/2 mile and 1/4 mile walks from Open Space areas

- **Potomac Yard Park Extension – Potomac Yard Park** is the largest piece in the North Potomac Yard Area Plan. Its details will be determined during the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) process and will have City amenities, playgrounds, small athletic fields for pick-up play and will be designed to work with the retail and residential areas.

- **Infrastructure** – A pump station will be at the north end of the development and park.

- **Community Feedback** - Community concerns include the amount and location of open space, open space uses, the need for a central gathering place, and shared street concerns. Other City needs such as Affordable Housing were also discussed.

**Next Steps:**
1. April 26, 2017 - Final North Potomac Yard Advisory Group Meeting
2. June 2017 - Planning Commission Public Hearing
3. June 2017 - City Council Public Hearing

**Commission Discussion:**

**Q: How will maintenance responsibilities for the parks allocated?**
A: Potomac Yard Park Extension will be dedicated as City-owned and City maintained. Crescent Park is City-owned, with possible City and/or shared maintenance (to be clarified). Market Lawn, Market Green, Metro Square and Metro Plaza will be privately maintained.

**Q: Will the new Street A go through Metro Plaza? Why will cars be allowed?**
A: (Znidersic) The new street A will provide access for the residences and be another connection to the play area and development.

**Q: Wouldn't it be better to put open space near the middle of the area rather than near Reed Avenue?**
A: (Farner) However the design ends up, the Plan aims to keep the energy and activity on the retail street, similar to King Street's access to Market Square. The retail will be local and regional. The retail space may become the downtown for Crystal City. There is a hierarchy of streets and the Shared Street is designed for pedestrians and bikes first, with cars as secondary users.
**Q: Are the green spaces useful for activities?**
A: (Farner) They will be mostly passive use social areas to create an urban retail experiences.

**Q. What street has a width comparable to New Street A?**
A. (Farner) New Street A is a few feet wider than King Street. There will be on-street parking for New Street A and B and we have discussed planting trees between parked cars to create a street canopy and help with storm water runoff.

**Q: Won't parking encourage people to drive?**
A: (Znidersic) it is a residential area but parking will be limited.
(Farner) We want to have a demarcation to separate public and private open space to discourage residents living adjacent to a public park from trying to take over the public area as their private park space.

**Q. How will overflow parking from Metrorail station be addressed?**
A. (Znidersic) Staff is talking with Parking Enforcement about having some timed spaces and perhaps short-term parking at the Metrorail station. Hopefully most people will take the bus or bike to the station

**Q. Will parking will be restricted to 72 hours?**
A. (Farner) T&ES is discussing short term parking. There will also be garage pay parking. (Znidersic) Covered bike parking at the Metrorail station is intended to encourage people to bike there.

**Public Comments:**
Judy Noritake, resident
- **Activating Open Space** - Active open space brings community together in a way that passive Open Space does not. How Open Space is used is more important than the amount. New York City's Bryant Park's varied active recreation areas - ping pong tables, chess tables, a book cart, help bring the community together. Benches don't.
- **Urban Deck** - This is not yet designed but will be a major pedestrian active space. The Plan appears to ignore it but should not.
- **Dog Park** - Arlington County is planning this area. Residents want a dog park here but it is not appropriate because of the Resource Protection Area (RPA). An area should be found for a dog park and the cost split with Arlington County.
- **Open Space pressures** - Across the City Open Space is under assault from (a) Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality, required by legislation regulations; (b) using Open Space to solve school needs - not a problem here because this school was always planned.
- **Affordable housing** - In-filling this site with affordable housing has been discussed, however this may not be the best use of open space here due to connection to Four Mile Run Park. A single affordable housing building here would max out the planned affordable housing tax credits. Workforce
and affordable housing needs to stay and should be addressed by having developers integrate it into other buildings.

- **Stormwater management as a feature**: In other places in the City, where the development is not part of a huge regional site, developers need to take care of stormwater on their site. Here the developer was allowed to handle their stormwater management on land to be given to the City as a park - but it is a just big hole in the ground with water. A BMP design was originally planned as an attractive park feature but was taken out. The money should be spent to retrofit that.

- **Shared Open Space with Schools**: It would be smart to share open space with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) because of shared uses.

- **Shared streets**: P&Z should be complimented for designing a shared street primarily for pedestrians and bicycles, not cars.

**Commission Comments:**

*Q. What is being discussed for the Arlington area known as South Park, near at the Arlington/Alexandria border that was discussed at the last meeting?*

A. (Wedes) Staff meets with Arlington County monthly. Arlington is planning the trail and discussing what the Urban Deck might be. Currently this area is fenced off on both sides because some residents were using it as a dog park. Arlington residents are pressing and looking for a dog park site, but Alexandria does not allow dog parks within the RPA.

*Q: Please address Noritake's point on the possibility that affordable housing infill might affect the amount of Open Space.*

A: (Farner) During the City Council work session a discussion of the need for open space lead to discussing affordable housing. P&Z recommends other opportunities be used to provide affordable housing. The Small Area Plan includes a bonus density provision and affordable housing could be put on top of the future school. Farner said a PRC representative could present the P&RC Open Space concerns to the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings.

**MOTION**: Baum moved to close the public hearing. Walsh seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote and the public hearing was closed.

Atkins will draft the letter on behalf of the P&RC.

**Commission Discussion:**

Issues highlighted:

- The P&RC is satisfied that the updated SAP increases the amount of Open Space.
- The P&RC expressed concern that planned Open Space may be reduced for affordable housing.
- Support for keeping the SAP Open Space's internal connectivity within the SAP area and external connectivity with the City's Open Space network and with Arlington County Open Space.
- Support for including usable active and passive Open Space.
• Interest in the North Potomac Yard Advisory Group’s idea to use the Pump Station as a park feature.
• The P&RC’s will send letters to the Planning Commission and City Council.

MOTION: McPherson moved and Baum seconded that the P&RC send a letter to the Planning Commission conveying Commission concerns about the North Potomac Yard SAP. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

III. Presentations:

a. Cameron Run Planning Process Update:
Presented by Jack Browand (RPCA) and Dana Wedeles (RPCA) and consultant John Fennell (Michael Baker, International)
Cameron Park briefing posted to:

Browand and Wedeles reviewed the planning process and summarized public feedback. There were 21 stakeholder and community group meetings and an on-line survey was widely publicized at meetings, via a press release and by flyers delivered throughout the City, especially the West End.
* Briefing details are at the above link.

• Next Steps - An oral report to City Council is planned for April 25 and a second Community Meeting for April 27.

Proposed Alternative Schedule - Browand noted the project has been on a very tight schedule to meet the original goal of completing the process by the end of FY2017, including staff's submitting to City Council its recommendations of options to consider.

Staff is now proposing an Alternative Schedule for the P&RC to consider since more time is needed for public input, time to analyze responses more fully, and time for staff to interact with users of the park in after the Wave Pool opens on Memorial Day weekend. The revised schedule will let the P&RC public hearing be moved back to June and the staff recommendation to City Council will be submitted in September.

• Public Feedback - Wedeles reviewed highlights of comments received as covered by the "Public Engagement Summary". Over 600 comments were received over 70 days of engagement that included a well-publicized on-line survey, breakout sessions at community meetings and a Walk and Talk at the park. Wedeles noted comments received as online and in-person feedback have been generally consistent with each other.

• Detailed public engagement information is at:
https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/2017-04-
- **Preferred uses** - Respondents' feedback on preferred park uses were somewhat skewed toward active uses (organized sports) but the largest number of respondents preferred a balanced mix of active and passive activities (e.g., walking, fishing, hiking, bird watching).

- If the NOVA Parks lease is renegotiated, respondents said they'd like to see more open space, more financial benefits for the City, better site maintenance and upgraded facilities, more swim programs, and more walking trails. Respondents also like the wave pool as a unique City feature, value preserving the site's plant biodiversity and see the site as valuable to local businesses.

- **Community engagement**: The second of the three-part process, formal community engagement and developing options based on community feedback to questions, ends with the second community meeting April 27.

- **Developing options**: For the third task, the Michael Baker team will develop for the City a range of concrete conceptual designs for a spectrum of alternatives, with cost estimates and a timeframe for implementing them.

- **Next public hearings** - P&RC in June 2017 and City Council in September 2017.

- **CIP funding** - Browand said there is currently no funding for City improvements at Cameron Run Park in the City's 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget.

- **Commission Discussion**:

  **Q. Why does staff think it is important to have extra time to gather on-site public comments from park users since most are probably not Alexandria residents?**
  A. (Browand) City Council advised staff to gather feedback from a broad range of park stakeholders using a variety of means. All users of the park are included because they are one stakeholder group among many. Staff has proposed the extended planning schedule for several reasons. (1) To give the P&RC more time to consider information and public comments from its Cameron Run Park public hearing before making a recommendation to City Council. (2) To provide additional time to gather public input; (3) To let planners talk to park users while they are at Cameron Run Park after the Water Park opens Memorial Day weekend for the summer.

  **Q: Surveys of park users should indicate Alexandria and non-Alexandria respondents by including their zip codes.**
  A: (Browand) Respondent zip codes will be requested for the next public survey. Also, RPCA's Needs Assessment was directed only to City residents.

  **Q: Will the public comment period be extended?**
  A: The cut-off may be about one week before the July P&RC meeting. The
first survey was open for 6 weeks. The second survey will be sent to the P&RC the next week for review and then sent out.

**Q:** The second survey should include information about improvements for passive uses that the City is already planning, such as walking and biking trails.

A: Browand said it will. The survey can both advise people of current plans and ask what additional improvements are of interest.

**Q:** What infrastructure would the City need to add for these options? What would it cost?

A: If the City renewed the long-term lease, public feedback about needed improvements would be a helpful. NOVA Parks would also have an opportunity to present options for using the park.

Staff has also asked them what their plans would be for capital improvements that benefit the community if their long-term lease is renewed.

**Q:** At the public engagement meetings City residents commented that the City’s membership in NOVA Parks is expensive compared to the City’s return on investment.

A: (Wedeles) At meetings some residents said they use the site, primarily for their children’s activities, but the park does not meet many adult recreation needs.

Atkins commended staff for moving through the planning process as quickly as they have and for recognizing that P&RC needs extra time to consider the proposal and public comments more fully before recommendations are made.

**MOTION:** Moved by McPherson, seconded by Baum, that P&RC endorse the Alternative Schedule for the Planning process for Cameron Run Regional Park. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

IV. **Public Comments – non-agenda items:** Moved up in agenda.

V. **Items for Action:**

a. **Approval of Minutes: March 16, 2017:** Moved by Baum, Seconded by Coleman. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

VI. **Project Updates** - Presented by Jack Browand:

a. **Windmill Hill Park Construction:** About 40 people attended the community meeting April 18. Groundbreaking was scheduled for April 22. Construction will begin soon.

b. **Warwick Pool:** has been demolished and the new pool is expected to be completed by the summer 2017 pool season.
c. **Beverley Park**: under construction to be delivered by the fall 2017.

d. **Holmes Run Park Pedestrian & Bike Trail Bridge**: currently under construction.

VII. **Director’s Report**:

a. **Follow up on FY18 Budget and CIP**:

Presented by: Director James Spengler  
Memo posted to:  

Director Spengler provided an update of actions related to RPCA's and the City's FY18 budget. **See Staff Reports.** Staff answered the Commission’s questions on the FY18 budget.

**Action**: Atkins requested that staff docket discussion of the community garden association issue with them further after budget season is over.

b. **Youth Sports Scholarship Policy**

See Section 2 of “RPCA's Financial Assistance Policy”, included with RPCA meeting materials:  

**MOTION**: Baum moved and Walsh seconded that the Commission approve the Youth Sports Financial Assistance Policy. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

b. **Nannie J. Lee and Lee Center test fit for ACPS**:

Presented by Director Spengler,  
See Director's April 20, 2017 Memo to P&RC "Update On The Study and Proposed Use of Lee Center Complex For ACPS Swing Space” (Meeting Materials)  
**Action**: No action required at this time.

VIII. **Division Updates**: Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina.  
See reports posted at:  

Browand said the Interim Fitzgerald Square project will be considered by the Planning Commission on May 2 and by City Council May 13. This is the City's SUP for demolition and repurposing of the area for a park.
IX. **Commission Reports** (Verbal reports by District)

- **Park District 1** (Baum & O'Connell) – Baum reported the Waterfront Commission received an update on Alexandria Economic Development Partnership's (AEDP) proposal to establish an Old Town Business Improvement District (BID). Two changes have been made to the draft proposal. (1) The BID district now includes Oronoco Bay Park; and (2) the process for Council setting up and funding the BID has been broken into two-steps. Council would pass a statute in CY 2017 creating the BID district's borders and Council would vote in spring 2018 on a BID fee to be assessed on businesses and commercial real estate owners in the BID district.

  **Aquatics Update**: In response to Baum's question, Atkins said the P&RC letter to City Council expressing concern about delays in funding City aquatics projects has been sent. A response had not yet been received.

- **Park District II** (Atkins, Beggs, Walsh) - Walsh reported that he attended the Long Range Facilities Work Group meeting with Pre-K stakeholders. The meeting with high school stakeholders was being held that night.

- **Park District III** (Coleman, Brune, McPherson) - Coleman reported she could not attend the Eisenhower West meeting May 22. Froemming will attend in her place.

X. **Adjournment**: Baum moved and McPherson seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

XI. **Next Meeting**: May 20, 2017