

**City of Alexandria, Virginia**  
**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**Public Hearing and Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 16, 2014, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Charles Houston Community Center**  
**901 Wythe Street**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22314**

**Summary Minutes**

**P&RC Members Present:** Judy Guse-Noritake, Chairperson, Gina Baum, Rich Brune, Judith Coleman, William Cromley, Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson, Emma Schutzius.

**Absent:** Jennifer Atkins, Stephen Beggs.

**RPCA Staff Present:** James B. Spengler, Director, William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning Design and Capital Projects; Laura Durham, Principal Planner, Open Space Coordinator; David Ghezzi, Architect; Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

**Guests:** Nathan Imm, Urban Planner III, Planning and Zoning, Nancy Andersen, Gary Carr, Keith Calhoun, Nicole Cieslicla, Jessica DeToro, Chris DeToro, Andrew Findlay, Jeanne Gardner, Caroline Griglione, Ginger Hedegore, Dan Kulund, Kyle Lynch (Maury PTA), Barbara Nelson, Mary J. Nyeat, Alma Schuster, Lawrence Smallman (Maury PTA), Christine Stout, Boyd Walker, Salena Willens.

**I. Call to Order by Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**II. Presentations:**

a. Public Hearing on Interim Braddock Park Plan (for 600 N. Henry Street).  
See Staff Report.

Laura Durham, Principal Planner and Open Space Coordinator provided background information on the hearing topic. The .5 acre property was acquired in March 2010 as open space, with the long term goal of having a 1.0 acre park on site as specified in the Braddock Metro Small Area Plan (SAP). The City anticipates redevelopment of the entire block, and is working with the U.S. Post Office on the possible relocation of its distribution center. In the interim, improvements are proposed for the 600 N. Henry Street site in the form of a temporary public open space. The goal is to construct interim improvements by May/June 2014. The interim public open space plan was reviewed by the Braddock Implementation Advisory Group (BIAG), and public meetings have been held, which resulted in the preferred design alternative (copy included). A separate planning process will be done for the full 1.0 acre park at a later date.

Imm, P&Z, said the plan will include small scale active recreation opportunities for the neighborhood and the Bike Share station will remain. Imm described materials that would be used for the interim open space; he said they would be lower-cost/low-

maintenance items intended to serve for about five years only and then some experimental items.

Durham said the interim park is being funded through revenue received from the City lease of the existing building and the budget is limited.

Baum said there had been discussion of making the large grassy area off-limits for dogs, so that the space can be more welcoming for families with small children.

Durham said staff is looking at the City Code to see what can be done. Staff received comments at the last P&RC meeting; also the BIAG is providing guidance on how to define limited periphery areas for dog “relief” only. This open space will not be a dog park or have any off leash use permitted.

Public Comments (speakers are identified where they provided their names):

1. Speaker 1: She has two dogs and walks them around the neighborhood. She does not agree with passing a law where dogs are not allowed on the grassy areas, but she doesn't think it's appropriate for dogs to urinate there either.

2. Speaker 2: Boyd Walker, King St., Alexandria Virginia said this is not a very creative plan, and it does not reflect the history of the neighborhood or site which dates back to the Smoot family lumber yard, and the National Fruit Sellers. He realizes that it is an interim plan, but perhaps these concerns can be incorporated into the RFP for the entire park, because none of the prior alternatives were shown, nor the possible configurations of the whole block. He asked Ms. Durham to email him additional information on the past planning process.

3. Speaker 3: He asked if the Post Office relocation will definitely occur, and what would happen if the Post Office decided to stay at its current location.

4. Speaker 4: She said it would be good to differentiate between the postal distribution center and the retail part. Is it possible that there will be a retail post office in this same block?

Responses to Public Comments:

1. Durham said that signs will help discourage people from bringing dogs onto the grassy areas, but it is non-enforceable at this time.

2. Cromley said that the process for the interim park has taken two years, and that many community meetings have been held and alternatives discussed, prior to selection of the chosen alternative. It is important to remember this is a temporary park. The permanent park design will need to go through the City's public development process and will include historical elements. In addition, planning for the permanent park is dependent on what will happen with the building that will be built on the site since the building will help pay for amenities.

The Chair said that there have been many public meetings, but no public hearing. The property was purchased with open space funds. The building was deemed to be not historically significant before the purchase and was going to be torn down. A lot of

discussion was held about the building, it was suggested that RPCA could put a café there; however RPCA does not operate cafes or restaurants. Discussions have occurred between the P&RC and P&Z and the decision was made to tear the building down. There is the Starbucks across the street. The entire site covers a two-acre block, and half the site will be a park and half will be buildings. Further discussions will occur once the landscape designers are hired for the larger park design effort. The Chair said interested people should attend those future discussions.

3. Imm: Staff is in communication with the USPS real estate firm, and have asked that the Post Office seek appropriate space in the surrounding areas. The intention is not to get rid of the retail establishment, just relocate the distribution center.

4. Imm said yes, there may be a retail post office established in this block later.

The Chair asked staff what action is desired from the Commission. Durham said the Department of RPCA is seeking the Park and Recreation Commission's endorsement of the interim park plan.

Action: Brune moved that the P&RC approve the interim open space park plan. Baum amended the motion to include taking steps to discourage dog use of the lawn area. All were in favor.

The Chair asked if a letter was needed. Durham responded that no letter was required.

- b. Draft Large Park Plans (Citywide Park Improvement Plans): Dana Wedeles, Park Planner. See Staff Report and copy of plans for the City's large parks. Wedeles gave a brief presentation. Information was sent to Commissioners in advance of the meeting; complete information can be found on-line at <http://alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=65170>.

Copies of the six Citywide Parks Improvement Plans for the City of Alexandria were included in the handouts. The Commission held a brief discussion on the Citywide Parks Improvement Plans for: Simpson Stadium; Ben Brenman, Boothe & Cameron Station; Chinguapin; Four Mile Run; Joseph Hensley; and Holmes Run System Parks. Wedeles said the rest of the information includes specific recommendations, cost estimates and implementation strategy. RPCA began the process for developing the Citywide Parks Improvement Plans in 2012. A Public Hearing will be held on February 20, at the next P&RC meeting. If the plans are endorsed, they will tentatively go before City Council on March 20, or in April 2014.

- Questions and Comments:
- The Chair said at Cameron Station (Slide # 28), there is an area labeled #3 – near new rectangular field, baseball diamond, and there is a large area/free open space (renovate open space passive use area). The way the plan is written appears to codify this as unprogrammed space. She would rather this area not be seen as general open space. She wants to keep the door open for future discussions of potential uses.
- Baum asked if this site is a hill, and how can it be programmed. Wedeles said many comments were received from the public requesting not to remove the hill as it is used for sledding.

- Coleman said that any community gardens for Cameron Station will depend on who the residents are in 3-5 years.  
The Chair said she attended a Cameron Station HOA meeting, and let them know that there is a waiting list of over 300 people for gardens, and that residents desiring gardens would need to place their name the end of the list.
- Baum asked that a label (light bulb) be added to plans where there are lights on fields.
- Chair - Chinquapin #42- Circle #13 states “study possible storm water infrastructure” She said that T&ES is interested in turning this area into a BMP. The Chair disagrees with this; she said this site gets used recreationally. The original plan showed that there were three soccer areas, now there is only one. #14-on original plan it was a practice field, now it is not labeled.  
Wedeles - said it is shown as one large grass field.
- Cromley said #7 is also labeled as a practice field now.
- Wedeles said due to its condition it is actually not used as a practice field now.
- The Chair said this points to the importance of area #13 being available for even small scrimmage games. Wedeles said we need to keep in mind storm water management associated with a new aquatics facility. The Chair said there are many technical ways to do this if City/RPCA moves toward a LEED Silver building. It should not require a BMP pond. Staff should also take a look at storm water BMP’s that are not supporting runoff near immediate adjacent areas. She said some BMP’s are taking care of water way up stream, this is not good for public open space.
- Cromley said in the long range planning efforts it would be better to separate the field areas, from the nature areas. Chinquapin does this well.
- Baum asked if any thought was given to improving the flow of traffic around Chinquapin in order to maximizing the play space.  
Wedeles said #10 shows that the west side of the loop would be pervious surface and only used for overflow parking. The eastern half would become twoway traffic with a turnaround. This will help with the parking situation. There are three parking lots but one is hardly used because you have to drive around the loop to get to it.
- Chair- back to Cromley’s point about “zoning” the plan - you’re keeping all the active activities on one side or circle, by taking the road and making it pervious it becomes very much landscaped so that the open green part of park is not interrupted by the road; this will make the park feel much larger.
- Cromley- agreed and suggested taking the red triangle and flipping it 30% to better define zones to keep active uses are on one side and passive on the other.
- The Chair said there is no reason to keep the current road configuration. Wedeles said specimen trees need to be maintained.
- The Chair said she is happy to see the plan for the Four Mile Run pedestrian bridge, it’s a 3-10 year timeframe. She said that, following last year’s attempt to purchase Joseph Hensley Park for private redevelopment, it is important that the City and RPCA consider what else could be built at this site, allowing more intensity of use, and consider who might be partnered with to share the costs.

- Wedeles said at Hensley there is an alternative shown for an indoor facility and staff is looking at several scenarios. The Chair said she thought under the Land and Water Conservation Action provisions it could only be a swimming pool or ice rink. Durham said the City would need National Park Service approval for any structure.

**Items for Action:**

III. Approval of Summary Minutes: October 24, 2013, and November 21, 2013. The Chair asked if there were any corrections to the minutes, there were none. Forbes moved to approve the minutes. Baum seconded. All were in favor. Minutes of November 21, 2013: Brune moved to approve the minutes; Forbes seconded. All were in favor.

IV. **Approval of Interim Braddock Park Plan by the Park and Recreation Commission:**  
See Item II. a.

**Items for Information and discussion:**

V. **A. Maury School Plan (ACPS):** See Staff Report and Plan. Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development introduced Kyle Lynch and Laurence Smallman who presented the plan for a new playground at Maury School and said they are seeking action at next month's P&RC meeting. (See handout – "Maury Elementary School Yard – Visioning Session- Summary of Key Findings, Concept Recommendations, fall 2013.") The plan's goal is to make it a more useable space. (See plan). Questions and comments were taken from the Commission. Smallman said it would be good if planning process for the City could include some improvements as Beach Park. The Chair said this is an ambitious and expensive plan, and that funding for this plan will be critical. She said ACPS is using a large portion of the City's CIP budget and that she is happy to see artificial turf being put in the small area.

The Chair said we know that this school yard and turf gets used, it may be good to have artificial turf at Mt. Vernon School, and at some point Beach Park. Kagawa said the example they looked at is the small field at McArthur School.

Baum asked a question about the "cistern", what is the intent for this space and could this be incorporated into the measures that T&ES is required to implement for the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act. She said possibly this could get T&ES some funding.

The Chair asked if there will be any impacts on RPCA programs, or MOU's for maintenance and use. Kagawa said when staff began this process they discussed things they need from this process: 1. maintain current programs on-site; and 2. maintenance regime (Tier 3), would need to be revisited. In addition, RPCA has committed a staff person to guide this through the Interdepartmental Review Process. The Chair said she applauds them for taking this project on. Cromley agreed the project is impressive, particularly the fact of people working together to do something good. Smallman said the project is due to the work of parents and other people in the community and encouraged people to drive by and view the site. He said that a fundraiser will be held on February 6, 2014 to raise money for the project and he expects Members of City Council and the School Board to attend. The Concept plan will be presented at the February P&RC meeting for final approval.

B. Facility & Outdoor Maintenance & Use Agreement, 2014 Revision - Update: See Staff Report. The City is in the process of developing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA).

VI. **Division Updates: To View Full Staff Reports Go To:**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCMeetingInfo16Jan2014.pdf>

A. **Recreation Programs and Service Update** - William Chesley, Deputy Director - **See Staff Report**.

B. **Park Operations Report** - Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director- **See Staff Report**, and handout - Proposed Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens in the City of Alexandria Draft and Garden Plot Regulations: 2014 Gardening Season (FY 2014 -2015): Tiwari distributed and reviewed the draft regulations and proposed guidelines. The Chair said this is a good first step and asked what the timeframe is for completion. She will review and reach out to the small community garden group she had discussed this with prior. Tiwari said the only time-sensitive item is the “Regulation”, and that the “Guidelines” are the foundation for future policy discussions. This could become an Appendix to RPCA’s Large Park Plans. Currently there are over 350 people on the waiting list for garden plots in Alexandria. The Park and Recreation Commission members held a lengthy discussion about how non-resident gardeners who currently hold leases would be handled.

Discussion: The Chair said the issue is two-fold moving forward. 1. Do we grandfather in current non-residents with existing plots, and allocate future plots only to City residents, 2. How long do residents get to keep a plot lease? The Chair said it’s an issue of equity about not passing along a “lifetime lease” to people as these gardens are public land. Cromley said another issue of equity that should be considered is that some people who are leasing plots have their own yards where they could garden. Forbes said he feels that non-City residents should lose their leases immediately, and that the new regulations should state that leases for non-City residents will not be renewed. He said the policy is silent on the grandfathering in issue. Baum said that fees for non-residents could be made higher. Following the discussion, the Chair asked if there were a motion. Coleman asked if at this stage there should be a recommendation, pending legal review.

Action: Forbes moved that the P&RC recommend that upon the renewal of current community garden leases, that the Department of RPCA provide priority to current leaseholders who are City residents, and that there be no priority given to current leaseholders that are non-City residents.

Baum moved to amend the motion to propose that fee increases be applied for non-City residents. The Chair said that the P&RC will discuss any proposed fee changes for non-residents later. The Chair asked if there were a second to Forbes’ original motion. Baum seconded. All were in favor.

C. **Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront Operations** - Jack Browand, Division Chief. **See Staff Report**.

D. Park Planning, Design & Capital Development Reports – Ron Kagawa, Division Chief and Team. **See Staff Reports:**

1. Capital Projects Project Update (in brief)
2. Capital Facilities Maintenance Projects Update (in brief)
3. Braddock Interim Open Space Background Information
4. Maury School Yard Initiative Background Information
5. Proposed Schedule of Items for Consideration; January-July, 2014

Jefferson Houston School- Kagawa reminded people that the topping-out ceremony for Jefferson Houston School is scheduled for tomorrow at noon, location Cameron and West Streets.

**VII. Joint Meeting, Waterfront and Park & Recreation Commissions, January 21, 2014 - Waterfront SAP: Program Analysis, Art, History and Lighting:** Browand reminded the Commission and staff of the upcoming meeting. The meeting will be held at the Lyceum starting at 7:30 a.m.

**VIII. Reports from Commissioners (verbal updates):**

Chair Judy Guse-Noritake said that Judith Coleman and Rich Brune are up for reappointment at the end of March, and both have expressed a desire to be reappointed, which requires a letter from the Commission. The Chair asked if there were a motion. Action: Forbes moved to reappoint Judith Coleman, and Rich Brune to the Park and Recreation Commission, McPherson seconded the motion. All were in favor. The Chair provided draft reappointment letters addressed for the City Clerk to Jack Browand. She reminded Ms. Coleman and Mr. Brune to follow-up with the City Clerk to retake their Oaths of Office prior to April.

- A. Waterfront Commission - Gina Baum. Laurie Olin, Designer, Waterfront Plan is considering Founders Park as more of a passive park, but the Founders Park residents really want the park to stay the same. She said members should keep this in mind going forward to Tuesday's meeting.
- B. Youth Sport Committee- Brian McPherson said he was unable to attend the meeting, the Director attended. A discussion was held by the sport leagues on "best practices" which was well received. An item that came up was change of fees. Alexandria Little League wanted to sponsor a 6 week winter baseball clinic league, in conjunction with the T.C. Williams H.S. baseball team. Last year the event was held at the Minnie Howard gym, and was very successful at a cost of \$50 per hr. This year the fee increased to \$285.00 per hr., which made the program unfeasible and it had to be cancelled. He has been receiving a lot of concerns about this.
- C. Four Mile Run - Ripley Forbes: The Chair noted that Congressman Moran will be stepping down soon. She said the major issue is to try to get the flow rate changed at the federal level.
- D. Freedmen's Cemetery. The Chair stated that project is moving forward and the stone is being laid down. David Ghezzi Architect RPCA said the remaining stones are some bench pieces that need to be added, project should be completed in March.
- E. ACPS & Capital Improvements - Judy Guse-Noritake: A meeting on Patrick Henry School will be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> in the evening; she will try to attend.
- F. Community Gardens Policy- Judy Guse-Noritake: this item was discussed earlier- See IV-B. A follow-up will be done at a later time.

- G. Ft. Ward - Ripley Forbes and Rich Brune – the final draft Management Plan has been completed. Durham said the draft plan is also being posted on-line. The Ft. Ward Advisory Group will hold a community meeting in February 2014, followed by a joint public meeting with various commissions in March.
- H. ACPS School Projects- Judy Guse-Noritake
- I. Jefferson Houston School – William Cromley- See Item VI-D.
- J. Open Space - Judy Guse-Noritake
- K. Braddock Plan Park- Judy Guse-Noritake. See Item II. a.
- L. Patrick Henry School Update- the Chair said she is a member of the citizen’s group for Patrick Henry and is willing to continue reporting on this item, once her term on the P&RC ends in April 2014.
- M. Aquatics Update- Jennifer Atkins (absent) no updates.

**IX. Public Comments:** See Item II. a. There were no other public comments on other items.

**X. Agenda items for February 20, 2014, meeting and location.** Public Hearing Citywide Park Improvement Plans, tentative location City Hall-Sister Cities or Council Workroom.

**XI. List of upcoming public meetings.** List was inadvertently left out of package-please see RPCA and City’s websites.

Meeting Adjourned 9:05 p.m.