

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, November 17, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Jerome “Buddie Ford” Nature Center
5700 Sanger Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia

Summary Minutes

Commission Members Present: Chairperson, Judy Guse-Noritake, Gina Baum, Richard Brune, William Cromley, Ripley Forbes, Jeffrey Murphy, John Sullivan, Mollie Timmons, Caleb Vogt.

Absent: Clark Mercer, Robert Moir.

RPCA Staff Present: Director James Spengler, William Chesley, Deputy Director Recreation Services, Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director Operations, Dana Wedeles and Bethany Carton, Park Planners, David Ghezzi, Architect, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: Alisa Carrel, Director Office of the Arts, Ron Kagawa, Division Chief Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects, Laura Durham, Open Space Planner, Cheryl Lawrence, Acting Director Special Events/Marina.

Guests: Jeffery Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning, Zunilda Rodriguez, Planning and Zoning, Catharine Puskar, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh, P.C.; Jeanne Gardner, Chinquapin Advisory Council, Jack Sullivan, resident of Seminary Hills.

I. Call to Order by Chair: 7:00 p.m.

- II. Presentation Beauregard Corridor Plan - Jeffrey Farner, Planning and Zoning:** The Chair introduced Mr. Farner, and Ms. Rodriguez of Planning & Zoning (P&Z), and Ms. Puskar, who attended the P&RC meeting in July and gave a brief presentation on the plan. **Jeffrey Farner**, project manager, gave the presentation/update. To view copy of presentation – go to www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation/Commission Reports/November 2011). The Draft Beauregard Corridor SAP was developed with input from the community; staff is working to develop final recommendations. The Beauregard Corridor is a unique area in the City for several reasons: the topography, existence of natural vegetation, the Winkler Botanical Preserves, and existing garden apartments, which relates to affordable housing. The plan area is very large and contains approximately 300 acres, not all areas are being redeveloped. A series of developers have been working with the community and City to look at potentially changing the land use and density on some of the sites. The area also includes an existing stream corridor, floodplain, and Resource Protection Area (RPA). Staff has received feedback from the community and the P&RC about the importance of preserving open space, including the existing stream valley, Winkler Botanical Preserve, Dora Kelley Park, and maintaining the school (Ramsay) on the corner of Beauregard and Sanger Ave. In the area of Dora Kelley Park, staff discussed pulling buildings back from the steep slopes, non-privatization of open space, and making the park more visible. The presentation included a discussion on: existing conditions, plan area, connectivity, proposed and existing open space, community gardens, dog parks, green streets, trail connections, public dedication vs. public access easements. In addition, a multipurpose athletic field is proposed at the corner of Beauregard St. and Sanger Ave. and adjacent to William Ramsay Elementary School., timing of the field construction is still under development. Farner said that the additional zoning will create added value. This is an incentive for some funds to come back to the City in the form of public amenities (transit, open space, affordable housing).

Next Steps: Next community meeting, Monday, November 21, 7 to 9 p.m., at John Adams School. A large focus will be Developer Contributions that will be used for amenities such as: a field, park, and open space. There will also be an overview of draft Traffic Study and upcoming meetings schedule.

Questions/Comments from the Commission:

Chair Noritake:

Q. Chair - What is timing for the Beaugard SAP to go to the Planning Commission.

R. Farner - The immediate step is to hold the meeting on November 21 to discuss Developer Contributions, with a follow-up meeting likely for December. The goal is to put all information together, and present a working draft by January, or the first quarter of 2012. A discussion still needs to be held with the community. The SAP will go to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval.

Q. Chair - What happens when the first developer proposal is received?

R. Farner - First approval is needed on the SAP and all properties will then require rezoning approvals. Next establishment and approval of specific design guidelines and finally each individual building (or development block) will require DSUP. All will require City Council approval.

Q. Chair - Traffic Ellipse - what is the number of acres here?

R. Farner - the portion on the right-hand side is about 3/4 of an acre; area south of that is about 1/2 acre. The challenge is what can be done with this space it is in a high traffic area. P&Z discussed possibly using the area for tree canopy, or a storm water amenity, there are challenges with both options. Landscaping is another option. *(The Chair asked that the existing storm water retention pond which is not currently shown, be clearly shown on the plan. She commented that if an additional retention pond is added, it should be kept as small as possible.)*

Q. Chair - Will the Winkler Botanical Preserves be accessible to link to other trails.

R. Farner - The Winkler Botanical Preserves is private open space, and not accessible. It is up to the owners, if they will allow access to trails in the future.

Q. Chair - What is the timing of the athletic field at Ramsay, it is said this may be expensive.

R. Farner - Budget priorities need to be established. Current projections are that fields are more of a mid-term item (ten years or more out). Mr. Farner urged staff to attend Monday's meeting, he said Deputy City Manager Mark Jinks is preparing a financial analysis of cost implications. *(The Chair suggested that a provision be included in the plan to install the field, prior to redevelopment of rental housing to private ownership homes.)*

Additional comments discussed by Chair included a suggestion of pulling back the perimeter and road in certain areas, to help maximize green spaces; ensuring that the existing storm water retention pond is shown; inclusion of amenities, i.e., multipurpose athletic field, dog park, additional recreational facilities, and internal community gardens. The Chair's preference is not to put gardens in publicly owned open space in this area, but, to encourage development of smaller gardens closer to homes and largely on private land. She commented that under existing City regulations, once gardens are put on public land and are leased, they in essence become privatized for long periods of time. The Commission will undertake a garden policy in the future.

Farner - Regarding field at lower Hammond, there are a couple of schools and parks adjacent to the plan area. Staff is looking at how to get open space improvements along with ACPS. Rather than designating money for a specific project amenity, the goal is to provide certain active recreational amenities at one or more locations within or adjacent to the plan area. A final

determination to be made at a later date and come back to the P&RC and School Board.

The Chair asked if there were any other questions:

Jack Sullivan- resident of the Seminary Hill area spoke about the plan, with respect to the proposed amenities e.g. improvements to lower Hammond field. When amenities were discussed with the developer of Seminary Hills Apartments, who has a proposal to tear down the existing apartments, and rebuild them with more expensive taller buildings, this would displace current residents. The field is within the boundary of Seminary Hills area, there are lots of problems with improving this field. Seminary Hills community have asked for a new park (See Slide 12) left-hand side shows development proposed by the Hekemian Corporation. Currently there are 14 single family homes on 12 lots and it is low density with a lot of green space. Area used to be called, Shirley Gardens. The increase in density would be 2000 times the current density. One parcel already is owned by the City. Seminary Hill Assn. has asked that the City to consider creating a park and soccer fields-with funds paid as a result of the Army taking open space for BRAC. Initially the City asked the Army for \$14 million in remedial costs for open space. The Army came back with \$1.4 million and the City accepted it. He believes the City should get the full \$14 million, enough to buy the properties and make a portion into a park; this is the amenity that Seminary Hills is requesting. The park does not have to be paid for by the developer. The immediate neighbors do not want this development and have signed petitions of protest and have submitted them to the City Clerk.

Catherine Puskar- said the land at corner of Beauregard St. and Seminary Rd., is not for sale. A number of the referenced parcels are already under contract to a developer. The land referenced as a park at the corner is City right-of-way. Staff has worked hard with the developer to ensure that the amount of open space present is incorporated into the project. The development will generate funds from Developer's Contributions that will be used for the other open space amenities, discussed for the plan area, as presented by Mr. Farnar, e.g., fields, open space, and programming throughout plan area. Regarding Mr. Sullivan's concerns, about displacing residents. They are redeveloping market rate affordable housing, which will result in committed affordable units. If these units were not redeveloped, chances are they might be renovated without affordable housing. Ms. Puskar said she met with Mr. Sullivan's Association and explained this. Developers are committed to making contributions for amenities, such as a dog park, and contributing additional dollars for possible improvements at lower Hammond field, or elsewhere in the plan area.

Chair- it was asked previously, how many units would there be.

Puskar- an estimated 6,469 new residential units are proposed along with new mixed use development.

Chair- Another concern aside from the fields, is availability of other recreational amenities for residents. The entire burden should not be put onto the public recreational facilities, City already needs another recreation center in the west end. One of the highest priorities from the recently completed Needs Assessment is having more active trails. The P&RC will be looking closely at how trails are configured in the plan.

Puskar- Re: Slide 6. Area with gray squares includes townhouses; many will have yards, and multi-family buildings (with rooftop amenities and pools). In these areas they can include tot lots and play areas for children. There are a lot more opportunities for green space. There has been a lot of discussion regarding trails and connectivity.

Commissioner Sullivan- What is the density change?

Puskar- under the existing zoning there is an additional four million square feet. We are looking at an estimated 3,900 new residential units net.

Farner- there are two questions, one is related to existing buildings today, and existing zoning. Proposed zoning increase is 2.4 million more sq. ft. than what exists today. Occupancy in City is about 1.3 people per unit.

Commissioner Sullivan- therefore, we are looking at an increase in population of approximately 10,000.

The Chair thanked Mr. Farner for his presentation, she will try to attend meeting Monday.

III. **Update on Waterfront and Waterfront Alternative Plan:** Jeffrey Farner was asked to provide an update. See attached memo, from Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z, dated November 17. **Farner** - As many are aware, there have been ongoing weekly meetings with various stakeholders (see memo). Councilman Smedberg has been the facilitator for the group. The goal is to try to finalize the report by the end of the year. City Council will hold a work session on January 10, 2012, to review the revised plan. The original Waterfront SAP was approved by the Planning Commission, but was deferred by City Council in June 2011 for further study. The Chair asked how does the Alternative Plan address the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) parking lot. Mr. Spengler said that both plans state that it is the preferred alternative for the City, and ODBC to negotiate a peaceful resolution regarding possibly relocating the ODBC parking lot away from the waterfront, in order to have a more continuous walk path. **Baum** said, the Waterfront Plan Work Group will make its presentation to the Waterfront Committee on November 29, at 4:30 p.m. Chair Noritake asked Commissioner Baum, new liaison to the Waterfront Committee (replacing Cromley), to keep the Commission informed of the project status. Ms. Noritake thanked Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, P&Z for attending the meeting.

IV. **External Citizen CIP Requests - (See Staff Report for details):**

There were no members of the public present to speak on these items. Formal requests were submitted and are on file with the Department of RPCA. The requests were distributed to the Commission in October. In response to a question from Mr. Sullivan regarding the sequence, priority and timing of items. Mr. Spengler said the projects are relatively independent from each other and are not listed in any priority order. The Commission and staff held a discussion on the following items:

Park Planning District I:

1. **City Marina Utility Upgrade**- a project requests to provide electric upgrades for boat slips. The Commission discussed concerns about marina costs being out of balance with revenues. The P&RC discussed raising user fees for boat owners, in order to help complete the project with the anticipation of completion in three years. This item is currently in the CIP in later years. Chair said we should let the waterfront plan take its course and leave this item where it is in the CIP.

2. **Marina Seawall Maintenance**- a project requests to repair the existing seawall at the marina. The marina seawall is eroding and the walls are deteriorating. This project would be a high priority, but will be most impacted by any new marina design within the Waterfront Plan, which is currently under review. The project is currently in the City's CIP in later years.

3. **Marina Waterway Trash Deterrence**- a request to implement measures to help reduce debris in the water at the marina. The Chair commented that this is a 15,000 sq. mile watershed area and this is a hard problem to control, as the problem is bigger than the City waterfront. It was recommended that staff investigate options to address the debris issue, including purchasing additional bubblers that help collect debris, and ways to use existing funds instead of including in next year's CIP.

4. Marina Security Improvements- a project request to provide additional security measures at the marina. The project would primarily benefit marina leaseholders (there are 47 slip holders). Security relates to afterhours security of boats.

5. Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Repair- a project request for repairs to the deteriorating bulkhead. The repairs are included in the City CIP in FY 2016/2017 and are part of the Windmill Hill Master Plan. The project has been pending for six or seven years in the CIP and is independent of the marina. The P&RC discussed moving this project up one year, however, the project costs four million dollars, and a separate project would need to be moved back in the CIP. Windmill Hill is not in the waterfront plan for changes.

The Chair said that some of the other projects, depending on how fast development and changes occur along the waterfront, may need extra time. The other projects are three years out, which gives plenty of time to see how Waterfront Plan develops.

Park Planning District II:

1. Mt. Jefferson Greenway- a project request to create access to Mt. Jefferson Greenway at Route I. The Chair pointed out area on the map. The area is elevated in places, has a steep slope, goes behind small Del Ray houses, ends at Raymond Ave. where there is a small playground, and is a nice amenity. It would be good to do something with it. The project request could be handled in phases. A drainage issue along Raymond Ave. is being addressed separately. It was also discussed that improvement to this area could reduce privatization of public open space in this area. Interim improvements were determined to be a good option, also using volunteer efforts, and address cost concerns. The Commission recommended that staff look into using existing department funding sources for an initial phase.

2. Simpson Park- Batting Shell Fencing- a project to modify the fence at Simpson Baseball Field to house the batting shell. This capital expenditure is proposed to be covered by T.C. Williams Boosters and Alexandria Little League. The Commission recommended approval of the request.

Park Planning District III:

1. Ben Brenman Community Gardens- a project to create community gardens at Ben Brenman Park at Cameron Station, residents continue to ask for community gardens. She and Commissioner Sullivan spoke at their last community meeting. The Commission will undertake a garden policy for the City to address the various aspects of community gardens. Additionally, funds will need to be requested through the City's CIP process for installation of irrigation. Budget implications, including infrastructure needed for garden spaces, irrigation costs and staff costs were discussed as items to be addressed with Council. The potential of a "friends group" to help manage gardens was also discussed.

The Commission by general consensus recommended leaving most items where they are in the CIP due to possible budget implications and the possible impact of changes once the City approves the Waterfront Small Area Plan. Two items were recommended to move forward: Simpson Park-Batting Shell Fencing, the capital expenditure is proposed to be covered by T.C. Williams Boosters and Alexandria Little League. Mt. Jefferson Greenway, the Commission recommended that staff look into using existing department funding sources for the initial phase.

V. Approval of Summary Minutes from October 20, 2011: deferred to January.

VI. **DIVISION UPDATES: To View Full Staff Reports - go to www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation/Commission/reports.**

A. **Recreation Programs and Service Update** - William Chesley- **See Staff Reports:**
Other:

Jeanne Gardner- member of Chinquapin Advisory Committee spoke about the need to push for the renovation of Chinquapin Recreation Center and pool up in the CIP budget. The Center is twenty-six years old, and has the only indoor pool in the City, and operated year-round. Ms. Garden stated that the pool is over-programmed. Some recent upgrades have been done, but the building is deteriorating and not up to par, pool pumps are old and break frequently, toilets also need to be replaced due to drainage issues. The Committee is concerned; facility is very busy and is worn out. Pool needs to be rebuilt. She is aware of recently completed Aquatics study -Approximately 140,000 residents live in Alexandria, and over 50,000 people visit the pools each year.

- **The Chair**- acknowledged Ms. Gardner’s concerns regarding the age, and condition of Chinquapin Center and pool, including concerns with difficulty of people getting a swim lane. She said we sell our children short, by not having enough aquatic facilities. When T.C. Williams, H.S. was planned, there was a conceptual plan to add another 25 meter pool on the side of Chinquapin, and expand the locker room, after the school was built. However, other projects took precedence, e.g., the new Police facility, DASH bus facility. The current priority is renovating and rebuilding schools. Renovation of Center is in the CIP for 2018. The Aquatics Master Plan study has been completed now, along with the Needs Assessment. The findings will be presented to City Council next year in January or February. This will be the time for discussion of more pool facilities. A large part of CIP dollars will go to ACPS for new schools and school improvements.
- Two new pools are being discussed, if the old Chinquapin pool is rebuilt, City will still have only one indoor pool, which is inadequate for City’s needs.
- **Spengler**- The Aquatics Master Plan findings could change, currently information is leaning towards tearing Center down, and building a new facility with a 25 meter x 25 yard pool. Cost estimate is \$25-\$30 million, plus staff time. Simply renovating this facility doesn’t change much in terms of usage capacity. Decision will be left up to the community and Council, whether to proceed with renovation vs. adding an addition to existing building, or building a new facility.
- **Gardner**- asked if ACPS shares in cost of use of Center.
- **Spengler**- since the facility was build; it has been programmed on an 80/20 split with ACPS. ACPS and the City share gymnasiums and Recreation Centers, this helps offset cost. Analysis done over the last 20-30 yrs. show that there is a fairly even benefit.
- **Gardner**- will driveway behind T. C. Williams be repaired.
- **Chair**- The P&RC is about to undertake a Master Plan for parks including Chinquapin, this will be discussed at that time.

B. **Park Operations Report** - Jack Browand – **See Staff Report**- there were no comments on this item.

C. **Office of the Arts Update** – report by Alisa Carrel - See Staff Report.

Mr. Spengler gave some highlights in Ms. Carrel’s absence.

- **The Alexandria Film Festival** held November 3 to 6, was very successful.
- **Wedeles**: The movie event scheduled to be held outdoors at the former “Duron” paint building site, was shown indoors due to weather, the event was well attended. **Ghezzi**- said that three bids were recently received for construction of stage. The bids are slightly high, he is trying to get lower bids.
- **Freedman’s Cemetery** - public art proposals, have been received back (See Staff Report). The Selection Panel will review submissions and identify the top three candidates and

then select final artist.

D. **Park Planning Updates** – Bethany Carton, Dana Wedeles. (See Staff Reports).

i. **Division Updates:** See Staff Report.

- **Francis C. Hammond field lights update:** The Chair, asked what were the findings of the BZA hearing held October 13, regarding the suit filed by the Seminary Hills Citizens Association, in opposition to the lights.
- **Wedeles-** The BZA findings denied the Seminary Hills Association appeal. The suit will be filed against the October BZA findings; the case will move forward to Alexandria Circuit Court. This does not preclude Seminary Hills from filing against a potential City Council action. The SUP for lights will most likely go before City Council in January or February, not December.
- **ASA-Four Mile Run Field- Wedeles-** there will be a public meeting December 15, at Cora Kelly to review plan, at 7:30 p.m, an email will go out next week.

ii. **CFMP for Recreation Centers Update** – David Ghezzi - See Staff Report.

- In October, the Commission received a memo detailing the new CFMP process. A week ago staff met with Recreation Center Directors to finalize the budget.
- With a goal of transparency, staff is working with Centers to maximize costs. His experience with construction management and design is to maximize value of the CFMP. Increase ability to enable program flexibility and facility usability. He will follow-up to ensure warranties are adhered to, systems are monitored, and that there is overall satisfaction of Recreation Center and users. The Director said the meeting was a very positive first step.

E. **Marketing, Public Relations & Special Events** – report by Cheryl Lawrence - Jack Browand gave the report in the absence of Ms. Lawrence-See Staff Report. In addition he reported that: **The Occupied Movement** - will move through City next Tuesday, a rally will be held in Market Square; **The Annual Tree Lighting** – is Friday, 11/25, 7-9 p.m., City Hall, Market Square; **The 35th Annual Turkey Trot Race-** is Saturday, 11/24, 8 a.m. to noon, event will start at G.W. Middle school.

VII. **Director's Report - James Spengler (verbal updates):**

A. **FY2013 Budget and CIP:** See Staff Report.

- The Acting City Manager, Bruce Johnson has asked departments to prepare a 6% budget reduction options to operating budget for FY13. The City is forecasting a 15-20 million dollar deficit of current services vs. projected revenue. ACPS is forecasting a 25-30 million dollar deficit. The new City Manager, will present his recommendations to Council in February 2012. During the last three fiscal years, the Department lost 30 positions, reduced hours at Recreation Centers, and also reduced programming. Staff met over the last few days to review budget reduction options. Actual numbers will be available later. The Department will seek to maintain its core programs, such as: after school, and Out of School Time (OSTP) programs for youth, youth sports and athletic programs, proper maintenance to ensure parks open daily for their intended use activities safely. Cultural and performing arts special events, and preservation/acquisition of open space, which was stressed as being important to residents, in the recently completed Needs Assessment. Items that are largely aesthetic will take less priority. The Director reviewed the list of potential budget reductions with the Commission. Actual reductions will be determined by City Council during this year's budget process which begins in February (increase in taxes is unlikely).

- B. Jones Point Park Construction:- See Staff Report- there were no comment.
- C. Park and Recreation Commission Future Meeting Times:
The P&RC agreed to permanently change its meeting start time to 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. Staff will process this through the City Clerk's office.

VIII. Report from Commissioners (verbal updates):

- A. Waterfront Committee -Gina Baum.
 - The Waterfront Plan Work Group will release its alternative report on December 13, the report will go to City Council for a decision early next year. Mr. Spengler said that both the Waterfront Plan SAP, and Francis Hammond field lights request will go before City Council on January 21, 2012 for a public hearing.
- B. Youth Sport Committee - Jeffrey Murphy.
 - Miracle field fundraising is coming along; they will be working with Washington Nationals to get them on-board. Wedeles- a meeting on the Miracle Field was held last night \$40,000 dollars is in the bank. More is coming.
 - Ewald lights - that are supposed to be shining on the basketball courts are getting turned to the field, it may be guys playing soccer-climbing poles (lights are 40 ft. high).
 - Proposed increase in fees for the youth sports programs- Budget cuts were discussed at meeting, and possible increase in fees for youth programs. Alexandria City's program fees are relatively inexpensive as compared to other jurisdictions. A moderate increase may be acceptable, but not market rate.
 - Baum- regarding fee policy suggested adding a provision that would give people the opportunity to make donations/contributions, to help others attend programs.
- C. Four Mile Run - Ripley Forbes- no report
- D. Freedman's Cemetery - Bob Moir- was absent.
- E. ACPS & Capital Improvements- Judy Guse-Noritake.
- F. Jones Point Park Liaison Group- Judy Guse-Noritake. Project is moving along fine-See Staff Report on JPP VII-B.
- G. Community Gardens Policy- Next Steps-Judy Noritake. Will be discussed later.
- H. Ft. Ward- Ripley Forbes- (corrected text) - Mr. Forbes was unable to attend the entire meeting but said a presentation was given on the components of a Management Plan. Once something is written in the plan, it must go back through the Department and City Council for review and approval. Public and stakeholder comment is expected to be an important part of a process to develop a Management Plan for the park. The Chair said that the Management Plan should include a revisitation schedule.

IX. Agenda Items for January 2012 meeting and location (No meeting in December):

The Next Meeting will be January, 19, 2012, at Charles Houston Center, agenda item- continued discussion on Friends Groups.

X. Adjourned: 9:40 p.m.

XI. At the close of the meeting, the Commission will take comments on any other topic from the public. See Item VI-A, comments by Jeanne Gardner, Chinquapin Advisory Council.