P&RC Members:
**Present:** Jennifer Sands Atkins, Chair (District 2); Judy Coleman, Vice Chair (District 3); Brian McPherson (District 3); Matthew Walsh, Secretary (District 2); Liz Birnbaum (District 1); Gina Baum (District 1)

**Absent:** Stephen Beggs (District 2); Connor Rex (HS Youth rep); Abby Froemming (District 3); Barbara Marvin (District 1)

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, Director; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & CIP; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Beth Znidersic, Principal Planner, Park Planning; Laura Durham, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Margaret Orlando, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager.

Guests: Carolyn Griglione.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Jennifer Sands Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **PUBLIC COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Carolyn Griglione addressed the Commission with an update on the Family Splash Night events held at Chinquapin Park Recreation Center and Aquatics Facility. All 14 public schools, and private school, St. Stephens & St. Agnes participated in the event over the past year. There were 1452 participants during the 2017-18 school year, of which 293 were first time visitors to the recreation center. Ms. Griglione also reported that close to 400 fourth graders from four different schools participated in the ACPS physical education swim program. Many participants exceeded the expectations of their swim instructor. Next year, P.E. swim will broaden its program to include George Mason Middle School, Patrick Henry, and Cora Kelly elementary schools. On August 11, Chinquapin Park Recreation Center and Aquatics Facility will host a free swim event and movie night in the park. Ms. Griglione also requested that the Commission meet at Chinquapin Park Recreation Center and Aquatics Facility once this year.

**Commission Discussion**

Chair Atkins thanked Ms. Griglione for all of her hard work in planning and helping facilitate these events. Atkins has heard nothing but good things about Family Splash Night. She also mentioned that the Commission plans to move their monthly meeting to different parts of the City, including Chinquapin Recreation Center.
III. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATION

a. **Resource Allocation & Cost Recovery Policy**

Laura Durham, Division Chief, shared an excerpt from an article entitled, “Cost Recovery in public parks and recreation”, by Chris Dropinski.

> “Agencies are simultaneously accountable for maintaining a functional, sustainable system that attracts the overall community and one that also responds to the interests of the individuals. Park and recreation professionals have a broad vision to provide opportunities and services that will improve the quality of their residents’ lives.” She went on to say, “...there should be a relationship between the way tax revenues are spent, and the extent to which the community as a whole benefits from the resulting opportunity. If some individuals receive greater benefit from a specialized program or service, the opportunity exists to charge them for part, or a bulk of, the operational costs.”

Durham stated that the article highlights the foundation of the cost recovery concept. She explained the Pyramid Methodology, indicating that programs ranked at the bottom of the pyramid are mostly of community benefit (funded by tax dollars), while those ranked at the top were of individual benefit. Durham continued that one key element is making sure that the community is involved in the process. Commission members are invited to the Priority Based Budgeting session hosted by Green Play on August 15. There will be additional public sessions in the fall.

**Commission Discussion**

Birnbaum stated that she is president of the board for the Alexandria Harmonizers. For many years, the Harmonizers rehearsed at the Durant Center free of charge. Priority based budgeting now requires a rental fee for the space. She is interested in how the City determines whether a small group of people is benefiting just their group or the community. She used Family Splash Night planning meetings as an example of a small group benefiting the community at large. Mr. Spengler, RPCA Director, stated that groups raised this topic during the first two sorting years. They wanted consideration based on the goodness of their services. He explained that we are rating facility rentals, and not who is renting the facility. RPCA created three categories to include for profit, non-profit, and Government rentals. RPCA charges rental fees based on the individual category. The Arts Commission and Arts Forum discussed the three categories to address the question posed by Birnbaum. They determined the need for a fourth category between non-profit and Government rentals to include groups like the Alexandria Harmonizers. This year council agreed to allocate $90,000 to performing non-profit art groups. There is an affiliate agreement process similar to the sports affiliate agreement. If an art group has an affiliate agreement, they are able to use rental space at an 80% subsidized rate. McPherson asked if there have been any major challenges to adapting this process over the last few years. Mr. Spengler stated that early on there were groups that felt they benefitted the City, and should receive a discounted rate. After five years, everyone seems to understand the process and we are currently at 50% cost
recovery. Baum wanted clarification on adding an additional tier for performing arts. Mr. Spengler stated that it is just for rentals. Walsh asked if it was fair to say that financial assistance has increased over time. Durham stated that there is an increase, and that she will report actual numbers in upcoming months. Chair Atkins stated that one of the things she would like to see data on financial assistance and participation. She went on to stress the importance of advocating for tier one and two programs.

IV. ITEMS FOR ACTION:

a. Approval of Minutes: JUNE 21, 2018

McPherson moved and Birnbaum seconded the approval of the June minutes. The Commission approved the motion by unanimous voice vote.

V. PROJECT UPDATES

a. Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning
   i. Waterfront Projects Update

   King Street Park
   Browand stated that there would be a delay in the contractual substantial completion. There have been continuous challenges with heavy flooding. The park has flooded 22 days out of the last 60. We are on target to have the park open early to mid-fall.

   Windmill Hill Park
   Browand stated that early August is the contractually deadline for the project. There may continue to be contract extensions submitted and the City will determine if they are valid. If you have visited the area, you will see placement of the bridge, the sidewalk is complete, the trails are starting to form, the vegetation along the shoreline is starting to come in, and most tree planting met the June deadline. The construction of the northern pier is a separate project, which shortens the turnaround time for this project. The intention is to have this park substantially complete by the end of the summer.

   USS Bruckenthal
   On July 25, the City of Alexandria will host a christening of the USS Bruckenthal a U.S Coast Guard fast assault vessel. The ship will arrive on July 24, and will be in port until July 26. The christening is open to the public.

   Ben Brenman Park
   Browand stated that there has been discussion in regards to the meadow and non-maintenance issues at Ben Brenman Park. There has been a consistent reduction of trashcans throughout the City’s park system. The reduction started at the waterfront and moved west. There have been no significant issues in regards to removing trashcans. It has actually improved the efficiency in many cases. There are plans to meet on the west end to discuss the maintenance policy.

Commission Discussion
Coleman asked about the area now referred to as the meadow. She stated that though it is a natural habitat, the area has not changed much. Coleman stated that the planning of this space seems backwards. This was not part of the large park plan done for Ben Brenman. Browand agreed that the amendment to the park plan happened without community involvement, and states that additional steps will prevent that from happening again.

Cameron Run Regional Park Planning Process
Browand introduced Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager, and Beth Znidersic, Park Planner, who were both part of the staff team that meets with NOVA Parks in reference to the Cameron Run discussion. Browand gave some history on the topic stating that NOVA Parks has held the lease for the last 40 years. In 2016, City Council considered a 20-year lease extension. This commission, as well as others spoke up against it. The direction was then for staff to undertake a planning process. From August 2016 to October 2016, a planning process took place and ended with a recommendation to this commission and City Council. The recommendation in December 2017 included a 10-year lease replacement that would start in 2018, which would give NOVA parks a 7-year extension on the current lease. There were seven priorities identified by the residents and stakeholders, which City Council endorsed. In addition, City Council provided staff with four directives, which included exploring the possibility of a partnership. From February 2018 to present, staff has met with NOVA Parks monthly to discuss partnership parameters. The proposed extension is performance based, with NOVA Parks required to meet certain conditions by June 30, 2021.

Browand indicated that additional discussions will continue over the summer. The September Commission meeting will be a public hearing to present staff recommendations. Staff will forward a recommendation to City Council in the fall.

Commission Discussion
Chair Atkins wanted to voice that there is a possibility to talk to other entities in regards to the park if there is no agreement made with NOVA Parks. Browand agreed. Coleman stated that it would be helpful to have the costs endured by NOVA Parks for the conditions above. Coleman also commented that the costs to NOVA Parks seem to support things that would benefit them, opposed to general community benefit. Baum added that it would be nice to list benefits to the City and benefits to NOVA Parks in two columns. Birnbaum stated that many aspects of the extension seem to benefit both sides. Walsh asked if the City would still transfer money to NOVA Parks each year, and if the items listed as long-term considerations are in the current CIP. Browand stated that the city would continue to transfer money to NOVA Parks, and that they have not made a determination on the long-term considerations. McPherson stated that the batting cages are poorly maintained, and that many visitors are not Alexandria residents. Baum disagreed with Browand’s
statement that there was not an outcry against the waterpark. She also feels that the important question is how we will ensure that this property serves our community. She added that there is no way the public will accept that NOVA Parks will not be paying a fee. Though adding holiday lights and ice-skating from November-February is nice, it is not year-round use. She would like to see additional programming during the fall and spring. Both Browand and Collins stated that Nova Parks has agreed to dedicating onsite maintenance crews for the property. McPherson stated that we need to negotiate a way to get more money than nothing, and the fact that we pay them a certain amount while they make money off the park is hard to swallow. Browand wanted the commission to understand that the membership fee paid by the City is to support the entirety of the park system, not specifically Cameron Run Regional Park. He continued to say, the direction was not to seek rent from NOVA Parks. Chair Atkins asked if Collins could comment from a City Manager’s perspective. Collins stated that the City Manager has been clear that this is not walking away from membership of the Regional Park Authority. Browand stated that this is about activation of the site for 12-month use. This is a shared responsibility, and not solely on the shoulders of NOVA Parks. Baum stated the need for a planning process that aligns with the proposed extension. Chair Atkins closed discussion and summarized that she liked the negotiation that has taken place to have the site activated as quickly as possible. It was smart to have conditions put in place for the extension. We need to look at our assets and figure out how to use them to the best of our abilities. She thinks this process should include a commitment that we start planning and having a long-term vision for the site. During the public hearing in September, she would like to hear more about the specifics of the conditions, maintenance criteria, and the language of the City’s assess to the site.

VI. DIRECTOR’S REPORT
a. CIP Update
James Spengler, Director, RPCA, advised the Commission that CIP planning through FY20 kicks off in August and ends in January. In March, the FY21-FY30 will begin. If the Commission would like to submit any recommendations to Council for CIP items, this would be the timeline.

VII. DIVISION UPDATES: Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina
Division updates (staff reports) posted at:

VIII. COMMISSION REPORTS (verbal reports by District)
DISTRICT 1: Liz Birnbaum and Gina Baum had nothing to report.
DISTRICT 2: Jennifer Atkins had nothing to report.

DISTRICT 3: Judy Coleman and Brian McPherson had nothing to report.

IX. NEXT MONTH MEETING ITEMS – Working Draft Attached

X. NEXT MEETING
September 20, 2018 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

XI. ADJOURNMENT
At 9:05 p.m., McPherson moved and Walsh seconded meeting adjournment. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.