

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission

PUBLIC HEARING AND REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, June 20, 2013, 7:00 p.m.

Charles Houston Recreation Center

901 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Members Present: Judy Guse-Noritake-Chairperson, Gina Baum, Stephen Beggs, William Cromley, Judith Coleman, Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson.

Excused Absences: Jennifer Atkins, Richard Brune, Emma Schutzius (H.S. youth representative).

RPCA Staff Present: Director James B. Spengler, Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations, Jack Browand, Division Chief Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, Judy Lo, Park Planner, David Ghezzi, Architect, Eugene Loew, Waterfront District, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services, Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects.

Guests: Bill Rivers, Steve Seiler, Jason Seiler, David Fromm, James Gevevie (Park Planning Intern), Bruce Foster Wiley, Paul Lineman.

Summary Minutes

- I. **Call to Order by Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake.** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Items for Action:

- II. **Approval of Summary Minutes: April 18, 2013, May 23, 2013:**

A. April, 18, 2013: McPherson moved to approve the minutes; Forbes seconded. All were in favor, the minutes were approved.

B. May 23, 2013: Forbes moved to approve the minutes; McPherson seconded, all were in favor, the minutes were approved.

- III. **Public Hearing - Capital Improvement Programs-External Projects-Citizen Requests:**

Please See Staff Reports. Durham gave a brief introduction to the process. She said external citizens requests are received by the department of RPCA periodically throughout the year. Six requests were received and will be reviewed tonight. A number of proposed projects still have to go through due diligence and may require a SUP. RPCA staff is looking for a recommendation from the Park and Recreation Commission on which requests staff should take steps to move forward. Durham reviewed the projects in order:

1. **Commonwealth Median Improvements:** Please See Staff Report. Background-the Del Ray Citizens Association Adopt-a-Park Committee submitted a citizen request raising concerns about the current condition of the medians located between Cliff St. and Mt. Vernon Avenue. There are twelve medians, most are 12 feet in width, and the largest is approximately 35 feet wide. Each median has turf and trees of varying maturity. The proposed project requests various median improvements –please refer to staff report for more information.

The Chair said the medians would be a wonderful resource in the middle of the community. She would like to take some forward steps with T&ES. The EPC may say to take some of the medians out and make them rain gardens, not sure what to do.
The Chair asked if there were any speakers in attendance on this issue.

Public Comment- David Fromm: the soil is old and compacted, a big concern is getting the soil treated to preserve trees there. Trucks drive across the median causing soil to become compacted. Care of the trees, park and land would be a big benefit. Agrees low curbs are nice. Going other route, approving trees, gardens, irrigation, is a good idea.

Recommendation: The final recommendation is to continue to work with the DRPCA, in conjunction with the City Arborist, T&ES, and the EPC.

2. **Exercise Station in Planning District I** - Please See Staff Report. The proposed project requests that the City install one chin-up/pull-up bar at any of the City's parks located in Planning District I, preferable one of the Waterfront Parks.

Recommendation: Install one pull-up bar now and require that exercise/adult fitness be considered as a possible part of the Waterfront Design process.

3. **Lee Center Playground Expansion** - Please See Staff Report. The proposed project requests an expansion of the existing playground behind the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St., to include accessible equipment. The Miracle League of Alexandria, and the Kelley Cares Foundations are pursuing this project that will provide additional outdoor recreational opportunities for Therapeutic Recreation programs based at Lee Center. Their goal is to raise \$70,000 for equipment. Kelley Cares has already raised \$13,000 and applied for a grant through CVS/Caremark for the remaining funds. If awarded the grant would be available in Fall 2013. If the grant is denied, they would pursue other fundraising efforts.
Discussion: Proposal to be entirely funded by the Kelley Cares Foundation and the Miracle League of Alexandria. Bill Rivers, Chair of the Miracle League of Alexandria, explained the proposed expansion project.

Recommendation: The P&RC supports this project.

4. **Simpson Dog Exercise Area Lighting** - Please See Staff Report. The proposed project requests lighting the dog park in Simpson Stadium Park.
Discussion: Durham said the request was received from a member of the Simpson Dog Park group. Paul Lineman is present to speak on proposal. This would be a capital project, and each light would cost approximately \$5,000. The lights would be on a timer and shut off at 10 p.m. The community expects to do a fundraiser to support the lights. Project would require a SUP.

The Chair commented that she had heard from Sandy Modell who is very interested in this project. Modell questions why an SUP is being required. She said the dog park formally had lights, however when the dog park was moved, the lights were not relocated.

Public Comment-Paul Lineman – he lives on Monroe Avenue and uses parks each day. Some fields are being well cared for, he would like the same consideration applied to dog parks. Doing a public/private partnership. Get lighting and safety issues addressed. He put out a petition for two days –received many signatures.

Recommendation: Solve the SUP issues, and move forward with residents/users to light the dog park.

5. **W&OD Off Leash Dog Exercise Area- Please See Staff Report.** Due to frequent poor drainage, standing water and proximity to traffic, a nearby resident and park user submitted a request to change the area where the off leach exercise for dogs is permitted. **Discussion:** Durham- the request is for proposed relocation of dog exercise area. Concern listed in request is that the area has poor drainage. **Chair-** two concerns: 1. At some point area will have a nice trail, 2. It is a dog park. This is not something to be decided tonight.

Public Comment- David Fromm, 2307 E. Randolph Avenue -

Fromm asked for more details and that the dog exercise area be located further south though not so far as to be behind the dog day care center. He said he appreciated Laura Durham's opening comments about the overall External Projects Request process. Agrees that the current dog park is not in the right place; poor drainage, near both the road and a children's playground.

Recommendation: Continue to work the neighbors and the DRPCA to discuss this issue.

6. **Windmill Hill Off Leash Dog Exercise Area- Please See Staff Report.** A citizen request was received via email for changes to the off leash dog exercise area at Windmill Hill Park; includes a request to provide a footbridge across the river end of the drainage area that would connect the Fords Landing path, all along the riverside of the park to Harborside; and installation of a fence. The Chair asked the commission for the consensus of the group?

Recommendation: Staff should not move forward on this request.

There were no further questions or comments, the Chair closed the Public Hearing.

Regular Meeting:

- IV. **Consideration of the 2013 Civic Award Nominations:** See Staff Report. The Park and Recreation Commission received the report, recognizing no nominations were received for the 2013 year. The report recommends that the PRC establish an Awards Subcommittee to review the existing program; and make recommendations for maintaining, modifying or discontinuing this program by the November 2013 commission meeting. **Discussion-** Browand said this is the first time in twenty-seven years that no nominations had been received. The Chair recommended discussing the Civic Awards Program at the January 2014 meeting. Regarding the City's Annual Birthday Celebration July 13, at Oronoco Bay Park, the Director said Park Commissioners can make their way to the stage during the Mayor's greeting. Browand said the program begins at 7 p.m., and the City's Birthday cupcakes will be distributed at 8:00 p.m. The Chair encouraged members to attend.
- V. **Potomac Yards Metro landing sites tour- follow-up: See Staff Update.** **Background-**The Potomac Yard Metrorail project is an infill Metrorail station located between National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations on the Blue and Yellow lines in the vicinity of the Potomac Yard. The development of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project is currently underway. The Park and Recreation Commission took a tour of the sites prior to their May 23, 2013 meeting in order to prepare to make recommendations on the DEIS when the time is right. Under the initial schedule the DEIS was to be released on May 3, 2013, however it is now scheduled to be released in late fall 2013. **Durham-** made reference to the Staff Report/Update. Projection is that the earliest a public comment period can be held is October 2013. Release of revised options will come back to Park

Commission in September. The Chair said this item will be deferred to the September meeting for further discussion.

Other- The Chair and Commission received a letter on March 26 from the Developer, expressing concern regarding the landing sites. The letter requests the Park & Recreation Commission to push for Alternative B. The Chair sent an email back saying that the PRC would be touring the site and would provide their formal comments when the time is right. On May 23rd a letter was sent from Rich Baier, Director T&ES to the author of the original letter from P.Y. Development, stating the letter he wrote to the Chair, Judy Noritake was forward to T&ES as the appropriate City agency to respond to the letter. The Chair relayed that she was quite unhappy that Director Baier had answered the letter addressed to her without calling her about it. She has spoken with him to relay her displeasure with the response. She will forward the correspondence to the Commissioners.

Items for Information and discussion:

- VI. **Overview of the City Open Space Master Plan, Status of Implementation Report- Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator** - Durham provided an overview at the May PRC meeting. Durham read excerpts from the May memorandum. The City of Alexandria is projected to need another 183 acres of open space in the next ten years; this will require more innovation and creativity. A number of recommendations are included in attachments and memo:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/OpenSpaceInformation23May2013.pdf>

Discussion: The Chair said some people may be unaware that the City's dedicated Open Space Fund that was in place for the first five years was removed from the budget by City Council recently. The Open Space Fund does not currently have a dedicated source of income. A few issues discussed with Durham, Open Space Coordinator- at a meeting unanimous- set goal that kept the same ratio of open space. The City of Alexandria is expected to grow fast over the next ten years, the amount of open space is getting scarcer. The Chair feels that the City should not compromise on its goal of open space. Durham said currently 7.3 acres per 1000 required for public open space. Cromley- stated that there are spaces along the waterfront that could be used for open space by filling in what is currently river area.

Chair- said she has mark-ups for Durham on the Open Space Plan. Need to also shine a light that there are public open spaces that are in danger of being used for other things, i.e. P.Y. metro site and ACPS expansion and growth may also threaten open space. The schools are installing modular classrooms, which have a longer use time, on open space – not trailers. We should look at how much space is taken up.

Coleman- asked is this going to City Council or the Planning Commission?

Durham- said the City has an interdepartmental work group, staff should review recommendations over the summer. Then it will go to City Council. This is an opportunity for EPC, and Planning Commission to review prior to City Council. There may be regulatory changes. The Chair said there is need for improved storm water management- more useable, better design, and need regulatory framework. The BMP under the Monroe Avenue Bridge is not useable open space and yet is counted as such.

- VII. **Braddock Park- Tentative Post Office Block Site (Park Planning & Planning and Zoning):** Durham gave brief update. Staff is working with Braddock rezoning group to explore guiding principles for a one acre park. At the next Advisory Group meeting, they will discuss interim timeline for taking down the existing building for a half acre park. Tentative demolition, late fall or early spring 2014, depends on what happens with site.

- VIII. **Four Mile Run (Park Planning)**- The City signed documents for PYD to take the bridge down.
- IX. **Division Updates:** To View Full Staff Reports go to <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCStaffReport20June2013.pdf>
- A. **Recreation Programs and Service Update** - William Chesley, Deputy Director- See Staff Report- there were no questions or comments.
 - B. **Park Operations Report** – Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director- See Staff Report- there were no questions or comments.
 - C. **Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront Operations** - Jack Browand, Division Chief- See Staff Report. Coleman asked a question regarding why the concerts at Ben Brenman Park are not listed. A concert was held last night, but she was unaware of it. Browand said he will check to see why it was not advertised and make corrections to future calendars.
 - D. **Park Planning, Design & Capital Development Reports** – Ron Kagawa, Division Chief and Team-See Staff Reports. 1. Active Park Projects including Capital Improvement Project (CIP-Update of Selected Projects and 2. Active Capital Facilities Maintenance Projects (CFMP) Report- Selected Projects and memo on Summer Interns. A summary report of the Large Master Parks Process will be provided at a later date. There were no questions comments.
- X. **Director’s Report** - James Spengler. No updates. McPherson asked how the summer registration is going now that Chinquapin has temporarily closed for maintenance repairs. Recreation staff will provide McPherson numbers on enrollment.
- XI. **Report from Commissioners (verbal updates):**
- A. **Waterfront Commission** - Gina Baum. Baum said she did not attend the last meeting. Elections were held; Charlotte Hall was elected Chair of the Waterfront Commission, and Steve Thayer was elected Vice Chair. The report of the Facility Assessment of the Marina is complete and being presented to the Commission. RFP for Beachcombers building was extended by five days to June 14, 2013. General Services has received applications – there will be no public opening. Comprehensive report expected from G.S. in July. Browand reported that the RFP for Robinson Terminal is out and due to close June 20th.
 - B. **Youth Sport Committee**. Brian McPherson- said no meeting was held. The group has been attending RPCA’s Large Parks Master Planning meetings.
 - C. **Four Mile Run** - Ripley Forbes- Mr. Forbes was absent.
 - D. **Freedmen’s Cemetery**. No update.
 - E. **ACPS & Capital Improvements** - Judy Guse-Noritake- there is a meeting on Monday the Chair will attend. RFP for Patrick Henry is being developed.
 - F. **Community Gardens Policy**- Judy Guse-Noritake. RPCA Deputy Director Tiwari, Park Operations is doing research on a city-wide garden policy and what other communities have done and will bring principles and an outline policy in September.

- G. **Ft. Ward** - Ripley Forbes. Durham said management consultant is on board- met with Advisory Group last Wednesday. The Ft. Ward Advisory Group meets the second Wednesday of the month.
- H. **ACPS School Projects**- Judy Guse-Noritake.
- I. **Jefferson Houston School** – William Cromley. Jefferson Houston School is currently under construction.
- J. **Open Space** - Judy Guse-Noritake- see Item V-I.
- K. **Braddock Plan Park**- Judy Guse-Noritake. See above, Item VII.

Other Items:

Discussion on Norfolk Southern: Coleman asked a question regarding Norfolk Southern applying for a permit to bring more rail cars carrying ethanol behind Boothe Park. Cameron Station residents and city officials asked for a hearing. Do we think the P&RC should comment? The Chair said there are some noise issues, possible spills (safety issue). Her feeling is that the P&RC should write a letter, and if there is an opportunity to testify do so.

Coleman- asked whether the Commission will be involved in developing the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan. The Chair said she could request that a member be appointed to the Advisory Group, similar to the request that was made for Beggs to represent the Commission on the Beauregard Corridor SAP, which was recently approved.

Status of SUP for Lights on Tennis Courts at T.C. Williams H.S. – Durham – on June 27, there will be a community meeting, it begins at 6:30 p.m.

- XII.** **Public Comments:** Please refer to Item #III – Public Hearing on 2013 External Citizens Requests- see public comments. There were no other public comments on any other item.
- XIII.** Agenda items for July 18, 2013, meeting and location.
- XIV.** List of upcoming public meetings- a list was distributed at the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 8:45 pm.