City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Charles Houston Recreation Center
901 Wythe St.
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, March 15, 2018
7 p.m.

P&RC Members:
Present: Liz Birnbaum (District 1); Abby Froemming (District 3); Barbara Marvin (District 1); Judy Coleman, Vice Chair (District 3); Matthew Walsh, Secretary (District 2); Stephen Beggs, (District 2)

Absent: Detriona Johnson (HS Youth), Jennifer Sands Atkins, Chair (District 2), Gina Baum (District 1); Brian McPherson (District 3); Connor Rex (HS Youth rep).

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, Director; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & CIP; Tiffany Marbury, Executive Assistant to Director; Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, Office of the Arts; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Margaret Orlando, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Debbie Woodbury, Regional Program Director, Recreation Services;

Guests: No guests reported.

I. CALL TO ORDER
Judy Coleman called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS
Nothing reported.

III. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATION
a. Office of the Arts Update
“Office of the Arts” posted at:

Diane Ruggiero (Deputy Director, Office of the Arts), gave a presentation that included Cultural Programming, Community and Cultural Events, Grants, Services to artists and art organizations, and creative economy and cultural planning. She advised the Committee that as of October 2016, the City began managing the Torpedo Factory. At that time, all current leaseholders received a 3-year lease. Artists now lease and sublease directly through the City. With the assistance of a consulting team, the Office of the Arts conducted a survey to gain public feedback on what they wanted in an arts center. They collected over 800 artist surveys, and 900 resident surveys. The task force will receive a draft of the survey data in June, and Consultants will meet with the task force at that time. Completion of phase one of the process (goals and strategies) July 2018.
Commission Discussion:
The Commission inquired about the change in tenant’s lease rates, and the center’s financial stability. Ruggiero explained that artists pay approx. $15 per sq. ft. per year. There was a rate increase of $1.35 per square foot when the City began management in 2016 to cover the cost of operating the building. She continued that the Torpedo Factory is self-sufficient, and only runs on the revenue it generates. The Commission also asked how often the artists are there, and why it seems that studios are not open on a regular basis. Ruggiero stated that there is a requirement that studios need to be open a certain number of hours per week based on how many artists are in the studio (one artist = 28hrs, two artists = 36hrs, three artists = 40hrs, galleries = 48hrs). Tracking whether the artists have been meeting that requirement has been difficult. It is currently on an honor system, but they are looking into better ways to track artist hours. The Commission asked if there was an option on the survey to make the building space something other than an arts center. Beggs asked what happens when someone is not aware of an upcoming project. Ruggiero stated that when someone is unaware of public art coming to their neighborhood, they tend to voice their displeasure with the artwork because they were not a part of the planning process. The Office of the Arts tries to make sure residents are fully aware of their projects, and encourages resident to attend the community meetings. The next community meeting is March 28.

The Commission requested that Ruggiero return in May to give a follow up on data collected from the survey. Ruggiero accepted the invitation.

IV. ITEMS FOR ACTION
a. Approval of Minutes: February 15, 2018
Froemming moved and Beggs seconded the motion to differ approval of the February meeting minutes. The Commission approved the motion by unanimous voice vote.

V. PROJECT UPDATES
a. Project Updates
   i. Simpson Park
   Jack Browand stated that renovations to the playground area of Simpson Park are currently out to bid. Construction will begin in June, with an expected completion time of mid fall.

   ii. Holmes Run Bridge
   Browand stated that there was a delay in the Holmes Run Bridge project due to the need for some changes in the design. This will push the project back approximately one month. Browand will notify the community and the Commission of the revised construction schedule.
iii. **Interim Fitzgerald Square/Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) site**
Browand reported that completion of the dredging project at the foot of Oronoco Street is later this week. Removal of soil from the river bottom has occurred. West Point Park will re-open to the public. Demolition of the Old Dominion Boat Club started this week, with completion of the demolition by tomorrow. The ground breaking for the construction of the new park will be this Saturday at 8 a.m., at the foot of King Street. The construction should last 6-8 months, with the park opening in mid-November. The Point Lumley connection is complete, and will officially open tomorrow morning. It connects the properties to the south of the new ODBC and the foot of Prince Street.

iv. **Windmill Hill Park**
Browand reported that the water company would not accept the meter system that they originally approved. However, he stated that most of the site work is complete and this should not be a major setback. The park will open this summer, with certain areas under minor construction.

v. **Patrick Henry**
Browand reported that the Patrick Henry project continues to progress and the new facility is still on schedule to be fully functional after the winter break in January 2019. The only recent concerns included an increase in construction workers parking on neighborhood streets, and runoff from the site entering Holmes Run. Staff has addressed and corrected both concerns.

vi. **Warwick Pool**
Browand stated that Warwick pool would open Memorial Day weekend. A soft opening or grand opening will be coordinated with City Council. He will update the Commission once finalized.

vii. **Ben Brenman Dog Park**
Browand reported that there is a technology issue with having a solar lighting system at Ben Brenman Dog Park. The current lighting system does not meet the requirement of having the lights shut off by 10 p.m. He will request that City’s Planning and Zoning Department amend the requirement to allow a lower wattage bulb and extend the time limit on the lights. In addition, residents have requested lighting for the paved pathway in that area. He will present this request to Planning and Zoning as well.

viii. **Boat Licenses**
A request for a commercial boat license will go to City Council this weekend. Barring any unforeseen issues, we will have the license by April.
b. **Cameron Run Regional Park Planning Process**

Browand reported that there is a meeting next week with park planning staff, the City Manager and NOVA Parks. A topic of discussion will be how to include amenities that create year-round use, and maintain water activity. He will update the Commission with takeaways from that meeting.

**Commission Discussion:**

The Commission asked if the site allows food trucks during normal operation. Browand stated that it would meet the criteria of off-street parking, and NOVA parks could allow it. In addition, the Commission asked if there have been other meetings they are unaware of, and when does the nine-month deadline expire. Browand stated that there have not been any additional meetings, and they have until October to go to City Council with a recommendation.

c. **Dominion Energy 230kv Line Update**

Browand gave some background on the project stating that there was an agreement that City Council endorsed to have the line to run within the railway easement. At some point, there was a change in management, followed by a significant price increase. Dominion Energy asked the City to reconsider a cheaper alternative. Unfortunately, the easements they are proposing would require the removal of every tree along that line. The City opposed that option. Dominion then agreed to reduce the width of their proposed easement. They will propose to stay within the street rights-of-way and it would only cause the removal of seven trees. The final meeting is in two weeks and the taskforce will make a recommendation. The recommendation would then go to City Council, where they will make a final decision.

**Commission Discussion:**

Birnbaum asked about the area of Potomac Avenue towards Four Mile Run. Browand stated that much of the power line in that area would be underground. They have not shown that area on their plan, but they will have to identify all areas that are affected. Walsh asked why they have decided to do this project. Browand stated that it is for resiliency. This will allow a new substation to connect with Pepco below the Potomac River.

VI. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

a. **Proposed FY19 Budget Operating & CIP Budget**


James Spengler (Director, RPCA) announced the promotion of Tiffany Marbury to the permanent position of Executive Assistant to the Director of RPCA. Margaret Orlando announced that Debbie Woodbury is the new Regional Program Director at Charles Houston Recreation Center. Spengler noted that there are two upcoming budget work sessions on March 21 and April 11. He went on to reference the Budget Summary handout. He highlighted the following:
Department Changes to City Services include:

**RPCA**
- Reduced One Regional Program Director position
- Leased adult fitness equipment to modernize fitness centers
- Patrick Henry will be a full service center in January 2019
- 1701 Beauregard Street will open as a new school facility including an afterschool site
- Art-based programming through collaboration with DCHS, to be facilitated at afterschool sites

**Park Operations**
- Funding for the maintenance of the new King Street Waterfront Park
- Additional cycles of maintenance and mowing has been reestablished for the public rights-of-way and parks
- Funding for Baseball field turf maintenance have been reestablished
- Funding added for vegetation control (weeds and overgrown vegetation) along the public rights-of-way

**Arts**
- There will be an agreement similar to the affiliate agreement for groups to get a special rate for rentals at the Durant Center. The City and those renting space at Durant came to this agreement. It also involves having cultural arts related services move from a tier 4 to tier 2 on the cost recovery model.

Spengler went on to say, RPCA has used priority based budgeting for the past 2 years. The City has adopted this process, and has started the transition. The next step will be creating a matrix to score services throughout City.

**Commission Discussion:**
Birnbaum asked about the process of priority rating and if cost is a factor. Spengler stated that cost is not a factor, and they base priority on the adopted goal areas of the City’s strategic plan and the strategic plan of the RPCA.

**VII. DIVISION UPDATES: Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina**

Division updates (staff reports) posted at:  
[https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCombinedStaffReports3_15_18.pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCombinedStaffReports3_15_18.pdf)

Margaret Orlando (Division Chief, Recreation Services) reported that the Citywide Out of School Time Program workgroup held a forum this morning at Lee Center. The group consists of staff from ACPS, Recreation Services, and the Campagna Center. The emphasis of the meeting was to increase communication and align services between ACPS and afterschool programs. Close to 100 people attended.
Beggs asked for an update on the Fort Ward park project. Dinesh Tiwari (Deputy Director, Park Operations) stated that the consultant hired by the City’s Office of Historic Alexandria to develop the Interpretive Plan for Fort Ward historic areas are tasked to hold four public work sessions before making the final recommendations. They have held two of the four public meetings so far. They have developed a preliminary outline for the Interpretive Plan, but it is still in the development phase. Dinesh will provide the Commission with the date of the next public work session.

VIII. COMMISSION REPORTS (verbal reports by District)

DISTRICT 1: Barbara Marvin had no information to report. Liz Birnbaum reported the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) groups had a few recent meetings, and the last meeting before making the recommendation to City Council on scheduled for Monday. The last meeting included a cost benefit analysis on green infrastructure. The meeting included participants that worked on the combined sewer green infrastructure in Philadelphia, which is one of the most aggressive projects in the country. They concluded that the results of that option were not significant enough for it to be a factor. They also shared that the estimate of the impact on water and sewer rates would be double what residents are paying now. Birnbaum stated that “Option B” still seems to be what the group is leaning towards. This option includes building large new tunnels near Hoofs Run, under Old Town and across the southern end to the Waste Water Treatment Plant. This option also involves the least treatment of the Oronoco Bay outfall. It meets the criteria, but it does involve dumping a considerable amount of untreated mixed sewage and storm water into Oronoco Bay.

DISTRICT 2: Stephen Beggs and Matthew Walsh had no updates to report.

DISTRICT 3: Abby Froemming and Judy Coleman had no updates to report.

IX. NEXT MONTH MEETING ITEMS – Working Draft Attached

X. NEXT MEETING
April 19, 2018 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

XI. ADJOURNMENT
At 9:12 p.m., Froemming moved and Walsh seconded meeting adjournment. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.