City of Alexandria, Virginia  
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING  
Charles Houston Recreation Center  
901 Wythe St.  
Thursday, September 20, 2018  
7 p.m.

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

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, Director; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & CIP; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Dana Wedeles, Principal Planner, Park Planning; Laura Durham, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Margaret Orlando, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Julie Miles, Recreation Manager; Tiffany Marbury, Executive Assistant.

Other City Staff: Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager; Jesse Maines, T&ES; Joni Calmbacher, T&ES; Bill Cook, Planning & Zoning; Nathan Imm, Planning & Zoning.

Guests: Brian Nolan, Nova Parks; Susan Hellman, Citizen; Erin Winograd, Citizen; Dave McOver, Nova Parks; Janice Magnason, Resident; Tommy Park, ASA; Jeff Newhouse, ASA.

I. CALL TO ORDER  
Jennifer Sands Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS  
None

III. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATION  
a. Ewald Park Neighborhood Park Plan Amendment  
“Ewald Park” posted at:  

Dana Wedeles, Principal Planner, stated that the department is proposing a new step in the process of amending park plans. She presented a form to the Commission that includes the proposed amendment, staff recommendation, and an area to note the action of the Commission. If the Commission approves the amendment, it becomes part of the park plan.

The amendment to the park plan for Ewald Park would allow the addition of a parkour area to the proposed playground site. The parkour area would be a multigenerational play space
that promotes fitness and can help activate the park. While the proposed amendment may reduce the size of the playground, the proposed use compliments the playground and provides an activity to diversify the ages of its visitors. The amendment does not create additional maintenance costs from the originally endorsed plan. It is the staff’s recommendation to approve this amendment.

Wedelles introduced Jonas Neihardt, a student at T.C. Williams High School that has proposed the parkour area. He has met with City Council and the City Manager’s office about the proposed amendment. Neihardt has been a parkour athlete for the last ten years, and explained how including parkour in the park would diversify the ages of park users.

**Commission Discussion:** Commission member Coleman asked how the cost of installing parkour compares to that of a regular playground. He stated that the cost is roughly the same, but it would depend on the equipment chosen for both. He also stated that the average cost for a skate park is $150,000; more than twice the cost of parkour. Commission member Froemming asked if there is lighting at this location. Wedelles stated that though the nearby basketball courts have full lighting, this area does not have functioning lights. Chair Atkins asked about having a wall verse railing around the area. Wedelles stated that walls might restrict visibility, and there would be a need to work closely with the police department to ensure safety. Commission member McPherson asked who designs the parkour parks. Jonas stated that seasoned parkour athletes usually design the parks due to their knowledge of the sport. Chair Atkins suggested adding the amendment to the agenda for action during the October Commission meeting. Various community groups will have an opportunity to weigh in on the decision.

b. **Storm Restoration Projects**


Jessie Maines, Division Chief of Storm Water Management for the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, and Joni Calmbacher, Civil Engineer, gave a presentation on improving the streams in the City. Calmbacher stated that they are in phase III of the stream assessment process, and that they are evaluating five streams. Based on the field assessments done by staff and consultants, the recommendation is that Strawberry Run and Taylor Run receive restoration first. The cost for restoring Strawberry Run is roughly $1.6 million, and Taylor Run is $4.5 million. Calmbacher stated that a Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) Grant could provide half of the funding needed. The project goes before Council on September 25. Maines stated that they would like to meet with the Commission again once they are further into the design process to gain input.

**Commission Discussion:**

McPherson asked if Four Mile Run belonged to the City or Arlington County. Birnbaum responded that it belongs to both. She went on to say that, Arlington recently completed
stream bank restoration on their side of Four Mile Run. The City completed wetland restoration on its side of the stream. Coleman asked if Backlick Run was on the priority list. Calmbacher stated that Backlick Run is very constrained, and there is not enough space to do a full restoration. Backlick is a good candidate for strategically placed stabilization techniques. Birnbaum asked if there is enough room for meandering or backwater pools. Calmbacher stated that there are both straight stretches and areas eligible for meandering.

c. **Zoning Text Amendment to Athletic Field Lighting**
Bill Cook, Urban Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning discussed the text amendment for Congregate Recreational Facilities. There is an existing definition of Congregate Recreational Facilities in the Public Open Space and Community Recreation zone. The amendment is to change the definition and place it in the general definition section of the zoning ordinance. The proposed definition reads *a use devoted to recreational activities typically or often pursued as a group or team, such as athletic fields, children’s play apparatus areas, archery ranges, court game facilities, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, amphitheaters, band shells, and outdoor theaters, not including drive-in theaters.*

Cook stated that there is an addition entitled Lighting for Congregational Recreation Facilities and Dog Parks to section 6-400 which pertains to height districts. The section adds regulations for lighting in those areas. Among the regulations, it states that with a special use permit, an applicant could request additional height for light poles at Congregate Recreational Facilities if they can demonstrate that the pole height adds an improvement to light spillage. Nathan Imm, Principal Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning, used a visual aid to show the effects of increasing the height of the poles on a field such as T.C Williams. He explained that the higher you place the lights, the less light spillage and glare you encounter.

**Commission Discussion:** Birnbaum asked why they decided to remove certain recreational facilities and not others from the definition. Cook stated that those locations in question fall under the definition of an amusement enterprise. Birnbaum also asked if the term, “Congregate Recreational Facilities” is used in other places of the City Code. Cook said no. McPherson asked how they arrived at 80ft in height. Cook stated that most football fields have 80ft lighting.

d. **2018 Summer Programs Update**

Laura Durham, Division Chief, Recreation Services, and Julie Miles, Recreation Manager, briefed the Commission on attendance and revenue data from the 2018 Summer Programs.

**Commission Discussion:** Birnbaum inquired about Nerf Fencing. Miles stated that it is similar to traditional fencing, but that they replace the sword or foil with a Nerf object.
IV. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Cameron Run Regional Park Partnership

“NOVA Parks” posted at:

Jack Browand, Division Chief, gave a brief history on Cameron Run. He stated that NOVA Parks has a 40-year lease agreement that expires in 2021. In 2016, City Council considered a 20-year lease extension, but that idea received significant opposition. Beginning in January 2017, a planning process took place and the group formed a recommendation. Once reviewed by this Commission, it went to 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. From action on that docket item, City Council provided staff with four directives, which included exploring the possibility of a partnership. From February 2018 to present, staff have met with NOVA Parks monthly to discuss partnership parameters. Browand went on to explain the staff recommended partnership agreement detailed in the presentation. The proposed 7.5-year extension is performance based, with Nova Parks required to meet certain conditions by June 30, 2021. These conditions include a Winter Village inside the waterpark, Learn to Swim classes and dedicated lap swimming during pool season, parking lot enhancements, site maintenance enhancements, and a mini portable multi-use synthetic turf field.

Tommy Park, Alexandria Soccer Association, wanted to address questions that have come up for alternatives for the space. He stated that there is a need for more access to usable recreation space in large parks. The narrative from youth sport leaders have been, “can we get the same deal as NOVA Parks”. He shared that ASA paid over $100,000 in city field fees last year alone.

Commission Discussion: McPherson asked how large the portable multi-use fields would be. Browand stated that there are a number of sizes, and they are usually in the neighborhood of a futsal size court. McPherson asked if there was ever a discussion on revenue sharing. Jack said that revenue sharing was not part of what the group was to pursue. Beggs said that it would be good to add minimum expectations to the conditions listed so that everyone is on the same page. Birnbaum asked if there was data to showing the demographics of who uses the site. She added that it is important to have accurate statistics on who we are serving. She would like to see something added into the conditions that track where visitors are coming from. Browand agreed that it would be important to know how many City residents are using the park, and that he would discuss that with NOVA Parks. Froemming shared that she was happy with the conditions, especially the site maintenance enhancements, and repairs to the parking lot. She asked about the location of the ice skating rink. Browand stated that the rink would be contained within the current fencing of the park. Paul Gilbert, Executive Director, NOVA Parks, spoke in more detail of the Winter Village. He also indicated that the quality of the Winter Village would be similar
to the Bull Run Festival of Lights, which is one of the largest light shows in the region. McPherson asked about the admission charge for the Winter Village. Gilbert stated that it had not been determined. Coleman stated that she was happy with the communication that happened over the past year. She also indicated that there are opportunities for clarity on the dates listed for starting the additions, and there could be more clarity given to the joint vision. She added that the items listed as City responsibilities read as though they are requirements. Browand indicated that it is still a working document, and the City duties may not be included. Walsh stated that he likes the plan, and mentioned that CIP planning would have to start soon when thinking long-term. Chair Atkins thanked those that attended the monthly meetings that led to this recommendation. She asked if price of Learn to Swim classes will be consistent with City class offerings, and will financial assistance be available. Gilbert stated that he was not aware of the current pricing for the City’s Learn to Swim classes, but he will obtain that information. Atkins also suggested continuing regular meetings to keep communication open. She mentioned that she likes the thought of the Winter Village, but possibly including options that are free of cost. She agreed that this recommendation is a good short-term solution that will activate the area. Browand stated that the next step would be presenting the recommendation to City Council on October 9, with a public hearing on October 13. Browand asked the Commission to provide a letter of support by Friday, September 28, if they support the recommendation.

Motion: Walsh moved and McPherson seconded the motion to close the public hearing. The Commission approved the motion by unanimous voice vote.

Motion: Coleman moved and Birnbaum seconded the motion to write a letter in support of the staff recommended partnership agreement. The Commission approved the motion by majority voice vote. McPherson opposed.

V. ITEMS FOR ACTION:
   a. Approval of Minutes: JULY 19, 2018
      Chair Atkins asked if the Commission had a chance to review the minutes. Froemming moved and McPherson seconded the motion to differ approval of the July meeting minutes. The Commission approved the motion by unanimous voice vote.

VI. PROJECT UPDATES
   a. Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning
      i. Waterfront Projects Update
         King Street Park
         Browand stated that there was a contract extension until the end of September. He expects that there may be another request to extend for a few more days due to rain and flooding. He is confident that the park will be available by mid-October.
Windmill Hill Park
Browand stated there was a proposal to place a memorial plaque in recognition of Captain Ryan Wojtanowski in the park. He was on the Environmental Policy Commission, the Waterfront Commission, and an advocate of the new park. The Naming Committee accepted the request this month and it will go to council in November. Browand states that the park should be in substantial completion by early October.

ii. Patrick Henry Recreation Center
Browand stated that construction is going well, and there is now a sub roof in place. The project is still on schedule for substantial completion/temporary occupancy by December 18. The school will open the first week in January, with full project completion the third week of August 2019.

iii. King Street Park at the Waterfront Public Art Update
“Public Art King St Park” posted at: https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/KSPPublicArtUpdate(1).pdf
Browand shared that the Office of the Arts’ Temporary Public Art Program selected King Street Park at the waterfront as the location of a temporary art piece beginning in March 2019. The piece will be on display for one year and there is an $80,000 budget. Art Commission members and community stakeholders formed a task force. The task force received a number of art submissions for this specific project. Out of those submissions, the task force chose SoftLab to provide the artwork for the park. Browand went on to discuss the draft presentation that includes a sketch of the artwork and its planned location in the park. Chair Atkins opened the floor for questions from the community. Janice Magnason, City resident, asked if the City had decided that the name of the park is King Street Park. Browand stated that the naming committee met last week to consider a naming process for King Street Park. Once finalized, the community will have an opportunity to propose potential names. There will be full community involved in naming the park.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
a. FY 2020 Priority Based Budgeting
James Spengler, Director, RPCA, reminded the Commission of a letter they received from the City Manager for feedback on the budgeting process. Please submit your feedback by October 26. Chair Atkins added the topic to the Commission meeting agenda for October 18.

VIII. DIVISION UPDATES: Recreation Services; Park Operations; Park Planning, CIP & Marina
Division updates (staff reports) posted at: https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCombinedStaffReports_Sept20_2018.pdf
Durham informed the Commission that the consultant GreenPlay would be facilitating resource allocation/cost recovery workshops during the month of October. She proposed combining one of the workshops with the October Commission meeting. Chair Atkins stated the need for further discussion.

IX. 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: Brian McPherson had nothing to report. Judy Coleman reported that the Eisenhower West group recently met and discussed landmark mall re-planning and open space compliance. Coleman suggested putting the commission reports earlier on the agenda.

X. NEXT MONTH MEETING ITEMS – Working Draft Attached

XI. NEXT MEETING
October 18, 2018. Location TBD.

XI. ADJOURNMENT
At 9:48 p.m., Walsh moved and Atkins seconded meeting adjournment. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.