

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**  
**Park and Recreation Commission**  
**Public Hearing and Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, November 19, 2009, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Charles Houston Recreation Center**  
**901 Wythe Street**  
**Alexandria, Virginia**

**Commissioners:** Judy Guse-Noritake-Chairperson, Henry S. Brooks, Rich Brune, Mathew Coda, William Cromley, Ripley Forbes, Clark (Stephen) Mercer, Kaj Vetter. Excused Absences: David Dexter, Robert Moir.

**RPCA Staff:** James Spengler- Director, William Chesley, Roger Blakeley, Jack Browand, Laura Durham, Alisa Carrel, Robin DeShields.

**MINUTES**

I. Welcome:

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed staff, the public and Councilman Frank Fannon. David Dexter and Robert Moir had excused absences. A quorum was present.

II. A. Public Hearing Opened: The Chair introduced Jack Browand, Department of RPCA.

B. **Presentation on FY 2010 Proposed New and Increased Fees - Jack Browand and William Chesley:** *A copy of the full report was submitted in advance to the Commission and posted to the City's website (please refer to staff report):*

- **New Fees being Recommended:** Adults Sports Fitness Fee, Tennis Court Light Fee and a Youth Sports Athletic Equipment Deposit Fee.
  1. Adult Sports Fitness Fee - a one time yearly fee of \$100 will be charged to adult residents of the City of Alexandria to utilize any of the Neighborhood Recreation Centers in the city. Currently use of all Neighborhood Recreation Centers is free with the exception of Chinquapin. The new fitness fee does not apply to Chinquapin admission and other class fees. This fee is similar to the fee created last year for the youth after school program.
  2. Tennis Court Light Fee - the proposed new tennis court light fee will not occur due to a lack of funds to install the equipment. The funds needed to purchase and install timed tennis court light control boxes were dependent upon a supplement budget request which was not approved.
  3. Youth Sports Athletic Equipment Deposit Fee - is targeted at participants of the football program. The cost will be \$50 per year per player for non-return of uniforms. The fee is fully refundable upon return of the equipment. The deposit fee may be expanded to other areas in the future.
- **Recommended Fee Increases:** Out of School Time Program Fee, Chinquapin Pass Fee, Chinquapin Admission Fee, Garden Plot Fee, Youth Sports Fee, Youth Sports Field Use Fee.

Out of School Time Program Fee - William Chesley reported to Mr. Brooks that out of approximately 900 participants in the program, approximately 30 were free.

Garden Plot Fees - the Garden Plot fees are tied to a supplemental budget request. If RPCA, staff receives funding they will look at all garden plots operated by the City. The goal is to standardize the size of future garden plots to maximize space, and to develop new plots to bring in more revenue. Mr. Blakeley- moving to a standardized plot size may affect some people who have had plots for years. People with existing plots will be allowed to keep them, however depending on the size; they may have to pay more. There are five non-resident gardeners grandfathered into the system, the oldest has been since 1972. Currently only residents can obtain a space. Henry Brooks noted that not all plots within the city limits are administered by the City. **The Chair – said the Commission needs to look at garden plots as a broad policy decision in the spring.** To include reviewing appropriate locations and how the plots are put in place. The issue deals with land use and water irrigation.

- **Mr. Browand - approval of the fee increase for garden plots doesn't mean it has to be applied on July 1, 2010.** Once authorization is obtained it can be applied anytime. Mr. Browand discussed the remaining fees; other recommendations have basically stayed flat.
- **Ripley Forbes-** asked if any of the fees will come down when the economy improves, and said that fees should also include deductions. The goal is to encourage people to participate in programs. **Mr. Browand-** staff are trying to get more fees that are tied to market rate adjustments; which would allow staff to make slight increases in fees without going back to City Council each time; however most fees tend not to go down over time.

Additional Discussion:

- Marina Fees - the Chair asked if the marina fees have been raised yet and stated that marina fees, rental of facilities and parkland fees, fall into a different category and should be handled incrementally. Mr. Blakeley- responded that marina fees are assessed on a calendar year basis and that RPCA staff is currently in the process of doing a waterfront study. Jack Browand- said these fees were all raised last year in line with market rate adjustment. Additionally - picnic reservation fees went from a one day rate to a half day rate.
- Soft Playroom Fees - Mr. Cromley asked why the soft playroom fees were not included in the report and if there was any consideration in making this a cost recovery program. Mr. Chesley-The Soft Playroom will generate revenue over time that will ultimately recover the cost to construct the room and the equipment, but the program falls under the umbrella of the Chinquapin Center operation as a whole. Jack Browand - the current cost is \$4.00 per half hr.; additionally people can use the room for birthday parties, etc.
- **Discussion of Fee Categories & Timeframes** - **The Chair** said people are paying many different fees that are on different timeframes and schedules. The Commission has pushed for smaller annual increases across the board, to avoid huge rate increases at one time. She would like to see a mechanism implemented by category that would allow fee increases to occur automatically. **Mr. Browand responded** that approximately two years ago City Council authorized the City Manager to raise fees equal to the % of the CPI-U index. New fees and fees increased greater than the CPI-U would continue to require City Council approval. For FY2011, the CPI-U index is 0%. Anything that is tied to the fee structure is part of the budget process and goes through the City Council and will have to be scheduled for a public hearing.

**Action Item:** The Chair asked RPCA staff to look at structuring fees by class/category, and then developing a system to raise or lower each class/category depending on the market or economy. The Chair also suggested that staff consider advertising fee changes in the department Program Guide.

- **C. Review and Receipt of Comments on Proposed Fees:**

- The following persons submitted comments by Email.

1. Kristopher Croghan - suggested that fees be charged for owners who use dog parks. Stated that with the fee, dog owners would receive a dog tag as proof of payment. He feels this is one way to receive some public payment for community services. Suggests building shelters at all parks that can be rented out to citizens for special events.
2. Brad C. - is opposed to fee increases for use of garden plots at Chinquapin due to the economy and his income being down. He grows vegetables to save money and eat healthy; the fee increase would eat away at that benefit. Stated plot fees have increased from \$40 to \$47 and now \$55, and may soon be \$100 - \$200. Stated that the fee should be frozen for the next two years. There are only about 40-75 gardeners at Chinquapin, feels they are politically weak and can be charged more. The fee increases send the wrong message to those who are trying to eat healthy and save money in the economy.
3. **Public Hearing Period:** The following persons spoke at the public hearing.

(a) John Timmons, Alexandria Soccer Association – He’s interested in what is going on with the fee increases. While the ASA doesn’t supports raising fees, he realizes they can’t ask for new synthetic turf fields and improvements in other facilities without recognizing that there is a need to pay for them. The proposed fees are in line with what other jurisdictions are charging. However, when comparing Alexandria City with other jurisdictions, staff needs to keep in mind that Alexandria’s recreation facilities lag way behind those of most other jurisdictions.

Councilman Frank Fannon – The City is going through the budget process. He is receives a lot of emails from citizens who don’t want user fees increased or higher taxes.

The Chair asked if there were any other comments on any other items. **There were no other comments; the public hearing was closed.**

**Motion:** The Chair asked for a motion regarding the Proposed New and Increased Fees Report. **Henry Brooks** moved that the Commission accept and endorse the report and fee schedule as presented by RPCA staff. Richard Brune seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**Copies of all public comments received by email prior to the meeting and during the Public Hearing will be posted on the City’s website.**

D. **Commission Receives Comments on Other Topics:** None received.

E. **Public Hearing Closes:** 7:30 p.m.

## **Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting:**

### III. Approval of Summary Minutes from the October 15, 2009 Meeting:

- Mr. Cromley asked that a correction be made on pg. 13 regarding his comments about the Post Office park. **Motion** - Kaj Vetta moved to approve the minutes with noted corrections. The motion was seconded by Richard Brune. The revised minutes will be reposted to the City's website.

### IV. Division Updates:

**Note: A Full Copy of Each Staff Report was posted to the City's Website. To view staff reports go to [www.alexandriava.gov/25560](http://www.alexandriava.gov/25560)**

#### A. Recreation Programs and Services Update - William Chesley (see staff report):

- Mr. Chesley recommended that his report be accepted as prepared. **There were no questions or comments, the Commission accepted the report.**

#### B. Operations and Park Planning Update - Roger Blakeley (see staff report):

- Mr. Blakeley recommended that the P& RC accept the report as prepared. **There were no questions or comments, the Commission accepted the report.**

### V. Update on Design and Construction of Athletic Field at Ben Brenman Park - Laura Durham (see staff report).

- **A work session with City Council is scheduled for January 12, 2010**, moved from 1/26/10 to discuss the field replacement program. Ben Brenman fields will also be discussed. RPCA staff has not received further comments from the public since the October 15 public hearing. Following the work session, staff will be move forward with plans to get the SUP for Ben Brenman docketed.
- **The Chair-** said she has not had a chance to prepare the letter in support of staff recommendations on Ben Brenman synthetic turf field conversion with addition of lights to the City Manager. The letter should be completed several weeks before the work session with City Council in January.
- **Mr. Spengler-** said the work session will be staff's and the P&RC opportunity to present the case to City Council showing the demand for more athletic fields vs. space available. Future trends show that as demand increases the City's capacity to handle it will not. In order to meet the capacity without new turf fields; the City would have to build 20-30 new fields. RPCA's preferred method of meeting the demand is with new synthetic fields conversion and lights. Staff wants to ensure that Council understands the broad view of athletic field capacity before getting into a discussion specifically on the Ben Brenman recommendation.
- **Chair-** Council members from last term understand these issues; new members need to be brought up to date. In addition to meeting the demand with new synthetic turf fields, as new developments occur (i.e. Potomac Yards, Landmark, etc.) the City needs to look at using space on rooftop developments for new fields. This is not an answer for full-sized fields, but will help solve some of the problems.
- **Accessing the needs of adult sport users:** The Chair and P&RC discussed the need to access the demand of adult sport users. There is a pent up demand of adult sports users in Alexandria, many go to other jurisdictions (Fairfax and Arlington Co.) to use fields due to a lack of availability in Alexandria. **Steven Mercer-** said many people work late, paying taxes to live in Alexandria. There is a lot of tension to get off the fields so

others can use them. **Ripley Forbes** -said staff shouldn't diminish what Alexandria is already doing, there are a substantial number of adults already playing sports, the Co-ed adult soccer programs are huge. **The Chair** said it is hard to answer this question until we know what the demand is for adult sports.

- **Use of Roof-tops for Fields:** Ripley Forbes asked were the lessons learned when the DASH field was proposed. **The Chair**- she has been speaking with Council and the Planning Director to try to get them to think about doing more fields on rooftops. **Laura Durham** - there are challenges and legal issues with requiring rooftop field developments on private buildings. **Mr. Cromley** suggested advocating for developing fields on top of public buildings if it was easier, and look at what public options may be coming up in the next few years.

VI. Update on the Public Art Funding Policy - Alisa Carrel (see staff report):

- A work session will be held with City Council on 12/8/09. A public community meeting will be held at the end of January 2010 to bring groups together to get input.
- **The Chair** suggested that Ms. Carrel speak with Gwen Wright, Division Chief, Development in the city's Planning Department, Donnie Simpson of Simpson Development Group and Katherine Puskar. Ms. Carrel said she is on the Northern Virginia Builders Association agenda for 12/10/09, and responded to Henry Brooks, that she has been in contact with the Art on the Waterfront Committee. Alisa mentioned that an Ad Hoc Advisory group for public art was established.

VII. Director's Report – James Spengler (see staff report):

A. FY 2011 Budget Process:

- The City Council held a Budget Retreat on Saturday, November 7, 2009 to discuss the economic outlook and priorities for the FY 2011 budget. **It is likely that all of the budget reductions submitted by RPCA will be taken during the budget process.** If asked to make further reductions, staff would need to decide what services to cut or reduce.

B. FY2011 CIP:

- **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) –see attached report-** total requests = approximately \$75 million. The CIP was changed from a 6 year to a 10 year time frame.
  - **Renovated or Expanded Rec. Facilities** - Chinquapin the largest facility is 30 yrs. old. Many systems are worn and large renovation costs are expected. **The Chair** –asked why Chinquapin is being put before Patrick Henry. Mr. Spengler responded Patrick Henry is one of the two sites along with Jefferson Houston that the School Board has targeted for renovation and expansion; this may be sped up depending on the school system. If all structures are removed at both sites-then we are back to looking at a new design model relative to both these sites. The impacts would be at Patrick Henry a new Rec. Center, and at Jefferson Houston it would impact the Durant Arts Center.
  - If Jefferson Houston and Old Town pools are scrapped, staff would request they be replaced with new competitive size, indoor/outdoor all season pools. This site is close to the King St. Metro Center and may have more intensive use after renovation. This would be a collaborative effort between the City and Schools doing a joint venture to serve the community.

- **Spray Areas** - Looking at Spray Area +Warwick Pool, the idea is adding both those funding streams together to renovate the city's Aquatic structures. There is no aquatic facilities master plan. RPCA staff has concluded that the Old Town pool site and Chinquapin would be the City's two Regional Aquatic Facilities. Chinquapin would have two pools and Old Town one year-round pool. Everything else will be done as a spray pool or spray pad. This is staff's intended direction.
  
- **Community Running Tracks**- \$100,000 has been included to take a look at running tracks in the City. Gary Carr, has been a strong advocate for more running tracks in the city along with others. **Steven Mercer** asked why there is only one running track in the city and said that removing the track at Francis Hammond School was a poor decision. He supports the need for more fields, but also supports the need for more running tracks. As a coach he wants to see kids running to help them stay in shape. **Chair**-the School Board made the decision to take out the running tracks the P&RC was not consulted. **William Cromley**- there was no demand for tracks in terms of broad public support; however he agrees that the Hammond decision was a poor one because there was already a track there. Henry Brooks said there was no place to put the school addition -he was a member of the school board at the time. Mr. Cromley fields get huge amount of use vs. running tracks. Steven Mercer-said that Washington Lee tracks are filled every night. Mr. Spengler agreed that there is a demand for running tracks and said that people are using the service roads at Ft. Ward Park. **The Chair**- commented that the field study that was done also addressed the running track issues. There have also been repeated inquiries from seniors for an indoor fitness track. This was discussed for Chinquapin. **As new development occurs, staff needs to take advantage of this and include competitive oval running tracks or put down a good wide path where new buildings are built, since land is scarce.** This is being done at Witter fields and needs to be done at other places. When the All Field Study was done it showed that there were very few places where competitive size tracks could be placed.
  
- **Park Facility Maintenance (CFMP)**- has been divided into two areas:
  1. **Recreation Facilities Maintenance (CFMP)**-these funds will go toward the recreation buildings and infrastructure improvements. Beginning next year, these funds will be managed by General Service as a way to become more efficient in repairing the Recreation Centers. General Services Facilities Manager will handle the projects.
  2. **Park Facility Maintenance (CFMP)**- these funds are to be programmed for the upkeep of existing outdoor facilities including athletic fields, sports complexes, and infrastructure needs. These funds will be managed by RPCA.
  
- **Bike Trails**- this is for repairs on the soft trails. Paving of other trails will be consolidated and handled by the Dept. of T&ES in the future. The City is trying to consolidate within departments those services they do best. In response to the Chair, Mr. Blakeley said that new trails construction this year were all done by T&ES.

**ADA Requirements for Parks** - A set of outdoor standards for disability requirements for public parks will be brought before the P&RC next year. A citizen inquiry was received from a person who lives near Ben Brenman Park, and

works for the federal access board. She questioned how a person in a wheelchair would be able to use the picnic tables or park benches. RPCA staff will work with the City's Office of Human Rights to address this issue. The City currently has no adopted outdoor standards for disability use in public park areas other than those for curb cuts and sidewalks.

**Public Art Conservation**- Alisa Carrel.

Includes conservation and installation of Public Art. This is anticipated to be a tiered process. Initially funds will go towards maintenance of current public art and then installation of new projects. There are currently two projects; Charles Houston and the Police Memorial project. Staff and community members are trying to raise funds for these projects; the cost will be about \$300,000 each. Mr. Cromley said that staff should look at projects to see how much maintenance is required and encourage artists to look towards doing low maintenance projects. Ms. Carrel said this is one of the criteria that the artists are being scored on.

**Open Space Acquisition & Development**- other than the balance of funds currently in the account- no new funds are anticipated.

- C. Waterfront Fishing. (The Director presented information on Waterfront Fishing please see staff report):
- D. Park and Recreation Commission Retreat:
- The Director RPCA and the P&RC discussed the possibility of holding a retreat in the spring in order to help plan on a list of topics to be discussed in the coming year and to look at what the P&RC wants to accomplish in the future. Staff & the P&RC will determine the most convenient date, time and place to hold the retreat. Mr. Brooks commented that the retreat should be held separately from the regular meeting.
  - **Mr. Spengler**- commented that most items on the agenda except for legislatively required public hearings are discretionary. It would be more effective if the agenda included items the P&RC wanted brought forward during the year. This would help ensure that staff's time is well spent and help identify what significant accomplishments have been made.
  - The Chair and a small planning group of 2-3 staff will be put together to develop an outline. City Council plans to use information from the Strategic Planning process to help determine and budget resource allocations. The Chair said the Commission should review the strategic plan once finished, because it may change the direction of the P&RC.
  - **It was suggested that the Retreat be held in February or March 2010, after the Strategic Plan is finished in January.**
  - Several Commission members spoke in support of holding a retreat: The Chair commented that she feels that the P&RC has been a highly proactive Committee. Suggested items for discussion at the retreat:
    - 1. Open Space Plan.
    - 2. Volunteerism in the parks (expanding).
    - 3. Community engagement with the parks.  
Mr. Forbes- said the community has not been surveyed since 2003-2004 when the Recreation Needs Study was done. Since that time, many things have changed.
  - 4. A Master Plan for the Parks.

The Chair-commented that if a master plan is done for the larger parks, an update of the Recreational Needs Assessment would need to be done.

- 5. Forming a Cooperative Agreement with users of the parks and neighborhoods, to help defray some maintenance costs.
  
- **Special Events Policy** - Jack Browand
- The Special Events Policy will go back to City Council for adoption on Tuesday, 11/24/09. A Council work session will be held on 12/8/09, and a City Council Public Hearing will be held on 1/23/2010.
- The G.W. birthday parade route change has been docketed for next month.
- Irish Parade-will raise more money to reimburse the City.
  
- **No Smoking in Public Parks** - A request was made to calendar before City Council an ordinance to ban smoking in and around playgrounds in public parks. This may or may not go to Council. The P&RC dealt with this several years ago, the law clearly states that a local jurisdiction can not create a standard higher than what the state law requires. RPCA staff is awaiting an opinion from the City Attorney. In the meanwhile staff has sent its response to Citizens Assistance office.
- Ripley Forbes- asked if City Council, the City Attorney state that staff can not ban smoking, could staff simply post signs asking patrons to please not to smoke in the parks for your health or the health of others. This way at least staff will be taking some action.
  
- **Discussion on Public Fee Policy** - The Director, RPCA suggested that the P&RC place on the agenda for discussion, development of a Public Fee Policy. Many jurisdictions have a philosophy statement on why fees are or are not charged, by category or type of program. Right now it is not entirely clear what fees are charged and why.
- **Action Item:** The Chair asked if RPCA staff could provide a sample policy, and take a crack at inserting the policies that are already in place.
  
- **Dog Park Master Plan** - the Plan is over 10 years old. It will be updated based on the knowledge gained over the past 10 yrs. and the types of requests staff are now receiving. Staff will look at making broad policy decisions rather than making decisions based on individual requests.  
**The Chair-** said staff should also look at including as a policy statement that as the Planning Dept. considers new residential developments over a certain size - they need to plan for including a dog park.

VIII. FY2010 - FY2020- Playground Renovation Schedule - Laura Durham (see staff report).

- This item was distributed as a follow-up request from Mr. Cromley from the last meeting. There were no additional questions comments. Henry Brooks - thanked RPCA staff for making repairs at Windmill Hill Park within a few days of his comments at the last meeting.

IX. Report from Commissioners:

- **Ripley Forbes** - the first Fort Ward Park Advisory meeting is scheduled for 12/8/09.
  
- **Henry Brooks** – The last meeting of the Waterfront Committee was held Tuesday at 7:30 a.m. There was an update on the Waterfront Plan and a presentation/study on flooding along the waterfront and recommendations on alleviating flooding. He will provide details at the January meeting. The Chairperson, of the Committee, Susan Petty is resigning.

- The Parade of Boats - will be held on 12/5/09 at dusk at the City's dock. The Campagna Center Christmas Walk will be held the same day.
- **Rich Brune** – He attended the Ft. Ward Historical Park Group meeting. It was very interesting; they are doing a historical investigation of families, tribes who lived there. There is no need to be represented on this group.
- He attended the Beauregard Planning Session on 10/28/09, and represented the P&RC. There was a very good turnout and the information was well received.
- **Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake** - The City Council Strategic Planning Meeting for Goal 4 is scheduled for 12/2/09, Commissioners Bob Moir and Steven Mercer will attend. The Director, RPCA described the structured planning process of the meeting and said that more information could be found on the City's website, on the Council homepage. The Chair commented that she didn't feel the use of dots as a way to vote on items was a very democratic process, not just on this but at other meetings as well. City Council members are elected to make the hard decisions, based on a broader prospective then just what they hear about guiding the future.

X. List of Upcoming Public Meetings - a list was distributed to the P&R Commission.

XI. Adjournment: 9:07 p.m. - There will be no meeting in December, the next meeting will held in January 2010.

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