

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**  
**Park and Recreation Commission**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, April 16, 2009**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Charles Houston Center**  
**901 Wythe Street**

**Commissioners**

Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair  
 Henry Brooks  
 Richard Brune  
 Matthew Coda  
 William Cromley  
 Ripley Forbes  
 Clark (Stephen) Mercer  
 David Dexter  
 Kaj Vetter  
 Marshanika Rich

**Commissioners – Excused Absences**

Robert Moir

**Staff**

Kirk Kincannon (RPCA)  
 Ron Kagawa (RPCA)  
 John Noelle (RPCA) (Trees)  
 Jack Browand (RPCA)  
 Mary Stephenson RPCA  
 Michael Stewart (RPCA)

**AGENDA**

- I. Welcome
- II. Approval of Summary Minutes from the March 19, 2009 Meeting
- III. Interim Staff in Department: Director Richard Baier,  
Michael Stewart Div. Chief Administration
- IV. City Waterfront Plan – Kagawa
- V. Update Potomac Yard and Braddock Park Fields at G.W. - Kagawa
- VI. Urban Forestry Plan- Kagawa
- VII. Four Mile Run Stream Restoration Project – Design Guidelines – Kagawa
- VIII. Recreation Program Plan update (deferred)
- IX. Accreditation Visit – CAPRA June 14-17 - Browand
- X. Director’s Report - Kincannon
  - Update on Fort Ward Park
  - Update on Special Events Policy
  - Council Work Session - Efficiency Study and Implementation, May 26
  - Athletic Field Improvements – Lighting at Four Mile Baseball,  
Synthetic Fields
- XI. Reports from Commissioners
- XII. Adjournment

**I. WELCOME****II. APPROVAL OF SUMMARY MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 19, 2009 MEETING**

- Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote on a motion proposed by Mr. Dexter and seconded by Mr. Vetter.

### III. INTERIM STAFF IN DEPARTMENT

- Mr. Kincannon reported that Richard Baier, T&ES director, is now Interim Director and Michael Stewart is Interim Division Chief, Administration
- Search for new director is ongoing.
- Plan is to complete a search for a new Director in time to be on board by July.

### IV. CITY WATERFRONT PLAN – Kagawa

**Follow-up Action:** Members to email Chair additional suggestions to be included in Chair’s letter to the suggesting issues that WF planning should address. (Commission suggested, but did not endorse specific WF activities to consider.)

- Public art as an important element.
- Principal departments involved – RPAC, P&Z, TES, Office of Environmental Quality,
- Schedule:
  - Phase I: Planning Phase – April/May
  - Phase II: Synthesis & Recommendations
  - Planning Meetings
    - April 23 – to obtain citizen input.
    - April 30 – Lyceum – Best practices in waterfront planning - Panel of experts to compare and contrast Alexandria to other city waterfronts (e.g. Savannah)
    - June 22 – Consultants report back; small groups will discuss their visions for Waterfront planning.
- Chair encouraged Commissioners to participate as fully as possible in meetings, especially since they represent the full range of City neighborhoods.
- Mr. Brooks emphasized the importance of recognizing that WF development will have a unique impact on those living in nearby neighborhoods – even though Waterfront development will impact all City residents since the WF is a city-wide resource.
- **Commissioners’ recommended that the following issues be forwarded for consideration the Waterfront planning.**
  - **Overview:** Operations (how WF is maintenance and planning), urban design (open space), and how the WF is used (events and programs)
  - Insuring continued public access to the full length of the WF
  - Consider views of WF from both water and land when planning development.
  - Waterfront dog parks: assess the locations and designs of the existing dog parks in the context of the overall plan that will emerge. We should plan for dog park(s) at the waterfront but located and design them in the context of the overall WF plan and to offer better and enhanced dog accommodations, if possible.
    - Consider the accommodation and facilities

- Well designed “Water dog” access point to river
- Possibility of a dog obstacle course at some location
- Urban design + architecture
  - Good contextual modernism
  - Elevate commercial development
  - Vibrancy - How to incorporate vibrancy and design in ways consistent with P & Z goals?
  - Designing to accommodate active community WF uses, and plan to accommodate the times when large numbers of people will be drawn by special events.
- Commission will discuss in the future taking Commission positions on specific recommendations as the need arises.
- Street ends/ views must be preserved
- Study the option of road closures to offer additional space for special events, to manage traffic, and to knit parks on the West side of Union to the WF
  - Street closures could be seasonal, or certain weekend days, may not be permanent.
  - Permanent closure of Union St. at Windmill Hill Park should be revisited
  - Robinson Terminal North – Union Street
  - Lower King St.
- Incorporate small scale active recreation nodes along the whole WF creating a “**string of pearls**” concept (small recreational areas dotting waterfront)
- Commissioners offered a range of examples for this string of pearls: croquet court, bocce/lawn ball/petanque court, horse shoe area, a chess garden (4-10 tables), badminton court,
  - Mr. Forbes urged keeping volleyball courts in the area.
- OTCA and Chamber - Mr. Brooks noted that Old Town Civic Association and the Chamber of Commerce had already taken formal on factors they wished incorporated into the WF planning process.
- Ranger position on WF – will be necessary as the use increases
- Plan must be supportable operationally, designed with maintenance in mind
- Vibrancy of parks to mirror context
  - Note: a commercial area produces more vibrancy
- Maintenance Depot / Ops center should be located somewhere on the WF and can be designed to architecturally compatible (like the floating boat-building school). It can also serve as an information location for visitors.
- Consider additional active uses
- Emergency/rescue boat launching should be included but no other boat launch.
- Mix of urban uses and the scale of retail should fit the context of the WF
- How to reflect Waterfront history
  - Industrial heritage - Port and train tracks have been removed - the Torpedo Factory the only vestige of WF industrial history.
  - Rail – reinterpretation – transport/trolley: Should a new North-South trolley be put in place?
- Water access at Mirant

- Integration with existing approved plans -
  - Existing parks be considered for potential modification to reflect improved use and needs in the broader context of the WF – but should not be diminished in size.
  - Consider interim modifications as component of Master Plan/WF process
- Residential areas - should have option to rezone neighborhood areas for commercial use where it makes sense
- Infrastructure at the WF should accommodate events of variable size/type.

## **V. UPDATE POTOMAC YARD AND BRADDOCK PARK FIELDS AT G.W. – Kagawa**

**Follow-up Action:** Chair to send a letter to City Council supporting the idea that a “threshold study” being conducted to evaluate the initial feasibility of the field land swap idea raised at recent PYPAG public meeting.

**Follow-up Action:** Chair to bring this issue to the attention of Jim Gibson of the Youth Policy Commission

- Reviewed the layout of the area.
- Idea was generated at a PYPAG’s citizens forum
- Proposal:
  - To conduct a threshold study of the citizen-proposed idea to determine the feasibility of idea to relocate existing athletic field to a nearby location (which is larger and may accommodate additional recreational fields) and convert the rezoned field site to high density development
  - Staff noted that conducting a feasibility study of the idea would offer an opportunity to develop a plan incorporating schools, parks and other needs.

### **Discussion:**

- Factors to consider as part of pros and cons of the suggested land swap: (a) acreage, (b) geometry of the land sites (activities don’t always fit into the available acreage), and (c) topography of the land.
- Parking – perhaps a garage – might be needed to accommodate increased recreational usage all the way to Simpson Fields
- Chair emphasized any redesign of the area must not eliminate the number of baseball or softball diamonds in the area, though some might be re-located.
- The idea of reconfiguring the two existing Simpson fields has been discussed as a possibility for review when a Master Plan for the area is eventually done.

## **VI. URBAN FORESTRY PLAN - Kagawa**

**Follow-up Action:** Chair to send Planning Commission a letter supporting the recommendations of the RPCA report.

- John Noelle presented the draft plan. Chair advised that City Council considers this an important issue, is concerned by the rapid steady decline in the canopy coverage, supports raising the canopy up to 40 percent coverage from 37 percent in 2004, and is looking for ways to address the needs despite the budget limitations – including ways to involve citizens in implementing the recommendations.

**VII. FOUR MILE RUN STREAM RESTORATION PROJECT – DESIGN GUIDELINES – Stephenson.**

**Follow-up Action:** Commissioners to send a letter to the Council concurring with the proposed design guidelines developed by RPCA staff.

- Staff presented a brief overview of actions taken since the last meeting.

**VIII. RECREATION PROGRAM PLAN UPDATE – Browand**

- RPCA’s program plan and annual update to be provided to the Commission in June, they are being developed as part of the Department’s documentation for its upcoming re-accreditation review. Plan will be an updated version of last year’s.
- Updated plan to be presented to Commission at May meeting
- Staff anticipates discussion of the plan at the Commission’s June, with adoption at that time.

**IX. ACCREDITATION VISIT – CAPRA June 14-17 - Browand**

**Follow-up Action:** Small reception at Charles Houston Rec Center June 16 for accreditation review team, and City officials, and RPCA staff and members of the public.

- RPCA is preparing its documentation required for its re-accreditation review. Renewal would be for five years, barring any problems. .
- RPCA is finalizing the self-assessment portion of the re-accreditation On-site visitation review is June 15-17.

**X. DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Kincannon**

**Follow-up Action – Fort Ward:** City Council has requested Commission’s views on RPCA’s proposed use guidelines for Fort Ward Park.

**Follow-up Action – Fort Ward:** May 13 will be first meeting of informal stakeholders’ group committee created by Office of Historical Alexandria. Commissioners Forbes, Vetter and Brune will represent the Commission on this informal group.

- **Update on Fort Ward Park**
  - Lance Mallamo presented to City Council its new information re historical aspects (grave sites, culture, etc.).

- Director has advised Council that he has put into place interim measures on Fort Ward uses until City Council considers proposed Fort Ward measures at its May meeting.
- **Discussion – Fort Ward**
  - Fort Ward’s multiple-use challenges reflect Alexandria’s broader challenge of how to balance respect for the City’s historic elements with need to respond to current/future needs of residents for recreation. Fort Ward is a park with significant historic and cultural resources– needing to balance these aspects.
  - The full scope and importance of some on-site historic elements (e.g. grave sites) was only recently more fully documented and put at the forefront by Office of Historic Alexandria.
  - Chair urged Fort Ward’s recreational functions be balanced fairly against the need to respect Fort Ward’s historic issues.
- **Update on Special Events Policy**
  - Tuesday evening the Special Events recommendations were presented to City Council.
  - Challenge for the Department and City Council is the cost of implementing the recommendations during this tough economic time when RPCA is reducing tree & athletic field maintenance and activities.
  - How to measure benefits to City (economic and otherwise) of Special Events?

**Next Step:** Council requesting additional RPCA information re criteria to measure benefits to the City of Special Events that are not self-supporting.
- **Council Work Session with P&R Commission - Efficiency Study and Implementation, May 26 at 5:30 p.m.**

**Follow-up Action:** Council requests Commission’s comments re how and whether the Matrix study recommendations reflect to RPCA efficiency improvements already implemented.

- Council to discuss with RPCA how to respond to Matrix recommendations.
  - RPCA’s implementation of actions put into place already reference the Auditor’s study (Matrix) study.
  - RPCA has made tremendous advances, for example, on its IT and web-based technology, with additional improvements remaining to be implemented.
- **Athletic Field Improvements – Lighting at Four Mile Baseball, Synthetic Fields**

**Follow-up Action:** RPCA to consult with PRC re: priorities for remaining 2009 funds.

**Follow-up Action:** Director recommended Commission consider among 2010 priorities which has priority – a synthetic field or lighting at Brenman Park?

- Director urged that replacing lights be a funding priority, noting that RPCA had wanted to do this for past several years – but priority was lowered by push for synthetic fields, and other actions.
  - Engineer reviewed the Four Mile Run Field lights a few weeks earlier – and recommended replacing the lights (approximately \$200K). Note: Funds will not be taken from synthetic fields funding.
  - City Manager had not recommended synthetic field funds in 2010 budget
  - RPCA will consult with PRC re priorities for the 2009 funds remaining.
- **Upcoming events:**
    - April 18 – Annual Citywide Cheerleading Competition (T. C. Williams HS)
    - April 21 – Days of Remembrance - Market Square
    - April 23 – Girls’ fast pitch softball season begins
    - April 25 - Earth Day 2009 (Brenman Park); Earth Day Tree Sale; Project Discovery Walk-a-thon
    - April 26 – GW Parkway Pacers Race
    - May 1 – Spring for Alexandria Community (volunteer program).
    - May 3 – West End Farmers Market opens (Brenman Park).

## **X. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS**

- **Mr. Cromley** – Planning Commission has passed a requirement that all new commercial buildings will be LEED Silver certified, and all residential new residential buildings be LEED Certified
- **Mr. Coda** – No report.
- **Ms. Noritake** – Distributed some “dog park rules” palm cards she had found, available for residents to hand to dog park users if they see a violation of a dog park terms of use.
- **Mr. Brune** – No report.
- **Mr. Dexter** – Stream restoration
  - US Army will be paying the City \$400 K for stream restoration work on Holmes Run as part of the BRAC funding to be provided to mitigate the impact of an additional 6400 new employees coming to City.
- **Mr. Brooks**
  - Noted inappropriate placement of political signs placed in Windmill Hill Park
- **Mr. Vetter** – No report.
- **Mr. Forbes**
  - Working with Steering Committee for Healthy Alexandria to develop a vision statement; distributed draft and invited comments.
- **Ms. Rich**
  - A student representative on the Commission, she reported she will be finishing her service when she graduates this year.
  - Has been working with the Youth Council developing “drug free” commercials and other activities.

### **Discussion:**

- Del Ray 1 and 7 pocket park: RPCA staff is working on the readying the plan to move ahead, but starting work will be delayed until funding is available.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT – 9:45 p.m.**