

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

Thursday, October 15, 2009, 7:00 p.m.
Patrick Henry Recreation Center
4643 Taney Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia

Commissioners:

Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Henry S. Brooks
Rich Brune
Matthew Coda
William Cromley
David Dexter
Ripley Forbes
Robert Moir
Kaj Vetta

Recreation Department Staff:

James Spengler, Director, (RPCA)
William Chesley (RPCA)
Roger Blakeley (RPCA)
Jack Browand (RPCA)
Ron Kagawa (RPCA)
Mary Stephenson (RPCA)
Laura Durham (RPCA)
Robin DeShields (RPCA)

Commissioners -Excused Absences

Clark (Stephen) Mercer
Vacant- 1 Student Position

MINUTES

I. Welcome:

Chair Judy Noritake opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed staff, the public and Councilman Frank Fannon. The Chair provided a brief outline of the process for the Public Hearing and Regular Meeting.

II. A. Public Hearing Opened:

- The Chair, stated the first item is a public presentation on the updated 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study which gives a rank order of attributes for a number of athletic fields in the City which may be candidates for of artificial turf and lights.
- The Chair provided background information on the proposed Synthetic Turf Field Conversion study. The Athletic Fields Master Plan, adopted in 2006, pointed out that the Alexandria had a severe shortage in athletic fields, that existing fields lacked the capacity to handle programming levels, and that many fields were in poor condition. As one solution, the Master Plan recommended conversion of some fields to synthetic turf. This would allow more games to be played on the limited number of fields in the city. In the years since the City Council has undertaken funding these recommendations. The first two synthetic fields were installed at Minnie Howard and Ft. Ward Park.
- Following the brief public presentation of the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion study and public hearing the P& R Commission regular meeting will be held. During the regular meeting, staff will address adoption of the 2009 Synthetic Fields Conversion study including any additions or alterations, and make a recommendation based on the report and from public comments received on the next field that should be converted to synthetic turf. The Chair noted that there is currently funding available to undertake conversion of one field plus lights with a window for construction of June through August of 2010. The Chair turned the presentation over to Mary Stephenson, Park Planner, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

- B. Presentation on Synthetic Field Study-Mary Stephenson:
A copy of the full report was submitted in advance to the Commission and posted to the City's website:
- **Mary Stephenson provided a brief presentation on the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study.** She noted that the presentation was previously given before the Parks & Recreation Commission on September 17, 2009. Mary stated that the one of the reasons the city is considering conversion of some fields to synthetic turf is that there is a severe capacity shortage issue in the city. Another reason is as a result of information contained in the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study.
 - Ms. Stephenson stated that the reason people value athletics is because of its impact on our youth, contributing to better health as well as better academic achievement. The City of Alexandria's population has increased by almost 12% from the 2000 Census. These numbers are reflected also in the increase in school enrollment and an increase in participation in youth sports.
 - Chart of Capacity challenges –if using all natural turf, 150 hrs. a year, the turf can remain in good condition. If used over 400 hrs. a year, natural turf fields require more maintenance; field condition deteriorates and becomes poor.
Field Supply-solution is to build more fields or alternatively install synthetic turf field with lights. Synthetic turf fields allow more play time for sports and under more weather conditions.
Lighting concerns - Alexandria uses environmental friendly lights full cut-off lights. Ft. Ward Park and Minnie Howard have these type of lights installed.

Chronology:

- In 2006 the Athletic Field Master Plan was completed.
- In the fall of 2007 staff studied fields that were candidates for conversion to synthetic turf which resulted in a 5-year conversion strategy.
- In 2009 an update to the 2007 Field Study was completed. **As a result of the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study, staff recommends Ben Brenman as the next synthetic turf field for conversion.** An additional objective of the study is to consider other fields that might be future candidates for conversion as money becomes available.

Planning Process- A Field analysis was done, criteria established, site visits completed, and each field was scored on a scale of 1-3. Information and results were presented to the P&R Commission September 2009 at its regular meeting. October 15, 2009, the P&RC is holding this Public Hearing. The next steps are to go before the Planning Commission and then City Council for any necessary for approvals.

A Field Inventory was done which helped determined what the definition of a field is and is not. The inventory looked at Field Conditions, Facility Classification, etc. Process Diagram for Field inventory: Fields were considered if they met regulation soccer size at minimum, including diamond fields. Fields that were smaller were not considered for conversion to synthetic turf.

Current Synthetic Field Locations are: Ft. Ward Park, Minnie Howard, and T.C. William H.S. Synthetic fields at the Witter complex will be coming on line soon.

Criteria for Conversion included: 1. Size,-the bigger the better, 2. Direct Fiscal Impact, 3. Process for Approval/support, 4. Impact on Existing Uses, 5. Location-How close to existing fields, 6. Field Condition, 7. Public Access-site amenities 8. Indirect fiscal impact,and 9. Constructability.

Determining Weights- the fields were grouped by relative order of importance and were put into a formula to determine criteria. Four different strategies for determining weights were used. Each

field was weighted on every criteria, a scale of 1-3 was used for each field, and multiplied by the weight of criteria.

Staff recommends -Matrix 4 as the most representative of its goals. Ben Brenman and Francis Hammond scored highest in all 4-Matrices. Staff recommends Ben Brenman as the next synthetic turf field for conversion.

The Chair asked if there were any questions or comments before moving into the Public Hearing. Commissioner Henry Brooks commented that Witter fields are under construction with funds made available from the Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction. As a result there is no direct budget impact on the City except for maintenance. There were no additional comments or questions from the Commission.

C. Review and Receipt of Comments on Synthetic Field Study:

- Persons requesting to speak at the public hearing were asked to complete a Request to Speak form. The Chair stated that at the end of the public hearing additional comments on other topics would be taken. Copies of comments received by email were distributed to those in attendance. The Chair noted that all comments would be included as part of the official record.
- **Chair Noritake responded to several comments received by email prior to the public hearing:**
 - In response to concerns expressed that the synthetic fields be kept dog free and sanitary Judy said the fields would be fenced and that dogs would be kept off of the fields. In addition, geese don't normally visit artificial turf fields.
 - Regarding accessing the need for artificial turf fields in the area of Cameron Station and Ben Brenman Park, Judy responded that the City is small and land c enough that the need for fields should be addressed on a community wide level, not neighborhood level. She anticipates that by going to bid now, staff will receive a better price on this next field.
 - Regarding comments that natural turf fields are better than synthetic turf fields the Chair stated that natural turf is better to play but only if it is in good condition. The problem is that after 150 hrs. played on natural turf, more maintenance is required, and the field becomes unpleasant to play on. It is a balancing act with limited land resources available in the city.
- **Public Hearing Period:**
- The Chair requested that comments be kept to 3 - 4 minutes, and reminded participants that they could submit written comments after the hearing for a two week period. Participants were asked to address both the whole of the report as well as the recommendation on Ben Brenman park becoming the next synthetic turf field conversion.

(a) Bill Ronsello, Cathedral Drive, Alexandria, Virginia, Vice President of Alexandria Soccer Association and board member, spoke in favor of the synthetic turf fields. He stated that there is no other alternative to do a turfed field quickly and said that Ben Brenman is central to their program. Mr. Ronsello said that use of some fields have been lost, i.e. Bishop Ireton and Jones Point, while at the same time there has been a huge growth in field sports in the community. There are 140 teams-2 seasons, only 10-15% of teams play on artificial turf. There are capacity and other issues (i.e. normal work hrs. sunlight, weather, high school scheduling, etc.), that impact the ability to use natural fields without lights.

(b) Gary Carr, Aspen Street, Alexandria Virginia, advocates for additional running tracks in the City, stated that the field at Francis Hammond middle school should be made the priority due to the large number of children there. Mr. Carr said that the city should consider circumnavigating all fields with running tracks. He also suggested that

periphery lighting or street level lights be added to the field at T.C. Williams in order to help maximize its use. He believes that this would not violate the Special Use Permit (SUP) which precludes full lighting at T.C. Williams. ***Chair Judy Guse-Noritake said that T.C. Williams H.S. is under the control of the Alexandria School Board and when it was built an SUP was put in place that excluded field lights. She believes there is going to be a walking-running asphalt path included at Witter fields when this comes on line. Judy stated that staff would also like to see more full tracks in the city, however currently they are trying to get more walking running tracks around fields.***

(c) Stephen Frerichs, Cathedral Dr., Alexandria Virginia, President Alexandria Little League, fully supports the staff recommendation. Supports lights for rectangular and baseball fields. (8-12 yrs., 13-14 yr. olds-400 kids; kickball league for 4 & 5 yr olds support to help get overlay use reduced). Synthetic rectangular fields help baseball. He said it is important to improve all fields in city.

(d) Owen Malone, Windsor Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia- member, Board of Directors Alexandria Rugby, is very much in favor of staff's recommendation. Youth rugby has the smallest number of kids and it is hard for rugby to get new fields to use.

(e) Mark Dowling, N. Latham St., Alexandria, Virginia- soccer coach, spoke in favor of field conversion at Ben Brenman Park with lighting. The number of fields has gone down in city, however, more people are involved in sports and there are twice as many teams. Requested field size at Ben Brenman be made at least 75 yds. in width, so that two teams at a time can use it for practice. He believes synthetic fields provide a safer playing surface.

(f) Patrick J. Malone, Duke St., Alexandria, Virginia - President Alex Aces collegiate baseball team. Spoke in support of synthetic turf fields, said they take pressure off other fields. Supports Ben Brenman with inclusion of lights, for baseball and with the rectangular. Stated that there are only two 90 foot ball fields in the City.

(g) Jim Gibson, Chairman of Youth Sports Advisory Board for the City of Alexandria. He's an advocate for kids and supports staff's recommendation; stated new turf fields must have lights. Mr. Gibson said that Alexandria is lagging behind other jurisdictions in installation of turf fields, and that there is a pent up demand for artificial turf fields in the city.

(h) Ester McDonald, Alexandria, Virginia, resident of Cameron Station, spoke in opposition to installation of lights at Ben Brenman. She feels that there are not enough people represented who are not involved in sports, partly due to method of advertising the hearing. She said there needs to be more compromise for people with different interests. She does not support the installation of lights, the lighting is a major issue. Requests no lights or lights in an area with less residential traffic. She is concerned that lights will bring increased traffic and that parking will spill over into the Cameron Station neighborhood. Expressed concerns about safety issues and possible increase in neighborhood crime. Ms. McDonald stated that she has no opinion on the synthetic turf fields. Her concerns are largely an issue of the lights and traffic increase. She believes that installing lights at T.C. Williams H.S., and/or upgrading the field at Francis Hammond would be a better option.

(i) Richard Stone, Paxton Street, Alexandria, Virginia, briefly attended the public hearing but had to leave early. Mr. Stone provided the Chair with brief written comments. He fully supports Ben Brenman field conversion and lights for soccer and baseball fields.

(j) Dak Harwich, Brawner Place, Alexandria, Virginia, representing Cameron Station Homeowner's Association. Mr. Harwich stated that they are generally not opposed to the lights and fields at Ben Brenman Park. He expressed concerns regarding the fields and lights and events which occur outside the boundaries of the park. Has major concerns regarding the parking around Ben Brenman park. Said there is not enough parking at Ben Brenman Park which pushes people into the neighborhood. The SUP for Cameron Station clearly states that 15% of the parking must be devoted to visitor parking, but all of the visitor parking can not be used for residents. Mr. Harwich stated that if staff is considering the installation of synthetic turf at Ben Brenman fields with lights then the parking problem must be addressed.

Chair Noritake said that the concerns expressed regarding parking are something that staff should take a look at if the City moves forward with this field upgrade. The Chair stated that staff would include these issues as part of their planning for this project, to see what the extent of the problem is and what might be done to address it.

In response to comments and concerns expressed about the lighting. Judy stated that RP&CA staff advertised to the public and held a tour of Ft. Ward Park on October 9, 2009 for residents wanting to learn more about synthetic fields and these full cut-off lights. If anyone is interested in seeing the lights they should drive or stop by Minnie Howard. The city is using full cut-off lights, which have virtually no light pollution, and meet LEED green standards.

Mr. Harwich and Commissioner Henry Brooks discussed ways to try to fix the parking around the Ben Brenman Park. Mr. Harwich said that people are parking on one side of the road.

The Chair asked if any one had questions another topic that they wished to discuss. There were no other comments or discussion. The Chair thanked everyone for their comments, and the Public Hearing was closed.

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 (See Attachment).

D. Commission Receives Comments on Other Topics

- There were no further items commented on or discussed during the public hearing.

E. Public Hearing Closes:

The Public Hearing closed at 8:10 p.m. and the Commission moved into the regular meeting.

Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting:

Discussion and Recommendation:

- Chair Noritake said there are two decisions and recommendations needed following on the hearing. The first and most important is discussion, approval and recommendation of the 2009 Synthetic Turf Field Conversion Study and the rankings contained in the report. A determination needs to be made on what to do with the first allocation of funds, and how staff will move forward in the future as more resources become available.
- The Chair stated that the report and information presented has been fine tuned and the information is solid. This should help provide a roadmap for the next five years before another assessment needs to be done. RP&CA staff have invested a great deal of time and resources into the report. The Chair asked for comments on the field study and methodology for ranking from the Commissioners. David Dexter agreed that the report methodology was

solid and provides a good template for the future. He commended RP&CA staff for their work on the report. Commissioner Henry Brooks commented that staff did an excellent job and having the hearing open, provided everyone with an opportunity to be involved.

- Ripley Forbes asked how many emails were from direct neighbors, and suggested starting an education campaign, months or years ahead for future fields that may be coming on line next, such as Francis Hammond, which is much closer to residences. The campaign should include information regarding lights and other advantages and address any concerns residents may have in advance before it becomes controversial. Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, said that staff held a meeting with the Sommerville residents in July. Many residents came out and found the fields softer and nicer than they expected.
- **The Chair agreed with doing an outreach and educational campaign and inviting the community out each time before a new synthetic field is contemplated.**
- The Chair said residents who live near Ben Brenman may have some legitimate concerns regarding traffic and parking issues. But the issue we must address is that the City has great unmet need and not lots of places to put new fields. Ben Brenman is one of the largest parks in the City where we can think about accommodating this artificial turf and lights. The need to meet the demand for youth and adults sports is a critical health need in the community. Alexandria City is increasingly becoming an urban community and active recreation space, including back yards, is limited. Children need daily activities and organized sports help provide this. The need for fields will continue to increase as more children are staying in the community.
- Ripley Forbes asked for a brief chronology of the next steps to be taken in order to meet the timeframe of construction the facility by the summer of 2010.
- **The Chair said the next steps would be discussed after motion is made on the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion report and on Ben Brenman fields being selected as the next synthetic turf field for conversion. The recommendation will then go forward with a letter to City Council.**
- **Discussion of Next Steps to be taken for Ben Brenman Field:**
- Laura Durham, Park Planner, stated the next steps would be to go through the Special Use Permit application process for the lighting only. Ms. Durham said approval of the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion report does not require any other approval, except that of the Park and Recreation Commission. The same applies to the conversion of the field to turf as well.
- A plot plan would have to be done and administratively approved through the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services.
- The Special Use Permit required for lights will need to go before the Planning Commission and then City Council. In order to meet the summer construction deadline, staff would need to make an application for SUP by March 2010. The earliest date to apply for a Special Use Permit would be November 17; plans would need to be submitted along with the SUP application. Judy requested that the process for obtaining a SUP be started as soon as possible. Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, RP&CA said this will be done as quickly as possible, once an electrical contractor can be hired to do the lights, schematics and design work. Mr. Blakeley stated that the design work may take three to four months; he will also need to work with City's Purchasing Department. Mr. Blakeley will provide the Chair with a monthly update on the status.
- **Action Item:** Chair Noritake said that the Park and Recreation Commission will write a letter outlining their approval of the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Report and recommendation that Ben Brenman become the next synthetic turf field for conversion and forward it to the City Manager. The letter will include the next steps to be taken, with the understanding that no further approval of the report is required, but that a Special Use Permit is needed for approval of the lights. RP&CA staff will move forward as quickly as possible to complete

the SUP process in order to meet a construction deadline for the summer months so the field can be brought on-line by fall 2010.

- Commissioner Henry Brooks made the motion that the Park and Recreation Commission approve the report and recommendation as put forth by staff. Richard Brune seconded the motion. The Chair asked if there was any other discussion.
- Additional Discussion:
- Commissioner Brooks requested that language be added to the recommendation, as discussed, about addressing the parking situation around Ben Brenman Park. The Chair said the motion could be amended to include this additional language. James Spengler, Director, RPCA suggested that two separate motions be made. One to approve the receipt of the RPCA staff report so that it becomes our policy, and another regarding the recommendation that Ben Brenman be considered as the next synthetic turf field conversion with the improvement of parking.
- **Henry Brooks restated the motion** -to approve the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion report as presented and discussed at the public hearing. Richard Brune seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was approved.
- **Henry Brooks made a second motion** -to approve the recommendation included in the staff report that the rectangular field at Ben Brenman field as the next synthetic turf field conversion, with the addition of possible improvements being made to maximize the parking within the present footprint. The motion was seconded by Richard Brune. All were in favor. The motion was approved.
- **Robert Moir** recommended making the size of the soccer field as wide as possible (70 yards wide) and adding lighting to the baseball field. Roger Blakeley said that he would try to make the soccer field as large as possible within the footprint of the space.
- Mr. Moir also suggested that a preference be given that due to scheduling concerns, the new field at Ben Brenman primarily serve youth sports during the spring and fall seasons. He suggested that adult sports (other than Hensley) be held at Ft. Ward Park or Minnie Howard where fewer residents might be adversely affected by later hours of play, in order to help try to alleviate some of the concerns of the Cameron Station Community.
- The Chair asked that this recommendation be included in the report and asked the Commission for a vote. The motion passed, unanimously.
- **The Chair recommended moving forward with the letter to the City Manager approving the report and recommendations.**

III. Approval of Summary Minutes from the September 17, 2009 Meeting:

- Henry Brooks made a motion to approve the minutes of September 17, 2009. The motion was seconded by David Dexter. The minutes were approved with one correction.

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

A. Recreation Programs and Services Update - William Chesley:

- Mr. Chesley recommended that the report be accepted as prepared-if there were no questions or comments. A copy of the full report Item IV-A was submitted to the Commission and staff in advance on November 16 and was posted to the City's website. **There were no questions or comments, the Commission accepted the report as submitted.**

B. Operations and Park Planning Update - Roger Blakeley:

- Mr. Blakeley recommended that the P& R Commission accept the report as submitted if there were no questions or comments. A copy of the full report Item IV-B was submitted to the Commission in advance on November 16 and was posted to the City's website. **There were no questions or comments, the Commission accepted the report as submitted.**

V. Confirmation of Public Hearing on the Proposed Fee Increases in November- Jack Browand:

- Mr. Browand confirmed the date of the Public Hearing for November 19, 2009, the hearing is schedule be held at Charles Houston Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m.
- The Chair requested that the hearing be advertised to the public, and that information on proposed fee increases and new fees be provided to the Commission and posted for the public prior to the hearing. Mr. Browand said that material would be submitted to the Commission for review prior to the hearing and that the hearing would be advertised to the public and information would be made available on the City's website.

VI. Playground Renovations Update - Laura Durham:

- Ms. Durham presented a report on Playground Renovations as prepared by Judy Lo, ASLA, RLA, Park Planner. The report discusses four playgrounds with approved funding for renovation in FY2010. The playgrounds which are considered a high priority are: Buchanan Park, James Mulligan Park, Tarleton Park, and Stevenson Park.
- Staff proposed holding one community meeting per renovation in order to help facilitate smooth installation and allow community input. Tentative dates for community meetings are November 9 and Nov 16 for District III.
- Chair Noritake suggested that RP&CA staff attend the neighborhood civic association meetings instead of holding individual community meetings by district. She believes that playground renovations can be accomplished without holding separate community meetings, in contrast to a new playground design which may merit more outreach. Judy stated that civic association meetings may involve a twenty minute time slot as opposed to holding separate community meetings, that may take two-three hrs. each, and may involve two-three staff persons. The city goal is to reduce staff time at meetings. Henry Brooks agreed that staff attending a civic association meeting would be a better option.
- Laura, noted that \$521,320 in funding has been allocated for the renovations. The estimated expenditure for each playground is \$130,000 each. This will include complete replacements and resurfacing of playgrounds. Henry Brooks noted that equipment repairs are needed at the Windmill Hill Park, and there is no mulch.
- Ripley Forbes asked if when the Ft. Ward playground renovation was done if there was a community meeting. Laura responded that Judy Lo attended their civic association meeting.
- **Action Item:** Ms. Durham agreed that Judy Lo would attend a community civic association meeting instead of holding a separate community meeting. Ms. Durham said that the information on playground renovations will be posted on-line for two weeks and people could view it there.
- Ripley Forbes asked if the meetings would also discuss landscaping and trees, Windmill Park lost a lot of trees. Ms. Durham noted that the meetings will be strictly to discuss playground renovations, but that landscaping and trees may be considered as an option with community contributions.
- Mr. Blakeley said this process is different from Hunter Miller or other renovations.
- 30 year old equipment. Renovations will include: new rubberized surface, new system, changing of slide to whole or curly, some interchangeable items, optional

colors for some items. The main focus will be replacing worn out pieces of equipment.

- The Chair suggested that the playground renovation meeting primarily focus on replacement of equipment. Judy suggested that staff speak with the Homeowner Associations to see if they would be interested in making a contribution to upgrade the standard playground equipment and/or purchasing shade trees. Donations could also be taken to purchase or upgrade additional playground equipment. Commissioner Brooks suggested letting the Commissioner in that area know about it and see if they can suggest ways to raise money.
- Commissioner Forbes asked if there were substandard playgrounds in Planning District II. Mr. Blakeley responded that all the planning districts currently contain substandard playgrounds. 43 playgrounds are in the city-10 are in good shape or new, many of the rest don't meet current standards. The infrastructure has not been improved for past 30 years; staff is now pushing forward to do this. Staff choose the playgrounds in the poorest condition for renovation at this time.
- **Action Item:** Mr. Forbes asked if the P&R Commission could get a chart by district of playgrounds that do not meet the CPSC standards.

VII. Open Space Update- Laura Durham:

- The Chair asked Ms. Durham to provide an update on the status of open space plans, since City Council lowered the amount of money dedicated to the fund. The Chair also requested an update on the parcel at 3550 Commonwealth Avenue.
- **Open Space Plan:**
- Laura suggested acceptance of the information, unless there were questions. Laura-only clarification is that with the approval of FY2010 budget, the Open Space Fund is now .3% which is only to cover debt service; it will not increase the fund for new acquisition or property. Until/unless the fund is reauthorized by City Council the money will be depleted. Henry Brooks commented that support for the open space funding will turn around when the real assessments increase.
- The Chair Noritake asked where the money that is paid on an annual basis for the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust comes from. Ms. Durham responded that (\$48,000) it comes out of the general open space fund. Judy asked if is depleting the 8.6 million, Laura responded yes. Ms. Durham is an advocate for continuing the partnership with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust.
- David Dexter, the Army will owe the City of Alexandria 2.4 acres of land as a result of the BRAC project being built at Mark Center. The army is building a 15-17 story office building at Seminary Rd. and Beaugard St., the footprint sits on some open space. Once the size of the space is determined, the Army will pay the City the value of the land to be used as open space. Ms. Laura Durham noted that there is not an actual easement but that on the previously approved plans the land was designated as open space. Her understanding is that the federal government will be paying the City to mitigate this loss of open space--The Chair asked if the Army will pay at today's market rate. The City intends to use the mitigation money for open space in the Beaugard Corridor.
- Laura - we are looking at identifying quality open space through the Beaugard Corridor Planning process.
- Mr. Dexter asked if the Army is also putting public open space behind a high security fence-how the public will gain access to the space. The Chair noted that in the Open Space Plan value is placed on all open space, including space which is not accessible. Space behind a fence, may still be accessible for people who work in the buildings to use, it is still considered open space.

- **Current Open Space Opportunities-** Laura-staff are still working on waterfront properties on the Strand as well as one of the properties identified in the Braddock Metro Area Small Area Plan that is part of the Post Office site The remaining money in open space fund will likely be spent.
- Laura-20% of the open space fund was designated for pocket parks- Judy asked if this percentage was part of the 8.6 million. Laura to complete the E. Del Ray and South Early Street pocket parks-spending will come out of 8.6 million.
- In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Durham stated that there is probably not enough money left to acquire another pocket park.
- The Chair said that they have had more contact from the community up near Four Mile Run at Commonwealth Avenue about the property that was purchased from VEPCO. Laura-it was actually purchased from a private developer with a contract with VEPCO on the property and said that is approximately one-half an acre.
- The property is on a corner of E. Reed and Commonwealth, across from Cora Kelly and Four Mile Run Park. The goal was to have area cleaned up and sod added.
- **3550 Commonwealth Avenue-**
- A handout was distributed on the 3550 Commonwealth Avenue.
- A copy of the Planning Commission 9.06, Docket Item #12, June 2, 2009.
- The parcel is bigger than a pocket park, but smaller than a dog park.
- The item was approved for acquisition by the Planning Commission on 6/2/09.
- In response to a question from the Chair, Laura confirmed that the Council approved plan at the current time is to sod the space and leave it alone. Minimal landscaping may be done and a trash receptacle added.
- Judy said that over time within the next few years, staff will need to take this item up for further planning. Laura said that the Council docket item on this indicated that as economic conditions improve staff will go forward with a planning process that involves the community.
- Judy and Laura had contact with people from the neighborhood have asked that the space be made into a dog park for interim use. The space is not big enough for a fenced dog park and is too close to the adjacent residential property.
- Some people in the neighborhood expressed concerns about security if the park is left undeveloped. Judy encourages staff and the P&RC to take a look at the space at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and provide comments. Ms. Durham has viewed the space and said in her opinion, that the space/grassy area on the corner; she doesn't feel that it will be a place where people will congregate.
- The Chair stated that she is reluctant to put in any single uses (gardens or a dog park) in place on an interim basis because it will be difficult to change the uses when we do have the resources available to design and implement a plan at this location. Mr. Brooks thought community gardens might work here. Judy responded that a community garden could not be done without a full planning process, and stated that staff can not currently commit time for this.
- Laura stated that the City Council said that the city would not be investing additional funding in the property at this time.

VIII. Director's Report – James Spengler:

A. City Council Strategic Planning Process.

- City Council met on September 26 to discuss updating the Strategic Plan. They decided not to have a separate Recreation and Parks strategic goal. RPCA staff have been assigned to work on several related goals:
- Goal #2 - Laura Durham and John Noelle. *"The City Respects, Protects and Enhances the Health of its Citizens and the Quality of its Natural Environment.*

- Goal #7-William Chesley and Alisa Carrel. “*Alexandria Is a Caring Community That is Affordable and Diverse With A Rich History and Culture.*”
- Goal #4- Jim Spengler, Director, RPCA will serve as the lead on Goal 4- which deals with schools and youth.” *Alexandria is a Community with Public Schools Amongst Northern Virginia’s Best and Where Our Recreational Programs Provide Youth the Opportunity to Succeed.*”
- Meetings are being held at different times and locations throughout the City. The best way to track the process is by visiting the City of Alexandria website, under City Council-strategic plan. Each goal group has different Council members assigned. At least one meeting held will be a public meeting. Staff covering a particular Goal will let the Commission know when the public meetings will be held and if it is helpful for P&RC members to attend.
- Laura Durham stated that there is an upcoming meeting on Goal 2 on November 4th and requested that two Commissioners attend. Ms. Durham agreed to provide the Commission with a one page document outlining the process as requested by the Chair and to let Judy know the topic.
- The Chair commented that the Commission deals with issues covering a lot of areas and asked what their role would be. The Commission has been proactive and would have valuable input. Judy asked how the plans that the P&RC already have feed into the strategic plan. She also asked if there were other avenues to provide input other than a public meeting...
- Mr. Spengler said that input could be provided by cards, letters, phone calls and through the City’s website. The Strategic Plan will deal with a short term planning period of three years. Council, the City Manager and staff feel that the economy is too uncertain to plan longer term. The plan is to develop overarching goals and to finish updates to the Strategic Plan by January 2010.
- Each of the 7 goal areas will include a public meeting. One of the public meetings will be for representatives from boards and commissions. Most of the goal areas are trying to include a general public hearing for citizen input.
- For each goal they want to develop 3-overarching objectives; a set of measures and for each objectives they want to develop 5 to 7 initiatives.
- Judy asked for each Goal, that staff let her know in a succinct manner, how the Commission can participate without adding more burden, and when it would be important for P&R C members to attend. Laura stated that at a recently attended meeting some issues related to open space came up. The Chair said this deals with plans already developed i.e., the Open Space Plan, the Field Report, the Dog Park Master Plan, The Eco City Plan, etc.
- Mr. Spengler said that most departments making presentations are making them with information from their existing plans. The City Council is thinking further in advance in terms of looking at resource allocations.

B. Organizational Changes- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

- Mr. Spengler notified the Commission of the new organizational changes effective October 5, 2009. The Director will assume a greater span of control over the Department due to the budget.
- Deputy Directors are William Chesley and Roger Blakeley. Alisa Carrel - Director, Office of the Arts, Jack Browand, Director, Marketing, Public Relations and Special Events (has an expanded area of focus, including improving customer service throughout the City), Belinda Hillard, Human Resources Coordinator, Shuron Putnam, Safety Officer, Faye Maslaki, Fiscal Officer, John Mead, Information Technology Officer and Robin DeShields, Executive Administrative Assistant. Looking down the road there might be a third Deputy Director added.
- A copy of the new organization chart was included in the package.

- C. FY 2011 Budget Process.
 - A meeting was held with the budget office and Deputy City Manager. The purpose was to review RP&CA proposed budget reductions against the target given by the City Manager. Reductions take the Department below its 2006 level of funding. Except for a few administrative items, that will be handled separately, all reductions have moved to the second round.
 - Council will hold a retreat on November 12, 2009. The retreat will focus on city finances and look at further reductions. Council will decide what will be cut. Actual reductions will be taken between now and April/May 2010. The City's financial outlook doesn't look good for next year. There is currently a 15% vacancy rate in commercial real estate, the residential market is currently stable. There will be a budget presentation at next Department Head Meeting.

IX. Report From Commissioners:

Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake

- **Re-appointment of Stephen Mercer to Parks & Recreation Commission:**
- Judy noted that Stephen (Clark) Mercer has an excused absence. Mr. Mercer was filling a partial term which is now up. The Chair asked that the Commission support Mr. Mercer's reappointment to the Parks and Recreation Commission and to the Youth Policy Commission for an additional term to begin in November.
- **Henry Brooks motioned** to approve the reappointment of Stephen Mercer to the Park & Recreation Commission board for another term. The motion was seconded by Richard Brune. All were in favor. The Chair will write the letters in support of reappointing Mr. Mercer for new terms.
- **Public Meeting re: Potomac Yard "Big Box" redevelopment Plans - October 20, 2009:**
- Judy will try to attend since there will be several open space concerns on agenda.
- There will be about 4-5,000 new residences. She believes the Commission should be advocating the inclusion of a field, dog park and a school, necessary to meet the needs of this new population. The Planning staff is thinking creatively about these options, including ground level and roof top options. Judy encouraged staff to attend if possible. The meeting will be held at Charles Houston.
- **Public Meeting on the Beauregard Plan- October 29, 2009.**
- The Chair stated that the P&RC needs to develop goals for input into the plan. Commissioner David Dexter who represents BRAC neighborhood task force plans to testify at the meeting and will also represent the P&RC. 6400 people are expected to move to this area and will need more schools, recreation facilities, etc. Judy said staff needs to think about including a school, fields and dog park and Recreation Centers as part of this plan. Judy asked Mr. Dexter to provide input at the meeting as a member of the Commission.

Ripley Forbes- Asked what the Ft. Ward Park History Group was. Mr. Spengler, said it is a group formed by OHA with some City and grant funding for research on the cultural resources, including the graves within the park. City Council also adopted an Ad Hoc Ft. Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group that the P&RC has recommended three members for appointment by the City Manager. The stakeholder group will meet for one year, with a presentation on the findings to be given at the end of their term. The history group will present their initial findings at their October 17th meeting.

William Cromley- Mr. Cromley spoke about the ongoing negotiation for the acquisition of the Post Office site at Wythe & N. Henry Streets for a new City park. He stressed that it was important that the Parks and Recreation Commission be involved in all stages of the planning for

this park and how it was a unique opportunity to help design a truly urban park, a goal of the recently approved Braddock Metro Small Area Plan.

Mathew Coda-commented that he was unaware of the restrictions on lighting the field at T.C. Williams and that it was the only high school field without lights. Judy stated that when the SUP was done through the Planning Commission it had restrictions on lights.

David Dexter-distributed a flier on The Friends of Dora Kelly Nature Park-, Clean-Up Day, Saturday, October 31, from 9 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

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

XI. Adjournment: 9:15 p.m.

**ATTACHMENT: PUBLIC COMMENTS-ON PROPOSED SYNTHETIC FIELD CONVERSION
AT BEN BRENMARK PARK.**