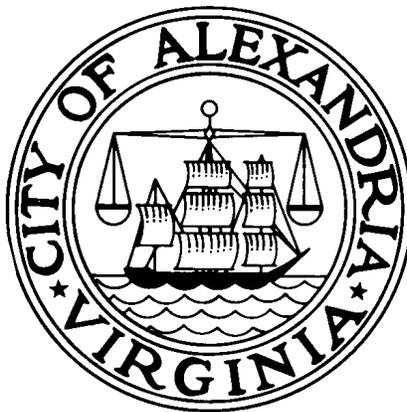


City of Alexandria
Park & Recreation Commission
Annual Report



FY 2009

(July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009)

Introduction

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory board created by City Council in March 1970 to advise City Council on policy matters related to parks and recreation, as well as to broadly address issues related to park and recreation needs. City Council appoints nine residents to the Commission from three Planning Districts and two high school age members to represent the youth of the City.

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission in its operations allows City residents to participate in planning activities, and serves as a panel to hear citizen suggestions or concerns relating to recreation and park programs, advise City Council on community recreation needs, and assist the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities in its continuing effort to be aware of and sensitive to public needs, and to meet the changing needs of its diverse residents.

The Commission meets on the third Thursday of each month from September to July, except December, at recreation centers throughout the City. The Commission sponsors an annual CIVIC Awards program that recognize outstanding City residents, organizations, and youth. Awards are presented at an annual ceremony in July as part of the City's annual Birthday Celebration.

Members of the Park and Recreation Commission for FY 2009

Planning District I	-	Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Planning District I	-	Henry Brooks
Planning District I	-	William Cromley
Planning District II	-	Ripley Forbes
Planning District II	-	Robert Moir
Planning District II	-	Lindsey Swanson (resigned December 2008)
Planning District II	-	Stephen Clark Mercer (appointed February 2009)
Planning District III	-	David Dexter
Planning District III	-	Kaj Vetter
Planning District III	-	Richard Brune
Youth Representative	-	Marshanika Rich (resigned June 2009)
Youth Representative	-	Matthew Coda

City Staff

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Rich Baier, Interim Director, RPCA
William Chesley, Deputy Director, RPCA
Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, RPCA
Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA
Tutu Kargbo, Secretary II

Park and Recreation Commission Accomplishments for FY 2009

- The Commission received specific project updates, provided input, and continued to support the following projects: Charles Houston Recreation Center Project, Matrix Efficiency Study, Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria, Open Space Acquisitions, Four Mile Run Stream Restoration Plan, Land Bay K Potomac Yard park land and athletic fields, Jones Point Park, Wilson Bridge Project mitigation sites for parkland (Witter Street and Freedman's Cemetery areas), Community Discussions on the Proposed Renovation of the Patrick Henry Recreation Center, Urban Forestry Plan, City Waterfront Plan, Athletic Fields Improvement Plan, Multi-use and Athletic Court Repairs and Renovations, 1 & 7 Del Ray and Early Street Pocket Parks.
- The Commission received updates on and continued to support: the City youth anti-violence and anti-gang initiatives, out of school/after school program initiatives, pedestrian and bicycle improvements to on and off street trail systems, regular Community Clean ups in City Parks and Stream Valleys, Department efforts to expand and improve the City Tree Canopy, and efforts to Beautify the City through the use of the Departments existing "Adopt a Park" and "Adopt a Garden" Programs.
- The Commission endorsed the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities' effort to obtain reaccreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).
- The Commission solicited and received nominations for the Annual Park and Recreation Commission CIVIC Awards which will be presented at the City's Annual USA/Alexandria Birthday Celebration held in July 2009. The CIVIC Awards recognize the unsung volunteer efforts of Alexandrians who provide a valuable service in meeting recreation, park, or cultural needs.

Formal Council Recommendations (attached)

- January 26, 2009 – Recommendation on City's Draft Special Events Policy
- April 14, 2009 - Short and Long Term Improvements at Ft. Ward Park
- May 5, 2009 – Potomac Yards Landbay L and Braddock Fields

Park and Recreation Commission Public Hearings

The Commission held topic-specific public hearings, and after these hearings, residents were provided the opportunity to comment on any park and recreation issues. The Commission encouraged increased community participation by holding public hearings and regular monthly meetings at various recreation center locations throughout the City. The following public hearings were held:

- **July 17, 2008 - Patrick Henry Recreation Center Renovation**
The purpose of the hearing was to provide citizens with the opportunity to comment on potential program and design elements on the proposed renovation of the Patrick Henry Recreation Center.

- **November 20, 2008 - Proposed Elements for Pocket Park at 1 and 7 East Del Ray**
The purpose of the hearing was to provide residents with the opportunity to comment on the proposed elements for the pocket park.
- **December 11, 2008 - Proposed Special Events Policy and Procedures Manual**
The purpose of the hearing was to provide residents with the opportunity to comment on the proposed Special Events Policy and Procedures Manual.

Liaison Groups

Commission members serve as liaisons to multiple City commissions, committees and subcommittees in promoting park and recreation pursuits as well as community needs.

- Ft. Ward Ad Hoc Advisory Commission- Bob Moir, Ripley Forbes, Rich Brune
- Youth Policy Commission - Stephen Clark Mercer
- Waterfront Committee- Henry Brooks
- Youth Sports Committee- Jeffrey Murphy
- 4-Mile Run- Ripley Forbes
- Charles Houston Memorial Project-William Cromley
- Freedman's Cemetery- Bob Moir
- Beauregard Corridor Plan- David Dexter
- ACPS & Capital Improvements- Henry Brooks

Park and Recreation Commission Future Goals

The Commission will continue to work with Alexandria residents and staff to evaluate existing recreation programs and will continue to make recommendations to enhance and expand programs that will serve the diverse needs of residents. The Commission will hold public hearings on future Department projects and work with staff to ensure budget proposals reflect future CIP renovations and operational needs of the Department. The Commission will continue to work on issues pertaining to parkland and facility needs in support of City Council's Strategic Master Plan, City Open Space Master Plan, Capital Facilities Maintenance Program, and with the evolving Waterfront Master Plan. In addition, the Commission will seek increased cooperation and coordination with the Alexandria City Public School System in developing mutual benefiting redevelopment opportunities.

- Attachment:
1. Formal Council Recommendations as outcomes of Public Hearings
 2. Letter from Youth Sports Advisory Board



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Kirk Kincannon
Director

1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

Phone (703) 838-4343
Fax (703) 838-6344

Park and Recreation Commission

January 26, 2009

The Honorable William Euille
Vice Mayor Redella Pepper
Councilman Ludwig Gaines
Councilman K. Rob Krupicka
Councilman Timothy Lovain
Councilman Paul Smedberg
Councilman Justin Wilson

Re: Recommendations on City's Draft Special Events Policy

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Park and Recreation Commission reviewed the draft Special Events Policy prepared by City Manager Jim Hartman's staff and held a public hearing on this issue in December. As requested I am writing with our response to the recommendations represented by the draft policy. We agree in general with the contents of the draft and support the intent to formalize a consistent policy aimed at better cost recovery while still supporting this unique part of the character and culture of Alexandria.

Our discussion highlighted that these special events are intrinsically valuable to the City, our quality of life and are of increasing economic importance. We would caution, as others have, that the economic cost and benefits to the City from holding these events are both direct and indirect, and currently available figures need to be taken with a grain of salt as they only represent a piece of the overall picture. Only recently has the City been able to begin to trace the personnel costs associated with supporting these events, but we are a very long way indeed from being able to accurately gauge the overall economic impact on businesses and the associated tax revenue. We would suggest that the impacts cannot be accurately captured by monitoring increases in trade just on the day of a specific event but that there is a broader and less tangible community impact. Perhaps we should ask what the impact might be over several years if there were no special events held in the City at all. We suspect that it is often through these special events that visitors first become exposed to the City and then return again later because of what they found the first time. The recently nationally televised HGTV coverage of the Scottish Christmas Walk had a clear economic benefit that would be hard to measure, but is probably very real.

By the same token, we would offer caution about increasing the number or intensity of current special events in attempt to garner more revenue for the City through the associated fees. It seems clear that with a new policy in place the City may come closer to paying for the associated expenses of hosting these events, but that they would not be viewed as a source of revenue. We must keep in mind that special events do have a clear impact on park resources and to the neighborhoods that surround the venues. Our parks are meant to be used but they all have a "carrying capacity". Recent events at Ft. Ward are a clear example.

The Commission posited a number of comments and suggestions after hearing testimony from the public. They are summarized below:

- A. A better system of data collection for direct personnel costs, above those that are a part of a job position's regular duties, needs to be instituted. We understand that the current system captures only overtime hours associated with these events. Such data is only a part of the equation of costs incurred by the City. In a further refinement of such cost accounting, a project number would be assigned to each event and all costs, personnel and otherwise, could be tracked, an overhead variable assigned and the result would be a very close accounting of the actual costs of the event. The private sector has this kind of cost accounting in place and the City should move to do the same through a central server.
- B. In addition, a method of gauging the economic benefits of these special events needs to be explored. We are concerned that cost recovery will over-shadow the benefits these events bring to the City. We feel a clear picture

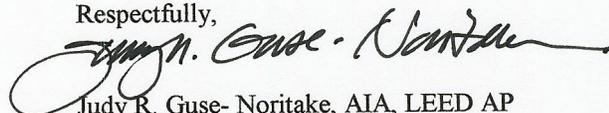
of the costs and benefits to the City of the major events has not been fully developed and there are significant barriers to do so. In the meantime, even an effort to gather "day of" antidotal evidence from business owners in Old Town could prove useful.

- C. The City should not look to special events to generate revenue, but work toward cost recovery as a goal. While in this climate it is tempting to view these events as potential income generators, if we go down that slippery slope there is a great likelihood that decisions will be made that will accommodate events but compromise public resources.
- D. This policy must have an equitable and transparent scale of fees that applies to all organizations and entities using City resources and venues. A part of that needs to be a clearly understood and shared articulation of the cost impact of the event on the City's resources.
- E. This policy and the permitting process should be readily and easily available to organizations trying to plan for these events. There should be a "portal" developed for one-stop processing of all the various departmental permits, etc., necessary when hosting a large event. Currently it is a daunting and unreliable process for the outside organizations. The City needs to move toward an on-line administrative process for this as soon as possible.
- F. At the same time, the City needs to articulate and enforce policies that accommodate these events, but with the least impact possible on traffic, safety and nearby neighborhoods. That would include suggesting and enforcing alternative routes for parades or substitute venues that might better accommodate large crowds. If the organizers reject the alternative route or venue then they should be fully responsible for all costs above the amount the City would have to incur if the recommendations had been accepted.
- G. The Park and Recreation Department should develop a list outlining the capacity of the larger parks and other public areas in the City to help with moving events to the location best able to accommodate them. When an event cannot be accommodated, or is too large for the available areas here in the City, then the Department should refer the organizers directly to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) which is our partner in providing recreational and park facilities. NVRPA has expressed a desire that such referrals be made, as they see it as part of their mission to be able to supply resources and accommodations which the City cannot.
- H. We recommend that no event that benefits an ACPS function (inclusive of sports, arts, and music programs) should incur an event fee as long as the associated costs to the City are \$5000 or under. If the impact is greater, then a fee should be assessed. We must remember that our public schools are a critical part of our community and deserve the support of the rest of the City's departments and resources.
- I. Participation in the City's CERT training program needs to be stepped up and the CERT volunteers used more regularly, in as much as is possible, in relation to these special events to decrease the personnel costs to the City.

On the topic of the ethnic festivals, there was a spectrum of opinions among Commissioners, but in general the conclusion was that a few of the larger ethnic festivals, like Arlandria's Chirilagua Festival, need to be continued as a singular event and in that case, it needs to be continued in the Arlandria neighborhood, at the season in which it has been traditionally held. As for other small festivals we have traditionally hosted in the City as singular events, we should move toward hosting them in one self-sustaining annual event featuring a wide variety of cultural participants, grouped together across a pedestrian-accessible area. Such an event would by necessity have to be held at one of our few large parks or it perhaps might be better accommodated along the length of the various small parks strung along our Potomac Waterfront. Such a concept on the waterfront, both for an ethnic festival site and for other special events, should be discussed as a part of the waterfront planning process set to begin soon. Inevitably the waterfront will serve this function in one way or another and it should be planned to do so.

In closing we would ask staff to make sure you receive the written comments we received during our hearing process. Undertaking this effort has not been easy and we commend staff that is a part of the Special Events Committee. There is still a lot of work ahead, but progress has been made. Our Commission's suggestions are offered in a spirit of what is best for the broad community, knowing that at times some neighborhoods will bear the brunt of an event. It is these events that increasingly define us as a City. We should welcome them, but on our own terms. If we may be of further assistance in these matters, please just ask.

Respectfully,



Judy R. Guse-Noritake, AIA, LEED AP
Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

Cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Kirk Kincannon, Director



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
1108 Jefferson Street
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James B. Spengler
Director

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Park and Recreation Commission

April 14, 2009

The Honorable William Euille
Vice Mayor Redella Pepper
Councilman Ludwig Gaines
Councilman K. Rob Krupicka
Councilman Timothy Lovain
Councilman Paul Smedberg
Councilman Justin Wilson

Re: Short and Long Term Improvements at Ft. Ward Park

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Park and Recreation Commission has followed the issues raised about Ft. Ward Park over the last year or more as various aspects of the assets and management of the park have been explored and discussed. As our Commission and the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities focused on some of the issues last fall it became apparent that this was a place where many different interests come together and that circumstances had reached a point where increasing demand from the various sets of user-interests had become too great. Alexandria has loved this park a little too much.

The Commission has had a number of discussions with Director Kincannon about how to proceed, especially given the fiscal restraints under which the City is now operating. Our first recommendation was for the Department to hold a series of community listening sessions on all topics and uses related to the park. Those were concluded recently. As an outcome of those sessions, the Commission is recommending a series of stepwise actions which you will consider shortly and which we want to address here briefly.

The Park and Recreation Commission sees the process of addressing the concerns and opportunities at Ft Ward Park in two distinct steps – the first to occur in the short term over the next five years and the second occurring five to six years from now. Starting last year it was apparent that some changes needed to occur almost immediately and we want to recognize that some steps were taken during the last season which helped to address the issues of over-use and noise levels. It was clear those steps needed to be taken almost immediately.

The staff report that you now have on Ft. Ward Park outlines some further recommendations for changes this year to reservations, management and some consolidation of picnic shelter locations, along with better enforcement. This list of short term actions were presented at the community listening sessions and there was general agreement in the community that these were appropriate steps to take at this time.

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We wish to point out that implementing this short-term plan will result in substantially decreased picnic area use, particularly the large group use that has been traditionally accommodated at Ft. Ward. Decreasing the amount of this use in the park is inevitable and desirable, but there is no other location in the City that can currently absorb this demand. What we also know is that, like a balloon that squeezed in the middle only to have it expand in another place, we cannot significantly decrease the large party use in this park without planning to introduce or increase it in some other location in the City. This applies to other large events that occur at the park as well, like the jazz festival. The truth of that matter is that the City's population continues to grow and that population is seeking more outdoor recreational opportunity – which we should embrace and accommodate. We are not growing our parks in proportion to the needs of today and certainly not to meet the needs that are coming in the near future. Most neighborhoods that are near larger parks do not want increased use and we have certainly heard about the consequences of unplanned increases from the community around Ft. Ward Park.

This conclusion brings us to the second and more important step that we feel must be undertaken to address the longer term issues and planning at Ft. Ward Park and in other parks. It is our Commission's strong recommendation that the City must commit to undertaking a single, large park master plan starting approximately five years from now which will address the increase in demand for park uses. We see this plan addressing the accommodation of increased use primarily at the larger City's larger parks, while leaving the small and more neighborhood-oriented parks to serve passive uses. Last year the Commission sent a list to the City Manager of items under the heading of *Unfunded CIP Requests for 2009*. We wanted to underscore, even as the City moved into uncertain economic times, that the capital budget items in the current and out-years of the budget were only the tip of the iceberg, and that much more need was waiting in the wings. The first item listed was "*Park Master Plans – Key Sites*". As we have thought more about it, it has become apparent that there should be one master plan done for the "Key Sites" and that each one of these large parks should comprise a chapter in the master plan. As a preface to developing that master plan, we recommend that the Recreational Needs Assessment, adopted in 2003, be updated with new demographic and use-demand information. The Department had previously requested resources to accomplish this update in FY 2010 but the request was denied. Five years from now the current Assessment will be more than ten years old, with the underlying data even older. The update must be accomplished in order to serve as framework to develop a large park master plan. Without taking these two steps we will not be able to meet increasing needs.

By way of example, many of these key, large parks were never subjected to a formal planning process, and certainly not one that related overall City recreational demands and uses to each other. Chinquapin is a prime example of a park that was unplanned and must be used much more efficiently in the future. The ring road (formerly the neighborhood drive) that existed when the property was purchased using federal Land and Water Conservation Funding remained and the park uses were developed in an adjunct manner over time off the road. Now we must determine what uses fit in this park, how much it can accommodate and whether the roadway, or parts of it, should be removed. We should even re-examine parks like Ben Brenman which was planned, but more than a dozen years ago. Times have changed.

The updating of the recreational needs assessment and the undertaking of a large parks master plan both must be efforts that are contracted to outside professional organizations which specialize in these kinds of products. While there is a cost associated with doing so, it is very clear that there is real value to the taxpayers in our community for making that kind of investment. Together these studies will form a roadmap for defining and meeting the recreational needs of our community for the next several decades. Departmental staff is not equipped to produce these kinds of work products for a number of reasons.

Meanwhile, the recent focus on Ft. Ward has started our community on a journey of discovery to bring to light the full history of the park. Layers of time and history are our City's greatest asset and biggest challenge. While we need to honor the past in our public parks, we also need to keep these parks functioning and meeting today's needs. Over the next few years representatives of the various interests at Ft. Ward should coordinate

and work together to set a course for uncovering and documenting the full history of this place to serve as a foundation for the full park plan that will be undertaken in the future. We will give a caution at this point however, that all these multiple concerns and uses need to be viewed and solved together, not in isolation. Any comprehensive park that is developed needs to address the history of the African American community that was located there, the Civil War history of the site, the recreational needs and must do so while honoring the final resting places of many of Alexandria's citizens. It is a tall order and one that we must all work together to solve, but in the end there will still be a park here that will the City can enjoy. We should not rush to solve this piecemeal, but that the time to do a thorough job as financial resources once again become available.

In closing we want to mention one final item at Ft. Ward that is an issue in other places in the City and which needs a city-wide solution. For some time Ft. Ward has served as the horticultural center for City operations. This is not a park that is well suited for that city-wide function. In the past we have discussed with the Director that the 3 acre silver of public land between the Metro and CSX lines that the City received as a part of the Potomac Yard planning should become the horticultural center for the Department's operations. It would be a very good use for that parcel of land. But the truth of the matter is that there is no more "back of house" in the City at any of our parks where park maintenance facilities and yards can be located without interfering with park activities or the nearby neighborhoods and yet this is a critical function. As the waterfront plan is developed and the public areas and access along the waterfront is managed as a single park unit we will need to address a need for a place to stage maintenance in that area as well.

In our view there is a crying need for the City to find perhaps three locations across the city to centralize this kind of maintenance facility. A small proto-type park building can be developed that is attractive and fits with the character of our community. Adjoining maintenance yards could be planned so that they are not unsightly. This should be done in conjunction with TE&S so the facilities serve some of their functions as well. Additionally these locations could also serve as outreach centers for citizens to get mulch, recycle, purchase rain barrels, or buy native plants and trees. In short, these could become the defacto environmental outreach centers for the City. Done right, there will be no need to hide them. If they are well designed and integrated they should make good neighbors. As with any good idea in the City, this one requires land and money. It is an issue that we need to address head on. Not doing so in the past lead to a situation at Ft. Ward that will need to be corrected over the next few years.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to discuss these ideas further.

Respectfully,


Judy R. Guse-Noritake, AIA, LEED AP
Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

Attachment: *Unfunded CIP Requests for 2009*

cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Kirk Kincannon, Director
Rich Baier, Acting Director
Ellen Stanton, Chair, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Lance Mallamo, Director Office of historic Alexandria
Park and Recreation Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Unfunded CIP Requests - 2009

PRIORITY I (Short Term – following behind current budget “out years)

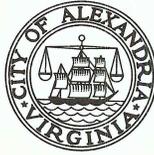
1. Park Master Plans (key sites)
2. School Grounds Master Plans (key sites)
3. Miracle Field
4. Chinquapin Park Sports Complex
5. James Polk Recreation Center
6. Bike Trails (key trails)
7. Four Mile Run Stream Restoration/Four Mile Run Park Improvements
8. Competition Track (perhaps Hammond or GW)
9. School Irrigation Systems on School Property (key sites)
10. Brenman Park (sports lighting, field additions & synthetic surf)

PRIORITY II (Medium Term)

1. Park Master Plans (balance of sites)
2. School Grounds Master Plans (balance of sites)
3. Lee Center Outdoor Sports Complex
4. Bike Trails (additional trails)
5. Charles Barrett Recreation Center (expansion)
6. Minnie Howard II (completion of 2nd planned field)
7. Skate Park 2 (location to be determined)
8. In-line Hockey Facility
9. School Irrigation Systems on School Property
10. Arboretum (facility, plantings, signage & marketing)
11. Brenman Park (sports lighting, field additions & synthetic turf)
12. Spray Parks at two Mini-Pools

PRIORITY III (Long Term)

1. Tennis Courts
2. West End Recreation Center
3. Bike Trails (balance of trails)
4. West Side Field Sports Areas (around Van Dorn Eisenhower)
5. Fort Ward Park Improvements (budgeted as joint project w/OHA)
6. School Irrigation Systems on School Property (balance of sites)
7. Horticulture Center
8. Marina (upgrades and expansion)
9. Spray Parks at two Mini-Pools



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
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Kirk Kincannon
Director

Park and Recreation Commission

May 5, 2009

The Honorable William Euille
Vice Mayor Redella Pepper
Councilman Ludwig Gaines
Councilman K. Rob Krupicka
Councilman Timothy Lovain
Councilman Paul Smedberg
Councilman Justin Wilson

Re: Land Bay L and Braddock Fields

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Park and Recreation Commission entertained a presentation at our April meeting on the topic of a future land exchange between Potomac Yard Land Bay L and the City-owned fields located near George Washington Middle School at the corner of Braddock Road. It is our understanding that the proposal on the table at this point in time is to further study what the advantages and disadvantages might be if such an exchange occurred.

After discussing the issue our Commission was in full agreement that the proposed land swap be further studied. Many voiced the opinion that there is no harm in taking a closer look and there is perhaps much to be gained. Without further study there is no way to know. We ask that you approve further study of the potential benefits to the City of a land exchange concerning these two parcels.

In addition, I must also convey to you that the Youth Sports Policy Board, a sub-group of the Park and Recreation Commission, entertained the same presentation at their meeting on April 20, 2009. Chairman Jim Gibson spoke with me following that meeting and asked me to convey that his group, representing the interests of almost all of the youth sports played in the City, is also in full agreement that further study of the Land Bay L-Braddock Field land swap should be studied. He underscored that, as a City, we should not be afraid of looking at creative ideas to solve the formidable challenges that have been documented in providing adequate athletic field facilities in our community, both now and into the future.

In closing, both of our groups fully embrace the further study of this land exchange and believe that it is only through this kind of "out of the box" thinking that Alexandria will make the progress that is necessary. We ask that we be allowed to give input on the configuration and use of the recreational alternatives as the study develops. We feel both groups can play a positive role and we stand ready to do so. We urge you to undertake further study as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Judy R. Guse-Noritake, AIA, LEED AP
Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

Cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Rich Baier, Acting Director
Farrol Hamer, Director
Chairman John Komoroske and the Planning Commission
Park and Recreation Commission
Chairman Jim Gibson and the Youth Sports Advisory Board

Youth Sports Advisory Board
Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Judy Guse-Noritake
Chair, City of Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Madame Chair:

We are writing to you as the parent organization for our Youth Sports Advisory Board. The Board wishes to express its concern over the potential impacts of cuts in the budget for the City of Alexandria on the ability for the youth in Alexandria to maintain a healthy lifestyle. A major part of that healthy lifestyle – and a major deterrent to childhood obesity - is having the fields necessary to accommodate the playing needs of our youth.

The City has made a significant effort over the past several years to develop a long-term, balanced approach to upgrading the level of fields in the City. Given the nature of a City dynamics, there is a constraint on the amount of space available for fields. The City has recognized that and is seeking to maximize use of the existing space. This primarily involves installation of artificial turf and engineered grass fields. Such fields can accommodate up to four times the usage of our existing grass fields. That represents a tremendous step forward in meeting the needs of our youth and other residents.

In the past two years, three artificial turf fields have opened – Minnie Howard, Fort Ward, and T. C. Williams. Minnie Howard and Fort Ward have been particularly useful for the recreation needs of the City. Among others, youth lacrosse and soccer have been able to provide more opportunities to Alexandria's youth by having the fields available for greater periods of time. Other fields are planned to come on-line over the next several years – Potomac Yards, Roth-Witter, Braddock Road, etc. All are part of the City's plan for artificial turf fields. A recent study commissioned by the City showed that the City needed over 40 more fields to adequately meet its' citizens needs. With little space to expand, these artificial turf fields provide the only opportunity for the City to achieve its goals.

All of the identified fields have been approved in the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Obviously, the recent budget crunch has led to a closer review of City expenditures and projects are being held up for more examination. We believe that the City should support the funding for the identified fields so that it can meet a multitude of goals with the approved fiscally balanced plan already developed: maximize use of existing open space; provide healthy opportunities for our growing youth needs (virtually every youth sports organization is reporting record numbers of participation now); cost-effective development and maintenance of fields; further development of a family friendly

atmosphere within the City; reduction in youth obesity – all of these are possible through the actions encouraged above. Along with these benefits, there will also be accompanying improvements in meeting adult recreational needs.

The City has done its due diligence in developing and starting to implement a plan for success. We must make sure that plan is allowed to continue. Our specific recommendations are:

- Approve and release the funds in FY2009 and FY2010 for the artificial turf fields and related equipment at Potomac Yards, Simpson, Roth-Witter, and Braddock Road facilities;
- Reallocate funds set aside for the All City Sports Facility to fund artificial turf fields (if the required matching private funding is not available for such a Facility);
- Approve planned funding in FY2011 for Mount Vernon and Ewald open use artificial turf fields;
- Continue City staff presence at approved games at artificial turf fields to ensure full support for the recreational needs; and
- Reinvestment of sports generated revenues in the support of youth and adult sports programs.

The Youth Sports Advisory Board represents the groups that address the needs of Alexandria's youth. There are over 10,000 youth in the City and they need an advocate to ensure their needs are addressed. We are passing on our request for you join us as that advocate and for you to communicate our position to the appropriate City and Council officials. We would be happy to meet if you need more information. Please contact Jim Gibson, President at gccjg@aol.com or 703.461.0099 for more information or to set up a meeting.

The following Board members have endorsed the January 13th letter from President Gibson to Judy Guse-Noritake regarding fully funding artificial turf fields in Alexandria:

Sincerely,

Jim Gibson
Alexandria Titans Football Program

John Timmons
Alexandria Soccer Association

Brian Donegan
Alexandria Lacrosse Club

Jeff Murphy
Alexandria Rugby Association

Bob Moir
Alexandria Lacrosse Club

Dennis Burstein
Alexandria Public Schools

Richard Stone
Girls Sports Programs

Don Simpson
At Large Member

Mike Neilson
Youth Baseball

William Rivers
Youth Basketball

Melvin Miller
At-Large Member

Elliott Branch
Youth Basketball

Angela Hale
Youth Track Program

John Liss
Tenants & Workers Committee

cc: Kirk Kincannon, Director
William Chesley, Deputy Director
Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director
Mac Slover, Youth Sports Supervisor
Mayor Euille and City Council Members
City Manager Hartman