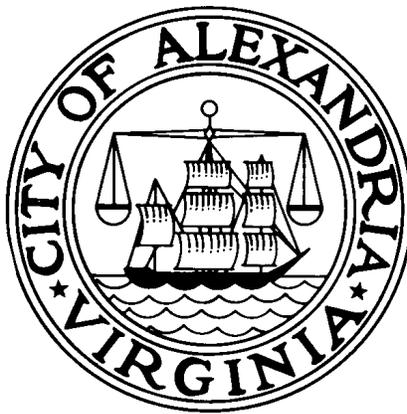


City of Alexandria
Park & Recreation Commission
Annual Report



FY 2010
(July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010)

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 Fiscal Year 2010

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	-	Stephen Clark Mercer
Planning District III	-	Richard Brune
Planning District III	-	David Dexter
Planning District III	-	Kaj Vetter (resigned January 2010)
Planning District III	-	Jeff Murphy (appointed February 2010)
Youth Representative	-	Matthew Coda (resigned June 2010)
Youth Representative	-	Vacant

City Staff

James Spengler, Director – Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
William Chesley, Deputy Director, RPCA
Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, RPCA
Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA
Robin DeShields, Executive Secretary, RPCA

Park and Recreation Commission Accomplishments for FY 2010

- The Commission received specific project updates, provided input, and continued to support the following projects: Citywide Playground and Outdoor Court Renovations; Synthetic Field Renovation Projects; Waterfront Planning Process; Jones Point Park Reconstruction; Pedestrian Bridge design project at Four Mile Run Park; the conversion of the rectangular field to synthetic turf, and the installation of sport lighting at the rectangular field and baseball field at Ben Brenman Park; monitoring and advising on the proposed open space in the Potomac Yard Development; and the relocation and installation of replacement athletic fields at Simpson Park.
- The Commission supported and endorsed the rezoning of the parcels at 4100 Mt. Vernon Ave., including the existing building (old Duron Building), for conversion for park-related community use. A volunteer group, under the name of Architects Anonymous, provided a concept plan for the properties. As a result, plans are underway to convert the facility, to community use, at a reduced cost, and the first farmers' market in Arlandria opened on June 27, 2010.
- The Commission held a retreat on March 6, 2010. Topics of discussion included Legislation and Governance Procedures; Planning for Joint Schools/Recreation Expansion; and Park Master Planning. Actions as a result of the Commission retreat included the identification of the top ten priorities for the Commission for next one or two years; drafting of a consolidated list of action steps in accomplishing priority items; and formation of a subcommittee to develop and present to City Council formal Commission Bylaws.
- 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 2010. The CIVIC Awards recognize volunteer efforts of Alexandrians who provide a valuable service in meeting recreation, park, or cultural needs.
- The Youth Sports Advisory Board, a subcommittee of the Park and Recreation Commission, is comprised of representatives from all of the City's operational youth sports leagues, City staff and Park & Recreation Commission members, formed in FY 2003 advocates and makes recommendations to the Commission on athletic field development, use and programming in the City of Alexandria. In addition to field sports, they advise on other youth sports including volleyball, track & field, and cheerleading. This year, the Advisory Board was instrumental in advocacy issues related to synthetic field conversion at Brenman Park; building of the new fields at Simpson Park; and the proposed conversion to synthetic turf at Francis C. Hammond Middle School by Alexandria Public Schools.

Public Land Initiatives

- May 20, 2010 – Initiated a discussion and briefing with the City's Department of Planning and Zoning to receive an update on the Draft Waterfront Plan and to provide areas of interest for consideration regarding recreation use (passive and active),

maintenance activities, water access, pedestrian and bike trails, small scale recreation and playgrounds and preservation of public open space purchase through the dedicated Open Space Fund.

- May 20, 2010 – Invited staff from the National Park Service (NPS) to provide an update to Commission members on the status of the Jones Point Park Reconstruction project scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010. NPS staff confirmed preparations are being finalized and that the Royal Street Community Gardens, the Lee Street Community Gardens, the Mount Vernon Trail and the Community Recycling Center will have continuous public access throughout the construction process. Commissioners expressed a desire for the project to be completed as soon as possible so that the City can benefit from its renewal.
- Spring 2010 - Initiated dialogue with the Alexandria City Public School System to discuss and ensure recreation and park needs are met with the proposed conversion of the Francis C. Hammond athletic field to synthetic turf, and the planned renovation of the Patrick Henry Elementary School and Recreation Center and proposed redevelopment of the Jefferson-Houston Elementary School including Buchanan Park, Durant Center and Old Town Pool, and the expansion of Cora Kelly Elementary.

Formal Council Recommendations (attached)

- August 13, 2009 – Four Mile Run Design Guidelines
- January 3, 2010 - 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study & Ben Brenman Field Conversion and Lighting
- March 19, 2010 - VDOT Recommendations Affecting the Winkler Botanical Preserve
- April 27, 2010 - 1001 South Washington Street and 714 Church Street Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial

Park and Recreation Commission Public Hearings

The Commission held topic-specific public hearings, and after each of 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 16, 2009 - Public Hearing on Freedmen's Cemetery**
The purpose of the hearing was to provide residents with the opportunity to comment on the proposed elements for Freedmen's Cemetery renovation project.
- **October 15, 2009 - Public Hearing on Synthetic Field Study**
The purpose of the hearing was for the commission to receive a report on the Synthetic Field Study provided by staff which identified and prioritized athletic fields for conversion to synthetic surfaces, and to provide residents with the opportunity to comment.

- **November 19, 2009 - Public Hearing on the Proposed Fee Increases**

The purpose of the hearing was to provide residents with the opportunity to comment on proposed fee increase submitted as part of the Department's FY 2011 Operating Budget.

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 (Sep-Apr) & William Cromley (May-Jun)
- 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: Formal Council Recommendations as outcomes of Public Hearings



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

Phone (703) 838-4343

Fax (703) 838-6344

Park and Recreation Commission

August 13, 2009

Chairman John Komoroske
Members of the Planning Commission

Re: Four Mile Run Design Guidelines

Dear Chairman Komoroske and Planning Commissioners:

The Park and Recreation Commission has reviewed the Draft Design Guidelines for the on-going re-design and restoration of Four Mile Run. We enthusiastically lend our support and approval to these guidelines and urge you to adopt them as written.

The Design Guidelines are a companion to the Four Mile Run Master Plan adopted by both the City of Alexandria and Arlington County in March of 2006. Since that time staff from both jurisdictions along with their counterparts at the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the appointed citizen's Joint Task Force has worked to begin the process of realizing the vision contained in the Master Plan. One critical step in the process was a framework to guide the design of the various components in the Master Plan which were envisioned to be undertaken over the span of several decades. These Design Guidelines provide the specific design language which will over time shape the physical manifestation of the urban design elements, the updated flood control measures and the ecological restoration components in this important corridor.

Design guidelines are a tool most commonly used in urban planning, but in this case they have been extended to include all the layered complexities of the restoration of this green corridor. The scope of these guidelines is extensive enough to focus the needed attention on Four Mile Run and extend attention to the relationship the Run should have with the surrounding neighborhoods - one of urban oasis. The design language the document contemplates strikes the right tone, grounded in the context of this place. The corridor is now dominated by overhead power lines, a wastewater treatment facility, and other vestiges of urban life infrastructure which seem at first glance oppressive and daunting to surmount. Instead in this document the designers propose to use those same elements to draw on creatively for the design language in order to ground the restoration efforts in the context of what now exists and is unlikely to change, creating a logical whole.

We applaud and endorse this design direction and hope you will as well. It is much different than the colonial design elements used for design language in much of the rest of Alexandria but it is the correct design direction for this place, born of 20th century urban life. We can't wait to see what comes of these guidelines and the on-going efforts for the restoration of this important place in our community.

Respectfully,

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

Cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Jim Spengler, RPCA Director
Faroll Hamer, P&Z Director
Park and Recreation Commission



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Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

Phone (703) 838-4343

Fax (703) 838-6344

Park and Recreation Commission

January 3, 2010

The Honorable William Euille
Vice Mayor Kerry Donley
Councilman Frank H. Fannon IV
Councilwoman Alicia Hughes
Councilman K. Rob Krupicka
Councilwoman Redella S. Pepper
Councilman Paul C. Smedberg

Re: 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study & Ben Brenman Field Conversion and Lighting

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

At our October 2009 monthly meeting the Park and Recreation Commission addressed the continuing challenge of providing athletic fields of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the current and growing demand for field sports by both the youth and adults in our community. The Commission feels that addressing this shortfall is an important public health goal for all ages as well as a critical objective in providing positive opportunities for the youth of our community.

As you are aware, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA) along with the Park and Recreation Commission completed an Athletic Fields Master Plan which was adopted by City Council in 2006. The Master Plan 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 prime solution, the Master Plan recommended conversion of some fields to synthetic turf, allowing more games to be played on our existing limited number of fields. In the years since the City Council has undertaken funding these recommendations. The first two synthetic fields have been successfully installed and are in full use at Minnie Howard and Ft. Ward Park.

At the direction of the Commission RPCA staff undertook to update the information and field conversion assessment tools over the summer months following the adoption of the 2010 budget which allocated funding sufficient for the conversation and lighting of one existing grass field somewhere in the City. Staff gave a presentation to the Commission and the public at our October meeting. The presentation also included the staff recommendation that the next field in line for conversion is at Ben Brenman Park. Following the presentation and staff recommendation the Commission conducted a public hearing on both the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study - its content, conclusions and plan for future conversions – along with the public comment on the staff recommendation for the next field conversion occurring at Ben Brenman.

To generalize, both the people who commented and the Commissioners felt the RCPA staff had done an excellent job of further clarifying and reinforcing the criteria and logic for the sequence of recommended field conversions. The Commission later voted unanimously to support and adopt the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study, which has now been transmitted to you. While the process outlined in the Study is fairly rigorous it can be summed up into several key points. First, fields targeted for conversion should be of a size that will accommodate multiple field sports played at competitive level, that is to say that the fields be large enough to “count” the games played on them toward league standings. In doing so these fields then are also large enough to be divided at the midpoint to accommodate two practice sessions at once, particularly for younger children, serving double-duty on some days. Second, all fields that are converted must also be able to accommodate night-time lighting. The addition of lights extends the play by up two games into the evening, depending on the time of year. As most of our youth sports are coached by parents and volunteers with other employment, practices and games not associated with schools most often cannot commence until after the work day when coaches can arrive, and are not dependant on when children are

finished with school. As the majority of youth and sports they play are not affiliated with school programs, the fall and spring practices and games are severely limited on fields without lights. Investing in artificial turf on fields where the installation of lights is not possible is not a good investment, particularly at this time of limited financial resources.

During the portion of our hearing associated with the recommendation to convert and light at Ben Brenman Park, a couple speakers raised concerns about the night-time artificial lights and the effect on the proximal neighborhood. In order to address potential concerns staff had previously advertised and led a field trip for the Ben Brenman neighbors and the public to observe the lighting conditions after dark at Ft. Ward Park. In the case of Ft. Ward and Minnie Howard fields the City has installed the new generation of "full cut-off lights" which meet the criteria for limited light pollution under LEED green building guidelines and meet Dark Sky Compliance guidelines. Simply put, the light is focused and stays on the field with virtually no spill-over into even immediately adjacent areas. The effect on the surrounding neighborhoods has been tremendously limited as compared to field lights of even ten years ago, some of which are still in place in other locations in the City.

While the majority of speakers supported the next field conversion occurring at Ben Brenman, several neighbors raised concerns primarily about the impact of increased field use on parking. Dak Harwich, representing Cameron Station Homeowner's Association, indicated that while the Association was generally not opposed to lights and artificial turf conversion at Ben Brenman Park they were concerned about the parking around Ben Brenman Park and the potential this field conversion might have to make the situation worse. He indicated they feel there is not enough parking at Ben Brenman Park currently, which is already pushing people to park in the neighborhood.

While pointing out that with the conversion and lights there would not be more games played at any one time, just that the hours of play would be extended, the Commission did address parking concerns by asking staff to take a look at the current and future parking use inside and outside the park as part of the planning for this project, in order to understand the extent of the problem and what might be done to address it. The Commission also strongly indicated that they would not support converting any additional green, open space in the park to parking and asked staff to develop other recommendations and solutions if parking needs to be addressed.

After the hearing, along with endorsing the findings of the Field Study, the Commission also endorsed the staff recommendation that Ben Brenman be the location of the next conversion to artificial turf and lights. This vote was the only approval necessary for the conversion to turf to occur, but in order to install lights a Special Use Permit will be required. And here we would point out that under this plan lights are to be installed both on the rectangular field that will receive the artificial turf and on the existing baseball diamond as well. There is economy in undertaking lighting both of these areas in the park at the same time.

The construction period for this project, or any field conversation project, is limited to the June – August timeframe and the Commission instructed staff to begin immediately with the project planning and start the SUP process in order to begin construction in June and have the field and lights in place by September of 2010. We are pleased to report that staff is making tremendous progress in this regard. Most critical to note at this time, an engineering firm has been hired and is working to assemble the information necessary to meet a February filing of the SUP application so that public hearings and necessary approvals can occur in May, the latest date for these actions that will accommodate field construction in 2010.

The process staff has undertaken is outlined below:

General Update-Design/Engineering Consultant:

- Staff has solicited a scope of work, selecting the team of AMEC/Kimley Horn(KHI) as the design consultant based on significant experience with similar athletic facilities throughout the mid-Atlantic and is in excellent professional standing with the City.

Scope of Work Includes:

- Amendment of site survey information using existing data.
- Geotechnical investigation/analysis/recommendations.
- Site design and engineering including utilities dedicated to replacement of the natural grass field with a synthetic infill turf system field.
- Electrical engineering for athletic field lights and supporting site electrical system as related to replacement of the existing rectangular field and provision of lights at the existing diamond field and play area southeast of the park office/restroom building.

Design/Engineering Approval Process:

- As a field replacement, the consultant is preparing engineering documents that will be administratively processed as a Grading/Plot Plan. The documents include environmental considerations for stormwater quality and quantity. Grading/Plot Plans do not require approval by Planning Commission or City Council and takes approximately 10-12 weeks to process internally.
- A Special Use Permit will be required for the athletic field lights and necessitates approval by Planning Commission and City Council. The consultant is providing information to support application for the Special Use Permit, which

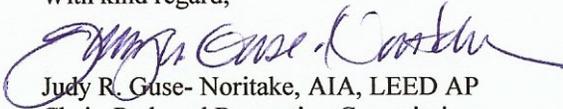
will be developed/processed by RPCA staff in coordination with other City departments. There is a 90 day advance filing deadline, so a public hearing and approval in May will require filing an application in February 2010.

Anticipated Schedule:

- AMEC/KHI is initially amending existing survey data and performing geotechnical investigations. Survey work is proceeding with crews verifying field data using typical site collection methods that are non-invasive and do not cause site disturbance. The geotechnical investigation necessitates that test borings be taken adjacent to the little league and rectangular fields for light pole foundations, and within the rectangular field for field engineering design. The borings are being performed using methods that limit site disturbance with minimal impact/if-any on park activities. Affected areas are being fully restored to match conditions prior to disturbance.
- 90 days lead time is required for application for the Special Use Permit; therefore staff is scheduling application in January/February, 2010 in anticipation of an April/May, 2010 hearing schedule with Planning Commission and City Council.
- Commencement of construction for the replacement field and athletic field lights remains anticipated in summer, 2010.

The Park and Recreation Commission will look forward to further discussion of the 2009 Study and field issues at your Work Session on January 12, 2010. If we can be of further assistance before then please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kind regard,



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

Cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Farrol Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning
Park and Recreation Commission
Chairman Jim Gibson and the Youth Sports Advisory Board



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

James B. Spengler
Director

1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

Phone (703) 746-4343
Fax (703) 838-6344

Park and Recreation Commission

March 19, 2010

The Honorable William D. Euille
and Members of the City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: VDOT Recommendations Affecting the Winkler Botanical Preserve

Dear Mayor Euille and Members of City Council:

The Park and Recreation Commission would like to offer these comments on the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) recommendations contained in its February 2010 Mark Center (BRAC-133) Access Study. The study evaluated seven unique alternatives to facilitate direct access from I-395 to Mark Center and concluded that two alternatives, A1 and D, be advanced for further study. Both of these alternatives would have a large, negative impact on the Winkler Botanical Preserve that this Commission finds completely unacceptable.

Alternative A1 would require the removal of approximately 3.7 acres of urban forest and trees screening the BRAC office building along the I-395 right-of-way and the Winkler Preserve. Alternative D would require the removal of approximately 9 acres of urban forest, with over 6 acres cleared on the I-395 right-of-way and the acquisition of 96,297 square feet (2.2 acres) from the Winkler Preserve.

The Winkler Preserve is a unique natural area within our densely urbanized city and we view any proposals that would negatively impact the preserve as totally unacceptable. This notable preserve provides recreational and learning opportunities for thousands of Alexandria youngsters, as well as a peaceful retreat for adults and a habitat for wildlife that is rarely present at any other location within our City's boundaries. Promises were made about the long-term preservation of this close-to-home and irreplaceable resource. We must all stand together to protect and maintain the integrity of the open space commitment our community has made at this site to future generations. If the Winkler preserve can be sacrificed for traffic lanes and access roads then no public park or open space in this City is safe. If the Winkler Preserve is lost where

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will we draw the line for open space and natural resources in our small City? Paving over parts of this important natural resource is shortsighted, unthinkable and unforgivable.

We therefore urge you in the strongest terms possible to inform VDOT that the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission, along with the citizens and neighborhoods we represent, cannot and will not support either alternative A1 or D. Another way must be found that will not rob future generations of the natural preserve they were promised.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judy R. Guse-Noritake". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name below.

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



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AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

James B. Spengler
Director

Phone (703) 746-4343

Fax (703) 838-6344

Park and Recreation Commission

April 27, 2010

Chairman John Komoroske
Members of the Planning Commission

Re: 1001 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET AND 714 CHURCH STREET
FREEDMEN'S CEMETERY MEMORIAL

Dear Chairman Komoroske and Planning Commissioners:

The Park and Recreation Commission wishes to lend their full support to the proposed Master Plan and Zoning Map amendments to change the land use at the location cited above from Commercial to Parks and Open Space. This sacred site represents both the best and the worst of our City's long history. We have now come to a time and place where we can remove the last vestiges of the inappropriate recent use of this land and once again honor the freed men and women that long ago were a part of our community and were laid to rest in this place. It is right and good that we should take this important step.

The Park and Recreation Commission held a public hearing last fall on the proposed design, with a goal to re-establish the cemetery, mark its boundaries and identify the known grave sites. A design competition was held as a first step in the re-creation of the cemetery and memorial garden surrounding it. Further development of the winning design from that competition has yielded a plan that is simpler and somewhat altered from the vision first presented. While the changes are significant, they were made with full citizen input and respond to the realities of construction costs. The result is more understated but quite appropriate for the site, where the graves themselves must remain the most important aspect of this place. Our Commission approves of the current design.

The Special Use Permit for this purpose and the current design should be granted without hesitation.

With kind regard,

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

Cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
James Spengler, RCPA Director
Faroll Hamer, P&Z Director
Park and Recreation Commissioners

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