

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
Park and Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2009
7:30 p.m.
Lee Center - 1108 Jefferson St.**

Commissioners

Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Henry S. Brooks
Rich Brune
Matthew Coda
William Cromley
David Dexter
Ripley Forbes
Clark (Stephen) Mercer
Robert Moir

Staff

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

Commissioners – Excused Absence

Kaj Vetta
Vacant- 1 Student Position

MINUTES

I. Welcome:

- Chair Judy Guse-Noritake opened the meeting at 7:30 p. Judy introduced Robin DeShields, new Executive Administrative Assistant. Judy also welcomed Director James B. Spengler who started on August 10th.

II. Approval of Summary Minutes From the June 16, 2009 Meeting:

- The draft summary minutes were approved as amended and corrected. Mr. Henry Brooks moved to approve the minutes as corrected; the motion was seconded by David Dexter. A copy of the revised minutes will be posted to the City’s website.
- Chair Judy Guse-Noritake noted that the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) staff reports that were emailed to Commission members prior to the meeting on 9/15/09 were greatly appreciated and should ensure more efficient meetings in the future.

NOTE: A FULL COPY EACH STAFF REPORT WAS POSTED TO THE CITY’S WEBSITE ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2009. See Departments/Recreation

III. Recreation Programs and Services Update - William Chesley.

- Mr. Chesley presented a report on Recreation Program and Services Updates to the Commission. A copy of the full report (Item III) was submitted to the Commission and staff in advance on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City’s website. The following items were discussed:
- New late night basketball league has been introduced at Charles Houston Recreation Center. The target age is youths and adults 18 to 26 yrs. old. The program is helping keep young adults involved in positive activities. The RPCA department is partnering with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority in helping to market the program via a newsletter, word-of-mouth to the residents; Community police officers are attending the events.

- An update on the Charles Houston early morning Pilot Program will be provided in October. If the fees don't cover all the expenses, the program may need to be discontinued. A variety of marketing efforts are underway to generate interest in the program.
- P&R Commissioner William Cromley asked if there is a way to show a correlation between the late night basketball program and a reduction in crime or nuisance complaints. Mr. Chesley stated that he would research this and report back to the Commission at the October meeting.

IV. Update on Four Mile Run Design Guidelines and Mt. Vernon Avenue Properties - Ron Kagawa.

Four Mile Run Design Guidelines:

Mr. Kagawa reported on the status of the Four Mile Run Design Guidelines to the Commission. A copy of the full report Item IV was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed:

- Mr. Kagawa reported that the Four Mile Run Design Guidelines were approved by the Alexandria Planning Commission on September 1, 2009 unanimously, and by the Arlington County Planning Commission on September 14, 2009.
- Approval of the Design Guidelines is not required by the Alexandria City Council because they are part of the implementation process of the previously approved Master Plan.
- The Guidelines go to the Arlington County Board of Supervisors on September 26, 2009, as part of the Consent calendar. There has been positive support for the Guidelines by the County Board and they are expected to pass.
- The Chair and Commission members congratulated Ron Kagawa and Mary Stephenson for their work on the Four Mile Run Design Guidelines.

Follow-up Item: A Hearing on Approval of the Design Guidelines will be held by the Arlington County Board of Supervisors on September 26, 2009.

Mt. Vernon Avenue Properties- 4109 Mt. Vernon Avenue:

Mr. Kagawa presented a report on the status of the Mt. Vernon Avenue Properties to the Commission. A copy of the full report Item IV was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed:

- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities staff held a public informational meeting on August 6, 2009 in conjunction with Planning & Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services.
- Planning and Zoning and Recreation staff will submit a docket item to City Council for the October 13, 2009, meeting recommending an Implementation Advisory Group for Arlandria be established.
- Chair, Noritake noted that the Implementation Advisory Group will be as a subset to the Arlandria Plan.
- Ron Kagawa noted that the Arlandria Plan encompasses the entire Mt. Vernon Avenue. The Arlandria Small Area Plan was approved by City Council two years ago.
- Mr. Kagawa said it is important to bring Arlington residents into the Program as well since Alexandria and Arlington share Four Mile Run.

Follow-up Item: A Docket Item will be submitted for the October 13, 2009 meeting recommending City Council establish an Implementation Advisory Group for Arlandria.

Additional Discussion:

Four Mile Run Pedestrian-Cyclist Bridge Design Competition: The Chair asked when the bridge design competition would be moving forward. Ron Kagawa said the competition has been programmed, looking at evaluation criteria for the entries and the RFP Process. Anticipates having the website up-expected date October 2009. Entries are expected back mid-December-Selection in January 2010. Virginia Tech is the design competition manager.

V. Discussion on the need for a Public Hearing on the Proposed Fee Increases (November)-Jack Browand.

Jack Browand presented a report on the need for a public hearing on the proposed fee increases. A copy of Item V was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed:

- As part of the annual budget process the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities routinely evaluates its fees.
- There are some new fees being **Proposed** this year:
 - **Adult Fitness Fee:** A \$100 adult fitness fee, similar to fees implemented this year for the youth.
 - **Garden Plots Fee.** RP&CA is requesting additional funds to be used to improve the garden plots. The Department is looking at standardizing the size (square footage) of some garden plots at a square footage charge of approximately \$55 per year.
 - Chair Noritake said that requests for additional garden space need to come before the Parks and Recreation Commission for a policy discussion. Garden plots are a use that almost becomes a private property right. "The issue of anything that becomes a dedicated space, which is only used for one purpose (i.e., playgrounds, dog parks, garden plots, etc), need to come to the P&RC.
 - The Chair said there is a national movement for gardening in places that are small strips. New plots should be in small excess spaces not used for other things.
 - **Tennis Court Light Fee-** Proposed installation of timed money boxes to be installed at tennis courts, which would control when the court lights come on and go off. The project would be contingent on receiving funding to purchase the timed money boxes. Mr. Browand said he feels that the costs could be recovered in about two and ½ to three seasons. Purchase of the timed money boxes would require a supplemental budget request.
- **The Chair and Commission supports a discussion on fee increases and will schedule it for the November meeting.**
- Staff will identify as many fees as possible that are similar to the class fees or adult sports fees that are more market driven. This will allow for increases without City Council approval and provide more flexibility. Most of the fees in the current Chart are City Council approved fees. If changes were made to these fees, except for inflationary increases, they would have to go back to City Council.
- The Chair asked that a brief presentation be given before the hearing to answer questions people might have. Chair Judy Noritake said it is important to move forward so that request for proposed additional fee increases can be included as part of the FY2011 budget cycle. Commission Member Ripley Forbes requested that part of the

public hearing include information on scholarships, grants, and waivers for youth fees, and any other background information that is applicable.

Follow-up Action:

- **The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will present its list of proposed fee increases and new fees to the Parks and Recreation Commission at its November 19, 2009, Public Hearing and Regular Meeting.**
- **Following this a Public Hearing for the community will be held at Charles Houston Recreation Center, tentatively for November. The fee structure will be put out to the public in advance and the hearing will be advertised.**

Additional Discussion:

Charles Hamilton Houston-Ad Hoc Naming Committee:

A Public Hearing will be held on September 30, 2009 by City and the Charles Hamilton Houston Ad Hoc Naming Committee. There have been efforts in the community to name rooms within the Charles Houston Recreation Center, the First Phase is the public hearing. Mr. Browand said an announcement will go out tomorrow.

VI. General Budget Update (Schedule) - Jack Browand

Mr. Browand presented a brief report on the City of Alexandria budget schedule. A copy of the memo Item VI was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed:

- The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural submitted its recommendations for the FY 2011 budget on September 10, 2009.
- The Department identified approximately \$1.45 million in budget cuts and also submitted supplemental requests which would be an increase to the budget.
- In addition new fees and increases to fees are being proposed.
- Over the next couple of months the City Manager and OMB will work with the Department to finalize the budget.
- The FY 2011 budget will be formally adopted in May.
- A complete schedule of the budget process can be found on the City's website. Further details on the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities budget can be found in the Director's Report, IX.

VII. 2009 Synthetic Field Matrix- Discussion of the Next Steps (Public Hearing October 2009)- Mary Stephenson.

Mary Stephenson presented a comprehensive report and power point presentation on the 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study. A copy of the full report Item VII was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed.

This is a follow-up Item from the Meeting of July, 16 2009:

- An initial synthetic fields study was brought before Parks and Recreation Commission (P&RC) in November 2007. In July, 2009, P&RC asked that the study be updated. The presentation and report are the results of the update. The goal of the study is to help the Commission and the community decide where the next synthetic turf field should be and to consider the location of future fields.
- **As a result of the study, staff recommends Ben Brenman Park as the City's next synthetic turf conversion field.**
- **The 2009 Synthetic Field Conversion Study was presented to Youth Sports on Monday, September, 14 2009 and is scheduled to be heard before the next Parks and Recreation Commission Public Hearing and Regular Meeting on October 15, 2009.**

- The presentation outlined the study process, methodology, analysis and results. The 2009 study differed from the 2007 in that it included a detailed inventory and GIS analysis. Also, the criteria were refined and updated. The field inventory helped staff define what a field is and what a field is not.
- Fields Considered for Conversion - Staff determined that only fields that could accommodate a minimum of 320' X 185' play surface, which is the size of a regulation soccer field, would be considered for conversion. Fields that exceed the size standard would also be considered. Additional fields were included in the 2009 study that were not included in the 2007 study because of the field size standard. Some fields in green which were considered in 2007 did not meet the standard in 2009
- Commissioner, Henry Brooks asked why Four Mile Run was not included. Mary said that size was not a factor here; however in 2008 the City invested in the restoration of natural turf and it is now in pristine condition. Additionally, there are some regulations there that prevent the City from installing synthetic turf within a resource protection area (RPA). Judy stated that City Council recently passed a regulation that prohibited artificial turf in an RPA, though, Chair Noritake pointed out that there is broad industry evidence that this is not detrimental from a water quality standpoint. Mr. Brooks noted that Four Mile Run was one of the fields initially recommended for artificial turf, however it was later prohibited for use at this site.
- Nine (9) Criteria were developed for evaluating the fields in 2009 - "Size" and "Direct Fiscal Impact" are criteria used as they were in the 2007 study. "Process," "Indirect Fiscal Impact," and "Constructability were in the 2007 study, but have been refined. "Impact to Existing Use," "Location," "Field Condition," and "Public Access and Site Amenities" are new criteria added in 2009. Criteria were grouped together according to relative importance to the City and a weight was assigned based on a formula.
- Each field received a score between 1 and 3. 1-least favorable condition, 3-most favorable condition. The scores were integrated into four matrices.
- **Results: Matrix 4 was recommended as most representative of the City's priorities.**
- **Ben Brenman Park and Hammond scored top in all 4 categories (John Adams and George Mason scored in the bottom).** Ben Brenman scored higher in location, site amenities, and constructability categories and was therefore selected.
- Mary Stephenson noted that the study assumed that each artificially turfed field will have lights. Lighting was taken into consideration, as well as its impact on adjacent neighborhoods. The positives are that staff has put in place some of the best lights on the market which are full cut-off, meet dark sky standards, and are LEED certified. While the playing surface is lit there is minimal glare off the field itself.
- **Chair Noritake discussed the need to move forward quickly with the Public Hearing, as funding is available in the current budget. The goal is to get the field designed this fall. This may require a Special Use Permit (SUP) though the City's Planning Commission for the lights, then getting the design done and bids out as soon as possible, so that the field can be completed and ready by Fall of 2010 when the season starts. The construction window is June – August.**
- **Questions and comments were taken from the Commission.**
- Judy stated that as we grow as a City and land availability decreases our larger parks will be used more intensively to meet the growing recreational needs of the community. Mr. Moir suggested that an education campaign be done to educate the community the benefits of synthetic turf fields. The fields can be used year round and require less maintenance. Matthew Coda said he has played on artificial turf and lighting is one of the biggest concerns and that Hammond field is in poor condition.

Commissioner Robert Moir suggested researching information to support the use of more synthetic fields such as increase in the number of people enrolling in youth sports and adult sports. He also suggested checking with the School Board to see if there is an increase in school enrollment. It was also suggested to check with the City to see what the increase in housing demands are and relate this as well. We need to be planning to meet unmet needs now, as well as the growth that we can anticipate.

- Judy suggested having the public hearing at Beatley Library or Samuel Tucker Elementary School.
- Mary Stephenson will provide a complete presentation and also a brief presentation on artificial turf. Mr. Moir said that the presentation to the public needs to be similar but more substantial and should include the cost benefits of artificial turf and some demographics.
- Slides will be used, including night time slides of Ford Ward and a sample of artificial turf will also be available. Mr. Henry Brooks suggested people who have concerns may need to be taken on a site visit.
- Judy said that Roger Blakeley went with Councilman Rob Krupicka to speak with people who live near Ben Brenman fields to discuss their concerns.
- An opportunity will be available in advance of the Public hearing for people to tour the synthetic fields at Ft. Ward prior to the meeting at night when the lights are on in the field.
- A press release will go out announcing the tour and a convenient pick-up point will be determined.
- The Parks and Recreation Commission will decide after the Public Hearing and hearing comments whether to make a recommendation to go forward with the project.

Follow-up Action:

- **The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will sponsor a free tour of Ft. Ward Park Synthetic Athletic Field for the public on Thursday, October 8, 2009.**
- **A Public Hearing and staff presentation on the synthetic fields will be held October 15, 2009.**
- **The hearing will include a brief presentation on synthetic fields: increase in demand, why synthetics are beneficial, and full cut-off lights.**

X. 2009-2010 Commission Meeting Dates, Locations and Future Agenda Items.

The Parks and Recreation Commission and RPCA staff discussed proposed agenda topics for the upcoming year. Meetings will generally be held on the third Thursday of each month, unless otherwise specified. The location of the meetings may be rotated throughout the City in order to provide an opportunity for various groups and the public to attend.

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Director, James Spengler, requested that a brief Public Comment period be added to the Agenda each month. This will not replace scheduled Public Hearings but will be an additional opportunity for the public to participate in the process.

IX. Director's Report -James Spengler, Director, Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities.

Mr. Spengler presented his report on the City of Alexandria budget reductions. A copy of the memo Item IX was submitted in advance of the meeting to the Commission and staff on September 15, 2009 and was posted to the City's website. The following items were discussed:

- The City's FY2011 budget process has begun. RPCA staff submitted recommendations based on the forecasted worst case scenario for the City as requested by the City Manager. Based on the worst case scenario, the City Manager came up with targets for each Department to reduce their funding from FY2010 levels.

- The Department of RPCA target is \$1.4 million below the current level and is well below the Department's FY 2006 levels.
- The Focus will be on maintaining Core services and functions, in key areas:
 - Park Operations - Core Services include keeping the parks open daily, clean, trash removed, and keeping restrooms operational, to allow people to use the parks for their intended use.
 - Recreation Services - Core Services, based on community needs, include maintaining the After School and Out of School Time Programs.
 - Administration- In the area of general Administration, the focus is on how small we need to be and still be able to operate efficiently.

The Department's developed a list of proposed cuts that exceeded the requested amount in order to provide flexibility for the City Manager. **The Department's goal is to shift the focus and discussion on development of broad policy decisions which balance the need for aesthetic appearance items, relative to providing direct services.** Further reductions are being suggested for the following areas:

In the area of Leadership and Management, 3 high level vacant positions were eliminated (\$351,618), however the position FTE was maintained. In the area of Park Operations, reductions proposed include not doing any pond maintenance at Ben Brenman Park (\$39,000) and reduction in median mowing (\$296,880), which is the largest reduction.

Urban Forestry Program - the Department is asking the City to limit the number of trees planted in order to reduce maintenance costs. Mr. Henry Brooks, P& RC suggests investing more in neighborhood programs where the local community would become actively involved in helping to care for the trees and water plants in their neighborhood. The Chair stated that in some communities this works, however someone needs to get the program up and running and there needs to be public involvement. Mr. Brooks suggested designating a contact in the neighborhood. Mr. Spengler stated that the Urban Forestry Master Plan as passed by City Council, is currently under-funded by two million dollars, volunteers efforts would not fully cover this deficit.

Recreation Services - proposed budget reductions include the elimination of approximately ten (10) vacant positions permanently from the budget, as well as proposing some fee increases and new fees.

Graffiti Removal Program - The Department originally proposed shifting this program to the Sheriff Department because they have the equipment and staff resources available to handle it. However the Sheriff Department declined, therefore this program will continue to be handled by the Recreation Department at this time.

Supplement Requests - approximately 1.3 million dollars in supplemental requests were submitted, which include funds to operate Witter fields when the project comes on line. Supplemental requests will be presented to the Commission at a later date.

Judy stated that what happened in the residential market is now affecting the commercial market, more will be discussed later under the Director's report. She anticipates the budget being a regular item on the agenda.

Additional Discussion

Ft. Ward Advisory Group- All appointments have been recommended. The Office of Historic Alexandria recommended (3 members), the Parks and Recreation Commission (3 members), and the Environmental office (1 member). Additionally members are being

solicited by the City's Citizens Assistance office. The group is expected to hold its first meeting sometime in October.

Arts Division- A handout on the upcoming Alexandria Film Festival was distributed, the event will be held September 24 - 27, 2009, at the George Washington Masonic Memorial Temple.

Public Arts Projects- Three public arts projects are currently underway:

- Charles Hamilton Houston Memorial Project-deadline for RFPQ is 10/1/09.
- Police Memorial Arts Project, RFPQ out, deadline 10/30/09.
- The Freedman's Cemetery Project- Selection Panel has been chosen, RFPQ will be out mid-November/December.
- The Van Alstine Sculpture public art project is moving forward again. The project was put on hold in March of 2009, due to budget constraints. RPCA has recently been given the go ahead to proceed with obtaining updated costs for this project. The project is scheduled to go before the Board of Architectural review on October 7, 2009; concurrently an RFP will be sent out to contractors. Once a firm price is received, the City Manager will make a decision on releasing funding.

The Alex Awards- will be held October 23, 2009.

Joint Jones Point Park

Discussion: The neighborhood task force for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge held its final meeting this week. Citizens who previously worked on the former Woodrow Wilson task force have questions and want to be involved during the construction process. The thought is for the Parks and Recreation Commission to appoint an Ad Hoc committee of a few neighbors and one or two Commission members to work with staff to provide oversight during the construction process. The group will also serve as a point of contact for citizens and help provide information and answer questions regarding construction.

Chair, Judy-Guse Noritake asked if the design decisions had been finalized yet and asked if the public has seen the work. She was involved when the original design went forward, the design was approximately 35 % complete, including the park restroom and maintenance building, however she has not seen anything since that time. She is concerned that when this comes forward people in the community will ask how that design was arrived at. Judy said that there is a need to present the architectural elements (historical markers, site furnishings etc.) to the P&RC and public. Mr. Spengler said to start this process he will ask the National Park Service to come to the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, in order to bring them up to date on the project. It was expressed by the Mayor that for the construction and operation the P&RC should be the focal point for citizens. Judy expressed concerns about the Commission assuming this responsibility. Judy said that there is a need to have a controlled forum/group for citizen input and concerns. However, she stated that the group needs to ensure that on-site contractors and professionals will have room to operate without impediments from the citizens.

Commission members asked what the scope and role of their involvement would be. Judy stated that the scope and charge of work needs to be clearly spelled out so that it is not overstepped. Mr. Spengler stated to the same extent that the Woodrow Wilson bridge task force met and handled concerns during construction of the bridge; there is the need for a similar group to be constituted now. Further help of the P&RC is needed for development of an agreement with National Park Service for operations. Construction will begin in October of 2010.

Strategic Planning- Mr. Spengler informed the Parks and Recreation Commission that the City Council recently held a retreat and is in the process of updating its strategic plan. The

Plan focuses on seven (7) goal areas. Council members will self-select which goal they want to work on; the groups will also be divided into subgroups to work with stakeholders. One of the seven initiatives is specific to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. Mr. Spengler, will share more information on which City Council member will be assigned to work with the Department of Recreation with the Commission. City Council wants to complete the updates to the strategic plan between October and December 2009.

XI. Reports From Commissioners:

Judy-Guse Noritake, Chair- reported on the following items:

Waterfront Tour of New York-The P&RC was invited to travel to New York City on a field trip with the Planning Commission. She and others from the Arts and attended a tour of Battery Park, Highline Park, and Bryant Park. The tour was eye-opening for Planning Commission. Several of the parks' designers and other came and spoke to the group as they toured. New York City has invested millions of dollars in improving its waterfront over a 30 year period. The City of Alexandria has big plans for developing its waterfront but limited funds and infrastructure to support it, therefore there may be a need to scale back projects from what was seen in NYC. Judy would like to see more trips sponsored with other Commissions, City Council and others to provide a broader view of where the City can and should go with parks, open space and recreation.

Potomac Yard Landbay F- Judy and Ron Kagawa met with the Planning staff regarding proposed redevelopment of Potomac Yard Landbay F/The Big Box Center, regarding plans for further redevelopment. The goal is to help guide all open space and recreational elements to meet future needs, including seeing if it possible to do more roof top recreational development to help meet demands.

Henry Brooks- None.

Rich Brune- None.

Matthew Coda -None. The Chair asked if he would help recruit another youth to fill the vacant board position.

William Cromley-reported that the Alexandria Master Soccer League has started.

David Dexter- reported on Holmes Run-stream bank restoration/ stabilization plan, the Army gave them funds to do the project for impacts of the BRAC project in that are of the City. A meeting is scheduled to be held at the William Ramsey Recreation Center on September 24, 2009. The Urban Forestry Tree Sale will be held on October, 3, 2009. The trees are available for good prices: see the City website. The event will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church.

Ripley Forbes- reported that Alexandria Master Co-ed Soccer is very popular and has started with great success. Eight teams of adults are signed up, based on Alexandria communities.

Clark (Stephen) Mercer- requested an excused absence for October. Mr. Mercer stated that he supports "building on local groups" and distributed an invitation for the "Friends of Chinguapin Park" clean up day, to be held Saturday 10/3/09 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mr. Mercer noted that he had won a Master Gardner Award this summer and shared some produce he had grown in his garden plot with group. Members congratulated Mr. Mercer on his upcoming marriage and thanked him for the produce.

Robert Moir - reported that the Youth Sports Advisory Committee is having its 1st meeting of the new school year, on Monday 9/21/09. He stated that there has been an explosive growth in youth sports at all entry age levels, especially in soccer, youth football and lacrosse. The explosion is at kindergarten and first, second and third grade level children. We need to make sure demand is met. We need to increase the availability of fields and amount of money spent on fields.

Next Meeting – Public Hearing and Regular Meeting- October 15, 2009 – 7: 00 P.M.-Location to be Confirmed.

XI. Adjournment - 9:55 PM