

City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Public Hearing and Regular Meeting

Thursday, May 21, 2015, 7:00 p.m.
Charles Houston – 1108 Jefferson St
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members Present: Jennifer Atkins, Co-Chair, Judy Coleman, Co-Chair; Stephen Beggs, Rich Brune, Secretary, Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson, Catherine Poulin, Alexis Browand, Emma Schutzius. Absent: Gina Baum, William Cromley.

RPCA Staff Present: James Spengler, Director; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Public Information, Special Events, Waterfront Operations; David A. Miller, Division Chief, Recreation Services; James Nichols, Division Chief, Park Operations; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects; Laura Durham, Open Space Planner, Dana Wedeles, Park Planner; Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Other City Staff: Susan Eddy, Deputy Director, Transportation and Environmental Services. Jeff Farner, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning, Tony Gammon, Civil Engineer IV, Department of Project Implementation, P. Patrick Mann, Urban Planner III, Planning & Zoning.

Guests: Kevin Van Hise, Kimley Horn and Associates; Melanie Avery, Mark Eisenhour, ACPS, David Fromm, Peter Heimburg, Kristine Hesse, Pat Miller, Amy Slack, Maria Wasowski, Chair, Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Advisory Group and Member Planning Commission, Elizabeth Wright.

- I. Call to Order: Jennifer Akins and Judith Coleman, Co-Chairs. The meeting was called to order by Atkins at 7:02 p.m. who reviewed procedures for the hearing and meeting.
- II. Public Hearing and Action on the Mt. Jefferson Park Plan: Laura Durham, RPCA, Open Space Coordinator:

To view a copy of the Presentation, go to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/FinalDraftDetailPlanMountJeffersonPark.pdf>

To view the May 21, 2015 RPCA staff memo to the Commission at:

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/COMBINEDMAY212015REPORTSCURRENT.pdf>

Full schematics for the Mt. Jefferson Park Draft Concept Plan are posted to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/DRAFT%20Plan%20Feb%202015.pdf>

RPCA's Mt. Jefferson Park Planning Process, community meeting and online survey results information is posted to: (<http://alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=83168>)

Planning & Zoning's Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Study information is at: (<http://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=83465>).

Durham provided a presentation on the proposed Draft Concept Plan for Mount Jefferson Park, for the section from East Raymond Avenue to Route 1 (Draft Park Concept Plan). She said that planning for Mt. Jefferson Park is part of RPCA's ongoing planning process for all City neighborhood parks, which have about a half-mile service area. Durham said that because of the separate planning process for the Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Plan and the proposed Oakville Triangle site redevelopment, RPCA is running its review of the Draft Mt. Jefferson Park Neighborhood Park Plan in parallel to the Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Plan to ensure concerns about and impacts to the park are addressed through RPCA's planning for Mt. Jefferson Park.

Durham said that the process has been going on for a little over a year and began when the Oakville Triangle Corridor Advisory Group was formed, and Mt. Jefferson Park was a topic at their very first meeting.

Durham said community priorities from the Advisory Group meetings: include retaining the park's naturalistic character, consideration of widening the park, or providing a buffer along the Oakville border, improving safety "eyes on the park", addressing drainage problems, improving the dog exercise area, and providing a connection between Del Ray and Oakville Triangle through the park. Durham said the Advisory Group held 13-14 meetings and that information is available on-line. Information on the planning process and timelines are included in the staff memorandum and presentation (See Link above).

At the March 12, 2015 public feedback meeting, draft plans were presented. Feedback received from that meeting is included in the presentation (See presentation).

Durham said that during the process with the draft plan along with holding meetings an on-line survey on the Draft Park Plan was conducted in March-April 2015. According to the survey, "The "Majority of Respondents" (See slide):

- Agreed that the "Draft Plan" reflects and balances community needs and comments received to date.
- Preferred the dog area options that included fencing along the trail and a retaining wall
- Preferred a secondary trail connecting to Calvert and offering additional plantings
- Connections between Oakville Triangle and existing Del Ray neighborhoods is extremely important
- End only access should be seriously reconsidered
- Accommodate bicycles and wheelchairs on trail
- Stormwater improvement should be the highest priority
- Keep the park as natural and continuous as possible.

Next Steps: pending endorsement by the P&RC (See slide)

- a. Develop engineered stormwater/drainage and grading plan.
- b. Further develop plans for Oakville Triangle on site open space.
- c. Incorporate any interpretive elements based on Mount Jefferson Park's history and character.
- d. Submit site plan for approval by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner questions/comments:

Q. Was any thought given to moving the path slightly under the trees to create more open space, and so that the path meanders through the foliage to help provide some shade areas. What are the number of proposed entrances?

A. This has been partially implemented where possible and the community has recommended that the design concept be looked at for the full trail in the future. Durham reviewed proposed entrances.

Q. If the path around the north side is done, will it require drainage and grading work.

A. The area is at grade, drainage will be improved, the area is currently unusable.

Q. Are the berms on the Oakville side of the park likely to be effective in deterring access and encouraging people to enter the park at the trail's access points?

A. The berms are 3' height with plantings on top, this should deter most people.

Q. Was consideration given to lowering the berm height to preserve the park's character and also make the southern part of the park more usable?

A. There was no community interest voiced for having this done.

Q. Will the berms and plantings on top will be native plantings.

A. The detailed park plans talks about using native species. Early on the plants will be under warranty, and will be watered until established, but no irrigation is currently planned.

Q. Will the Raymond Street-side grade, near the sewer, be changed to improve drainage?

A. The grade work will be done at a few points to provide proper drainage, and some Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be used.

Q. Were there ideas other than grading for how to improve drainage since it is a major concern?

A. There will be some inlets to help with water collection along with bio-swales and rain gardens, especially near the outside of the fence where the dog area is, and final engineering will probably handle it this way in other areas of the park.

Q. Were accessibility, emergency access and safety factored into choosing the access point locations?

A. The access point locations reflect community concerns about increasing 'eyes on the park' and some safety concerns were considered, as well as the need to provide access to the park for new residences.

Q. Does the grade of the hill determine whether to keep the fence there or remove it?

A. The community has said the steep grade near Route 1 is part of the park's historic character, and staff plans to preserve the current fence, and that no significant grading work is planned at this time.

Q. What are the building heights, and will this materially impact the amount of sunlight from coming into the park.

A. Farner (P&Z) said building heights near the park will be about 30-45 feet and the multifamily buildings will be 50-60 feet with some variation. He said P&Z conducted a solar study, which is posted to P&Z's website, shows the proposed buildings will have very limited impact on Mt. Jefferson Park and he will provide the study to Durham to share.

Q. Does the pervious surface and other trail improvements only run up to Stewart Avenue?

A. The first draft of the Plan, before March 2015, proposed the improvements just up to Stewart Avenue, however, based on the feedback, staff is proposing improving to the entire trail.

Q. What is the proposed rezoning?

A. Farner said staff will probably propose to the Corridor Advisory Group in June rezoning the Oakville Triangle and the entire SAP area as a Coordinated Development District (CDD), a zoning which allows flexibility subject to design guidelines, similar to North and South Potomac Yard.

Q. With respect to bicycles on the trail, are there alternatives under consideration for having this go through the Oakville Triangle on-road alignment.

A. Wasowski said there is a parallel road. Farner said one discussion is how to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles. Swann Avenue is signalized and with City Council having approved the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station location the previous night the question is how to provide a pedestrian/bicycle crossing on Route 1 to access the Metrorail station with a signal. He said staff is working with the Advisory Group and the developer to provide a new pedestrian-only crossing at the end of Fannon Street that will be signalized.

Q. How close the park's exit at Route 1 is to the Simpson Dog Park.

A. It is less than half a mile.

Forbes said he likes the idea of making improvements to the dog park, but is concerned about not fully fencing the dog park, for safety reasons, particularly since staff projects that additional dogs will be using the park. He questioned whether grass is an appropriate surface material, and said he is unaware of any community using grass as a primary surface for such a small confined dog area because of compaction.

Durham said right now grass seems to work but staff will monitor this over time. She said the majority of the City's unfenced dog exercise areas are grass, but staff will consider other recommendations.

Public Comments:

a. Peter Heimburg, 201 Windsor Avenue, submitted a letter for the record (*See Attachment*). Heimburg stressed the importance of retaining the stretch of the park between Raymond Avenue and Custis Avenue as a walking trail. He said there are many positive aspects to the Plan, but expressed several areas of concern: 1. The new access points up and down the park will affect use of the trail and detract from its current sense

of seclusion. 2. He said the proposed automobile road running adjacent to the park on the Oakville side will lead to noise pollution despite the proposed berm. 3. He said the proposed paved bicycle-pedestrian path between Raymond Avenue and the cut-through at Stewart Avenue will span the walking trail and harm the goal of maintaining the trail's seclusion and calm. He said introducing bicycles on the path and creating mixed mode pathways, will make the path less peaceful and hinder walkers who will have to stay in their lanes. He asked that the Park Commission and Oakville triangle planning advisory board reconsider improving the park trail for bicycle traffic, and retain the park as a natural urban walking trail to the extent possible.

b. David Fromm, 2307 E. Randolph Avenue, said he has lived here since 1992, and his property backs up to the park. He has seen many changes. He said that the trail was created in May 2007, and when it was first opened, it was a nice two-foot wide meandering nature trail. Over the years, it has changed in character and is now 8 feet wide. He appreciates the current sense of seclusion in the park. Once the road is put in, he is not sure how a sense of seclusion can be preserved, because the new residents will want access to the park. This seems to be a reasonable compromise. He said the dog park does not meet the Dog Park Master Plan (DPMP) requirements, and it runs directly behind residential properties. If the size of the dog park is increased, it will have more dogs and, some residents may complain and challenge it because it will not meet the DPMP requirements. He prefers a trail that runs along the top edge as a commuter trail. He opposes having a trail as a commuter path that runs through the park since its use will intensify and people may then also want it lighted. Fromm said residents in the area would not want the berm taken down. Residents in the area desire to maintain the berm as it helps reduce noise, etc. He supports taking out the invasive plants. He said that the park is unique and beautiful, and staff's challenge is how to address competing needs/uses while maintaining the character of the park to the extent possible. He said additional ideas may be needed for creating a multi-modal trail that can work well within this park's context.

c. Christine Hesse, 2605 Dewitt Avenue, said she takes her dog to Mt. Jefferson Park when it is not muddy. She supports maintaining the park's character and the sense of calm and thinks berms will help do this. She asked that staff consider putting in a fence along the park to create a sense of separation from the Oakville Triangle development. She supports limited access to the park to provide a sense of enclosure. She likes the proposed dog exercise area improvements. She said that maintaining the berms will help maintain a sense of seclusion. She opposes the crossing spur to Fannon Street, because she feels points of access to the park should be limited and it would also not provide access to Route 1. She said more details are needed on how the park will be funded and its cost. She said the amount of developer contributions available for Mt. Jefferson Park improvements is not yet known, nor are the costs of storm water management infrastructure. She believes the soil is contaminated and remediation may be needed. She said there is a list of demands for using the developer contributions from the Advisory Group, and she hopes these don't take away from items needed for Mount Jefferson Park improvements. She would like park improvements to include at least measures such as a

fence to create a sense of separateness for the park and improvements in the stormwater management infrastructure.

d. Amy Slack, 2307 E. Randolph Avenue, said that she has been an advocate for planning for park improvements since 1977, and is thankful it is finally being done. She said staff has done a tremendous job addressing the competing goals, although details still need to be worked out. She said that the proposed tree line along Park Road screams "new development", which detracts from the naturalistic character of the area. She asked staff to reconsider the spacing and types of trees selected, in order to maintain the area's natural and forest-like feel. She offered as an example D.C.'s forested and naturalistic 16th St. NW area with million-dollar homes across from the Rock Creek Parkway which is so natural. She supports making the dog exercise area larger on the north section. She said creating a sense of space, whether the park is fenced or unfenced, is more important because of conflicts between some dog owners, who use the entire park as an off-leash dog exercise area, and other people who would like to use the area, but no longer use the park because some people do not keep their dogs on a leash. She would like to see plantings that reinforce the signage, that delineates the off-leash dog area, and she would like it called an "off-leash dog exercise area" not a "dog park". The Fannon Trail (Central Section) used to be open, and that reestablishing the opening is okay with her to all allow more people into the park. She supports having a less meandering trail and having more evergreen trees on the east side to expand the visual buffer. She is not opposed to offering more access points into the park as the community expands. She said having at-grade access, especially at Route 1, should be a clean connection to Route 1 that permits wheeled access, be it for wheelchairs, strollers or bicycles. She also asked whether the name Mt. Jefferson Park is still appropriate and suggested that the Park's name meaning and history be revisited and/or changed.

e. Maria Wasowski, Chair of Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Corridor Advisory Group and member of Planning Commission said that the park has been discussed at each of the Advisory Group's monthly meetings over the last year. She said the many opinions expressed need compromises to create an actual physical plan that addresses community interests, City policy, and good park planning. She feels the Draft Concept Plan successfully does this. The Draft Concept Plan also captures the community interest in keeping the feeling of rooms created by the meandering path through the park. She said community interest in preserving the park's mature trees is important and suggested that staff walk with the community through the park to view the mature trees and determine which ones are important to preserve. She said that addressing invasives, trash, and stormwater puddling will make the park more pleasant for everyone to use, especially since the muddiness of the dog exercise area makes it unusable and creates conflicts between off-leash dog owners and other users who need to use the park. The current area for dogs is unusable and needs to be improved and expanded. She said safety is a big issue, but most people also want the park to be accessible by all. She feels the Corridor Advisory Group's year of community meetings that led to its unanimous approval of the Draft Park Concept Plan for Mount Jefferson Park was a very positive process.

Durham, said that even without the Oakville Triangle process, RPCA would still be undertaking the City-wide Neighborhood Park Improvement Planning process for Mount Jefferson Park, and that funding would be built into RPCA's CIP funding proposal. Durham said the majority of the Mt. Jefferson Park Plan should be able to move forward regardless of the Oakville Triangle SAP.

Atkins thanked community members for their extensive participation in the meeting process, and for working so well together to develop compromises. She said that planning is currently at the concept level phase. She will ask staff to consider during the detail phase of the project, the community's desire for this to remain a natural forested area, and that the street trees not be designed in a line, and that evergreen trees be included to help maintain the area's secluded forest-like feel which is a unique feature of the park.

Regarding trail improvements, Atkins asked if half the trail can be permeable, and half be a berm to help maintain the park's natural forested feel. She suggested a secondary trail could be a pervious surface accessible for wheelchairs, strollers and bicycles.

Durham said this was in the original draft plan, and feedback was received about it.

McPherson said since this is a concept plan, it is not necessary for the Commission to agree on all the details now.

Beggs said there seems to be concerns about access into the park, and about having bicycles and pedestrians on the same trail, which might detract from the feel of the park. He said the park has changed dramatically over time, and that the majority of users used to be dog owners; he is pleased that over the past 5-6 years more people have been using the park. He said that future enhancements will add to enjoyment of users. **Beggs** proposed an alternative multi-use trail design.

Forbes said in light of the proposed dog park expansion being in proximity to a road and residential housing, the Concept Plan should show a fence (he suggests a 360 enclosure) and said that the height does not have to be 6 ft. it can be 3 ft.

Durham showed the areas where the park is currently fenced, and the open space areas. She said there is a proposed fence, and that where it is unfenced that leads to open space for Oakville Triangle Area. She said there are stairs to go into the dog area from the trail site, and a pathway that delineates the dog area. In response to Forbes, concern about a 360 enclosure, Durham said the Dog Park Master Plan (DPMP) states that that in order for a dog exercise area to be completely fenced it cannot be within 50 feet of a residential area, and it has to be a minimum of .5 acres. She said the site is not quite .5 acres, and it is within proximity to residential area, so staff would have to revisit this issue. She said the DPMP has been used as a guideline as it is an approved document.

Forbes said the DPMP is an advisory document it should not be used as a reason not to include a fenced dog exercise area in a park's design concept. **Forbes** said if there are community complaints about dogs running off leash then fully fencing the dog area would make regulations enforceable and should be included in the concept plan. He sees

no basis on expanding the park or improving the dog exercise area unless it is fenced, he said the expansion is not authorized by the DPMP.

Durham said there is no size specification for expansion of an unfenced dog exercise area.

Coleman said she does not support showing a 360 fence on the Concept Plan, and that she will work with Forbes to determine how the DPMP affects new or expanded dog exercise areas and parks. She said the P&RC can consider this issue at its next meeting.

Atkins recommended this issue come back before the P&RC in conjunction with discussion of the DPMP to address the fencing issue. She said that approving the Concept Plan does not preclude the P&RC from discussing the details later.

Beggs asked if staff has researched other municipalities that may have successfully created a partially fenced area with some landscaping in a long linear area for dogs. Durham said there are some successful examples she can provide but it is challenging.

Forbes said if there is no agreement among commissioners that the dog exercise area have 360 degree fencing, then the dog park expansion should be deleted from the Concept Plan until the question is resolved. He does not believe that an unfenced dog park is an acceptable expansion of the DPMP, and he doesn't want the community to assume that a fenced dog park is prohibited by the DPMP, because it is not. He asked that any reference to a dog park be deleted from the Concept Plan and that a space be left there for the future. **Beggs** agreed and asked if the plan can move forward without the dog area designated.

Atkins asked Durham if the engineering plan can move forward without designating the area as a dog area, since the big issue there is primarily drainage. **Durham** said engineering work to improve the drainage can move forward without a decision on the off-leash dog area. She said, the plan right now calls for a retaining wall, along the edge of the trail and staff has received a determination from the City Attorney that they can expand the existing area. Durham showed Atkins the area of retaining wall.

Coleman asked why this area is being called a dog park, instead of a dog exercise area since that essentially is what it is. **Durham** said staff can make sure the language "off-leash dog exercise area" is consistently used throughout, since this is what is there today and also proposed for the future. **Atkins** said she does not want to hold up the engineering work until a consensus is reached on the dog exercise area.

Motion: Atkins moved to approve the Mount Jefferson Park Concept Plan, with the caveat that there is concern about the dog exercise area vis a vis fencing vs. non-fencing, and that the issue needs to be readdressed in conjunction with the P&RC's addressing the Dog Park Master Plan. Poulin seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

REGULAR MEETING:

Public Comments (non-agenda items):

a. Elizabeth Wright, 113 S. Ingram Street:

1. The Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee does bicycle and pedestrian counts three times a year. A volunteer who runs on the Holmes Run Trail pointed out when the spring count was taken two Saturdays ago that runners and cyclists can't see the mile markers. Ms. Wright said it would be helpful if the numbers, instead of only facing the trail, were put on three sides of future trail marker poles. She suggested an interim measure could be to paint the numbers on the ground until funding for new markers is available.

2. Regarding volunteer efforts to remove invasive species, she said that morning eleven volunteers behind the Holmes Run Greenway (behind the Beatley Library) filled 18 bags in 21-1/2 hours collectively. She said many people do this on their own, and it would be helpful to improve collective volunteer efforts to help staff. She said staff should work with the Environmental Policy Commission to get an invasive plants program integrated into schools' standards of learning.

3. The Holmes Run Trail will be closed for three months this summer for maintenance and bridge repairs, she said the City's engineering staff should have publicized this better. She had recommended in February that there be better communication between City Departments, and hopes the P&RC was advised of the Holmes Run Trail work.

b. William Goff, 1313 Bishop Lane, spoke about the Patrick Henry redevelopment. He said that he has been attending School Board meetings on this and understands Option 2 is the only option since there is no funding for swing space. He wants to better understand RPCA's role in this process, and feels that there is some disconnect between ACPS and RPCA. He heard that the new recreation center will contain a 120 x 53 yard field and an indoor track labeled a field house, at an estimated cost of \$6 million, separate from the cost of the new school estimated \$38 million cost. He said that the original Patrick Henry School had a recreation center with a gym, daycare, and a place for senior citizens. He expressed concern that, the new field house structure will have none of this. The neighborhood has concerns about the parking lot and it is not designed well. He thought the project's focus was for the schools to improve infrastructure and thereby academic achievement. He asked if the new recreation center will be for community use or rented out, and what the other field is going to be used for? He said that the School Board will vote on this June 11, and that there are some issues that need to be addressed for the community as indicated at the School Board meeting.

Atkins said the P&RC does not have a role in the Patrick Henry School decision and asked staff to comment.

***Spengler** said he attended that evening's School Board work session on Patrick Henry, and he also attended their work session the previous Tuesday. He explained that the Patrick Henry recreation center and new school, is a joint City-School Board project underway for two years, and is currently in the feasibility study phase, Sorg consultant is working to see what structures will fit on the site and programming. Staff is working on refining several options with Sorg Architects. Currently the new recreation center will be about 27,000 sq. ft. which is consistent with the size of centers at Cora Kelly and William*

Ramsey K-8 schools. Staff goes to City Council June 23, 2015 to get their direction on the feasibility stage on the recreation center.

III. Items for Information:

Presentations:

A. Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP) Update:

A copy of the presentation and related memorandum from Karl Moritz, Director Planning and Zoning is posted at:

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/PRC21May2015LREFP.pdf>

Susan Eddy, Deputy Director of Planning & Zoning; Pat Mann, Urban Planner III, Planning & Zoning; and Mark Eisenhour, ACPS reviewed the LREFP projecting enrollment trends for the next 30 years, the product of several years' work that is posted to the City website. Eddy said the LREFP focuses on Alexandria elementary and middle schools, and is a joint effort of the City of Alexandria and Alexandria City Public School system, who will work cooperatively on the plan. The process included meetings with various work groups and many public meetings were held. The Department of Planning and Zoning is seeking feedback from the P&RC. Mann reviewed Enrollment Trends and Forecasts (See presentation): The Plan's Executive Summary highlights, and Chapter 2 details, the rapid increases in school enrollment. He said that the increase in school enrollment is occurring due to families living in existing City housing, not new development. Eisenhour reviewed Guidelines for 21st Century Educational Facilities (See presentation): Highlights are that maximum school sizes have been established by ACPS: 850 students for elementary schools, and 1200 students for middle schools; subject to modification by the School Board. Schools will be designed based on an urban school model and be multi-story buildings, adjoined with other facilities to maximize community use and space. Information on Mini-Master Plans covering new facilities are planned (See presentation), and infrastructure and renovation needs as projected throughout the City.

Next Steps: The School Board will hold a Public Hearing on May 28, 2015 and is expected take action on the Draft LREFP at its June 11, 2015 meeting. A Public Hearing with City Council is scheduled for June 13, 2015, with expected endorsement of the LREFP at its June 23, 2015 meeting.

Commissioner Comments:

Q. Atkins asked what the maximum enrollment sizes: 850 students for elementary school, and 1200 students for middle schools are based on?

A. Eisenhour said it's a mix of available land and design capacity.

Q. Beggs said a lot of growth as explained happened without new housing development. He asked if development is now pushing the increased school projections.

A. Mann said that projections are increasing based on the pattern of current growth in existing housing, not new development. He said the primary reason for enrollment growth is driven by larger families staying in the City and sending their children to public schools. Eisenhower said for example, the new Potomac Yard development has about 12,000 units, which may result in 120 new students, who may attend the new Jefferson Houston School, which is currently under-enrolled.

Q. Beggs asked if Potomac Yard student enrollment exceeded its projections would this trigger a new school at the Simpson Field site. He said short-term fields that are currently programmed may be maxed out.

A. Eisenhower said he was unsure what the trigger point would be, and that ACPS is also starting a redistricting discussion. **Wedeles** said there is no trigger for a new school at Simpson Field. The focus is on new schools on the West End, on the East side of the City it's more retrofitting existing school sites. She said the reason to keep Simpson Field on the table is long-term planning, 30-years out.

Q. Atkins asked whether, from a P&RC perspective, co-location of school and recreation facilities will continue to be part of this planning process.

A. Eisenhower said yes.

Action: The P&RC received the LREFP Report.

- B. **Windmill Hill Park Shoreline Rehabilitation Project:** See Presentation: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WMHPublicMeetingPRC21May2015.pdf>
- **Jack Browand** introduced Tony Gammon, the Project Manager, and project consultant Kevin Van Hise, Kimley-Horn, who have been updating options for the Windmill Hill Park Shoreline Rehabilitation Project. He said staff plans to present its recommendation to City Council in June 2015 for approval and is requesting that the P&RC endorse the living shoreline option.
 - **Gammon** and **VanHise** reviewed the community outreach process followed to develop updated options for the Windmill Hill Park Concept Plan approved in 2003. The new options reflect changes in technology and best practices. Van Hise said three options were considered in addition to the 2003 plan to replace the structural bulkhead: a living shoreline, a rip rap/armored shoreline, and a bulkhead/armored shoreline hybrid. He said, among other changes, the basin shape will be modified to improve flushing.
 - A priority voiced at community meetings was the desire for shoreline actions to be implemented quickly.
 - The living shoreline concept is favored by the Army Corps of Engineers and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), federal permitting agencies for the project, and by the community. It is also the least expensive option of the three new options considered. The cost will be \$5.5 million for the living shoreline improvements (design and construction) and \$500,000 for other park improvements.

- Van Hise said the living shoreline will also earn the City storm water quality improvement credits for enhancing the river's habitat and furthering the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act.

IV. Items for Action:

A. **Windmill Hill Park Shoreline Rehabilitation Project:**

Motion: McPherson moved to endorse the Living Shoreline Concept Plan, Brune seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

B. **Receipt and Endorsement of the Sports Group Affiliate Policy for RPCA,**
David A. Miller, Division Chief, Recreation Services - See Staff Report.

To view Sports Group Affiliate Policy documents go to:
<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/COMBINEDMAY212015REPORTSCURRENT.pdf>

Miller asked the P&RC to endorse the Sports Group Affiliate Policy as an administrative policy of the Department of RPCA. Atkins asked McPherson for comments. McPherson said he was unable to attend last Youth Sports Advisory Board (YSAB) meeting, but heard the “Policy” was positively received. Forbes asked if the requirement for Articles of Incorporation for 501(c3) status affects any existing group that RPCA works with. Miller said he doesn’t think so, and that groups have looked at the “Policy”. Poulin asked if Alexandria residents are already given priority access. Miller said yes, this formalizes the current practice.

Motion: Brune moved to endorse the Sports Group Affiliate Policy for RPCA. Beggs seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. **Approval of Minutes of March 19, 2015:**

Motion: McPherson moved to approve the minutes; Brune seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

V. RPCA Staff Updates:

A. **Director’s Report:** (See Public Comments, non-Agenda items (b), response to questions from William Goff.)

B. **Division Updates:** To view full staff reports go to:
<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/COMBINEDMAY212015REPORTSCURRENT.pdf>

1. **Recreation Services:** William Chesley, Deputy Director - See Staff Report. Co-Chair Atkins commended staff for the Underwater Easter Egg Hunt held at the Chinquapin Park Recreation Center and Aquatics Facility on April 4, 2015.

2. **Park Operations:** Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director - See Staff Report.

3. **Public Information, Special Events and Waterfront Operations:** Jack Browand, Division Chief - See Staff Report.

4. **Park Planning, Design + Capital Projects**: Ron Kagawa and Staff - See Staff Reports.

VI. **Commission Business**: Jennifer Atkins and Judith Coleman, Co-Chairs.

Dog Park Master Plan (DPMP) discussion:

The Park and Recreation Commission (P&RC) held a lengthy discussion about the Dog Park Master Plan (DPMP), and how it affects new dog parks or making improvements to existing dog exercise areas. **Coleman** said she Forbes and Brune will review the Dog Park Master Plan (DPMP), before the next meeting. **Forbes** said the P&RC should send a letter to City Council or the City Attorney asking them to clarify how the DPMP applies to existing dog exercise areas that are unfenced. He stated that he does not believe the DPMP prohibits the fencing of a designated dog exercise area. He said that if the community recommends fencing for a designated dog exercise area, then the proposal should be presented to the P&RC for review, and then go to City Council for review/approval. He also asked if the DPMP formally controls changes to existing dog exercise areas or are existing dog areas grandfathered in, in a way that prohibits future improvements. Forbes said the DPMP is merely an advisory document and does not prohibit City Council from approving fencing and other improvements to existing dog exercise areas.

Browand said the DPMP was adopted by City Council and within the plan is an ordinance giving the City Manager the right to take certain actions. He said staff will review the ordinance, and work with the P&RC to clarify language if needed. Browand said that obtaining clarification on the DPMP would be helpful, because there will be a variety of park issues coming forward. He said that Windmill Hill Park, also includes an unfenced dog exercise area, however, specific criteria was included in this particular plan.

Atkins said the DPMP is clear when new dog parks are built, however there seems to be unclarity, as to how the DPMP works when making improvements to existing dog exercise areas or improving smaller dog areas. She said the frustration is that during community discussions and that during the ongoing Neighborhood Park Improvement Planning process, the community has been told by staff that making a change to a dog exercise area cannot be included as an option in a park's concept plan because the DPMP precludes this, and this needs to be clarified.

Spengler said it is his understanding that City Council identified certain existing parks as fenced dog parks or unfenced dog exercise areas and set a standard for new areas. He said staff's approach has been that unless City Council changes a historical area's designation it stays as is. He said City Council is the controlling body on what happens to existing dog exercise areas, and that Council did take action when they adopted the Ft. Ward Management Plan, and that the dog exercise area was removed. He said if the P&RC or residents make a recommendation to change an existing dog exercise area, staff would then take that recommendation before Council for action. He said there is nothing that

precludes the P&RC or the community from saying they want Mount Jefferson Park to have a 360 degree fencing for the dog exercise area.

Forbes said at the last meeting staff said the addition of fencing at an existing dog exercise area is prohibited by the DPMP. He believes this is in an incorrect reading of the DPMP and would like to see this point clarified. **Spengler** said the final recommended plan will need to come before the P&RC but any changes to an existing designation would need City Council approval.

Atkins said the confusion is that staff is saying that fenced dog exercise areas are prohibited by the DPMP, however this is not the case.

Coleman said the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan presented at a previous meeting, should either not say what the DPMP requires or add a note, where applicable, that it needs a P&RC recommendation or a determination by City Council.

Forbes suggested the P&RC send a letter to City Council requesting a direction to the Department that the DPMP does not preclude the consideration and design of fencing at an existing dog exercise area.

VII. Reports from Commissioners by District (verbal updates):

Poulin (District I) asked if RPCA manages the natural area at Taylor Run Parkway, and said that a citizen contacted her requesting removal of invasive species. Browand said staff can add this to RPCA's volunteer projects.

Atkins (District II), said she had received several complaints about areas needing to be mowed, and thanked staff for taking care of this.

Civic Awards Program Update: **Forbes** said that two meetings ago members were tasked with making a recommendation for the Civic Awards Program. He said that he, Emma Schutzius, and Rich Brune, members of the subcommittee, recommend that the Mayor present the awards at a City Council meeting in December 2015 or January 2016. The announcement should be sent out in September or October, 2015 so that the P&RC can make nominations in November. He said criteria should be included on the nomination form that the awards are designed for individual volunteer activities, and not for people who serve in appointed positions, such as Commissioners. Forbes will send the outline of both proposals to Jack Browand. **Browand** said if nominations are received by November the awards could be presented in January 2016, and that Proclamations are presented at the second Tuesday City Council meeting. He said that City Council must receive information thirty days in advance of a scheduled meeting.

Motion: Atkins moved to accept the proposal of the Civic Awards sub-committee. McPherson seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

VIII. Next Meeting: Agenda items and location for June 18, 2015 are to be determined. Reports from student Commissioners are requested.

IX. Adjourned: 10:05 p.m.

Mt. Jefferson Park Plan Comments

Park and Recreation Commission Public Hearing

21 May 2015

Peter Heimberg, 201 E. Windsor Ave, Alexandria VA 22301 (peter.heimberg.asa@gmail.com)

Over the course of the past year's discussion regarding the possible improvements to Mt Jefferson Park, nearly all parties involved concur that retaining the stretch of the park between Raymond and Custis as a walking trail should be part of any plan going forward. Although there are many positive aspects to the proposed plan, in my opinion, it has several features that run counter to this goal.

First, the new accesses up and down the length of the park means that users of the park will no longer be encouraged to treat it like a trail to be traversed. This will increase the number of encounters and detract from the sense of seclusion even before considering the manifold increase in the real number of park users stemming from the new Oakville and Potomac developments. I do not wish to revisit options for this here, as we have been assured by the advisory board that popular support for them was in the minority.

Second, there will be a new automobile road running adjacent to the park on the Oakville side which will undoubtedly increase the noise pollution in spite of the suggested berm. I assume that the parks commission has little to say about this aspect of the plan, as the road is not actually part of the park.

Third, the plan includes a paved bicycle-pedestrian path between Raymond and the Stuart cut-through, and would span roughly half of the existing 0.4 mile walking trail. One of the nicest features of a dedicated walking trail is the lack of focus required to use it. It's relaxing. Slow moving. Introducing bike traffic along this stretch would require walkers to stay in their lane, make no sudden turns, mind the leash, keep a close eye on the kids, listen for the bells. It becomes stressful. Anyone who has walked or biked mixed mode pathways, such as the Mt Vernon trail, knows this to be the case.

Given that so little secluded space dedicated to walkers exists in this area of the city and that the proposed improved bike trail represents only a few extra strokes of the peddle to cyclists, I would ask the parks commission and the Oakville planning advisory board to reconsider improving the park trail for bicycle traffic and to retain this park as a natural urban walking trail as much as possible.