

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: WINDMILL HILL PARK BULKHEAD SHORT TERM SAFETY FENCE

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As indicated in the staff memo to City Council on March 19, 2012, staff received an updated condition assessment from a professional engineering firm of the Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead on March 9, 2012. The updated assessment indicated a continued deterioration of the bulkhead, and noted that failure of a part or all of the bulkhead may be imminent. In addition, the increasingly uneven top of the bulkhead represents a significant trip and fall hazard to park users. The assessment recommended that the City immediately barricade the bulkhead to prevent public access until it can be removed and replaced in the future.

Staff believes that a fence around the deteriorated bulkhead is necessary to protect the public from the dangers associated with a failure of the bulkhead. The condition as described by the assessment completed is not an appropriate condition to leave without a barricade in an area that the City knows is well used by the public. While the City installed warning signs this Spring, those warning signs are not sufficient to protect the public, nor sufficient to protect the City from claims arising from an accident by a park user. Those warning signs were also removed by some member of the public and have been replaced by City staff.

Therefore, we are going to install a short term safety fence prior to the eventual replacement of the bulkhead which (based on CIP funding plans) is about five years away. The short term safety fence recommended by staff would remain in place until funding is available for replacement of the Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead in the FY 2016/2017 CIP. Installation of a fence in this location requires a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Board of Architectural Review (BAR).

Staff initially proposed a fence with heavy steel wire and wooden rounded posts because it would be visually unobtrusive and not obscure views of the water. On June 5, 2012, staff hosted a community meeting at the Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead to discuss the need to restrict access to the bulkhead to improve public safety, present the fence design and receive public comment. Staff's proposed fence was presented to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for approval on June 20, 2012. Attachment 1 outlines where the proposed fence would be located.

Following public comment on June 20, 2012, the BAR deferred a decision on the approval of the proposed design of the short term safety fence and instructed staff to work with the community to recommend a preferred alternative fence design. Staff took community comments under consideration and presented four additional design options (Attachment 2).

On August 15, 2012, City staff hosted a community open house to present the additional design options and established a web site for the community to register a preferred fence option from August 9 to 22, 2012. In total, 59 votes were received. The Nautical Post & Rope option (Attachment 2, page 4) received the most votes, 46% of the total. Staff, therefore, recommended approval of the Nautical Post & Rope option to the BAR on September 5, 2012.

On September 5, 2012, the BAR voted 4-2 to approve the Split Rail option, favored by 20% of the survey respondents, because the BAR found the Nautical Post & Rope fence to be too high-style and “Disneyesque” along the water’s edge where no fence would historically have been located. They found the more rustic split rail fence to be architecturally appropriate in this location. Staff has no objection to any of the proposed designs for the short term safety fence, and does not intend to appeal the BAR’s selection of the split rail fence to Council.

Staff has received comments from the public that an appeal may be filed in opposition to the BAR’s decision on September 5, 2012. The deadline for an appeal is September 19, 2012.

We continue to recommend the installation of a short term safety fence at the Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead. In our view, because of the safety and liability issues, the question is not if a fence should be installed, but what type of fence should be installed. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Location of Proposed Bulkhead Fence

Attachment 2: Windmill Hill Park Safety Fence Design Options

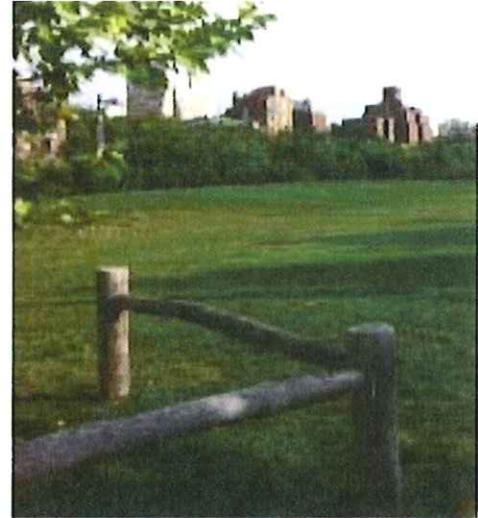
cc: Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager  
James L. Banks, Jr., City Attorney  
Joanna Anderson, Assistant City Attorney  
James Spengler, Director, RP&CA  
Jack Browand, Division Chief, RP&CA  
Rich Baier, Director, T&ES  
Emily Baker, City Engineer, T&ES  
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning



Windmill Hill  
June 2012

--- Location of Proposed Safety Fence

↑  
1 inch = 75 feet



EXAMPLE OF FENCE IN PLACE IN BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK, BROOKLYN, NY



DEMONSTRATION PROJECT AT WINDMILL HILL PARK

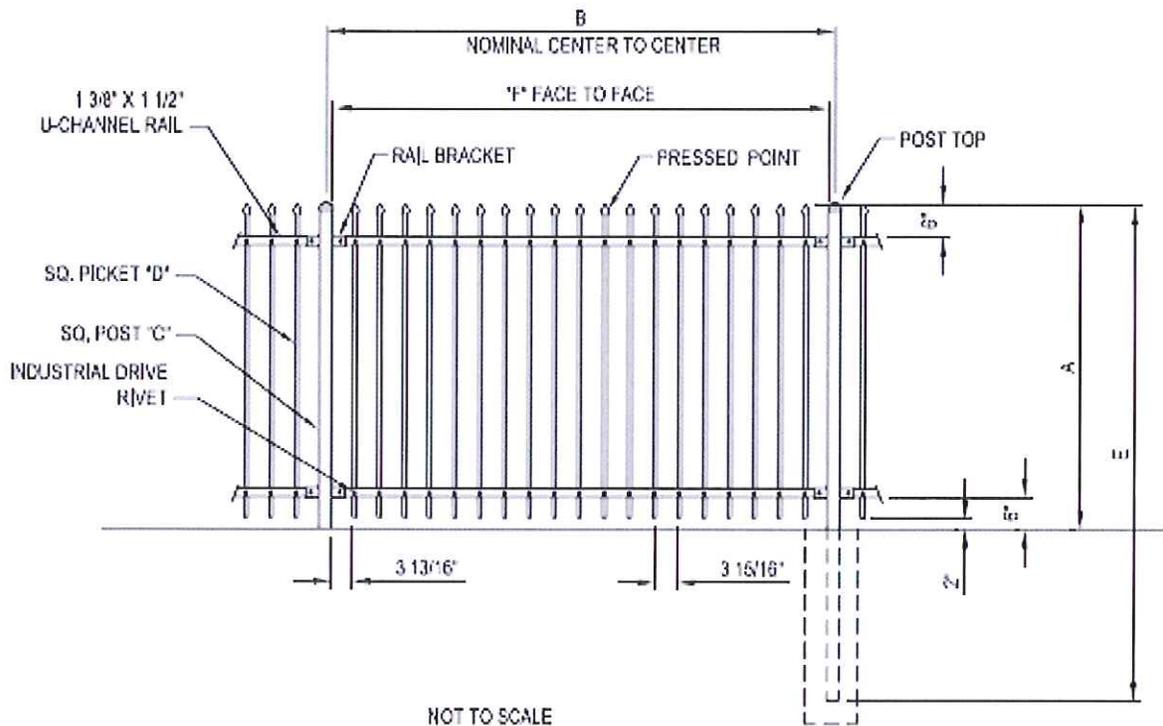
**Option #1: Post and Wire**

Estimated Cost: \$16,000



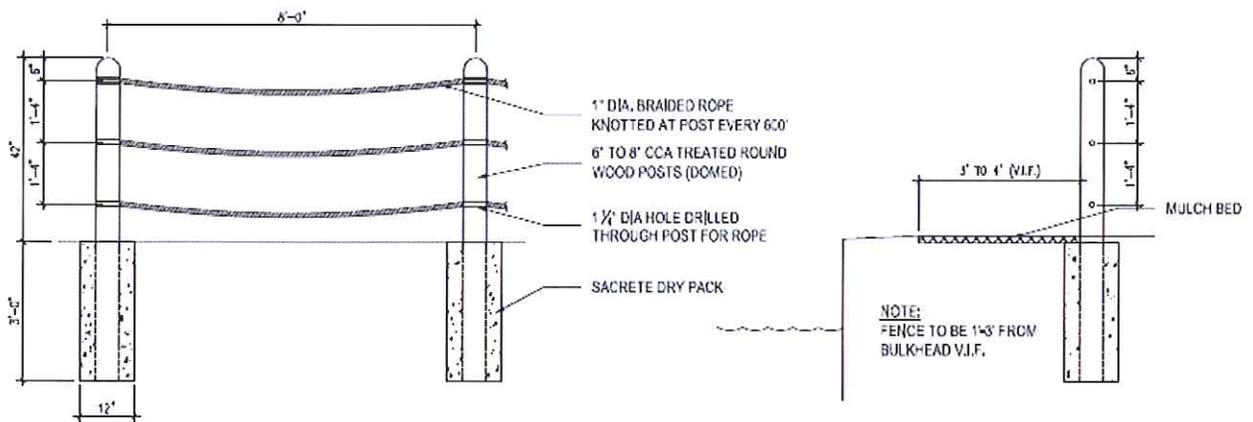
**Option #2: Ornamental Aluminum**

Estimated Cost: \$34,000





**Option #3: Nautical Post and Rope**  
 Estimated Cost: \$32,000

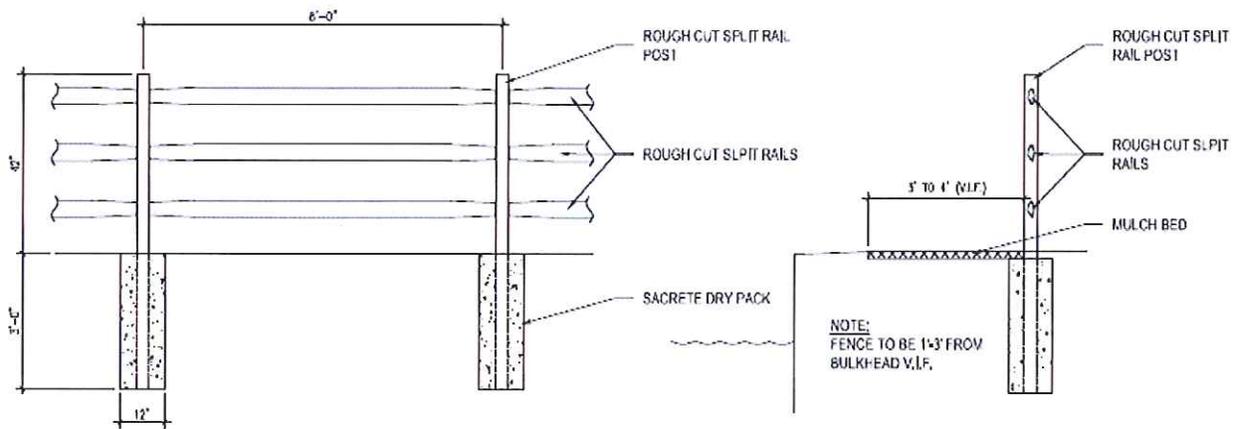


**A BULKHEAD FENCE DETAIL**  
 SCALE: NONE



**Option #4: Three Rail, Split Rail**

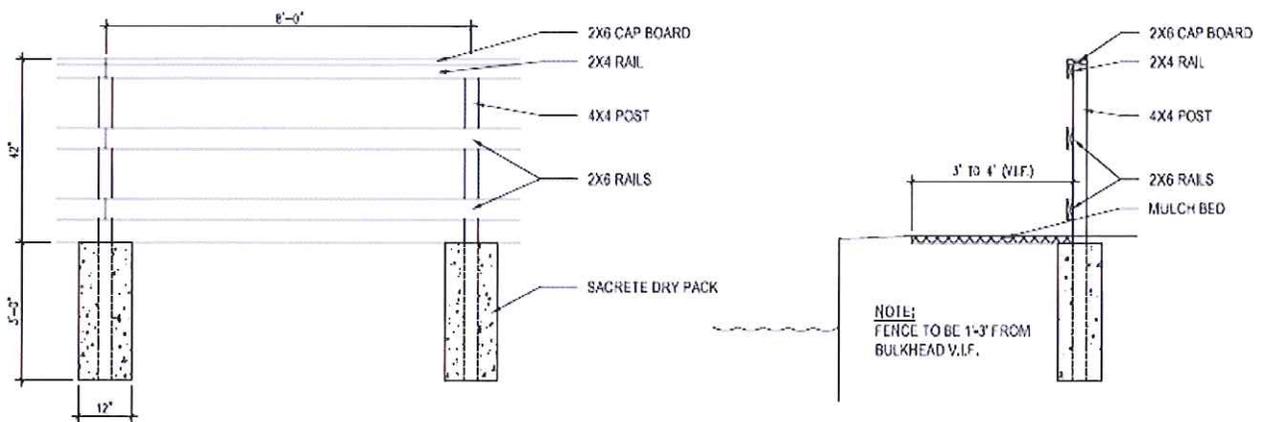
Estimated cost: \$8,400



**A** BULKHEAD FENCE DETAIL  
SCALE: NONE



**Option #5: Kentucky Board Rail**  
 Estimated cost: \$15,800



**A BULKHEAD FENCE DETAIL**  
 SCALE: NONE