

November 1, 2010

Dave Cavanaugh
November 14, 2010

City of Alexandria
Department Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Attention Laura Durham
laura.durham@alexandriava.gov

Dear Laura:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report prepared by the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG).

The Chairman and members of the SAG are to be commended for their diligence in conducting public meetings, listening to information provided by City officials and providing an opportunity for citizens to express their concerns regarding overall management of an important historic and recreational resource for our community. The draft report reflects extensive work and hopefully will be used as guide to mitigate damage done to the park and improve overall management.

I have lived in Alexandria for nearly 35 years and have seen the transformation of the park over time. Actions taken by the Department of Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) and to the Office of Historic Alexandria have adversely impacted the park. Poor decisions have led to maintenance and operation practices that have reduced the attractiveness of the park, worsened drainage problems, and disregarded the presence and contribution of African Americans before, during and after the Civil War. Not tallied are the deferred costs to the City of having to eventually mitigate problems created by the inept management.

Alexandria is fortunate to have Fort Ward Park and Museum. We will begin commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War. As public interest in the Civil War increases, now is the time to refresh the historical context of the Fort and the historical message presented to visitors. A more inclusive, cultural presentation of Civil War history will renew interest and support for the historical character of the park and make it more relevant to a diverse Alexandria community.

Lastly, I support strongly the formation of a community group to oversee implementation of the SAG recommendations approved by the City Council or City Manager. It is very alarming the park has been allowed to deteriorate to its current condition.

Attached is a suggested Executive Summary for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Cavanaugh

(Draft for Public Discussion)

**RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT
OF FORT WARD HISTORICAL PARK**

by the

**AD HOC FORT WARD PARK AND MUSEUM AREA
STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP**

for the

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

NOVEMBER, 2010

(Draft for Public Discussion)

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Executive Summary

The Advisory Group, created by the City Council to make recommendations on the management of Fort Ward Park, offers the following specific actions for the city to consider:

- **Prepare a Fort Ward Master Plan.** The plan should include: a Resource Inventory and Management Plan (“RMP”); a Cultural Resource Inventory; a Storm Water Run-off Mitigation Plan; an Interpretive Plan; a Vegetation Management plan, a plan for Community Input, a Joint Management Plan among affected city agencies including the use of cooperative Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”); Special Use Permits (“SUP”); and provisions for Picnic and Event Permits. Such a Master Plan would provide citizens with a role in, and understanding of, management decisions at Fort Ward Park.
- **Complete the archaeological investigation** at Fort Ward Park. With the ongoing discovery of marked and unmarked graves, the City should make it a priority to complete an inventory of sites, promote understanding, ensure protection and strive to honor the graves of the African Americans and others in Fort Ward Historical Park.
- **Address infrastructure issues** at Fort Ward Park. **Mitigate storm water runoff problems** and threats to marked and unmarked graves within the Park, the privately-owned Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, and impacts on the recreational sites, topsoil and vegetation throughout the park. Use vegetation (such as rain gardens) as well as other methods to mitigate storm water runoff. Move the playground to a location that is fully accessible and adjacent to parking.
- **Focus attention on re-invigorating the Arboretum** at Fort Ward Park or consider eliminating this function at the park. **Set up a regular schedule for tree care and pruning** and **create a tree replacement plan** utilizing data from the 2010 tree inventory. Tree planting will be coordinated with OHA data to avoid damage to identified sites. Update the arboretum signage and information. Continue to **clean up the Maintenance Yard** at Fort Ward Park and work to create in its place a landscape that properly honors the many African American graves that lie in this area.
- **Use best management practices (BMPs) in choosing mowing and turf management practices.** The City’s current policy is one of simply not mowing certain areas thus increasing invasive species and reducing areas for public use. Monitor park for invasive species, soil compaction, areas in need of re-vegetation, and use temporary fencing to allow restoration in heavily impacted areas.

Encourage city staff to continue to collaborate on management issues of Fort Ward and keep communication open and transparent across different city departments. Consider establishing a Citizens Advisory Committee to assist in oversight of Fort Ward management.

Comment [DC1]: The Executive Summary should contain a language from the City Council Resolution: 6. That the functions of the Advisory Group shall be:

- Advise staff with a goal of finding an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archeological interests.
- Provide staff with recommendations on balancing park uses, implementing education and outreach opportunities and reviewing the success of recently implemented changes; and
- Advise staff on Fort Ward issues and opportunities related to the interim park historic area use, management of Fort Ward and long term goals to be refined through a city-wide park master planning process.

Comment [DC2]: I suggest the City Manager review the current delegation of authority between OHA and RPCA and any conflict in management of the park for recreation or historical purposes being elevated to the City Manager for resolution. There is too much rivalry which has led to a gradual deterioration of the park. There should be a periodic reporting requirement to ensure implementation.

Comment [DC3]: A Resource Management Plan is undefined. There is no one accepted definition. However, typically a RMP provides land use planning and management direction guiding future actions and uses in the park. It identifies the ... [1]

Comment [DC4]: The archaeological investigation should be completed documenting the location of known grave sites and the location of potentially historically significant buildings.

Comment [DC5]: Possibly a separate item. The interpretation of Civil War History in the park should acknowledge and incorporate the struggle and contribution of African Americans before, du... [2]

Comment [DC6]: These recommendations should be considered in a RMP. I suggest this document address how management can be more effective.

Comment [DC7]: Planning process—public input to support arboretum or eliminate the function.

Comment [DC8]: This should be part of the RMP—guidance for maintenance of the park.

Comment [DC9]: Management and use of the area as a maintenance and storage yard was inappropriate (did not follow requirements for a special use permit) and is incompatible to the use of an urban, historic park. The area of the maint... [3]

Comment [DC10]: I suggest you call into question maintenance practices at the park. These would include, compaction of soil, adding gravel for parking and storage of equipment in the ... [4]

Comment [DC11]: Should be a recommendation. The Committee should oversee implementation of the City Council approved recommendations.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background

In 2008, neighbors in the West End of Alexandria began to notice changes in the management of Fort Ward Park (“Park”) that had been underway for several years. Loud parties, using amplified speakers, large numbers of cars parked on grass, and huge numbers of partygoers were beginning to occur with some frequency. Additionally, an area informally known as the maintenance yard that lies next to a community of homes was undergoing increasingly intensive use. Large trucks and bulk garden supplies were being stored in the yard, near where a tombstone marked the grave of one of the Park’s early residents.

Park neighbors had also experienced increased property flooding from the Park during periods of heavy rainfall. However, it took an attempted break-in at a home bordering the Park, where the intruder entered the property from an overgrown site within the Park, for neighbors to be galvanized into action. Alexandria police, led by then Chief Richard Baker, were immediately responsive and a tour of the maintenance yard yielded several recommendations for making it less attractive to potential criminals. However, when approached by concerned citizens, the City agency managing the Park, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (“RPCA”), then led by Director Kirk Kincannon were not especially receptive. In one noteworthy instance when it was pointed out that cars could be kept out of the Park at night by simply closing the gate, the gate was removed.

With citizens and the City seemingly at an impasse over how the Park might best be managed, the City, to its credit, agreed to hold a series of public forums on issues of concern at Fort Ward Park. The first, held February 18, 2009 at the adjacent St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School was led by RPCA Director Kincannon and featured a City-directed charrette which allowed residents the ability, after considerable spirited debate, to choose their own priorities in what management issues the city should address at the Park. The second public forum was held March 4, 2009 at the City’s Lee Center, the RPCA headquarters and followed much the same format. And a third public meeting was held March 18, 2009 at T.C. Williams High School where Mr. Lance Mallamo, recently hired as Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria (“OHA”), joined RPCA Director Kincannon in leading the meeting. That meeting was notable in that a number of descendent families attended who had relatives buried in the Park.

Additionally, on March 15, 2009, an article appeared in the [Washington Post](#) titled; “*At Civil War Fort, A Tale of Two Histories,*” (See Appendix III) which laid out the story of some of the African Americans buried at the Park and the fact that city-owned trucks were still being parked in close proximity. The resulting public comment and points raised in the public forums prompted the City to remove the vehicles and other associated maintenance materials from that area of the Park.

Comment [DC12]: There is the issue of operations, maintenance and overlapping management of the park. It is also important that maintenance issues were contributing to the deterioration of known OBC and family graves.

As a result of citizen concerns and media awareness, including publication of a periodic newsletter titled *The Fort Ward Observer* the city took several positive actions. The City Council, to its credit, appropriated \$50,000 to undertake an archaeological examination of the Park to better understand where graves might lie within the Park. The RPCA undertook to revise and better control its permitting process. Also, in March 2009, OHA undertook the creation of a citizen-led “Fort Ward Park History Work Group,” to better understand the complex history of the area for the period between the Civil War and the creation of the Park in the 1960’s.

Convergence of Issues

The reason issues regarding management at the Park elicited such intense interest from the public are the multiple roles it plays in meeting the diverse needs of city residents and visitors. The Park represents not only an effort by the City to protect the best preserved fort in the ring of forts that encircled Washington during the Civil War, it was the home to a community of African Americans, many of whom are buried there, and whose descendents still live in Alexandria. Additionally, the Park’s size provides an unparalleled opportunity for family and community picnics as well as walking and jogging and dog walking. It has a children’s playground, a museum, an amphitheater, tennis courts, an artificially-turfed sports field as well as serves as the City’s arboretum. As a result of these multiple uses, the Park is jointly managed by both the RPCA and OHA. The complexity of the Park is reflected in the complexity of its management.

Comment [DC13]: It was an area settled by African Americans after the Civil War, they became landowners and land was set-aside and used by African American families living nearby for a school and as a cemetery.

The Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group

On June 19, 2009, the Alexandria City Council received a recommendation from City Staff for the creation of a citizen’s group to advise it on management decision making at Fort Ward Park. On June 23, 2009, the Alexandria City Council adopted Resolution 2349 affirming that recommendation (see Appendix No I). Resolution 2349 authorized the City to select ten residents to serve on an Advisory Group that would exist for one year and make recommendations to the City regarding the Park and its management. While specifically excluding any recommendations within the museum walls at the Park, the Resolution did not restrict the subject area of management the Advisory Group could undertake in its deliberations within the Park itself.

Comment [DC14]: To make the report more readable, I suggest the background be shortened and the details incorporated into the Appendix.

~~The Resolution stipulated that these ten citizen members would fall into the following five categories: 1. three members recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission; 2. three members recommended by the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (“HARC”); 3. one member recommended by the Environmental Policy Commission; 4. two citizens at large; and 5. one member living within a one-mile radius of the Park. By the end of October, 2009, the members had been selected.~~

~~— The first pro-forma meeting of the Advisory Group was held on December 8, 2009, where new members met one another and were introduced to Mr. Lance Mallamo, Director of the OHA and Mr. James Spengler, the new Director of RPCA, having replaced the departed Kirk~~

~~Kincannon. Led by City officials, Advisory Group members agreed to meet again on January 14, 2010, to begin work.~~

~~On January 14, 2010, the members of the Advisory Group met and as its first item of business selected officers. Tom Fulton was elected Chair, Charles Ziegler Vice-Chair and William Schreiner as Secretary. The selection of officers was unanimous. A recording of minutes was undertaken. It was also decided that the Advisory Group adopt a mission statement to guide its work:~~

Mission Statement:

~~“Ensure the preservation and protection of Fort Ward Park for the citizens of Alexandria into perpetuity. Commemorate and interpret Fort Ward history related to the Civil War, the African American community living in and around the Park and all other cultures. Develop a framework of recommendations for the overall usage of Fort Ward by balancing and merging the richness of culture and history with recreational, environmental, and operational management demands.”~~ *Approved, March 11, 2010*

~~Additionally, the Advisory Group asked that City officials involved with management at the Park address the Advisory Group and answer questions. Finally, the Advisory Group agreed to a schedule of future meetings:~~

~~Over the course of 2010, the Advisory Group, meeting twice monthly, has heard formal presentations from:~~

- ~~Mr. James Spengler, Director of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities~~
- ~~Mr. Lance Mallamo, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria~~
- ~~Mr. Richard Baier, Director of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services~~
- ~~Dr. Pam Cressey, City Archaeologist~~
- ~~Ms. Susan Cumbey, Director Fort Ward Museum~~
- ~~Mr. Wally Owen, Assistant Director, Fort Ward Museum~~
- ~~Mr. John Noelle, City Arborist~~
- ~~Mr. Walter Powell, Parks Department Regional Supervisor~~

~~In addition to presentations from assorted city officials, the Advisory Group also sought out written statements regarding management actions at Fort Ward Park from the following:~~

- ~~The Alexandria Archaeology Commission~~
- ~~The Alexandria Parks and Recreation Commission~~
- ~~The Friends of Fort Ward~~
- ~~The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission~~
- ~~The Oakland Baptist Church~~
- ~~The Seminary Hill Association~~

Comment [DC15]: Who approved. A copy of the City Council action should be part of the Appendix.

—— The Seminary Civic Association

—— The Advisory Group, after discussion, agreed to produce a set of recommendations in a report and chose to divide into subcommittees, each to undertake the authorship of a chapter of the document that was anticipated be the result of its deliberations. The five subcommittee chapters agreed to were:

- 1. Historical and Cultural Issues and Recommendations
- 2. Recreational Use Issues and Recommendations
- 3. Environment and Natural Resource Issues and Recommendations
- 4. Park Operations Issues and Recommendations
- 5. Development and Promotional Issues and Recommendations

Items Addressed in the Report

—— The agreed to topics and items addressed by the Advisory Group spring largely (but not solely) from the comments received from citizens who attended the three public forums sponsored by the City as well as written comments that were received. These were then compiled by Ms. Laura Durham of the RPCA.

—— The City document, entitled *Fort Ward Park Priorities and Issues Identified by Community* (See Appendix II), and an associated document which included topics raised by e-mails and letters, is divided into five general categories: 1, Historic/Cultural Uses; 2, Park Operations; 3, Active/Passive Recreational Uses⁴; 4, Environmental/Natural Resources; and 5, Other.

—— The following, then, is the resulting effort of this group of dedicated citizens committed to ensuring that the City of Alexandria continues to own and maintain one of the cultural jewels of Northern Virginia — Fort Ward Park.

⁴ Originally two categories; Active Recreational Uses, and Passive/Casual Uses, these were combined into one category Recreational Uses by the Advisory Group. Subcommittees were free to include issues raised within any category if deemed appropriate.

Chapter 2. Historical and Cultural Issues and Recommendations

Charles Ziegler and Frances Terrell⁵

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with the historical context of Fort Ward Park, the earthen fort that lies there and the history of the vibrant African American community that made “the Fort” and surrounding Seminary area their home.

Background

Fort Ward was the fifth largest fort in the Defenses of Washington, a ring of forts and batteries built during the Civil War to protect Washington, D.C., from Confederate attack. It is the best-preserved fort of the Defenses, featuring the fort’s original earthwork walls and authentically re-constructed Northwest Bastion, as well as the Ceremonial Gate entrance, Officers’ Hut, and Museum.

Native American Presence

Evidence of a Native American presence on the site of what became Fort Ward Park was discovered in the late 1970s by archaeologists in the Alexandria Regional Conservation Office and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Approximately ten flakes of milky quartz, byproducts of the process of shaping stone spear points or arrowheads were found just to the northeast of the Northwest Bastion. Unfortunately, insufficient archaeological evidence exists at this time to be able to date the finds. Future additional archaeological work may uncover further evidence of a Native American presence in the Park area.

The Civil War

On May 24, 1861 Virginia seceded from the Union. Early in the morning of the same day, Union troops occupied the City of Alexandria. During the next month, Union soldiers began camping in the area around the Virginia Theological Seminary, not far from the future location of Fort Ward. Construction of Fort Ward—named for Commander James Harmon Ward, the first Union naval officer killed in the Civil War—began in July 1861 and was completed by September 1. The fort was sited so as to defend the high ground at the junction of Braddock Road and Leesburg Pike.

In 1864 Fort Ward was extensively modified in order to correct and improve early design deficiencies, so much so that it came to be considered a model of mid-19th century military engineering. It was described by General John G. Barnard, the Chief Engineer of the Department of Washington who was in overall charge of the construction of the forts and batteries around Washington, as “one of the most important of the defenses of Alexandria.”

⁵ Charles Ziegler is a member of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission. Frances Terrell is a descendent of families buried at Fort Ward and President of the Seminary Civic Association.

Comment [DC16]: May want to acknowledge other nearby forts and the Fairfax Seminary Hospital.

After the Civil War, some consideration was given to incorporating Fort Ward as part of the 20 forts to be retained as a permanent defense system for Washington, D.C. However, this idea was not implemented. By the end of 1865 many of Fort Ward's fittings had been sold, and it ceased to be a military installation.

In 1865, the war ended. The Union Soldiers left. African Americans had gained their freedom. Now what? It has been documented that there was an extensive presence of African American refugees in the area of the Fort and that African American men, women and children worked in support of the Union as U.S. Colored Troops, laborers, cooks, and drivers. Confronted with the problem of where to live, and how to survive, some settled at the now abandoned Fort Ward Union military base. Through sheer strength of will, determination, fortitude, guts, and against all odds, they fashioned a life for themselves; then out of necessity, developed an entire viable self sustaining community that's still very much in existence today. *Burr Shorts and James Jackson were two of the earliest property owners at the Fort with 10 and 11 ½ acres respectively as early as 1879.* With these early purchases being subdivided among family members, the community grew, sustained itself through employment at the Episcopal High School and Seminary, and merged into the Seminary Community where they founded the Oakland Baptist Church and the Seminary school. They remained on the property until the late 1950's, when the City through eminent domain forced them to leave as they prepared for the centennial celebration of the Civil War. Their lives were disrupted, their homes destroyed, and they were displaced. Fort Ward Park opened in 1962 when, once again, the City had a need for property belonging to its African American citizens. In 1961, it disrupted the entire Seminary community, displacing everyone in order to build T.C. Williams High School. The school stands today where in 1927 the Seminary "colored" stood. Each time family members who were unable to return were lost to the community.

Establishment of the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site

The preservation of the forts within the Defenses of Washington and their incorporation into the Greater Washington Park System was suggested as early as 1902 by the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed many well-known urban parks, including Central Park and Prospect Park in New York City, indicating that the historical importance of this system of forts was recognized even at that date. In the 1960's, with the upcoming Civil War Centennial, interest in preserving Fort Ward intensified. Detailed plans were drawn up, and land for the park was acquired by the City of Alexandria.

In 1962 Fort Ward opened as a park; Fort Ward Historic Park and Museum was officially opened on May 30, 1964. The restoration project was such a major achievement that it was instrumental in the selection of Alexandria as an All-American City in 1964. The Northwest Bastion was restored to its 1864-65 condition, including reproduction armament taken from the 1865 table of armament. Un-restored elements were identified by descriptive markers. The City of Alexandria received an award from the Council on Abandoned Military Posts for its major contribution to the preservation and interpretation of Fort Ward.

Comment [DC17]: African Americans were involved in rebuilding the Seminary and High School as well as restoring and rebuilding nearby farms that had served as military camps.

Comment [DC18]: James Jackson received title in about 1894.

Comment [DC19]: Burr Shorts obtained title in 1884, however he paid for a 1879 survey.

African American and Native American culture, Summary of existing and proposed interpretation

History

African American culture begins at Fort Ward Park post Civil War, though there is strong evidence which indicates they were here during and perhaps even before the Civil War. As noted earlier, they established the Ft Ward and Seminary community, and maintained a decades long connection with the Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School. OHA's History Work Group and the Non-profit Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society have been extremely proactive in gathering data to substantiate, refute or nullify information.

After emancipation, settling at the Fort, finding employment mainly with the Seminary and High School, African Americans were determined to secure economic opportunity and social mobility. Education represented one of the keys to achieving these goals and in 1898, Clara Adams, Harriet Shorts daughter, sold part of her land out of the 10 acres subdivided by Burr and Harriet Shorts, to the Fairfax County School District for the creation of a school where many children of the African American community at the Fort and Seminary would attend. When in 1925, the school closed due to overcrowding that property was sold to the Diocesan Missionary Society of Virginia to be used as an Episcopal church which became known as St Cyprians. That same property in 1942 became the home of John Claiborne and later in 1947 to Sgt Lee Young.

As was the custom among African Americans during these early settlement years, James Jackson set aside a portion of his 11 ½ acre property as a burial ground for his family, friends and loved ones, thereby establishing what became known as the "Old Jackson Cemetery" at Fort Ward.

Citizen Concerns

The citizen concerns are in protecting and preserving the African American heritage in the Park post Civil War; and in recognizing their participation in the struggle to free themselves and to establish a viable, thriving community after.

It should be noted that during the public hearings concerning the future of the Park in March 2009, provision of signage and markers relating to African American history received the second largest number of votes in terms of the importance of the issue, following only concern for noise problems from various recreational activities in the park.

Actions Taken so far

1. Interpretative signs are being developed by OHA, the African American Descendants Group and Neil Vaz, a Howard University Graduate student. With a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Neil is developing text and graphics for six draft signs to be reviewed by the History Workgroup, and the public, and when finalized, to be installed at

Comment [DC20]:

Comment [DC21]: After the War. There is evidence the free and formerly enslaved blacks lived in the area and were hired in support of the Union cause. Many worked at the Fairfax Seminary Hospital on the grounds of the Seminary and High School as well as at nearby forts.

Comment [DC22]: ¼ acre—one room school house. There is evidence they used a tent (Jacob Ball) for overcrowding.

Comment [DC23]: This was common among whites especially in rural areas.

Comment [DC24]: May want to include the OBC Cemetery in the history.

Comment [DC25]: This process is being spearheaded by the Office of Historic Alexandria. Neil was a summer intern helping out the office.

historic sites in the Park on or before July 1, 2011. The locations of the signs have not yet been firmly established. Themes for the signs included (i) overview, a triage of the park, Seminary community and Seminary/High School; (ii) church and cemetery; (iii) education; (iv) Civil War; (v) founders, and (vi) The Jackson cemetery and labor.

2. The Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society and the Ft Ward History Work Group have discussed having an African American presence at the annual Civil War Reenactment event. One of the Shorts was a servant at the Menokin household, (where Minnie Howard School is now), where Robert E. Lee is known to have visited, and could have encountered him there.

Comment [DC26]: This is in the discussion stage and it may be inappropriate to mention at this time.

3. African American exhibits, photos of U.S. Colored Troops, laborers, and possibly a small community model within the Museum itself.

Oakland Baptist Church and Cemetery

Comment [DC27]: The currently fenced cemetery is likely the legal boundary of the cemetery. It is likely there are other burials outside the fenced area.

Several founders of the Oakland Baptist Church (“OBC”), the center of the community’s spiritual, social, moral, and political sphere, lived in the Fort. The church started in a bush arbor as Oak Hill Baptist Mission in 1888, then relocated to 3408 King Street in 1893, where it stands today. Burr and Harriet McKnight Shorts once owned the land that became this burial ground which by 1930 was known as the Oakland Church Lot. In 1939, most of the current cemetery was conveyed to the Oakland Baptist Church by a relative of the Shorts. A land exchange with the City of Alexandria in the 60’s caused some reconfiguration of the original property; however, the fence around the cemetery delineates its legal boundaries.

Citizen Concerns

Issues are identifying unmarked graves, graves outside of the cemetery including the maintenance yard, water runoff, and damage to the fence as a result of trees on city property falling on the fence. Families largely concerned about preserving the dignity and integrity of their loved ones buried there.

Actions Taken so Far

1. Alexandria’s Office of Archeology has had ground penetrating radar (“GPR”) equipment searching for possible grave sites not yet identified in the Park. Oral testimonies from family members formerly living at the Fort have indicated that there were many more burials in the park than the ones in the Oakland Baptist Church and Jackson cemeteries. While over 27 readings have been identified, more GPR is to be done for graves as well as other artifacts, some Native American.

2. Oral histories from families, church and funeral home records, old newspaper obituaries, and city records have all been used for identification purposes. Some relatives are sure they know where their ancestors are located but they do not have formal paperwork nor exact dates of death. So identification is ongoing.

3. The Jackson cemetery has been roped off by the City as well as the graves outside of the OBC cemetery including the Fitzhugh and Adams gravesites.

In an effort to address issues of water runoff at both the Marlboro Estates and the Oakland Cemetery, Mr. Richard Baier, Director of Alexandria's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services ("T&ES"), outlined an action plan in May 2010. The Director indicated that erosion, flooding and drainage problems within and adjacent to Ft Ward were being caused by runoff from park lands from Episcopal, OBC's cemetery and Marlboro Estates. He said that Ft Ward is a large park carrying a lot of water; that there is no collection system in the park, and the surface area of the maintenance area needed to be removed and restored to a vegetated state. Short and long term recommendations included construction of a temporary dyke or swale to channel runoff away from the OBC cemetery and improved groundcover to reduce water flow. Long term, increase the capacity of the ditch and re-vegetate the area to mitigate erosion, install additional drainage structures for storm water relief, and construct storm water vault or other storm water detention facility.

4. The T&ES Director indicated that the city was willing to replace the hay bales that were installed earlier to reduce water flowing from the park maintenance yard into the cemetery. A "no mow" policy has also been implemented with the grass going back to its natural state and uncut, it would serve as a barrier to the free flow of water.

With regard to the fence damage, a meeting with City officials, OBC leaders, Advisory Group members, Councilwoman Alicia Hughes staff and Marlboro Estates homeowners met on June 28, 2010 in the OBC cemetery to discuss past and possible tree damage to the fence. In November 2009 and February 2010 trees within the Park fell into the cemetery damaging the fence. Mr. John Noelle, the City Arborist had marked off the trees which had fallen and those he felt posed a threat to the cemetery in the future. RPCA Director, Spengler, indicated that the trees would be removed by the end of July. Mr. Mallamo, the OHA Director indicated that the trees along the cemetery border were not historic and were planted by the City after 1964 probably to screen the cemetery from the surround Park. One of the OBC church officers, Alphonzo Terrell, told the group the graves outside the cemetery and in front of the maintenance yard were part of the original Oakland cemetery. He said when the city and church traded land the original cemetery boundaries were altered. The original entrance to the cemetery was from the current maintenance yard. Access to the cemetery was from Braddock Road, through the maintenance yard, and past the area where the Adams are now buried. During the discussion of the reconfiguration of the cemetery, OHA Director Mallamo suggested that the City might take over the cemetery, put an attractive fence around it, about 6 ft high, and include it in as part of their tour, having visitors walk inside the cemetery and putting up signage outside about the two different cemetery, Oakland and Jacksons. Church Trustee Lena Rainey commented she had to take it to the Church for discussion. No action has been taken as yet on this suggestion.

5. As of the end of October 2010, all trees have been cut down and the chain link fence repaired.

In conclusion, while there have been measures taken to capture the African American history, in and around the Park, through research by the History Work Group members, African American Descendants Society, OHA and archeology staff before, during and after the Civil War, locating and preserving grave sites, identifying families living in the Fort, discovering the connection between the Fort, the Seminary community, the High School and the Theological Seminary, we're still waiting on results from these efforts. The placement of signage, for instance, must be strategically located so as to note the historical significance of the area, but not in a manner which detracts from the overall appearance of the park or be an encumbrance to visitors either touring the park for historical purposes, for relaxation, for exercise or a family gathering.

Comment [DC28]: The major issue is that 150 years after the Civil War the park does not appropriately acknowledge the struggle and contribution of African Americans in Civil War history or the existence of African Americans—who likely were free blacks or former slaves—living at the abandoned Civil War fort. Ironically, it is likely that former slaves who settled at the fort helped preserve the bastions rebuilt in the 1960s.

Recommendations

1. The City incorporate the aforementioned suggestions and ideas into the park planning, i.e. Civil War Re-enactment, Civil War Camp Day, community model, and African American and U.S. Colored Troop photos and other artifacts in the museum at Fort Ward, as a teaching tool for students and visitors on African American culture, during and post Civil War.

Comment [DC29]: There may be a American Disability Act requirement.

Comment [DC30]: The signs and their permanent location should be part of the planning process. This would create the urgency and ensure public involvement and build support for implementation.

Comment [DC31]: It is important to provide a more balanced, diverse interpretation of the struggle of African American and their contribution during the Civil War. This will sustain interest and support for the park and be more relevant to the events that led up to the Civil Rights movement.

2. The City perhaps partnering with the Oakland Baptist Church to have the cemetery designated as and included on the National Registry of Historic places since it meets the requirements in number of years in existence and it is located within the Park itself which already carries that distinction.

Comment [DC32]: It may meet the requirements. That is left to the National Park Service.

3. The City consider replacing the chain link fence around the cemetery with a 4-6 ft black wrought iron fence making it more in conformance with the historic nature of the park and more visibly appealing to visitors and/or community casual users.

4. Devise a permanent solution to eliminate water runoff in the Park and more specifically the cemetery realizing that the laying of hay bales is only a temporary measure.

Managerial Challenges

The fact that the Park is both an historic site and a recreational facility has over the years created significant managerial challenges for ensuring the preservation of its historic character while also addressing recreational needs. From 1964 to 1981 the RPCA operated the entire site. The Museum and historic fort became the responsibility of the Department of General Services in 1981, and in 1982 they were transferred to the newly-established Office of Historic Alexandria.

As a result of the post-1981 division of responsibilities for the Park, historic site and RPCA operations became less coordinated over time in some functions: communications on park maintenance projects and operations; picnic reservations; trash removal; and parking issues. In particular, there have been issues directly concerned with the protection of the historic character of the park:

-RPCA staff are not trained in historic preservation issues.

-There is a need for improved coordination with RPCA to ensure that the mowing of grass in the restored Northwest Bastion and other selected areas of the fort are performed in a timely way, according appropriate turf preservation guidelines.

-Improvement is needed in coordinating and balancing Park maintenance projects with the protection of historical resources. For example, the installation of the irrigation system and other digging operations need to be sensitive to historic preservation issues.

-Coordination of and provision of resources for the performance of routine maintenance duties that preserve the well-cared-for appearance and integrity of the historic site. Due to previous staff cuts, OHA staff must rely on RPCA staff for the provision of these services.

In order to address these serious issues of coordination, the Advisory Group suggests the following:

- a) Establishment of a MOU between OHA and RPCA, with a list of issues that are to be addressed by the directors of the respective agency to resolve between themselves, should any of these issues arise.
- b) Establishment of a requirement for meetings on a regular—perhaps monthly—basis between the park-level leads from each agency, and for quarterly meetings between the directors of OHA and RPCA.
- c) Mandating reports to the City Council and a public advisory body to be established as a successor to the Advisory Group, prepared jointly by the directors of each agency on a quarterly basis, until a Park Master Plan is completed.
- d) Requiring that any Park Master Plan incorporate the mandating of regular meetings at the appropriate level, and at regular intervals, to ensure continuing coordination and cooperation in the administration of Fort Ward Park.

Comment [DC33]: Suggest City Manager review and revise the delegation of authority including budget. Disagreements between OHA and RPCA should be resolved at the City Manager's level.

Preserving Fort Ward Park's Historical Character

Perhaps the most important challenge has been that of balancing the preservation of Fort Ward Park's historical character with legitimate recreational needs. In this context, it is important to remember that Fort Ward Park was established as an *historic* park. The 1982 application for the listing of Fort Ward on the National Register of Historic Places states:

Fort Ward is a 35-acre Historic Park owned and operated by the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The park is comprised of three major elements. In order of importance [emphasis added] they are:

- a) *Civil War Earthen Fortifications*
- b) *Reproduction Period Military Buildings*
- c) *Recreational Facilities*

It should also be noted that in a letter to the Stakeholder Advisory Group of March 17, 2010 the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (“HARC”) wrote:

“The preservation, protection and interpretation of the historic resources of Fort Ward Park should be the primary consideration in the formulation of any plans for the future of Fort Ward Museum and historic site, as listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“HARC recognizes the legitimate and rightful needs of the citizens of Alexandria for appropriate recreational space and facilities. Nevertheless, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission places on record its considered view that the protection and preservation of the historic character of Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site and its ability to offer exhibits, education and interpretive programs, tours and other related activities not be compromised in any way.”

Also, study of the identified Ft. Ward Park priorities and issues identified by the community in the meetings held in early 2009 clearly indicate that matters of African American history and identification of historic areas are considered of primary importance to concerned citizens. Indeed, the only group of issues that was considered to be of greater importance, as measured by the number of votes obtained, were issues of excessive noise, alcohol abuse and overcrowding.

It therefore follows that, in considering priorities and plans for the Park, priority needs to be given to preservation and enhancement of the historical character of the Park.

**Chapter 3. Recreational Use Issues and Recommendations
Ripley Forbes and Robert Moir⁶**

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide members of City Council input and recommendations for the continued use of Fort Ward Park as a major facility for passive recreational usage.⁷ This usage is intended to have minimal negative impact on the historic importance and natural environment of the Park. It is also intended to offer transformative suggestions for possible changes in the recreation policies, usages rules and maintenance standards in light of growing awareness and respect for the historic and cultural significance of the Park.

Comment [DC34]: Should include an identification of problems associated with operation and maintenance of the park. Would also like to see discussion of the park being utilized as an operating center for City park maintenance.

Background

Since it's opening in 1964, more people come to the Park on a daily basis for passive recreational use than any other reason. The Park has served as the major passive recreation venue for residents of the west end of the City of Alexandria. The Park hosts numerous walkers, joggers, picnickers, sledders, dog walkers and playground users.

In 2008 the City of Alexandria's RPCA, roughly counted 63,617 people using the Park for walking or picnicking during the picnic rental season (April through October). In 2009, this number fell to 54,949 people due in part to needed administration decisions that reduced the number of picnic rental areas from 11 to 7 and excessive gatherings that adversely impacted Park resources were prohibited. Through end of August, the Park has recorded 43,885 passive recreational users⁸ with a further decrease in picnic areas to 5.

A recent count⁹ conducted during the weekend of September 3rd (Friday) through 5th (Sunday) provided a count of 1606 passive recreational users broken down as follows:

Walkers:	Friday	389
	Saturday	433
	Sunday	403
Playground users:	Saturday	30
	Sunday	63
Picnickers:	Saturday	148 ¹⁰
	Sunday	110

⁶ Ripley Forbes and Robert Moir serve on the Park and Recreation Commission representing Planning District 2.
⁷ The separate nature of the active recreation side of the park (the tennis courts and rectangular artificial-turfed field) are not discussed here because it is the feeling of the Advisory Committee that because of their separate entrance and parking facility as well as the fact that they are fenced off from the Park proper, its usage has no impact on the Park.
⁸ See attachment 1.
⁹ See attachment 2.
¹⁰ Numbers for picnickers includes those with and without reservations.

It is assumed that the number of walkers decreases during the non-picnic season (November through March) but easily exceeds 100 people on average per day.

In a community that is becoming more and more urbanized, it is incumbent upon the City to provide and preserve land for a multitude of public uses. The competition for use of these facilities will only get more intense in the future. Additionally, the growing appreciation for the historic and cultural nature of this Park needs to be reflected in how Park resources and Park administration support the needs of citizens who value the Park as a site for passive recreation, relaxation and unstructured physical activity. Historic, cultural and recreational activities can mutually co-exist but reforms may be needed.

Current Situation

A recent poll of users of the Park noted the following problems are perceived to exist: (a) noisy picnics; (b) picnickers abuse of alcohol; (c) inappropriately large picnic groups; (d) excess trash; (e) safety of walkers; (f) lack of a nature walk; (g) lack of signage for the dog park; and, (h) large festivals not associated with the historic nature of the park. *(Need attachment)*

In response to these concerns and recognition of the increasing use of the facility, RPCA has introduced several changes to mitigate future potential damage to the historic nature and natural environment of the Park and the surrounding community.

Foremost is the introduction of a resident park manager. His job is to not only oversee the daily operation of the Park, but to provide an increase in security for the facility. This has been accomplished by: (a) decreasing the number of picnic areas; (b) more stringent issuance of permits (limitation to the size and length of picnics); (c) provision of rangers on weekends; (d) construction of a ranger booth for permit check in; (e) limiting the number of vehicles on the roadway; and, (f) moving the city maintenance facility.

In addition, the RPCA has limited the number of permits for the pavilion areas, limited the number of picnicker per permit, limited the decibel levels of amplified music, eliminated certain inflatable recreational devices and limited alcohol use. Also, the limiting of the number of vehicles with permission to enter the Park has increased the safety for walkers and picnickers.

Increased signage has directed users of the Park to appropriate areas and usages. Simple measures such as keeping cars off the grass as well as directing picnickers and pedestrians off historic sites and off designated wild growth areas have all helped to mitigate damage to nature and decreased storm surface run-off. However, these efforts are not enough.

Recommendations

1. Creation of a natural walkway for nature walks. We recommend that a nature walk be created around the periphery of the Park. This walk way should be constructed of a semi-impervious material. Signage and rest areas (benches) should indicate important historic and natural features of the Park. The stops on this walk should include: (a) Oakland Baptist Cemetery; (b) the monument to the City's first arborist; (c) the bridge; (d) native species of bushes, trees and flowers; (e) areas containing potential unmarked gravesites; (f) home sites; (g) presently unmarked Fort Ward Civil War ramparts; and, (h) areas of known Native American habitation.

2. Removal of the concrete from the run-off gulley by the monument to the arborist memorial and the impervious material surrounding the monument itself.

3. Removal of the playground to an area that is accessible to people with disabilities. Its present location is in the direct path of run-off and removal and replacement with a more natural surface will decrease run-off leaving the park.

4. Improvements to the roadway loop. The road surface is starting to deteriorate and needs replacement in several areas. Several citizens recommend a curb to keep cars off the grass. We disagree, as the curbs will only serve to increase the amount of imperviousness of the road surface. Park Rangers need to continue to ensure that Park patrons do not park inappropriately.

5. The dog park. Signage for the current dog park is poor. Serious consideration should be given to removing the dog park, but continue to allow well behaved dogs in the park when they are on leash. If the dog park is to be retained, it needs to be identified with signage in the park, the dimensions of the dog park need to be well defined and the dimensions of the current dog park reduced to move it farther away from the historic rifle battery. Signage alerting parents and children to the location should be made prominent because the area is not fenced and children play in the vicinity. We strongly oppose any fencing of this area and would prefer the area be returned to the park as a site for passive recreation.

6. There are major restoration needs in the Park due to years of deferred maintenance and weather damage. The city needs to commit resources or accept volunteer assistance to clear deadfall from wooded areas. Additionally the erosion of the grassy areas leading to the current playground site as well as multiple picnic areas should be addressed to restore the natural character of the park. Installation of water breaks, perhaps using the large deadfall and installation of wood chips would help restore these areas until a long-term solution to the dispersal of rain water can be addressed.

Comment [DC35]: Many of the ideas should be left to the public planning process. Issues of deferred maintenance should be budgeted.

Comment [DC36]: May be a great ideas, but should be left to the planning process. There may be other equally good or better ideas.

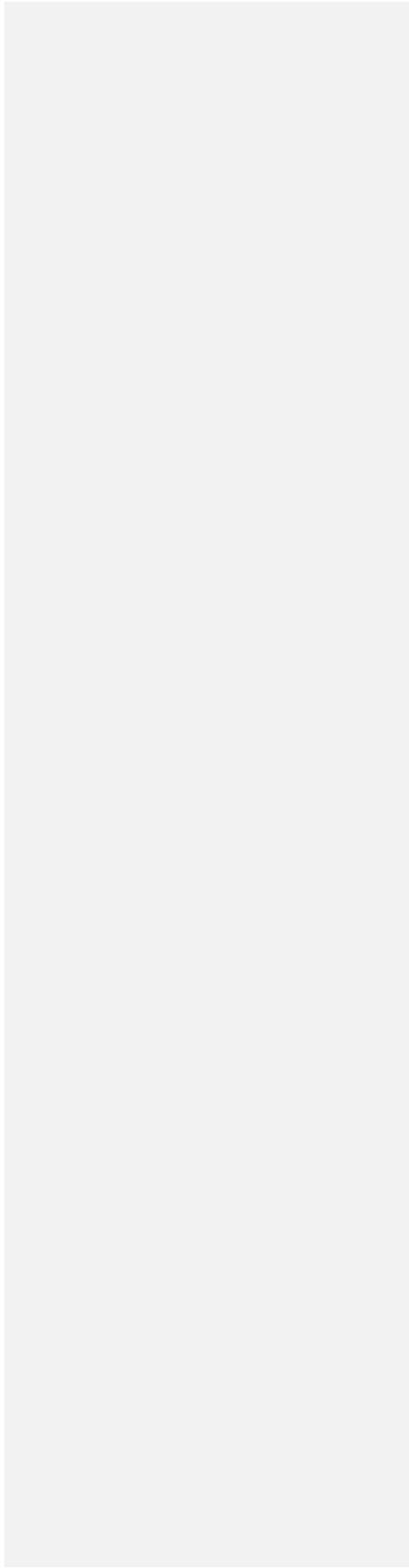
Comment [DC37]: Species ?

Comment [DC38]: deteriorate ?

7. Consideration should be given to restoring the gate between the Park's athletic field and the passive area of the Park. This would ease access to the public restrooms and allow visitors to move more easily between the passive and active sections of the Park.

8. Strengthen picnic procedures by prohibiting consumption of alcoholic beverages and the use of amplified music in the Park. There should be no authority for the granting of individual exceptions relating to picnic reservations. The only area of the park where amplified music should be permitted is in the amphitheater where summer concerts are held. The consumption of alcohol and amplified music are not integral to the goal of maintaining a passive recreation resource. For the safety and enjoyment of those who value the park for its tranquility and respect its significant cultural origins, these additional protections should be considered.

DRAFT



Chapter 4. Environment and Natural Resources Issues and Recommendations

Linda Ries and Richard Brune¹¹

Purpose

We focused on existing conditions of natural resources within boundaries of the Park, areas of concern we have identified, current issues identified at public meetings and from public comments, and finally recommendations for management of natural resources of the Park.

Introduction and background:

Fort Ward Park is rich in cultural and historical resources. In addition the Park could be considered rich in natural resources in an urban area. The Park has seen many changes in management of its natural resources over the past one hundred and fifty years. During the Fort development, trees were removed for wood products and to provide good views from the Fort. After the Fort was no longer actively used and as people settled on the land surrounding the fort, homes were built, gardens and trees were planted, and other plants and trees filled in the area naturally. After the Park was created in the 1960's, some trees were planted and there were still some trees and plants in the Park from the former residents. In other areas, natural succession of trees and plants is obvious where the use of the land is less intensive. What makes this Park unique is the blending of natural and native species and ornamental, planted species.

Trees in the Park include tulip poplars, white and red oaks, Virginia pine, maples, cherry, hickory, sassafras, ash, black locust and as well as some attractive ornamental varieties of trees such as ornamental cherry, crepe myrtle, camellias, bald cypress, ginkgo, and true cedar. Some non-native ornamental trees were planted as part of the City Arboretum. These species were chosen to represent a variety of trees that are hardy, disease and insect tolerant, as a demonstration to citizens and to increase the diversity of trees within the Park. This tree diversity provides a rich habitat for squirrels, birds and various butterflies and insect species. Recently, the City indicated a tree inventory had been completed which would be an excellent resource to complement recommendations in this chapter.

Another natural resource is the soil. Because the Park is slightly higher than other land surrounding it, it functions to drain the land after rain storms and snowmelt into lower areas, into storm drains and draws. The area containing the Fort could be managed to help manage storm water by not only man-made infrastructure but by also managing the natural resources of the park – trees, shrubs and forbs, and amending the soils to restore and increase soil permeability.

Because of the impact of grounds and turf management methods used, maintenance vehicle traffic on turf, and recreational use especially in picnic areas, the predominant clay soil

¹¹ Richard Brune is a member of Alexandria's Parks and Recreation Commission. Linda Ries is a frequent user of Fort Ward Park.

has become compacted. This stresses tree roots and causes premature mortality and other problems in trees. The presence of hardscape –including roads, paved picnic table pads, and sidewalks - have affected the health and condition of the existing trees and plants. As evident by the recent storms of the summer of 2010, when over 22 large, mature trees failed, sustaining a healthy forest canopy is very challenging. . Some of these trees had extensive decay, and would have failed at some point, but of concern is the large loss of canopy and potential for increased tree mortality over the next decade. Other concerns would be accidental introduction of invasive insects (or diseases) such as Emerald ash borer which has been found as close as Fairfax County and would be devastating to ash trees in the Park.

The Park is special not only for its cultural and historical richness but also as a wonderful green space which serves as a refuge for city weary residents. As economic resources are stretched thin in the city, management of the natural resources – especially the urban forest of the Park may mean it will be difficult to sustain and replace the forest canopy. As trees are approaching maturity, resources from the city to properly prune, remove trees and shrubs as needed and plant replacements are needed for the Park to retain a healthy forested canopy. Also necessary is a proposed planting plan with recommended tree species based on sites that are appropriate for trees and that won't disturb artifacts and historical locations. In some locations it may be appropriate to plant memorial trees to honor former residents.

This chapter addresses natural resource issues raised at public meetings and from public comment. We will acknowledge changes in management since our committee began, and present our recommendations for future steps to alleviate these issues brought up at the public meeting as well as some other evolving issues concerning the sustainability of natural resources. Any future plans for replacing and management of existing trees must complements goals to protect cultural and historical resources.

Issues

1. decline in tree health and forest canopy

A. Current situation: Recent tree failure (at least 22 large trees failed in 2010 storms), stressed and dying trees, signs of extensive decay, broken branches, disease and insect damage, leaning trees.

Interim measures taken – trees that failed in 2009-10 winter and summer storms have been removed, trees along OBC cemetery fence have also been removed, but these lost trees have not been replaced.

Recommended actions: Set up a regular cycle to prune to remove dead and broken branches, and increase vigor of all trees. Prioritize pruning in heavily used areas of the Park. Conduct an annual hazard tree exam of trees that are adjacent to picnic areas, roads, and locations where people gather. Adopt sound arboricultural practices to maintain and increase tree vigor. Help the City plan a larger budget for tree care.

B. Current situation: Minimal tree plantings, neglect of arboretum, no master plan for planting, historic trees are not documented.

Interim measures taken: A tree inventory was completed in 2010 and has been shared with the City of Alexandria.

Recommended action: Use the recent tree inventory to assess existing canopy and identify areas with greatest need to increase canopy. The park could be divided into “zones” to help identify priority areas. Work closely with OHA employees to identify locations to avoid planting where they may be grave sites, cultural resources and artifacts. Promote replacement of trees that have been removed or have failed over the last decade. Create a planting plan for park and develop a recommended tree replacement list. Start a program to plant memorial trees in honor of previous residents of the Park. Schedule maintenance of new trees including: watering, mulching, and pruning as needed. Increase volunteer and educational opportunities for the public to increase ownership of Park trees.

2. stormwater drainage, loss of topsoil and compaction of soils

A. Current situation: Picnic and recreation sites on the northern and eastern sections of the Park have clay soils that have been heavily compacted by recreational use and maintenance vehicles. These compacted soils cause extensive run-off and are damaging to tree roots and vigor of all plants.

Interim measures taken: last summer some straw was laid down over grass seed along damaged turf on the edge of road (north end)

Recommended actions: Limit use of Park maintenance vehicles in these areas already affected especially when soils are wet. Aerate and/or add soil amendments. Do not remove all of the leaves in the fall, leave some in place to add nutrients to soil and slow erosion. Restore bare areas by using hay/mulch and grass seed, use temporary fences to keep people and vehicles of any sort out of these areas

B. Current situation: Extensive sheet erosion as well as evidence of gully erosion in drainages. Top soil is being lost through much of the Park.

Interim measure taken: Some Park areas were designated “no mow”/natural areas to alleviate some erosive problems and to save money on turf management. After one summer of not mowing some areas, it appears this has been beneficial in some area to slow flow of stormwater as well as save on mowing costs. However, some areas have now become very weedy, and some invasive species are becoming established. These areas should be continually assessed. Some areas might be appropriate for long term “no mow” – others should be mowed on occasion to keep for park aesthetics and to keep weeds from seeding and spreading. Over time, some of the “no mow” areas could encourage pests or become a fire hazard as tall grasses dry.

Recommended action: Review areas that are currently not mown, and moderate the location of these areas as needed. Monitor and treat invasive plants before they become more widespread. Apply other mitigation techniques including mulching with straw and reseeding areas that have sheet erosion. Monitor and reseed areas that will be excavated for archaeological surveys. Plant rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run-off, especially on eastern side of park. Some hardscape areas such as picnic table pads could be replaced with pervious pavers to decrease run-off.

In addition to mitigate stormwater problems on the eastern side of park: increase capacity of draw and revegetate, Install additional drainage structures and possibly a storm water vault or other retention facility. Continue debris clean-up within stream channel, ditch and inlet structures. Construct temporary berm to channel water away from OBC cemetery. Work with neighborhood to advise them on they can help moderate stormwater as well.

C. Current situation: stormwater is not retained in the Park for irrigation

Interim measures taken: none known

Recommended actions: possible capture of stormwater in cisterns or rain barrels for flower beds, newly planted trees, plant a rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run-offs on eastern side of the Park.

3. decreased use by birds and some wildlife

A. Current situation: there appears to be a decline in the use of the Park by songbirds

Recommended actions: Do a survey to assess birds in the Park. Plant existing flower beds areas in species conducive to attracting songbirds, and butterflies. This might be an excellent volunteer project for a garden club, youth group or local school.

4. Other issues

A. Current situation: no community service or volunteers help with flower beds, clean-up or planting of trees in the Park.

Recommended actions: To strengthen pride and ownership of Park grounds, plan for opportunities for the public to volunteer and help take care of Fort Ward Park, tree planting, taking care of flower bed, pick up litter, pull invasive plants, plant butterfly garden.

Chapter 5. Park Operations Issues and Recommendations

William Schreiner and Philip Voorhees¹²

Purpose

We focused on the management of the Park itself. Included within our bailiwick were ways in which the site itself is managed to serve the needs of Park users – including those who visit the Park for recreation, enjoyment of nature, or to foster an appreciation of the historic features of the site.

By exclusionary definition, then, we focused on features of Park management that many Park visitors never think about, but which can clearly add or detract from their experience of the substance of what the Park has to offer. For example, few visitors would consider the number and location of picnic pavilions when planning a Saturday outing in the Park, or consider the process of mowing the historic Fort when deciding to visit the Fort Ward Museum and the Historic Fort¹³ and yet decisions of this kind by park management have a material influence on how the Park is perceived by city residents and experienced by park visitors. While appropriately not decisions with which many casual visitors need to be concerned, all sorts of Park management and operation decisions directly impact the experience users of the Park will have.

Management and Operation of Fort Ward Park

The unique management structure at the Park presents special challenges for the Park, and an understanding of that structure – and its good and bad consequences – is necessary to an understanding of the particular concerns we reviewed. Unlike most (or any) other City park, two City agencies – Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities and the Office of Historic Alexandria – share responsibility for managing different operations in the Park site. This dual-agency management structure has certain benefits of dividing responsibility between two agencies, but similarly carries risks that challenge clear communication about park purposes and management priorities. In many ways, the dual-agency management structure, while uncommon within City operations, seems appropriately designed for a Park that contains an abundance of historic features as well as significant open space available for broader use by City residents. The park was designed around a historic Civil War fort and contains the only museum devoted to interpreting the history of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park was built on the site of a significant African-American community, the story of which remains to be interpreted and is culturally significant to the City of Alexandria. Separately, the site, at 35 acres, is an oasis for recreational

Comment [DC39]: This is the most important chapter—along with chapter 7.

Comment [DC40]: There should be a clear listing of management issues and specific actionable items to correct the deficiencies. This chapter could be shortened.

Ideas for planning that impacts the character of the park; e.g., maintenance yard, parking, pavilions, historic treatment, should be incorporated into a resource management plan. The resource management plan can be incorporated into the City's Master plan. This would provide support for doing something immediately instead of waiting for funding for the master plan.

Although SAG insights are of value, this is beyond the scope of the City Council Resolution.

¹² William Schreiner is President of the Friends of Fort Ward. Philip Voorhees is a member of Alexandria's Environmental Policy Commission.

¹³ This Chapter will refer to the restored and/or preserved star-shaped Fort Ward, built during the Civil War, as the "Historic Fort." Discussion of specific Civil War-era defensive earthworks located in the Park but outside of the Historic Fort itself will be clarified as needed in the text.

users and nature-seekers and is seen by some as a site with significant promise for hosting public events and (potentially) generating income for the City.

Despite the benefits of the dual-agency structure in concept, though, in operation, the structure can impede effective management and operation of the Park. Some of these impediments result from having two agencies operating closely on one site. Others, perhaps growing from the structural complexity of the dual-agency structure, appear to include a series of misunderstandings or disagreements between the two agencies that unsurprisingly result from the push and tug of agencies with different missions and goals. This was made apparent when public hearings were held in early 2009 regarding conditions in the Park: many residents commented on facets of the Park that, traced back, result from a lack of comprehensive planning and communication between the two necessary agencies. Clearly, better cooperation and coordination between RPCA and OHA will be a key step in improving management of the Park and Historic Site and will result in a better experience for Park and Historic Site visitors, and a clearer understanding of the site's purpose by city residents and others.

Significantly, improvement in the operation of the dual-agency structure has been observed during the term of the Advisory Group, and the Advisory Group identifies two bases for this positive turn of events. First, both lead agencies at the Park have received new managers in the relatively recent past. Both Jim Spengler Director at RPCA and Lance Mallamo, Director at the OHA have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate and communicate on the challenges facing the Park, and both appear to bring fresh approaches to those challenges. Second, and not unrelatedly, both agencies have shown a willingness to respond to the public concerns that have been raised about the Park over the past two years. While the work of building a better dual-agency structure is certainly not complete, new leadership with fresh approaches and a willingness to respond to the unique challenges posed by the Park and Historic Site bodes well for the future.

Specific recommendations to improve the dual-agency management structure are contained elsewhere in this Report. The challenges of that structure, though, underlay many of the particular concerns reviewed by this Subcommittee. Any long-term solution to these individual problems will hinge on continuing to improve the management structure, and enshrining positive changes in it.

II. Current Situation of Park Operation Issues

Throughout our work, many concerns were raised to the Advisory Group about the operations of the Park. In no particular order, this section will identify the main issues brought to our attention and discuss the current status of each one.

A. Turf Maintenance and Mowing

Mowing and maintenance of the turf in the Park includes two related but separate components: mowing the open spaces surrounding the Historic Fort, and mowing the Historic

Comment [DC41]: The benefits are questionable. A management axiom is joint responsibility is no responsibility.

Comment [DC42]: It is difficult to mandate cooperation. One of the problems is OHA has often times reluctantly gone along with the changes, having no real budget or authority to influence what RPCA wants. (Go along to get along)

Comment [DC43]: This is not true as evidenced by comments made by both Lance and Jim at your meetings. At time Jim has been antagonistic to suggestions. The "No-mow", unwillingness to protect the bastions from heavy equipment or to carefully cut grass around monuments are examples.

Fort itself. Given the historic nature of the Park and the Historic Fort, each presents challenges that are unlikely to be found in too many other City parks.

i. *Non-Historic Fort Area*

Mowing the open spaces surrounding the Historic Fort may at first glance appear to present no more of an issue than mowing the open spaces at any other City park. The space appears to be open space for recreation and picnicking. The problem, though, is that just underneath those open spaces lie significant historical resources: the grave sites of members of the community that developed in the area around the Historic Fort site, the foundations of many of the buildings built by that community and Civil War defensive structures outside of the walls of the Historic Fort itself.¹⁴ This means mowing of what in any other City park would just be open space requires particular care to avoid damaging these features.

Over the term of the Advisory Group, mowing practices applied to the area around this Historic Fort have changed substantially in two ways. First, at least one area of the Park where underground graves have been identified has been **barricaded** and excluded from mowing, to prevent further damage to the depressions that suggest gravesites. This is a positive step that the Advisory Group encourages and that should be expanded, at least while a full investigation of the subsurface historical features is ongoing. Both historic preservation and respect for the human remains being identified in the Park suggests especially careful treatment of these areas until the period of discovery is complete.

The other substantial change in the Park's mowing practice outside of the Historic Fort has been the addition of "no-mow" areas where mowing is not undertaken with frequency. This was a substantial policy change that has impacts on many areas of the Park, some of which are discussed in other sections of this Report. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities first outlined the "no-mow" policy to the Advisory Group at the start of the mowing season, and presented areas of the Park that would not be mowed with frequency. The purpose of the policy, as it was explained to us, was essentially two-fold: higher grass would serve to slow down the progression of water through the park and reduce **erosion**; additionally, higher grass would deter recreation users from using areas of the Park where subsurface historic features were likely to be found (serving, in some sense, as the same sort of deterrent that the barricades placed around the Jackson Family Cemetery just south of the restored fort bastion serve). The "no-mow" policy likely had a positive fiscal impact on the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities budget for mowing – not an unreasonable factor given the City's challenging fiscal posture – but the Advisory Group has received no information on anticipated savings or the absorption or reallocation of funds resulting from cost savings.

Comment [DC44]: 35 acres is considered historic. The non-historic areas would include the soccer field.

Comment [DC45]: Is this the maintenance yard?

Comment [DC46]: The "no mow" policy fundamentally changes the character of the park without any public input. The stated reasons are a pretense for a policy that makes no sense other than to justify it from a funding point of view and to blame it on the history community.

Comment [DC47]: Some of this is possibly true. However, there was no evidence the City took into consideration of soil science, botany, plant biology in support of the policy.

In addition, the signs in the grass areas; e.g., to support wildlife or protect drainage into the Chesapeake seem absurd and frivolous.

¹⁴ As noted in note 5 above, this discussion of mowing in the Park area around the Historic Fort excludes Civil War features that supported the Historic Fort but are outside the remaining walls of the Historic Fort itself – such as the rifle trench that extends roughly northeast from the old walls of the Fort and is bisected by the park loop road. While those features are identified and some are out of the way of regular recreational use, they need to be tended with the same care that the Historic Fort is.

From the standpoint of park operations, however, the “no-mow” policy has been somewhat controversial. Heading toward the end of the policy’s first year, it is evident there are some positive and negative consequences. On the positive side of the ledger, the policy itself represents a dynamic and new approach to park operations, and was presented in response to two identified citizen concerns – water erosion and the protection of subsurface historic features and gravesites. Moreover, the likely fiscal benefit of the policy represents a reasonable attempt to respond to the City’s budgetary constraints. Perhaps most significantly, the Advisory Group understands that the “no-mow” policy was developed cooperatively by the two agencies that govern the Park. As discussed in our introduction to this section, this cooperative effort is a key to solving many of the Park’s challenges, and is something the Advisory Group encourages.

Like many admirable solutions to problems, though, the implementation of the “no-mow” policy itself raised new concerns and some unintended consequences. Some citizens living in the area around the Park informed the Advisory Group that the policy was implemented with little citizen input. Additionally, neighbors living near the “no-mow” areas of the Park are justifiably concerned about the effects of the overgrowth – large unsightly weeds and vermin are not what they had in mind when they chose to live near Fort Ward Park. At least one neighboring resident has commented to the Advisory Group that the “no-mow” policy has limited the areas that families can use for recreation primarily to the mowed areas closer to Braddock Road, thus increasing, in that resident’s view, the risk of collisions between playing children and Braddock Road traffic. The “no-mow” areas themselves have also had the unintended consequence of driving recreational users into smaller open spaces in the Park and even outside of open spaces onto historic features: runners have been observed clambering over the walls of the Historic Fort in the absence of other areas to run.

The Advisory Group was informed in October 2010 that RPCA plans to continue the “no-mow” policy in 2011, but in a smaller area of the Park; only an area on the East side of the Park where substantial water drains toward the North side of the Park. We were further advised that Park staff made this decision, but without any input from the public that we are aware of.

The decision to not mow a certain part of the Park in 2011 may be the right one – higher grass in the Eastern side of the Park will likely slow water and may ease some stormwater concerns. We were not fully informed of the information used to decide where to mow or not mow in 2011, however, and are not able to comment on the mowing plan for 2011.

Observing how this decision was made, we note that neither the Advisory Group nor the public had any input on whether the “no-mow” policy would be renewed in 2011 and, if so, on what terms. This is disconcerting and will almost certainly lead to a waste of City resources. Given the new, controversial and significant nature of this policy, the decision to pursue the “no-mow” policy without public review is a short-sighted one and almost certainly inefficient. RPCA leadership informed us that the decision of what to mow or not mow in the Park is a staff-level decision not normally subject to public review, and this is technically correct. That decision, however, is not made in a vacuum or in a remote corner of the City; its impact will be

noticed by dozens of civically engaged park users as soon as the grass begins to grow in the Spring of 2011. Those people will proceed to bring their complaints and thoughts about the policy to City leadership, which will then proceed to internally review the policy with the Parks Department. Some involvement from those people beforehand would, we think, save a lot of debate about the policy later, and may lead to a “no-mow” area of the Park that is more in line with users expectations.

ii. Mowing inside the Historic Fort Area

Mowing inside the Historic Fort area has often been problematic. In short, the Historic Fort area requires careful turf treatment much like the care and attention given to the green on a golf course, but it has, instead, been treated like the ‘rough.’ This problem existed prior to the advent of the Advisory Group, and has not changed during its term.

By way of background, the Northwest Bastion (the portion of the Historic Fort restored in the 1960s that most replicates what the Fort looked like during the Civil War) has been mowed by an outside contractor in recent years, and the rest of the Historic Fort (made up of historic earthworks) has been mowed by Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities.

Both the contracted mowing of the Northwest Bastion and RPCAs’ mowing of the rest of the Historic Fort have been subject to an inability to reach a successful outcome – the frequent mowing of the Historic Fort in a manner that enhances the visitor experience and does not damage an irreplaceable piece of the City’s history. With regard to the Northwest Bastion, mowing has been done infrequently in the past: in 2009, the Friends of Fort Ward requested City management involvement in ensuring that the restored Northwest Bastion of the Fort was mowed, when a misunderstanding between the two lead agencies overseeing the Park led to the bastion not being mowed for a great length of time.

Outside of the Northwest Bastion but inside the preserved earthworks, mowing has not always been done with the care that needs to be shown to historic structures. On occasion, the earthworks have been mowed with riding mowers that have scraped away the earthwork – a problem noted over several years and again in 2010. Damage to the historic earthwork itself is costly to repair (if it can be repaired at all) and supports faster erosion of the work itself. Other parts of the Historic Fort maintained by RPCA have been included in that agency’s “no-mow” policy, discussed above, leading to an unkempt appearance and possible earthwork damage from the roots of this excessive overgrowth. The result for the non-Northwest Bastion part of the Historic Fort has been, therefore, a hodgepodge: some sections mowed with riding mowers, and others mowed minimally or not at all. This result does not do justice to Alexandria’s fifty-year investment to preserve and interpret Fort Ward, and detracts from the visitor experience.

The Museum’s citizen advocacy group, the Friends of Fort Ward, has needed to repeatedly call attention to this problem, and each call yields a short-term response – but no long-term solution or directed guidance on how the Historic Fort should be properly cared for. This is an area where the greater cooperation between RPCA and OHA has yet to bear any fruit. Proper turf care for the Historic Fort is, as yet, an intractable problem between the two

agencies, leading to annual misunderstandings, slow and progressive damage to the historic earthwork, and greater inefficiency for both agencies when they need to respond to this annual problem, rather than use due care and foresight to plan for proper greenscape management that preserves the historic character of the fort.

The Advisory Group was informed by RPCA that that agency does not have, in its view, the technical ability to properly mow the non-Northwest Bastion part of the Historic Fort, and it has suggested that the entire Historic Fort be mowed by outside contractors (in the same way that the Northwest Bastion part of the Fort currently is). While we find this conclusion surprising given the number of parks and variety of turf conditions that are otherwise well-managed by that agency, we accept (as we must) that RPCA is the best judge of its own capabilities.

B. Maintenance Yard

A maintenance yard is located on the eastern boundary of the Park, adjacent to the Park's boundary with the Marlboro Estates community. The maintenance yard was one of the main concerns expressed at public hearings held regarding the Park in early 2009. The variety of concerns included: 1) noise generated from the operation and movement of city maintenance equipment unrelated to the Park itself; 2) unpermitted use of the Park as a non-specific city maintenance area; 3) erosion at other places in the Park caused by impermeable or semi-impermeable packed soil accelerating the movement of water through areas of the park during rain events; and most significantly, 4) location of the maintenance yard right atop significant historic features – indeed, grave sites are identified through markers located in the yard, and others have been identified through archaeological research.

In the Advisory Group's view, there is little doubt that the maintenance yard's location was a mistake made in the past. No maintenance facility should ever have been located in an area where graves are visible, nor should it have been placed directly abutting a residential area. The City ceased operation of the yard when concerns were raised in 2009. Currently, the yard is not in active use and its functions have been placed elsewhere. Even without active use, though, the yard still contributes water to erosion in other areas of the Park, its historic features are inaccessible to Park visitors, and its location next to the formal property lines of the OBC located within the Park's boundaries and adjacent to the yard reflects especially poor planning and is a continuing insult to the descendants of the community that was bulldozed to create the Park.

C. Parking

Parking is a challenge at the Park. During large events, the small lot along Braddock Road and the unpaved lot behind the Museum overflow, with parking provided by closing one of the lanes of that road. Moreover, neither lot is sufficient to safely handle tour buses that visit the Museum (more of which are expected during the next several years as the Civil War Sesquicentennial begins and Civil War tourism increases). At the 2009 public hearings, six citizens commented that there "needs to be parking for casual use" and one commented that

“City vehicles take up visitor parking spaces,” again reflecting an apparent concern that parking at the Park is not currently sufficient. During our term, parking areas at the Park have not changed measurably.

Comment [DC48]: Often maintenance vehicles during the week are using the parking area near the public bathrooms.

D. Staffing and Security

Various issues related to staffing of, and security in, the Park were frequently raised when public hearings on the state of the Park were held in 2009. According to a collection of citizen concerns prepared by RPCA after those hearings, security issues were raised frequently and in different guises based apparently on the commenting citizen’s view of an interrelated set of security issues: six individuals commenting noted generically that “security at the Park is a concern,” three called on the City to “address drug use, crime, rats, vermin and speeding (St. Stephens & St. Agnes)¹⁵” while another three asked the City to “address closing times and a gate,” while one simply pled “involve the police.”

Issues related to staffing of the Park also came up in different ways at the same hearings. Two commenters said that “Staff not on duty to help,” and four exclaimed “Who do you go to if needed? Who is in charge?” On the other hand, several citizens volunteered possible remedies for these concerns based not on the City’s resources but on the resources of their fellow citizens: five called on Park users to “take home their own trash, ‘leave no trace,’” and two asked the City to “coordinate a volunteer corps for the Park.” Other significant and related suggestions included a “community service plan,” an “adopt-a-garden plan,” and a “plan for Park users to donate time.” See Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities *Chart of Citizen Concerns*.

Over the term of the Advisory Group, some progress has been made on both the staffing and security fronts at the Park. We are informed that RPCA obtained funding for a staff member to supervise Park use during the summer weekends. This has helped with crowd control and ensuring that picnic pavilions are appropriately used. A new reservation system for picnic pavilions has also helped reduce the burden of picnic pavilion use on Park staff and presumably has led to a more efficient visitor experience. Additionally, RPCAs’ Park Manager has informed us that he has established better communication with the Alexandria Police Department, and we are advised that the police have occasionally cracked down on speeding on the Park’s ring road in the early mornings.

E. Storage and Buildings for Park Operations

A constant challenge at the Park has been adequate storage for Fort Ward Museum and space for Park operations. This problem was exacerbated by the necessary closure of the maintenance yard. Outside of the Museum building itself, the only buildings available in the Park for storage and park operations are the small maintenance building located on the north

¹⁵ We conclude, based on later work of the Advisory Group, that the reference in this citizen’s comment to “St. Stephens & St. Agnes” is to parents dropping off their children at that school in the mornings who apparently use the Parks’ ring road as a cut-through to reach the school.

edge of the parking lot immediately behind the Museum and a portion of the amphitheater on the west side of the Park. The maintenance building was designed to reflect the building style that likely would have been used at Fort Ward during the Civil War (a style also reflected in the Museum building) to replicate the actual buildings that stood in the area of the Museum and its parking lot. The maintenance building includes restroom facilities and is currently used as operations space for Park management.

Prior to the closure of the maintenance yard, the maintenance building was shared between the Museum storage and park operations space, but with the closure of the maintenance yard, the Museum's storage space was relocated to the amphitheater – making retrieval of Museum property much more challenging. The relocation of the Museum's storage facility has had a significant impact on maintenance projects and interpretation at the Museum, given the increased time to retrieve objects and the Museum's reduced staff. Additionally, the Museum's storage space in the amphitheater is not climate-controlled, and so it is not appropriate for storage of much of the Museum's property (or even for some maintenance items like paint).

F. Picnic Pavilions

The number, and use, of picnic pavilions in the Park has raised challenges for Park operations. Indeed, initial citizen concerns that helped lead directly to the creation of the Advisory Group resulted from an internal RPCA plan to renovate and relocate some of these facilities. In the past, these facilities often attracted much larger crowds than they were designed for, and this led to noise, excessive trash, and other issues. That said, picnicking in the Park is a civic use that, when appropriately monitored, not done by excessively large crowds, and done in the proper locations, is a positive activity. Excessive use of the picnic facilities by larger-than-expected crowds was apparently the cause of the problem with picnics in the Park.

During the term of the Advisory Group, some progress has been made in striking a better balance between this appropriate use of the Park and excessive use. The Park's operations manager has removed a number of the facilities located in areas of particular historic sensitivity, and has instituted a new reservations system to help ensure that large crowds are not using the picnic facilities. Better staffing – discussed separately in this section – has also helped control picnicking crowds. It is unclear to the Advisory Group however, how much progress can be made here without a clearly identified park management plan that delineates the anticipated level of public use of the park, allocation of space for large events, and a plan for staffing the park and crowd control on event days.

G. Park Amenities

During the 2009 public hearings, several citizens raised concerns about amenities in the Park outside of the picnic pavilions and the maintenance facility. Fourteen citizens commented that the Park's restrooms needed to be rehabilitated. Four noted that site amenities should be appropriate for a park with the historic features of the Park, and four more expressed concerns about signage in the Park (generally noting that it was inadequate and should include Spanish

Comment [DC49]: City maintenance staff frequent the bathrooms and smoke in them.

translations). One commenter called for removing the entrance booth to the Park’s ring road (currently stationed just past the entrance to the Museum’s parking lot).

With the exception of the comment about removing the entrance booth, the Advisory Group would agree with these citizen concerns. For Park visitors that do not enter the Museum, the restrooms may be their only indoor experience while visiting the Park, and Alexandria’s pride in its park system should be reflected in those facilities. Moreover, on a busy summer weekend, the rest rooms at the Park are likely to be heavily used. The Advisory Group also agrees that signage in the Park should be efficient and appropriate, and comport with the ongoing work of the City’s Wayfinding Program.

In light of its recognition that Park staff needs to be readily accessible to control Park use (especially picnic pavilion users and traffic), the Advisory Group does not agree with the one citizen’s comment calling for the removal of the entry booth on the Park’s ring road.

None of these concerns have changed substantially during the term of the Advisory Group, although we note that six new signs describing the historic features of the Park are being prepared by OHA.

H. Other Concerns raised to the Advisory Group

Various other concerns raised by citizens during the 2009 hearings included requests for programming for the City’s nursery and arboretum, a request for a pay phone on the west side of the Park, a need for electrical outlets for Park special events, a request for a utility survey of the Park, and a complaint about leaf blower noise. The Advisory Group notes these comments, but either did not investigate them in detail given the limited time and resources available to it (in the case of programming for the City’s nursery), or did not necessarily agree with all of them, in light of the competing priorities for the use of the Park space (the remainder of the comments).

III. Recommended Action(s)

Memorandum of Understanding: A major premise of this section of the Advisory Group’s report is that recent cooperation between the two lead agencies that manage the Park has recently improved, and the Advisory Group encourages this cooperation. The Advisory Group has two broader concerns about the current state of this cooperation, however. One concern the Group has is that the recent increased cooperation could be short-lived – as a result of management changes or the simple passage of time. Second, the Group is concerned that such cooperation between the agencies has yet to encompass all aspects of the Park’s operation. In short, while progress has been made, it is not yet complete, and could fade or change with changes to City staffing of critical positions.

To counter this, the Advisory Group has made recommendations on the long-term management structure in the Park in other sections of this Report. One interim step reported to the Group by the two lead agencies, though, and that bears discussion here, is a proposed “Memorandum of Understanding” between the two agencies that, we understand, will

Comment [DC50]: They need to be actionable and specific.

Comment [DC51]: This is superficial. OHA is in the Department of RPCA and has little leverage on decisions.

The City Manager should be directed to review the delegation of authority and clarify responsibilities. Disagreements regarding recreation and overall management of the park should be elevated to the City Manager’s office.

RPCA and OHA share responsibility for problems that have led to poor management and the detrimental condition of the park.

Unless you have instituted good management at the top, MOUs become another bureaucratic exercise.

Comment [DC52]: Actions taken over the last 2-3 years do not support this premise.

stipulate good management practices for co-managed Park operations and specify the chain of responsibility for park operations between and within those two agencies. The Group strongly encourages the City and its lead agencies to take their collective commitment to this project very seriously, and push it forward to completion.

To date, we have not seen drafts of this MOU, and we do not know what it contains. To the extent that the MOU is intended to overcome the challenges facing the Park and clarify the role of each of the agencies involved in park management, the Group sees this MOU – including its public release and discussion – as central to improving the management of the Park moving forward. We would therefore strongly encourage both agencies to complete their work on the MOU, circulate the same for appropriate and expedited public review, and commit to follow the MOU as a critical component until a more comprehensive Park Management Plan is completed.

Comment [DC53]: May want to suggest any policies to improve management and coordination be posted on the City's web site, invite comments, and/or be reviewed by any newly created ad hoc group.

A. Turf Maintenance and Mowing

i. Non-Historic Fort Mowing

As the Advisory Group has noted, Fort Ward is complex, it is both a place to recreate, and the site of an important Civil War fort. It is also the location of graves, both marked and unmarked, that remind us of its varied past. Nothing demonstrates this level of complexity more than the issue of mowing. In parts of the Park outside the historic Fort, graves, both marked and unmarked, and possibly other historic artifacts of the African American community as well as Native American culture, deserve to be mowed in a way that respects and honors those who are buried there. Still other areas of the Park lie on slopes where mowing can affect storm water run-off and thereby affect rates of erosion.

Additionally, decisions about mowing can affect the spread of invasive species, such as weeds, including poison ivy, poison oak and sumac. An unintended consequence of not mowing areas on a regular basis is the increase in rodent, flea, tick, and mosquito populations. The mowing policy must establish a regularized schedule where the height of grass is determined by lawn use, slope, erosion patterns and rainfall. Mowing is currently jointly managed, the OHA contracts for mowing within the reconstructed area of the Fort and the RPCA mows areas outside the Fort (and portions inside). Currently, the RPCA has a "no mow" policy in place where it believes erosion is significant. The Advisory Group believes that the issue of where to mow, where not to mow, and just how to mow, is one that should be resolved jointly by the city agencies involved and be done in a public way through a MOU, that properly meets the required needs of the Park.

Comment [DC54]: It really is not joint. RPCA provides the funding and OHA reacts.

ii. Mowing inside the Historic Fort area

Misunderstandings and a perceived lack of appropriate appreciation for the historic nature of the ground that comprises the Historic Fort have led to continuous challenges in managing the turf at the Historic Fort. Planning and communication can resolve or alleviate this problem, leading to greater efficiency and preservation of the Historic Fort. The Advisory

Group recommends that before April 2011: 1) the directors of RPCA, OHA, and their relevant staff members, convene a two-hour meeting¹⁶ to openly and freely discuss the proper management and care of the turf in the Historic Fort – with the focus of the meeting to be the efficient management of the turf going forward, not past misunderstandings; 2) at that meeting, agree upon a series of steps for proper management of the turf inside the Historic Fort – including the use of outside contractors if their use is deemed necessary -- and assign responsibilities for agreed-upon actions to accountable members of each agency’s staff; 3) carry out those outlined actions during 2011; and 4) meet again at the conclusion of the 2011 mowing season, evaluate which actions worked and did not, and prepare an improved action plan for 2012.

B. Maintenance Yard

i. Immediate Actions

The Advisory Group encourages RPCA to complete the decommissioning of the Maintenance Yard. This effort should be undertaken as expeditiously as possible to alleviate the blight of the yard, and show due respect for those who are buried within its fenced perimeter. Specifically, we would encourage: 1. the removal of the fence; 2. the removal of any remaining materials stored in the yard; 3. the removal of the gravel base and the restoration of the turf to a surface that will still slow water passage over the ground; and 4. the erection of appropriate **barricades** – along the lines used at the Jackson Family Cemetery area of the Park – to protect known grave sites.

Comment [DC55]: It is a “rope” fence, not a barricade.

ii. Longer-Term Actions

After those steps are taken, full consideration should be given to the appropriate future use – if any – of the Maintenance Yard area. While the entire use of the Park is in essence a balancing act between multiple civic virtues – primarily Alexandria’s value of historic preservation and interpretation, its value of safe and accessible recreation and open space, and its value of preserving the peaceful enjoyment of residents in quiet neighborhoods like those adjoining the Yard – no one place in the Park may draw a finer point on the challenge of reconciling those values than the Maintenance Yard.

The use of the Maintenance Yard was one of the prime factors leading up to the creation of the Advisory Group and bringing the focus of the City’s leadership to the Park. One view of the Yard was put in a March 2009 Washington Post column this way: “the headstone standing crooked and forlorn in the middle of a scruffy city maintenance yard along one edge of

¹⁶ Our recommendation of a two-hour meeting is not intended to be an act of micromanagement on the part of a citizen advisory group. Our intent is only to suggest to the two lead agencies that the problem of mowing inside the Historic Fort is a fairly compact one that is capable of being solved with a reasonable amount of discussion and planning among the knowledgeable professionals involved, and that the investment of a modest amount of time into advance planning will avoid the consumption of more time in the absence of such a plan. Of course, if the lead agencies see the scope of the problem differently, they are free to take as much or as little time as needed to craft a solution.

the park -- a painful symbol of a community of black families that was forced off the hillside in the early 1960s when the city bought the land to stop a housing development. ¹⁷ While the Yard was becoming a notorious symbol of the City's unfortunate desecration of its history, though, a competing civic value – the right of the neighbors living adjacent to the Yard to peaceful enjoyment of their properties – was being raised at the same time: during the 2009 public hearings, twenty-four citizens said the Yard should be removed but “not replace[d] with picnic or public access.” While it was clear, then, even before the Advisory Group began its work that the Yard needed to stop functioning as a Maintenance Yard, it was not clear what its future should be.

That lack of clarity only deepened during the Advisory Group's term. The initial request to close the Maintenance Yard to picnicking and public access was expressed prior to the implementation of the “no-mow” policy in many open areas of the Park in 2010. That policy itself reduced areas available for picnicking and public use in the Park and resulted in a competing concern raised to the Advisory Group: that families seeking areas to picnic and frolic were increasingly using the mowed areas along Braddock Road – potentially placing their young children at risk from the cars on that road.

Once the Yard is completely decommissioned, then, the three civic values identified above -- preserving and interpreting the City's history, assuring the neighbors adjacent to the Yard the right to quiet enjoyment of their property, and providing safe and adequate space for recreation – still must be brought into harmony at the Yard site. All three are desirable values at the core of what makes Alexandria a great City and a great place to live and work. In the Advisory Group's view, no one value can be favored to the exclusion of any other without unsatisfactory outcomes:

* If the Yard site were fully closed to public access, thus fully promoting the adjacent residents' interest in the quiet enjoyment of their properties, the two other values would be compromised because the City would be denied the opportunity to share and interpret important artifacts of its heritage in the Yard space, and a valuable piece of land that could be used for quiet picnicking or recreation would be foreclosed, increasing the use of other areas of the Park.

* If the Yard site were fully opened to public recreation without adequate protection for the gravesites and other artifacts there, the City would not be fully protecting its heritage that those artifacts represent, nor would it be protecting the neighboring homeowners from excessive noise.

Therefore, the Advisory Group recommends that once the Immediate Actions outlined above, and any archaeology research deemed appropriate by the OHA are completed, the following steps be taken: 1. appropriate signage should be erected to explain the significance of the gravesites in the Yard and the contributions of the community that lived in and around the Yard (or signs should be relocated there from other areas of the Park); 2. appropriate screening

Comment [DC56]: Once the chain link fence is removed and the disturbed area within is restored to its natural drainage and condition, the public should be involved in the planning, operation and maintenance of this area. We have reason not to trust City staff and there is a need for continuous public involvement.

¹⁷ Fisher, “At Civil War Fort, A Tale of Two Histories,” Washington Post, Mar. 15, 2009.

plants should be placed along the eastern boundary of the Park in consultation with the neighboring homeowners; 3. that portion of the Yard area outside of the identified historic artifacts which should be fenced as one of the Initial Steps (along with any identifiable below-ground artifacts identified via ongoing research) should be made available for public access, but 4. to limit noisy activities and preserve the right of quiet enjoyment held by the neighboring landowners, no amenities that would encourage prolonged use of the area – such as picnic tables – should be placed in the opened area of the Yard. The Advisory Group believes these recommendations will allow Alexandria to preserve, share and interpret the history that the Yard area bears, while allowing for limited use of part of the Yard area and reducing the risk of activities that could disturb the neighboring landowners.

C. Parking

The Advisory Group encourages the lead agencies managing the Park to: 1. consider whether current parking spaces inside the Park can be expanded or whether additional parking areas can be added, giving due concern to the need for parking light of the possible changes to the number of large events being held in the Park; 2. consider whether the current and any future parking lots can be constructed using materials to minimize water erosion in other areas of the Park; 3. devise a manner to permit tour buses to safely reach the Fort Ward Museum.

D. Staffing and Security

The Advisory Group is informed that RPCA is increasing its coordination with City police. This should be encouraged and continued. We also recommend that: 1) speeding crackdowns – especially in the early morning hours – continue; 2) RPCA consider installation of a gate arm that could block access to the Park’s ring road past the entry booth during the hours when the Park is closed (this would, we believe, deter use of the Park after operating hours).

On staffing at the Park, we note that RPCA has increased the weekend staffing at the Park. It appears to the Advisory Group that this has significantly improved both the recreational visitor experience and security, and should be continued. Given the historic nature of the Park, we would also recommend that RPCA provide training for all of its crews that staff the Park in both the history of the Park and Historic Fort, and in the general historic preservation concepts necessary to maintain historic parks. This would, we believe, result in at least two benefits: it would enable Park staff to enhance the visitor experience while promoting a greater understanding among the Park’s chief stewards of the value of the Park’s historic resources and the care needed to preserve those resources. We think the knowledge to conduct this training is already available in OHA.

In light of the City’s current fiscal restraints, we think RPCA should accept the requests made by many citizens commenting during the 2009 public hearings and utilize citizen volunteers to augment its staff at the Park. Some citizen comments called for a “volunteer corps” for the Park. We think that RPCAs’ “Adopt-a-Park” initiative may be tailor-made for this effort. That initiative allows “permanently established community or public organizations, businesses, or government entities within the City of Alexandria” to provide certain limited

Comment [DC57]: Although the insights of the ad hoc committee are helpful, there should be an open process for planning the various uses in the park, including different ways to protect, conserve or commemorate the presence of African American grave sites. It may not be possible to fund archaeological work to find every grave site without affecting funding for other needed work.

Comment [DC58]: This should be part of a public planning process. For large events, the City routinely allows parking on the street.

services to City parks. We think that among the various stakeholder groups that have participated in the public process surrounding the future of Fort Ward Park, one group (or a coalition of groups) can be located that can fulfill this role.

E. Storage and Buildings for Park Operations

The Advisory Group encourages the lead agencies managing the Park to: 1. assess all of the usable space in the Park included in the maintenance building north of the Museum and at the amphitheater; 2. assess whether that space is being used in the most appropriate manner, giving due regard to the need for the Museum to have adequate and nearby storage space, as well as the need for space to conduct Park operations; 3. in light of (2), make any needed changes to the use of these spaces.

Comment [DC59]: This will not change anything. Operations and maintenance should find another location for operations.

F. Picnic Pavilions

The removal of certain picnic structures and a new reservations system has helped abate some of the concerns about excessive numbers of picnics held by large crowds in the Park. In the short term, the Advisory Group encourages RPCA to continue to be vigilant in this area. In the longer term, the appropriate size and location of picnic facilities should be the subject of a master plan for the Park.

G. Park Amenities

The Advisory Group recommends the following changes to park amenities: 1. the Park's restrooms should be rehabilitated; 2. in coordination with the City's wayfinding project, Park signage should be: a) redesigned to be more appropriate for a historic park; b) reviewed to ensure that it clearly provides necessary information on Park rules and procedures; and c) communicates Spanish translations where needed; 3. the entry booth on the Park ring road should be redesigned and reconstructed to fit with the Civil War-era Museum and nearby maintenance building.

Chapter 6. Development and Promotion, Issues and Recommendations Adrienne Washington and Tom Fulton¹⁸

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide City decision makers and Park Managers with options and recommendations for increasing public outreach and awareness including interpretive products, educational opportunities, and special occasions at the Park.

Background

Fort Ward Historical Park and Museum opened with much fanfare on Memorial Day in 1964 as the City of Alexandria's main contribution to the Civil War Centennial then taking place across the nation. Over the next nearly 50 years, the Park has evolved to become a large city park that contains a museum, an amphitheater, picnic areas, serves as the city's arboretum, and contains the best example still in existence of the ring of Forts that protected Washington, D.C. during the Civil War. It is jointly managed by Alexandria's RPCA and OHA. Both city agencies feature the Park on their respective websites as does the City of Alexandria on its homepage. Because of its historical and cultural significance, the Park serves as one of the primary city engines for passive recreation, tourism, as well as serving as a unique teaching tool.

Current Situation

Although the Park represents one of the City of Alexandria's major public attractions, the public's awareness of the range of what it offers is limited at best. Currently, outreach to visitors is shared by OHA and RPCA. In most cases, in addition to maintaining Fort Ward's website, www.FortWard.org, OHA offers programs through the Museum located on the Park grounds, while RPCA, which also maintains a website, generally offers events that take place in the amphitheater or in areas outside the earthen walls of the Fort itself. Recent efforts to increase outreach include sharing information on a Civil War Round Table website, www.alexandriacwrt.com, as well as with the National Park Service at: www.nps.gov/cwdw/. OHA also sends information about events at the Park to the Virginia Tourism website and the Civil War Trails program. It is anticipated that notices of events will be sent to Virginia's Sesquicentennial website calendar as well.

Most day visitors to the Park are there to enjoy outdoor, passive recreational opportunities such as walking, jogging, picnicking and use of the children's playground. Visitors to the site's Museum and earthworks numbered approximately 34,000 in FY2010, up significantly from the approximately 25,000 visitors who came in FY 2009 with many of these taking a self guided walking tour of the earthen Fort's interior, especially its reconstructed

Comment [DC60]: Suggest for purposes of making the SAG report shorter and more readable that this section be shortened.

The City Council has asked SAG for advice on educational and outreach opportunities.

Fort Ward Park and Museum is an underutilized educational resource for nearby schools. I suspect much more can be done to adjust current programs to better coincide with Standards of Learning used at the schools.

Programs presented at the Fort have changed little over time. The City should be considering opportunities for sustaining the historical character of the park. This would include making Civil War history more relevant to our diverse community. Changes in the history presented at the park could increase visitation to the museum and broaden local support for better maintenance and operations at the park.

Outreach has been limited to a like-minded group of military Civil War buffs.

¹⁸ Adrienne Washington, a descendent of several of the families who made Fort Ward their home, is a member of the nonprofit Fort Ward descendent family's organization as well as the Oakland Baptist Church. Tom Fulton serves as Chair of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group, and is a member of the Alexandria Archaeology Commission.

Northwest Bastion. Infrequently there are events such as a reenacted Civil War or Revolutionary War skirmishes that attract visitors.

There is little public awareness of the Park's listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or its designation as the official arboretum for the City of Alexandria. Awareness is minimal of the Park's rhododendron garden. Although the Park is the site of a superb outdoor amphitheater it is underused. There is little interaction between the Park and Alexandria's school system, although it represents an authentic example of a crucial period in our Nation's history. Although the City informs visitors about Fort Ward through its various website portals, there is little innovation to attract or compelling reason to visit those sites. In addition, although the city, to its credit, is moving to alternative forms of electronic communication with its interested stakeholders such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc., there is little evidence that these sites are being exploited to their full potential.

Future Action

Interpretive Products

Currently there is underway an effort to expand interpretation at the Park beyond the traditional Civil War story of Generals and their tactics through the use of interpretive signs to tell the story of the African American families who settled at the Fort in the aftermath of the Civil War. Eventually a series of six to eight signs will inform visitors of the families who lived there and built a school, founded a church, and lived as a tightknit community for some 100 years. These interpretive signs will join an already existing set of signs that mark a self guided tour of the Fort and explain the Fort's role in the civil War itself. There is also an effort underway to develop podcasts providing short descriptions of neighborhood attractions in the West End of Alexandria including Fort Ward. These new efforts at interpretation are anticipated to be in place for the upcoming Sesquicentennial.

Educational Outreach

The Park lies within one mile of a number of public and private schools, including; Alexandria's Hammond Middle School, T.C. Williams High School, Minnie Howard, (the Ninth grade campus of T.C. Williams), the private St. Stephens and St. Agnes School (its middle school lies on the western edge of the Park), the Episcopal High School, The Friends School, the Virginia Theological Seminary and the Alexandria Campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. Currently few, if any, of these schools make the Park a field trip to study its museum or the earthen fort. The Fort appears not to be included in any of the school's teaching curriculums.

Special Occasions

Just as the Park played a key role in Alexandria's celebration of the Centennial of the American Civil War, it stands poised to make a similar contribution in the upcoming Sesquicentennial of 2011-2015. During the Centennial the focus was on the tactics of the armies of the North and the South and the decisions of their commanding generals.

Alexandria's own Robert E. Lee played a key role in the stories of the period. As we approach the Sesquicentennial, the emphasis has changed, now the interest is in discovering the story of the common man and how he, or she, was affected by events. Research recently conducted by the Office of Historic Alexandria and interested citizens indicates that families of African Americans who lived at the fort lived through many of the events of the period and after. We are now beginning to better understand their story and to tell it to a wider audience.

The Park is the site of several annual events including Civil War Camp Day, Civil War Kids Camp, Christmas in Camp, and periodic soldier-led walking tours of the Fort. It has, in the past played host to events such as the Alexandria Jazz Festival, the Scottish Festival, and is frequently the site of privately sponsored birthday and other private events.

Recommendation(s)

1. The City should work to better integrate the outreach and event planning opportunities currently handled separately by OHA and RPCA. Joint planning efforts could better leverage and extend limited city resources.
2. The City should work to more fully integrate various electronic communications systems such as websites, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to fully project the unique characteristics offered by the Park to interested citizens, students, and visitors.
3. The City should consider forming an education outreach committee of city officials from OHA, RPCA, as well as educators and interested citizens to work to offer Fort Ward as an instructional tool relating to Civil War history as well as African American History post Civil War, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights movement. The City could build on Fort Ward's current school outreach program, "Life During the Civil War."
4. City managers might consider, if they don't already, placing a "public outreach" element as a critical component in evaluating affected City employees annual performance.

Summary

Fort Ward Historical Park is a City-owned cultural jewel that offers much more than the city currently utilizes. Although care must be taken to ensure that activities at the Park are properly sized and fit into the context of the Fort and its surroundings, and the peace and quiet of neighbors is observed, the size of the Park and the facilities that exist there provide a rare opportunity for a city as densely populated as Alexandria.

Comment [DC61]: The main focus of the park has been on the Defenses of Washington and military tactics, munitions, and life as a soldier.

Unfortunately, reasons for the Civil War, slavery, and the changes the Civil War brought about have not been part of the interpretive history at the park.

The African Americans that settled at the park were representative of the free blacks and formerly enslaved who in some respects, by their occupation and ownership, preserved the fort bastions for posterity. Their struggle for freedom, the exercise of Presidential authority in the Emancipation Proclamation, the role of Blacks in support of the Union and as USCT has not been adequately made part of the program at the park and museum.

To sustain interest in the park, RPCA, OHA should revitalize the programs being presented to attract a broader group of visitors and local supporters. The location of the park and its listing on the National Register of Historical Places provides a regional opportunity to showcase Civil War related social and cultural heritage of that period.

Chapter 7. Concluding Recommendations

Comment [DC62]: This along with a revised Executive Summary may be all that is necessary.

Purpose

The Advisory Group was charged with making recommendations to the City about how to best manage the Park now and into the future. The Group takes this charge seriously and has endeavored to put forth its best effort. While recommendations are more fully developed in the preceding text, they are gathered in major themes and summarized here. Bottom line, the Advisory Group believes the City should, in its management of the Park, endeavor to be a better neighbor and strive harder to more explicitly comply with the rules, regulations, and norms of behavior the City expects and requires of all its residents.

Need for Planning

Many of the recommendations result from problems arising as a result of the lack of a plan to guide the City in how it manages the Park. The Advisory Group is pleased that the City Council has committed to the process of developing a City-wide park master plan and its intention to begin with Fort Ward Park. Implementation of and adherence to an overall Park Master Plan would have, in all probability, precluded problems such as the parking of city trucks on and near marked graves. Having a clear cut master plan with well understood avenues of public involvement will, in our view, allow for long term management and use decisions within Fort Ward Park that take into consideration its diverse nature.

Park Master Plan

Developing a Master Plan for the Park can serve as a model for other parks across the City. As an initial task, the Advisory Group recommends the institutionalization of a process to solicit, consider and evaluate input from residents and experts in park planning. As changes in use over time at the Park has demonstrated, citizens need some understanding of what uses are acceptable in these large parks, and if they need to change, how? The Advisory Group strongly recommends that the City's appropriate agencies undertake a rigorous effort to develop a master plan for large parks beginning with Fort Ward Park. This process should incorporate a process for allowing change overtime, and seek to incorporate maximum citizen participation as well as incorporate the mandating of regular meetings at the appropriate level, and at regular intervals, to ensure continuing coordination and cooperation in the Park's administration.

To be successful, in our view, the Master Plan should incorporate several essential components of planning: including a Resource Inventory and Management Plan; a Cultural Resource Inventory including African American and Native American presence in the Park; a Storm Water Run-off Mitigation Plan; an Interpretive Plan; a Citizens Advisory Committee; a formalized Joint Management Plan; as well as the use of Memoranda of Understanding; Special Use Permits; and Picnic and Event Permitting.

Resource Inventory and Management Plan (“RMP”)

The Advisory Group understands that Fort Ward Park is incredibly diverse and complex. At times the park hosts large concerts in its amphitheater, children at its playground, families picnicking at its pavilions, joggers using the .6 mile road that circle the Park, history buffs at its museum, tree identification fans at its arboretum, all the while allowing descendent families to visit graves of ancestors, and those enjoying quiet contemplation at its memorial azalea gardens. All of these involve complex uses of Park resources, but there has been no inventory of these resources nor a management plan developed to ensure that this Park retains the diverse qualities we treasure today and into the future. An Inventory and RMP should be developed and folded into a Master Plan for Fort Ward Park.

Cultural Resource Inventory

The OHA, to its credit, and that of its Director Lance Mallamo, has undertaken an effort to document and understand the rich African American history that surrounds Fort Ward Park. The Advisory Group believes the City should encourage and facilitate completion of this effort. Although we understand the on-going nature of learning all there is to know about the people who lived in an area as complex as Fort Ward Park, having a more complete Cultural Resource Inventory of the Park is a must for associated management decision making. For instance, although flooding is a problem within Fort Ward Park and neighboring homes, Alexandria’s Department of Transportation and Environmental Services currently believes it does not have enough information about the possible location of unmarked graves within the Park to proceed with a permanent water run-off mitigation effort.

Additionally, the Advisory Group believes the City might partner with the Oakland Baptist Church in order to have the privately-owned OBC cemetery designated as, and included in, the National Register of Historic Places in that it meets the requirements in number of years in existence and is within the Park which itself is on the Register.

Storm water Runoff Mitigation Plan

The City must pass along to future residents a Park that is undiminished. One certain threat is that of erosion caused by storm water runoff. It should devise a permanent solution to eliminate water runoff in the Park, and more specifically the graves, while understanding that the current use of hay bales is only a temporary measure. Excess runoff threatens not only existing features within the Park and private property adjacent to the Park, it also threatens marked and unmarked graves both within the Park and those in the privately-owned OBC cemetery that lies within the Park. The City needs to immediately undertake planning to develop methodologies that will mitigate current runoff and preserve important features within the Park. Such a mitigation plan should be an important part of an overall Master Plan for the Park.

There are several restoration needs in the park due to years of deferred maintenance and weather damage. The City needs to commit resources or accept volunteer assistance to

clear deadfall from wooded areas. Additionally the erosion of the grassy areas leading to the current playground site as well as multiple picnic areas should be addressed to restore the natural character of the park. Installation of water breaks, perhaps using the large deadfall and installation of wood chips would help restore these areas until a long-term solution to the dispersal of rain water can be addressed. The restoration should also include the removal of the concrete from the run-off gully by the monument to the arborist memorial and the impervious material surrounding the monument itself. To further reduce compaction, there should be a limit to the use of park maintenance vehicles in these areas already affected especially when soils are wet. There is a need to aerate and/or add soil amendments. Do not remove all of the leaves in the Fall, leave some in place to add nutrients to soil and slow erosion. Restore bare areas by using hay/mulch and grass seed, and use temporary fences to keep people and vehicles off these affected areas

The City should review areas that are currently not mown, and moderate the location of these areas as needed. Monitor and treat invasive plants before they become more widespread. Apply other mitigation techniques including mulching with straw and reseeding areas that have sheet erosion. Monitor and reseed areas that will be excavated for archaeological surveys. Plant rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run-off, especially on eastern side of park. Remove piles of dirt that were deposited in locations that are contributing to excessive water flow. Remove aggregate materials in the maintenance area and restore grass and trees to better absorb water flow. Some hardscape areas such as picnic table pads could be replaced with pervious pavers to decrease run-off.

In addition to mitigating stormwater problems on the eastern side of park, the city should increase capacity of draw and revegetate, it should install additional drainage structures and possibly a storm water vault or other retention facility, and continue debris clean-up within stream channel, ditch and inlet structures. It may wish to consider the construction of a temporary berm to channel water away from the OBC cemetery. The City should work with neighbors on how they can help moderate stormwater as well. For stormwater that leaves the Park, it should consider possible capture in cisterns or rain barrels for flower beds, newly planted trees, and consider plant rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run-offs on eastern side of the Park.

Interpretive Plan

There is a need for visitors to the Park to better understand what they are seeing at Fort Ward. The Park is trying to meet many diverse needs and often it leaves visitors confused about just what the Park is all about. The Advisory Group believes that the City needs to incorporate an Interpretive Plan into its Master Plan planning process, with citizen involvement, that helps convey the message of what the Park is (and what it is not), to its users. Such an Interpretive Plan would help focus Master Park planning goals.

Such an interpretive plan should work to better integrate the outreach and event planning opportunities currently handled separately by OHA and RPCA. Joint planning efforts could better leverage and extend limited City resources and more fully integrate various

Comment [DC63]: An interpretation plan for disseminating historic information can involve various methods, not linked to signs or other outdoor exhibits or commemoration areas.. This is separate from the Master plan.

electronic communications systems such as websites, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to fully project the unique characteristics offered by the Park to interested citizens, students, and visitors.

The Interpretive Plan might include the Park's role in history such as, Civil War Re-enactment, Civil War Camp Day, community model and African American and U.S. Colored Troop photos in the museum at Fort Ward, as a teaching tool for students and visitors on African American culture, during and post civil war. Finally, public signage, in coordination with the City's wayfinding project, should be: 1. redesigned to be more appropriate for a historic park; 2. reviewed to ensure that it clearly provides necessary information on Park rules and procedures; and 3. communicates Spanish translations where needed;

Citizen Advisory Committee

The Advisory Group believes that one of the great strengths of Alexandria is the role citizens play in decision making in the City. At the Park, the Advisory Group believes that role should be on-going and strengthened. The Advisory Group urges the city and City Council to consider forming a citizen's advisory committee to oversee the implementation of these recommendations at the Park and to oversee on-going management at the Park. Such a group might include (but not be limited to) members of local citizen groups such as the Seminary Hill Association, The Seminary Civic Association, the Friends of Fort Ward, as well as descendent and church groups with family buried at the Park. Responsible City agencies should also be required to submit regular reports to the City Council and any public advisory body established as a successor to the Advisory Group. These reports should be prepared jointly by the directors of each agency on at least a quarterly basis, until a Park Master Plan is completed. Finally, City managers might consider, if they don't already, placing a "public outreach" element as a critical component in evaluating affected City employees annual performance.

Joint Management Plan ("Memorandum of Understanding")

The joint management at Fort Ward Park by OHA and RPCA, may be unique in the City. It certainly offers significant challenges – and opportunities. At Fort Ward, coordination, or even conversation, between these two agencies has been, at best, uneven although under new leadership at both agencies it is improving. In the view of the Advisory Group, advantages to the City and its citizens are gained both financially and in resource allocations when maximum use is made of interagency resources and expertise. The leadership of these two agencies should undertake a more active effort to promote a cooperative relationship between the employees in both agencies. Joint meetings at appropriate levels, and early community involvement regarding decision making at the Park should be scheduled regularly and employees should be empowered to resolve differences at lower levels.

A major premise of the Advisory Group's report, however, is that recent cooperation between the two lead agencies that manage the Park has improved, and the Advisory Group encourages this cooperation. The Advisory Group has two broader concerns about the current state of this cooperation, however. One concern the Advisory Group has is that the recent

increased cooperation could be short-lived – as a result of management changes or the simple passage of time. Second, the Advisory Group is concerned that such cooperation between the agencies has yet to encompass all aspects of the Park’s operation. In short, while progress has been made, it is not yet complete, and could fade or change with City staffing of critical positions.

To ensure the current level of cooperation continues to develop the Advisory Group recommends that the two agencies, working with the community, complete a MOU, with a list of issues to be addressed by the directors of the respective agencies and to resolve other issues between the agencies. Such an MOU could underscore a requirement for meetings on a regular—perhaps monthly—basis between the park-level leads from each agency, and for quarterly meetings between the directors of OHA and RPCA.

Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”)

The Advisory Group understands that the two agencies are drafting a MOU. We also understand that it will stipulate good management practices for co-managed Park operations and specify the chain of responsibility for park operations between and within those two agencies. The Advisory Group strongly encourages the City and its lead agencies to take their collective commitment to this project very seriously, and push it forward to completion.

To date, we have not seen drafts of this MOU, and we do not know specifically what it contains – we have only been told that it is in progress. To the extent that it is intended to overcome the challenges facing the Park and clarify the role of each of the agencies involved in park management, the Advisory Group sees this MOU – including its public release and discussion – as central to improving the management of the Park. We would therefore strongly encourage both agencies to complete their work on the MOU, circulate the same for appropriate and expedited public review, and commit to follow it as a critical component until a more comprehensive Fort Ward Park Master Plan is completed.

Special Use Permit (“SUP”)

The Advisory Group notes the City’s selective use of SUPs in its decision making at Fort Ward Park. In one example, two green houses were built at Fort Ward at different times. The first, now gone, existed just north of the restrooms at the edge of the Museum parking lot. The City applied for and received a SUP for its construction. A second green house, built later further east in the so-called maintenance yard, and still there, was apparently constructed without a SUP (at least none can be found). Several other structures also exist in the Park without known SUPs. In our view, SUPs serve as an important public check and balance on city decision making. They require multiple review by other city agencies and offer the public some opportunity to let its concerns be known on a proposal prior to its implementation. The city should carefully adhere to the use of SUPs in its decision making at Fort Ward Park.

Picnic/Event Permitting

After experiencing picnic events where permit applicants stated attendance would be under 35, but where as many as 900 attended, the City undertook a substantial revision of its reservation and permitting system. As a result, the Advisory Group believes RPCA should be commended for these changes. While public use of the Park should be actively encouraged, however rules should be clearly vetted, understood and enforced. Limits on noise, group size, parking, and duration of events should be proposed by the appropriate city department(s), then publically vetted, placed on adequate signage, on permits themselves, and on the web - and then enforced.

Picnic procedures should be strengthened by prohibiting consumption of alcoholic beverages and the use of amplified music in the Park. There should be no authority for the granting of individual exceptions relating to picnic reservations. The only area of the Park where amplified music should be permitted is in the amphitheater where summer concerts are held. The consumption of alcohol and amplified music are not integral to the goal of maintaining a passive recreation resource. For the safety and enjoyment of those who value the Park for its tranquility and respect its significant cultural origins, these additional protections should be considered.

Finally, the removal of certain picnic structures and a new reservations system has helped abate some of the concerns about excessive numbers of picnics held by large crowds in the Park. In the short term, the Advisory Group encourages RPCA to continue to be vigilant in this area. In the longer term, the appropriate size and location of picnic facilities should be the subject of a Master Plan for the Park.

Archaeological Investigation

Alexandria's City Council is commended for allocating \$50,000 in citizen funds for the examination of where and how many possible graves exist at Fort Ward. While the Park is the site of an iconic Civil War earthen Fort, its history does not stop there. The area was also the home to a community of African Americans and the descendents of many of those families still reside in the Seminary area of Alexandria today. The Advisory Group believes these gravesites **need** to be found, interpreted, and appropriately honored. Planners at Fort Ward need the information about these graves, some marked some unmarked, to restrict these areas to activities considered appropriate. This on-going effort should be supported by the City Council in its budgetary process until it is completed.

Comment [DC64]: At a time of limited funding, first priority should be to do archaeological field work in those areas where there may be potential conflicts with public recreational uses—including defining paths for visitors.

The Arboretum

Not many Alexandrian's know that Fort Ward Park serves as the City's arboretum. Sadly this high minded ideal has been badly neglected. Aside from a few signs at the foot of a few trees dedicating them to specific individuals, and a brochure that is now out of print, there is not much evidence at the Park of its status as the City's arboretum. Frankly, the view of the Advisory Group is that the arboretum should receive greater and more consistent attention from the City. In the way that management of the Park should be the focus of a public process that results in a plan of action such an effort should also be undertaken for the arboretum. The

first step in this effort requires an inventory of tree type/age/location/health. From this inventory, the City can prioritize a plan for investing in appropriate replacement trees where warranted. The complexity of the Fort, however, dictates that many divergent considerations be taken into account as planning proceeds. For instance, an important part of the Civil War fort at the Park is the view shed from inside, this needs to be included in any arboretum planning. Also important to such a plan is where currently unknown burial sites might lie.

To address the decline in tree health and forest canopy, the City should set up a regular cycle to prune to remove dead and broken branches, and work to increase the vigor of all trees. And it should prioritize pruning in heavily used areas of park. It should conduct an annual hazard exam of trees that are adjacent to picnic areas, roads, and locations where people gather. And should adopt sound arboricultural practices to maintain and increase tree vigor.

The City should use its recently completed tree inventory to assess existing canopy and identify areas with greatest need to increase canopy. The park could be divided into “zones” to help identify priority areas. Park managers must work closely with OHA employees to identify locations to avoid planting where they may be grave sites, cultural resources and artifacts. It should promote replacement of trees that have been removed or have failed over the last decade, and create a planting plan for the Park and develop a recommended tree replacement list. The City might start a program to plant memorial trees in honor of previous residents of Fort Ward. It should develop a scheduled maintenance program for new trees including: watering, mulching, and pruning as needed. It should work to increase volunteer and educational opportunities for the public to increase citizen ownership of Park trees.

Additionally, the City might consider working with the Oakland Baptist Church to replace the current chain link fence around the church-owned cemetery with a 4-6 foot black wrought iron fence making it more in conformance with the historic nature of the Park and more visibly appealing to visitors and community casual users.

Maintenance Yard:

As an immediate action, the Advisory Group encourages RPCA to complete the decommissioning of the Maintenance Yard. This effort should be undertaken as expeditiously as possible to alleviate the blight of the yard, and show due respect for those who are buried within its fenced perimeter. Specifically, we would encourage: 1. the removal of the fence; 2. the removal of any remaining materials stored in the yard; 3. the removal of the gravel base and the restoration of the turf to a surface that will still slow water passage over the ground; and 4. the erection of appropriate barricades – along the lines used at the Jackson Family Cemetery area of the Park – to protect known grave sites.

For the longer term, after those steps are taken, full consideration should be given to the appropriate future use – if any – of the Maintenance Yard area. While the entire use of the Park is in essence a balancing act between multiple civic virtues – primarily Alexandria’s value of historic preservation and interpretation, its value of safe and accessible recreation and open space, and its value of preserving the peaceful enjoyment of residents in quiet neighborhoods

like those adjoining the Yard – no one place in the Park may draw a finer point on the challenge of reconciling those values than the Maintenance Yard.

The use of the Maintenance Yard was one of the prime factors leading up to the creation of the Advisory Group and bringing the focus of the City's leadership to the Park. One view of the Yard was put in a March 2009 Washington Post column this way: "the headstone standing crooked and forlorn in the middle of a scruffy city maintenance yard along one edge of the park -- a painful symbol of a community of black families that was forced off the hillside in the early 1960s when the city bought the land to stop a housing development."¹⁹ While the Yard was becoming a notorious symbol of the City's unfortunate desecration of its history, though, a competing civic value – the right of the neighbors living adjacent to the Yard to peaceful enjoyment of their properties – was being raised at the same time: during the 2009 public hearings, twenty-four citizens said the Yard should be removed but "not replace[d] with picnic or public access." While it was clear, then, even before the Advisory Group began its work that the Yard needed to stop functioning as a Maintenance Yard, it was not clear what its future should be.

That lack of clarity only deepened during the Advisory Group's term. The initial request to close the Maintenance Yard to picnicking and public access was expressed prior to the implementation of the "no-mow" policy in many open areas of the Park in 2010. That policy itself reduced areas available for picnicking and public use in the Park and resulted in a competing concern raised to the Advisory Group: that families seeking areas to picnic and frolic were increasingly using the mowed areas along Braddock Road – potentially placing their young children at risk from the cars on that road.

Once the Yard is completely decommissioned, then, the three civic values identified above -- preserving and interpreting the City's history, assuring the neighbors adjacent to the Yard the right to quiet enjoyment of their property, and providing safe and adequate space for recreation – still must be brought into harmony at the Yard site. All three are desirable values at the core of what makes Alexandria a great City and a great place to live and work. In the Advisory Group's view, no one value can be favored to the exclusion of any other without unsatisfactory outcomes:

* If the Yard site were fully closed to public access, thus fully promoting the adjacent residents' interest in the quiet enjoyment of their properties, the two other values would be compromised because the City would be denied the opportunity to share and interpret important artifacts of its heritage in the Yard space, and a valuable piece of land that could be used for quiet picnicking or recreation would be foreclosed, increasing the use of other areas of the Park.

* If the Yard site were fully opened to public recreation without adequate protection for the gravesites and other artifacts there, the City would not be fully protecting its

¹⁹ Fisher, "At Civil War Fort, A Tale of Two Histories," Washington Post, Mar. 15, 2009.

heritage that those artifacts represent, nor would it be protecting the neighboring homeowners from excessive noise.

Therefore, the Advisory Group recommends that once the Immediate Actions outlined above, and any archaeology research deemed appropriate by OHA are completed, the following steps be taken: 1. appropriate signage should be erected to explain the significance of the gravesites in the Yard and the contributions of the community that lived in and around the Yard (or signs should be relocated there from other areas of the Park); 2. appropriate screening plants should be placed along the eastern boundary of the Park in consultation with the neighboring homeowners; 3. that portion of the Yard area outside of the identified historic artifacts which should be fenced as one of the Initial Steps (along with any identifiable below-ground artifacts identified via ongoing research) should be made available for public access, but 4. to limit noisy activities and preserve the right of quiet enjoyment held by the neighboring landowners, no amenities that would encourage prolonged use of the area – such as picnic tables – should be placed in the opened area of the Yard. The Advisory Group believes these recommendations will allow Alexandria to preserve, share and interpret the history that the Yard area bears, while allowing for limited use of part of the Yard area and reducing the risk of activities that could disturb the neighboring landowners.

Mowing and Invasive Species Management

As the Advisory Group has noted, Fort Ward is complex, it is both a place to recreate, and the site of an important Civil War fort. It is also the location of graves, both marked and unmarked, that remind us of its varied past. Nothing demonstrates this level of complexity more than the issue of mowing. The earthen walls of the Fort are, for the most part, grass covered, and need to be mowed in a way that will preserve them into the future. In other parts of the Park, graves, both marked and unmarked, and possibly other historic artifacts of the African American community as well as Native American culture, deserve to be mowed in a way that respects and honors those who are buried there. Still other areas of the Park lie on slopes where mowing can affect storm water run-off and thereby affect rates of erosion.

Additionally, decisions about mowing can affect the spread of invasive species, such as weeds, including poison ivy, poison oak and sumac. An unintended consequence of not mowing areas on a regular basis is the increase in rodent, flea, tick, and mosquito populations. The mowing policy must establish a regularized schedule where the height of grass is determined by lawn use, slope, erosion patterns and rainfall. Mowing is currently jointly managed, OHA contracts for mowing within the reconstructed area of the Fort and RPCA mows areas outside the Fort (and portions inside). Currently, RPCA has a “no mow” policy in place where it believes erosion is significant. The Advisory Group believes that the issue of where to mow, where not to mow, and just how to mow, is one that should be resolved jointly by the city agencies involved and be done in a public way through a MOU, that properly meets the required needs of the Park.

Misunderstandings and a perceived lack of appropriate appreciation for the historic nature of the ground that comprises the Historic Fort have led to continuous challenges in

managing the turf at the Historic Fort. Planning and communication can resolve or alleviate this problem, leading to greater efficiency and preservation of the Historic Fort. The Advisory Group recommends that before April 2011: 1. the directors of RPCA, OHA, and their relevant staff members, convene a two-hour meeting²⁰ to openly and freely discuss the proper management and care of the turf in the Historic Fort – with the focus of the meeting to be the efficient management of the turf going forward, not past misunderstandings; 2. at that meeting, agree upon a series of steps for proper management of the turf inside the Historic Fort – including the use of outside contractors if their use is deemed necessary -- and assign responsibilities for agreed-upon actions to accountable members of each agency’s staff; 3. carry out those outlined actions during 2011; and 4. meet again at the conclusion of the 2011 mowing season, evaluate which actions worked and did not, and prepare an improved action plan for 2012.

Infrastructure

Staffing and Security: The Advisory Group is informed that RPCA is increasing its coordination with City police. This should be encouraged and continued. We also recommend that: 1. speeding crackdowns – especially in the early morning hours – continue; 2. RPCA consider installation of a gate arm that could block access to the Park’s ring road past the entry booth during the hours when the Park is closed (this would, we believe, deter use of the Park after operating hours).

On staffing at the Park, we note that RPCA has increased the weekend staffing at the Park. It appears to the Advisory Group that this has significantly improved both the recreational visitor experience and security, and should be continued. Given the historic nature of the Park, we would also recommend that RPCA provide training for all of its crews that staff the Park in both the history of the Park and Historic Fort, and in the general historic preservation concepts necessary to maintain historic parks. This would, we believe, result in at least two benefits: it would enable Park staff to enhance the visitor experience while promoting a greater understanding among the Park’s chief stewards of the value of the Park’s historic resources and the care needed to preserve those resources. We think the knowledge to conduct this training is already available in OHA.

In light of the City’s current fiscal restraints, we think RPCA should accept the requests made by many citizens commenting during the 2009 public hearings and utilize citizen volunteers to augment its staff at the Park. Some citizen comments called for a “volunteer corps” for the Park. We think that RPCA’s “Adopt-a-Park” initiative may be tailor-made for this effort. That initiative allows “permanently established community or public organizations,

²⁰ Our recommendation of a two-hour meeting is not intended to be an act of micromanagement on the part of a citizen advisory group. Our intent is only to suggest to the two lead agencies that the problem of mowing inside the Historic Fort is a fairly compact one that is capable of being solved with a reasonable amount of discussion and planning among the knowledgeable professionals involved, and that the investment of a modest amount of time into advance planning will avoid the consumption of more time in the absence of such a plan. Of course, if the lead agencies see the scope of the problem differently, they are free to take as much or as little time as needed to craft a solution.

businesses, or government entities within the City of Alexandria” to provide certain limited services to City parks. We think that among the various stakeholder groups that have participated in the public process surrounding the future of the Park, one group (or a coalition of groups) can be located that can fulfill this role. To strengthen pride and ownership of Park grounds, plan for opportunities for the public to volunteer and help take care of Park tree planting, taking care of flower bed, pick up litter, pull invasive plants, and plant butterfly gardens.

The City should also consider forming an education outreach committee of City officials from the OHA, RPCA, as well as educators and interested citizens to work to offer Fort Ward as an instructional tool relating to Civil War history as well as African American History post Civil War, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights movement. The city could build on Fort Ward’s current school outreach program, “Life During the Civil War.”

Storage and Buildings for Park Operations: The Advisory Group encourages the lead agencies managing the Park to: 1. assess all of the usable space in the Park included in the maintenance building north of the Museum and at the amphitheater; 2. assess whether that space is being used in the most appropriate manner, giving due regard to the need for the Museum to have adequate and nearby storage space, as well as the need for space to conduct Park operations; 3. in light of (2), make any needed changes to the use of these spaces

Parking: The Advisory Group encourages the lead agencies managing the Park to: 1. consider whether current parking spaces inside the Park can be expanded or whether additional parking areas can be added, giving due concern to the need for parking light of the possible changes to the number of large events being held in the Park; 2. consider whether the current and any future parking lots can be constructed using materials to minimize water erosion in other areas of the Park; 3. devise a manner to permit tour buses to safely reach the Fort Ward Museum.

Comment [DC65]: Recommendation regarding parking should be part of planning process.

The Roadway Loop. The road surface is starting to deteriorate and needs replacement in several areas. Several citizens recommend a curb to keep cars off the grass. We disagree, as the curbs will only serve to increase the amount of imperviousness of the road surface. Park Rangers need to continue to ensure that Park patrons do not park inappropriately.

Sign-in booth. The entry booth on the Park ring road should be redesigned and reconstructed to fit with the Civil War-era Museum and nearby maintenance building.

Access Gate to Playing Field. Consideration should be given to restoring the gate between the Ft. Ward athletic field and the passive area of the parks. This would ease access to the public restrooms and allow visitors to move more easily between the passive and active sections of the park.

The Playground. To make it ADA compliant, the city should consider moving the playground to an area that is accessible to people with disabilities. Its present location is also in

the direct path of run-off and removal and replacement with a more natural surface will decrease run-off leaving the park.

Nature Walk. We recommend that a nature walk be created around the periphery of the Park. This walk way should be constructed of a semi-impervious material. Signage and rest areas (benches) should indicate important historic and natural features of the Park. The stops on this walk should include: (a) Oakland Baptist Cemetery; (b) the monument to the City's first arborist; (c) the bridge; (d) native species of bushes, trees and flowers; (e) areas containing potential unmarked gravesites; (f) home sites; (g) presently unmarked Fort Ward Civil War ramparts; and, (h) areas of known Native American habitation.

The Dog Park. Signage for the current dog park is poor. Serious consideration should be given to removing the dog park, but continue to allow well behaved dogs in the park when they are on leash. If the dog park is to be retained, it needs to be identified with signage in the Park, the dimensions of the dog park need to be well defined and the dimensions of the current dog park reduced to move it farther away from the historic rifle battery. Signage alerting parents and children to the location should be made prominent because the area is not fenced and children play in the vicinity. We strongly oppose any fencing of this area and would prefer the area be returned to the Park as a site for passive recreation.

Comment [DC66]: Should be part of the planning process.

Comment [DC67]: Is a dog park appropriate for a historical park?

November 1, 2010

Appendix I.

RESOLUTION NO. 2349

**Resolution Establishing an Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park
And Museum Area Stakeholders Advisory Group**

WHEREAS, City Council wishes to establish an ad hoc stakeholder advisory group to advise City staff on Fort Ward Park and Museum Area use and management; and

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area are valuable City resources for use and enjoyment by residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area includes significant historic, environmental park, and recreational resources; and

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area is adjacent to a residential neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the appropriate balance of uses needs to be reviewed and determined; and

WHEREAS, a diverse group of City residents with a wide variety of interests can assist in recommending this appropriate balance.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY
COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

1. That there is hereby established an *ad hoc* stakeholder advisory group known as the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.
2. That the Advisory Group shall consist of ten members, as follows: 3 members recommended by the Park and Recreation Commission, 3 members recommended by the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, 1 member recommended by the Environmental Policy Commission, 2 citizens at large, and 1 citizen living within a one-mile radius of Fort Ward Park.
3. That the City Manager shall appoint the ten members of the Advisory Group for a limited duration.
4. That the Chairpersons of the Park and Recreation, Historic Alexandria Resource and Environmental Policy Commissions shall recommend to the City Manager its members for the Advisory Group.
5. That, in making their appointments, the City Manager and Commission chairs shall endeavor to ensure that in aggregate, Advisory Group members provide:
 - a. A commitment to a balanced, multi-use park and historic site in the City; and
 - b. Are representative of the diversity of interests and uses of the park and museum site.
6. That the functions of the Advisory Group shall be:
 - a. Advise staff with a goal of finding an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archeological interests.
 - b. Provide staff with recommendations on balancing park uses, implementing education and outreach opportunities and reviewing the success of recently implemented changes.
 - c. Advise staff on Fort Ward issues and opportunities related to the interim park/historic area use, management of Fort Ward and long term goals to be refined through a city-wide park master planning process.

November 1, 2010

7. That staff assistance to the Advisory Group shall be managed jointly by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and the Office of Historic Alexandria, with support as needed from the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Services, Planning and Zoning and General Services, and the City Manager's Office.

8. That the Advisory Group shall meet on an ad hoc basis and will be formed for a limited duration of no more than one-year unless otherwise extended by City Council.

ADOPTED: June 23, 2009


WILLIAM D. EULLE MAYOR

ATTEST:


Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC City Clerk

Appendix II

Fort Ward Park Priorities and Issues Identified by Community

HISTORIC/CULTURAL USES	PARK OPERATIONS	ACTIVE RECREATIONAL USES	PASSIVE/CASUAL USES	ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES	OTHER
1. African American History a) signage of African American community members b) Recognition of community groups and artists c) Exhibit for museum d) African American History - Impact and Research	1. Maintenance Facility a) Above maintenance yard, but do not require sign b) Repair, clean up and upkeep, ADA/ADA screening and buffer c) 3 easements located inside yard, overlies w/ yard, does facility need to be moved? d) Programming for Nursery - Now and when its gone e) Nursery used as staging then for growing	1. Picnics a) Noise, trees problems with picnic, parties, etc. b) Focus on picnic area (ABC permits) c) Overcrowding, control, reduce picnic, reservations, group size no large groups. d) Limit picnic picnic in areas adjacent to residents e) Noise abatement w/ adequate staffing on weekends f) Picnic area, which picnic tables to assess and add to to areas to be upgraded g) Increase recreation fees	1. Pedestrian Uses a) Restroom walking/drinking paths b) Walking Park is a plus c) Pedestrian vehicles are shared - safety concerns. Have a pedestrian only 'loop' d) Identify walking and driving road e) Sidewalks	1. Arboretum a) Reestablish arboretum at Fort Ward as part of Master plan for Arboretum - include education and plant collections 2. Trees and Landscaping a) Replant trees lost to erosion b) Trees/arboretum are non-existent c) Assess soils, test soil d) Tree work, maintain existing shade, plants e) Document trees/arboretum	1. Park Planning a) Develop Mission Statement b) Engage (Working Group/Committee, D, etc) on long term park, managed growth/landscaping c) Pedestrian facilities plan until master plan complete d) Rebalance use, ID how Park is used/until over utilized areas, prioritize use - passive/recreation e) Communications w/ Public, Open Comm, w/ sign
2. Identification of Historic Areas a) Open history, Research on old buildings b) Identify w/ signage, viable and clear c) Identify w/ signage through research, GPS	2. Rehabilitate Restrooms a) Security for Park b) Closing Gates/Gates c) Police 4. Communication/Outlets a) What do you see? What is the process for conducting authorities? b) Staff not on duty to help with concerns/needs 5. Cemeteries/Gravesites a) Damage to grave sites b) Better maintenance of Cemetery c) Vegetative Screening	2. Increase recreation fees 3. Requirements for maintenance - Advanced residents/residents 4. No additional parking 5. Special Events a) Large events, such as Jazz Festival not allowed, no permit impact, unrelated to history 6. Facilities a) No additional pavilions b) Lighting - lights are on and park is empty c) Rehab/Upgrade Amphitheatre d) Electrical Outlets for Special Events (concessions) 5. Management a) Determine max. limit to balance use and historic resources	2. Parking availability for casual use 3. Other a) More Historical emphasis b) More passive use 4. Damage along east property line throughout park a) No more parking, expensive vehicles c) Utilize stormwater as irrigation around loop	3. Misc. a) Drop User/Comm. Rates/Volunt. Parking (and pending for St. D, St. A. b) Pay Phone on Westside c) Park is a regional attraction and community asset d) Utility survey needed	2. Volunteer ideas a) Users take home their own trash - "Leave no trace" b) Coordinate volunteer corp. for park c) Community Service Plan d) Adopt a Garden to beautify e) Users donate time
3. Market/Promote "Park Story" History a) Recognize historic significance of site, establish events within park. b) Tour: African American Community, Civil War c) Brainstorm presentations for 150th Anniversary of the Civil War d) Appoint a committee to begin developing interpretive plan for 150th Civil War Anniversary e) History walk to be more accessible f) Interpretive program g. Interpretive Trail - of cultural, natural, African American resources 5. Resource Management a) Preserve history in museum, concerns about flooding in basement. b) Message to respect park and its resource (Picnic users) c) Park visitors and cultural resources are not parks themselves d) Mission Statement to tell the Park's historical significance e) Go back to the original concept of park/historic with Azalea beds, passive users.	6. Park Amenities a) Site amenities/furnishings should be appropriate for a historic area b) No Loud signage, etc. 7. Other Maintenance/Operations a) Leaf blower noise - why are leaves picked up? b) Incorporate green practices in maintenance c) City vehicles take up visitor parking spaces d) Do not increase parking				

Dated 3/18/09

= # of responses from priority exercise

Fort Ward Park Priorities and Issues Identified by Community via Emails and Letters January-March 2009

HISTORIC/CULTURAL USES	#	PARK OPERATIONS	#	ACTIVE RECREATIONAL USES	#	PASSIVE/CASUAL USES	#	ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES	#	OTHER	#
1. African American History: a) Signage of historical African American community, historic markers b) Protection and restoration of community graves and artifacts c) Exhibit for museum d) African American History - liquid and research	16	1. Maintenance Facility Move maintenance yard 2. Move horticultural area 3. Regular cleaning and upkeep - Add low wall 4. Restore maintenance area to sod 5. Improvements are evident - satisfied	3	4. Picnics New and school signage needed with low of amplified sound. 3. Better management and oversight of reservation and permit system 4. Alcohol prohibited on alcohol/ABC permits 2. Overcrowding and overuse - control, reduce 3. Signage for parking areas 2. Now a walkway w/ adaptive enforcement on 1. Cheaper rental policies and increase reservation fees 1. Need for larger picnic site with moveable tables 2. Dog Park Remove signage with utility for users with dogs 1. Move dog park Add area for "small dogs" 1. Dog park needs to be enclosed 3. Parking/Utilities a) Picnic tables continue to provide on street parking for special events d) No additional parking 4. Special Events a) This site is good for large events and regularly used by the community. Add open areas b) Improve the amphitheater and picnic tables a) Large events have negative impact and should be moved or reduced 5. Facilities a) No additional pavilions b) Regular seating facilities, including restrooms c) Rehab/Upgrade Amphitheater 6. Soccer Field Keep US Soccer Field Turn lights off when not in use	6	1. Park Planning Work with the community to develop a mission statement and park plan. Remove October 2008 Facilities Presentation from website. Create Advisory Group/Committee: to report long term goals, management, growth, landscaping, program improvements and spending unit master plan. 1. Balance use, compatible uses important 2. Write Commitment from Staff, MOU with community 3. Park planning should be funded by City Council and have a transparent public process 2. Volunteer Ideas a) Participate in partnerships and grants needed b) Coordinate volunteer/neighborhood expo for park clean up 3. Misc. a) Overall improvement needed Signage in Spanish Get land from Episcopal High School	2	1. Abolition Re-establish boardwalk at Fort Ward as part of master plan Add more trees 2. Trees and Landscaping Replant trees lost to arson Inventory all trees 3. Drainage a) Drainage along east property line throughout park Erosion control throughout park is needed	2	1. Park Planning Work with the community to develop a mission statement and park plan. Remove October 2008 Facilities Presentation from website. Create Advisory Group/Committee: to report long term goals, management, growth, landscaping, program improvements and spending unit master plan. 1. Balance use, compatible uses important 2. Write Commitment from Staff, MOU with community 3. Park planning should be funded by City Council and have a transparent public process 2. Volunteer Ideas a) Participate in partnerships and grants needed b) Coordinate volunteer/neighborhood expo for park clean up 3. Misc. a) Overall improvement needed Signage in Spanish Get land from Episcopal High School	

Appendix III

The Washington Post

March 15, 2009

MARC FISHER

A Tale of Two Communities, And of How the Tale Gets Told

With its rolling lawns and secluded glens, Fort Ward looks like a lovely place to take a walk. Turns out, it's far more than a park in Alexandria — it's one history sacrificed to make way for another, a Civil War military installation that has become a contemporary battleground over whose story gets told.

Officially, Fort Ward is, as the city of Alexandria puts it, "the best preserved of the system of Union forts and batteries built to protect Washington, D.C., during the American Civil War." That's fascinating enough: a Union fort in Confederate Virginia.

But Fort Ward is also Adrienne

Washington's ancestral home. Her great-grandmother lies buried there, the headstone standing crooked and forlorn in the middle of a scruffy city maintenance yard along one edge of the park — a painful symbol of a community of black families that was forced off the hillside in the early 1960s when the city bought the land to stop a housing development.

Fort Ward is also Tom Fulton's back yard, literally. Fulton, a retired Interior Department deputy assistant secretary who has delved into the history that lies behind his house, and his next-door neighbor, a National Park Service retiree named Glenn Eugster, are part of a group of residents trying to do what the city



COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

An undated photo of Clara Adams, looking to the left, at Fort Ward in Alexandria. Her great-granddaughter is helping lead the fight to recognize the area's black history.

never did — learn about those who lost out when Alexandria took these 44 acres across Braddock Road from Episcopal High School, reconstructed the old fort and made a park out of someone else's

neighborhood.

Now the city of Alexandria is trying to figure out Fort Ward's future: Should the

See FISHER, Page C5

Two Histories in Need of a Combined Voice

FISHER, *From C1*

park be used more intensively — already, it's a site for big corporate picnics — or protected as a site for reflection? And which story should the park and its museum tell — that of the Civil War fort, or the black community that called this home?

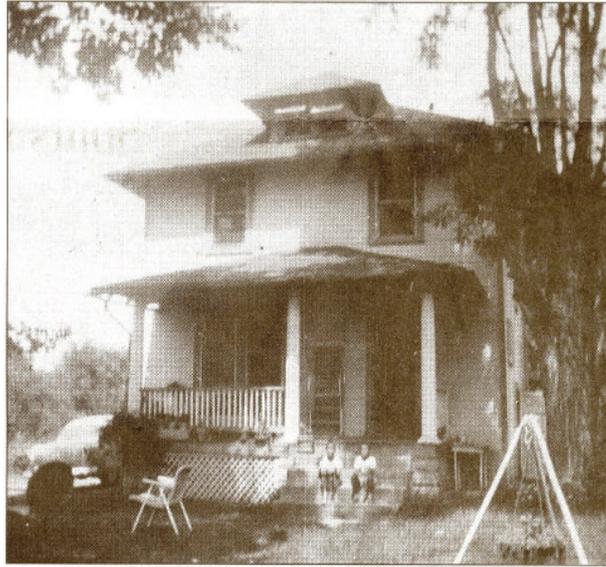
The debate has brought together two sets of residents who previously barely knew each other existed: The immediate neighbors, who want to curb the loud parties that have been held in the park since alcoholic drinks were allowed in its picnic groves, and the families who want to recover their relatives' buried stories of life "on the fort." The two groups have united in support of a park that tells a different history — quietly.

"It's just a shame when you have to go through two locked gates to see one of the graves of your ancestors," then find them surrounded by trucks, tools and piles of mulch, says Washington, a columnist at the Washington Times who is researching the history of the Fort Ward settlement where her family lived through much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

For a long time, the city operated a trash transfer station right where Washington's great-grandmother, Clara Adams (1865-1952), was laid to rest. Her headstone — and, historians say, the unmarked grave of her husband — now sit smack in the center of the maintenance yard, an offense to history that the city could solve easily, Washington says.

Neighbors who want the park to tell the full story of Alexandria's past have been gearing up for a fight. "Our park services have always had a discomfort with the tension between African American history and Civil War history," Eugster says. "But what started for us as a literally not-in-my-backyard battle because the city had put dumpsters behind our houses led us to explore what really is one story of both the Civil War and the black community that was here afterwards."

During the Civil War, you could stand atop Fort Ward and see Confederate soldiers at Baileys Crossroads three miles away, and those black flecks in your spyglass certainly looked like cannon (though you'd later learn that they were really tree trunks painted black to fool Union spies into thinking that the enemy was armed and dangerous).



COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

An undated photo shows a house at Fort Ward in Alexandria, one of the many demolished when the city bought the land in the 1960s.

After the war, freed slaves settled on abandoned land around the fort. Those workers who built and maintained the Virginia Theological Seminary (of Seminary Road fame) are the people whose graves are now believed to be scattered throughout Fort Ward Park. Just last week, says Lance Mallamo, director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, city historians used old maps to discover an area where still-visible depressions in the ground indicate some of the old residents are buried.

Thanks to pressure from people such as Eugster, Fulton and Washington, the city says it is looking at Fort Ward much as the neighbors do. After a community meeting Wednesday, the city will move to stop the issuing of alcohol permits, reduce the size of picnic groups and number of picnic areas, and look for ways to tell the black community's

history, says Kirk Kincannon, Alexandria's recreation and parks director.

The broken headstones are a reminder that the city rebuilt Fort Ward when "there was probably not much thought about more contemporary history," Mallamo says. But since the '60s, "the history of ordinary people has become as important as the history of the heroic."

No one expects to find the money anytime soon to conduct the archaeological digs needed to flesh out Fort Ward's full story. But it should be possible to protect the graves and the row of cedar trees that once led to the long-gone houses, and to use the park's tours and museum to tell a history of the fort that you can still see and the community that you can't.

E-mail: marcfisher@washpost.com

Page 4: [1] Comment [DC3] Dave 11/11/2010 8:12:00 PM

A Resource Management Plan is undefined. There is no one accepted definition. However, typically a RMP provides land use planning and management direction guiding future actions and uses in the park. It identifies the current condition, problems and opportunities and provides integrated guidance for multiple, compatible uses of the park land including maintenance. Recreation is a compatible use and the RMP should provide general guidance on overall maintenance and operation to ensure protection of the natural, historic and cultural resources. Discussion of a RMP could be in a separate section of the report.

Page 4: [2] Comment [DC5] Dave 11/11/2010 4:46:00 PM

Possibly a separate item. The interpretation of Civil War History in the park should acknowledge and incorporate the struggle and contribution of African Americans before, during and after the Civil War. This is a park issue as well as a museum issue.

Page 4: [3] Comment [DC9] Dave 11/11/2010 5:12:00 PM

Management and use of the area as a maintenance and storage yard was inappropriate (did not follow requirements for a special use permit) and is incompatible to the use of a urban, historic park. The area of the maintenance yard should be cleaned-up, restored and returned for park use.

Page 4: [4] Comment [DC10] Dave 11/11/2010 5:09:00 PM

I suggest you call into question maintenance practices at the park. These would include, compaction of soil, adding gravel for parking and storage of equipment in the maintenance yard, and inadequate justification for "no mow."