

SEMINARY HILL ASSOCIATION, INC.

**2115 Marlboro Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304
April 23, 2010**

Mr. Thomas Fulton, Chairman
Alexandria Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group
C/O Ms. Laura Durham, Advisory Group Staff Coordinator
Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Management at Fort Ward Park

Dear Tom,

Fort Ward Park exists today because of the efforts of Seminary Hill residents. Over 40 years ago, on April 1, 1954, the President of Seminary Hill Association (SHA) spoke to the Alexandria Planning Commission about the need to save the area as an important historical park to be used for education and enjoyment. In 2007, SHA encouraged the Alexandria City staff and the City Council to address health, crime, and quality of life issues related to Fort Ward Park and its surrounding communities. SHA appreciates the many improvements the City has made and supports continuing efforts to find solutions to ongoing problems. In addition, *the SHA Board of Directors asks that one of its members become an official member of the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.*

SHA appreciates the improvements since 2008 in crowd control and park uses:

- An increase in the number of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities staff in the park on the weekends to help manage park use and noise.
- The City's improved process and better oversight on picnic area reservations and parking.
- The City's relocation of undesirable uses, in particular the maintenance yard and nursery.

SHA remains concerned about the lack of a vision for Fort Ward Park and the failure to include citizens in the Advisory Group process:

- A mission and vision statement for Fort Ward Park has yet to be discussed with the community despite the Director of the Recreation Department supporting one on

March 18, 2009. The City should follow through on its stated plans to update the Fort Ward Park master plan prepared in 1962 and 1978. Seminary Hill residents still lament the loss of some of the azalea bushes (by the entrance), the neglect of the remaining azaleas, and the loss of trees.

- Interested citizens continue to lack a process to be included in plans for the Park; for example, a foot path parallel to the circular park-drive, a bus lane, and the relocation of the playground and dog park.
- The public has no time to comment at Advisory Group meetings because the agenda is all reports from staff.
- The City has held numerous public sessions and recorded comments and recommendations since 2009, but none of this information has been included in the matrix of priorities and concerns developed by the City's groups: Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Office of Historic Alexandria, Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, and Fort Ward History Workgroup.
- Announcements of scheduled Advisory Group meetings have not reached some Seminary Hill residents. At a minimum a sign could be posted at the park entrance on West Braddock Road a few days before to alert interested residents.
- Storm water continues to cause damage to parkland, residential properties in Marlboro Estates, and the graves and grave stones in the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery.

In 1954, SHA President Wiecking appointed a standing Fort Ward Committee and told the Planning Commission that "The Association will stay with you and the City on Fort Ward, and see it through. The Association will do all it can to help make and keep Fort Ward Historical Park a benefit and credit to the City,...". Then and now SHA members stand ready to help the City protect, manage, and enjoy this special historical park.

Cordially,

/s/

Mrs. Nancy Jennings, President
Seminary Hill Association, Inc.