

From: [INSPIRED GARDEN DESIGN](#)
To: [Ana Vicinanzo](#)
Cc: [Steven Cohen](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Comments on the new proposed language for POS.
Date: Monday, April 17, 2023 7:38:02 AM

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Ana,

I believe the new language is consistent with the typical uses of parks and open spaces and therefore should be used to create better synergies, efficiency and clarity for the citizens and city workers in general.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mónica Murphy

Alexandria Beautification Commission Member

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From: burnskathy1036
To: [Judy Lo](#)
Cc: [Ana Vicinanza](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]submission of Cover Letter and Attachments for public record for Open Space March 20, 2023
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 6:38:00 PM
Importance: High

Dear Ms. Lo and Ms. Vincinanza,
I would like to submit this cover letter and attachments as submissions for the Public Record for the hearing on Open Space on March 20, 2023, and its future directions. [we may have to send attachments separately because of computer problem

In your press release, I did not see the attachment for the "Zone Text amendment" for "expanding the City's ability to implement community based recommendations," as has happened for the past 10 years.

Also, I did not see any attached AGENDA which is usually part of a formal meeting. If there is one available, I would appreciate getting an email copy.

Unfortunately, the City has often ignored information submitted in the past on protecting Open Space that already is in the Public Domain when crafting various policies, and this is especially true with the lack of serious attention given in the last 10 years regarding the 5325 Polk Open Space Park. The Federal government contributed \$1 million, as required by law to compensate for DOD taking several acres from the Winkler Preserve in order for the construction of the BRAC Building. The Alexandria Open Space Fund also contributed \$400,000 to this purchase. On Dec. 4, 2012, the Planning Commission and then the City Council voted to designate this unique natural forest area in the midst of a dense urban area. In the last 10 years, there has been minimal maintenance or protection of the structural integrity of this space.

When the City held hearings on July 25, 2022, before the Traffic Board, not a single Board member spoke in defense of this eco-fragile site or voted to protect its vulnerable environmental structure. A large sign notes that the site is in the midst of a "Watershed Protection Zone. And they turned a deaf ear to any of the testimony opposing putting a cement sidewalk which would seriously upend the Open Space structure. With no support to their environmental responsibilities to the community, they voted 7-0, to support

The City's elected and appointed officials and some City staff similarly turned a deaf ear to the standing environmental protections accorded to 5325 Polk Open Space Park. They turned a deaf ear to the 155 Alexandria residents who signed an Appeals Petition, opposing potentially destructive structural changes within the borders of 5325 Polk. The petition was submitted to the City Clerk who presented it to the City Council and the hearing was held on Sept. 25.

Of the 18 appointed to the City's Opening Space Advisory Committee, only one member can see the actual site of 5325 Polk Park---and kudos to Martha Harris. We made calls to the Committee chair, Kurt Moser to discuss the site and to visit it firsthand. When I met him at an Agenda Alexandria meeting on Open Space, I again reiterated our request to visit this site and to talk with concerned neighbors.

No member of this citizen advisory committee ever spoke on behalf of Open Space preservation at either hearing.

Since 2000, four West End Civic Associations battled with a variety of developers and real estate speculators to turn this land into residential units (apartments, condos, townhouses). This site has a 47% slope, so the developers proposed that they could remove 100 mature trees and level the slope. This ignored the fact that several neutral land use experts noted it would lead to serious “waterfall flooding” for surrounding neighbors. In one amazing hear, an Alexandria City engineer was asked by a Planning Commission member about the threats of flooding. He replied that threat of flooding was ‘minimal’ and if it did occur in nearby basements, “it would only be ankle deep.”

It was very concerning last year was one City official said there were recurring “rumors” that some developers would like to remove the site protection s for 5325 Polk-----which had been granted “in perpetuity”—
and revive the push for developers to turn a one-of-a-kind site into just another revenue-generating project.

As chair of the Brookville-Seminary Valley Open Space Committee, we have found that over the past 10 years, some City officials, both elected and appointed, as well as various staff, paid no attention to the 5325 site in a serious way. Members of our Committee include Alexandria residents: Shirley Downs, Dick Burris, Carol James, Michael Moss and BJ Sullivan. We are happy to meet with Ms. Lo for a more comprehensive discussion on Open Space for the City in general, and for the Open Space 5325 Polk Park.

I am working off site, without the benefit of a printer or my files. When I return to Alexandria, I will send further background information for this Hearing record.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Burns
1036 N. Pelham St., Alexandria, VA 22304

From: Kathleen Burns <burnskathy1036@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 10:15 PM
To: 'Judy Lo' <Judy.Lo@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: 'Ana Vicinanza' <ana.vicinanzo@alexandriava.gov>; 'Jack Browand' <Jack.Browand@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL]follow up to your Open Space meeting
Importance: High

Dear Ms. Lo,
Some of your information regarding the 5325 Polk Open Space Preserve is not correct. You also may not be familiar with the history of very fragile area and the reasons why both the Planning Commission and the City Council decided to make this Open Space, with a mandate to ‘protect and preserve’ this space. The site had previously been owned by Dwight

Dunton, who also owned the adjacent apartment complex of Jamestown Village, with about 325 units. He initially sold the apartment complex to become condominiums, and it was renamed Parkside.

As the City's official press release of Jan. 4, 2013 notes, the site was purchased with federal funds specifically designated to replace the several acres taken by the Department of Defense from the Winkler Preserve. This area was also supposedly deeded as protected open space, 'in perpetuity' and that didn't happen.

It took 13 years of many very contentious battles with the city to preserve this site. There were astounding plans, supported by the Planning staff, for constructing townhouses and condos, in spite of the documented fact that there was pervasive clay soil throughout; underground riverlets; and a slope of up to 50%. They called for the removal of up to 160 trees, which anchored the soil, and, if removed, would have led to severe erosion and waterfall flooding.

At one of the public hearings, a city engineer noted that the flooding would be 'minimal' and probably only ankle deep in basements of surrounding homes.

After 10 years of being a "protected" space, 5325 Polk Open Space Preserve is again under threat ---from TES and VDOT. (How VDOT got into the business of school sidewalks is still a puzzle since they have neglected needed maintenance all along Van Dorn street, which is under their jurisdiction.?)

This is a TES driven myth that the City can build an unwanted and unnecessary sidewalk adjacent to the Preserve with no damage.

There has been no public hearings or public input from the neighbors----which is now the TES role model. By the time a project comes before the City Council, everything is a "done deal" and they simply rubber stamp the recommendations from City staff. It used to be that public hearings were held to air the Pros and Cons of most land use debates. There was time to review and revise. That is disappearing.

The best example of that is the debacle on the Seminary Road expansion, where 13,000 residents signed a petition to oppose this, and they were totally ignored. After a 4-3 City Council vote, TES steamrollered ahead the next day. Even though the Holmes Run Park trails had been at the top of the list for required maintenance for years, Seminary overnight became the the top priority.

At the March , 2022, hearing by the West End Coalition of 22 civic associations, we learned that essential safety maintenance for that trail has again been postponed, yet again, to between 2024 or 2026. A major part of that allocated money originally for Holmes Run was shifted to the Seminary Road experiment, to benefit bicyclists. It did achieve one goal----to minimize traffic---by cutting down four moving lanes, to two, and creating all kinds of new problems at the Seminary/Quaker exchange.

To return to the TES/VDOT plans to ram through a sidewalk, this plan is being driven by 6-year-old data.

There is no solid figure for how many children would actually use this sidewalk, given that Polk School is only up to 6th grade. So those students are gone. Current ones are much safer taking the free city-provided school bus that picks them up at the Parkside parking lot, and drops them off at the school door. They do not have to cross ANY streets.

There is no demand by the City to insist on sidewalks on both sides of the street on Polk Avenue from Pegram up to the school. Or for Pegram from Pickett to Polk. Yet there are many more students walking along that area from Hammond to Polk and beyond.

Why the double standard for Polk and Pegram? Obviously, the City seems no pressing need

for Pegram nor for the Polk segment directly across from Polk School. There is a need for a 'reality check' before TES comes out with a one-sided "feasibility study." The staff cannot claim they are seeking diverse "citizen and neighborhood input" when they ignored the information provided. That wou

We have been told that this "demand" for the sidewalk was triggered by ONE individual. My suspicion is the insistence is driven by adults from Parkside, a private, gated community, who walk down this path to reach their cars parked along our streets. This is in spite of the fact that Parkside has extensive parking lot space. However, residents were required to buy a permit for a small fee. Parkside residents passed out a flyer (which we saw) telling their fellow residents to park for free in our area.

Keep in mind that this Parkside (then Jamestown Village) path went up in the middle of the night, with no "due diligence" by the City regarding safety regulations. It does not meet ADA standards. The complex should ban the use of bicycles by young, unaccompanied children who shoot down this speedway, and run into two heavily trafficked streets.

In my request to you, following your March 3 meeting, I would still like to receive the requested information as a follow-up from that meeting:

-a contact sheet for the appointed Open Space Advisory members by the City Council, since this is a public board/commission. This information is a matter of public record, not secret documents. Too often, the city claims it has sought "public input" but there is minimal publicity for such sessions. I was the only member of the public who was able to attend. I hope my comments were recorded and will be part of the minutes. I would also like the documents put on the screen by your guest speaker (since I was not able to access those, with your limited technology.)

---I was glad to hear you and Ms. Vincinanzo have visited this site. I would urge the others who represent us, the residents, on this advisory board, to also come take a look, and notify us ahead of time, so you would have knowledge of the significance of this site.

---Please do send the above attachments to these members of the Open Space Steering Committee so they have better background in making their decisions. Of particular note is the document of Jan. 4, 2013, officially creating this site. That comes with the duty to 'protect and preserve' Open Space. Another is a detailed history of that area, provided by Tony Fleming, a noted geologist and historian from Alexandria, and a neutral observer.

---Was your committee involved at all at the loss of Open Space adjacent to the Seminary Road Fire Department? I remember a few years back when the city spent thousands of dollars to purchase that property. And then with minimal debate or discussion, the city sold it to the developer for \$10. No, that is not a typo. The reason it was made Open Space is because like other Open Space sites (including 5325 Polk) was that it was 'not conducive' to construction. It had the same clay soil, the underground waterways, and steep slopes.

----From the March 3 meeting, please send the specific link sites (as I requested) of the 2013 Criteria for Open Space acquisition. There was no way to "save" information from the screen since I had no access to the Chat function. I would also like the other documentation presented on the screen, including name and contact info for the young man who provide the outside assessments. I do not want to spend hours searching your website to try and find the few items specifically tied to the March 3 meeting.

----I was very surprised when Ms. Lo mentioned the only input on the 5325 Open Space Preserve and the staff request for a sidewalk was based on the so-called "Safe Schools" info from 2016 VDOT, and offered no other view points. We like our boards and commissions to have a more neutral stance on what they are assessing.

Four West End civic associations supported the creation of the 5325 Polk Open Space

Preserve and the 13 year fight against the city's faulty plans. The Seminary Hill Association (SHA) the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association (BSVCA) remain deeply committed to seeing the City enforce the pledge made in December 2012 to "protect and preserve" that fragile public space.

We citizens are still very involved in that fight, though we appear to be somewhat invisible to TES.

On Nov.17, 2021, the BSVCA Board authorized a detailed letter to TES officials regarding the lack of public transparent involvement of local residents on the future of 5325 Polk and the destructive impact of a proposed, none-essential sidewalk. We are still waiting for a response.

On Jan. 29, the SHA Board also sent a detailed letter to TES officials. And there has been no response from the city or acknowledgement.

This does not reflect well on a transparent approach to this staff-driven process. Before the City issues its long-awaited "feasibility study," TES needs to actually speak to the representatives of these two boards and answer the questions posed.

Staff are not supposed to be making decisions, without full and fair and diverse public input.

It has been greatly encouraging to hear the new City Manager Jim Papajon welcoming involvement and comments from the Alexandria civic associations. On both Feb. 10 and on March 5, he held Zoom calls with several civic groups. At both sessions, he devoted 90 minutes to questions from the audience.

What a great start to his new job! And he promised to convey this new sense of openness and interest in the ideas and opinions of the residents, and to spread that message to his large staff.

Sincerely,

Kathy Burns, chair, Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Associations (BSVCA) 5325 Polk Open Space Preserve

1036 N. Pelham St., Alexandria, VA 22304

burnskathy1036 Desk Phone: 703-824-1799 Cell: 703-624-2097

From: Judy Lo <Judy.Lo@alexandriava.gov>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 7:38 PM

To: burnskathy1036

Cc: Ana Vicinanza <ana.vicinanzo@alexandriava.gov>; Jack Browand <Jack.Browand@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]follow up to your Open Space meeting

Hi Kathy,

We are sorry about the technical difficulties last night and appreciate your patience. All of the Open Space Steering Committee information is available here, including meeting agendas, presentations and minutes: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/parks/project/open-space-planning>

A few points Ana and I would like to have made last night

- 5325 Polk Avenue was acquired with open space funds and BRAC funds. We presented the park at the January 18, 2022 Open Space Steering Committee meeting actually, as an example of land purchased with open space funds. We have both visited the park, and agree with you about the need for signage, improving accessibility, and safety from a Crime Prevention

through Environmental Design perspective. We are available to meet with you at the park and discuss the park.

- The park being purchased with open space funds is a City commitment that the open space will be protected.
- RPCA and TES are working closely to coordinate a design for a potential sidewalk. We have iterated the sidewalk should be located outside of the park property line so that it does not intrude into the park.
- There will be a community process once TES has developed plans for the sidewalk.
- If the sidewalk project does move forward, RPCA sees it as an opportunity to improve the park entrance, and make it accessible and welcoming. There are approved capital funds to improve the park trails.
-
- We will check the brochure for the park listing, the brochure does not list all of the parks, just major parks, as there are over 100. The website and Park link: <https://geo.alexandriava.gov/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=parksviwer> have the comprehensive list.

Again, thanks for your comments last night, and for staying through the whole meeting.

Sincerely,

Judy Lo, RLA, ASLA
Acting Principal Planner
Division of Park Planning, Capital Development & Waterfront

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