

City of Alexandria, Virginia

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, May 15, 2014, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Charles Houston Center**  
**901 Wythe Street**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22314**

**Summary Minutes**

**P&RC Members Present:**

Jennifer Atkins, Co-Chair, Judith Coleman, Co-Chair; Gina Baum; Stephen Beggs; Rich Brune, Secretary; William Cromley; Brian McPherson, Catherine Poulin.

**Excused Absence:** Ripley Forbes, Alexis Browand, and Emma Schutzius.

**RPCA Staff Present:** James Spengler, Director; William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Oscar Mendoza, Division Chief, Park Operations; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects; Laura Durham, Principal Planner, Open Space Coordinator; Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Manager, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

**Guests:** Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Current Planning, Planning and Zoning; Jeanne Gardner, Carolyn Griglione, David Levy, Holmes Run Park Committee, Bill Rivers, Alexandria Advocates for Aquatics.

- I. Call to Order by Judith Coleman and Jennifer Akins, Co-Chairs.**  
The Commission welcomed new member Catherine Poulin, Planning District I.

**Items for Action:**

- II. Approval of Summary Minutes: March 20, 2014, April 17, 2014:**  
**Motion:** Baum moved to approve the minutes of March 20, 2014, Brune seconded. All were in favor.  
**Motion:** Atkins moved to approve the minutes of April 17, 2014, Brune seconded. All were in favor.  
The motions passed unanimously.

**Items for Information and discussion:**

- A. Cameron Park Development Special Use Permit Approval (DSUP #2013-0003):** See Staff Report - site map. The Commission was briefed by Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z) who provided background on the Cameron Park DSUP #2013-0003. The property is a 457 unit mixed use development project at Cameron Station Blvd. and S. Pickett Street near Armistead Boothe Park. Moritz said at issue is Condition #14 which was modified on May 6, 2014 by P&Z for the Planning Commission meeting that same night without notice to RPCA. As modified by P&Z and approved by the Planning Commission, Condition 14 provided \$100,000 in developer contributions for "neighborhood public space enhancements" to be determined through meetings held by P&Z with neighborhood residents, as opposed to the park improvements to be determined as part of the City's Capital Improvement Program, in conjunction with the City's large park planning

effort, as originally contemplated and negotiated with RPCA. Moritz said the confusion arose because two discussions were taking place simultaneously, one with the developer about using funds to pay for Armistead Boothe Park improvements; and one with representatives from Cameron Station Civic Association (Association) to provide a more open-ended contribution. Moritz apologized for not asking RPCA to review and approve the language first. He said the May 17, 2014 meeting would be an opportunity for the Commission to request City Council to restore the language originally agreed-to by P&Z and RPCA staff.

Discussion:

- The Park and Recreation Commission members discussed at length, the flawed process and the language that should be proposed to City Council to restore Condition 14's original wording and purpose.
- **Cromley** said that P&Z should give RPCA staff recommendations high priority. Moritz said recommendations of RPCA staff and the P&RC are taken seriously, and apologized for the flawed process used in this project. He said what happened in this case is not standard practice, but he believed that it was within the parameters of the discussions held, and that P&Z staff routinely seeks input from the community on projects. Moritz said a representative from Cameron Station spoke at the Planning Commission meeting, he is unsure if they were from the HOA.
- **Atkins** pointed out that the project, which includes 457 housing units, would create intensity of use on the adjacent Armistead Boothe Park as previously conveyed by RPCA staff. She said that there is a parks plan that calls for maintenance and improvements at an estimated cost of \$400,000, but only \$100,000 was allotted, and this will not be enough funds for maintenance or improvements. Atkins said that the public process did not coincide with the approved CIP and other City plans and guidelines. In response to a question raised by Atkins, Moritz said the proposed pocket park in Cameron Parke would be a privately owned park with a public easement.
- **Baum** also disagreed with the process used for Cameron Park and said that procedural issues need to be addressed because the City's Waterfront includes many parks, and the process should not be repeated in planning development around those parks. Baum said that the funds for Cameron Park should be specifically dedicated for parks. **Moritz** said the Waterfront Plan provides \$9.00 per sq. ft. towards development of parks.
- **Beggs** expressed concern that RPCA's staff's request of \$400,000 that was based on the number of proposed units was reduced to \$100,000. He asked was the reduction in maintenance costs addressed with the developers. Moritz said it was an inter-staff discussion. **Kagawa** said the discussion was that approximately 10,000 sq. ft. of open space may have been a point of contention with the applicant so P&Z and the City staff took the position that the maintenance funds would be reduced but that they would still like to support the Large Parks Master Plan so that any Capital funds that the development would produce would go to something.
- **Cromley** said it would be better if the condition language specifically designated the purpose of the contribution. He also said depending on the number of people in the development, a parks

contribution should be codified for development approvals in the same way affordable housing contributions are codified.

- **Moritz** said another potential issue in the Landmark Plan is that these projects are considered catalyst plans with reduced expectation for developer contributions.
- **Atkins** said she would draft a letter on behalf of the P&RC to City Council that addresses this project, the process used and how these items are negotiated with the City. She said one problem is that civic groups can impact negotiations in a way that undermines what is best for the City as a whole unless the City speaks with one voice in the negotiation process. She said there are two issues: one issue for the P&RC to deal with now, and that going forward the P&RC will need to advise City Council for the future developments.
- **Cromley** asked Moritz if P&Z would support putting back the original language, and have it amended at the public hearing. Moritz said that the process was flawed and P&Z would support either approach, and that he could clarify what happened as part of the City Council discussion on Saturday.
- **Baum** expressed concern the revenue raised by RPCA goes into the City's general fund rather than to RPCA for program activities, particularly in a time of budget cuts.
- **Coleman** asked if there were a motion for the Commission to draft a letter to City Council regarding changing the language in Condition 14 back to the language that RPCA previously agreed to. **Baum** asked if a motion were needed to draft the letter to Council. **Coleman** suggested there be two motions, one regarding amending the language in Condition 14, and a second motion to include a paragraph in the letter addressing the flawed process, and the importance of the Civic Engagement Process policy against using private meetings to resolve questions with broader community impact.
- **Motion #1** Brune moved that the Park and Recreation Commission request that the language in Condition #14 be re-amended back to the previously agreed-to language, Baum seconded. All were in favor. The motion carried unanimously.
- **Cromley** raised the issue of establishing a specific formula for developer contributions for parks, specifically for large parks. Atkins said this will be discussed as part Open Space (Item II-D).
- **Motion #2**- Baum moved to include Cromley's language in the letter to City Council regarding the necessity of establishing a process for developer contributions for parks. Beggs seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Action**: Atkins said she would draft a letter tonight for the Commission's review and approval prior to forwarding it to City Council tomorrow.

- B. Fee Increases for City Recreational Programs:** James Spengler, Director RPCA said he would discuss this item in conjunction with the budget later in the agenda.
- C. Chinquapin Aquatics Feasibility Study, Task 1A Report:** Laura Durham, Park Planner, Open Space Coordinator– See Staff Report and Task1A Report. Durham said the Department of RPCA awarded a contract and began a Feasibility Study to determine if a 50 meter indoor, competitive size pool could be built on the Chinquapin Center site. The first phase of Task1A involved looking at the basic viability, including site size, constraints and other major issues. The “Study” concluded that a 50 meter pool can be built on the Chinquapin site. The consultant completed six different schemes which are detailed in the Task 1A Report (see report). One constraint is that any new pool would have to be attached to the existing Chinquapin pool, in order to sustain operating costs. Other constraints are the existence of a large storm/sewer lateral in front of the existing Chinquapin Center, an existing Resource Protection Area (RPA), and heavily wooded areas – all that would require mitigation strategies that could be costly. Durham said that detailed cost estimates are not available at this time and will be refined as the preferred alternative (Task 1B) is developed. She noted that members of Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), some who are here tonight are committed to supporting a 50 meter pool and helping with fundraising. Next steps: Durham noted that the first City community meeting will be held on June 12, 2014; review of schemes will begin at 6:30 p.m., with the meeting following at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion:

Baum said it is important to locate the pool in the best location where it can be utilized by the public, and that storm water issues should be addressed and paid for by the appropriate department. Durham said that costs would come from the overall City capital budget and that some options do not require moving the storm/-sewer lateral such as building the additional pool on the rear of the Chinquapin site. Cromley expressed concern with the possible loss of trees. Durham said the next step will be discussion of the six options with the community. Baum said it would be good if the diving well can be kept. Bill Rivers, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics agreed. Durham said that the marketing analysis will also be important, and that the next step would be completion of Task 1B which will kick off with a community process and discussion of options, led by the consultants, Hughes Group Architects and Concordia on June 12. The goal is to finish by the end of Fiscal Year 15 and then if feasibility is determined, begin building in FY17.

- D. What’s Next for Open Space in Alexandria – May 31<sup>st</sup> Public Open House,** Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator – See Staff Reports and “Alexandria Open Space Festival” flier. In May of 2013, a status update memo on the Open Space Plan was presented to the Commission - see report: Open Space Master Plan 2003-2013 Implementation Status Report and Recommendations for Future Action. Since that time an interdepartmental staff team comprised of City department staff has worked together to look at recommendations for moving forward with the open space plan. One recommendation being discussed is standardizing developer’s contributions related to open space for potential new land acquisition. An Open House will be held with the community, Saturday, May 31, 2014, from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at The Conservatory Center at Four Mile Run Park to allow for public input. There will be participation from various City departments. Staff will highlight the 15 goals of the Open Space Plan, including successes to date; and ask for feedback on moving forward on the 15 goals. Staff is partnering with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT). There will be a public comment period, clean-up of Four Mile Run Park, open play on Four Mile Run Field and a film showing of “Green Fire” to help draw people out to speak about the plan. Fliers will be circulated in both English and Spanish. Staff will come back to the P&RC with specific recommendations on developer contributions, and determining the appropriate stakeholders.

Cromley asked what will be the formula for developer contributions. Durham said staff is looking at best practices there are pros and cons to both. The City's Open Space goal is based on the number of residential units and considers a base level for non-residential. In addition to developer contributions, staff will also continue to encourage the donation of land open space as well.

**E. 2014 CIVIC Awards - Identify Review Committee – Jack Browand.**

The Commission was asked to identify three volunteers to serve on this year's Review Committee. Brian McPherson, Rich Brune and Ripley Forbes were nominated to serve on the committee for 2014.

**III. Division Updates: To view full Staff Reports please go to:**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/COMBINEDFILEPRCMAY152014.pdf>

**A. Recreation Programs and Service Update - William Chesley, Deputy Director, and Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Manager - **See Staff Report and presentation - Program Interest Survey Results, May 15, 2014.** To view presentation go**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCProgramInterestPresentation15May2014.pdf>

Gilfillen reviewed the survey results, including the different ways that staff collects data such as: RPCA's biennial Needs Assessment; Program Evaluations; Experience Surveys (currently placed in all Recreation Centers); and the new Program Interest Survey which will be completed annually. She said the goal of the survey is to dive deeper into the biennial Needs Assessment and focus on providing programming to meet the needs of different user groups. The survey was opened for eight weeks, and made available online and in person, and 934 responses were received. The results represent patrons with a high interest in recreation. Summary Data is available as a tool for Recreation staff to sort by location, age group or program type preference (see presentation). The Commission had no questions or comments and thanked Ms. Gillfillen for her presentation. In response to a question on when City pools would open, Chesley said that pools are scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend, Saturday May 24, 2014. The Director RPCA said that operating hours vary at pools because some have a.m. programs or classes, and that total operations are constrained by budget resources.

**B. Park Operations Report – Oscar Mendoza, Division Chief, Park Operations - **See Staff Report.****

Mendoza said all our schedules have been placed regarding right-of-way mowing. The program to control weeds in parks starts today, and school mowing is on schedule. The issue in Ben Brenman Park has been fixed –Dominion Power shut the power off for maintenance affecting all timers. Atkins asked if RPCA maintains school mowing during the summer months. Mendoza said yes, and that mowing is done on a 14-day mowing cycle and herbicide application, and watering as part of irrigation timers controls where applicable.

**C. Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront Operations - Jack Browand, Division Chief- **See Staff Report.** Browand briefed the Commission on the details of the City's proposal to amend the City Code regarding food trucks. The proposal has been under review during the past nine months by the Food Truck Policy Advisory Group. The City is considering amending the code to allow for food truck vending on public and private property in certain designated areas, to include City parks and farmers markets under certain conditions. The City would have the right to limit vending in certain areas if they deemed there was a legal government interest in doing so. All vendors would need to go through the City's permitting process. Browand said that currently the City policy allows food trucks only as part of a special event or on a construction site for short periods. Food trucks could**

not vend within 2 blocks of an approved special events area. City Council approved at its May 13, 2014 meeting a proposed ordinance to permit food trucks on public and private property with certain restrictions and had set a public hearing on the proposed policy for May 17, 2014. Some residents in Old Town are concerned about loss of parking near their homes. What occurred on Tuesday night and may occur on Saturday staff was instructed to strip everything out of ordinance regarding on-street parking. This weekend there may be an ordinance passed that would allow vending from off-street area. There will be further discussion regarding vending from on-street areas. All street vending would need to be from a legal sized parking space. Browand said there has been high interest by farmers markets, and that Ben Brenman, Del Ray and Four Mile Run markets have parking structures. He said the West End is also a desirable location. Cromley said food trucks provide a service but, some small businesses may feel threatened and some residents see food trucks as unattractive to their neighborhoods. Atkins said the key for food trucks in parks is that any request would have to come through the department of RPCA first.

D. Park Planning, Design & Capital Development Reports – Ron Kagawa, Division Chief and Team-**See Staff Report**. Kagawa said that the new fountain at Potomac Yards Park currently scheduled to be activated in May had a broken pipe and opening will be delayed until June 2014. He reported that the S. trail connecting the Monroe St. to the Braddock Rd. Metro will be completed by the end of the year. Kagawa said there has been a lot of discussion about gates for playgrounds. The gates have signs and locks on them but the hinges and pins are being vandalized. For now, the gates have been chained shut. Cromley said this would be a good project for using developer contributions.

E. FY15 Budget Update - James Spengler, Director, RPCA. **See Staff Report/Handouts**. Director Spengler briefed the Commission on the upcoming budget.

Commissioner Comments:

- **Poulin** said at some point the price of programs exceeds the benefit. She said it is important to keep this in mind particularly from a family perspective. **Spengler** said that RPCA has a Fee Assistance Policy for eligible individuals/families that helps offset the Resource Allocation Recovery Policy.
- **Cromley** explained that it is a philosophy of what services the government are expected to provide to its citizens.
- **Poulin** expressed concern that some fees have almost tripled, in particular Therapeutic Recreation- which is being subsidized. She said people may walk away from services. **Atkins** said some people have said that RPCA's after school and summer programs are still a bargain at \$100, and asked why the department does not charge more. She said while there should be subsidies for certain families; costs need to be balanced.
- **Brune** asked how the City's cost recovery model compares with other jurisdictions, and said there needs to be an analysis of the regional costs. **Spengler** said generally communities have similar categories of service, and that Alexandria currently charges on the low-end when compared to other jurisdictions.
- **Spengler** said in FY14, personnel costs were 73% of the budget.

- **Baum** asked if any thought has been given to RPCA hiring a private company to run to run its sports programs such as soccer to help increase enrollment. **Poulin** said that soccer is run mostly by volunteers and offered to help where she can with regards to financial planning.
- **McPherson** commented that we have to be careful when comparing City programs with those of surrounding jurisdictions. While fees for some leagues may be higher, they may own and maintain their fields.
- For more information see:
- <http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/services/CostRecoveryReport.pdf>
- <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/budget/info/budget2015/FY%202015%20Proposed%20Section%205%20-%20Forecast%20Scenarios.pdf>

#### IV. Reports from Commissioners (verbal updates):

- A. **Waterfront Commission - Gina Baum:** Reported that the last public meeting was held on with the Olin Group on the waterfront landscape design. She met with EYA on the S. Terminal development. Baum distributed a handout on Olin report; she said it is on the City's website.
- B. **Youth Sport Committee - Brian McPherson:** The committee was disappointed about the lack of notice on the fee increases. There is still a push for lights on T.C. tennis courts, Aquatics was discussed previously.
- C. **Eisenhower West - Judy Coleman:** The group recommended a plan boundary, and this is being reviewed by Planning and Zoning. A community meeting will be held June 16, 2014.
- D. **Aquatics Update - Jennifer Atkins:** See Item II-C. Atkins said she will attend the next Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA) meeting on Monday and provide update the Commission in the future.
- E. **Four Mile Run - Ripley Forbes:** no update.
- F. **Ft. Ward - Ripley Forbes:** no update.
- G. **Braddock Plan Park:** no updates
- H. **Patrick Henry School Update - Brian McPherson:** no updates.
- I. **Jefferson Houston School – William Cromley:** no updates.
- J. **Open Space - Jennifer Atkins:** See Item II-D.
- K. **Freedmen's Cemetery.** no updates
- L. **ACPS & Capital Improvements.** no updates
- M. **ACPS School Projects -** no updates

#### V. Public Comment Period:

David Levy, Holmes Run Parks Committee (HRPC), said that the Committee has been active over the years – they have some trees to plant. He commented that several special events were not listed on the City's events schedule. Browand said the Citizens Band generally performs over the summer and RPCA's list currently only goes through the end of June. Browand advised him to view the online calendar. Levy suggested that volunteers who work at the Chinquapin soft playroom receive some type of credit or be offered a complimentary recreation class. Levy reported that Elizabeth Wright, President, would like to obtain a grant from T&ES to help complete the mile marker project at Holmes Run Park currently underway, and that a similar system be done at Four Mile Run Park. Levy said the Police Department should discourage staff not to use the Holmes Run Trail as a shortcut to police headquarters or other parts of the City. The Committee has also been helping with remove invasive plant species removal with assistance from Sheriff Inmates, and pulled up about 200 pounds of wild garlic. The Commission thanked him for his comments.

**VI.** Agenda items for June 19, 2014, meeting and location. The next meeting will be held at Charles Houston Community Center as requested.

Baum motioned to adjourn; Coleman seconded the meeting adjourned at 10:06 p.m.