

City of Alexandria

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Thursday, November 19, 2015, 7:00 p.m.
Cameron Station Clubhouse – Great Room
200 Cameron Station Blvd.
Alexandria, VA 22304

Summary Minutes

Members Present: Jennifer Atkins, Chair, Judith Coleman, Vice Chair; Gina Baum, Rich Brune, Secretary, William Cromley, Angela Lalwani, Catherine Poulin.

Absent: Stephen Beggs, Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson.

RPCA Staff Present: James Spengler, Director; William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Public Relations, Special Events, Waterfront Operations; Oscar Mendoza, Division Chief, Park Operations; Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Judy Lo, Park Planner, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning Design & Capital Development, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator. Beth Znidersic was excused due to illness.

Other City Staff: Steve Sindiong, Principal Planner, Transportation and Environmental Services, Jason Kacamburas, Project Coordinator, Department of Project Implementation (DPI).

Guests: Bill Rivers, Chair, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), Caroline Grigilone, AAA, Jeanie Gardner, AAA; Tarleen “Tina” Singh, Deputy Director, Alexandria Health Department, Jennifer Sonderman, Epidemiologist, Alexandria Health Department, Tom Williamson, resident.

I. **Call to Order:** Vice Chair, Judith Coleman called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.; she noted that Chair Jennifer Atkins would be arriving later.

II. **Presentations:**

A. **Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan Update:** Steve Sindiong, Principal Planner, Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES) gave presentation. To view presentation go to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRC11Nov2015BikePlan.pdf>

Sindiong said the primary objectives of the Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan (PBMP) are to 1. Update Pedestrian and Bicycle Chapters of the Transportation Master Plan, which will help improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists); and 2. Develop Complete Streets Design Guidelines, that will help guide staff developers and the community in the future. In 2008 Council approved the Transportation Master Plan (TMP), since that time there have been many changes and several Small Area Plans (SAP’s) have been completed. The PBMP will update and incorporate changes put into effect since 2008 and incorporate the Complete Street Plan’s goal of ensuring each street addresses the needs of intermodal users, i.e. pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, transit. Sindiong reviewed the project’s timeline, which began in May 2014, with expected completion in spring 2016, and key themes raised during civic outreach activities (See report). He said staff expects to release the

Draft Plan in early 2016, and approval of the Plan will require an amendment to the City's Master Plan.

Next Steps: Fall 2015 - Continue Public Outreach; winter 2016 - Public Release of Draft Plan in January, one month for input via AlexEngage; spring 2016 - Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, and City Council Review for Approval/Amendment to the Master Plan. See project webpage for further information. <http://www.alexandriava.gov/PedBikePlan>

Commission Questions and Comments:

Q. Are bicycle facilities for cyclists to park bikes, shower and change clothes planned?
A. There are strategies that relate to this such as bike parking and showers. He said the City's Land Use Plan also requests such amenities from major developers.

Q. How will conflicts between cars, bikes, and pedestrians in Old Town be addressed?
A. There is heavy Union Street commuter and recreational bicycle traffic and major intermodal conflicts at Union/King. The community also wants traffic slowed down. The Union Street BikeShare station will remain but staff is recommending other north-south bike corridors such as Royal St. be created as connections to the Mt. Vernon Trail. A neighborhood bikeway is being recommended.

Coleman said she doesn't like the bicycle lane on the Cameron Station Blvd. because the street makes a sharp turn that is difficult for cars to navigate as it is."

Sindiong said the plan is to change Cameron Station Blvd. from two lanes in each direction to one lane with a buffer bike lane and this will provide more room for bikes.

- B. **Alexandria Health Department – Crumb Rubber Infill:** Dr. Tina Singh Deputy Director, Alexandria Health Department, Jennifer Sonderman, Epidemiologist, Alexandria Health Department. **Background information is posted at:** <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/AlexandriaHealthDepartmentCrumbRubberReview16Sep2015PRC.pdf>

Director RPCA, Spengler said he received several inquiries following publication of an article about possible links between crumb rubber infill and cancer. He asked Dr. Stephen Haering, Director, Alexandria Health Department (AHD) for assistance in responding to inquiries. See Alexandria Health Department Crumb Rubber Review, dated September 16, 2015. Spengler said information and the "Advisory" was forwarded to City Council, the P&RC, the Public Health Advisory Commission, and a presentation was given to RPCA's Youth Sports Advisory Board (YSAB). The AHD was asked to provide information to the P&RC.

Dr. Tina Singh, Deputy Director, AHD, and Jennifer Sonderman, Epidemiologist, AHD, summarized the Health Department's Review. Sonderman researched the scientific literature on the crumb rubber synthetic turf infill material and potential human health effects. In summary, "AHD has found no evidence to date that the chemicals present in the City of Alexandria's synthetic turf playing fields present a health concern."

Sonderman said the reviewed studies were published in peer review literature, and also included reports from state and national governments, the rubber industry and non-profit organizations. She said they did not find any studies on alternatives infill materials for

comparison. She said the studies they found fell into three categories: 1. Laboratory, 2. Bio-accessibility, and 3. Exposure monitoring studies.

Sonderman said all the studies are small and have limitations, and AHD believes more research is needed. She said the Northern Virginia Health Districts have requested that the Virginia Department of Health reach out to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to collaborate on a large exposure study in our region. They are also continuing to monitor the scientific literature on crumb rubber infill and also on alternatives to use of crumb rubber.

In Summary, AHD has requested that additional state and federal studies be conducted and will continue to monitor the scientific literature. For more information see:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/AlexandriaHealthDepartmentCrumbRubberReview16Sep2015PRC.pdf>

In response to Baum's questions, Spengler said Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is in charge of Maury School field project, and RPCA would maintain fields. He said staff is in the process of writing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ACPS, that would cover artificial turf, and compensate/pay RPCA to maintain the fields.

- C. **Potomac Yard Metrorail Project/Redesign of Potomac Greens Park:** See Staff Report submitted by Bethany Znidarsic, Park Planner, RPCA. Jason Kacamburas, Project Coordinator, P.Y., Department of Project Implementation (DPI), gave the update on the project. **The presentation is posted at:**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/20151119PRCMetro.pdf>

Kacamburas reviewed the City Approval process, and location of proposed new station and parks. He said the City approvals will include three Development Special Use Permits (DSUPs) for: 1. The Metrorail station, 2. Potomac Yard Park, and 3. Potomac Greens Park. June 2016 is the target date for public hearing on the DSUPs. WMATA's goal is to put the Design-Build Request for Proposals (RPF) out by July 1, 2016. The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group (PYMIG) is the primary group to get information to the public, and the update covered information from the October and November PYMIG meetings (See Presentation). Kacamburas said that PYMIG was expanded and includes developers. Public feedback on the Potomac Greens Park redesign indicates the majority of respondents are pleased with what exists at the park now (See presentation).

Park Elements: Three options presented for the Potomac Greens Park Concept: See Option 1, 2, 3 (pg. 14). Kacamburas said feedback received was that the plan includes a lot of elements for this small one acre park. The preferred option at the PYMIG meeting was Option 1. He said Alex Engage is open until November 29 for further feedback.

Next Steps: See presentation, the next PYMIG meeting is December 14, 2015. The P&RC will be updated in January.

III. Items for Information:

- A. **Public Comments:** None
- B. **Update on Beverley Park Renovation:** Judy Lo, Landscape Architect and Park Planner. **The presentation is posted at:**

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDFILENOVEMBER192015Final5.pdf>.

Lo said the Beverley Park Renovation Plan will be incorporated into the overall Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan that is scheduled to go to City Council in January 2016. She said there have been minimal changes since the plan was presented in November 2014 (See Plan for details), and that staff is collecting feedback until December 15, 2015. Lo said a body was found at the park the day staff was scheduled to present the plans to the North Ridge Civic Association (NRCA). She said the presentation was rescheduled for December, and that safety and security will be an important meeting topic, as well as obtaining feedback on lighting needs, and other recommendations to help open up sightlines into the park. In the interim, RPCA, Park Operations Division, will coordinate removal of some of the hedges along N. Overlook St., with the NRCA, who may also schedule a volunteer clean-up event.

- C. **Warwick Pool Report and Recommendation from Geotechnical and Structural Analysis Study:** James B. Spengler, Director – See Staff Reports posted at: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDFILENOVEMBER192015Final5.pdf>

The staff report provides an update on architecture/engineering analysis at Warwick Pool, located at 3301 Landover St. In November, 2015 architecture and engineering study by CARDNO, Inc., was substantially completed. The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of renovation of the facility. Refined and updated estimates of probable cost remain outstanding. As initial findings, the study cited that. 1. Demolition and replacement of the existing building is more cost effective in capital investment and future operational capacity than renovation of the existing building. This is due to age of the existing facility and servicing infrastructure, current building codes, and requirements for accessibility.

Spengler said that funding is in the CIP Budget and money will be available July 1, 2016, and completion of project is expected in 2017. He will brief the City Manager on Monday regarding the report findings. Based on the report, it was determined that the pool can be replaced on-site and the soils will hold the facility. Two options are available for pool replacement; typical construction, or use of a Myrtha pool liner product which if selected will leave the existing pool in place. Spengler said the consultant favors traditional pool construction, and there is little cost differential between the two options. He said the larger issue is the renovation of the bathhouse, given the age of the facility, and the accessibility requirements.

RPCA staff is recommending a one-story facility, which will eliminate the need for an elevator and help meet ADA requirements. Spengler said the one-story structure, using either method of pool replacement is within the current budgeted amount of \$1 million, while building a two-story structure is outside the current budget. Spengler said a recommendation will be presented to City Council in January 2016. He said staff will use the remaining maintenance account funds to begin engineering and design work on the new facility, to help keep the pool on schedule to open in summer of 2017. Chair Atkins said the P&RC's consensus is that timing is critical and the design process should continue moving forward.

- D. **Draft Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan/Updates/Montgomery Park:** Dana Wedeles, Park Planner. To view plans go to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/DraftNeighborhoodPlanUpdatesPRCNov2015.pdf>.

Wedeles said at the October 15, 2015 meeting, the P&RC asked staff to consider making three changes to the Draft Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan: 1. Include the Beverley Park Plan, and Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway Plan, in the overall Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan; 2. Add lights and artificial turf options for the field at Ewald Park; and 3. Hold a community meeting to discuss the Montgomery Park Plan.

Wedeles said, a Montgomery Park community meeting was held on November 17, 2015, and about 10-15 persons attended. The Old Town North Small Area Plan (SAP) Charrette was being held the same evening. Wedeles noted that Montgomery Park falls within the OTN SAP, and said that this particular park plan is at the Concept Design level and flexible. Community concerns discussed at meeting are included (p. 4), and staff proposed solutions (pg. 5, 6). Wedeles said opinions differed about using the backboard for solo play, but moving the backboard out of the tennis court area increases cost and would remove some parking. Four options are proposed for the tennis backboard/practice court: 1. Install backboard on fence of existing court, as proposed in Draft #1 of the plan; 2. Construct solo court in half of the parking lot; 3. Construct solo courts along north side of tennis courts; and 4. Do nothing. Wedeles said option #3., the highest cost option with the lowest impact on existing park features, came out of the meeting. The benefits of this option, is it would not interfere with other park users and allows for two practice courts; the cons are the cost, and the need for storm water mitigation.

Staff Recommendations: 1. Revise the Montgomery Park Plan to include the non-tennis related recommendations at this time, 2. Add a backboard to an existing tennis court (as proposed in Draft #1 of the plan), and include regulations giving priority to groups rather than solo players.

Discussion: Commission members discussed at length the tennis court options, with **Baum** noting that Lacrosse is a growing sport, that could benefit from having access to a separate backboard space, rather than using the shared tennis court space. She asked what would happen if other players showed up, and said she doesn't see the point of placing the backboard in the middle of the court because it may not be used. **Spengler** said a team would need a permit to use the court. He said the concept plan would go back to the tennis community before the proposal moved forward.

Poulin said she rarely sees all four tennis courts used and asked what the tennis community wants. **Wedeles** said the tennis community representatives want the backboard placed in the parking lot.

Atkins said Wedeles did a good job balancing community input, and noted other issues may be raised within OTN planning as it moves ahead. She said the Concept Plan helps guide the CIP budget process by taking a holistic look at all parks and providing concrete ideas for using potential developer proffers.

Baum asked if it makes more sense to show the concept for the backboard on the other side of the fence and have it independent. She said this would help when seeking uses for future developer proffers. She said if the backboard is done on the north side and the Farmer's market takes off then the Farmer's market can also be put there. **Cromley** opposed impacting the parking lot since the court is just being activated for solo players. **Spengler** said this option has not been shared with the community.

Atkins suggested documenting the two options as part of the Concept Plan, and said further community input could be sought during the implementation and design phases of project.

Poulin asked if this could be a natural grass court.

Atkins said the P&RC would support RPCA staff recommendations but note Baum's other suggestion. **Brune** agreed that the P&RC should support the staff recommendation. He noted the concept plan hasn't been approved yet, the OTN SAP process is ongoing, funding isn't available and the draft plan can be changed in the future.

Public Comment: **Darryl Drury**, 1030 N. Royal St., said he attended the November 17 Montgomery Park meeting. He said several points discussed were not included in the updated plan, e.g. such as pathways using brick pavers, lamp posts along the path, a separate, not combined, fountain area, and a wrought iron perimeter fence around at least the N. Royal St. and 1st St. areas. Drury submitted a Petition from about 50 people who were unable to attend the November 17 meeting (**See Attachment**).

Atkins said the materials to be used are typically determined later during the design phase. Following the commission discussion, Wedeles requested a letter of endorsement from the P&RC, she said once the plan is endorsed it will go to City Council in January.

ACTION: Baum moved that the P&RC endorse the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan subject to the discussed adjustments, Brune seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. Atkins said she would draft a letter to City Council from the P&RC endorsing the entire set of park plans.

E. **Jones Point Park Recreation Plan – Community Engagement Meetings:**

Jack Browand, shared information from the George Washington Memorial Park, News Release, dated November 4 – on Jones Point Park Recreation Plan, upcoming community meetings: November 7, 9, and 10. He encouraged Commissioners to attend meetings and to provide recommendations for use of park. He said they are looking at how to use the large open space under the bridge. In response to Cromley, Browand said the parking lot under the bridge has been prohibited due to security concerns, about potential hazards from trucks carrying explosives, and that the current parking design was completed prior to September 11, 2001. He said activities under the bridge, however, are not prohibited. Atkins asked Commissioners to complete the survey, and provide feedback about the grass fields. She also suggested that the National Park Service (NPS) be invited to attend the January or February meeting. Browand noted that the NPS will accept comments through December 4, 2015. For more information go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/jonespoint>

IV. Items for Action

A. Approval of Minutes: September 17, 2015, October 15, 2015: Deferred.

V. RPCA Staff Updates:

A. Director's Report - James Spengler: The Director gave a brief verbal update on the FY17 Operating and CIP Budgets. He said Departments were asked to turn in their budget targets by next Wednesday, and the City is projecting a \$30 million shortfall. He said there is a 5% reduction target across all Departments from the approved FY16 budget levels, which will result in about a \$1 million reduction for RPCA. The City

Council will hold a retreat on Saturday, November 21, 2015 to discuss budget guidance with the City Manager.

- B. **Division Updates:** Full Staff Reports are posted at:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDFILENOVEMBER192015Final5.pdf>
1. **Recreation Services** - William Chesley, Deputy Director – See Staff Report. Chesley said registration for the fall Out-of-School Time Program (OSTP), is about 1,100. He said the youth basketball program is underway, and staff expects approximately 115 teams to participate this year. Chinquapin Family Fun Nights continue to be offered with the support of the Chinquapin Advisory Council.
 2. **Park Operations** - Oscar Mendoza, Division Chief – See Staff Report. In response to Vice Chair Coleman’s question, Mendoza said funding for invasive plant removal falls under the Park Operations, Natural Resources Division budget.
 3. **Public Information, Special Events, Waterfront Operations**- Jack Browand, Division Chief - See Staff Report. Browand said an update meeting is planned with the community on Windmill Hill Park, December 10th, and that construction is expected to begin next year.
 4. **Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects**, Ron Kagawa Division Chief, See Staff Reports.

VI. **Commission Business (verbal updates):**

- A. **Civic Awards Sub-Committee Update:**
Brune said an email was sent out the new form was submitted information is available on-line and awards will be presented in 2016. Browand said one application has been received and it has been submitted to the Mayor Elect for the February 9, 2016 meeting.

VII: **Next Meeting:** January 21, 2016, 7:00 p.m. at Charles Houston Community Center. The Commission discussed potential agenda items.

VIII. **Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Attachments:

1. Montgomery Park Report, Darrel W. Drury, Ph. D, dated November 12, 2015, and Citizen Petition
2. Draft Montgomery Park Improvement Plan: Reactions to Community Meeting and Report by Dr. Drury, Ashley Walker, dated November 17, 2015