

City of Alexandria

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2016

7:00 p.m.

Charles Houston Community Center

901 Wythe Street,

Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

Commission Members: Jennifer Atkins, Chair; Danielle Baker, Gina Baum, Stephen Beggs, Rich Brune, Secretary, Jessie O’Connell, Angela Lalwani, Brian McPherson, Catherine Poulin.
Excused: Judith Coleman, Co-Chair, Ripley Forbes.

RPCA Staff Present: James Spengler, Director; Margaret Orlando, Division Chief, Recreation Services; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Public Relations, Special Events, Waterfront Operations; Robert Taylor, Division Chief, Park Operations, Lyndon Murray, Regional Program Director, William Ramsay Center, Sheila Whiting, Regional Program Director, Charles Houston Center, Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Director, Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Bethany Znidersic, Park Planner, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator/Acting Director Chinquapin Aquatics Center, Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning Design + Capital Development, Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations.

Other City Staff: Jason Kacamburas, Project Coordinator, Potomac Yard Metrorail station, and Tony Gammon, Acting Deputy Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI).

Guests: Bill Rivers, Chair, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), Caroline Griglione, AAA, Bonnie Petry, Vice President, Wakefield-Tarleton Civic Association, member Arlington/Alexandria Tree Stewards, and Roger Sullivan.

I. **Call to Order:** Jennifer Atkins, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m., and welcomed new Commissioners: Danielle Baker and Angela Lalwani, high school members, and Jessie O’Connell, new District I representative.

II. **Presentations:**

A. **RPCA 2015 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment:** Dana Wedeles, Park Planner gave a brief update on the 2015 Leisure Vision Survey. **Background:** RPCA conducted a citywide Needs Assessment during summer/fall 2015. The purpose was to help establish priorities for the future development of Alexandria parks, recreation, cultural facilities programs and services. Consultant Leisure Vision and the City designed and conducted the survey to obtain statistically valid

results from Alexandria households, and the information is benchmarked against national and local surveys and previous surveys from 2011 and 2013. The five-page survey was mailed to a random sample of 3,000 City households, and follow-up was conducted. The goal of obtaining at least 600 completed survey responses was met. The results have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.3%.

Wedeles reviewed the following 2015 survey response data categories: Usage of Parks; Rating of Programs; Parks and Recreation Facilities That Households Have a need For; How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities in Alexandria Meet the Needs of Households; Parks and Recreation Facilities that Are Most Important to Households, Importance - Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for City of Alexandria Parks and Recreation Facilities 2013 and 2015; and Recreation Programs that Households Have a Need For.

Major findings are summarized in the following documents:

See Staff Report at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDREPORTJANUARY212016.pdf>

See Full Survey at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/2015NeedsAssessmentPRC21Feb2016.pdf>

Atkins commended RPCA staff for their continuing work on the Needs Assessments, and said these surveys help support policy and budget decisions.

- B. Update on Chinguapin Aquatics Center Expansion Feasibility Study:** Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, Acting Director of Chinguapin. *For background information See Staff Report posted at:*
- <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDREPORTJANUARY212016.pdf>

See Presentation posted at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/ChinguapinPresentationPRC21Jan2016.pdf>

Durham provided an update on the consultant's updated Chinguapin 50-meter pool Feasibility Study and the related cost estimates for project options for alternative layouts and building types (See Staff Report).

Based on the additional studies and recommendations from staff and Alexandria Advocates for Aquatics (AAA), HGA explored the following 50 meter pool options:

- A. One-story or Two-Story, Conventional Building (Options A & E)
- B. One-story or Two-Story, Pre-Engineered Building* (Options B & F)
- C. One-story or Two-Story, Translucent Enclosure (Options C & G)
- D. One-story, Architectural Membrane (not available in two-story construction)

Durham emphasized the preliminary drawings *are not official designs* but only draft layouts to help provide an idea of the scale of each building.

The FY2016-FY2025 CIP includes \$22.35 million for the project, for work to be done in FY17 and FY18. AAA has committed to raising \$2.5 million.

Cost Estimates for Options A through Option G are included in the Staff Reports. Durham said the Architectural Membrane (Option D) is within the CIP, and the one-story Pre-engineered structure (Option B) is close to the \$22.35 million project budget.

Recommendation: Durham said staff recommends the one-story pre-engineered structure (Option B) at this time, because it is easier to integrate with the existing building and neighborhood. Durham said the information will tentatively be presented to City Council January 26, 2016. Spengler said City Council will not be asked to take action on moving Chinquapin forward in the CIP until the budget in May.

Atkins thanked RPCA staff for their work on this project and getting options that are more cost effective and in-line with the CIP's existing budget and AAA for their partnership on the project.

- C. **PARKNERSHIP Program Overview:** Dana Wedeles, Park Planner and Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Manager gave a brief presentation. See Staff Report posted at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDREPORTJANUARY212016.pdf>

Presentation is posted at

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PARKnershipProgramPresentation.pdf>

The Mission of the PARKnership Program is to develop a systematic approach to organizing and sustaining community partnerships in support of the Department's Strategic Plan. The program will cultivate sustainable partnerships, align sponsors, partners/affiliates, volunteers and donations to support RPCA's goal of healthy and thriving City of Alexandria (See presentation).

Wedeles gave an overview of the PARKnership program, and Gilfillen gave an overview of the PARKnership marketing program and shared branding samples logos.

Public Comment: Bonnie Petry-Vice President, Wakefield-Tarleton Citizens Association, and member of the Arlington/Alexandria Tree Stewards spoke in support of the PARKnership program. She said it is smart to encourage citizen involvement in City parks, and she has seen an increase in RPCA's staff leveraging volunteer efforts over the past 1.5 years, and cited examples. She said that volunteer support helps get work done in parks, and helps increase residents' community involvement. Volunteer coordination takes a lot of effort by RPCA

who has been affected by budget cuts. She applauded City efforts to formalize and expand its partnerships with residents and stakeholder groups. Petry commended RPCA's Natural Resources Division for helping to beautify Tarleton Park and their neighborhood by planting over 200 trees and shrubs. She said the public/partnership has also helped neighbors get to know one another, and the program can help RPCA and the City meet their goals during times of budgetary challenges. Petry said she plans to submit a proposal from the Tree Stewards of Arlington/Alexandria to establish a partnership with Fort Ward Park to help increase the tree canopy and plant 100 trees, saving taxpayer funds. She said the proposal will fit within the goals outlined in the Fort Ward Park Museum Area Management Plan, and will respect the site's sensitive nature and its grave sites.

Atkins thanked Ms. Petry for her continuing work in the community.

Spengler thanked Wedeles and Gilfillen for their work on the PARKnership Project, and said the Department of RPCA is advertising internally for a PARKnership Manager position.

D. Potomac Yard Metrorail Project/Redesign of Potomac Greens Park and

Potomac Yard Park: Bethany Znidarsic, Park Planner, RPCA and Jason Kacamburas, Project Coordinator, Potomac Yard (PY), Department of Project Implementation (DPI), gave the update on the project. For background, See Staff Report posted at:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560#2016MeetingInformation>

See Presentation posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25560>

Kacamburas reviewed location of proposed new station and parks, and said the City approvals process will include three Development Special Use Permits (DSUPs) for: 1. Metrorail Station, 2. Potomac Yard Park Amendment, and 3. Potomac Greens Park Amendment. Since the November 2015 update, progress has been made on the station design and the pedestrian bridges. The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG) will hold additional community meetings, and AlexEngage will be used to receive community feedback and staff will update City Council and various boards and commissions (See Process Framework slide 3). The DSUP process will begin on February 1, 2016 with the goal of getting City Council approval in June.

Four station enclosures designs are proposed – See presentation.

Kacamburas said City staff is looking at refining design concepts and the pedestrian bridges, and many things will be happening over the next 60-90 days. Staff will continue to update the P&RC monthly.

Znidarsic said that the City has hired consultants Andropogon & Associates for Potomac Greens Park, and Michael Baker for Potomac Yard Park.

Next Steps: Next PYMIG Meeting is February 11 and staff will update P&RC monthly. The DSUP submission process begins in February with an anticipated City Council hearing in June. Staff anticipates a P&RC public hearing on the parks in May prior to the Planning Commission and City Council hearings.

E. Waterfront Plan - Fitzgerald Square Update: Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA and Tony Gammon, Deputy Director, DPI. **See Presentation and Concept Plan.**

Background: Browand said in January 2015, City Council established priorities for implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan: 1. Flood Mitigation Plan, 2. Build Fitzgerald Square, a new public plaza at the foot of King Street made possible by the City's purchase of the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) site in 2015. An interim plaza is being planned because there will be a seven to eight year gap between the time ODBC vacates its current clubhouse site, and when City funds will be available to build the permanent Fitzgerald Square.

Gammon reviewed the Draft Concept Plan for the Interim Fitzgerald Square public plaza, about one acre in size, similar to the size of Market Square. He said two design schemes are proposed, Scheme 1 and Scheme 2 (See presentation). Scheme 1 makes one large continuous plaza, while Scheme 2 divides the space into two unique smaller spaces. He said the City's civic engagement process began last week, and community meetings are scheduled for February and March, with feedback taken through AlexEngage. The Plan will be taken to Planning Commission. The construction process is expected to take about 12 months, and the space might be completed in early 2018.

III. Items for Information:

A. Public Comments-non agenda items:

Bill Rivers, Chair, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA), spoke in support of the proposed Chinguapin 50-meter pool proposal. He said the project has been a great example of a collaborative effort and how public/private partnerships can work. Rivers said he enjoyed working with City staff and thanked Laura Durham, for her work on the project, and in particular staff's efforts in finding lower cost options within or close to the City's CIP budgeted amount.

B. Update on Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center Project:

Commissioner McPherson serves on the Advisory Committee for the Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center Project. He said the current Pre-K5 Patrick Henry School has 667 students, and Alexandria City Public School (ACPS's) objective is to build a new Pre-K8 school which could accommodate up to 800 students. The Advisory Council will meet next Wednesday and hopes to receive information on the Architect. McPherson is following the progress of the new Recreation Center and field. The Department of RPCA staff recommended the Neighborhood Recreation Center Scenario for programming for the new recreation center. Some people wonder why items discussed a year ago are not happening. He will have more information at the next P&RC meeting.

IV. **Items for Action:**

- A. **Approve 2015 CIVIC Award Nominees:** See Staff Report: Rich Brune and Ripley Forbes chaired the Civic Awards Sub-committee. Brune said he and Forbes met and all nominations comply with the guidelines. The Sub-committee recommends all nominees be approved for awards: 1. Catherine Hilliard, Master Community Gardner Program, 2. Paul Linehan, for his work to improve Simpson Dog Park and establishing a public/private partnership, 3. Sue Setliff, for her long-term efforts to improve the ACPS Matthew Maury Schoolyard, and 4. Jody Smolik, for her camp for kids at the Winkler Botanical Preserve. For more information see report.

Action: Brune moved to approve the slate of nominees. McPherson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The awards will be presented at the February 9, 2016, City Council meeting. Browand encouraged Commissioners to attend.

- B. **Approval of Minutes for September 17, 2015, October 15, 2015:**

Action: Brune moved to approve the September 17 and October 15, 2015 minutes, Beggs seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. **RPCA Staff Updates:**

- A. **Director's Report:** James Spengler, Director

FY17 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program: The City Manager will make his recommendations to City Council in early February. The budget is divided into four Focus Area Groups. RPCA falls into: Livable, Green and Prospering City and Healthy and Thriving Residents, and the CIP. Department's direction was to reduce the budget by 5% from 2016 levels, about \$1 million for RPCA.

- B. **Division Updates:** Recreation Services; Park Operations; Public Information, Special Events, Waterfront Operations; Park Planning, Design and Capital Projects. To view full staff reports go to:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDREPORTJANUARY212016.pdf>.

VI. **Commission Business/Reports from Commissioners by District (verbal updates):**

Commissioner Assignments Update: Atkins said the list of Commissioners assignments will be reviewed, and added to next month's meeting agenda.

Youth Sports Advisory Group Update: McPherson said there is a movement to contact the high school coaches to facilitate different things. Last month they held a recognition event for sports groups' volunteer efforts and received the usual field turf presentations.

Brune said planning related to the City's Combined Sewer System is going well and reviewed some of the issues that have been discussed, such as different pipe options and feedback on costs. He said an Old Town group is looking at all City alleys and driveways and recommending checking all impervious surfaces and replacing them with stones or pervious surfaces. He said green infrastructure money might be able to be used for this project.

VII. **Next Meeting:** February 18, 2016, Charles Houston Community Center.

VIII. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.