

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission**

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, July 19, 2012, 7:00 p.m.
Charles Houston Recreation Center
901 Wythe Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Summary Minutes

Commission Members: Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake, Gina Baum, Stephen Beggs, Rich Brune, William Cromley, Robert Moir. **Excused Absences:** Ripley Forbes, Brian McPherson, and John Sullivan.

RPCA Staff: William Chesley, Deputy Director; Cheryl Anne Colton, Acting Deputy Director, Office of the Arts; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing/Special Events/Marina; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development; Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator; Bethany Carton, Park Planner; Dana Wedeles, Park Planner; Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: James Spengler, Director; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director Operations, Cheryl Lawrence, Director Special Events.

Guests: Dave Levy, member of the Holmes Run Park Committee, and the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

- I. **Call to Order by Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake.** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.; she noted that John Sullivan has resigned from the Commission due to moving out of the area.
- II. **Approval of Summary Minutes from June 21, 2012 and formal vote on May 17, 2012 minutes:**
June 21, 2012- Rich Brune moved to approve the minutes as presented; Gina Baum seconded. All were in favor, the minutes were approved. **May 17, 2012-** As there was not a quorum in May; a formal vote was taken on the May minutes. Rich Brune moved to approve the minutes, Gina Baum seconded. All were in favor, the minutes were approved.
- III. **DIVISION UPDATES-** **Please See Full Staff Reports: To view copies of full staff reports go to <http://alexandriava.gov/Departments/Recreation/Commissions/Reports>**
 - A. **Recreation Programs and Service Update** - William Chesley - **See Staff Report. Follow-up from June, discussion on Aquatics Learn to Swim Classes.** The Chair commented on pg. 3 of the report which says that, "Staff is exploring offering learn to swim classes, during non-traditional times in the future to help meet the growing demand for classes". The Chair said that she had discuss with the Mayor at one point on the need do greater outreach to children who do not

know how to swim. It should be a responsibility of our community to make sure every child has access to basic swimming instruction. It will save lives at some point. Some suggestions include; creating alliances with the City's swim programs, when there are vacancies, and collaborating with the City's YMCA. Another idea under discussion with RPCA staff is to trying to get swim instructors to offer programs/classes in high-rises and apartment complexes in the City's West End which have their own facility pools.

- B. **Park Operations Report** – See Staff Report by Dinesh Tiwari, new Deputy Director Operations: Robert Taylor, Division Chief, Natural Resources gave the report for Mr. Tiwari who was attending a conference. Taylor- reported that Operations staff are still responding to the June 29, Derecho Storm Event –levels are gradually coming down, there are still some residual issues, such as downed trees, which have had a major impact on operations (Please see report for more info.)

Archeology Work at Ft. Ward Park: - See Staff Report- the report provides an update on the ongoing Archeological work at Ft. Ward. Archeologist have determined 16 locations to be actual burial sites”. In response to a question from the Chair about correlation of physically located grave sites to those indicated through the use of ground sensing radar, Durham explained that the area where the investigation shows occurring is in fact a cemetery identified by descendants and that currently up to 23 gravesites have been reported found.

Mt. Jefferson/ W&OD Greenway Update- See Staff Report - Staff is continuing - outreach and coordination with neighboring residents as they update their strategy for management of this linear park. The Chair said she would like Commissioner Beggs to be involved with this project as he was active on this prior to joining the commission. She suggested Beggs meet with Deputy Director Tiwari and walk the site. Durham said this is a joint effort with the Neighborhood Association.

- C. **Office of the Arts Update-** Cheryl Anne Colton, Acting Deputy Director, Office of the Arts - See Staff Report. A discussion was held about the proposed Draft Public Arts Policy, the amount of funds requested from developers for relative to various types of development projects; the definition of what would be considered public art for certain projects, and if this would include landscaping elements that might be considered art. Cromley- commented that the definition of art should be very broad, so that it doesn't, limit the imagination of the developer choosing the art.

- D. **Park Planning Updates** – Ron Kagawa and Division Team - See Staff Reports. **Division Updates:** Please note that some items were discussed out of agenda order.

- **Aquatics Update:** see below.
- **Park Master Planning & Standards Manual: Presentation by Bethany Carton, Park Planner. Carton-** said the creation of the Park Facility Standards Manual (Standards) was a two year process. This is the first edition of the

Standards, developed for use on public projects, and also as a reference for private projects. The Standards were created through a team effort led by RPCA and include input from all divisions and other City departments. Digital copies of the [Standards Manual, July 2012](#), were distributed to Commission members, additionally the information will be put on the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities website.

Questions and Comments:

The Chair said that the Standards Manual is a very professional document and staff should be proud of their work. Over time as elements in parks are replaced having the “Standards” will make staff’s job easier. The Standards will limit the debate over new or replacement items, and also allow RCPA to keep stock of certain replacement/repair parts. The Standards will also be a helpful resource to developers charged with designing and constructing parks.

- **Summer 2012 Park Planning Interns:** See Staff Report-Mr. Kagawa introduced two summer interns, Amanda Foran, and Eduardo Diaz-Etchevehere. Alexander Ray was not in attendance. The Chair and Commission welcomed them. For more info and bios, please see report.
- **Active Park Projects including Capital Improvement Projects- Update:** See Staff Report.
- **Active CFMP Projects Report Update:** See Staff Report.
- **Long Range Park Planning Presentation** – Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, gave a presentation on: **Planning and Capital Improvements Projects** (See Staff Report). Wedeles- Park Planning staff has collected a lot of data in the last two years: the 2011 Needs Assessment; the Parks Inventory, and now the creation of the Parks “Standards Manual”. History-Since1940, every 10 years a new Park Plan has been done; the last one was completed in 2002, which was the Comprehensive Open Space Master Plan. Staff decided that for 2012, rather than doing one large document, staff will create smaller plans that are easier to implement and are more detailed.

Overarching Park Planning Goal: *Ensure a citywide open space system that equitably responds to the City’s recreational and natural resource needs while efficiently utilizing available resource with three Initial Objectives; 1. Determine opportunities for improving existing open space and recreational facilities; 2. Create individual Park Plans based on typology to guide the future development of existing open space and 3. to allocate resources according to existing needs as well as future goals (see presentation).*

Citywide Park Framework- constitutes the first phase of the planning process. The goal is to provide a management framework for large (over 20 acres), multi-use, municipally-owned parks that best balances the City’s recreational environmental and passive use needs. These include: Ben Brenman/Booth/Cameron Station Park, Chinquapin, Hensley, Holmes Run, Potomac Yard Park/Simpson Stadium Park, and Four Mile Run. Fort Ward and the Waterfront Parks are being evaluated through a separate management planning process.

Wedeles- Public workshops are scheduled for the fall. For each park two public workshops will be held. Over the winter staff will analyze information and at the end of winter/spring hold another six meeting to share information gathered and get feedback. Using this information, staff is looking to produce a programmatic framework plan in the summer 2013 to serve as guideline for future funds and plans.

- **Jones Point Park Update:** - **See Staff Report** - the park opened on July 5 for public use, and is being managed by the National Park Service (NPS).Dedication Ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, September 22, at 10 a.m. further information on the ceremony will be distributed.
- **RPCA/ACPS Athletics Fields Exercise Update-** This item was discussed later in the meeting near the end of the agenda.
- **Potomac Yards Landbay K- Update.** The Chair requested that a revote be taken on the Potomac Yard Park North Pond Amendment from the June meeting, because there was not a quorum. Duncan Blair, Attorney for Potomac Yard Development, LLC made a presentation in June on a redesign of pond and requested the commission's support. Rich Brune moved to support the redesign as proposed in June, Bob Moir Seconded the motion. All were in favor. **Action:** the Chair will draft a letter stating that the P&RC approves the reconfigured design as presented by Attorney Duncan Blair, at the June meeting.
- **Progress Updates-Selected Projects 2012:** See Presentation.
- **Miracle Field at Lee Center- Kagawa** - Construction begins this summer and the project will be completed early September. The Commission held a discussion regarding the proposed name of the field: the Kelly Cares Miracle Field. Moir suggested the P&RC write a letter in support of the name to City Council. The Chair said in past years the PRC has stated it generally prefers that parks be named for their locations, defining a place, rather than after people. The P&RC has not weighed in on naming since Ben Brenman Park, having the Commission decide on the naming of places puts them in an awkward position of deciding the worthiness of individuals. The City currently has a Naming Committee. There are several proposals currently under consideration.
Moir- agrees in principal, but asked if he could poll individual Commission members for their opinion. He said there will be a wall with the names of major donors, and a home plate with major/minor donors.
Cromley- no single person can be credited for the field, however he doesn't feel it is inappropriate.
The Chair said she would write a personal letter of support for the name an encouraged others on the Commission to do that same. No action was taken by the Commission.
- **Witter Fields-** 80% complete. Pavilion are up, and the hope is that the softball field (sod) will be laid within a week. Work should be complete in the fall. Kagawa said due to storms a slight delay in installation of the lights at site is expected. Moir- T&ES put lights on Duke St. but they are not yet operations.

Kagawa - signalized intersection lights have been installed by the contractor. Chair- asked when permitted activities will start on the two rectangular fields. Carton- staff is working with Recreation Services- anticipate fall.

- **Aquatics Plan Discussion follow-up from June:** Laura Durham gave a brief update on the Aquatics Plan discussions. Over the past month staff worked on developing a range of smaller options. Staff is ready to schedule initial meeting with stakeholders.
 - **RPCA/ACPS Athletic Fields Exercise Update:** This item was discussed near the end of agenda.
- E. **Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront** – Jack Browand – Please See Staff Report which details Waterfront Operations, Special Events, and other information.

Waterfront Discussion Items:

The Oronoco (former Sheet Metal Workers Building) - A pre-construction/ community meeting with EYA the developer is scheduled for July 24, 5:30 pm. Baum – inquired as to whether any of the trees along this site can be saved and/or repurposed. Browand - said he spoke with the City Arborist, and saving and or relocating these trees along the waterfront may not be possible for several reasons, including their size.

Oronoco St. Outfall Environmental Remediation Project - See Staff Report. Expected to begin in fall in October.

Beachcomber Property- an RPF is expected to go out in September/October. Cromley asked if the money will go back into the OSF, if this property is sold or leased. Browand – the money from the lease is to be returned to the Open Space Fund.

Union Street Corridor Study: Browand said the study is underway. The Chair said that the P&RC should weigh in on the Union St. Corridor Project with regards to Windmill Hill Park. The Chair said this item should be brought before the Park Commission at the next meeting.

Windmill Hill Park Safety Fence - See Staff Report - Browand - four designs are being considered. A public comment period will be held to receive community input. The fence design will go back to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) in September.

Art League Building proposed redevelopment- along the Waterfront. The Chair mentioned an article in the “Living Section” of the Washington Post that said this was going to the BAR next week, this item got pulled from action but there is going to be a public meeting. Baum- said there will be a work session with multiple options. The Chair encouraged P&RC interested members to attend the upcoming meetings.

Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) discussion – Baum- said that ODBC has talked about their desire to install a new fence around their existing parking lot. Baum asked if this item comes up during the Commission’s recess how should it be handled. The Chair provided background information for the Commission. The Chair said that if something comes up during the Commissions recess she will let commission members know.

IV. Director’s Report - James Spengler- absent (verbal updates):

A. **Update on Waterfront Properties:** The Director was not present for the meeting. Waterfront Property items were discussed previously- See Waterfront Discussion Items above.

V. Annual Report and Attendance Report due July 27 to Rose Williams Boyd,

Secretary Boards and Commissions. Annual Report- Jack Browand and the Chair worked on the annual report for the period of July 2011 to June 30, 2012. A draft copy was submitted to the Commission for review; members noted some additional changes. Comments should be sent to the Chair by next week, the final report is due July 27 to Rose Boyd. The Chair asked that the draft report be sent out electronically again tomorrow, allowing one week for reviewing, the Chair will complete the revisions. Fort Ward- includes Linda Reiss as an outside representation, Ad Hoc representative of the Commission.

Attendance Report: Letter received from the City Clerk’s Office, City Code required 75% attendance and it is not clear if it does not matter if absences are excused or unexcused. Four people did not meet 75% for the 12 month period. Two students: Timmons and Vogt who have now graduated from T.C. Williams H.S.; Commissioner Sullivan, who has recently resigned because he is moving out of City – leaving a vacancy on District III, and Ripley Forbes. The Chair discussed with Director the above and with Mr. Forbes as to how this will be handled. She will contact the City staff at the City Manager’s office who deals with this and get a clarification. **Rich Brune, Secretary, Park Commission**-read an excerpt from a copy of the City Code. Chapter 4 General Provisions. Item #2- states “the Committee Head may excuse the absences from an appointee from a meeting or meetings, if informed by the appointee of the absence in a reasonable period of time, in advance of meeting such excused absences shall not be considered by the Committee Head when preparing the appointee’s attendance record but shall be noted as excused absences on the report.” Commissioner Brune, Secretary, stated that if the City is changing its policy whereby excused or unexcused absences do not matter then they will also need to change the City Code as well before this is enforced.

The Chair noted that July is the start of the 1st meeting for the coming next year.

VI. Report from Commissioners (verbal updates):

A. **Waterfront Commission** - Gina Baum. Several issues were discussed today, no further comments.

B. **Youth Sport Committee** - Bob Moir - No report.

- C. **Four Mile Run** - Ripley Forbes (absent). Chair said there is a meeting tomorrow of the agents groups to discuss design of Pedestrian Bridge, the bridge is currently unfunded; the design must be completed first.
- D. **Freedman's Cemetery** - Bob Moir - no update.
- E. **ACPS & Capital Improvements** - Judy Guse-Noritake- Jefferson Houston School is moving along fine. She will reconnect with the Chair of the School Board soon. Kagawa said a new Director of Facilities, Bill Finn was hired by ACPS.
- F. **Jones Point Park Liaison Group** - Judy Guse-Noritake.- Discussed- See Item #
- G. **Community Gardens Policy** - Judy Guse-Noritake- one meeting held to date.
- H. **Ft. Ward- Ripley Forbes, Bob Moir**- Moir - meeting held last week. Linda Reiss presented her portion of the suggested Management Plan- no concerns. Durham said RPF is in Purchasing Dept., goal to get someone on board by fall. The Group is working on individual chapters of the Management Plan.
- I. **ACPS School Projects**- Judy Guse-Noritake.
- J. **Jefferson Houston School** - William Cromley- the Concept Plan for Jefferson Houston School was passed by the BAR last night. 4-1 instead of 7-1, several members had to recuse themselves.
- K. **Beauregard Corridor Plan Task Force**- Stephen Beggs- Attended the most recent meeting, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, did a good job presenting open space issues. People need to be informed that there is a certain amount of open space required.

RPCA/ACPS Athletics Fields Exercise Discussion: Moir- requested that RPCA make a formal presentation to the Park Commission. Wedeles- said the document is currently in draft form, the final documents will be available after staff meets with the Youth Sports Advisory Board again. **Action:** RPCA Staff will bring the information to the Commission on September 20, 2012 meeting for review update.

VII. **Public Comments on Other Topics:** David Levy, member of the Holmes Run Park Committee and also the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, asked about the status of the Holmes Run Park Committee's Citizen Request for fitness equipment along the Holmes Run Trail. Durham responded that she has spoken with the applicants and notified them that the PRC approved their request contingent on matching funding from the community.

VIII. Agenda items for September 20, 2012 meeting and location. Location Lee Center. Topics: Miracle Field, Union Street Corridor.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.