

Cameron Run Park Public Meeting 1

3/2/2017

Beatley Central Library 5005 Duke St, Alexandria, VA 22304



Attendee Comments:

1. A resident of The Townes at Cameron Parke asked if Lake Cook is man-made in reference to the RPA surrounding the lake and the restrictions the RPA sets for future development. He was questioning if the RPA was legitimate since it's on a man-made water body.
 - a. Jesse Maines (Division Chief of Environmental Services, Storm water Management for City of Alexandria) explained that Lake Cook was built at the convergence of Cameron Run and Strawberry Run in the 1970's so it was assigned a Resource Protection Area (RPA) similar to a natural stream.
2. The same resident asked Jesse if dredging Lake Cook would be part of the improvements plan.
 - a. Jesse answered that the lake would be dredged and the soil would be used elsewhere in the city (he is not sure of location) to the best ecological benefit.
3. Cameron Run Park is only used three months out of the year. We need to look at alternatives for year-round use.
4. Hensley is disconnected and we should look for ways to better connect Cameron Run and Hensley Parks
5. Connection between Cameron Run and Claremont Natural Area should be investigated.

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6. Paul Gilbert, NOVA Parks representative: "NOVA Parks manages the site. It's to the city's benefit to have NOVA Parks do maintenance. The city built Lake Cook for storm water management."
 - a. A resident of The Townes at Cameron Parke quickly responded "So why is [NOVA Parks] not maintaining the northeast corner? Why is that not included?"
 - b. "Care of the park is not great. Has anyone located the original lease?" The person speaking did not see it on the city website
 - i. City of Alexandria representative said that he would locate it and upload it to the project site.
 - c. Another attendee asked NOVA Parks representative, Paul Gilbert, if the park authority would be open to any alternative plans.
 - i. He responded by saying that "everything is on the table and we're listening and taking notes... we don't have a plan. Our previous proposal fell through."
 1. Is the [Master Blaster] waterslide going to be pursued moving forward?
 2. He responded saying that the Master Blaster is only one of many options on the table going forward.
7. Jack Browand, RPCA, interposed to clarify, saying that the reason we're here today is to explore whether or not the current use is the best and highest use for the space.
8. Could the RPA affect the [proposed] Lake Cook improvements?
 - a. No, everything in the Lake Cook Improvement Plan is an approved activity in the RPA.
9. Could parking expand into the RPA?
 - a. Paul (NOVA Parks rep): "No, but we can still develop some things within the RPA like pervious surfaces, picnic table areas, etc.
 - b. How about a parking structure in the northeast corner for more space in the park?
 - i. It would require a special DSUP.
 - c. Why can't you reduce parking now and provide shuttle service from Eisenhower West area to Cameron Run Park?
 - i. John Fennell: "The park gets such great use in the summer. Off site parking with shuttle service should be considered during peak times."
 - d. Does the existing parking trap sediment now?
 - i. Jesse: "Some. [Cameron Run Park] had some storm water controls at the time [it was built]. It wasn't required before."
10. Are public safety issues for Cameron Run Regional Park same as for other City of Alexandria Parks?

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- a. Yes, though its isolated location can add extra challenges.
 - b. Great Waves, mini golf and batting cages are locked when not in use.
11. Townes at Cameron Parke resident: "Ethanol tankers sit right along the park and homes. It's a major consideration for us."
 - a. Seen break-ins in the area and a small fire – concerned about public safety.
12. Is anyone taking upcoming traffic from Eisenhower East and Eisenhower West plans into consideration? Will there be an expansion of Eisenhower Ave?
 - a. Dana Wedeles, RPCA, explained how new streets in the Eisenhower West plans will be parallel to Eisenhower Ave and new connections to be made to the north will help alleviate traffic on Eisenhower Ave. There are no plans to expand Eisenhower Avenue's width.
 - b. Who are the traffic planners?
 - i. RK&K see:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/EisenhowerWest/EWTSSAPReportFINAL11092015redux.pdf>
 - c. Concern for maintenance of natural area and planted areas around Lake Cook. Would like to see increased use of native species around Lake Cook.
 - i. Jesse: We have worked with the Park Department. We have value in Lake Cook – we are using all native plants and an aquatic bench around the perimeter of the lake to improve the habitat.
 - ii. Is the [proposed] track along Lake Cook impervious or dirt?
 1. Jesse: The track will be pervious asphalt.
13. Representative from the Alexandria Soccer Association – "Our programs are growing and we are running out of space for our programs."
 - a. Existing space is underutilized.
 - b. Finances are getting tighter.
14. The water park is a pretty unique and interesting use for the space. As one of the richest and most affluent communities, it would be a shame to replace it with something more generic.
15. I've been to Great Waves and have been astonished by how many families and kids were there. It's an uncommon amenity.
 - a. To be within walking distance of a water park is good.
 - b. Hate to see it go away to be replaced with more of the same [kind of parks].
 - c. The land is worth more today than it was 40 years ago. Alexandria open space is becoming increasingly valuable as the city becomes more developed. More and more kids are encouraged to join organized sports.
 - i. If the space was converted to synthetic sports fields, we could use it year-round.

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- ii. We need a better deal – keep the facility the way it is and use the profits to make the park better.
 - 1. If we keep the park, we need a better deal so that City of Alexandria gets more money from the revenue generated at Great Waves to improve our own [Alexandria] parks.
- 16. Increased traffic on Eisenhower is negatively impacting our home values.
- 17. Thinking parochially, just in the City of Alexandria, we don't have a lot of space. Nothing like [Great Waves] is as affordable.
- 18. NOVA Parks had a discussion a year ago about adding an attraction to the water park that was quiet tall. Is NOVA Parks still planning to make these improvements?
 - a. Paul: "Zoning is 15' height by right, 30' with special permission. The plans for the Master Blaster adhered to all the zoning laws. The current design is not off the table but it is part of the discussion."
- 19. New parents to the West Side: "We were looking forward to using the water park with our baby [when the time comes] and are disappointed to hear it might go away but we are open to new ideas as well."
 - a. Great Waves is viewed as an amenity.
- 20. Would like to see a different use.
 - a. Similar use, still family draw
- 21. Who goes to the Water Park?
 - a. Two studies:
 - i. 2016 – 60% of city residents visit Cameron Run on a regular basis
- 22. Could we use the money that goes to NOVA Parks for something else?
 - a. Let's keep using the park and make a deal to have [some] revenue derived from the park stay in Alexandria so we can improve our own parks
- 23. "Of the fees that the city pays NOVA Parks does that offset the entry fee?"
 - a. Paul Gilbert, NOVA Parks: "NOVA Parks charges an in-jurisdiction rate and an out-of-jurisdiction rate upon entry."
 - b. Jack Browand, RPCA: "Alexandria residents are just as much resident of the other six jurisdictions when it comes to belonging to NOVA Parks."
- 24. Strawberry Hill Resident: I've been to [Great Waves] Water Park many times and I'm looking toward using this unique amenity that's so close.
- 25. Cameron Station Resident: I'd like to see something like trails that are free to enter. Something more for adults.
- 26. Is the money we pay to NOVA Parks independent of Cameron Run Park?
 - a. Anyone can go to a NOVA Parks facility, but the entrance fee would be different from a resident of one of the six jurisdictions.

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27. Married, no children resident of Cameron Station: "I've never been to the park but I came because I was warned that there could be new development. I'm glad to hear that new buildings are off the table. I'd like to see trails for hiking and bikes. I'm tired of paying taxes for kids' parks when the roads are terrible and falling apart."
28. Del Ray resident: has teenagers, used to go to the water park but not anymore. Still thinks it is a terrific amenity. Would like to see more trails and more use around the edges that seem to be neglected or not maintained.
29. 20 year resident: used mini-golf and batting cages for little league. Sees a lot of empty spaces on the property. Any alternate use to get more use out of the space would be helpful.
30. Confused about [sports] fields and why people can't just play a pickup game. Instead, they have to reserve it for a later time.
 - a. We need more of them in the city
 - i. "People use the fields to the point where they are degraded and other can't use it."
 1. Dana Wedeles, RPCA: "Hensley Park has drainage issues but it will be renovated in the next two years with new drainage solutions."
 - ii. "We don't have lights on our fields, so between October and March, the fields go unused. We live in one of the wealthiest places in the country; we could afford to put lights on our fields but we don't want them."
31. Resident of Cameron Station: If the Water Park is not here in 4 to 5 years, is there any priority for what the city would want the park to look like?
 - a. No, you're part of the process now.
32. NOVA Parks rep, "If Cameron Run Regional Park isn't here, then prices go up for Alexandria residents at all NOVA Parks facilities."
33. How do we want Cameron Run Park used?
34. Resident: "We (City of Alexandria) should get a better deal [monetarily]."

Flip Chart Exercises:

How many people have visited Cameron Run Park?

- This year: 15
- Last year: 8
- Last 5 years: 15

What do you do at Cameron Run Park?

- Walk
- Swim

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- Batting cages
- Jog
- Mini-golf
- Playground
- Picnic
- Eat at the café
- Fish
- Cyclists stop and use restrooms

Why don't you go there?

- Poor wayfinding
- For kids
- Sanitation of Great Waves
- Upkeep
- Cleanliness
- Safety in parking lot

What works (today)?

- Bike paths
- Fishing at Lake Cook
- Use water park
 - Slides
- Batting Cages
- Mini-golf
- Natural Area
- Playground

What does not work (today)?

- Trash collection
 - Maintenance at parking area and along the stream to the north
- Sidewalk in front of park needs maintenance
- Signage for the park
- Parking – main lot
 - Northeast corner lot
- Invasive species planting in the park

What do you want more of at Cameron Run (tomorrow)?

- Year-round active use
- Ice skating rink / Sled run
- Winter use

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- Native plants & wildlife
 - Pine trees
- Bathrooms
- Natural trails for bikes
- Indoor recreation
- Indoor pool
- Shade trees
- Shade structures
- Lazy river
- Futsal course
- Small spaces/meditation field
- Bicycle pump track
- Skate Park
- Dog training area
- Bikeshare station@ Cameron Park and Hensley Field
- Crosswalk to connect to eastbound bus stop
- Improved east bound bus stop
- Wayfinding directing non-motorized patrons
- Improved Bike parking
- Bike path through Hensley connecting to Claremont Avenue to Eisenhower Avenue
- Reduce speed on Eisenhower from 35 to 25 mph.
- Vehicle Parking Garage in leu of surface parking lot
- Repave sidewalk in front of park.

