OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
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December 22, 2010

Mr. Tom Fulton, Chair
Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Stakeholders Advisory Group
4020 Ellicott Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

Dear Mr. Fulton:

In response to your letter, Jim Spengler, Rich Baier and Lance Mallamo and I have talked and/or met on several occasions to address the questions raised in your letter. The answer to your question about the process and timeline relates largely to budget resources and the timing of their availability.

1. The Office of Historic Alexandria reports that they should be complete with the first stage of the archeological examination to confirm the location of marked and unmarked graves previously identified through ground penetrating radar (GPR), written documentation or oral communication at Fort Ward Park by the end of this month or early January, weather permitting. The recent heavy rains and extremely cold weather have had some impact on the timeframe for the work at the site. You have likely been receiving the Pam Cressey update reports of their work as the archeological contractor has been progressing on the review of the findings which derived from the GPR results. OHA is still evaluating the mixed findings resulting from the GPR survey performed in 2009, and may revise the archaeological methodology in future stages of the project. However, the next phase of the archeological work that was contemplated includes the historical research work outlined in Tasks 1-1 d., f., g, and h, as well as Task 1-4, and 1-6 in Stage One, as outlined in the *Request for Proposals Number 00000104 Documentary Study and Archaeological Evaluation for Fort Ward Historical Park* (RFP) dated April 7, 2010 (a copy of which can be found on the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group website of RPCA). These remaining Stage One tasks are expected to cost approximately $20,000 to $30,000. After the completion of the remaining Stage One elements of the project, the tasks outlined in Stages Two and Three of the RFP are anticipated, and these work programs are projected to cost $230,000 to $270,000. Funding for these two stages is not in hand and would need to be considered as part of the FY 2012 and future budget processes.

2. The Master Plan for Fort Ward Park and Museum area is one that will take a combination of City staff and outside consultants to develop. It is estimated that this study would take some $100,000 to $150,000 in new budget resources to fund. Since neither the Department of Recreation and Parks and Cultural Resources, nor the Office of Historic Alexandria, have funds

for a Master Plan study, those funds would need to be considered to be added in a subsequent year's City budget. The earliest that could occur would be in FY 2012 where budget planning is currently underway. However, to be frank, getting an item such as this (or the next two stages of the archaeological work described above) funded, given the tight budget situation that FY 2012, represents a significant challenge. If the Master Plan study was funded in FY 2012, then it would take about a year to complete (depending on the process used), and then because any capital and operating budget needs would likely be not known when the FY 2013 budget was prepared in mid-FY2012, funding for implementing study recommendations would need to wait for consideration in FY 2014 at the earliest.

3. The situation with the stormwater mitigation study funding is better news. Funding exists ($35,000) in the current City stormwater budget to be able undertake such a mitigation study (which would look at the stream and runoff on the eastern side of the park where the erosion and flooding concerns have been raised by many). The study would look at daylighting the stream and making other related improvements to it and the immediately adjacent area. The study would also encompass reviewing what could be done by homeowners on their own property to help reduce flooding in the Park as well as on their own and their neighbors' properties. State grant funding may also potentially be able to be obtained to implement the public property elements of this study. If further funding is needed then those budget dollars would need to be sought in a future City Capital Improvement Program budget.

   It is my understanding that the discussion to date has focused in part on integrating the stormwater study into the Master Plan study. In one way, it is logical for the two to be combined. However, that would likely result in what could be a significant delay in the stormwater study, as it awaits funding for the Master Plan study. In the meantime the flooding and erosion issues would not be further addressed beyond temporary measures such as hay bales. A second possibility that we would like the Stakeholders Advisory Group to consider, would be to go ahead with the stormwater study this fiscal year which would precede the Master Plan study. We propose that thinking, the stream and drainage shed on the eastern side of the park is not likely to change materially (in regard to major structures, etc) in any Master Plan, and therefore the outcome of the stormwater study would not likely be that much different if done before the Master Plan study, compared to what it might be if done as part of the Master Plan study. If a stormwater study precedes the Master Plan study then the Master Plan study would need to assume the stormwater study outcome as a given. There are, however, some overlapping issues that would need to be addressed such as the playground equipment location. Any study in the Fort Ward Park and Museum site area would need to be coordinated by the three departments, where I think coordination has improved since you and your neighbors began raising concerns. While there is always room for improvement, from what I hear and see, is that coordination is better.

   We would appreciate if the Stakeholder Advisory Group could discuss these stormwater study options, and let the three department heads and me know of your thoughts and recommendation in this regard. Also, as the FY 2012 proposed budget unfolds you and other interested parties are welcome to weigh in on the proposed budget and to inform Council of your budget priorities.

Finally, I want to thank you and all the other members of the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Stakeholder Advisory Group for your time and efforts into maintaining, preserving and improving the Fort Ward Park and Museum area.

Sincerely,

Mark Jinks
Deputy City Manager

cc:

Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services