EXHIBIT NO. 1

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2-13-01

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER ps

SUBJECT: STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR A COMMUNITY CENTER AT CAMERON STATION

ISSUE: City Council receipt of the staff recommendations on the planning process for a community center at Cameron Station.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive this report, and docket it for consideration at the February 27 legislative meeting.

I am recommending that Council defer establishing a task force to plan for a community center in Ben Brenman Park in Cameron Station and, as an alternative, approve staff proceeding with a City-wide assessment of recreation and leisure needs and facilities that would include the following elements:

a. conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of recreation and leisure services, activities and facilities, and a comprehensive plan to address those needs, to be undertaken by staff, a consultant and a City Manager-appointed steering committee, as described below in this memorandum; and

b. considering the results of the open space study, which is underway and determining how the results of that study affect the recreation and leisure needs of the City.

Staff would return to the City Council in the spring of 2002 with the results of the City-wide needs assessment and with recommendations, including whether to construct a new community center and, if so, whether it should be located at Ben Brenman Park or elsewhere in the City.

While significant effort has gone into the development of a concept for a community center at Ben Brenman Park, I believe it is essential for the City to undertake a professional and comprehensive analysis at this time to ensure that our facility planning will address the needs of the entire City for years to come. This process will enable us not only to address changes in our community since the Cameron Station community center concept was discussed with Council in 1996 and 1997, but also to provide a framework to balance and prioritize the use of limited

resources (i.e., available land and available funding) for new public facilities, whether they be community centers, schools, additional passive or active open space, or other high priority facilities. The analysis will also incorporate the latest City demographic data from the 2000 Census, which will be available beginning in the spring of 2001.

BACKGROUND: The proposal for the development of a multi-purpose, multi-generational community center at Cameron Station is the result of three separate, yet related events: (1) the Commission on Aging's recommendation from 1985 that Alexandria have a senior center; (2) residents in the West End of the City requesting more recreational opportunities, particularly in the area south of Duke Street and west of Van Dorn Street, and a neighborhood recreation facility, particularly to serve the large youth population in this area of the City; and (3) the National Park Service deeding over to the City, in 1997, approximately 62 acres of open space at Cameron Station for recreational uses as a result of the 1988 Base Realignment and Closure Act.

The Commission on Aging, in its 1985 Annual Report, recommended that there be a multi-purpose senior center to provide services and activities for Alexandria's growing senior population. In 1996, the Commission on Aging submitted its "Senior Center Study Report" to City Council in which it defined a multi-purpose senior center as "a facility in which the aging of the community gather to fulfill their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs. It is an accessible entry point into the aging network's continuum of care, providing a broad range of activities, information, referral and access to community resources that help seniors remain in their own homes with independence and wellness." The 1996 report also recommended that a multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation facility be built in the west end of the City and that the Commission be represented on planning groups for City facilities. Over the last few years, the Commission on Aging has made a number of proposals for beginning the planning of a multi-purpose, multi-generational community center at Cameron Station that would include a senior center component.

In 1995 and 1996, the Park and Recreation Commission reviewed plans for recreational uses for the 62 acres of open space at the redeveloped Cameron Station, including converting the old Cameron Station Administration Building to a recreation center (which was later determined to not be financially feasible). During the course of the Commission's public hearings on the various plans, public comment focused on specific recreational needs/interests in the west end, such as an indoor track, a rowing facility, more courts, a gymnasium, and senior facilities, with the largest interest in a neighborhood recreation facility for West End children. In March 1996, the Park and Recreation Commission reached a consensus on the need for a neighborhood recreation center in the West End with "Cameron Station not necessarily the best location" and "general desirability for a multi-use facility to be constructed on the site at a future date, to include running track, concession areas, game rooms, meeting rooms, multi-purpose rooms, locker and rest rooms, and ample parking." In the final Commission motion passed on March 26, 1996, the Commission stated that it "generally endorses and supports the open space uses, as expressed in the working plan for Cameron Station, and specifically reserves for further study and examination the appropriate constructed recreational uses and recommends that City Council

undertake a professional study to assess what constructed recreational uses could and should occur on the site."

In April 1996, during the approval of the proposed plans for what was then referred to as the East End and West End Parks in Cameron Station, City Council established a task force to "look at, in general, the concepts of a multi-generational, mixed use facility at Cameron Station or potentially another site if they so desire, with a report back to Council in October 1996." In September 1996, this task force recommended, on a vote of 7 to1, that a two-story, 60,000 square foot multi-use facility be located in the East End Park. At its October 17, 1996 meeting, the Park and Recreation Commission voted 5 to 3 not to adopt the task force report (they wanted more information on costs, funding availability and plans for schools in the west end) and to have a work session with City Council. On October 23, 1996, City Council received the final report from the task force and requested staff to review the recommendations of the Task force, to prepare a fiscal analysis and to schedule a work session with the Park and Recreation Commission after the staff analysis.

On February 11, 1997, City Council held a work session on the plans for recreational uses at Cameron Station. At the legislative meeting, Council received the staff response to the Task force recommendations and "endorsed, in concept, a plan to construct within a four to six year period, a smaller scale multi-use, multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation facility in the East End Park in Cameron Station" and included, as part of the six year Capital Improvement Program in the FY 1998 budget, $5,000 in FY 2003 for future planning and development of the recreation facility. In the FY 1999 budget process, this preliminary planning funding was increased to $20,000 and, in FY 2000, the amount was increased again to $25,000, and the funding has always remained scheduled in FY 2003.

On May 5, 1999, City Council included in the adoption of the FY 2000 budget, the designation of "$25,000 within Contingent Reserves for preliminary design for the multi-purpose/multi-generational community center at Cameron Station. These monies are to remain in Contingent Reserves until the completion of the Ramsay Recreation Center." The Ramsay Recreation Center was completed in the fall of 2000; however, some of the new and expanded program offerings have only begun in January 2001.

On May 23, 2000, in response to a letter from Connie West, written on behalf of the Holmes Run Park Committee, calling for a City Council-appointed task force of citizens to begin the planning of the community center, City Council voted 6 to 0 to examine the possibility of forming a Task force in January 2001 that would look into a community center at Ben Brenman Park. At its May 23 legislative meeting, Councilman Speck noted: "there are several things that are really significant to this planning that Council has not yet addressed. The monies that have been set aside may very well be used, when Ramsay is complete and some other facilities have completed all of their changes and modifications, to do a very thorough and professional needs assessment of the whole area to determine what needs there are and what needs are being unmet."

DISCUSSION: As evidenced by the chronology above, much time and effort have been devoted by many people to bring us to this point, which demonstrates the sincere desire on the part of all involved to do what is best for the City and its residents. However, proper planning for the City's future recreation and leisure needs requires that we take a careful, in-depth look at where we are and where we want to go, in terms of City-provided recreational and leisure services and facilities, before concluding that a new community center should be constructed and that it should be built at Cameron Station.

With regard to facility and program planning, it is essential that we first identify the needs we are trying to meet and the facilities (existing or new) that will best meet those needs, taking into account what the City has done to date and the City's ability to finance both additional capital and on-going operating costs now and into the future.

Since the initiation of the proposal to build a community center at Cameron Station, the City has made considerable progress in upgrading our recreation facilities and in adding new programming. The Nannie J. Lee and Mt. Vernon Recreation Centers have been renovated, and the construction of the new Ramsay Recreation Center was completed this fall. The Recreation Department has added new programming for seniors and for youth. Recreation centers have been opened earlier in the day to accommodate senior programming (e.g., moving the seniors from the Nicholas Colasanto Senior Center to the renovated Mt. Vernon Recreation Center). Planning is underway for the renovation of the Durant Center, and this project is anticipated to be under construction during 2001. The goal of these efforts has been to make our major neighborhood recreation centers more "multi-purpose" and "multi-generational," so they can better serve City residents and create convenient neighborhood centers for seniors and others with limited transportation options, and to keep Chinquapin as the centrally located, destination recreation center for the entire City.

There remain, of course, unmet recreation and leisure needs, particularly in the West End and particularly for residents who live in apartment/condominium complexes. The needs assessment, in addition to identifying those unmet needs, will help us evaluate how we can prioritize and address those needs, and incorporate new programmatic approaches as appropriate.

With regard to senior programming and a senior center, it is important to note that the concept of a senior center incorporates elements that differ from the current programs for seniors offered by the Recreation Department. For example, the furnishings in a senior center are generally more suited to older adults, as compared to furnishings that can withstand the heavy wear and tear of a wide range of recreation center users. In addition, programming typically incorporates a meal, and health care or wellness screening services may also be offered. The City currently funds two senior centers - Charles Houston and St. Martin de Porres. These programs provide a social gathering place for seniors, provide a hot meal, and also offer recreational/leisure activities. These senior centers are a program of the Office of Aging and Adult Services within the Department of Human Services, and transportation is provided to these centers.

As the City's senior population increases, we must assess our current programming for seniors and plan for future programming, in light of the new and changing needs and the changing demographics of this population. The Commission on Aging's 1996 Senior Center Study Report pointed out that: "The most significant change in the population of older Americans will come about as a result of the aging of the 'baby boomers.' The baby boomers have characteristics that contrast with the elderly of today and will require major adjustments in our senior center operations. The 'new' elderly will be more highly educated, more ethnically and racially diverse, healthier and have higher expectations regarding service quality, access and availability. Senior centers will have to change activities and marketing strategies to attract 'young' seniors who are more financially secure or risk becoming service providers only to the poor, disabled, and oldest residents."

In the Commission on Aging's 1996 Report, the Commission also noted that the City's senior programming tended to attract older, low-income participants, and the Commission suggested a continuum of programs to attract a more diverse range of participants. The Commission also suggested that the program at Charles Houston could be enhanced if the senior center space were enlarged.

More recently, various proposals have been suggested for the desired size and features of a senior/community center as envisioned at Cameron Station. Community members have expressed a desire for a facility of 25,000 to 35,000 square feet that includes an indoor track or walkway; multi-purpose rooms and classrooms; game and activity rooms, including woodworking; and other features. With the exception of the indoor track and woodworking, we note that there are existing City facilities that already include many of these desired features. Other features, such as arts and crafts classes, are provided not only by the City's Recreation Department, but also by private groups in the City, such as The Art League.

With regard to leisure services overall, it is important to note that the City's Library system is also undergoing a continued period of change, and the public libraries are an important component in the overall continuum of leisure services available to children, adults and seniors. The Alexandria Library Board is in the process of developing its new five-year master plan for library services that will reflect the services provided at the new Beatley Central Library and the re-opening of the Burke Branch Library. While library services are not proposed to be part of the needs assessment and planning process recommended in this report, the Libraries are one of the resources offered to the community, and the increased operating costs of the expanded library service system must be considered as we plan for the future recreation and leisure services to be provided by the City.

With regard to the location of any new facility at Cameron Station, this community has changed significantly since the initial proposal for a community center at Ben Brenman Park was discussed. New residences have been built immediately adjacent to the area under consideration at Ben Brenman Park, and staff have already been tasked with evaluating the traffic impacts of

the park and athletic facilities on the Cameron Station community.[1] In addition, this year the City initiated a study of open space, coinciding with an increasing interest in preserving open space in the City. One of the challenges that we face in planning for any kind of new facility is to prioritize the use of our limited resources – open space and available funding in particular – to achieve an appropriate balance among competing interests and to serve all of our residents in the best way possible in the coming years. In light of the programmatic planning work that remains to be done in order to clarify the need for and the desirable features of a community center, and to evaluate transportation access to it by its users, I believe it is premature to assume that Ben Brenman Park is the best location for a new facility.

Recommended Planning Process. In order to develop a plan that will interrelate programs, services and physical resources in the area of recreation and parks and to provide us with a framework to balance and prioritize the use of limited resources for new recreational facilities, I recommend that the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities retain a consultant that will work with staff and a City Manager-appointed steering committee of community representatives to undertake a City-wide recreational and leisure needs assessment and to develop a comprehensive plan for recreational and leisure services. This plan will address the identified needs and will include prioritized recommendations for new or renovated recreational facilities and realistic construction and maintenance costs for such facilities. This plan will also incorporate and reflect the results of the open space study that is currently underway. This open space study will be a tool that will assist the City in balancing open space resources with competing needs for new or expanded public facilities, or other private uses, and it will be an integral component of the comprehensive plan for recreation.

The consultant will assist staff and the steering committee review the various reports and needs assessments that have been developed to date by the City, the Commission on Aging, the Joint Working Group for Community Center at Ben Brenman Park, and others. The consultant will conduct a thorough analysis of the 2000 Census demographic information and other sociological and economic data. The consultant will also assist us in conducting a process that ensures wide and representative community input into the needs assessment and that ensures that the community has ample opportunity to comment on the draft plan for future recreational services and facilities.

The Steering Committee is proposed to include the following members:

- Representative from the Park and Recreation Commission
- Representative from the Commission on Aging
- Representative from the Youth Policy Commission

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[1]Because the athletic fields and park facilities were not fully completed this summer, staff has not been able to conduct adequate traffic counts and monitor speed on Ben Brenman Drive. Staff will be returning with a docket item prior to mid-May 2001 to request that Council extend the study period of Ben Brenman Drive as a two-way street until fall 2001 so that traffic studies can be performed during the spring/summer seasons when the park facilities are fully operational.

- Representative from the Planning Commission
- Representative from the Chamber of Commerce
- One citizen representative from each of the three Park and Recreation Planning Districts (three citizen representatives)

Staff from Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Human Services, Planning and Zoning, Transportation and Environmental Services, the Alexandria City Public Schools, the City Manager's Office and the Office of Management and Budget will work with the Steering Committee and the consultant throughout this process.

The role of the Steering Committee will be to review the request for proposals for the consultant prior to its release. Following the consultant selection, the Committee will monitor and work with the consultant while the needs assessment is underway, and review the consultant's draft needs assessment report. The report will incorporate the community input and the open space study, and will address construction and operating cost issues, and funding approaches. The Steering Committee will also work with staff to recommend priorities based on the needs analysis, and assist staff and the consultant in the development of a draft comprehensive recreational and leisure services plan.

As part of the process, the Steering Committee and staff will work with the consultant to ensure that the study and plan address areas where the private sector is currently providing programs and services, and areas where a public-private partnership may be a feasible approach to addressing new needs. Meeting the challenge of providing programming that is attractive to diverse populations, including youth, adults and seniors, may require that the City explore the feasibility of public-private partnerships, and/or encourage private sector responses to certain markets.[2] In addition, it will be important to recognize from the outset that the City should not be competing with private organizations that may already attract a particular group, such as programming offered by the Smithsonian Institution.

The proposed planning process timeline calls for staff to draft a Request for Proposals for the consultant assistance in April, with a goal to select the consultant no later than late May or early June. Staff, the consultant and the Steering Committee would begin meeting regularly in June. The study period would be during the next six to seven months. During January and February 2002, consideration would be given to the results of the open space study. The Steering Committee, staff and the consultant would then develop a draft comprehensive plan. The draft plan would be released for wide review by the community in the spring, prior to the final plan

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[2] For example, staff from the Northern Virginia Urban League have recently conducted an informal survey of the community facilities that may be available within apartment communities in Alexandria in a effort to gage whether apartment communities: (1) have physical space available for services for their residents; (2) whether the community offers its own programs for residents; and (3) whether these communities would be receptive to hosting or sponsoring their own community activities. To date, six apartment communities have been identified that offer monthly programs for residents of all ages at their complexes. While additional complexes have community rooms, limited organized programs exist at this time, although several other complexes have small youth programs.

and recommendations being presented to City Council. The recommendations would include whether a new community center should be constructed in the City and, if so, when, what general features it should provide, and whether it should be located at Ben Brenman Park or elsewhere in the City.

FISCAL IMPACT: The estimated cost of the recommended needs assessment and comprehensive plan is $100,000. Of this amount, $25,000 is available from the monies designated in FY 2000 to begin the planning process for a community center. The balance of the funding would be included in the FY 2002 Proposed Budget that will be presented to City Council in March. Under this recommendation, the $25,000 budgeted in FY 2003 of the City's Capital Improvement Program for a community center at Cameron Station would remain unallocated and unexpended, pending the needs assessment and comprehensive plan.

ATTACHMENT: None

STAFF: Lori Godwin, Assistant City Manager for Operations
Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Meg O'Regan, Director, Human Services
Bob Eiffert, Director, Office of Adult Services, Human Services
Beverly Steele, Special Projects Coordinator, City Manager's Office