

8
2-24-01 ~~15~~
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 to 1, 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

¹Because 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

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

8
2-24-01

February 22, 2001

The Honorable Kerry Donley
Vice Mayor William Cleveland
Councilman William Eulle
Councilwoman Redella Pepper
Councilman David Speck
Councilwoman Joyce Woodson
Councilwoman Claire Eberwein

City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Va. 22314

Dear Mayor Donley and Honorable Members of City Council,

I wish to support the City Manager's recommendation for a citywide recreation needs assessment. In particular, I believe that it is imperative that such a project be completed prior to any decision on construction of any large-scale recreation center.

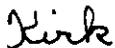
The City has **never** completed a comprehensive assessment of existing recreation programming and resources, in conjunction with undertaking a detailed survey of what the residents of the City actually desire for recreational outlets. Are we adequately serving all segments of the population or have gaps and deficiencies arisen over time that we have yet to identify? A complete assessment is a valuable tool to help identify where the needs are and to create a detailed plan for satisfying those needs in the present and future. It is also necessary in order to insure the appropriate allocation of scarce resources, financial and otherwise. We cannot afford to needlessly duplicate some programs and amenities while ignoring or overlooking others.

While some residents would in fact like to have a "multigenerational" recreation center at Ben Brenman Park, it has not yet been demonstrated whether the need exists or if that is the appropriate location. As of yet Brenman Park is only a location of opportunity since no effort has been made to identify other potential sites in case such a center is found to be advisable.

Furthermore, it should be noted that at public hearings before the Parks and Recreation Commission other residents testified that they preferred improvements and additional amenities at Chinquapin Recreation Center. For example, most of the residents and students requesting an indoor track and indoor rowing apparatus would like them to be at Chinquapin because of its proximity to T. C. Williams, St. Stephens, and Bishop Ireton high schools as well as being closer to Hammond and George Washington middle schools. Residents and students also expressed their desire to have a competition size pool at Chinquapin for the same reason.

To conclude, there are too many unknowns and uncertainties to make major decisions about satisfying recreational needs and allocation of scarce resources. The entire community must first have the opportunity for input, and a comprehensive assessment of needs must be completed. Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,



Kirk S. Fedder
Vice-Chair, Parks and Recreation Commission
113 West Maple Street
Alexandria, Va. 22301

sent to CC, CM, Michele
Whitmore, Siffert

DONALD D. FOWLER
3307 Alabama Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22305

#8 2/24/01 PF

February 26, 2001

The Honorable Kerry J. Donley, Mayor
City of Alexandria, Virginia
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Kerry
Dear Mayor Donley:

The February 24 public hearing on an Alexandria Community Center at Cameron Station disclosed the longstanding confusion among City Council and staff between recreation for the young (soccer, baseball, etc.) and a Community Center for multi-purpose community services for all ages (including those who do not play soccer, football, baseball, etc.). The planning process has been stretched thin over a decade to the point that the need first proposed has come to lack focus and to be confused with children's play space.

We believe that Lois Van Valkenburgh and Donald Edwards, the Commission on Aging speakers at the February 24 hearing, made clear the broader definition of a Community Center, which suggests political participation and control of the planning process. The planning process should concentrate on the Community Center concept.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Don @
Don Fowler



23 February 2001

Send to CC, CM, Michele,
Whitmore

8
2.24-01



Dear Honorable Mayor Donley and City Council,

I am writing on behalf of the recent vote, Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association took at our meeting this past Wednesday, on February 21. We support the efforts of Mr. Ralph Thompson, in building a community center in the West End, at Ben Brenman Park. Until recently, the West End had very little, in city services, buildings, and programs. The new park, the central library, the completion of Ramsay Rec Center, are all wonderful capital improvements. The addition of an overall community center, is long overdue, much desired, and supported, by West End citizens.

We realize the wisdom and logic of conducting a needs assessment, for the entire city concerning parks and rec needs. However, we would appreciate having the community center, to what we consider, to be the crown jewel, at Ben Brenman park. As Ms. Pepper has pointed out, the acre set aside for the center, was protected from having soccer fields on it, even temporarily. The concern was, once the site was used for soccer, the land would never revert back for a community center. Alexandria, like VDOT, does not build roads/bridges to "nowhere." And we are getting use to the South Holmes Run Bridge. With the bridge, we can access the park, and community center (if built), without adding to traffic on Duke Street. This location, would also be an excellent site to share the proposed visitor's center. Smart Growth.

Please consider the WTCA unanimous vote, in support of the West End community center Task Force, for Ben Brenman Park. We had 26 in attendance at this month's meeting.

We would also appreciate, the correction, to tax assessment map 59.04. Last May 13, 2000, in the city council public hearing, we mentioned that the city's tax map shows Tarleton Park, incorrectly identified as Ben Brenman Park. A check with the tax maps today, on file at city hall, shows this error still exists. Please help ensure that our neighborhood park, is correctly named on city documents.

Respectfully yours,

Elizabeth Wright
co-chair, Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association
from Gordon to Jordan, south of Duke

8
2-24-01



MIME:elizabeth.wright
@baesystems.com

02/23/01 09:43 PM

To: Beverly I Jett@Alex, billclev@home.com @ INTERNET,
wmeuille@wdeuille.com @ INTERNET, vote4eberwein@aol.com @
INTERNET, dspeck@aol.com @ INTERNET, delpepper@aol.com @
INTERNET, woodsongroup@home.com @ INTERNET,
mayoralx@aol.com @ INTERNET, kdonley@vcbonline.com @
INTERNET, Beth Temple@Alex, Joanne Pyle@Alex, Judy
Stack@Alex, mlynnsmith@home.com @ INTERNET,
jluby@home.com @ INTERNET, mbrandon99@home.com @
INTERNET, Sandy Murphy@Alex

cc: Sandra Whitmore@Alex

Subject: To City Council, Agenda #8 for February 24, 2001

- > 23 February 2001
- > > > > Dear Honorable Mayor Donley and City Council,
- > > I am writing on behalf of the recent vote, Wakefield Tarleton Civic
- > Association took at our meeting this past Wednesday, on February 21. We
- > support the efforts of Mr. Ralph Thompson, in building a community center
- > in the West End, at Ben Brenman Park. Until recently, the West End had
- > very little, in city services, buildings, and programs. The new park, the
- > central library, the completion of Ramsay Rec Center, are all wonderful
- > capital improvements. The addition of an overall community center, is
- > long overdue, much desired, and supported, by West End citizens.
- > > We realize the wisdom and logic of conducting a needs assessment, for the
- > entire city concerning parks and rec needs. However, we would appreciate
- > having the community center, to what we consider, to be the crown jewel,
- > at Ben Brenman park. As Ms. Pepper has pointed out, the acre set aside
- > for the center, was protected from having soccer fields on it, even
- > temporarily. The concern was, once the site was used for soccer, the land
- > would never revert back for a community center. Alexandria, like VDOT,
- > does not build roads/bridges to "nowhere." And we are getting use to the
- > South Holmes Run Bridge. With the bridge, we can access the park, and
- > community center (if built), without adding to traffic on Duke St. This
- > location, would also be an excellent site to share the proposed visitor's
- > center. Smart Growth.
- > > Please consider the WTCA unanimous vote, in support of the West End
- > community center Task Force, for Ben Brenman Park. We had 26 in
- > attendance at this month's meeting.
- > > We would also appreciate, the correction, to tax assessment map 59.04.
- > Last May 13, 2000, in the city council public hearing, we mentioned that
- > the city's tax map shows Tarleton Park, incorrectly identified as Ben
- > Brenman Park. A check with the tax maps today, on file at city hall,
- > shows this error still exists. Please help ensure that our neighborhood
- > park, is correctly named on city documents.
- > > Respectfully yours,
- > > Elizabeth Wright
- > co-chair, Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association
- > from Gordon to Jordan, south of Duke



City of Alexandria, Virginia

301 King Street, Suite 2300

Alexandria, Virginia 22314



Claire M. Eberwein

Member of Council

(703) 820-9442

Fax (703) 820-9442

vote4eberwein@aol.com

Dear Colleagues —

*Tho't you might find
this to be of historical
interest in light of the proposed
Recreational needs assessment
study & Item #8 on Saturday's
docket.*

Claire

"Home Town of George Washington and Robert E. Lee"

ALEXANDRIA

CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Telephone: (703) 824-6600
Facsimile: (703) 824-6699
TDD: (703) 824-6666

Superintendent of Schools
Herbert M. Berg, Ed.D.

School Board Chairman
Stephen J. Kenealy

Vice Chairman
Henry Sidney Brooks

School Board Members
Sally Ann Baynard
Mary M. Danforth
V. Rodger Digilio
Mark R. Eaton
Claire M. Eberwein
Dan D. Goldhaber
Susan J. Johnson

April 20, 1998

The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

Dear Mr. Mayor:

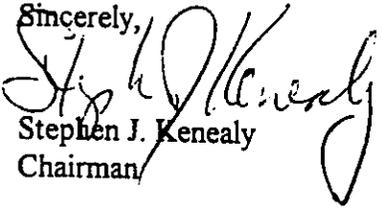
On April 14, 1998 the School Board's Facilities Committee met with City staff and the architect of the Ramsay Recreation Center project. As a result of that meeting the Committee prepared the attached document which was considered by the Board at its April 16, 1998 meeting and, on a voice vote, the Board agreed with the recommendation of its Facilities Committee.

Essentially the Committee recommended that Council review the Ramsay Recreation Center project. In this review, Council may wish to consider:

- ** putting a "placeholder" for an out year construction of a full size recreation center at William Ramsay Elementary School,
- ** in the near term, expand the Nature Center to a 5,200 square foot facility (estimated by City staff to be about \$1.2 million), and,
- ** reconsider expanding the gymnasium facility of the new West End school from elementary school size to full spectator size, include community rooms and reorient the building to place these facilities on park land (estimated by School staff to be about \$0.9 million).

These recommendations, if adopted by Council, would save approximately \$1.8 million dollars in FY-1999 expenditures, and while delaying the provision of a full size recreation center in the West End by about 18 months, would nevertheless result in both an expanded Nature Center at William Ramsay and a spectator size gymnasium and community recreation center rooms in the West End.

In light of the severe fiscal constraints facing the City over the next few years the Board hopes that you will take these recommendations in the spirit in which they are offered. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Kenealy
Chairman

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Alexandria School Board

FROM: The Facilities Committee
Claire M. Eberwein, Chairman
Mark R. Eaton
Stephen J. Kenealy

DATE: April 16, 1998

RE: Coordination and Timing of School System and Recreation
Department Projects in the City's West End

The history of cooperation between the City and the School System with regard to construction projects is extensive. There is little doubt that this cooperation must continue: apart from the financial aspects, it is a physical reality that in this densely populated city there is little open space available. Joint use is made of many facilities and recreation centers are built on school property. A recent proposal sought construction of a school on park land, a planning option that cannot be ruled out should projected enrollments materialize at the secondary level.

At recent joint budget work sessions with the City Council, it was noted that closer coordination between the city and the schools on capital projects was required and it was proposed that a working group be set up to accomplish this. However, many projects are currently in the budget pipeline and because of the timing of scheduled public meetings, particularly the City Council's May 6th budget approval meeting, the Facilities Committee is forwarding a recommendation to the School Board for action at tonight's meeting with regard to the proposed Ramsay Recreation Center, the proposed expansion of the Nature Center, and the proposed construction of the new west end elementary school.

A brief synopsis of city/school communication on these projects is in order. Outside of staff contact, the first meeting with the Recreation Department and the Facilities Committee occurred in the fall of 1997. The committee was informed that due to expected budget constraints, the Recreation Department had made no decisions on the extent of the project regarding its scope or the amount of new construction versus renovation or a combination thereof. Staff contact continued and based on reports from school staff and from the City/Schools Sub-Committee, the Facilities Committee invited the Recreation Department to its February, 1998 meeting for an update. The invitation was accepted and, except for minor business, the agenda was given over to this discussion. Just prior to the meeting, the Recreation Department indicated that it could not attend and the Facilities Committee cancelled its February meeting.

The Facilities Committee was invited to the March 25th community meeting at Ramsay elementary school. Committee members made no comments given that the Recreation Department was scheduled to come to the April 14th meeting of the Facilities Committee. As previously reported, siting and parking issues were raised regarding the recreation center but much of the controversy centered on the proposed delay in renovating the nature center. This meeting was apparently the first time it had been publicly announced that with tight revenues, an internal decision was reached by the city to move ahead with the recreation center and put the nature center on hold.

Although both the recreation and nature center are on school property, the schools were not consulted in priority setting on these construction projects. And it was particularly troublesome that in a fiscal year when the schools long term capital budget is in doubt, the current proposed city budget calls for \$620,000.00 in additional funds for a total of \$3,024,500.00 for the recreation center alone. This works out to a cost of \$150.00 per square foot for construction using the Recreation Department's estimates for an 18,000 square foot stand alone facility. These figures stand in marked contrast to the budgeted \$110.00 per square foot cost, inclusive of equipment such as desks and chairs, for the proposed west end elementary school at Cameron Station.

A vigorous discussion ensued at the April 14th Facilities meeting. Most of the questions from Facility Committee members revolved around an attempt to understand how decisions by the Recreation Department were arrived at and whether they had been considered in the broader context of the city as a whole.

Several things became clear: 1) The opening of a new school at Cameron station was not factored in. Please refer to the attached memo from this committee dated January 23, 1998. In addition to the points made in that memo, it should be noted that this new school will relieve the current overcrowding at both Adams and Ramsay schools, thus also decreasing some of the pressures on the recreation programs currently located in those schools. And reference should be made to the attached letter from Katherine Morrison of the Campagna Center. Given the current small site, the school system simply cannot accommodate those very beneficial programs in dedicated space without either the purchase of costly additional acreage or the relocation of the gym to park land (as part of a recreation center).

2) The school system's potential use of an expanded nature center was not factored in. The current center is tiny and holds only 20 people or so comfortably. This not only limits access by most community groups but it severely restricts practical use of the nature center by all schools but Ramsay, which itself can only serve one class at a time. According to the Recreation Department, the proposed expansion from 700 square feet to 5000 square feet would comfortably accommodate approximately 125

people at one time. A school bus carries 66 students or around three classrooms of kids. An expansion would allow an entire grade level or two from any of our schools to utilize the rich science resources of the center and associated nature trails. With regard to the plans of the Winkler Company, the Recreation Department said information regarding the size or planned construction date of any privately funded nature center is unknown but that any planned programs are intended to be complementary with the programs offered by the current nature center.

3) Additional points were made by the Recreation Department that there is a shortage of full size recreation centers (with spectator seating in the gymnasiums) in the west end of the city (please refer to Attachment A) and that there is a need for senior citizens to be served given the delay of the multi-generational recreation center planned for Cameron station. Again, reference should be made to this committee's January 23, 1998 memo. Further, on April 14th our staff was informed by the Cameron Station developer's architect that the latest plan calls for two senior citizen high rise dwellings to be located near the proposed school site.

All capital projects are worthy to their advocates. And it is recognized that recreation centers benefit the school system by providing after school activities for our students. But in hard times, choices need to be made. Certainly, no large expenditure of capital funds should be made without a thorough reanalysis of whether projects should maintain their current placement status in the capital construction time schedule. This is particularly prudent from a planning perspective when new projects, such as a west end school, have been added to the mix. And it is critical that the schools have a meaningful voice in the process as we face unprecedented growth and severely limited site options.

In light of competing capital needs, the Facilities Committee recommends that the city review the scheduling of the Ramsay Recreation Center by putting a "placeholder" funding amount in the budget for future out year construction and consider the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: Pursue near term renovation/expansion of the nature center. According to Deputy City Manager Beverly Steele, this would require approximately \$1.2-1.3 million dollars for a 5000 square foot facility. Using the \$1.2 million figure, this works out to \$240.00 per square foot. We believe the estimate is probably closer to the 1997 estimate of \$702,000.00 for a 5,200

square foot facility which works out to \$135.00 per square foot.

Build a spectator seating sized gym facility at the Cameron Station school site, to be located on park land, freeing up the school system to accommodate other community uses, such as the Campagna Center's Head Start programs and senior citizen access to the school's computer lab. Our staff estimates that the cost to build a larger gym with some attached community rooms would be approximately \$900,000.00 over the construction cost of the school with an elementary sized gym.

Use the remaining funds for other critical capital needs, with particular attention paid to the renovation of the school system's aging infrastructure.

Alternative 2: Use the funds for the school system's capital needs as proposed in the ACPS adopted Capital Improvement Budget.

Should the recommendations of the Facilities Committee be accepted by the School Board, it is suggested that this memorandum be forwarded to members of City Council and the City Manager and that further discussion continue at the next scheduled City/School Sub-Committee meeting.



SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

March 5, 1998

The Honorable Kerry Donley
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

The Honorable Stephen J. Kenealy
610 N. Paxton Street
Alexandria, VA 22304

Dear Kerry and Steve,

As a follow-up to our meeting with the consultants working on the proposed school at Cameron Station we want to reaffirm our position concerning the need for both Head Start and Campagna Kids before-and-after-school programs at that site.

As you know, The Campagna Center has over a 20-year history of partnership with the City and schools in delivering these essential services, and we are certain that parents served by a new school will expect them. In fact, at present we maintain a waiting list of 159 families eligible for Head Start, many of whom reside in the West End.

To address each program's needs specifically, we would like to have two Head Start classrooms which must offer at least 35 square feet/child for 17 children, plus offices and toilets and 75 square feet/child of playground space. These rooms must be on the first floor. The federal government awards construction grants for Head Start and we would expect the City (as Head Start grantee) to apply for \$200,000 (\$100,000 per classroom). If awarded, that portion of the building constructed with federal funds would have a federal lien placed on it and could only be used for Head Start classrooms. We've requested written information on the construction grants and resultant liens and will forward that to Phil Sunderland.

While construction funds could be secured to add to an existing school building in the West End instead of the new facility, we believe that it would be more economical to incorporate Head Start classrooms in a building that is being planned rather than incurring the additional expense of adding to an existing building, which is why we're pressing you to include it in the new school at Cameron Station.

HEAD START • CAMPAGNA KIDS • THIS WAY HOUSE • WRIGHT TO READ • RSVP • REUSE

THE CAMPAGNA CENTER, 418 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314-3630
PHONE (703) 549-0111 FAX (703) 549-2097

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Chairman Stephen J. Kenealy
and Members of the School Board

FROM: Chairman Claire M. Eberwein, Facilities Committee

DATE: January 23, 1998

RE: Coordination of Elementary School and Recreation Facilities
at Cameron Station

At the January 22, 1998 school board meeting, the Facilities Committee reported on current progress regarding the construction of a new elementary school at Cameron Station. At that same meeting, the School Board approved the architectural contract award for the design of that new elementary school to the firm of Grimm and Parker. The school site will be located adjacent to the Western Park site and consultation has already begun between the architect for the developer of Cameron Station, the City's Recreation Department and the School System's Facilities staff.

The Cameron Station project is one of the last of the large scale, premier development projects in a city that has already achieved most of its commercial and residential growth potential. It will help meet the burgeoning housing, educational and recreational needs of the western part of the city. As such, careful coordination between the City Council, the School Board, and the developer is essential. Decisions which thoroughly integrate the various planned uses, including the recent addition of an elementary school to the use mix, must be made in a manner that results in a harmonious development that inures benefits to all the taxpayers in this City.

To that end, the purpose of this memorandum is to identify some of the essential planning issues associated with the construction of an elementary school, park facilities, and the proposed future multi-generational recreation center within the overall development plan for Cameron Station.

* The construction of a multi-generational recreation facility, relocated from the Eastern Park site to the Western Park site, would more readily serve the school population and eliminate the necessity for students to walk through the development and near the lake, which poses a potentially dangerous attraction. It also makes the facility more readily accessible to residents of high rise senior living buildings currently proposed for construction adjacent to the school site.

* The Recreation Department has indicated that the recreational facility is planned to be a "pay for play" facility similar to Chinquapin, rather than like the more typical

**COMMENTS BY LOIS VAN VALKENBURGH FOR THE COMMISSION
ON AGING REGARDING THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR A
COMMUNITY CENTER AT CAMERON STATION
FEBRUARY 24, 2001**

1. Acreage was set aside for a community center at Cameron Station (now Ben Brenman) Park at the May 1997 Council session on the capital improvements budget by a unanimous vote of Council. The land is at the northwest corner of the park, at the intersection of Duke and Somerville Streets. It seems highly unlikely that this much open space that is so accessible to so many of its citizens could be found anywhere else in the city (public and private transportation is already in place.)
2. The current recreation and senior centers cannot serve the wide range of ages as a community center can - infants to seniors. There should be no doubt in any Alexandrian's mind that a multi-purpose community center is sadly lacking. Such a facility would include space for large and small meetings, conferences, and trade fairs (this has made planning for Successful Aging events particularly difficult). The Chamber of Commerce and others have, for a number of years, publicly noted the lack of such a facility. This may well be an opportunity for a public-private partnership, in financing as well as in programming.
3. There should be wide representation on the steering committee, which should include, among others, someone from the Federation of Citizens Associations and the School Board. The steering committee should be appointed by City Council who are the city's elected representatives. (See appointments to Cameron Station Recreational Task Force).

HONORABLE MAYOR, MEMBERS OF COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER

I AM RALPH THOMPSON. MY TOPIC IS THE CITY MANAGER'S MEMORANDUM, "STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR A COMMUNITY CENTER AT CAMERON STATION, DATED FEB. 9, 2001, DOCKET ITEM 15, ON 2-13-01

THE MEMORANDUM FAILS TO ADDRESS ITS SUBJECT AND ^{GOES} ~~WANDERS~~ INTO UNRELATED MATTERS AS SHOWN BY THE FOLLOWING QUOTE FROM PAGE 6 IN THE PARAGRAPH ENTITLED, "RECOMMENDED PLANNING PROCESS".

The Manager states that a Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities "consultant will work with staff and a---steering committee—to undertake a City-wide recreational and leisure needs assessment and to develop a comprehensive plan for recreational and leisure services".

THE PLANNING PROCESS DOES NOT EVEN MENTION COMMUNITY CENTER SERVICES. AFTER THIS, THE MANAGER COULD NOT POSSIBLY MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON A COMMUNITY CENTER. AS HE PROMISES AT THE TOP OF PAGE 8. WE SUPPORT THE MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION FOR A STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE PURPOSES HE DESCRIBES, BUT IT IS NOW CLEAR BEYOND ANY REASONABLE DOUBT THAT WE NEED THE COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE.

CONSISTENT WITH THE ABOVE, THE MEMO SHOWS ENORMOUS PROBLEMS IN RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACE. THE MANAGER SHOULD RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE ARE NO SUCH PROBLEMS CITED OR KNOWN TO EXIST ON THE COMMUNITY CENTER BECAUSE IT WAS LAID ON YEARS AGO. IN ADDITION, IN 1997 THE MANAGER HAD 62 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE AT CAMERON STATION. WHY DOES HE NEED MORE NOW?

A FAVORABLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER WAS COMPLETED IN 1997, BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO IT. WITH THE YEARS, THE NEEDS HAVE GROWN STRONGER AND MORE NUMEROUS. LACK OF A NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN-HAND DOES NOT PROHIBIT THE WORK OF A COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE AS RECOMMENDED BY THE HOLMES RUN PARK COMMITTEE. COUNCILLMAN SPECK'S CONCERNS OF MAY 23, 2000 WILL BE ADDRESSED.

WE HEAR THAT THE CITY WANTS A VISITOR CENTER, POSSIBLY TO REPLACE OR AUGMENT THE LYCEUM. THE IDEAL LOCATION WOULD BE IN THE CENTRALLY LOCATED COMMUNITY CENTER AS OPPOSED TO THE RAILROAD STATION. THE NUMBER OF VISITORS ARRIVING OR LEAVING BY RAIL DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE RAILROAD STATION LOCATION. THE COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE SHOULD RECEIVE THIS ISSUE FOR

STUDY

APPROVAL OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE WITH THE LIMITED SCOPE DESCRIBED BY THE CITY MANAGER IS A MATTER FOR THE COUNCIL TO DECIDE, WE HAVE ALREADY SHOWN THAT THE COMMUNITY CENTER REQUIRES A DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT IN REGARD TO RANGE, SCOPE AND PERSONNEL. RECOMMEND THAT A COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE BE ESTABLISHED, IMMEDIATELY, BY COUNCIL USING NAMES ALREADY FURNISHED REQUIRING APPROPRIATE PARTICIPATION BY AREA RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONALS, INCLUDING MEDICAL, CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS, SOCIAL CLUBS, GARDEN CLUBS, ETC.

City Manager on Community Center
Re Alexandria Journal; Trigie Erley, 703-846-8340; Barbara Hollingsworth, OPINION
ED

- I. Opening: We cannot agree to the City Manager's Memo. Feb. 9th regarding the planning process for the Community Center. There are many reasons. The first of which is the City Manager states his subject at the top of his memorandum and loses track of it six lines later.

He is mixing apples and oranges, because the Community Center is no more related to recreation and leisure than it is to any other City Department.

It should be recognized that on page 6, in the paragraph entitled, "Recommended Planning Process", the Manager states that a Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities "consultant will work with staff and a---steering committee--- to undertake a City-wide recreational and leisure needs assessment and to develop a comprehensive plan for recreational and leisure services". After this misdirected effort, the Manager could not possibly make recommendations on a Community Center as he promises on the top of page 8. What is he doing to us?

The relationship between a Community Center and Recreation Centers has been explained many, many times. It needs to be understood

As was suggested by Council, the City Managers Study should include, either combined or separately, the Library and the Schools. That with recreation, leisure and open space is sufficient to keep staff busy without trying to address Community Center issues which they don't understand.

- II. The memo shows enormous problems in recreation, leisure and open space. The Manager should resolve these problems-- he doesn't need a consultant in our opinion because he has a staff. He shouldn't need any money either, unless it comes from his own funding. On the other hand, there are no such problems cited or known to exist on the Community Center because it was laid on years ago.

In 1997, the Manager had 62 acres of open space at Cameron Station. Why does he need more open space now?

The Manager should get any outside help he needs on recreation, leisure and open space from the Parks and Recreation Commission because that is their area of operations.

Council scheduled a work session with Parks and Recreation Commission in 1996 and then apparently dropped the ball.

- III A needs-assessment of the Community Center was completed in 1997, but we don't know what happened to it. With the years, the needs have grown stronger and more numerous. Lack of a needs-assessment in-hand does not prohibit the work of a Task Force as recommended by the Holmes Run Park Committee. Councilman Speck can rest assured that his concerns of May 23, 2000 will be fully addressed. Apparently little has been done since that date, nearly one year ago.

The \$ 25,000 committed on May 5, 1999 should remain available to the Community Center Program—the fact is that the Task Force will need the completed Preliminary Design Studies to adequately perform its work.

- IV. There appears to be another “Ramsay Center maneuver” on the way. Please help us explain to the staff, and Council members as necessary, that a “Recreation Center is not, cannot be and will never be a “Community Center”.

The original Task Force asked for 60,000 Square Feet and we are asking for 40,000 Square Feet for now with a possible need for expansion later.

The Recreation Department will be expected to provide any recreation programs at the Community Center much like it does to the Senior Centers now.

The Manager is wrong in his statement that the City funds two Senior Centers. The City makes only minor contributions to one of these Centers.

Lest we be misunderstood, the Community appreciates the Senior Programs which have been incorporated into the Recreation Centers in the past 5 years. The fact remains, however, that a Recreation Center plus Senior Programs is still a Recreation Center, not a Community Center.

- V. The Arts and Crafts room, for example, may be reassigned, particularly, if it is found that there are enough in the City. That area has changed since the original plan. Additionally, we did not plan for a Youth Center because we were told that the City was building one. Doubtless, the Arts and Craft space plus other construction or other space would be needed for a Youth Center. One solution offered by the Northern Virginia Community College would be to use the Day Care area for adults early in the day and for Youth after school. The whole scheme of the Community Center is based on multiple uses of adequate facilities.

We have a report that the City may want to build a Visitor Center. Presumably this Project would replace or augment the Lyceum. This report also says that the Visitor Center is planned to be located near the Railroad station, but a far more accessible location for visitors would be to put it in the Community Center which is closer to the center of the City. Does the City have a needs assessment which shows that most visitors to the City arrive and leave by rail? We recommend that the Community Center Task Force be given this issue for study.

There is no other open, centrally located space for the Community Center besides Ben Brenman Park. We must resist encroachment from the Park. The Center must be co-located with the Beatley Library and Ben Brenman Park.

We cannot accept the membership of the Steering Committee, as proposed. As previously explained, a steering committee and a Community Center Task Force are both essential. The first is staff driven whereas, the second is public driven. To balance the Steering Committee concept, we would need representatives of area residents, businesses of selected types, professionals, medical personnel, civic associations, social clubs, garden clubs etc., etc. Therefore, the Community Center Task Force approach either with or without the recreation component is the better way to move.

Once again, the relationship between a Community Center and Recreation Centers has been explained over and over. It should be understood.

EXHIBIT NO. 5



City of Alexandria, Virginia

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3999

Park and Recreation Commission



Sandra Whitmore
Director

8
2-24-01

(703) 838-4343
Fax (703) 838-6344

February 22, 2001

The Honorable Kerry J. Donley
Vice Mayor William Cleveland
Councilman William Euille
Councilwoman Redella Pepper
Councilman David Speck
Councilwoman Joyce Woodson
Councilwoman Claire Eberwein

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

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I am writing to inform you that the members present at the Park and Recreation Commission meeting on February 15th voted unanimously to support City Manager Philip Sunderland's recommendation to defer establishing a task force to plan for a community center at Cameron Station and instead undertake a City-wide assessment of recreational and leisure needs.

The proposed method and timeline outlined in Mr. Sunderland's February 9th memorandum to the City Council is in line with our own thinking on this matter and we look forward to getting started as soon as possible with the work. We would appreciate your support in helping to achieve this comprehensive, prioritized assessment of recreational and leisure needs in Alexandria for the foreseeable future.

Sincerely,

Judy R. Guse-Noritake, Chair