

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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5-22-01

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 11, 2001
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*
SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON BRENNAN PARK DRIVE IN BEN BRENNAN PARK

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a status report on Brennan Park Drive in Ben Brennan Park.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Keep Brennan Park Drive in Ben Brennan Park in its current configuration as a two-way road open to vehicular traffic; and
- (2) Request staff to return to City Council in September with the results of a traffic and pedestrian study of Brennan Park Drive, at which time Council would determine whether to make any changes to the existing road configuration.

BACKGROUND: During the public discussion period at the May 13, 2000, public hearing, three speakers commented on whether the portion of Brennan Park Drive that goes through Ben Brennan Park at Cameron Station should be open or closed to vehicular traffic, even though Ben Brennan Park had not yet officially opened to the public.

Roland Gonzales, President, and Randal Joyner, Board Member, representing the position of the Cameron Station Civic Association, favored keeping this section of Brennan Park Drive for pedestrians, and only available for emergency, maintenance, or police surveillance vehicles. Hugh Wetherald, a resident of Cameron Station, said he could not oppose the two-way road because he had not seen a traffic study or other reports on the impact of not having the road, specifically closing one of the four ingress/egress points in the development. He did, however, favor as many speed controls (bumps, stop signs, low speed limits) as possible on this road, as well as through Cameron Station.

After considerable discussion, City Council, on a vote of 5 to 2, decided that staff would continue with the current plans for the park and would make Brennan Park Drive a two-way road open to vehicular traffic until May 31, 2001, at which time the road would revert to pedestrian use only unless Council expressly determined to keep the road open to vehicular

traffic. The Council felt that this time frame would give everyone an opportunity to assess how the two-way configuration worked using traffic calming measures.

DISCUSSION: Staff is recommending that City Council defer making a decision on the status of the portion of Brenman Park Drive that runs through Ben Brenman Park until after staff returns to City Council in September with the results of a traffic and pedestrian study conducted this month and in June. While the dedication of Ben Brenman Park occurred in June 2000, the park was not officially opened until the fall with a limited schedule of activities. As a result, staff did not initiate the traffic and pedestrian study last year because it could not get an accurate count of pedestrian and vehicular traffic given the limited schedule. Staff believes that conducting the study this May and June will provide a greater benefit since there will be a full schedule of activities in the park.

In the meantime, staff did work with the developer, Greenvest, on the application of proper pavement markings and on the installation of signage for all of the streets in Cameron Station, including Brenman Park Drive. In addition, the City installed several raised traffic calming features along Brenman Park Drive.

Staff also reviewed and concurred with the conclusions made by Greenvest's traffic consultant in the traffic study prepared for the proposed Archstone project and completed in February 2001. The traffic study shows what staff indicated last May, that intersections outside of Cameron Station and within Cameron Station continue to be underutilized. For example, outside of Cameron Station, the intersection where Cameron Station Boulevard, Edsall Road and South Pickett Street come together and the intersection of Somerville Street and Duke Street are operating at service level C or better. Within Cameron Station, all intersections are operating at service level A, the highest and best level. In addition, the study showed that there was very little cut through traffic from Duke Street to South Pickett Street (e.g., only five vehicles during the p.m. peak hour). Further, staff remain concerned about the prevailing travel speed on Cameron Station Boulevard and have required Greenvest to provide \$20,000 for traffic calming features on Cameron Station Boulevard.

All of the information from the Greenvest traffic study will be factored into staff's recommendations in September, along with an analysis of the impact that closing the road or keeping it open to vehicular traffic would have on the operation of the park, the safety issues raised at the May 2000 public hearing, and the results of the May/June 2001 pedestrian and traffic study. The collection of data for this study will take place at two distinct times: when no scheduled activities are occurring in Ben Brenman Park, and when scheduled activities are occurring in the park, and will include vehicle and pedestrian counts and speed checks. The vehicular collection points will be the following: (1) vehicular turning movement counts at the intersection of Brenman Park Drive and Somerville Street; (2) radar speed checks on Brenman Park Drive; and (3) a one week volume count on Brenman Park Drive. The pedestrian counts will be taken all along Somerville Street to count the number of pedestrians entering the park from Somerville Street and counts will be taken of the number of pedestrians entering the eastern side of the park from the new pedestrian bridge that crosses Holmes Run.

FISCAL IMPACT: None. Transportation and Environmental Services staff will conduct the traffic study.

ATTACHMENT: None

STAFF: Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Douglas Mc Cobb, P. E., Deputy Director/Transportation and Transit Services, T&ES