

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 2, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO PERMIT AN EXCEPTION TO THE MAJOR EVENTS POLICY TO ALLOW A MODIFICATION TO THE ALEXANDRIA UNITED WAY GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKWAY CLASSIC 15K RACE ROUTE IN OLD TOWN

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a request to permit an exception to the Major Events Policy to allow a modification to the Alexandria United Way George Washington Parkway Classic 15K race route in Old Town.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the request for an exception to the Major Events Policy to allow a modification to the Alexandria United Way George Washington Parkway Classic 15K race route in Old Town, which is scheduled for April 21, 2002, with the understanding that the sponsors of this event will be required to:

1. Seek letters of support from community groups in the areas of Old Town that will be affected by the race;
2. Provide off-street parking at sites such as Canal Center Plaza and the United Way of America for the race participants; and
3. Reimburse the City for any costs associated with supporting the event, including expanded Police coverage and signage.

BACKGROUND: In 1985, in response to concerns that were raised by residents and businesses about the number of events held in Old Town, City Council adopted a set of guidelines governing the scheduling of major events in Old Town. Parades and races were exempt from these guidelines. In 1994, Council asked staff to review these guidelines and recommend changes to reduce the number of events in Old Town to lessen the impact on traffic and parking, and to schedule more events throughout the City. As a result, City Council adopted guidelines that included races and parades as major events and defined an event as having 500 or more people. This policy was expanded in 1998 to include private events. The George Washington Parkway Classic Race, which is sponsored by the Alexandria United Way, was one of the races that was permitted to continue in Old Town after this policy was established. This race historically has had a limited impact on the Old Town area because the race route was primarily south of the City.

DISCUSSION: In a letter dated December 3, 2001, the members of the 2002 George Washington Parkway Classic Race Committee requested authorization to change the route for this race, which is scheduled for April 21, 2002, because Jones Point Road and Jones Point Park, previously the finish area for the race, are closed as a result of Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction (Attachment 1). Prior to 2001, this race, which began in 1984 and has earned national renown for the scenery along the race path, began at the top of the circle at the Mount Vernon Estate and proceeded north on the George Washington Parkway along the river and finished at Jones Point Park. Last year, because of construction on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, the route was reversed and the runners started at Jones Point and finished at Mount Vernon. The organizers of the event have indicated that this route was not well received by race participants, and that the impact on the Mount Vernon Estate was considerable. A change is necessary to adjust for the bridge construction, retain the scenery along the race route, and maintain the same distance for the race.

The sponsors of this event are requesting that the race start at the Mount Vernon Estate and proceed north on the George Washington Parkway into Alexandria, turn right on Franklin Street, turn left on Union Street, and continue to a finish line just south of Oronoco Bay Park. Participants will board buses located at the United Way of America on Fairfax Street to travel to the Mount Vernon Estate for the start of the race. Race participants will gather at the southern end of Oronoco Bay Park for award presentations and closing ceremonies which are expected to end at 11:00 a.m. It is estimated that this race attracts approximately 1,200 to 1,500 participants. The race requires street closings, including parts of Franklin Street and Union Street, and possibly part of Washington Street south of Franklin Street. Extra police coverage will be provided to minimize the impact on traffic. The sponsor will be required to provide off-street parking at sites such as Canal Center Plaza and the United Way of America to minimize the impact on parking in Old Town. In addition, the sponsor has been told to seek letters of support for the change in the race route from the following organizations: Rivergate Homeowners' Association, Founders Park Citizens' Association, Old Town Civic Association, Old Town Business Association, Ford's Landing Community Association and Harborside Community Association.

After the event, staff will evaluate the impact of this change in the route, including the impact on parking and traffic.

FISCAL IMPACT: Costs associated with City services, including Police, are estimated at approximately \$5,500 to \$6,000. These costs will be charged to the sponsoring organization, and there will be no net fiscal impact to the City.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Letter from 2002 George Washington Parkway Classic Race Committee dated December 3, 2001.

STAFF: Sandra Whitmore, Director
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities



United Way
of the National
Capital Area

ALEXANDRIA UNITED WAY

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CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
ALEXANDRIA, VA

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December 3, 2001

The Honorable Mayor and Members of Council
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, VA 22313

Dear Mayor Donley and Members of Council:

Since 1984 the George Washington Parkway Classic 15K has been a major running event in the metropolitan area. With its impressive start at the top of the circle at the Mount Vernon Estate, north on the Parkway along the scenic river road to the finish at Jones Point Park this April event was dubbed one of the ten most scenic races in the United States. For 17 years the race ran this course but last year with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction the course was reversed and the runners finished at Mount Vernon.

We had hoped that this simple solution would solve the problem caused by the construction. Unfortunately this new course was not well received and the impact on the estate was considerable. April is the peak of the tourist season and the mansion opens at 9:00 a.m. (peak finishing time for the 8 a.m. start). While Mount Vernon management has graciously agreed to work with us again we believe that this race should return to the original course from Mount Vernon to Alexandria.

The GW Parkway Classic organization was grateful to the city for being allowed to remain in Old Town when other running events were located to Eisenhower Avenue. We have worked hard to be a good event and maintain a "classic" reputation. The race is a low-key, quality run attracting the serious running enthusiast that has donated 100% of all proceeds to community groups through the James P. Moran Special Project Grants.

This year we are requesting a route alteration that would change the ending of the race. The start would return to Mount Vernon Estate, north on the Parkway into Alexandria, right on Franklin and east on Franklin to Union Street, left on Union to the finish line just south of Oronoco Bay Park. This route affords the runner a safe route and an attractive and comfortable finish area. History has shown that runners pick up post race refreshments, wait for their times to be posted and quickly depart the area. In addition a large number of race participants live within walking distance of the park. We anticipate providing off street parking at sites such as Canal Center Plaza and the United Way of America.

We assure you that we will take all appropriate actions to assure a safe and secure course as well as continue offering the running public a uniquely beautiful race. In closing we ask that you favorably support this request and approve the changed course for the George Washington Parkway Classic 2002.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

The 2002 George Washington Parkway Classic Race Committee:

George Banker, IBM and Journal Newspaper
Rich Brune, Verizon
Keith Burner, Smith Barney
Steve Fryxell, Pacers Running Store
John LaValle, Smith Barney
Nancy LaValle, Alexandria United Way
Len Lynch, Advanced Power Technologies
Mark Machina, Advance Power Technologies
Loretta Wells
Randy Worden



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