

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: FUTURE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA'S OPEN SPACE STEERING COMMITTEE

ISSUE: Future committee structure for the City of Alexandria's Open Space Steering Committee (OSSC).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) At the conclusion of the public hearing on February 24, 2007, approve the original recommendation for the new structure of the OSSC with the underlined changes, based on the January 23, 2007 City Council legislative meeting;
- (2) Retitle the OSSC to the Open Space Advisory Group; and
- (3) If Council agrees to change the future structure of the OSSC, acknowledge and commend the members of the current OSSC for their pioneering and productive work in protecting and expanding public open space in the City.

BACKGROUND: On January 23, 2007, City Council reviewed and discussed the possibility for an alternative recommendation regarding the future structure of the Open Space Steering Committee. Pursuant to that discussion, Council voted to retain the original January 4, 2007 staff recommendation and schedule a public hearing on that item. Two changes to the original recommendation were requested and are discussed below and indicated as underlined in the attached copy of Docket Item #20 from January 9, 2007 (Attachment).

The first change incorporated a member of the Beautification Commission, which increased the advisory body to a seven member group. The second change establishes a criteria that the Commission representatives appointed to the Open Space Advisory Group would not be the chairs of those commissions. The recommended revised structure of the City Manager-appointed advisory group is as follows:

- One member from the Planning Commission
- One member from the Park and Recreation Commission
- One member from the Environmental Policy Commission
- One member from the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
- One member from the Beautification Commission, and
- Two citizens who have shown a knowledge and keen interest in open space and represent diverse geographic areas of the City (to be appointed by the City Manager).
- The commission representatives to this advisory group would not be the chairperson of those commissions.

ATTACHMENT: January 4, 2007 Docket Item #20

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager

Kirk Kincannon, Director, RPCA

Aimee Vosper, Landscape Architect Supervisor, RPCA

Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, RPCA

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED FUTURE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA'S OPEN SPACE STEERING COMMITTEE

ISSUE: The future Open Space Steering Committee structure.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Schedule a public hearing on February 24, 2007, to consider approving a new structure for the Open Space Steering Committee (OSSC) and retitling it the Open Space Advisory Group; and
- (2) If Council agrees to change the future structure of the OSSC, acknowledge and commend the members of the current OSSC for their pioneering and productive work in protecting and expanding public open space in the City.

BACKGROUND: With approval of the Open Space Master Plan in 2003, an 11-member committee, devoted expressly to the preservation of open space, was appointed by the then City Manager. Since its inception in 2003, the Open Space Steering Committee (OSSC) has worked diligently with City staff to identify, analyze, review and rank potential open space sites throughout the City. The OSSC has also actively sought out opportunities for community outreach and education related to the City's Open Space programs and opportunities. The many successes achieved thus far related to preserving and protecting open space are a direct result of this committee's efforts.

The terms of their appointed service has come to a close, and in the September 20, 2005, Open Space Report and Recommendations, a future new structure of the OSSC was proposed. Since that 2005 report, and with review and approval from the existing OSSC, staff has taken into account additional feedback from OSSC members, staff and citizens, and has proposed revisions to the recommended structure. As much of the ground work for future open space protection has been established, the proposal is for a far smaller advisory group. The name of the group would also change to the Open Space Advisory Group. The recommended structure is outlined below.

We recommend the Committee be appointed as an *advisory group* to staff and the City Manager and include the following representatives: one person from each of the following commissions based on the nominations of these commissions.

- One member from the Planning Commission
- One member from the Park and Recreation Commission
- One member from the Environmental Policy Commission
- One member from the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, and
- Two citizens who have shown a knowledge and keen interest in open space and represent diverse geographic areas of the City (to be appointed by the City Manager).

Staff would assist this six person advisory group, and work with the group primarily to implement education and outreach opportunities, and to review future potential open space pocket parks, and conservation easement sites.

The Advisory Group would:

- Meet up to four times a year, and/or additionally when necessary;
- Advise the staff open space team on open space issues and opportunities found during the outreach process;
- Work with staff to make initial contact with citizens concerning open space opportunities;
- Conduct and participate in open public forums to publicly review opportunities; and
- Review vacant and oversize lots for open space potential.

The Staff Open Space Team would:

- Confer with the advisory group on potential open space opportunities;
- Facilitate the meetings;
- Use long range development planning in securing open space on future development sites;
- Use the development process to secure open space on current development sites;
- Develop education and outreach strategies; and
- Report and make recommendations to City Manager and City Council as opportunities become available.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager

Kirk Kincannon, Director, RPCA

Aimee Vosper, Landscape Architect Supervisor, RPCA

Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, RPCA

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02/21/2007 03:08 PM

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cc

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Subject COA Contact Us: The Future Open Space Steering Committee Structure # 20



Time: [Wed Feb 21, 2007 15:08:01] IP Address: [76.21.194.182]

Response requested:

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Subject: The Future Open Space Steering Committee Structure # 20
Dave Cavanaugh 703. 461.3310
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February 21, 2007

4008 Fort Worth Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304

The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: The Future Open Space Steering Committee Structure # 20

The Open Space Steering Committee has been successful in developing and advancing a strategy for protecting space and resources that are rapidly becoming an after thought. It is important that conservation and resource protection continue to be a significant part of the City's efforts in making Alexandria a livable community with a sense of history and love of our natural environment.

Protecting and controlling space is inherently a government responsibility. Staff must be directly involved in directing and overseeing initiatives to protect (control or acquire) natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources. An advisory or steering committee should be accountable to the City Council or City Manager and not be able to solicit acquisitions (outreach) without their approval.

The proposed restructuring is too bureaucratic. It may not be prudent to arbitrarily assign members from other City Commissions unless they share an interest in conservation and resource protection.

Comments:

The Mayor City and City Council should continue to give energy and support to the City's open space initiative. This initiative is central to the type of community we want to be 5 or 10 years from now. It impacts transportation, air and water quality, historic areas, the natural, urban environment and planning and zoning. Actions taken now will define the City of Alexandria in the future. Without that connection, future generations will have lost the sense of place and history that makes Alexandria a special.

The staff, working with others, should draft an advisory commission charter approved by the City Council or City Manager. Once the role and responsibility of the advisory group is determined, it would be appropriate to determine the number and representation of members. A member of the City Manager's staff or a person reporting to the City Manager's staff should guide, direct and oversee the work of the group.

The role of the six person advisory group should be more should be expanded. They should assist and facilitate developing and implementing a more comprehensive open space strategy. This would include improved strategies for identifying, promoting, and protecting historic, cultural and natural resources, and maintaining a diverse, urban, natural environment. This should be in addition to developing a more objective, open process for evaluating open space proposals for consideration by the City Council. The advisory group should leave political considerations to the City Council and not include them in the ranking process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Sincerely,
Dave Cavanaugh