

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 18, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THRU: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

FROM: RICH BAIER, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
 LANCE MALLAMO, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
 JAMES SPENGLER, DIRECTOR, RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: STAFF RESPONSE TO THE AD HOC FORT WARD PARK AND MUSEUM AREA STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY: The Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group made a set of 58 recommendations for the park. Staff prepared estimates for the capital and operating impacts of the recommendations when implemented. The estimates represent additional costs not currently shown in either the 10-year CIP or General Fund operating budget. Total capital improvement program impacts for items which have been costed out are \$2,052,925. The annual recurring operating budget impact would be \$78,987. Many of the recommendations are already implemented, starting in the summer of 2009, and have no cost impact.

BACKGROUND: In June, 2009 City Council established an Ad Hoc Stakeholder Advisory Group to advise City staff on Fort Ward Park and Museum use and management. The Group consisted of ten members appointed by the City Manager beginning in December, 2009 and ending in January, 2011. The goal set for the Advisory Group was to advise staff, recommending an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archaeological interests. As stated in Resolution 2349, the functions of the Advisory Group were as follows:

- a. Advise staff with a goal of finding an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archaeological interests;
- b. Provide staff with recommendations on balancing park uses, implementing education and outreach opportunities and reviewing the success of recently implemented changes; and

- c. Advise staff on Fort Ward issues and opportunities related to the interim park/historic area use, management of Fort Ward and long term goals to be refined through a Citywide park master planning process.

The Advisory Group met twice a month for 13 months, and in January, 2011, in response to their charge of work, the members submitted a report documenting their recommendations for the future management and planning of the park.

Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group Recommendations:

The Group's report is broken down into chapters consisting of research and related recommendations for each section, including: History and Culture, Recreational Use, Environment and Natural Resources, Park Operations, Planning, and Development and Promotion. While the report includes specific recommended actions within each chapter, there are a number of key, overarching recommendations that are discussed in the Executive Summary. These recommendations are:

- Prepare a Fort Ward Master Plan;
- Complete Archaeological Investigation;
- Address Infrastructure Issues (especially related to storm water);
- Re-invigorate or Eliminate the Arboretum and Improve Tree Care;
- Use Best Management Practices for Mowing and Turf Management;
- Encourage Continued Staff Collaboration on Management Issues; and
- Establish a Citizen Oversight Group.

The recommendations do not include a specific timeline for action, but the group expressed a desire for the City to establish an ongoing citizen oversight group to participate in the implementation of their proposed actions.

City Staff Response to Recommendations:

Staff from the Departments of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and Transportation and Environmental Services, the Office of Historic Alexandria, as well as City Manager and City Council received copies of the recommendations from the Group on January 14, 2011. Staff from the aforementioned departments worked together to respond to the report and related recommendations. Given the extent of the report and specificity of the recommendations, staff has done their best to provide estimates of cost impact. The budget impacts may change as more specific planning and analysis is completed. Staff response deals with the recommendations made in the executive summary of the report. More detailed cost estimates are in the attached table that sorts the total set of recommendations by lead department.

Prepare a Fort Ward Master Plan

OHA, RP&CA and T&ES support this recommendation and jointly agree that this is the most important long term strategy to preserve, protect and enhance the resources of the park for the enjoyment and use by current and future generations. A master plan for Fort Ward Park would identify the natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources of the park, and layout a management strategy that will maintain and enhance these features in the years ahead. The plan should address major issues of concern at Fort Ward including Storm Water Mitigation, Interpretation, Vegetation, Recreation/Reservation and Joint Departmental Management Plans.

The estimated cost for thorough study and master planning of the park is \$150,000.

Complete Archaeological Investigation including completion of inventory of sites, promoting understanding, proper interpretation, and protection of graves.

The Office of Historic Alexandria has completed the first phase of a \$50,000 archaeological investigation in limited parts of the park. This work discovered 22 graves, few of which had grave markers, **in three graveyard areas** as well as significant foundations and artifact concentrations. These graves and other cultural resources can be associated with the African Americans living in “The Fort” community for about 100 years. A few Civil War-era artifacts were also discovered. The Revised Draft Cultural Resource Inventory incorporating this information will be available for public review in a few months.

A second stage of archaeological investigation/historical reporting and interpretive planning is needed to provide sufficient information and broaden the inventory to establish a baseline for master planning of the park. This phase will also establish the boundaries of two graveyards and identify all graves within those burial areas so that proper protection and recognition can occur.

A third stage would produce sufficient information and planning to complete a final cultural resource inventory, ensure protection and develop means of interpretation and memorialization. Additional archaeological investigation and treatment would be necessary as part of a study for infrastructure changes, for example, storm water mitigation and daylighting of streams.

The estimated cost to conduct a sufficient Stage 2 archaeological investigation, complete the historical study and interpretive plan, and begin implementation of a process to mark and protect grave sites prior to master planning is \$75,000, while not in the FY 2012 base budget, but listed as the potential supplemental for the FY 2012 operating budget. Depending upon the amount of proposed ground disturbance, archaeological assessment and mitigation costs for soil erosion control and daylighting streams could range from \$15,000 to \$75,000, and Stage 3 may cost \$80,000-\$120,000 depending on master plan requirements. Total cost for all phases of work and assessment/mitigation of erosion control and daylighting projects could be \$230,000 to \$270,000, excluding any additional work that may be deemed necessary to implement the master plan.

Address Infrastructure Issues (especially related to storm water)

The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services currently has \$35,000 in this year's (FY 2011) budget to undertake a storm water mitigation study in Fort Ward Park, including an investigation of run-off and erosion on the eastern side of the park. The study would also look at storm water solutions that abutting private property owners could choose to implement. Additional funding may be available from the State if T&ES determines that the daylighting of stream(s) in the park is advised. Future implementation of a storm water management plan would ideally be incorporated in the master planning process for the park, however it could be done earlier outside of that planning process.

To develop the storm water management plan (beyond the \$35,000 for the storm water mitigation study), an estimated \$50,000 is needed. Implementation costs of a storm water management plan for Fort Ward Park is roughly estimated at \$500,000.

Re-invigorate or Eliminate the Arboretum and Improve Tree Care

Currently, the placement of some specimen Arboretum trees has a negative impact on the historic areas of the park by providing a landscape environment inappropriate for the historic period of the Civil War and African American settlement. Improperly placed trees also block viewsheds once known to be significant to the site. From the Civil War period until the 1950's the landscape around Fort Ward was largely devoid of trees, with vistas extending several miles in each direction from the high point of the Fort. Tree cover has now eliminated this feeling of openness and geographic prominence. However, the presence of tree foliage assists with blocking the intrusion of high-rise building views on the edges of the park.

New trees will require archaeological review before planting, increasing costs to the City beyond the actual cost of the tree and planting labor. However, properly placed specimen trees could be used to honor the memory of those associated with the history of the Fort Ward site, providing a lasting legacy of their contribution to the heritage of Alexandria.

A determination regarding the status of the arboretum at Fort Ward should be made in conjunction with the master planning effort. In the interim, RP&CA manages ongoing tree care throughout the park with guidance from OHA (related to the protection of nearby cultural resources).

Use Best Management Practices for Mowing and Turf Management

For many years the departments that manage Fort Ward have struggled with the issue of appropriate mowing. Although the entire park is recognized as an historic site by federal and State agencies, certain lawn areas of the park are highly sensitive and need appropriate specialized mowing procedures due to both natural and man-made topographical concerns. These include the areas in and around the Fort, including the Fort walls and associated earthworks. During the past three years, the interior and Northwest Bastion of the Fort have been maintained by a private contractor at a cost of \$17,800 annually, under the direct supervision of OHA's Fort Ward Museum staff, with the remainder of the park mowed and

supervised by RP&CA staff. RP&CA and OHA agree that it is in the best interest of the City to transfer responsibility to OHA staff and the mowing contractor for all historically sensitive areas in the park at an increased cost of \$13,560, totaling \$31,360 for 14 mowings annually. This cost is not included in the FY 2012 proposed budget.

Encourage Continued Staff Collaboration on Management Issues

The Departments of RP&CA, T&ES and the Office of Historic Alexandria are committed to an ongoing collaboration in the management of Fort Ward. In conjunction with this effort, staff is preparing a memorandum of understanding that will help better guide current and future staff in managing the park and museum area.

Establish a Citizen Oversight Group

There are currently a number of involved citizen groups and City commissions/boards already established to support Fort Ward Park, including the Friends of Fort Ward, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Alexandria Archaeology Commission, the Environmental Policy Commission, and the Fort Ward Park History Work Group. Given the existing established citizen involvement and support for Fort Ward Park, City staff does not recommend establishing an additional citizen oversight group, except that substantive citizen involvement would be important as part of any future Fort Ward master planning process.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ft. Ward Cost Impact Table

cc: Ad Hoc Fort Ward and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group
Chairs, Park and Recreation Commission, Alexandria Archaeology Commission, and
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

ATTACHMENT #1
Ad Hoc Fort Ward Advisory Group Recommendations

#	Lead Department	Advisory Group Recommendation	One-Time Expenses	Annual Cost Estimates	Explanation/Notes	Timeline
1	TES	Stormwater Plan (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)	\$ 655,000		Multi-year costs include a study and development of a management plan	FY2011-2012 funding for study, Subsequent management plan requires funding
2	RPCA/OH/ATES	Decommission maintenance yard	\$ 220,000		Includes removal of fence, structures, and gravel as well as grading and seeding.	Requires funding
3	RPCA	Relocate playground	\$ 215,000		Appropriate new location must be determined through master planning process	Requires funding
4	RPCA/OH/ATES	Master Plan for Fort Ward Park and Museum Area	\$ 150,000		Refer to Memo	Requires funding
5	TES	Roadway loop resurfacing	\$ 116,000			Requires funding
6	RPCA	New entry booth	\$ 50,000			Requires funding
7	RPCA	Replace cemetery fence	\$ 40,000		Estimate based on request from Oakland Baptist Church for 6' wrought iron	Requires funding
8	RPCA/ATES	Natural walkway	\$ 25,000		Estimate based on cost for 4 foot wide, 6/10 of a mile trail parallel to roadway	Requires funding
9	RPCA/ATES	Permeable hardscape	\$ 24,000		\$8,000 per pad in picnic areas – additional hardscape areas to be determined through master planning	Requires funding
10	RPCA	Install gate arm on ring road	\$ 13,000			
11	RPCA	Restore soccer field/park gate	\$ 10,000		Also includes cost of stairs	Requires funding
12	RPCA/OHA	Historic/Cultural Interpretive Plan (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)	\$ 10,000		Half funded by SAT grant; costs associated with staff time	Currently underway with grant funding- requires additional funding
13	RPCA	Plants on east boundary	\$ 6,125		125' of planting	Requires funding
14	RPCA/OHA	Historically appropriate park signage	\$ 4,800		30 signs at \$160 each	Requires funding
15	OHA	Interpretation of Cultural and Historic Resources	\$ 239,000		\$14,070 funded by SAT grant for printing brochures, website development, grave markers and fencing; \$41,965 funded by SAT for ADA; and \$15,000 funded by NTHP for African American interpretive signage	Requires additional funding
16	OHA	Cultural Resource Inventory Phase III(as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)	\$ 120,000		Total costs for Phase 3 are a minimum estimate only.	Requires additional funding
17	OHA	Cultural Resource Inventory Phase II (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)	\$ 75,000			Ongoing – May require additional funding

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18	RPCA	Regular tree care plan	\$ 60,000	\$10,500	One time cost covers tree care for the entire park with subsequent annual cost for a rotation cycle of pruning and maintenance (30 trees per year)	Requires funding
19	RPCA	Completion of historical research and compilation of history report (necessary to begin Fort Ward Master Plan)	\$ 20,000			Underway
20	OHA	Joint outreach (RPCA/OHA)		\$30,000	Includes outreach, promotion, and educational programming	Requires funding
21	RPCA/OHA	Historic turf management		\$13,560	Current contractor cost for maintenance of bastion and interior fort area (mowing) already funded - additional 13,560 for sensitive areas	Requires additional funding
22	RPCA	Monitor new gate arm		\$12,420	for gate \$1,035/mo. for staff each night	Requires funding
23	RPCA	Clear deadfall from wooded area		\$6,900	Estimate for annual staff and equipment time dedicated to smaller deadfall removal (see also large tree removal)	
24	RPCA	New tree maintenance program		\$3,095	\$125 per tree annually (assumes 25 new trees/year)	Program currently on hold pending archaeology investigation
25	RPCA/OHA	Increase volunteer program + volunteer coordinator 1/2 FTE		\$2,512	Funding for volunteer coordinator	Requires funding
			\$ 2,052,925	\$ 78,987		

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#	Lead Department	Advisory Group Recommendation	One-Time Expenses	Annual Cost Estimates	Explanation/Notes	Timeline
COSTS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED / OTHER ITEMS						
26	GS	Rehabilitate restrooms				Requires funding
27	OHA	Signage and protection program for graves			Includes signage and fencing	Requires funding
28	RPCA	Vegetation Management Plan (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)			After development, annual review is equal to one-day staff time	Requires funding with master plan
29	RPCA	Tree replacement				
30	RPCA/GS	Assessment of storage area and any related changes			Included in master planning estimate	Requires funding
31	RPCA/OHA	Natural Resource Inventory (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)			After development of plan, annual review is equal to one-day staff time	*Requires funding with master plan then incorporated into budget/work plan)
32	RPCA/OHA/TES	Community Input Plan (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)			Add to Master Plan	Requires funding with master plan and annual operating costs
33	RPCA/OHA/TES	Joint Management Plan (as section of Fort Ward Master Plan)				Currently underway
34	RPCA/TES	Install Rain gardens				Requires funding
35	RPCA/TES	Parking plan			Included in master planning estimate	Requires funding
36	TES/GS	Rain barrels				Requires funding
37		Police speeding				
38	OHA	Cemetery on National Registry			Cemeteries not accepted on registry	
39	RPCA	Large tree removal (storm damage, etc.)			Fort Ward loses up to 7-9 large trees each year	Currently provided on an as needed basis
40	RPCA	Best Practices for turf management			Implementation cost only on plan	To be incorporated into operating plan
41	RPCA	Dog park signage			Cost for replacement of regulatory signage	FY2012 – funded through Dog Park CFMP
42	RPCA	Dog park relocation			Cost for new bollards and reinstallation of signage	Funded through Dog Park CFMP
43	RPCA	Strengthen picnic rules			Enforcement costs covered by weekend Manager on Duty program	
44	RPCA	Memorial Tree program			\$250/tree paid by donor+ \$69 staff time	Program currently on hold pending archaeology investigation
45	RPCA	Review mowing plan			Annual review is equal to one-day staff time	Currently ongoing
46	RPCA	Monitor invasive			Ongoing review is equal to one week staff time	Currently ongoing

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	Lead Department	Advisory Group Recommendation	One-Time Expenses	Annual Cost Estimates	Explanation/Notes	Timeline
47	RPCA	Plant plan for wildlife (as section of master plan)			Development of plan is equal to one week staff time	Requires funding
48	RPCA	Mowing plan for public review				Currently ongoing
49	RPCA	Maintain increased weekend staffing			Current cost for Manager on Duty program	Currently funded, ongoing
50	RPCA/OHA	Complete MOU for public review				Currently underway
51	RPCA/OHA	Train RPCA staff on history			Staff time ~ annual training of seasonal staff	Requires funding
52	RPCA/OHA	Electronic communications			Absorbed in ongoing operations and IT costs	
53	RPCA/OHA/TES	Citizens Advisory Group			24 hours staff time/month	To be incorporated into operating plan
54	RPCA/OHA/TES	Monthly interdepartmental mtgs				Currently ongoing
55	RPCA/OHA/TES	Regular joint reports to Council				
56	RPCA/OHA/TES	Employee performance review			Standard for City	on-going
57	RPCA / VOLUNTEERS	Survey birds in park			One time survey is equal to one week staff time	Requires funding
58	TES	Remove concrete from stream				Ongoing stream maintenance
59	TES	Improve/repairs to roadway loop			For repairs only. Cost estimate for repaving listed below	
60	TES	Install water breaks			Current yearly cost for straw bales	Ongoing
61	TES	Regular inlet maintenance				Currently ongoing as part of stream maintenance

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