

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

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**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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| #  | Lead Department | Advisory Group Recommendation  | One-Time Expenses   | Annual Cost Estimates | Explanation/Notes  | Timeline  |
|----|-----------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 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  |
|    |                 |  | <b>\$ 2,052,925</b> | <b>\$ 78,987</b>      |  |   |

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| #  | Lead Department | Advisory Group Recommendation                                    | One-Time Expenses | Annual Cost Estimates | Explanation/Notes   | Timeline  |
|--|-----------------|--|-------------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>COSTS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED / OTHER ITEMS</b> |                 |  |                   |                       |   |   |
| 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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**Ad Hoc Fort Ward Advisory Group Recommendations**

|    | 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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