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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 2, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF THE FY 2000 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

ISSUE: City Council consideration of the FY 2000 Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission (Attachment).

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive the Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission, and thank the Commission for its efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory body created by City Council in March 1970 to study issues relating to park and recreation needs. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from the three planning districts and two high school age members to represent the youth of the City.

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission has prepared a report which highlights the principal activities of the Commission during FY 2000 (July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000) and the Commission's planned future efforts. The following are highlights of the Commission's accomplishments during this period:

1. In an effort to provide information to City Council and make recommendations concerning the City's recreational needs, the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission:
 - established a Dog Subcommittee in April 1999 to evaluate the current City dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks, and develop a Master Plan for Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks;
 - made a recommendation to the City Manager outlining the funding priorities for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, to include increased funding for park operations, the maintenance of new and existing facilities, and capital improvement projects;
 - supported the recommendations that were included in the Open Space Concept Plans concerning the City properties located at Potomac Yard, including the need for both active and passive recreation space and the inclusion of soccer fields;

- appointed an Open Space Subcommittee to address open space issues in the City of Alexandria;
 - continued to monitor the design plan for the replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to ensure that the City's park and recreation resources are maintained and that bicycle and pedestrian transportation and recreation issues are considered; and
 - appointed William Conkey as the Commission's representative to the Rocky Versace Vietnam Veterans Plaza project which recognizes Vietnam veterans from the City of Alexandria.
2. In an effort to encourage public participation in the decision making process, the Park and Recreation Commission:
- held public hearings for Planning District I, II, and III to solicit input from citizens in each of these areas; and
 - held public hearings on special issues including the City application for federal funds from the TEA21 Enhancement Programs for the Proposed Eisenhower Valley Greenway Trail, dog exercise areas, the planned renovation of the Durant Center, a five-year license agreement with the Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia for the use of athletic facilities located at 4401 West Braddock Road by students attending St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School, and program planning and architectural designs for the renovation of the Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center.

The Commission will continue to monitor both parent and participant satisfaction with existing recreation programs and make recommendations for changes and the development of new programs. In addition, the Commission will continue to make recommendations to improve diversity in all recreation programs. The Commission will also continue to study and make recommendations on improving the City's waterfront and Jones Point Park during the impending replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and work on issues pertaining to open space and evaluate the use of dog parks, and teen programming.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT: FY 2000 Annual Report for the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

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

**ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
2000 ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1999 - JUNE 2000**

Introduction

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory unit established by City Council in March 1970. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from each of the three planning districts. Two high school age members are also appointed by City Council to represent the youth of the City.

The purpose of the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is to allow City of Alexandria residents to participate in planning activities, serve as a panel to hear citizen suggestions and/or concerns relating to recreation and park program, advise City Council on community recreation needs, and assist the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities in being aware of, and sensitive to, public needs.

Fiscal Year 2000 Planning District Representatives:

Planning District I	-	Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Planning District I	-	William Conkey
Planning District I	-	Melissa Luby (resigned May 2000)
Planning District II	-	Kirk Fedder
Planning District II	-	Lynette Hart
Planning District II	-	Bruce Dwyer
Planning District III	-	Kenneth Foran
Planning District III	-	Ellen Murray
Planning District III	-	Joanne Tomasello
Youth Representative	-	Alex Rubenstein
Youth Representative	-	Allison Swindell

City Staff:

Sandra Whitmore, Director - Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
 Janet Barnett, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
 Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
 Moses Simmons, Special Assistant to the Director - Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

During Fiscal Year 2000, the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission encouraged public participation in the decision making process involving recreational issues by holding public hearings as indicated:

- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District I on December 16, 1999 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district;

- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District III on January 20, 2000 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district. A second public hearing was held on the Eisenhower Avenue Bike Trail Enhancement/Expansion project which was submitted as a TEA-21 grant proposal;
- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District II on February 17, 2000 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district;
- Held Public Hearings at the Lee Center on November 4, 1999, at Patrick Henry Elementary School on November 8, 1999 and, the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on January 27, 2000 to give City residents an opportunity to comment and provide suggestions pertaining to dog exercise areas. On March 29, 2000, a Public Hearing was held at the Minnie Howard School to review the proposed Master Plan for Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks in the City. The Master Plan was submitted to City Council for their review on June 27, 2000;
- Held a Public Hearing on January 26, 2000 at the Durant Center to give City residents an opportunity to comment and provide suggestions pertaining to potential uses, program planning and architectural designs for the renovation of the Durant Center. A second Public Hearing was held on June 15, 2000 to review the proposed design plans with the architectural firm;
- Held a Public Hearing on March 16, 2000 at the Lee Center to receive comments on entering into another five-year license agreement with the Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia for use of the athletic facilities located at 4401 West Braddock Road by students attending St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School; and
- Held a Public Hearing on April 4, 2000 at the William Ramsay Elementary School to discuss potential uses, program planning and architectural designs for the renovation of the Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center.

2. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Commission established a Dog Subcommittee in April 1999 to evaluate the current City dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks. The subcommittee reviewed the areas, issued a survey to dog license holders and held several public hearings as indicated. As a result of the survey, and input from citizens at the public hearings, the subcommittee developed a Master Plan for Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks. The Commission supported and recommended that the Master Plan for Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks be accepted by City Council. The Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks includes issues regarding the safety of dogs and the general public, the location of dog exercise areas, the prioritization of areas to create an adequate balance throughout the City, time sharing of parks between dog owners and non-owners, signs, rules and regulations, and funding sources for the building and maintenance of dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks;



- The Commission made a recommendation to the City Manager outlining the funding priorities for the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities to include increased funding of park operations and maintenance of new and existing facilities. In addition to increased funding for operations and maintenance, the Commission supports capital improvement funding for the implementation of the Bicycle Master Plan, realization of a new Jerome “Buddie” Ford Nature Center, and the upgrading and improvement of existing bike and walking trails;
- The Commission supported the recommendations on the Open Space Concept Plans concerning the City properties located at Potomac Yard. The plans include addressing the need for both active and passive recreation space and the inclusion of soccer fields;
- The Commission appointed an Open Space Subcommittee to address open space issues in Alexandria. The Mayor asked this subcommittee to join forces with the open space subcommittee of the Planning Commission and the Environmental Policy Commission to form a Steering Committee to address the open space issues in the City. The goals of this Steering Committee will be to:
 - 1) inventory existing open spaces
 - 2) develop a classification system
 - 3) develop an open space master plan which will set out goals, objectives and policies for protecting existing open space resources and obtaining additional open space
 - 4) develop an implementation plan to include funding sources for capital investments, as well as the maintenance of open space.
 It is anticipated that the master plan will take 12-18 months to complete;
- The Commission and its Bicycle Study Committee continued to monitor the design plan for the replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to ensure that the best interests of the City of Alexandria’s park and recreation resources are met and that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations for transportation and recreation are included in the design; and
- The Commission appointed William Conkey as its representative to the Rocky Versace Memorial project. This project recognizes Vietnam Veterans from the City of Alexandria. An appropriate memorial will be placed at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center Plaza.

3. **FUTURE GOALS**

The Commission will continue to monitor both parent and participant satisfaction with existing recreation programs and make recommendations for changes and the development of new programs. In addition, the Commission will continue make recommendations on how to improve diversity in all recreation programs. The Commission will also continue to study and make recommendations on improving the City’s waterfront during the impending replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The Commission will also continue to work on issues pertaining to open space, evaluate the use of dog parks, and teen programming.