

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 18, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER ^S

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF ENHANCEMENTS RELATING TO THE KING STREET GARDENS PARK AND RESOLUTION TO ALLOW TEMPORARY VENDING OPERATIONS IN THE PARK DURING SUMMER 2001

ISSUE: Consideration of enhancements relating to the King Street Gardens Park and resolution to allow temporary vending operations in the Park during summer 2001.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Maintain the design of the King Street Gardens Park and approve implementation of staff recommendations relating to park enhancements that include new planting strategies, a vendor cart, concerts, and lighting; and
- (2) Adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 1) to allow the vendor selected and monitored by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities temporary use of King Street Gardens Park for the sole purpose of providing pre-packaged food and non-alcoholic beverage items, for sale, operating from a food cart on site, from July through October 2001, as authorized by Section 6-104 of the Zoning Ordinance.

BACKGROUND: At the March 27, 2001 City Council meeting, Councilman Speck asked that the City Manager come back to Council with a general history of King Street Gardens Park, and provide information on what are the perceived problems with the park and what, if anything, Council could do to address them (Attachment 2).

DISCUSSION: In the late 1980's, the King Street Task Force was formed to guide development in the area surrounding the King Street Metro Station. Included in the discussions was the development of a 15,000 square-foot triangular plot of land adjacent to the Metro Station. Two goals were established for the land: to create a park of national significance that would provide a respite in the only public space in the area's high-density urban environment; and to design a work of public art that would incorporate Alexandria's distinct historical significance, integrating public art and creating a memorable civic image in a fluid urban landscape.

In 1989, the King Street Task Force, the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission, the Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, and the Alexandria Commission for the Arts joined in a partnership to create the King Street Gardens Committee which administered a national competition for the park, and established a fund-raising plan for project.

In May 1990, a design team from Seattle, Washington, won the national competition. Town meetings and workshops were held to gather community input and to refine the proposal. In June 1991, City Council endorsed the design.

The winning King Street Gardens Park design received the largest available Art in Public Places grant award (\$30,000) from both the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Virginia Commission for the Arts (\$20,000).

Additional fund-raising opportunities included the "Buy the Brick" program which generated 2,500 brick orders totaling \$145,840, and the Naming and General Support Opportunities program which generated \$49,865. The King Street Gardens Committee also approached local foundations, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Federal Government through a grant application program. This effort raised \$142,780, including an ISTE Federal program grant of \$125,000.

The King Street Gardens Park design received citations from the American Institute of Architects, Seattle Chapter, Seattle, Washington, in 1991 and the Northern Virginia Chapter Award of Excellence in 1992. Also in 1992, the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service included the King Street Gardens Park design as part of the "Fragile Ecologies" exhibit that traveled to ten cities nationwide. In Spring 1993, two invitational presentations on the King Street Gardens project were held at the Harvard University School of Design. In the fall of 1994, an invitational presentation about the King Street Gardens project was held at the Tate Gallery, London, England.

The Park was dedicated October 4, 1997. The total cost of the King Street Gardens project was approximately \$1.2 million, of which \$395,000 was for the site acquisition and approximately \$800,000 was for design and construction.

PERCEIVED PROBLEMS: People have commented that the Park is dark, and that the vines are dead or need to be replaced. Staff have also had comments regarding the weedy, grassy appearance of the wetland garden. Callers have also commented on the height and look of the steel topiary, the hanging gardens and trellis columns, stating that the structure is too tall for the setting, and that it is not easy to understand the images presented by the structure.

If the topiary were removed, as some have suggested, the cost for total removal would be approximately \$20,000. If only the top tier of the topiary were removed, the cost is estimated at \$30,000 which includes the redoing of the lighting rods, redoing the wiring for the vines, cold galvanizing the cuttings on the topiary, and the priming and painting. If there are structural changes made to the Park, some contributions, grants and the "brick" money may need to be returned.

RECOMMENDATION: In light of the significant investment in the creation of King Street Gardens Park, staff recommends that, for now, the design of the Park be maintained, and that specific steps be taken to improve the Park's appearance and to enhance activity at the park. Staff has developed a strategy to improve the appearance of the park by adding plants with more year-round interest and color, and by replacing existing plants in the wetland garden with new plants that are more colorful in appearance and relate better to the urban setting. If Council approves staff recommendations, the following specific actions will occur:

1. Grassy plants in the wetland garden will be replaced with native flowering perennials and shrubs that will provide color for most of the year.
2. Shrubs in the linear planting strips at the street edges on King Street and Daingerfield Road will be removed and replaced with low evergreen ground covers and annuals in order to open up views to the sunken garden.
3. Evergreen and flowering vines will be added to the tricorn structure for a longer season of interest. The current grape vines, which offer no ornamental interest and retain their brown leaves during the winter, will be removed.
4. Vines, which are not performing well in the hanging gardens, such as English ivy and climbing hydrangea, will be removed and replaced with more vigorous flowering and evergreen vines that have a longer season of interest. The lavender wisteria will be replaced over time with a white wisteria, which was the original design intent.
5. The base of each trellis column and the street tree pits on King Street will be planted with evergreen ground covers. Pots of annuals will be added near seating areas under the trellis for additional color.

Planting improvements will be phased as follows: vines will be removed and replaced slowly over the next few years, starting in summer of 2001, so that the structures do not appear bare as the vines are replaced; clean up and replanting of the wetland garden will occur in fall of 2001; and annuals will be planted at the corner of King Street and Daingerfield Road in summer of 2001; and, maintenance of this site will be improved with additional staffing starting in summer of 2001.

Staff also recommends that during the winter months, the Park be lit with small white lights to improve the appearance.

In addition, during the original planning of King Street Gardens Park, the King Street Gardens Committee envisioned a food and beverage cart on the park property, attracting residents, tourists, and employees from the area. This concept has the support of KISMET, the West King Street Neighborhood Association, and the King Street Metro Task Force, and staff believes this will help increase activity in the park.

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, working with the Purchasing Department, issued an Informal Solicitation for Proposals (ISP) in the fall of 2000. Although

care was given to advertise the opportunity through the local business community and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, only one proposal was received. After review and discussions with both citizen groups and the bidder, it was determined that the proposal was not acceptable. The ISP was re-issued in March 2001, then extended upon the request of the West King Street Neighborhood Association, in an effort to maximize the number of submissions.

Currently negotiations are underway with one of the companies which submitted a proposal. The delay in the process makes it impossible to obtain an SUP (Special Use Permit) for this summer. Therefore, City Council is requested to approve the temporary use of King Street Gardens for this vending operation, on a trial basis, with oversight by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. This temporary use is compatible with the purposes of the POS zone.

The SUP application will be completed this summer and submitted for the Planning Commission's consideration in the fall, if the project is to continue.

Finally, summer concerts are scheduled which staff believes will bring more activity to the Park. Concerts are planned as follows: June 26, 12:15 p.m., Michael Mulvaney, acoustic blues and roll; July 10, 12:15 p.m., Charles Parente, acoustic pop and contemporary folk; July 24, 7:30 p.m., Bill Parsons, family fun and high energy acoustic pop; and, August 7, 7:30 p.m., 2nd Story, world beat blues.

FISCAL IMPACT: The costs for the new planting strategies which include plants, pots, soil, mulch, and soil preparation is estimated at \$12,440. The new plants will be phased in over time. Therefore, this expense will be spread over several fiscal years. Currently, there is an annual budget of \$7,045 for maintenance of the King Street Gardens Park. This expense is anticipated to increase to \$8,500 annually mostly due to the need for additional staff time to care of the new plants. The recommended new planting strategies will be funded from remaining donations for the King Street Gardens project. Currently, the donation account for the project has an available balance of approximately \$41,800.

The vendor for the vending cart will pay a nominal fee to the City. This amount is yet to be determined, as the contract has not yet been secured.

The cost for the four concerts totals \$1,400 which includes the cost for performer fees and sound support, and is included in the Recreation Department's Special Events budget.

The cost of lighting the park during the winter months of November through February will be approximately \$1,200, and these costs in FY 2002 will be absorbed by the Recreation Department.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Resolution to Allow Temporary Vending Operations in King Street Gardens During Summer 2001
2. Action Docket, March 27, 2001 City Council Meeting.

STAFF:

Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Cheryl Anne Powalisz, Alexandria Commission for the Arts, Department of Recreation, Parks
and Cultural Activities

Patricia McManus, Landscape Architect Supervisor, Department of Recreation, Parks and
Cultural Activities

Angela Smith, Budget Analyst, Office of Management and Budget

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, a vending operation at King Street Gardens during the summer months would assist in the creation of a positive, community environment for local residents, tourists, and area workers; and

WHEREAS, the original King Street Gardens Committee envisioned a food and beverage cart and service on the King Street Gardens park property; and

WHEREAS, the West King Street Neighborhood Association, KISMET, and the King Street Metro Task Force support this concept; and

WHEREAS, the vendor selected from the recent solicitation process does not have sufficient time to obtain an approved special use permit for the summer 2001 season; and

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria's Zoning Ordinance, Article VI Special and Overlay Zones, 6-104 Temporary Uses and Structures allows City Council, by resolution, to authorize temporary uses and structures compatible with the purposes of the POS zone;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia;

1. That temporary vending at King Street Gardens be authorized for the summer of 2001; and
2. That the City Manager, through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, provide supervision of the vendor selected and the vending operation; and
3. That the vending operation can be terminated by the City Manager at any time for unsatisfactory performance; and
4. That the term of this temporary authorization will be from July 1, 2001 until October 31, 2001, unless extended by resolution of City Council adopted prior to October 31, 2001.

ADOPTED: June 26, 2001

Kerry J. Donley MAYOR
On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:

Beverly I. Jett City Clerk

ORAL PRESENTATIONS BY MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL (continued)

(I) Councilman Speck asked that City Council consider King Street Gardens. City Manager Sunderland will come back to Council with a general history of King Street Gardens, go through what are the perceived problems, what if anything Council can do and make a definitive decision.

Council Action: _____

New Business Item No. 1. City Manager Sunderland distributed to Council the proposed FY 2002 budget on CD which is available for members of the public by calling the Budget Office at 703-838-4780. He also reported that the budget message has been translated into Spanish and is being distributed.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**CONSENT CALENDAR (19-20)**

19. Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of AN ORDINANCE to establish the real estate and personal property tax rates for calendar year 2001.

20. Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of AN ORDINANCE to modify the membership of the Alexandria Commission for Women.

END OF CONSENT CALENDAR

19. City Council introduced and passed the Ordinance on its first reading, set it for public hearing on Tuesday, April 17, 2001, and for second reading and final passage on Monday, May 7, 2001.

20. City Council introduced and passed the Ordinance on its first reading, and set it for public hearing, second reading and final passage on Tuesday, April 10, 2001.

Council Action: _____

21. Introduction and First Reading. Passage on First and Second Readings of AN ORDINANCE to adopt Supplement No. 24 to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, as amended, and to provide for the repeal of ordinances not included therein, except those saved from repeal by this ordinance, and for other purposes. **[ROLL-CALL VOTE]**

City Council finally passed the Ordinance on its first and second readings.

ORD. NO. 4193

Council Action: _____

22. Consideration of Budget Resolution. **[ROLL-CALL VOTE]**

City Council adopted the budget resolution in order to provide a framework for budget consideration by the present Council.

RES. NO. 1998

Council Action: _____

RESOLUTION NO. 2004

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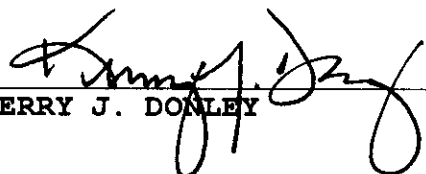
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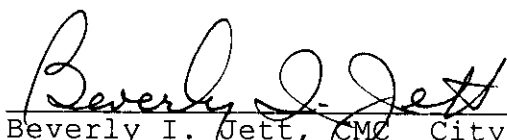
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KERRY J. DONLEY MAYOR

ATTEST:


Beverly I. Jett, CMC City Clerk