

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 10, 2003
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER PS
SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 22 : HISTORY OF FUNDING AND REPORTS ON THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL RECREATION FACILITY

This memorandum is in response to City Council's request for staff follow-up at the budget public hearing on the recent history of discussions about a possible multi-generational recreation facility.

BACKGROUND: The City initiated the discussion regarding a reuse plan for Cameron Station in March 1989. This effort involved input for several groups and task forces, the Park and Recreation Commission, several City agencies and input from the public at numerous public hearings and forums.

April 23, 1996: Based on recommendations from staff and from the Park and Recreation Commission, City Council, at its legislative meeting, approved the proposed development and renovation in the West End Park (now Armistead L. Boothe Park) at an estimated cost of \$275,000, and the development of a soccer field and four multi-use courts, as well as landscaping and site amenities for the East End Park (now Ben Brenman Park) at an estimated cost of \$1,425,000. In addition, Council established a Task Force to "look at, in general, the concept of a multi-generational, mixed use facility at Cameron Station or potentially another site if they so desire, with a request to report back to Council in October, 1996" with their recommendations.

October 23, 1996: City Council received the Final Report of the Cameron Station Recreational Task Force, and requested that staff review the report and return to Council with a fiscal analysis of the Task Force's recommendations, and any alternative recommendations. The Task Force recommended, by a vote of 8-0, that a multi-generational mixed use facility similar to the Chinguapin Recreation Center, be located in the East End Park of Cameron Station. The recommended facility was contemplated to be approximately 60,000 square feet and would include an indoor track, gymnasium, swimming pool and locker facilities, weight room, sauna, dance studio, kitchen, a computer lab, and a large number of meeting rooms for social events, seniors, clubs, classes, etc. (It should be noted that during subsequent discussions between former Task Force Chair Bernard Brenman, and former Department of Recreation Director Barry

Robinson, Mr. Brenman stated that the Task Force wished to remove the swimming pool from consideration as an element.)

The Task Force also recommended that "City Council provide funds for preparation of an architectural plan for a multi-generational mixed use facility as a matter of high priority." The Task Force also recommended that "the highest priority be given to commencement of construction of this multi-generational mixed use facility."

February 11, 1997: Per Council's request at the October 23, 1996 legislative meeting, staff reviewed the Task Force report recommendation for a new multi-generational, mixed-use facility of approximately 60,000 square feet to be located in the East End Park and reviewed the suggested programmatic elements that would be offered at such a facility and reported back to Council at a work session with its recommendation.

Staff noted that a 60,000 square foot recreational facility as recommended by the Task Force would be nearly twice the size of the City's current destination recreation facility - Chinquapin, which is 32,500 square feet and includes an indoor swimming pool. Staff believed that an additional destination facility, such as the one recommended by the Task Force, would duplicate many of the services and programs already available at Chinquapin. Therefore, staff's analysis was that the facility recommended by the Task Force would not be cost effective to build or operate because of the duplication of services. Staff recommended a smaller, 32,500 square foot multi-purpose recreational facility in the East End Park. Because the specific programmatic needs and resulting facility requirements should be reassessed after the existing recreation facility renovations are completed, new programming is in place, and a decision regarding, at the time, a possible new West End School (Samuel Tucker Elementary) has been made, staff recommended that City Council endorse a concept of a smaller-scale facility at the East End Park site, but defer actual planning, design and construction for a period of approximately five to seven years.

February 11, 1997: At a regular legislative meeting, City Council authorized the City Manager to contract out the technical design for the development of the approved elements of the West End and East End Parks at Cameron Station using monies already allocated for the Cameron Station development and endorsed, in concept, a plan to construct, within an estimated period of four to six years, a multi-use, multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation facility at the East End Park.

March 10, 1998: At a legislative meeting, City Council approved the adoption of the concept plans for the East and West End Parks of Cameron Station, which included reserving the "open green" at the northern end of the park for the multi-use, multi-generational recreation facility.

FY 1998 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget: City Council added \$5,000 in FY 2003 of the CIP for the future planning and development of a multi-generational recreation facility in the East End Park. The Approved FY 1998 CIP budget did not include funding for the preliminary engineering or design of a recreational facility, pending further analysis of other City-wide capital facility needs and priorities, including the completion of the current recreation

center renovation projects at Mount Vernon, Nannie J. Lee, William Ramsay and the Durant Centers. This was also to give the Schools time to make a decision regarding the development of a new school in the West End (Samuel Tucker) and Recreation Department staff time to assess the development of a recreation center in the context of the construction of the new school and the impact of that center on the type of recreation facility that would best be suited for the East End Park at Cameron Station.

FY 1999 CIP: City Council approved an increase in the funding for future planning of the multi-use, multi-generational facility from \$5,000 to \$20,000 in FY 2003.

FY 2000 CIP: City Council approved an additional \$5,000, for a total of \$25,000 in FY 2003, which was consistent with the amounts budgeted for the initial planning of other facilities in the City.

February 28, 2001: Based on City Council actions, establishing a process to determine the comprehensive needs of recreation and leisure services City-wide, the \$25,000 in the CIP for the planning of a multi-generational center remained unallocated and unexpended pending the outcome of the planned needs assessment, which was presented to City Council on December 10, 2002.

Per the needs assessment called the "Strategic Master Plan for Open Space, Parks and Recreation," the Alexandria community, through focus groups, public forums and a residential survey, indicated their most important recreation facilities needs. The majority of respondents (66 percent from the citizen survey) believe "the City should develop indoor recreation programming space that supports a multi-generational indoor recreation center that can serve all ages as a priority." In addition, the needs assessment states that the City should explore the feasibility of enlarging Chinguapin Recreation Center to become the multi-generational center the residents desire. According to the assessment, the City also needs to explore the feasibility of acquiring property and constructing a new neighborhood recreation center on the City's west side to support its population density.

Prior year unallocated funding, in the amount of \$25,000, currently remains in the Capital Projects Fund.

- cc: Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
- Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation
- Brain Albright, Division Chief, Recreation
- Alfred Coleman, Budget/Management Analyst, OMB