

WS  
9-17-02

Dear Mr. Donley

### Save Chinquapin Park

Chinquapin Park is one of only a couple parks (if not the last) that I can think of that still have a decent sized open space. It is the only park of any size with open space in the eastern part of Alexandria. Most of the other parks I can think of that have open space also have softball fields and hence are covered in unsightly chain link fence.

Who knows what will be left of Jones Point after the bridge is built, whatever is left will be in the shadow of a towering monstrosity of a bridge and traffic noise. Nothing came from Potomac Yards but a shopping center. It seems the acquisition of Cameron Station resulted in only a tiny park and a lot of condos. Economic development is fine, but it seems Alexandria is coming very close to a point where there is too little open space for citizens to enjoy and thus becoming an unattractive city like Arlington. My fiancée and I would like to raise our family in Alexandria, but if there is no open space where we can take our children to run around then Alexandria will look a lot less attractive.

There is almost no open park space left in Alexandria. We are voting, tax paying citizens of Alexandria and are for strong schools and education on Alexandria. However there are alternatives to the T.C. Williams project that don't involve ruining Chinquapin.

Don't ruin Chinquapin!

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WS  
9-17-02

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September 16, 2002

TO: Mayor Kerry J. Donley  
City Council Members

In case you might have missed it during the summer vacation period, we thought you might like a copy of our Letter to the Editor of the Alexandria Gazette Packet regarding the T.C. Williams High School renewal project.

Since our letter appeared in the July 11-17 issue, the School Board issued 4.5 as an additional option. That option would use both the land on the present school site and also take a very large part of Chinguapin Park for the new high school. We feel this could lead to a disastrous fate for one of Alexandria's most important parks, eventually jeopardizing such activities as its unique community gardens and woodland trails that are used by birding enthusiasts, dog walkers, and others -- also its playing fields, picnic area, playground, and other sites for numerous activities.

Of the four options presented at the most recent steering committee meeting (4A1, 4 B, 4.5, and 5B), we think option 4B is preferable, since it best protects valuable green space in Chinguapin Park and the unique activities there. We would modify that option to even further protect against encroachment into the park by keeping school-use tennis courts within the present school site, possibly locating them on top of the parking deck. And, since that option already shows a practice field, we would recommend doing away with the present practice field in the park in order that the needed green space there might be freed up and used, as in the past, for park activities.

We are enclosing some photos that show both the community gardens at Chinguapin and the plantings we, as volunteers, carry out around the area of the gardens, woodland, and city compost demonstration area. We hope you will agree that it is quite feasible to develop a modern new high school on the present school site -- albeit a somewhat taller one -- and that the present park with its country-like atmosphere should be protected for the unique park uses that were noted in our Letter to the Gazette Packet.

Sincerely,

*Dale May*

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THE ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET, ♦ JULY 11-17, 2002

# OPINION

ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET EDITOR DALE SMITH  
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TC's Option 4 Favored

To the Editor:

The Alexandria School Board would take over Chinquapin Park as one of its options for the T.C. Williams High School renewal project. We favor option 4 of building a new "T.C." high school on the present school site.

Chinquapin is the only park in Alexandria that has a unique diversity of activities and values. They include the children's summer camp amid the park's beautiful surroundings and mature park trees, a children's playground, a pavilion where groups of city residents regularly have picnics and reunions, athletic fields where little league and other groups play soccer, basketball, and other sports, areas where on-leash dogs can be walked in country-like surroundings, a site for Earth Day and ethnic city festivals, and some 140 rental garden plots.

It has taken 30 years to develop these, and it is not just a matter of moving them to the current T.C. site after a school and parking lots have been built in their place. The community gardeners, for instance, have painstakingly worked and amended the soil where the garden plots, including handicap plots, lie in one part of the park, having started with rubble left from the torpedo-factory-worker housing that was there at one time. They create beauty

and educational enjoyment — as well as a healthy food supply — in these plots, and the gardeners themselves monitor with garden board teams to see that the plots are well maintained.

Incidentally, the city recently presented the two of us, as volunteers and gardeners, with a beautification award for the flowering perennial beds we put in and maintain in the park area surrounding the gardens and city site where residents observe and learn how to properly do backyard composting.

Option 5 would replace all this with the school and parking lots. One variation would even put a 2-story parking garage up against the beautiful forested nature trail that is part of the park. It is regularly used by bird watchers and strollers.

How could all this be properly squeezed into a much-reduced park area where the current T.C. Williams High School lies once a new school is built on top of Chinquapin Park? And that eventual smaller park would then be very close to a congested intersection (King-Braddock-Quaker) with its noise and auto pollution.

We hope other park users besides those of us who garden at Chinquapin will agree and tell their city officials how they feel.

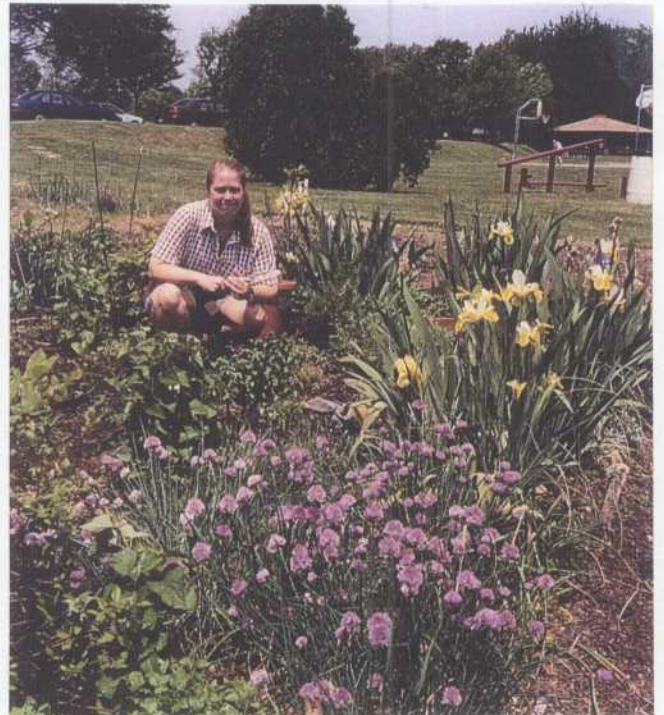
**Dale May and Mildred Fajna**  
Alexandria





Redbud with plantings on embankment.

## **At Chinquapin: COMMUNITY GARDENS AND PLANTINGS BY VOLUNTEERS**



Gardener and member of Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board works in her plot.



Plants help beautify city compost demonstration area, maintained by volunteers.



Gardeners show children how to prepare soil for plants.



Tulips bring early-spring color to daylily planting bordering Chinquapin woodland.



Gardener (with future gardener) waters her vegetable plot.