

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER

FROM: RICHARD J. BAIER, P.E., DIRECTOR
TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: FREEDMEN'S CEMETERY RESTORATION

On August 27, 2002, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) executed the Amendment to the June 30, 2000, Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement with the City of Alexandria. The amendment letter describes the changes that were presented to the City Council in the June 21, 2002, Memorandum, Amendments to Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement, including the program for acquisition and enhancement of Freedmen's Cemetery.

In September, the City Attorney's Office initiated contact with the owners of the two parcels of privately held land that will be acquired under this program. The immediate objective is to obtain rights of entry to the property and to determine whether condemnation proceedings will be required. At this time, the FHWA has not authorized initiation of negotiations.

Concurrently, T&ES retained a consultant to serve as the Program Manager for those elements of the Settlement Agreement that will be implemented by the City. The consultant, Baker and Associates, has prepared draft programs and schedules for the entire Settlement Agreement, including the Freedmen's Cemetery work, which have been reviewed by staff and submitted to FHWA and VDOT for approval.

On October 21, City staff met with representatives of FHWA, VDOT and the WWB Project to discuss the City's plans for proceeding and to review administrative procedures. VDOT will be the principle point of contact and will act as FHWA's agent for technical, administrative and financial matters. The next meeting of this group will be scheduled as soon as VDOT and the WWB Project receive feedback from FHWA.

While City staff has been organizing the Freedmen's Cemetery implementation effort, several stakeholder groups have been active. The Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery and the Alexandria Archaeology Commission have collaborated in the preparation of a draft document titled "Principles for Planning the Alexandria Freedmen's Cemetery Park." This highly constructive

paper presents a detailed set of rule, caveats and design guidelines that should be followed during the planning and execution of the memorial park. The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission will be meeting with the Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery, Alexandria Archaeology Commission and City staff on November 19 to discuss the multiple facets of the Freedmen's Cemetery restoration process.

The City expects to have Right of Entry to the entire original Freedmen's Cemetery site before the end of 2002. This will clear the way for additional cultural resource and hazardous materials investigations by the WWB Project, for topographic and property surveys by the City, and for demolition of the filling station and office building. In addition to determining the need for removal of contaminated soils, archaeological investigations will be completed in the areas that are now private property. In early 2003, the City will retain a design consultant with recognized expertise in urban parks to develop a detailed design that interprets guidelines provided by City staff and stakeholder groups and to prepare construction documents. Construction is scheduled for the 2007 construction season, after completion of the urban deck north abutment and retaining walls. The park restoration will be complete in December, 2007.

cc: Ignacio Pessoa, City Attorney
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