

Comments of Frederick Nelson, President, First Christian Church of Alexandria, June 21, 2004

Honorable Mayor, Members of the City Council:

I am Frederick Nelson, President of the Congregation of the First Christian Church of Alexandria. The Church has not had time to develop an official position on the open space plans in the Report before you today. However, I feel that my comments on the Report and proposed actions do represent those of many of our members. The church owns the property listed in the Report's "Open Space Opportunities List." The property is identified as "King Street to Rosemont Neighborhood Path," which is at 2723 King Street.

1. The letter sent to us on June 11 was the first we had heard of the open space plans and certainly the first time we were made aware that our property was included on the list of possible sites for protection or purchase by the City. Our immediate reaction was one of surprise and a feeling of concern that something of great significance to the future of the church was coming about rather quickly--and that we were as yet unprepared to evaluate or react.
2. Our feeling of concern and unease was encouraged by our uncertainty about what the Council is scheduled to do with the report and the comments from tonight within a short period of 24 hours. Decisions are scheduled to be made at the Council meeting on June 22. This seems like a very short amount of time made available for citizen input to be prepared, presented, and evaluated. We wish we had been alerted much earlier.
3. Nevertheless, I believe the First Christian Church will be open to dialogue with your planning groups. We have recently begun to evaluate our future needs for the full utilization and/or disposition of our church property. We hope for an open, collaborative, and fruitful participation with you on the issue of open space preservation versus development. This collaboration has not yet begun. However, I do believe you have our attention.
4. We hope that the City will be sensitive to the dynamics of the market for real estate at this time. We cannot afford, nor would it be just to ask the Church to take a financial loss on property set aside by the City for community open space.
5. Please be aware that our church has provided over the years, and continues to provide much service to the community through our participation in activities of ALIVE, Meals on Wheels, Carpenter's Shelter, Christ House, twelve step programs, Boy Scouts, and others. Our ability to continue such services depends on our financial position which in turn depends on our ability to utilize all of our current resources in a flexible and effective manner.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Frederick Nelson, President of First Christian Church of Alexandria (703-451-4785).