


*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 20, 2006

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR, AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 128 HOLD ON LAND AND \$25,000 IN UNALLOCATED BALANCES FOR MULTI-PURPOSE, MULTI-GENERATIONAL RECREATION FACILITY IN CAMERON STATION (BEN BRENNAN PARK)

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The issue of constructing a new multi-purpose field at Ben Brenman park was raised by Councilman Smedberg at the preliminary add-delete Work Session on April 17, 2006, and he requested a docket item from staff that would initiate a process to construct a field at this location, including the release of a "hold" on \$25,000 funding for a multi-purpose, multi-generational recreational facility. This issue had previously been discussed at the CIP Work Session on March 1, 2006.

Previously, Budget Memorandum #47 provided a cost estimate for a new field at Ben Brenman park. That memorandum provided an estimated cost for a natural turf field at Ben Brenman Park of between \$670,000 and \$870,000, and an estimated cost for a synthetic turf at this site of between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million. Budget Memorandum #71 contains information on the availability of sports facilities and sports fields over the next several years and concludes, "Existing fields are used approximately two to three times the amount that is recommended for sustaining healthy natural turf fields."

This memorandum outlines several possible courses of action that may be taken at this point by Council at this point. Staff will await direction from City Council at the final add-delete work session on April 24, 2006, as to whether, and what type of docket item should be prepared.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget document provides the following history of the "hold" of \$25,000 in the section entitled "Cameron Station" in the Recreation and Parks section of the document (p. 74).

"In the context of the FY 1998 budget, City Council added \$5,000 [in the CIP] in FY 2003 for the possible future planning and development of a multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation facility in Cameron Station. In the FY 1999 – FY

2004 CIP, funding was increased to \$20,000, and in the FY 2000 – FY 2005 CIP, funding was increased to \$25,000 in FY 2003, consistent with the amounts budgeted for planning of other facilities in the City. Based on City Council actions on February 28, 2001, establishing a process to determine the comprehensive needs of recreation and leisure services City-wide, this \$25,000 would remain unallocated and unexpended pending the outcome of the planned needs assessment. This City-wide study is complete, and some of the outcomes of this study are reflected in this CIP in the \$20.0 million approved over four years (\$0.5 million in FY 2007, \$1.5 million in FY 2008, \$9.0 million in FY 2009 and \$9.0 million in FY 2010) for a major addition and improvements to the Chinquapin Recreation Center, as well as \$0.5 million in unallocated prior year monies for the Patrick Henry Recreation Center and \$8.6 million over three years for the Charles Houston Recreation Center (\$4.6 million in unallocated prior year monies, \$2.2 million in FY 2007 and \$1.75 million in FY 2008).”

To meet lower budget expenditure targets, I have proposed an option for delaying the \$0.5 million in planning funds for the renovation of the Chinquapin recreation facility initially proposed for FY 2007 to FY 2008. The base budget had accelerated it to FY 2007 from FY 2008 in order to start the study process earlier. I also have proposed delaying a new Recreation and Parks service, program and facility needs assessment (\$300,000) from FY 2007 to FY 2008. Based on initial Council discussions at the Preliminary Add/Delete Work Session, these options appear to be acceptable to Council. *If that is the case, we will have no more specific information until FY 2008 than that which is already available concerning the specific plans for Chinquapin and other Recreation Centers in the City.*

Council has three options as to how it may wish to proceed at this point:

1. Council could direct City staff to prepare a docket item for its immediate consideration that would release the hold of \$25,000 on this item and direct staff to proceed with the development of plans for funding and constructing a field at the location as part of the FY 2008 CIP. A final decision on building such a field would not be made until City Council reviewed and approved the FY 2008 CIP.
2. Council could direct City staff to take no action at this time on this matter.
3. Council could direct staff to consult with the Commission on Aging, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the neighborhood civic association concerning this matter and to report back to the City Council in the fall on the results of those consultations and the possible uses of this area of the Ben Brenman park. At such time, a docket item could propose any of the following:
  - a. Continuation of the status quo, meaning no change in the “hold” described above;
  - b. Construction of a temporary, multi-purpose field until such time as other fields become available and then reexamination of the permanent use of this part of Ben Brenman park;

- c. Development of plans for funding and constructing a field at the location as part of the FY 2008 CIP.
- d. Designate this area of Ben Brenman park for passive park and recreation use.

It should be noted that while the City clearly needs additional active sports fields, there may be a desire by many Cameron Station residents to keep a more passive use. Also, without a resolution of the Chinquapin facility issue and the RPCA needs analysis, those wishing additional indoor recreation facilities may not want to give up the "hold" at this time on the Ben Brenman park area site.