

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 31, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF INCORPORATING PUBLIC OUTDOOR ART
HONORING CHARLES HOUSTON AT THE RENOVATED
CHARLES HOUSTON RECREATION CENTER

ISSUE: Consideration of incorporating public art honoring Charles Houston at the renovated Charles Houston Recreation Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council:

- (1) Endorse the concept of incorporating public art honoring Charles Houston into the renovated Charles Houston Recreation Center;
- (2) Request the Commission for the Arts to work with the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities to coordinate discussions with the Charles Houston Parent Advisory Board and staff at the Alexandria Black History Museum as well as schedule public meetings to garner insights, input and community support on the type of public art that should be located at the Charles Houston Recreation Center plaza honoring Charles Houston; and,
- (3) Request the Commission for the Arts to work with the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities to prepare a report for City Council in early 2008, on its findings from the public meetings and to provide Council with a scope of work for the art project, anticipated costs, and fundraising plans for the public art project.

BACKGROUND: Charles Houston was both an attorney of national reputation and a civil rights activist. He used his expertise and influence to bring educational opportunity to the Alexandria African-American community. He later became Dean of Howard University Law School. He also authored a legal brief that was used by his protégé, Thurgood Marshall, to win the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education*, which helped end racial segregation in American schools.

At the City Council meeting on October 25, 2005, Councilman Gaines discussed the Charles Houston Recreation Center renovation project and suggested that the renovated center include a piece of public art honoring the memory of Charles Houston.

Councilman Gaines asked that the Alexandria Commission for the Arts take the lead in this effort. Mayor Euille requested that this proposal be docketed for Council consideration.

DISCUSSION: The Commission for the Arts has begun initial work on this concept including preparing initial ideas and a range of estimated costs associated with such a project. Through a series of collaborative public meetings between now and early 2008, this work can continue, and together with community input, the Commission for the Arts and the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities can further develop the scope of work, project costs, and identify funding strategies. Concurrently, City staff from Planning and Zoning, General Services and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will work to address and identify a potential location outdoors at the new Charles Houston Recreation Center.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no money budgeted for this public art project. It is anticipated the costs associated with this art project will be funded by grants and private donations.

STAFF:

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Edward Mandley, Director, General Services

Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Cheryl Anne Colton, Cultural Arts Administrator, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities