

New Bus. Item #1


9-15-07


*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: KIRK KINCANNON, DIRECTOR  
RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES 

SUBJECT: WINDMILL HILL PARK USE

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In response to the questions at the City Council meeting on Tuesday September 11, regarding use of Windmill Hill Park and, specifically related to the permitted athletic use of the park, I am providing the following information.

The design of Windmill Hill Park is a combination of passive and active public space and is identified as such in the approved concept plan for the park. Active uses are designed to generally occur on the western side of the park and most but not all, are identified in the plan and have been in existence for a number of years. These active areas include a basketball court, sand volleyball court, playground, multi use trail and open field areas. The passive areas of the park are generally identified in the eastern half of the park near the Potomac River waterfront, with the exception of the active dog exercise area located on the eastern half. As shown in the plan, the park achieves a balance of use and helps fulfill many community recreational needs.

During the past two years, the Wilson Bridge Construction Project has significantly impacted the use of the two Jones Point Park athletic Fields due to parking and field access issues at Jones Point. As a result, the use of the soccer fields at Jones Point Park was discontinued approximately two years ago. Given that the Windmill Hill Park site had been permitted for organized soccer practice for dozens of years, park permitting staff believed that providing a "game use" permit to the Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA) was in line with current use practices for the park site and the issuance of the game use permit would help to provide relief for the loss of fields at Jones Point Park.

The granting of additional use to ASA for games was meant to provide for the game field loss at Jones Point. However, permitting staff did not fully realize the impacts that the "game use" designation would have upon the larger community surrounding the park. As the spring soccer season neared its completion, the Department (RPCA) began receiving complaints from citizens concerning the increased intensity of use at the park site.

Those complaints included loss of parking spaces, increased amounts of traffic; increased noise levels at the park and wear and tear on the park grounds. In fact, the Department (RPCA) received a letter from Townsend Van Fleet, President of the Old Town Civic Association, which communicated concerns about the increased soccer activity in the park due to the games.

As a result of the community concerns, staff met with the Alexandria Soccer Association during the summer and explained that there was a concern about the overuse of the park with soccer games this year. The Soccer Association was informed at that time, that formal use of the site could not be accommodated. Staff also told the Soccer Association that no formal use also included practices which is incorrect. I clarified this matter with staff and communicated to them that practices are to be permitted at the site.

In addition, I have communicated this information to the President of the Alexandria Soccer Association, John Timmons, who understands the situation. I also suggested to Mr. Timmons that if there is a continued desire by ASA to hold games at the park, that we would facilitate a meeting with the community and ASA to discuss the short and long term needs of the soccer program and the impacts of the current field loss in Alexandria. We may be able to develop a short term community compromise. In any event, we will continue to work with all of the parties to resolve this issue.

Should you have any question please contact me 571-238-0309.

cc: Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager  
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, RPCA