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## Statement to the Alexandria City Council September 12, 2009 by Gary J. Carr

Mr. Mayor, Mr Manager, Members of Council, welcome to the new members, and thank you all for your service. My name is Gary Carr, and I rise once again to ask you to pay it forward and restore the running tracks to Francis Hammond and George Washington Middle Schools.

The specific topic I would like to address today "Is the restoration of the running tracks is good for business, that is, does it make economic sense?" In times of fiscal restraint is this a good investment?

Running tracks have been categorized as just another sport competing for scarce recreation dollars. However, when compared to playing fields they serve a statistically significant larger portion of the populace. While 90% of citizens will never play a game of football, or soccer, or lacrosse, or baseball; 99% of citizens will, *or should*, use the running track. I must say this again, it's not about the track, it's about running, jogging or walking the recreation, fitness and health. It's about usefulness to the entire community, kids and adults. And its about childhood obesity, the insidious threat to our future.

I was opposed to the so-called "All-City Sport Complex" not because it was a bad idea. It was the wrong idea. It was in the wrong place, and absent a running track, the wrong concept. There is a right place. The George Washington/Braddock Field Site. It has several obvious advantages. Location being the primary one. A location that provides shelter and parking and public transportation, but also history. I quote from the GWHS website: "*The GW Memorial Stadium, with a capacity of 14,800 fans, was built by the city in 1947, with merchants' donations funding the cost of the lights and a single corporation providing for the electronic scoreboard. The stadium, with its quarter-mile track and lighted football field, was often the site of professional preseason football games, three-ring circuses, visits by U.S. Presidents, and every Thanksgiving Day it was filled to capacity for the Olde Oaken Bucket football game between GW and arch-rival Washington & Lee High School of Arlington.*" While new stadium maybe a little much, recognize that this site has the city's history attached to it. Say we built the running tracks, then what?

What if Alexandria positioned itself as the "run friendly", the place to stay when you visit the metropolitan Washington area to participate in one of the many national and local running or walking road races? Hundreds of thousands of athletes come to nation's capitol annually to participate in everything from the Marine Corp Marathon, to the Race for the Cure. What if the first choice for these legions was to stay, eat, prepare and visit was Alexandria. Why? Because of a network of running facilities and trails that are safe and accessible to public transportation. They would come to train and prepare for the races, and would come back again and again because no where else in the Washington area could match Alexandria's running infrastructure. The "Fun Side" of the Potomac could become the "Run Side", with an opportunity for cross collaboration of various merchants too numerous to mention.

What if the running tracks in Alexandria were also known as safe? Not only for their public locations, but also because police and firemen were known to frequent them. What if they were appropriately, but not excessively illuminated, and women and children could comfortably jog alone after dark?

What if the tracks were convenient? With parking, taxi's, Metro rail and bus, maybe even and occasional trolley. This would be an extraordinary draw for the thousands that come to Washington, DC area to choose Alexandria as the place to stay. What if it they connected to the GW bike path and the trail to Leesburg?

What if we restore these running tracks? Well if we built them, they would run.

## MESSAGE TO ACPS SCHOOL BOARD 9-2009 by Gary J. Carr

***“Success is not a random act. It arises out of a predictable set of circumstances and opportunities”***  
Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers- Secrets of Success*

Madame Chair, Mr. Superintendent, Members of the Board my name is Gary Carr, welcome to the new members and thanks you all for your seervice. I rise in an ongoing effort to get you to pay it forward, and restore the running tracks to Francis Hammond and George Washington Middle Schools.

If one-in-four, up to one-half, of the students in our schools are overweight or worse yet clinically obese. could it reasonably be said that we are diligently nurturing our children?

### FROM THE ACPS MISSION STATEMENT:

Alexandria City Public Schools will provide ***the environment, resources, and commitment*** to ensure that each and every student succeeds — academically, emotionally, ***physically*** and socially. (Author's Emphasis)

By your own admission what I am advocating represents fully twenty-five per cent of why you are here. This is the irrefutable basis of my advocacy for the restoration of the running tracks at the middle schools. ***“It is easier to build strong children, then to fix broken men.”*** Frederick Douglas

Childhood obesity is the tsunami of our health care crisis, and while the water has metaphorically receded, it will return soon with a vengeance. How are we to save ourselves and our children? Run!

Our health care problem will never be solved until we address the issue of childhood obesity.

I have been asked what motivates me to advocate for this issue? Let me state it as succinctly as I can. This may be one of the most important thing I may do in my lifetime. To immediately change the health and well-being of over 10,000 children, and for it's effects to have a positive impact for generations is an awesome thing to believe.

Gladwell in his book *Outliers- Secrets of Success* describes “The10,000-Hour Rule”, on how long it takes to become a preeminent at most anything. Ten thousand hours equates to five-years of full-time endeavor. That indicates one thing in an educational context. You have to start in Middle School. So what began as quest for a simple asphalt path at one school, has evolved into believing that running tracks should be at every middle schools in this nation. This is not about tracks, its about running.

I am not suggesting we increase the amount of Physical education during school hours. Just for the commitment, environment and resources for them to engage in the healthful activity on their own. This physical educational paradigm shift should, and must, start here. **If you show a child a sport they will play for a day, but if you show a child how to run, they are healthy for a lifetime.**

### Goals

- Restore the running tracks to George Washington and Hammond Middle Schools.
- Place a 200 meter track at the T.C. Williams HS- Minnie Howard Campus
- Construct a championship level 8-lane facility within the city limits
- Add lights to the tracks (low-level “street light” illumination) for evening usage

My fellow Alexandrian's the time has come to restore these athletic icons-  
*If We Build It, They Will Run!*