

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting**

**Patrick Henry Recreation Center
4653 Taney Ave.**

**Thursday, September 26, 2024
7 p.m.**

Commission Members

Present: Dana Colarulli, Chair (District II); Katy Matthews, Vice Chair (District III); Jeffrey Miller (District I); Geoffrey Goode (District II); Joseph Fray (District II); Paul Komelasky (District I); Tookie Organek (student member), Jacques Lecoq (student member).

Absent: Phillip Voorhees (District III); Stuart Fox, Secretary (District I)

RPCA Staff: James Spengler, RPCA Director, Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Park Services; Laura Durham, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Beth Znidersic, Division Chief, Park Services; Tiffany Marbury, Administrative Assistant, RPCA.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dana Colarulli, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Resident, **Steve Dawson**, addressed the commission regarding the George Mason Modernization Project. Three plans are being considered and all of them retain the historical frontage of the school at the expense of the fields. He mentioned that a 3-story option would preserve the fields and the historical entrance of the building, but it is not being conspired. He asks the Commission to fight for an option that preserves the fields.

Resident, **Melissa Riddy**, addressed the commission concerning a lack of civic engagement and transparency regarding the George Mason Modernization Project. She states that ACPS has now removed a slide deck previously posted online. There was a survey to gain feedback on the project, but the survey results were not shared. She agrees there should be a 4th option to build the school higher and preserve the existing fields.

Resident, **James VanderMeer**, addressed the commission concerning Hoofs Run Greenway Park, and an issue with the green place adjacent to the playground. The green space is unfenced and is used as an unofficial dog park. Owners are allowing their dogs to run off-leash in this area. He was bitten by a dog a few months ago, and his wife had to fend off a dog a few years ago in the same area. It seems that signage was incorrectly placed in that area designating it as a “dog exercise area”. He went to that location today and noticed the signs had been removed, and he appreciated the staff who corrected that mistake. He has

worked with animal control and local law enforcement, and they were limited in what they could do due to the signage. He will continue to work with animal control to ensure safety.

Jack Browand responded to the concern regarding dogs in the green space. He stated that signage may have been posted incorrectly after construction in that area. The signs were removed and placed in the correct dog exercise area. Unfortunately, many owners let their dogs run off-leash though it is prohibited in the City. RPCA will continue to work with animal control to support safety in our parks.

Jack Browand responded to the concern of losing field space at George Mason. He stated that the entire parcel of land is owned by ACPS. The area functions as a park with outdoor space on school grounds. RPCA works with schools to ensure the space is available for community use. There are concept plans that reorient the open space, however, that is not a final design. He is on the advisory committee and is working to ensure the open space can support the community and RPCA programs.

Geoffrey Goode, who is assigned to the George Mason Project, advised that there is a community meeting and a superintendent advisory meeting next week. If the commission would like to provide a comment to ACPS, it will need to be motioned during this meeting.

ACTION: FY25.9.26.24A

Motion: Geoffrey Goode moved, and Katy Matthews seconded the motion to write a letter to ACPS asking that they prioritize the following regarding the George Mason Modernization Project: 2 diamond fields, the current amount of natural green space, and an additional rectangular turf field. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

III. COMMISSIONER REPORTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. New Commissioner Introduction

Commission Chair, Dana Collaruli, introduced the new student member, Jacques Lecoq. Jacques is a senior at Alexandria City High School.

b. Staff Report Highlights

The staff report can be found here: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/PRCCCombinedReport92624.pdf>

Laura Durham gave an update on the following topics:

OSTP - She recently presented to the City Council School Board Sub-committee and shared information about OSTP enrollment. Most sites are at capacity, and the waitlist is down to 71 compared to 200 at this time last year. She looks to fill 20 positions to maximize program capacity and address turnover.

Coach-Pitch & T-Ball - The coach-pitch and t-ball program currently facilitated by RPCA staff is now transitioning to Alexandria Little League.

Court Services - A small part of the Court Services unit will now be housed under Recreation Services.

Minnie Howard Pool – The pool is open, but there have been several issues that are still in need of repair. ACPS has not accepted the pool from the contractor. The pool is open for public use, but classes will not start until next month.

Jack Browand gave an update on the following topics:

Patrick Henry – It is anticipated that this project will be completed by the end of November. There was a delay in getting the posts to support the netting around the field.

Holmes Run Trail – Construction started on the middle portions back in June. It should take 12 months to finish. It's anticipated that the bridge will be placed on the west side of 395 in February. By this time next year, there should be a continuous path from Eisenhower to Beauregard.

Parking @ Witter Field – Parking restrictions were implemented the 1st weekend of September. There were a lot of tickets written for cars parked in fire zones.

Judy Lowe Park – Temporary blocks were put outside the Mount Vernon Recreation Center as a response to the intermittent closure of Judy Lowe Park.

Pump House – The former director of DPI wrote a memo to update City Council on the decision to move the pump house. They plan to move forward on the original proposal to have the pump station at Waterfront Park. Construction will start in mid-2025.

Beth Znidersic gave an update on the following topics:

Hensley Park – Construction is still ongoing at this location. Recently the focus has been on the fields, both the grass field and the synthetic turf. There is a minor delay in building the restrooms.

Colesanto Spray Park Project – RPCA has recommended a contract award. They are working with purchasing to finalize the last steps in the process. The goal is to open the park sometime during the summer of 2025.

Mount Jefferson Park – The team is working with designers to address punch list items. Some of the vegetation has died. Additional items include fencing and retaining wall issues.

Simpson Park – The dog park is open, and the lights are working. Some final punch list items need to be done, including signage.

Skate Park Pop-up – There will be a Skate Park Pop-up event at Lockett Field on October 26. This event will include arts and crafts with a visit from the Mobile Art Lab.

North Potomac Yard Park – The ribbon-cutting event is scheduled for October 19.

c. Commissioner Assignments

DISTRICT I: Stuart Fox was not in attendance. **Paul Komelasky** did not have an update but wanted to note that his favorite portion of the staff report was Back to School Night at Mount Vernon. **Jeffrey Miller** did not have an update but wanted to note that his favorite portion of the staff report was the section on killing invasive species in parks.

DISTRICT II: Dana Colarulli enjoyed the OSTP update in the staff report. He also noted the article about Pirate Day at Patrick Henry Recreation Center. **Geoffrey Goode** did not have an update on Alex West but did enjoy the staff report article on invasive species. **Joe Fray** stated that his favorite part of the staff report was the article about the invasive species.

DISTRICT III: Katy Matthews stated that demolition has started on the old Minnie Howard building. The solar panels have reached their end of life, and the new solar panels will be in the parking lot. She also filled in for David Brennan and provided the following Youth Sports update. The group is working on its mission statement and reviewing its composition. Her favorite part of the staff report was the article about RPCA staff recruiting high schoolers as basketball referees. **David Brennan** did not have an update to report but noted that his favorite part of the staff report was the donation of a scoreboard at Miracle Field.

STUDENT MEMBER: Tookie Organek referred Jacques as the second student representative. His favorite section of the staff report was the scoreboard donation. Jacques Lecoq did not have an update to report.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 18, 2024

ACTION: FY25.9.26.24B

Motion: Dana Colarulli moved, and Katy Matthews seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes with the following amendments. Please amend the minutes to include the 2 members of the public who spoke on OSTP registration concerns and format the minutes to reflect the order in which items were discussed. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

V. ITEMS OF INFORMATION

a. Community Health Assessment (CHA)

Sean Curry from the Virginia Department of Health gave a presentation on the Virginia Health Assessment. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/chaintroboardscommissions.pdf>

b. Robinson Terminal North Open Space Update

Ken Wire, of Wire Gill, LLP., presented on Robinsons Terminal North. The presentation can be found here:

https://media.alexandriava.gov/content/rpca/20240926PRCPresentation.pdf?_gl=1*_psaisg*_ga*MTQ2MDQwNDU4MS4xNTgxOTgzNDEw*_ga_249CRKJTTH*MTcyOTAyMzUwNy44Ny4wLjE3MjkwMjM1MDcuMC4wLjA.

c. Resource Recovery / Cost Allocation Update / Commission Preparation

Laura Durham spoke briefly to the commission about Resource Recovery and Cost Allocation. She gave the group “homework” to complete before the next meeting. Commission members must review the service categories and provide feedback by October 11. In addition, please share stakeholder groups or community members that may not have been targeted in past exercises.

VI. NEXT MEETING

October 17, 2024 – Charles Houston Recreation Center

VII. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: FY25.9.26.24C

Motion: David Brennan moved, and Paul Komelasky seconded the motion to adjourn at 9:18 p.m. The motion passed by unanimous vote.