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6-23-09

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 19, 2009
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING AN AD HOC FORT WARD PARK AND MUSEUM AREA STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

ISSUE: Consideration of a Resolution Establishing an Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholders Advisory Group.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Adopt a resolution (attached) to establish the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group, and
- (2) Request the City Manager appoint members to this Advisory Group.

BACKGROUND: Since its establishment in the 1960s, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area site has always been considered an important community and City-wide parks and historic resource. Most recently, in the Fall of 2008, significant community interest was generated in response to activities, maintenance and operations at Fort Ward Park. In particular, park users and neighbors indicated an interest in long-term, master planning of the park in order to address their interests and concerns related to the use and management of the park.

Through a series of public meetings in the winter and early spring of 2009, a matrix of community and user issues was developed that reflected a need for both an immediate and a long term plan to address Fort Ward Park issues. The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and the Office of Historic Alexandria worked with the City Manager's Office to address some immediate issues and to develop an interim management plan for the park in the Spring/Summer 2009 season. In order to respond to the longer term future of the park, staff recommends the establishment of an Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.

This Advisory Group would advise staff with a goal of recommending an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archeological interests. The Advisory Group's physical area of responsibility would include the total area of Fort Ward Park, including the area of the Fort, as well as the Parks Maintenance facilities. Excluded would be the actual Museum building itself. The Advisory Group's work would complement the work of the Fort Ward Park History Work Group which will be exploring and focusing on the historic issues such as the existence and location of potential additional graves at the Fort Ward Park site. The Advisory Group would be formed for limited duration of about a one-year period. Staff recommends that the Advisory Group stakeholders would be appointed by the City Manager, and would include the following representatives appointed by the City Manager:

- a. Three members recommended by the Park and Recreation Commission
- b. Three members recommended by the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
- c. One member recommend by the Environmental Policy Commission
- d. Two "at large" citizens who have shown a knowledge and keen interest in Fort Ward and
- e. represent diverse geographic areas of the City
- f. One citizen living within a one-mile radius of the park

Staff would facilitate the 10-person Advisory Group, and work with the Advisory Group primarily to solicit recommendations on balancing park uses, implementing education and outreach opportunities and reviewing the success of recently implemented changes. Staff support will include staff from Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RP&CA) and the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA). When appropriate, staff from the Department General Services, Transportation and Environmental Services, the Office of Environmental Quality (OEQ), Planning and Zoning (P&Z), and the City Manager's Office (CMO) will also work with the Advisory Group. The City Manager would appoint a convening chair who would serve until the Advisory Group chooses its own chair.

The Advisory Group would advise the staff team on Fort Ward issues and opportunities related to interim park/historic area use, management of Fort Ward and long term goals to be then transmitted for consideration to a future City-wide park master planning process. Participating staff would confer with the Advisory Group on potential Fort Ward issues and opportunities, facilitate the meetings, develop education and outreach strategies, and report and make recommendations to City Manager, and then to Council which would serve a policy-setting role.

In addition to this Ad Hoc Advisory Group, the Office of Historic Alexandria has created a Fort Ward Park History Work Group. The purpose of this Work Group is to assist the Office of Historic Alexandria and Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities with the documentation, research and interpretation of cultural and historic resources of Fort Ward Park, including its association with Native Americans, the Defenses of Washington Civil War fortifications, and the post Civil War African American community that existed on the site until it was acquired by the City of Alexandria for park and preservation purposes. Anyone with an interest in this subject has been invited to attend and can become a member of this Work Group.

This Work Group's focus is history (including researching the issue of gravesites) and is not charged with the overall Fort Ward Museum Area park usage issues that the Advisory Group would be responsible for reviewing. The Work Group's findings however will inform the Advisory Group in their work.

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Richard Baier, P.E., Interim Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, City Council wishes to establish an ad hoc stakeholder advisory group to advise City staff on Fort Ward Park and Museum Area use and management;

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area are valuable City resources for use and enjoyment by residents and visitors;

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area includes significant historic, environmental park, and recreational resources;

WHEREAS, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area is adjacent to a residential neighborhood;

WHEREAS, the appropriate balance of uses needs to be reviewed and determined; and

WHEREAS, a diverse group of City residents with a wide variety of interests can assist in recommending this appropriate balance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA:

1. That there is hereby established an *ad hoc* stakeholder advisory group known as the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.
2. That the Advisory Group shall consist of ten members, as follows: 3 members recommended by the Park and Recreation Commission, 3 members recommended by the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, 1 member recommended by the Environmental Policy Commission, 2 citizens at large, and 1 citizen living within a one-mile radius of Fort Ward Park.
3. That the City Manager shall appoint the ten members of the Advisory Group for a limited duration.
4. That the Chairpersons of the Park and Recreation, Historic Alexandria Resource and Environmental Policy Commissions shall recommend to the City Manager its members for the Advisory Group.
5. That, in making their appointments, the City Manager and Commission chairs shall endeavor to ensure that in aggregate, Advisory Group members provide:
 - a. A commitment to a balanced, multi-use park and historic site in the City; and
 - b. Are representative of the diversity of interests and uses of the park and museum site.

6. That the functions of the Advisory Group shall be:

- a. Advise staff with a goal of finding an appropriate balance between the different uses of the park, including active, passive/environmental and historic/archeological interests.
- b. Provide staff with recommendations on balancing park uses, implementing education and outreach opportunities and reviewing the success of recently implemented changes; and
- c. Advise staff on Fort Ward issues and opportunities related to the interim park/historic area use, management of Fort Ward and long term goals to be refined through a city-wide park master planning process.

7. That staff assistance to the Advisory Group shall be managed jointly by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and the Office of Historic Alexandria, with support as needed from the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Services, Planning and Zoning and General Services, and the City Manager's Office.

8. That the Advisory Group shall meet on an ad hoc basis and will be formed for a limited duration of no more than one-year unless otherwise extended by City Council.

ADOPTED: June 23, 2009

WILLIAM D. EUILLE

MAYOR

ATTEST:

Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC, City Clerk